

INFORMATION TO USERS

The most advanced technology has been used to photograph and reproduce this manuscript from the microfilm master. UMI films the original text directly from the copy submitted. Thus, some dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from a computer printer.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyrighted material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each oversize page is available as one exposure on a standard 35 mm slide or as a 17" × 23" black and white photographic print for an additional charge.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. 35 mm slides or 6" × 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.



300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA

Order Number 8826398

**The rhetoric of identity in Japanese American writings, 1948–
1988**

Kawaharada, Dennis, Ph.D.

University of Washington, 1988

Copyright ©1988 by Kawaharada, Dennis. All rights reserved.

U·M·I
300 N. Zeeb Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

The Rhetoric of Identity
in Japanese American Writings, 1948-1988

by

DENNIS KAWAHARADA

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Washington

1988

Approved by M. L. J. J.
(Chairperson of Supervisory Committee)

Program Authorized to Offer Degree

ENGLISH
Date 20 May 1988

Copyright by

DENNIS KAWAHARADA

1988

In presenting this dissertation in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctoral degree at the University of Washington, I agree that the Library shall make its copies freely available for inspection. I further agree that extensive copying of this dissertation is allowable only for scholarly purposes, consistent with "fair use" as prescribed in the U.S. Copyright Law. Requests for copying or reproduction of this dissertation may be referred to University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106, to whom the author has granted "the right to reproduce and sell (a) copies of the manuscript in microfilm and/or (b) printed copies of the manuscript made from microfilm."

Signature *Denn Kamhauo*

Date June 1, 1988

University of Washington

Abstract

THE RHETORIC OF IDENTITY
IN JAPANESE AMERICAN WRITINGS, 1948-1988

by Dennis Kawaharada

Chairperson of Supervisory Committee:
Professor Malcolm Griffith, Department of English

I examine the rhetoric of identity in Japanese American writings (1948-1988), focusing on two questions: How did Japanese American writers characterize Japanese Americans? Why did they characterize them in the ways they did? The introduction ("The Making of a Japanese American Identity") presents an overview of the anti-Japanese movement in America and the attacks in the media on the character of Japanese Americans used by white working class and racist organizations to justify both the exclusion of Japanese workers from the American state and discrimination against Japanese Americans. The exclusionists and racists charged that anyone of Japanese ancestry was loyal to the Japanese emperor and unassimilable. To counteract these charges,

many of the Nisei (second-generation) writers portrayed Japanese Americans as patriotic (Chapter 1--"Nisei Patriotism"), assimilated (Chapter 2--"In the Melting Pot"), and ideally middle-class (Chapter 3--"The Hawaii Success Story"). Chapter 4 ("Down and Out in California") analyzes the rhetoric of two West Coast Nisei short story writers, Toshio Mori and Hisaye Yamamoto, who characterized the Issei and Nisei not as model middle-class citizens, but as struggling outcasts and victims who deserved sympathy rather than animosity from the American public. Chapter 5 ("The Passive Stance in Nisei Writing") discusses the generally deferential stance of Nisei writers and points out that this stance had its roots in Confucian rather than American values. Chapter 6 ("Active Voices: West Coast Sansei Poetry") describes the emergence of a new Japanese American identity during the 70's and 80's emphasizing protest rather than tolerance and acceptance. Under the influence of the Black Power and Third World movements, a new generation of West Coast Japanese American writers, mainly Sansei (third generation), rejected unquestioning patriotism, assimilation, middle-class success, and political passivity as the main elements of a Japanese American identity, instead emphasizing ethnic differences, cultural pluralism, and political activism. In my conclusion I argue that the rhetoric of ethnicity and protest has had a beneficial

effect on the Japanese American community, creating a healthier ethnic identity for Japanese Americans and promoting greater political and cultural participation in society.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: The Making of a Japanese American Identity	1
Chapter 1. Nisei Patriotism	28
Chapter 2. In the Melting Pot	52
Chapter 3. Up from the Plantation: The Hawaii Success Story	83
Chapter 4. Down and Out in California	109
Chapter 5. The Passive Stance in Nisei Writing	141
Chapter 6. Active Voices: West Coast Sansei Poetry	165
Conclusion: Ethnicity and Democracy	202
List of References	211

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to Professor Ron Takaki of the University of California at Berkeley for reading and commenting on an early draft of the dissertation and Professor Malcolm Griffith of the University of Washington for advice and support throughout the writing process.

To Makita and Matsuko Kawaharada

Introduction:

The Making of a Japanese American Identity

A people must define itself, and minorities have the responsibility of having their ideals and images recognized as part of the composite image which is that of the still forming American people.

Ralph Ellison, "Twentieth Century Fiction and the Black Mask of Humanity," Shadow and Act

Like novelist and essayist Ralph Ellison, Japanese American writers have had as their central concern the shaping of an American identity. The Nisei, or second generation of Japanese Americans, children of late 19th and early 20th century immigrants, were something new--like the children of other immigrants to America before and since, the first American born generation of an ethnic group. They felt awkward, like fledglings, unsure of their identities in a country that most of their parents knew little about and that did not accept their parents as citizens and did not seem to want the American-born Nisei as citizens either. Their parents, the Issei or first generation, prohibited by an 1790 law from becoming naturalized American citizens because they were not white, had their Japanese citizenship, language, stories and traditions of Japan to provide them with Japanese identities. But the Nisei, American citizens

by birth and educated in American schools, had been shaped by the traditions of America and thought of themselves as Americans. Their family life, foods, and customs as well as their skin color, faces, and names might have marked them as different from Americans of other ethnic backgrounds, but these differences, they felt, did not make them less able to understand and love democracy and the freedom and equality of opportunity that America claimed it offered to all of its citizens. And once the Nisei had adopted these American values, or thought they did, they believed they were Americans in heart, mind, and body.

Unfortunately, that was not how white Americans in general perceived the Nisei. As the Nisei grew up in the 20's and 30's, they discovered that they were treated differently from white Americans--discriminated against--and that many Americans thought they were incapable of becoming good Americans because of their ancestry. Racism and discrimination made the Nisei feel like aliens in the land of their birth and made them wonder about their identity.

The Nisei were burdened by a long tradition of anti-Asian and anti-Japanese sentiment and legislation in America and its territory of Hawaii. The first group of Asian laborers in America, the Chinese, had been excluded in 1882 by legislation sponsored by racist groups and the white working

class, which feared competition for jobs, unemployment, and a lower standard of living. In the 1890's, when white farm, mine, and factory owners began to recruit Japanese immigrant laborers to replace the Chinese, the racists and the white working class opposed the Japanese as well and began to work for their exclusion.

As Issei workers began leaving the farm labor pool and setting up small businesses or farms--becoming the self-reliant small entrepreneurs many political philosophers saw as the ideal American citizens--, opposition to them intensified. White labor continued to agitate for the exclusion of the Japanese, claiming the Issei small businessmen and farmers paid lower wages than whites and therefore forced white businessmen and farmers to pay lower wages in order to compete. White farmers joined the opposition to the Japanese, accusing them of unfair competition--using family members as free labor, working longer hours than white farmers would, and living in substandard living quarters that no white person could tolerate. The white farmer feared aggressive Issei farmers would take over West Coast agriculture.

White racist and labor groups won the first round in the battle to exclude the Japanese in 1907 when President Theodore Roosevelt signed what became known as the

Gentlemen's Agreement between America and Japan: in exchange for the rescinding of local legislation in San Francisco segregating Japanese school children, Japan agreed to stop issuing passports that allowed Japanese laborers to enter the U.S. Although immigrant laborers were allowed to bring in wives and began to raise families in America, the Gentlemen's Agreement insured that the Japanese population would remain small. (Before World War II, it never reached more than 2 percent of the population of California, or .1 percent of the population of the United States.)

But even the small number was too much for white labor and farmers. To discourage the Japanese in America from staying and to insure that those who stayed did not compete for property with white landowners and farmers, California passed the Alien Land law in 1913, prohibiting aliens ineligible for citizenship from owning land. Other states adopted similar laws. In 1920, the California law was strengthened, prohibiting leasing and sharecropping by aliens ineligible for citizenship. Anti-miscegenation laws prevented the Issei from marrying whites in California and other Western States, and U.S. citizens who married Japanese nationals lost their citizenship. In 1924, California Congressmen--backed by the anti-Japanese coalition of white labor, farmers, and racists--helped enact an immigration act

prohibiting the entry of Japanese laborers or their wives to America.

The exclusion was justified by attacks on the character of the Issei. In the media, the exclusionists portrayed the Issei as disloyal to America--agents of the Japanese Emperor and the advanced guard of a Japanese invasion, a fear fueled by Japanese militarism in East Asia. The Issei were also called unassimilable--incapable of learning American political and social values. They were accused, like Blacks, American Indians, and Mexicans, of being morally inferior--lazy, untrustworthy, dishonest, sneaky, and given to vices, such as prostitution, gambling, and alcohol. They were dangerous to white women because of their supposedly unrestrained sexual appetites as their high birth rates seemed to prove. They were supposedly arrogant. They were also greedy, trying to buy up the best farmland on the West Coast. In short, they were not the kind of "virtuous" people the founding fathers believed were needed to build and maintain a republican nation. Furthermore, they were also obedient to authority and servile: they had been taught in Japan to obey their emperor and lords, and therefore, were not self-reliant and independent as good citizens of a republic were supposed to be. It did not matter that some of the accusations were contradictory (lazy and overly

ambitious, arrogant and obedient); the purpose of these attacks on the Issei character was to imbue the Issei with negative traits that justified discrimination and exclusion.

The same negative image created to vilify the Issei stigmatized the Nisei. Whether born in Japan or America, "a Jap was a Jap," the exclusionists claimed. After the prohibition of Japanese immigration, the anti-Japanese forces tried to deny the Nisei citizenship. Although the racists were never able to achieve this goal, the Nisei were made to feel unwanted. On the West Coast, the Issei and Nisei lived on isolated farms or in segregated urban communities and were denied service at exclusively white barber shops, hotels, restaurants, and recreational facilities. The Nisei were allowed to attend integrated schools and colleges (partly because of the Japanese government's protest over segregated schools), but they found it difficult to get jobs in white-owned companies and in white-dominated professions after graduation:

Outside of school . . . the Nisei faced a society that rejected them regardless of their [academic] accomplishments. Fully credentialed Nisei education majors, for example, were virtually unemployable as teachers in the very school in which they had excelled. Whatever their skills, most Nisei were forced into the ethnic economic community . . . (Daniels, 23)

Stories about Nisei with college degrees working as grocery clerks, secretaries, or delivery persons were commonplace in the community.

The Issei and Nisei in Hawaii also faced discrimination. In the late 19th century, plantation owners brought Japanese as contract laborers to Hawaii to work on sugar plantations, where the wages were even lower than for farm work on the West Coast and where the wages of Japanese workers were lower than wages of other ethnic groups. (Discriminatory wages ended only after a strike by Japanese workers in 1909.) On the plantations, the Issei and Nisei were not allowed to advance beyond manual labor and low-level foreman positions; when they moved off the plantations, they faced discrimination by white-owned companies and so, like the Japanese Americans on the West Coast, became small businessmen or farmers. While there was no strong white working class or farmer associations to agitate for the exclusion of the Issei, the white elite of Hawaii worried that the Japanese, who were growing in numbers and political strength, would eventually take control of the islands. The Japanese labor strikes of 1909 and 1920 increased their fears. When exclusion came in 1924, the white elite were ambivalent--exclusion cut off a major source of cheap labor; at the same time, it limited a growing threat to their

dominion.

The December 7, 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor triggered more suspicion of and hostility against the Issei and Nisei. It seemed to confirm American fears that the Japanese intended to invade Hawaii and the West Coast. Japanese Americans were identified with the enemy and their loyalty was questioned. In February, 1942, the U.S. governments ordered everyone of Japanese ancestry on the West Coast, including 70,000 American citizens, rounded up and interned in camps in isolated areas of the West and Midwest. The Issei and Nisei were deprived of their supposedly inalienable rights to personal freedom, property, and the pursuit of livelihood and well-being. The Nisei were stripped of their constitutional rights of due process, declared guilty and incarcerated because of their ancestry. While the government began to allow the internees to relocate in 1943 in order to work or attend college outside the prohibited West Coast "security zone," some Nisei and most of the Issei--embittered, confused, unmotivated, or fearful of the white world--stayed in the internment camps until the government forced them out at the end of the war.

The U.S. government argued that the forced removal was a military necessity: the Issei and Nisei were supposedly a security threat on the West Coast. Historians have shown

that the "security threat" was a fabrication of racist military men and government officials. The proponents of the removal doctored a military intelligence report to support their claim that the Issei and Nisei were potential spies and saboteurs, when in fact there was no evidence the Japanese American community in general was disloyal or intended to commit acts of sabotage or espionage. In Concentration Camps USA: Japanese Americans and World War II, Roger Daniels calls the argument of military necessity "a fig leaf for a particular variant of American racism" (71). Bonacich and Modell argue that not just racism, but greed was a factor: West Coast white labor and farmers saw a too-good-to-be-true opportunity to eliminate the Issei and Nisei as economic competitors and vigorously supported their removal (The Economic Basis of Ethnic Solidarity).

Hawaii was more tolerant: Although seven hundred or so community leaders with ties to the Japanese government were arrested and interned, there was no indiscriminate mass internment--even though Hawaii was closer to the war zone, and disloyal Issei and Nisei would have been a greater threat in Hawaii than on the West Coast. The Issei and Nisei--over a third of the population--had become indispensable to the Hawaiian economy and were accepted as loyal Americans by key leaders and the majority of the

population. Still, the Nisei in Hawaii, like many Nisei on the West Coast, felt shame over the Japanese attack and mistrusted by their fellow citizens; they wanted to prove their loyalty to America.

To prove their loyalty, Nisei in the internment camps and Hawaii volunteered for military service. Two segregated Nisei combat units, first the 100th battalion made up of Hawaii volunteers and then the 442nd regiment to which the 100th was later joined, fought and died for democracy in Europe, the 442nd becoming the most decorated American combat unit during the War, largely because of its unusually high casualty rate (1,000 purple hearts). Some of the Nisei also served as military intelligence officers in the Pacific because of their ability to understand and speak Japanese.

After the war, the Nisei wanted to tell their story--to establish their American identity. They felt they had proved their doubters wrong: they were "100% American" and their war record confirmed it. The need to establish their American identity was even more pressing on the West Coast than in Hawaii, because when the Issei and Nisei began returning to the West Coast, they found that in spite of Nisei military service, Japanese Americans were not welcomed by everyone: many white Americans still perceived them as the enemy and they were subjected to harassment and racial

slurs. In California, anti-Japanese groups opposed the return of the Issei and Nisei to their former homes:

Foremost in aggravating this anti-evacuee ill-will were the newspapers of the powerful Hearst chain, then outdoing one another in prostituting the privilege of free speech. The hue and cry were now aimed at disenfranchisement and deportation of the Nisei, for their "relocation" on some Pacific isle. Members of Congress from the coastal area were among a growing throng insisting that even loyal, regardless of their citizenship, would not be welcomed back. (Weglyn, Years of Infamy, 221)

In Hood River, Oregon, the names of Nisei veterans were removed from a War Memorial, and reinstated only after national protest. How, the Nisei must have wondered, could they ever overcome American prejudices against them?

Writing was one of the means the Nisei used to counteract the prejudices they faced. White media and literature had created a mythology of Japanese Americans as enemy aliens; Nisei writers wanted to produce a counter-mythology that would give the Nisei an American identity. (I use "myth" to refer not to a false belief or fiction, but to a selective verbal representation of reality which emphasizes some parts of reality while ignoring or downplaying others; I refer to a set of related myths as a mythology.)

As a first step in establishing their American identity, the Nisei writers responded to the accusation that they were

loyal to the emperor of Japan by declaring their loyalty to America and their independence from the homeland of their parents. They offered the story of the Nisei soldier as clear proof of their loyalty, characterizing the Nisei soldier as loyal, stoic, and brave--an American patriot of Japanese ancestry. The story of the West Coast Nisei soldier was especially poignant because he volunteered out of internment camps where his Issei parents spent the war. Daniel Inouye's 1967 autobiography Journey to Washington (written with Lawrence Elliot) was the only book by a Nisei veteran to describe the war experience, but other Nisei writers (Toshio Mori, Monica Sone, John Okada, Kazuo Miyamoto, Milton Murayama) reported Nisei sons volunteering and/or returning, often wounded, from the war; and they reported the pride and grief of Issei parents whose sons did not return. The story of the Nisei soldier was also covered extensively in the news media during and after the war because it was a great propaganda story for the U.S. government, which wanted to promote patriotism and valor in defense of democracy. In 1951, Hollywood made the film Go for Broke (the motto of the 100th Battalion), solidifying the myth of the Nisei soldier in the popular imagination, and in 1954, Ambassador in Arms: The Story of Hawaii's 100th Battalion by Thomas D. Murphy appeared. (The story has had a continuing appeal--retold in the 80's by Japanese

journalist Masayo Umezawa Duus in Unlikely Liberators: The Men of the 100th and 442nd [1987] and by Chinese American filmmaker Loni Ding in Nisei Soldier [1984] and The Color of Honor [1987], both shown to a national audience by PBS.)

The early Nisei writers promoting patriotism ignored or vilified the pro-Japan faction among the Issei and Nisei, especially the 5,371 or so Nisei who renounced their citizenship and refused to volunteer or be drafted because of bitterness over their internment, pressure from pro-Japanese parents and agitators, or genuine nationalism (before World War II, some 8,000 Nisei had been educated in Japan and many joined the pro-Japan faction in the camps). John Okada was the only Nisei writer to focus on the experience of a draft resister, but his novel No-No Boy (1957) is not an apology for the draft resister, but a confirmation of Nisei patriotism: draft resister Ichiro Yamada deeply regrets his refusal to serve his country and atones for it in part by rejecting his fanatically pro-Japanese mother after the war.

In addition to the question of loyalty, the Nisei writers had to deal with the question of their ethnicity: the racists had argued that the Nisei could not be culturally assimilated; the Nisei, on the other hand, promoted the myth

that the Nisei had been "100% Americanized." In the 50's and 60's, the West Coast Nisei writers told stories which depicted the Nisei rejecting Japanese values and beliefs and adopting American ones. The most complete account of the Americanization process from a West Coast Nisei's point of view is Monica Sone's autobiography Nisei Daughter (1953). As in earlier Americanization stories by European immigrants (see Dearborn, Pocahantas's Daughter), education plays an important role in Sone's assimilation. But Sone also parroted apologists for the internment by arguing that the relocation benefited the Nisei by forcing them into the mainstream of American life, in Sone's case, into the Midwest where she wins marginal acceptance at a small, mainly white liberal arts college.

In Hawaii during the 50's and 60's, the Nisei writers promoted a different myth--the myth of Hawaii as a culturally pluralistic melting pot. The maintenance of ethnicity was easier and stronger among the Hawaii Nisei than among the West Coast Nisei because Japanese Americans formed the largest ethnic group in the islands, and island society was more tolerant than mainland society (due in part to the influence of the indigenous Hawaiian culture on Anglo-American culture). Hawaii Nisei novelists Shelley Ota, Margaret Harada, and Kazuo Miyamoto depicted the Nisei

blending harmoniously into a multiethnic society that was an embodiment of America's democratic ideal--a tolerant melting pot where each ethnic group maintained its ethnicity to some extent while contributing to the mixed culture of the islands. As members of this melting pot, the Hawaii Nisei writers felt they were as Americanized as American citizens of other ancestries.

The Nisei writers in Hawaii also affirmed their American identities by creating the Nisei middle-class success story, which became the predominant mythology of Japanese America. Shelley Ota's novel Upon their Shoulders (1951), Margaret Harada's novel The Sun Shines on the Immigrant (1960), Kazuo Miyamoto's novel Hawaii, End of the Rainbow (1964), and Daniel Inouye's autobiography Journey to Washington (1967) all tell this success story. According to the mythology of success, the Issei and Nisei were generally disciplined, hard-working, persevering, intelligent, law-abiding, and morally upright. The Issei parents, starting as plantation laborers, overcame hardships, including racial discrimination, and achieved a modest, marginally middle-class success after leaving the plantation; the Issei were self-sacrificing, motivated by the philosophy of kodomo no tame ni--"for the sake of the children." The children fulfilled the dreams of their parents by going to college

and achieving solidly middle-class status.

The Hawaii Nisei success story expressed the euphoria of the Nisei in post-war Hawaii: the Nisei veterans were welcomed home as heroes and the majority of Nisei entered the channels of upward mobility that had begun to open for them even before the war. (Margaret Harada's The Sun Shines on the Immigrant and Kazuo Miyamoto's Hawaii, End of the Rainbow tell pre-war Hawaii success stories.) The only Nisei writer to undercut the idealizations of the success story was Milton Murayama in his novella All I Asking for Is My Body (1975). Murayama told a tale of frustration and failure, of selfish rather than self-sacrificing parents, of rebellious rather than filial sons. In order to free himself and his family from debt, Kiyō Oyama, the Nisei protagonist, cheats in a dice game. Murayama's novella describes aspects of the Japanese American experience that the community, which likes to think of itself as having escaped the underclass and earned its success through honesty and hard work, has largely repressed. Still, the novella fits the success story pattern, ending as it does with the protagonist's escape from the plantation.

On the West Coast, the Nisei success story didn't appear until the late 60's. The trauma of the internment, post-war racial prejudice, minority status--all these made it

difficult for the West Coast Nisei to see themselves as successful in the two decades after the war. Three of the early West Coast Nisei writers--John Okada, Toshio Mori, and Hisaye Yamamoto--told stories of pathos, not of success, evoking sympathy rather than admiration for the Issei and Nisei in order to ward off racial hatred and prejudice. Okada portrayed a community torn between veterans and draft resisters, both of whom have to face the prejudices of American society as well as their hatred of each other and themselves; Mori focused on the pre-war struggles of Issei to establish families in America, the loneliness of Issei bachelors, and the feelings of alienation in Nisei youth; Yamamoto depicted the frustration, violence and tragedy of Japanese American life as the Issei and Nisei faced the immense pressures of racism and poverty, and Issei and Nisei women suffered the abuse of their husbands and fathers as well. Along with Murayama's novella, the stories by Okada, Mori, and Yamamoto of struggling, alienated, frustrated Issei and Nisei who are not successful represent a Nisei counter-mythology to the predominant success story. Rather than celebrating the material and social achievements of the Nisei, these writers were concerned with remembering what the Issei and Nisei had suffered through. In their appeals for tolerance and compassion, they spoke not just for the Issei and Nisei, but for all people oppressed because of

their ethnicity, gender, or class.

By the late 60's, however, as racial prejudice became less intense on the mainland and the Nisei became more comfortable with the middle class status they had achieved after the war, the West Coast Nisei writers, as the Hawaii Nisei had done earlier, began celebrating Nisei success and praising America as a land of opportunity. Curiously, they did not tell their success story in fiction or autobiography, but in sociological and historical writings. Sociologist Harry Kitano in Japanese Americans: The Evolution of a Subculture (1969) and journalist Bill Hosokawa in Nisei: The Quiet Americans (1969) praised the post-war educational and career achievements and assimilation of the Nisei. Hosokawa, for example, exclaimed:

One by one the barriers vanished for the Japanese Americans--legal barriers, social barriers, barriers that blocked the way to job opportunities. Although it was seldom articulated in this manner, it was as though the nation had been sickened by the evacuation experience and hoped to purge itself.

In time Nisei found they could live in virtually any area they could afford in any city, and many of them could afford a great deal. The doors to jobs were not simply opening; Nisei were astonished and delighted to find themselves being wooed by employers seeking better engineers or more imaginative designers, more efficient secretaries and more reliable clerks, more knowledgeable buyers and more brilliant laboratory researchers. (473)

The idealization of Nisei as model employees was typical of the mythology of middle-class success.

While many of the Nisei writers of the success story praised the Nisei for participating in elections and running for office to show that the Nisei had indeed learned their lessons in democracy, they also connected Issei and Nisei success not just to patriotism, assimilation, and hard work, but to generally passive political behavior on the plantations and during the internment, implying their success was a result of, or a compensation or reward for, suffering discrimination without complaint or protest. Nisei writers like Toshio Mori, Monica Sone, and Kazuo Miyamoto saw the Issei and Nisei's stoic endurance of political injustices as a sign of strength, arguing it had helped the Issei and Nisei survive hardships and eventually succeed in America. Of course, the moral and political character of the Nisei was not the only factor in the Nisei post-war success; other factors combined to make America a more open society for them--an increased demand for college-educated professionals in the economy and decreasing opposition from the white working class with whom the largely middle-class Nisei were no longer in direct competition; the more positive feelings toward Japan in America, now that Japan was an American ally in the struggle

between Capitalism and Communism that dominated post-war politics; and the need for the U.S. government to establish its claim of democracy (ethnic equality based on merit) in opposition to Communism's attractive promise of a classless society. But it was more satisfying for the Nisei to believe that their success was a reward for virtue or compensation for past suffering, rather than the result of a changed America and a changed world. The myth that success was compensation for the internment appealed to white Americans, too, since it relieved them of any further responsibility for it.

In the 70's, a new generation of West Coast Japanese American writers, mainly Sansei, began attacking the Nisei image of Japanese Americans as model citizens who had assimilated smoothly into American society and achieved middle-class success as a reward for hard work and political passivity. Inspired by the social protests of the 60's and 70's, the new-generation activists wanted to identify Japanese Americans not with the white middle-class in order to be accepted as Americans, but with other ethnic minorities who were making claims against the U.S. government for past and present injustices. Along with other ethnic activists, Sansei activists protested racial discrimination in American society. And with Nisei

activists, they began to work to get the U.S. government to apologize for the internment and to offer the community fairer compensation for the losses the Issei and Nisei had suffered.

To establish Japanese Americans as an ethnic group, the new generation of writers began to attack assimilation and Anglo-American cultural hegemony in America as racist and to assert their ethnicity and promote cultural pluralism. Two Nisei writers, influenced by the ethnic consciousness movement of the 60's and 70's, joined the West Coast Sansei in the return to ethnic roots. Daniel Okimoto's autobiography American in Disguise (1971) and Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston's autobiography Farewell to Manzanar (1973), like Monica Sone describe their successful assimilation. But unlike Sone, Okimoto and Houston questioned in the end the desirability of "100% Americanization." Confessing assimilation into American society had left them feeling empty, they described their efforts to reclaim their ethnicity, Okimoto by taking his white American fiancée to Japan so he could marry her in the homeland of his parents, and Houston, who also married white, by returning to the Manzanar internment camp and remembering the bravado of her father when, toward the end of the internment, he decided the family would ride back to

Los Angeles in a car he bought rather than in a community bus provided by the government.

In the 70's and 80's, Sansei poets Lawson Inada, Janice Mirikitani, Garrett Hongo, and Ron Tanaka published collections of poetry that shaped a new Japanese American identity emphasizing ethnicity rather than assimilation. They wrote in praise of ancestry, family, and cultural heritage (both Japanese and Japanese American). As part of their search for ethnic roots in America, the Sansei poets Inada, Mirikitani, and Hongo, along with other Asian American scholars and writers, researched the history of Japanese Americans and looked for, found, and celebrated works by early Nisei writers like Mori, Yamamoto, Sone, Okada, and Miyamoto. The three poets also helped to promote the teaching of Asian American literature in the college curriculum, an effort started by Chinese American writers Jeff Chan, Frank Chin, and Shawn Wong, who were highly critical of English departments for focusing primarily on Anglo-American literature to the exclusion of the literature of other ethnic groups.

The new generation of writers also began promoting a mythology of oppression rather than the mythology of success. In order for Japanese Americans to protest continuing discrimination against their ethnic group, they

had to do more than assert their ethnicity and recount the history of past discrimination and racism against Japanese Americans; they had to show the negative effects of past and present oppression. Unfortunately, by the 60's, the standard measures of achievement and well-being in America (years of education, income, employment rate, rates of deviant behavior and mental illness) all showed that discrimination and the internment did not have much, if any, adverse effect on the Japanese American community. There was no significantly large underclass or group of deviants that the writers could point to in order to show that the ethnic group had suffered from white oppression. The Sansei writers, therefore, focused on the cultural deprivation and psychological emasculation of the Nisei and Sansei which, they argued, resulted from discrimination and the internment. The cultural deprivation was easy to prove: Japanese Americans were scantily represented, if at all, in courses on American history, sociology, or literature. To prove psychological emasculation, the Sansei writers pointed to the passive, silent behavior they saw as typical of the Nisei.

The new generation of writers also condemned the Nisei's willingness to accept discrimination and the internment without complaint or protest. Ironically, some of the very

Nisei writers the Sansei praised for being cultural pioneers (e.g. Monica Sone, Toshio Mori and Kazuo Miyamoto) had praised the Issei and Nisei's resignation to political oppression and cooperation with the government during the internment. The Sansei writers, on the other hand, in the wake of the political activism of the 60's, characterized the Nisei complicity with the internment as abdication of their responsibility to defend the Constitution, arguing that American political tradition required citizens to resist racist authority. The Sansei writers adopted the rhetoric of protest and presented themselves as critics of American society. To encourage political activism and protest, other Sansei, like filmmaker Steven Okazaki, celebrated the few Nisei who resisted the internment by disobeying the evacuation order. (Okazaki's film on the subject is entitled Unfinished Business.)

The Hawaii Sansei writers who began to publish during the 60's, 70's and 80's were less radical than the West Coast Sansei writers. After World War II, Japanese Americans had gained considerable political and economic strength in the islands, and the Nisei and Sansei were not a minority group, but an integral part of the political establishment. By the 1980's, the majority of the state legislature, the Governor, and the two U.S. Senators were Nisei or Sansei. Also, unlike

the West Coast Sansei writers, the Hawaii Sansei writers did not have the internment as an issue to rally around. They did not condemn the Issei and Nisei for resigning themselves to injustices on the plantation, although it is clear from works by Margaret Harada, Kazuo Miyamoto, and Milton Murayama that such resignation was the norm. Still, two Sansei historians, Ronald Takaki, in Pau Hana: Plantation Life and Labor in Hawaii (1983) and Roland Kotani, in The Japanese in Hawaii: A Century of Struggle (1985), retold the story of the plantations with a greater emphasis on resistance to plantation injustices and strikes against plantation authority. Like Nisei writers Mori, Yamamoto, Okada, and the West Coast Sansei poets, Takaki and Kotani wanted to remember the working class/racial outcast roots of Japanese Americans rather than celebrate the middle class status Japanese Americans had achieved. Takaki and Kotani, educated in universities on the mainland during the decades of protest, saw themselves as members of a non-white minority with working class roots in the context of America, rather than as part of the establishment in Hawaii, and wanted to promote political activism in support of America's oppressed.

The promotion of cultural pluralism was also not as polemical in Hawaii as it was on the mainland since cultural

pluralism was the accepted ideology of Hawaii's people (though it was not the ideology of the mainland-influenced, white-dominated University of Hawaii and the university-trained teachers and administrators in public and private schools). In 1978, Bamboo Ridge Press, founded by Chinese American writers Eric Chock and Darrell Lum, began publishing a literary quarterly promoting a multi-ethnic literature for Hawaii and giving Japanese American writers, along with writers of other ethnic groups, a forum for praising and exploring their ancestries and heritages. In 1979, two Sansei scholars, Arnold Hiura and Stephen Sumida, published an annotated bibliography of Asian American literature in Hawaii, listing works by Chinese, Filipino, and Japanese American writers in order to establish roots for a local literary tradition. (Native Hawaiian writers were excluded--perhaps because they were difficult to identify by names, since many had Anglo last names, the legacy of intermarriage; also the label "Asian American" did not include them.) The Hawaii Sansei were reviving the vision of the culturally pluralistic melting pot that Nisei writers like Shelley Ota, Margaret Harada, and Kazuo Miyamoto had promoted, but with a difference: the emphasis was not on a Japanese heritage that had been Americanized in the melting pot, but on a multi-ethnic local heritage which made Hawaii different from America. Pidgin English, the

lingua franca of the local people, became one of the central symbols of the mixed culture.

By promoting political activism and ethnicity, the Sansei writers in Hawaii and on the West Coast helped to create a fuller and healthier identity for Japanese Americans. The positive values of the identity shaped by the Nisei remained intact--the Nisei soldier's valor in the war against facism; love of family, education, and achievement; and the compassion for outcasts expressed in the stories of Okada, Mori, and Yamamoto. The most insidious values of that identity--emphasis on material well-being and social status and deference to white cultural norms and political authority--were condemned in order to encourage greater participation by Japanese Americans in American life.

Chapter One

Nisei Patriotism

Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.

Horace, Odes, III. ii. 13

Searching desperately for something to block evacuation, Masaoka came up with an idea for a "suicide battalion," to be made up of Nisei volunteers, for combat against the Japanese. To guarantee their loyalty, they would leave their parents as hostages with the American government.

Bill Hosokawa, Nisei: The Quiet Americans,
271-2

Three novels by white Americans published in the early 1920's portrayed the Japanese immigrants in America as part of the Japanese emperor's plot to conquer America and the world--Wallace Irwin's Seed of the Sun (1921), Peter B. Kyne's Pride of Palomar (1921), Gene Stratton-Porter's Her Father's Daughter (1921) (Kim 3-6). Earlier, the movie Patria (1916) depicted a Japanese attempt to conquer America with the help of Mexico, and the movie Shadows of the West (1920) depicted Japanese in America spying for Japan (Ogawa, From Japs to Japanese 18). These works, part of the Yellow Peril fantasy, attacked the character of the Japanese immigrants on the issue of loyalty: the Japanese immigrants could not become loyal Americans because they were dangerous enemy agents loyal to the Japanese emperor. The works inflamed anti-Japanese sentiment in America, a sentiment

that was codified in law when Congress passed the 1924 immigration bill prohibiting immigration from Japan.

As tension between Japan and America over economic issues grew during the 30's and rumors of war spread, distrust of the Issei and Nisei increased: white Americans believed the Issei and Nisei would support Japan if a war broke out between the two countries. They pointed to Japanese language schools and celebrations of the Emperor's birthday as proof of the immigrants' continuing loyalty to Japan.

When war with Japan broke out, the question of loyalty was no longer hypothetical. The West Coast Defense Command under General John L. Dewitt argued that all Issei and Nisei were potential spies and saboteurs, and that even if all of them were not (though, he felt, most of them probably were), it would take too long to determine who was loyal and who was not. Immediate action was needed to secure the West Coast, so he recommended the forced relocation of the West Coast Japanese American communities. Under the assumption that the Issei and Nisei could not be trusted, President Roosevelt signed a decree authorizing the military to order all Issei and Nisei on the West Coast to report to detention centers for removal to ten internment camps in isolated areas of California, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Arizona, and Arkansas. In the camps, the question of loyalty

came up again. The government ordered the War Relocation Authority (WRA), charged with running the camps, to separate the loyal from the disloyal. A loyalty questionnaire was devised. Question 27 asked respondents if they were willing to serve in the military: "Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty, wherever ordered?" Question 28 asked if they would forswear loyalty to the Japanese emperor: "Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, to any other foreign government, power or organization?"

Both questions caused confusion. Should the Nisei fight for a country that had interned them? Should women indicate that they were willing to go into combat? Could the Nisei forswear loyalty to an emperor to which they had never been loyal? Should the Issei, ineligible for U.S. citizenship, forswear loyalty to the emperor and become persons without a country?

To make matters more complicated, pro-Japan groups of Issei, Nisei, and Kibei (Nisei educated in Japan) formed in the camps. Some members were Japanese nationalists; others were former patriots and World War I veterans embittered by

the internment. The pro-Japan groups argued that if the Issei and Nisei were treated like Japs, they should act like Japs and not support the American war effort. They answered no to questions 27 and 28 (taking on the name of no-no boys) and tried to intimidate other Issei and Nisei to do likewise. But the overwhelming majority of internees answered yes to the loyalty questions (65,000 out of 75,000 respondents) and 1,200 Nisei volunteered for military service (Daniels, Concentration Camps, USA 114). These Nisei were determined to prove their loyalty to America. Before the internment, fanatically pro-American Mike Masaoka, national secretary of the Japanese American Citizens League had even proposed a suicide squad of Nisei to fight in the Pacific while the American government held their Issei parents as hostages. In Hawaii, where the issue of Nisei loyalty had been raised but the Nisei were not interned, 10,000 Nisei--80% of the Nisei eligible for military service--stepped forward when the army called for volunteers.

After the war, Nisei writers wanted to let the rest of America know about their war-time support for America. Patriotism runs strongly and deeply through Nisei writing. The Nisei writers offered various proofs of their loyalty. The simplest was the straightforward declaration of loyalty

by Nisei characters. In Toshio Mori's short story "Slant Eyed Americans," included in Yokohama, California (1949), the first book published by a Nisei after the war, Tom, a Nisei gardener, expresses his patriotism on the day of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor:

"Sometimes I feel all right. You are an American, I tell myself. Devote your energy and life to the American way of life. Long before this my mind was made up to become a true American. This morning my Caucasian American friends sympathized with me. I felt good and was grateful. Our opportunity has come to express ourselves and act. We are Americans in thought and action." (130)

Mrs. Noda, an Issei mother in Mori's story, also expresses her commitment to America, declaring she was never a sojourner, but had always been intended to stay and become a part of America:

" . . . We have stayed here to belong to the American way of life. Time will tell our true purpose. We remained in America for permanence--not for temporary convenience. . . .
(132)

To confirm Issei and Nisei patriotism, the story ends with a visit home by Mrs. Noda's son Kazuo, a soldier on leave from the American army.

The Nisei writers saw Issei willingness to sacrifice their sons for America as proof of Japanese American loyalty. In Mori's Woman from Hiroshima, Mrs. Toda, an Issei widow,

supports the war effort with her two sons--one killed and one wounded--in spite of the fact that she is ineligible for U.S. citizenship. In Kazuo Miyamoto's Hawaii, End of the Rainbow (1964), Hawaii Issei Seikichi Arata, interned because of a former connection with the Japanese Consulate in Hawaii, feels pride in his grandson Edwin Arata, half-Japanese and half-Hawaiian, who volunteers from Hawaii and is later killed in action.

Other writers contrasted Nisei loyalty to America with Issei loyalty to Japan. In Monica Sone's autobiography Nisei Daughter (1953), when Issei parents and Nisei children argue about who is right and who is wrong in the war, Japan or America, the children are staunchly American:

Discussion of politics, especially Japan versus America, had become taboo in our family for it sent tempers skyrocketing. Henry and I used to criticize Japan's aggressions in China and Manchuria while Father and Mother condemned Great Britain and America's superior attitude toward Asiatics and their interference with Japan's economic growth. During these arguments, we had eyed each other like strangers, parents against children. They left us with a hollow feeling at the pit of the stomach. (148)

The fact that Nisei children were willing to reject their Issei parents and support America, Sone believed, was another proof of Nisei loyalty.

Two Nisei writers even cited Japanese authorities to

confirm Nisei loyalty to America. In Miyamoto's Hawaii, End of the Rainbow, Minoru Murayama, a Nisei student from Hawaii, visits Japan, and he and his fellow Nisei students are told by Japanese officials that they must be loyal to America, the country that has "adopted" them:

No matter what the blood heritage, the allegiance at all times belonged to the master of adoption. Therefore, I am telling you from a purely Japanese standpoint that, since you are American citizens, live and die for your country, the land of your birth, for then you will be following the precepts of Bushido. (172)

In Milton Murayama's novella All I Asking For Is My Body (1975), Kiyoshi Oyama asks his Japanese schoolteacher, "'Shouldn't the nisei fight for America in case of war with Japan?'" and the teacher uses another Confucian analogy to answer Kiyoshi's question:

"Hmmm. Yes. It's like a wedding, where the bride cuts off all relationship with her original parents and is reborn a member of her husband's family. That's why she wears a white death robe beneath her wedding kimono. It's a symbolic death and she can't go back to her old family. In this case it's as if the nisei is the bride and America the groom. (81)

Both analogies--the Nisei were like adopted retainers with America as their new masters and the Nisei were like brides with America as their husband--suggest a hierarchical relationship between the Nisei and the American government. The Nisei tended to see their allegiance to America in just

this way: patriotism meant whether America was right or wrong, they had to obey the government. The country was the father, the patria, the highest authority; and the highest expression of loyalty was obedience.

Not surprisingly, some Nisei writers used their cooperation with the U.S. government during the internment as another sign of their loyalty to America. Toshio mori, Monica Sone, and Kazuo Miyamoto pointed to the Issei and Nisei's obedience during the internment as further proof of patriotism.

The ultimate proof of patriotism, however, was the story of the Nisei soldier. The fullest version told by a Nisei appeared in the autobiography of Hawaii's U.S. Senator Daniel Inouye Journey to Washington (1967). When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Inouye, like other Nisei (but unlike whites born in America), felt that he could not take his American identity for granted, that he had to prove his loyalty to America:

. . . I carried the full and bitter burden shared by every one of the 158,000 Japanese-Americans in Hawaii: not only had our country been wantonly attacked, but our loyalty was certain to be called into question, for it took no great effort of imagination to see the hatred of many Americans for the enemy turned on us, who looked so much like him. And no matter how hard we worked to defeat him, there would always be those who would look at us and think--and some would say it aloud--"Dirty Jap."

(57)

Inouye tells us he gave up his dream of becoming a doctor in order to volunteer for military service when the government asked for volunteers. He rose to the rank of captain in the 442nd regiment and lost his right arm in combat in Europe. After the war, he returned to Hawaii a war hero and went into politics. His election to the U.S. Senate in 1966 was both a reward for his patriotism and a confirmation of his American identity.

Volunteering for military service on the mainland was complicated by the internment. Soon after the war began, the Nisei were classified as 4-C, ineligible for service. However, in 1943, the U.S. government decided it needed Nisei soldiers for propaganda: Japan had been trying to turn Asians against America by arguing the war was a race war; President Roosevelt called for Nisei volunteers to prove the war was not a race war, but a war of democracy against facism, declaring "Americanism is a matter of the mind and heart; Americanism is not, and never was a matter of race or ancestry." Ironically, the army wanted the Nisei segregated in a special combat unit so that their exploits could be featured in the press; otherwise, the Nisei would be useless as propaganda. The hypocrisy of Roosevelt's statement was not lost on the Nisei in internment camps. In Nisei

Daughter, Monica Sone describes the Nisei reaction to the statement:

We gasped and we spluttered. Dunks Oshima who had brought the news to us was on fire. Dunks had grown into a strapping young man with a brilliant record for high-school sports. He eyed us fiercely as he cried, "What do they take us for? Saps? First, they change my army status to 4-C because of my ancestry, run me out of town, and now they want me to volunteer for a suicide squad so I could get killed for this damn democracy. That's going some, for sheer brass!" (198)

The Nisei were naturally suspicious that a segregated unit might be used as cannon fodder. (In fact, casualties for the Nisei unit were remarkably high.) But Nisei writers like Sone sided with the volunteers and vilified those who attempted to resist the draft or to intimidate others from serving in the armed forces. Sone reports that Dunks Oshima overcame his anger and volunteered with enthusiasm, and Sone praises the decision: "The birth of the Nisei combat team was the climax to our evacuee life, and the turning point. It was the road back to our rightful places" (201). To Sone, the Nisei soldiers were super-patriots because not only did they volunteer, they volunteered in spite of the internment. (Curiously, however, not a single West Coast Nisei veteran has published a first-hand, book-length account of his battlefield experiences.)

The diligent patriotism of the Nisei had its roots in the

Confucian notion of willingness to sacrifice oneself for one's master. The Nisei had been taught in Japanese schools in America that this sort of loyalty was admirable, indeed, rewarded in the end. In All I Asking for Is My Body, Milton Murayama describes one of the lessons on obedience the Nisei learned:

The noblest person was the man who suffered in silence, not protesting even when he was falsely accused. . . . Hideyoshi [Toyotomi] was a low-down retainer to his lord. It was his job to guard the lord's straw slippers when the lord visited another lord. This one time it was freezing so Toyotomi decided to warm his lord's slippers instead of letting them just sit on the stone steps. He put them inside his kimono against his chest and held them against his warm body. When the lord came out and stepped into his slippers, he cuffed Hideyoshi, "Baka! You've been sitting on my slippers!" Hideyoshi didn't protest. Later the lord found out how Hideyoshi had actually warmed his slippers and how he'd suffer in silence, and he promoted Hideyoshi. (66)

Like Hideyoshi, the Nisei were falsely accused; like Hideyoshi they suffered without complaint, continuing to serve their master loyally.

The military service of the Nisei should have answered the question of Nisei loyalty once and for all. Unfortunately, old prejudices die hard and the Nisei who returned to the West Coast after the war faced the same anti-Japanese attitudes they had faced before the war. Kenji Kanno, a returning veteran in John Okada's No-No Boy (1957), tells

his friend Ichiro:

"You weren't here when [the Issei and Nisei] first started to move back to the Coast. There was a great deal of opposition--name-calling, busted windows, dirty words painted on houses. People haven't changed a helluva lot. (163)

Okada's novel No-No Boy is set during this post-war period of racism. Okada, a Nisei veteran, felt a deep sense of disappointment that the Nisei war record did not end discrimination against the Japanese Americans, did not prove once and for all the loyalty of the Nisei. At the same time he was committed to America and wanted the Nisei to be accepted as Americans by the American public. His novel develops a strong emotional appeal for such acceptance.

Okada contrasts the post-war experiences of two Nisei: Kenji Kanno, a Nisei veteran, and Ichiro Yamada, a no-no boy. Kenji returns to Seattle missing a leg and hoping to find the rewards of his sacrifice for America. To an extent, he has been rewarded: his father, Mr. Kanno, is proud of his son "who had gone to war to fight for the abundance and happiness that pervaded a Japanese household in America" (120). Mr. Kanno is content with his children and his grandchildren as they gather peacefully for a chicken dinner. The Kanno family gathering is idealized--it's the proverbial chicken in a pot and grandchildren on one's knees. The abundance and joy of the Kanno household is

contrasted with the poverty and misery of the Yamada household, where the pro-Japanese Mrs. Yamada dominates. Clearly, according to Okada's novel, the Nisei veteran's family has come out ahead after the war.

But Okada did not want to oversimplify, equating volunteering with happiness and refusal to serve with unhappiness. Okada's America was no fairy-tale democracy; rather, like Hamlet's Denmark, there was something rotten in it. Kenji's leg, amputated during the war, is being eaten away by gangrene. After each new amputation, the infection returns and more of the leg has to be cut off. The rotting leg suggests emasculation. In one scene, Kenji introduces Ichiro to Emiko, a Nisei wife deserted by her veteran husband because her brother was a no-no boy. Ichiro rather than Kenji goes to bed with her to comfort her. But it's not the rotting leg that drives Kenji to despair, it's the fact that the Nisei are still not accepted as Americans. As his death approaches, Kenji grows bitter and cynical. From his hospital bed, he complains to Ichiro that the Nisei veterans "getting killed and shot up doesn't amount to a pot of beans" (163). Kenji is embittered not just by the post-war discrimination against the Japanese Americans, but by all intolerance and bigotry in America: the democracy he fought for is an illusion. Earlier in the novel, Kenji

witnesses two Blacks being refused admittance to the Club Oriental, where the Asian Americans in Seattle hang out. He leaves, despairing over racial prejudice:

He drove aimlessly, torturing himself repeatedly with the question which plagued his mind and confused it to the point of madness. Was there no answer to the bigotry and meanness and smallness and ugliness of people? . . . there was no pattern and all he could feel was that the world was full of hatred. (134-6)

The incurable rot in Kenji's leg symbolizes the seemingly equally incurable racism in America, which is destroying its democratic ideals.

There is no redemption for Kenji in post-war America. He suffers in silence, pitying himself. Later we find out that Kenji has told his father not to bury him in the veteran cemetery in Seattle because the cemetery is segregated. He doesn't protest. Rather, he tells his father: "'Put my ashes in an orange crate and dump them in the Sound off Connecticut Street Dock where the sewer runs out'" (184). Loyal to the bitter end, Kenji does not blame his patria for discrimination against the Nisei, he blames the Nisei for congregating together and being conspicuous:

"There were a lot of [Japanese Americans] pouring into Seattle about the time I got back there. It made me sick. I'd heard about some of them scattering out all over the country. I read about a girl who's doing pretty good in the fashion business in New York and a guy that's principal of a school in Arkansas, and a lot of

others in different places making out pretty good. I got to thinking that the Japs were wising up, that they had learned that living in big bunches and talking Jap and feeling Jap and doing Jap was just inviting trouble. . . ." (163)

Kenji offers Ichiro a vision of racial obliteration through dispersion and outmarriage as a solution to the "Japanese problem":

"Go someplace where there isn't another Jap within a thousand miles. Marry a white girl or a Negro or an Italian or even a Chinese. Anything but a Japanese. After a few generations of that, you've got the thing beat." (165)

The West Coast story of the fictional veteran Kenji should be read with the Hawaii story of the real-life veteran Daniel Inouye in mind. Inouye, like Kenji, lost a limb during the war. After the war, he, too, wondered if his sacrifice would amount to anything. As fellow Nisei veteran Sakae Takahashi tells Inouye:

"We ought to have every single right that every single other American has! Man, we shed a lot of blood in this war. What was that all about? Was it all wasted? Dan, I'm not looking to put the blame on anybody. I don't even really care about all that stuff that happened before [i.e., racial discrimination in Hawaii]. What I'm interested in is tomorrow. I want my kids to have every break. I demand it!" (190)

Inouye's story celebrates the American dream and American democracy: Inouye returned to Hawaii a war hero and became a U.S. Senator--the first one of Japanese ancestry; Okada's story questions the American dream and democracy: Kenji dies

with a vision of racial suicide. Inouye's story was told with confidence in his American identity; Okada's story of Kenji was another appeal for acceptance of the Nisei. Inouye's story was the story America wanted to hear and his book went through five printings; Okada's story of Kenji was too grim and grisly for the general public and the novel was ignored until recently.

Like the story of Kenji, the story of Ichiro, the main focus of the novel, is a confirmation of Nisei loyalty and an appeal for acceptance. Despite his refusal to be drafted, Ichiro not only loves America and regrets his refusal to serve his country, but, in order to atone for his mistake, he is willing to suffer beyond the two years of prison to which the U.S. government had sentenced him for draft evasion. He begins to feel like an American again as he meets other Americans who are willing to forgive him. Ironically, it is the no-no boy rather than the veteran who embodies the hope that the divisions created by the war and the internment would be healed after the war; Okada's point seems to be that if America could accept a draft resister back, it would eventually accept its Japanese Americans citizens as well.

Ichiro doesn't consider bitterness or outrage over the internment as an extenuating circumstance in his refusal to

be drafted. He belittles those like himself who for whatever motive refused to be drafted, calling their reasons "flimsy and unreal" (33); he praises those who overcame their pride and anger and volunteered:

For each and every refusal based on sundry reasons, another thousand chose to fight for the right to continue to be Americans because homes and cars and money could be regained but only if they first regained their rights as citizens, and that was everything. . . . there can be no excuses. I remember Kenzo, whose mother was in the hospital and did not want him to go. The doctor told him that the shock might kill her. He went anyway, the very next day, because though he loved his mother he knew that she was wrong, and she did die. And I remember Harry, whose father had a million-dollar produce business, and the old man just boarded everything up because he said he'd rather let the trucks and buildings and warehouses rot than sell them for a quarter of what they were worth. Harry didn't have to stop and think when his number came up. Then there was Mr. Yamaguchi, who was almost forty and had five girls. They would never have taken him, but he had to go and talk himself into a uniform. (34)

Patriotism requires sacrifice: others had sacrificed; Ichiro had not.

If anyone is to blame besides Ichiro himself, it is Ichiro's mother. More than the American racists, Mrs. Yamada, stubbornly loyal to Japan, is the villain of this novel. Like Satan, she has tempted her son to betray the ultimate authority, the patria:

Ma is the rock that's always hammering, pounding, pounding, pounding in her unobtrusive, determined, fanatical way until there's nothing

left to call one's self. She's cursed me with her meanness and the hatred that you cannot see but which is always hating. It was she who opened my mouth and made my lips move to sound the words which got me two years in prison and an emptiness that is more empty and frightening than the caverns of hell. (12)

Okada portrays Mrs. Yamada and the other pro-Japanese Issei in the post-war community as insane and destructive. Cold, hard, and unpleasant, Mrs. Yamada stubbornly refuses to believe Japan has lost the war. Her family begins to fall apart because of her fanaticism: her husband, who is too weak to stand up to her, turns to drinking. Ichiro is bitter over what she made him do. His younger brother, Taro, hates his disloyal older brother and his crazy mother and rejects his mother and family by joining the army after high school--to prove his loyalty to America. When Mrs. Yamada's sister in Japan writes to inform her of Japan's defeat, Mrs. Yamada can't accept the defeat: she packs her bags and drowns herself in the bathtub, her spirit, no doubt, traveling back to Japan.

But despite his mother's influence, Ichiro decides he is to blame for his refusal since he was old enough at the time--twenty-two--to make his own decision about his political allegiance: he should have overcome his bitterness and his mother's hatred of America and remained faithful to his patria: he had no right to reject his country, even

though his country had rejected him. In a soliloquy addressed to his mother, he bemoans his betrayal:

. . . I was not strong enough to fight for America, I was not strong enough to fight the bitterness which made the half of me which was you bigger than the half of me which was America and really the whole of me that I could not see or feel. Now that I know the truth when it is too late and the half of me which was you is no longer there, I am only half of me and the half that remains is American by law because the government was wise and strong enough to know why it was that I could not fight for America and did not strip me of my birthright. But it is not enough to be only half an American and know that it is an empty half. (16)

Ichiro's sense of guilt is confirmed by the contempt the Nisei veterans feel toward him. In the first scene of the novel, when Ichiro arrives back in Seattle, Eto, a veteran, spits on him. Bull, another veteran, ridicules him in the Club Oriental:

Bull turned around and looked at Ichiro with a meanness which was made darker by the heavy cheekbones and the rough stubble which defied a razor. He wiggled out into the open with exaggerated motions and began to brush himself furiously, "Goddammmmit," he said aloud, "brand-new suit. Damn near got it all cruddy." (74)

The Nisei veterans, insecure about their American identity, use the no-no boys as scapegoats in order to dissociate themselves from Japan and define themselves as Americans.

Ichiro does not strike back at his tormentors. He is conciliatory, hoping to heal the divisions the war has

created in the community; he not only refuses to be angry at America, he refuses to be angry at the veterans like Bull who see him as a traitor and refuse to forgive or forget his betrayal. Ichiro's foil is Freddie, another no-no boy, who unlike Ichiro, does not admit that he was wrong, does not care whether anyone wants him around or not, and strikes back at the veterans who attack him. He knifes Eto for trying to spit at him in a bar. At the end of the novel, Freddie is killed in a car accident while fleeing from Bull, who is seeking vengeance for Freddie's knifing of Eto.

Ichiro, on the other hand, survives. Ichiro's contrite and conciliatory attitude evokes sympathy for him from others. Kenji befriends him. Later, Emiko, who unlike Ichiro, sees America as equally at fault in Ichiro's decision not to serve, tries to comfort him:

"They made a mistake when they doubted you. They made a mistake when they made you do what you did and they admit it by letting you run around loose. Try, if you can, to be equally big and forgive them and be grateful to them and prove to them that you can be an American worthy of frailties of the country as well as its strengths." (96)

Emiko then tries to make him feel a part of America again by telling him to remember the good feeling he used to have when singing the Star-Spangled Banner and pledging allegiance to the flag.

Throughout the novel, Ichiro refuses opportunities to start his life over again because he feels only veterans deserve such opportunities. Thus, he doesn't re-enroll at the University of Washington where he was once an engineering student. He refuses a job Emiko offers him working with a farmer who is leasing her land. He refuses a job offered by Mr. Carrick, the owner of an engineering firm in Portland, even after Mr. Carrick apologizes to him for the "big mistake" of the internment. He refuses work at the Christian Rehabilitation Center in Seattle, where another no-no boy is employed.

Still, toward the end of the novel, Ichiro begins to feel hopeful, partly because of the goodwill of Kenji, Emiko, Mr. Carrick, and an anonymous stranger who buys him and Emiko a drink at a dance club. He also gains hope from fact that Gary, the no-no boy he meets at the Christian Rehabilitation Center, seems to have found a place for himself and a new purpose in life, painting signs to support himself while pursuing his dream of becoming an artist. As the two no-no boys talk about the problems they face and the problems other outcasts in America face, Ichiro begins to see that "my miserable little life is only a part of the miserable big world" and that he, like Gary, should try to get on with it, make do. Later, he concludes:

It's the same world, the same big shiny apple with streaks of rotten brown in it. Not rotten in the center where it counts, but rotten in spots underneath the skin and a good, sharp knife can still do a lot of good. I have been guilty of a serious error. I have paid for my crime as prescribed by law. I have been forgiven and it is only right for me to feel this way or else I would not be riding unnoticed and unmolested or else on a bus along a street in Seattle on a gloomy, rain-soaked day. (232)

Ichiro's rotten apple metaphor is a grisly reminder of Kenji's rotten leg, which even a sharp knife could not save. Still, soon after this meditative passage, the novel ends on a hopeful note. In the climactic scene, Freddie dies after a fight with Bull and Bull ends up crying in Ichiro's arms. The scene, a bizarre re-imagining of Christ (Bull) and the Madonna (Ichiro), is cathartic--the bitterness and hatred generated during the war is partially purged from the community.

Ichiro's refusal to blame America, retaliate against the Nisei veterans, or take opportunities that belong to the Nisei veterans redeems this no-no boy in Okada's eyes. Okada was writing as a Nisei patriot who believed the more one sacrificed for one's country, the nobler one was. Just as Kenji proves his loyalty to America by volunteering for military service in spite of the internment and refusing to protest the post-war treatment of the Nisei, so, too, Ichiro proves his loyalty by continuing to condemn himself for his

refusal to serve his country even after his country has pardoned him. The Nisei notion of patriotism as sacrifice, based as it was on Confucian ethics, differs from the American notion of patriotism, based on a balancing of duties and rights. Most Americans would see the internment as an extenuating circumstance, or even a good reason, for Ichiro's refusal to serve. In the preface to the novel, a blond lieutenant from Nebraska and a Nisei intelligence officer assigned to listen in on Japanese radio transmissions converse in a B-24 reconnaissance plane over the Pacific during World War II. (Okada himself served in the Pacific as a military intelligence officer.) The blond and the Nisei talk about family, and the Nisei tells the blond about the internment. The lieutenant, is shocked, wondering why the Nisei, after being interned, would help fight the war. In a typically American expression of defiance against unjust authority, the lieutenant tells the Nisei, "'if they'd done that to me, I wouldn't be sitting in the belly of a broken-down B-24 going back to Guam from a reconnaissance mission to Japan,'" adding "'They could kiss my ass'" (xi). The lieutenant affirms his individual rights against governmental authority. The Nisei disagrees. The shame of disobeying one's patria and going to jail would have been too great to bear. He simply replies to the blond, "I've got reasons," perhaps because he thinks the

blond would not understand.

Chapter Two

In the Melting Pot

Mead: Well, it isn't a melting pot, is it?

Baldwin: No, it isn't. Nobody ever got melted. People aren't meant to be melted.

Mead: That old image from World War I is a bad image; to melt everyone down.

Baldwin: Because people don't want to be melted down. They resist it with all their strength.

Mead: Of course! Who wants to be melted down?

James Baldwin and Margaret Mead, A Rap on Race, 125

During the early decades of the 20th century, proponents of two competing visions of American culture debated social and educational policy toward immigrants. Supporters of the Americanization movement argued that to become American, immigrants had to give up the culture of the old country and assimilate to the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture by conforming to the majority in language, religion, and manners. In rebuttal, Zionist Horace Kallen, in a 1915 essay, argued for cultural pluralism: Americans, he believed, shared a common political and economic system that insured national unity; within that system Americans could be as culturally diverse as the rest of the world. Kallen felt that each ethnic group, in fact, had to maintain its ancestral culture since

each group had a distinctive character that was expressed in that culture. Kallen believed cultural pluralism embodied true democracy--it allowed for social and cultural equality among peoples of different and unique races, religions, creeds, and heritages. Americanization, on the other hand, smacked of intolerance, xenophobia, and racism, and thus, paradoxically, was un-American (Gleason 96-109).

The Americanization movement was not without its good intentions. Supporters believed they were helping immigrants to adjust to American life and at the same time promoting national unity. But the Americanization movement was also fueled by a fear that new immigrants arriving in America during the second half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, mainly from eastern and southern Europe, would weaken the dominion of Anglo-Saxon culture in America and change the character of the nation. The Americanization movement reached a feverish pitch around World War I, during which, as Philip Gleason notes:

The return to Europe of thousands of immigrants who were reservists in the armies of the belligerents and the eruption of ethnic nationalism on the part of immigrant groups with close ties to the warring powers came as a shock to many Americans, who had not realized just how 'foreign' the sentiments and attachments of the foreign-born population actually were. Sensational exposes of German propaganda and sabotage efforts in the United States, coming on the heels of the Lusitania crisis, reinforced anti-German sentiments and gave rise to a

formidable campaign against "hyphenation." The hyphen in such compounds as German-American was regarded as symbolizing divided loyalties and "100 percent Americanism" became the goal of Americanization programs. ("American Identity and Americanization," 87)

The Americanization movement was not just motivated by a fear of foreign influence on American culture, but by Anglo-American racism: the racists felt foreign influence had to be resisted because Anglo-American culture was superior to other cultures, just as the Anglo-Saxon race was superior to other races. There was a feeling that the East Coast was being overwhelmed by inferior races from southern and eastern Europe while the West Coast and Hawaii were being overrun by inferior races from Asia, including Japan. The racism and xenophobia of the period culminated in the 1924 bill that limited immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe and prohibited Japanese immigration, as well as in attempts to force immigrants already here to Americanize.

The Nisei writers who published during the three decades after World War II had grown up during the years in which the calls for Americanization of the immigrants and for the exclusion of "unassimilable" immigrants were strong. The Japanese were foremost among those races deemed "unassimilable" by racists. V.S. McClatchy, an anti-Japanese exclusionist from California, argued before Congress in 1924:

"The Japanese are less assimilable and more dangerous as residents in this country than any other of the peoples ineligible under our laws. . . . With great pride of race, they have no idea of assimilating in the sense of amalgamation. They do not come here with any a desire or any intent to lose their racial and national identity. They come here specifically and professedly for the purpose of colonizing and establishing here permanently the proud Yamato race. They never cease being Japanese." (Daniels, The Politics of Prejudice 99)

The same anti-Japanese argument was heard in Hawaii. In his 1975 novella All I Asking For Is My Body, Milton Murayama describes the debate over the "Japanese question":

. . . the radio and haole [white] newspapers were saying over and over, "Be American. Speak English." Pidgin was foreign. And whenever there was a debate about statehood for Hawaii over the radio, they always came back to the same question, "What about the Japanese and the Japanese-Americans? They're foreign, they can't be assimilated, they can't even speak English after eight years of grade school. (63)

One of the aims of Nisei writing was to show the American public that the Nisei could assimilate and, in fact, had assimilated. All the Nisei writers supported Americanization in one form or another. They argued that in spite of their different ancestry and appearance, they shared the same culture as other Americans. The fact that these writers were writing in English rather than in Japanese attested to their cultural assimilation (though some white readers claimed they could see the influence of

the Japanese language in Nisei writing). One of the Nisei's favorite devices for asserting their American identity was to depict the Nisei defending American culture and traditions against the Japanese culture and traditions that the Issei tried to promote. Thus, in her autobiography Nisei Daughter, Monica Sone criticizes Japanese modesty and reserve and praises Yankee openness and defiance; in John Okada's No-No Boy, Nisei Ichiro Yamada criticizes his mother's fanatic Japanese patriotism while extolling American democratic ideals; in his autobiography Journey to Washington, Daniel Inouye tells how he defended Christianity (his mother, an orphan, was raised by a Presbyterian family) when a Shintoist Japanese school teacher ridiculed the Christian creation myth; in Milton Murayama's All I Asking for Is My Body, Nisei protagonists Tosh and Kiyo Oyama complain about their parents' oppressive Confucianism and argue for American freedom and individualism.

But while asserting their American identities, the Nisei writers also try to maintain their ethnic pride. As Kazuo Miyamoto argued in Hawaii, End of the Rainbow, "America would never welcome a cringing individual . . . one had to be proud of one's forbears" (212). To maintain this pride, the Nisei writers had to maintain some elements of their ethnicity (minimally name and ancestry) and all of the Nisei

writers do this. Writing under their own names (rather than under pseudonyms or Anglicized names) and writing autobiographically about themselves or creating fictional Japanese Americans (rather than non-Japanese characters) were expressions of their ethnicity. They could not show their faces in their writing--their faces that marked their ancestry--but their ancestry was encoded in their names. In a piece called "Lil' Yokohama," (Yokohama, California), Toshio Mori celebrated Japanese American names in the role call of Issei and Nisei attending a baseball game in Yokohama, a fictional version of the Japanese American community in the Oakland-Alameda area where Mori grew up:

Mrs. Horita is here, the mother of Ted Horita, the star left field of Alameda. Mr. and Mrs. Matsuda of Lil' Yokohama; the Tatsunos; the families of Nodas, Yuedas [sic], Abes, Kikuchi, Yamanotos [sic], Sasakis; Bob Fukuyama, Mike Matoi; Mr. Tanaka of Tanaka Hotel; Jane Miyazaki; Hideo Mitoma; the Iriki sisters; Yuriko Tsudama; Suda-san, Eto-san, Higuchi-san of our block . . . the faces we know but not the names; the names we know and do not name. (Yokohama, California, 72-3)

These are the "slant-eyed" Americans Mori refers to in the title of one of his stories, American by virtue of participating in an all-American pastime.

To reconcile their ethnicity with the American identity that racists had tried to deny them, the Nisei writers adopted the cultural theory of the melting pot. Proponents

of the melting pot tried to bring together the conflicting claims of cultural unity (Americanization) and cultural diversity (ethnicity) by arguing that the diversity of cultures should be tolerated, while being melted into a single national culture. Two versions of the melting pot emerged, one emphasizing the pluralistic aspect of the metaphor, and the other the assimilationist aspect (Gleason 80-84). The pluralists believed that each of the immigrant cultures would make contributions to American culture, so that American culture would no longer be purely Anglo-Saxon, but a mixed culture combining the best of the all the cultures brought to America by its immigrants. The assimilationists, on the other hand, argued that while the immigrants would maintain their old country cultures for one or two generations, the cultural differences of the immigrant groups would eventually burn off, like impurities, as the immigrant families became Americanized in the second and third generations. Thus, American culture was not threatened by immigrant cultures; it would remain fundamentally Anglo-Saxon.

The pluralistic version of the melting pot predominated among the Nisei writers in Hawaii, where society was more tolerant of ethnic differences than on the mainland. Mixing of cultures rather than cultural purity was the ideal.

Nisei novelists Shelley Ota (Upon their Shoulders) and Margaret Harada (The Sun Shines on the Immigrant) commended the blending of East and West in Hawaii. Harada's novel concludes with a commencement speech at the University of Hawaii in which a Dr. Edwin R. Embree delivers a panegyric on Hawaii as the birthplace of "a new civilization" blending the best of the West with the best of the East. According to Embree, the genius of the West was its science and technology; however, Puritanism, industrialism, and individualism were negative influences because they led to endless work and competition and removed "'all enjoyment and richness from day-by-day living'" (246); on the other hand, while the East was behind in material comforts, its art, gracious living, communal spirit made up for them. Embree concludes, "'An exchange of cultural gifts is the self-evident answer to the needs of each group'" (247), and Hawaii, situated between America and the Orient, was the ideal locale for this exchange to take place.

Another argument for the pluralistic melting pot is found in Kazuo Miyamoto's novel Hawaii, End of the Rainbow. This novel, about two generations of two Japanese American families is filled with proud references to Japanese culture and presents the reader with a Nisei vision of America as a mixed culture:

He [Nisei Minoru Murayama] felt with all his conviction that to be a truly good American citizen, this [ethnic] pride was important, for America would never welcome a cringing individual, and in order to be a valuable member of Commonwealth capable of contributing something to the culture, one had to be proud of his forbears and add whatever he understood was good to the sum total of the existing civilization of America, which was in essence the collection of different strains of European culture grafted upon an English trunk (212).

While the trunk of American culture was essentially Anglo-Saxon, other cultural traditions, including the Japanese, could be grafted onto it.

Miyamoto's novel portrays Hawaiian society as an embodiment of the pluralistic melting pot. The first Japanese immigrants to the islands share customs and foods with other ethnic groups (Chinese and Hawaiian) and intermarry with the Hawaiians. The public schools are integrated, with multi-ethnic student bodies ("composed of Japanese, Chinese, Hawaiians, Portuguese, Spanish, and Koreans") and multi-ethnic staffs ("Portuguese, Chinese, Part-Hawaiian, and Caucasian"). Despite the ethnic diversity, it is a society of equals, bound together by democratic ideals:

The melting-pot process was a success. Youngsters were being instilled with the ideals of democracy without let up and each was made to feel that he was just as good an American as the direct descendants of the passengers on the Mayflower.
(65)

The title of the novel uses a Hawaiian symbol to suggest the ethnically diverse, tolerant society of Hawaii: the rainbow.

Of course, Miyamoto was aware that the melting pot was an ideal not fully realized. Anglo-Saxon racism had tainted the Islands: "Among the common people, racial barriers were minimal and one person was as good as another. Only the ruling race, the Anglo-Saxons held themselves haughty and aloof, priding themselves on racial superiority" (66). Plantation society was based on racial hierarchy:

To the people toiling on the isolated plantation, the horizon of their endeavors and subsequent achievement was very limited. There were only two classes of people. The white people who represented the capitalists and their hirelings, and the workers who toiled month after month, year after year, at a fixed subsistence income. There was no middle class, and no individual engaged in his own business. Not even a store was allowed to operate on the plantation. (142)

But for Miyamoto and the other Hawaii Nisei writers, plantation racism was of the past, and off the plantations, racial harmony reigned.

Of course, the harmony of non-white ethnics in Hawaii was also a myth--there was (and is) tension and intolerance among ethnic groups. Many indigenous Hawaiians resented the take-over of the islands by white missionaries and their

children and the massive immigration of plantation workers from Asia and other parts of the world. The immigrants also came into economic and social competition with each other. But the Hawaii Nisei writers saw the island community off the plantation as relatively tolerant and open, and they offered it as a critique of the more racially intolerant plantation society and mainland American society.

What the early Hawaii Nisei writers like Ota, Harada, and Miyamoto never clearly defined was which aspects of their Japanese heritage were compatible with American democracy and which were not. Ota and Harada assumed that compromises were easy and that the melding of their Japanese and American heritages could take place without complications. Miyamoto was more perceptive: he noted, for example, that his Buddhist faith, which promoted quietism, was not compatible with the tradition of resistance to and rebellion against unjust authority that was part of the American political tradition. Miyamoto, however, never resolved the conflict in his novel.

In his novella All I Asking for Is My Body, Hawaii Nisei Milton Murayama explored more carefully than did the earlier writers the interface between his ethnicity and his American identity. Tosh and Kiyo Oyama, Murayama's Nisei protagonists, bitterly reject the Confucian values of their

parents, values such as knowing one's place and suffering in silence, replacing them with what they see as American values--rebelliousness and personal freedom. Murayama realized that Japanese Confucian culture could not be the basis of Nisei American identity and turned instead to local plantation culture. He fixed upon pidgin English, the dialect of English that developed among the plantation workers--as an essential sign of the Nisei's ethnic working class identity. His character Kiyo Oyama expresses contempt for a Nisei girl who tries to talk "white" in order to show she was more assimilated than other Nisei:

She was acting too damn haolefied [white]. Whenever anything spoke goody-good English outside of school, we razzed them, "You think you haole, eh?" "Maybe you think you shit ice cream, eh?" "How come you talk through your nose all the time?" Lots of them talked nasally to hide the pidgin accent. (63)

But while Murayama used pidgin English to mark his own ethnicity and the ethnicity of his Nisei plantation characters, he wrote his narration in standard English, acknowledging the need to address his American audience in its dialect: pidgin was acceptable, too, but only in its context, and both standard and pidgin English were aspects of the Hawaii Nisei's identity.

While the Hawaii Nisei writers adopted the pluralistic version of the melting pot, the West Coast Nisei writers

promoted the assimilationist version. Because racial intolerance was stronger on the mainland and the Issei and Nisei were a small minority in a predominately white population, the mainland Nisei felt a stronger need than the Hawaii Nisei to repress as much of their ethnicity as possible and become "100% American." One version of the West Coast melting pot appears in Toshio Mori's short story "1936" (The Chauvinist). The narrator describes a barbershop where an Italian, a Spaniard, a Mexican, and a Japanese are brought together one afternoon. (The barbershop setting is significant, as white barber frequently discriminated against Japanese Americans, claiming their hair was too course to cut.) The multi-ethnic barbership provided Mori with a symbol of America:

If one tiny barbershop could have four nationalities at one time, how many does America house? Then, I could believe the vastness and goodness of America's project; this is the place, the earth where the brothers and the races meet, mingle and share, and the most likely place, the most probable part of the earth to seek peace and goodwill through relations with the rest of the world. It is for this reaction I think of my brother, living in his new surroundings, in the city, among the peoples of the earth, rooming in the same house with half-a-dozen nationalities, among them a Russian doctor, his best friend. I think of his life ahead in the city of America, I think of the thousands of untouched relations between the nationalities, the colors, the creeds, and the hour, the time and his opportunity of being. (29-30)

But while Mori celebrated the multiethnic American

population, he did not believe, as Miyamoto did, that the Nisei should hold onto Japanese culture in America. In an interview with Russell Leong of Amerasia Journal, Mori pointed out that most of the West Coast Nisei actively avoided an interest in Japanese culture:

I believe that the sansei and yonsei [third and fourth generation Japanese Americans] have more interest in their historical background, Japanese customs and traditions. Whereas my generation, the second generation, more or less deliberately stayed away from the Japanese interest in our native Japan [the Nisei were born in America, not Japan], especially customs, because we were trying to become pro-American, hundred percent American citizens, and we wanted to prove to ourselves that we were loyal Americans rather than half-and-half. Because of [sic] our background in California more or less made our position suspect, we studied more American things, American politics, and American traditions. Very few of us were attached even to the Issei concerns. (107-8)

Japanese culture was of the old world, something to be sloughed off during the process of Americanization. In the short story "Miss Butterfly" (The Chauvinist), Mori portrays two Nisei girls moving away from the old culture into the new. Mr. Hamada-san, an Issei nostalgic for Japan, asks two Nisei daughters of his friend Ito to wear kimono and perform odori (Japanese dance) for him. The girls, dressed for an American dance and expecting their ride any minute, are reluctant at first, but finally give in to the old man's pleading. After two dances, their ride arrives and they hurriedly change back into their American clothes and

leave. The old Issei is left staring at the empty room and listening to the ticking of a clock. Mori was sympathetic to old man, aware of what the Issei had lost: not just their past, but their children, since they were not able to fully understand or participate in the new American world of the Nisei. Still, Mori, like other early West Coast Nisei writers, praised the Issei who supported Americanization and saw cultural assimilation as both inevitable and desirable.

West Coast writer John Okada also saw the ideal American not as an ethnic American, but one who conformed to the Anglo-American way of life. In his novel No-No Boy, Ichiro Yamada, feeling like an outcast, but wanting to become a part of American society again, asks:

Where is that place they talk of and paint nice pictures of and describe in all the homey magazines? Where is that place with the clean, white cottages surrounding the new, red-brick church with the clean-white steeple where families all have two children, one boy and one girl, and a shiny new car in the garage and a dog and a cat and life is like living in the land of the happily-ever-after? (159)

There is no indication in Okada's novel that other ways of life were possible or desirable--no possibility of American communities with kivas, synagogues, temples, mosques, or no religious houses at all. For both Mori and Okada, "100% Americanization" was the ideal.

Realizing that Americans resented and ridiculed linguistic differences, Okada, fluent in Japanese (he served in military intelligence in the Pacific theater), studiously avoided indicating Japanese conversation between Issei and Nisei or using Japanese words in his narration. At one point he wrote, "There was a time that I no longer remember when you used to smile a mother's smile and tell me stories about gallant and fierce warriors who protected their lords with blades of shining steel . . . " (15). It would probably have been more natural for him to say "gallant and fierce samurai," and an American reader would have understood, but consciously or unconsciously, Okada used "warrior" instead of "samurai." The only characters who speak Japanese in his novel are white.

In the introduction to Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Asian American Writers (1974), the editors (Frank Chin et al) argued that West Coast Nisei writers like Mori and Okada did use language to express their ethnicity: what white critics saw as awkwardness or incorrectness in Nisei writing was actually the writers' conscious effort to create a unique Japanese American idiom that was an expression of Japanese American experience and culture: their style was an expression of their ethnicity, just as it was for black writers using black dialect. The editors criticized William

Saroyan as racist for objecting to Toshio Mori's grammar in the introduction to Mori's collection of stories Yokohama, California (1947). However, in her introduction to Mori's collection The Chauvinist (1979), Nisei writer Hisaye Yamamoto, disagreeing with the editors of Aiiieeeee!, argued that Mori was trying to write "the very best English of which he was capable," and that the awkwardness in his writing was the result of his weak command of English, not an attempt to assert his ethnicity, as was Murayama's use of pidgin English in All I Asking for Is My Body. The truth may be somewhere between the two positions (there is a certain Nisei flavor in the language of the West Coast Nisei writers), but Mori's assimilationist view of America's melting pot makes Yamamoto's position more plausible.

The temptation to appear "100 percent American" was strong for the Nisei writers because they wanted to deflect the suspicion, mistrust, discrimination, insults, harassment, and persecution their ethnicity had brought on them. But the danger of believing in the assimilationist melting pot was that while the children of immigrants tried to become American and reject values, behavior, or beliefs that marked them as ethnic, they would come to accept the racist assumption that the Anglo-Saxon race and culture was inherently superior to their parents' race and culture and

that the only good American was one who looked, spoke, and behaved like a WASP; and they would begin to feel contempt for themselves and their parents, who were inextricably bound to the ancestral culture. No Nisei work more clearly reveals the negative psychological effects of racist element in the Americanization process than the autobiography of West Coast Nisei writer Monica Sone. Sone's Nisei Daughter recounts the story of her Americanization, her "successful" assimilation into American society. Early in the autobiography, Sone describes the discomfort she felt about her ethnicity because of the discrimination she encountered growing up in Seattle; near the end, however, after she has been relocated by the U.S. government at a small college in the Midwest, she tells the reader:

I had discovered a deeper, stronger pulse in the American scene. I was going back into its main stream, still with my Oriental eyes, but with an entirely different outlook, for now I felt more like a whole person instead of a sadly split personality. The Japanese and the American parts of me were now blended into one. (238)

The text, however, doesn't reveal an equal blending of Japanese and American parts, but a deep shame about the Japanese part and a strong desire to appear "100 percent American." As Elaine Kim argues in Asian American Literature, the story is actually "an account of the suffocation by racial discrimination of everything that

creative, spirited, or pugnacious in one Nisei woman" (74).

Sone realized that Japanese Confucian values such as reserve, deference, and obedience to authority were not compatible with American values such as assertiveness, rebelliousness, and equality. Early in the text, she contrasts her active Yankee identity with the passive Japanese one her parents and Japanese school teachers tried to impose on her:

At Bailey Gatzert School I was a jumping, screaming, roustabout Yankee, but at the stroke of three when the school bell rang and doors burst open everywhere, spewing out pupils like jelly beans from a broken bag, I suddenly became a modest, faltering earnest little Japanese girl with a small, timid voice. (22)

In order to identity herself as American, Sone emphasizes her active, independent Yankee personality in her description of her childhood. She tells us she loved to explore without adult supervision the Skidrow neighborhood where her father ran a hotel for bachelors; and she, along with her siblings, loved to play games forbidden by her parents, the "four black-eyed, jet-propelled children" creating "bedlam" in her father's hotel:

One of our favorite games when neither Father nor Mother was looking, was "climbing the laundry." We vied with each other to see who could climb highest on an ill-smelling mountain of soiled sheets, pillowcases and damp towels, piled high to the ceiling. Henry always reached the top by giving himself a running start halfway down the

hall. He flew light-footed up the mound like a young gazelle. He hooted scornfully when I scrambled up, red faced and frantic, grabbing sheets and tumbling down when I snatched a loose pillowcase. (13-14)

When her father was harassed by policemen trying to extort money, Sone tells us she felt like kicking the officer in the shin bones everytime she saw him (42). She also reports disagreements with her father and her rebelliousness when he enrolled her in Japanese school and when he refused to let her take ballet lessons. When visiting Japan with her family, she slapped her cousin for being childishly selfish and helped her brother fight off some kids who were harassing them. She reports she committed her ultimate act of Yankee defiance while visiting a shrine at Nikko dedicated to one of the shoguns of Japan: she tried to scramble up a roped-off bridge that only the Emperor of Japan was supposed to use.

In Chapter 2, Sone describes her childhood heroes--the white bachelors in her father's hotel, true Yankees whom she idealizes as rough, free, entertaining, and generous--Sam, "a tall, rugged, blue-eyed retired mariner" (30); Joe, "a portly, cheerful man with a tiny black mustache and a deep dimple on his chin" who reminded her of "a swarthy version of Santa Claus, for his pockets were always bulging with chocolate bars, apples and nuts" (31); Peter, "a

soft-spoken, gentle old Bohemian who delighted us by performing impromptu folk dances and singing gay little Bohemian songs" (31); and Montana, "our self-appointed bouncer" who "weighed two hundred and fifty pound and required two sturdy chairs to hold his massive bulk as he sat dozing in the lobby" (31).

While idealizing Yankees and Yankee defiance and rebelliousness, Sone makes fun of Japanese politeness and Japanese figures of authority who tried to suppress her energy and rambunctiousness and turn her into "an ideal Japanese ojoh-san, a refined young maiden who is quiet, pure in thought, polite, serene, and self-controlled" (28). She describes the Japanese school principal, Mr. Ohashi, as "the Oriental male counterpart of Emily Post"; he had come to America "with the perfect bow tucked under his waist and a facial expression cemented into perfect samurai control" (24). Those who practiced Japanese etiquette were just as boringly passive or ridiculously rigid as those who taught it: Mrs. Matsui's daughter Yaeko "would sit quietly beside her mother, knees together, dress pulled down modestly over the ankles, hands folded demurely in her lap, and eyes fixed dully on the floor" (27). New Year's day at the Matsuis was a painful exercise in Japanese decorum which left Sone feeling "tight as a drum and emotionally shaken from being

too polite for too long" (86). Genji Yamada, sent to school in Japan, "returned home a stranger among us with stiff mannerisms and an arrogant attitude," and his conversation with the Japanese school teacher consisted of "sharp staccato barks, 'Hai! . . . Hai! . . . Hai!' [Yes! . . . Yes! . . . Yes!]" (25). Mrs. Kato, a friend of Sone's mother, made a fool of herself when she tried to bow politely to Sone's mother while blocking passengers trying to get on and off a streetcar: "The bottleneck was slow-motion Mrs. Kato smiling and bowing graciously to Mother who was submerged in the crowd. . . . I screamed at Mother to tell Mrs. Kato to please get in and dispense with the ceremony" (48).

Sone saw the kimono as the ultimate symbol of the ceremonious restrictions of Japanese etiquette. She says wearing one was like being "entombed like a cocoon under layers of garments and miles of sash." After putting one on, she "lumbered out to the main auditorium to help serve tea, reeling like a grounded butterfly. I could never have turned cartwheels or done the splits in the boa grip of a Japanese obi [sash]" (46). The imagery suggests that Japanese culture was a prison, a straightjacket, a tomb from which Sone wanted to escape.

In the first half of her autobiography, Sone's criticism

of Japanese culture is balanced with positive feelings for her Japanese heritage and ancestry. She describes her parents' lineage, immigration, and early years in America with pride. She also expresses a fondness for Japanese things with aesthetic value (e.g., a tea set) and for fun activities in the Japanese community, like a visit to a Japanese ship that docked at Seattle and the annual community picnic. But in Chapter 6, entitled "We are Outcasts," Sone begins to describe the discrimination that the Issei and Nisei faced in housing, recreation and employment; and she begins to reveal, perhaps without being aware of it, a sense of inferiority vis-a-vis white Americans. Not just Japanese ceremoniousness was bad, but her Japanese blood was bad. She portrays herself not as an equal of white Americans, but a white American manque.

This feeling of inferior ancestry is expressed in Sone's explanation of why Japanese students did not speak up in high school classes:

At high school, the teachers expected us to have opinions of our own and to express them. In classes like civics, history, current events and literature, the entire class hour was devoted to discussion and criticisms. Although I had opinions, I was so overcome with self-consciousness I could not bring myself to speak.

Some people would have explained this as an acute case of adolescence, but I knew it was also because I was Japanese. Almost all the students of

Japanese blood sat like rocks during discussion period. Something compellingly Japanese made us feel it was better to seem stupid in a quiet way rather than to make boners out loud. I began to think of the Japanese as the Silent people, and I envied my fellow students who clamored to be heard. (131)

Japanese students were inadequate in comparison to Whites--because of something in the blood, "something compellingly Japanese." (Sone never directly criticizes white racism for the insecurity the Nisei felt.)

One of the most painful sections of the text to read is Sone's description of her stay at a T.B. sanitarium. Sone obsequiously commends the behavior of three white women while putting down the behavior of Nisei women. Her descriptions of the three white women are masterpieces in the art of ingratiating: Hope "loved to talk about her T.B. history," showing that T.B. "need not necessarily make a person feel like throwing himself into the sea," that it could "elevate the spirit, put a sparkle of interest in a person's eyes, and provide an inexhaustible topic for conversation" (138); "Wanda was even more startling . . . a young divorcee with brilliant agate-blue eyes, full red lips and expressive language to match them. . . Her corner of the room was in a perpetual hubbub, with exploding temper and energetic defiance of all hospital regulations" (138); Chris "laughed easily and her crisp humor took the drabness

out of our routine life" (138). Comparing herself to these women, Sone concludes that she didn't measure up, that she was too polite, too reserved--she was not "American" enough. Sone condemns the inadequacy of the Nisei: "I thanked fate I was not rooming with three Japanese girls who would have had the same sense of futility as I did. We would have died stoically together" (138). She reports a conversation she had with two Nisei women patients, emphasizing the monosyllabic replies and the lack of vitality and wit, and concludes that all three of them were typically Japanese--that is, passive, unimaginative, and incapable of carrying on a decent conversation. Rather than associate herself with such boring people, she wanted to stay with the white women. Even if she could not behave like them, she could live vicariously through them. To her surprise, she discovered that they liked her modesty and reserve--that she could be accepted, paradoxically, by being unlike them. Toward the end of the chapter, Sone declares:

Chris, Laura, Anne, Elaine and my other companions [apparently all white women] had accepted me into their circle as I was. They did not care that I looked different, said or did a few odd things, because basically we liked each other. For the first time in my life I felt sheer happiness in being myself. (143)

Having won white approval by being deferential, Sone tells us she finally felt good about herself, a goodness her

parents and community, apparently, were not able to make her feel. The title of the chapter, "Paradise Sighted," suggests that the world of white people, which Sone was accepted into for the first time at the T.B. sanitarium, was the world she desired to live in. The Japanese American world of her childhood was a world of the past--she felt some nostalgia for it as she wrote her autobiography, but it was a world that she did not want to return to.

In the second half of the text, covering World War II, the evacuation and internment of the Seattle Nisei at Minidoka, Idaho, and Sone's relocation in the Midwest, Sone is intent on showing the reader that she was willing to sacrifice her cultural heritage, family, and community in order to be acceptable to white Americans. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor had terrorized the Japanese American community. Sone reports how her family burned their Japanese things in a furnace after the attack:

Henry pulled down from his bedroom wall the toy samurai sword he had brought from Japan and tossed it into the flames. Sumi's contributions to the furnace were books of fairy tales and magazines sent to her by her young cousins in Japan. We sorted out Japanese classic and popular music from a stack of records, shattered them over our knees and fed the pieces to the furnace. Father piled up his translated Japanese volumes of philosophy and religion and carted them reluctantly to the basement. Mother had the most to eliminate, with her scrapbooks of poems cut out from newspapers and magazines, and her private collection of old Japanese classic literature. (155-6).

Sone confesses that her family felt grief and guilt about the destruction; but she believes the destruction was necessary in order to distance the Issei and Nisei from anything Japanese.

Sone and her family were also terrorized by the internment; the racist action reinforced her desire to repress her ethnicity and to assimilate. But since she could not change the way she looked--could not physically assimilate--she desired invisibility. In Chapter 10, about internment life at Minidoka, Sone describes the shame she felt about her ethnicity and her desire for invisibility. When she and some others left the internment center in order to buy things in a small Idaho town for her brother's wedding, she describes their cautious behavior:

Somehow we felt we ought not to travel in droves or congregate in public in large groups. One Japanese face was conspicuous enough, and a party of them might be downright obnoxious. We finally decided to stay together, since Mrs. Yokoyama and Mother preferred each other's company, and Sumi and I were reluctant to see them go off by themselves. We walked timidly inside [a restaurant], hoping that we would not attract too much attention. Only one raw-boned, weather-beaten farmer stared at us. We made for the corner where we huddled close against the wall, trying to blend into the wallpaper design.
(204)

Because "one Japanese face was conspicuous" and "a party of them might be downright obnoxious," Sone believed that the

only way for the Nisei to assimilate was to disperse as individuals; they had to live singly in a white community, so they would be accepted for "themselves" rather than identified by their ethnicity--in short, they had to live as mascots of whites as Sone herself had done at the T.B. sanitarium. (We are reminded of Kenji's advice to Ichiro in John Okada's No-No Boy: "'Go someplace where there isn't another Jap within a thousand miles. Marry a white girl or a Negro or an Italian or even a Chinese. Anything but a Japanese. After a few generations of that, you've got the thing beat.'")

The final chapters of Sone's autobiography are devoted to thanking white Americans for allowing her to find the Paradise she longed for. The government allowed the Nisei to leave Minidoka in order to go to school or work in the Midwest or the East. Sone was offered a job with a dentist in Chicago and a room in the home of Dr. Richardson, a Presbyterian pastor and former China missionary. Her relocation was "a dream too good to be true." The people of Chicago were "too busy to notice the evacuees who had crept into town" (217). Living on her own in Chicago, Sone could no longer be identified as Japanese and she reports gleefully that she was mistaken twice for a Chinese. Sone was also able to neutralize her ethnicity at Wendall

College, the Presbyterian liberal-arts college in Indiana, at which Dr. Richardson enrolled her. At the college, she was marginalized--perceived as and accepted as a foreigner rather than as an American. Two of her best friends are Marta Sanchez from Bogota, Colombia, and Anna Jong from Bangkok. The one time when her ethnicity became an issue, Sone reports, she was saved from embarrassment by her willingness to accept her second class status: when two sorority girls came to tell her that she couldn't join their sorority because of national restrictions against students of Japanese ancestry ("We didn't want you to think we were ignoring you for personal reasons," they explained), Sone tells us she was grateful to them for their concern and their "moral honesty." (Sone was willing to ignore the apologetic cowardice of these two college girls carrying out a racist sorority policy).

Having left her family and community behind in an internment camp and tried her best to neutralize her ethnicity, Sone began to see her white sponsors as her new family. She refers to both Dr. Richardson's house and Mrs. Ashford's house (where she stayed as a college student) as "home." Toward the end of the autobiography, Sone tells us that on a trip to Minidoka to visit her family, she told her father "'I don't resent my Japanese blood any more . . . I

used to feel like a two-headed monstrosity, but now I find that two heads are better than one'" (236). This claim is not supported by the text, which reveals a shame of her ethnicity. Her autobiography was an act of ingratiation: she wanted to please her American readers by praising Americans and American culture while rejecting not just the ceremoniousness of Japanese culture, but her Japanese ancestry. Ironically, while Sone believed she was describing her growing independence and her successful assimilation, she was actually describing her loss of a Yankee identity--the active, rebellious spirit she had as a child--and her growing deference to and dependency on white Americans to define who she was (and wasn't) and to give her a sense of self-esteem. During the internment, when such Yankee values as defiance and rebelliousness would have meant something important politically, Sone was becoming more and more passive and dependent. The title of her book "Nisei Daughter" is revealing. The author, unlike the subjects in typical autobiographies, doesn't grow up; under the pressure of racism, she regresses. In the end, having exchanged one father (her biological one) for another (her patria), she was a more obedient daughter than she was at the beginning. Rather than addressing her white readers as an equal, able to both praise and blame, she accepted American racism and thanked America for approving of her

docility.

Chapter Three

Up from the Plantation: The Hawaii Success Story

The first Nisei novel published after World War II--Shelley Ota's melodramatic Upon their Shoulders (1951)--tells the Hawaii success story of immigrant Taro Sumida and his family. Sumida, frustrated by the lack of opportunity and the rigidity of feudal society in Japan, immigrates to Hawaii to get rich as a plantation laborer. He encounters brutal exploitation on the plantation and after he and other workers attack and beat an overseer, they are fired, and Sumida goes to live in a squalid Japanese ghetto outside of Honolulu. From these humble beginnings, he works his way up. He meets a benefactor, Mr. Philips, who hires him as a yard man and later offers him a job managing a restaurant in Honolulu. Taro does well enough to buy the restaurant and invest in real estate. His twin daughters Alice and Ruth go to the University of Hawaii. Ruth becomes interested in social welfare and works to promote slum clearance and better housing; despite opposition from her ethnocentric mother, she marries Tom Aki, a progressive part-Hawaiian farmer. Alice becomes interested in painting. Her marriage to Jerry Noda, son of an ill-natured upper-class Issei couple, is unhappy (Jerry commits suicide), but Alice finds solace in her art. The novel concludes with death of the

patriarch--his wife, daughters, and grandchildren together chanting Buddhist prayers for his peace.

The Nisei version of the success story differs from the traditional American success story in that the achievement of success takes two generations rather than just one--the success of the second generation built "upon the shoulders" of the first, as Ota's title suggests. The two generation structure reflects the historical reality of the limited options of the first generation because of language barriers, labor exploitation, and discrimination; it also expresses the Nisei reverence for parents and ancestors that is part of the Japanese Confucian tradition: the success of an individual was not just his own achievement, but an extension of the achievements of his family; similarly, the honor his success brought was not his own, but his family's as well. But although the two generation structure made the Nisei version of the story different from the traditional American version, the Nisei version embodied, like the traditional American version, the myth of America is a land of opportunity. Through diligence, hard work, and education, any person, born poor or made poor by misfortune, could be successful or help his or her children be successful, because America offered equal opportunities for everyone, no matter what his or her origin or background.

The Hawaii Nisei writers, trying to affirm their American identity after World War II, knew that the success story, told with Japanese American characters from a Nisei point of view, would help identify them as good Americans; they also knew it would be well received because it confirmed the beliefs their public school teachers had taught them about immigrants to America and the American Dream.

Other Hawaii Japanese American success stories followed Ota's and contained the same or similar elements: (1) the male immigrant who leaves Japan to escape frustrated ambition or family misfortune or to make money to pay off a debt; (2) a period of plantation hardship, including racial discrimination and brutal treatment by white overseers (the period of hardship is usually three years--the length of the work contract the early immigrants signed in Japan); (3) the successful attempt to make it off the plantation, usually with the help of a benefactor, sometimes a white man, sometimes another immigrant; (4) if the immigrant is unmarried, marriage to a picture bride, who is ideal from a male point of view--understanding, patient, hardworking, enduring, and child-bearing; (5) children--a second generation; (6) the first generation sacrificing to send the children to school or college; (7) the children's achievement of middle-class status, fulfilling the dreams of

their parents; (8) marriage for the second generation (sometimes, as in the case of Ruth Sumida, to someone with Hawaiian blood); (9) acceptance as equals in a pluralistic melting pot. The main characters in the early Nisei success story are idealized (industrious, diligent, persevering), and the success of the family is a reward for its virtues.

Like Ota's novel, Margaret Harada's The Sun Shines on the Immigrant (1960)--the second novel published by a Hawaii Nisei writer after the war--tells a Japanese American success story. Harada's Issei protagonist, Yoshio Mori, encounters fewer obstacles than Ota's Taro Sumida in establishing a successful family in Hawaii, perhaps because he is more obsequious. After leaving the plantation, Mori, with the help of a rich white benefactor, goes from butler to chauffeur to independent taxi-driver. When Yoshio is able to move his family from a tenement house into a cottage, he exclaims: "Were I in Japan I could not dream of it, but Hawaii has made it possible for me to live like a man instead of like an animal" (114). Later, he can afford a new Studebaker and a house in a nicer neighborhood in Kaimuki. His children, Jack and Megumi, go to college: Jack becomes a politician and Megumi a teacher. The novel ends with Yoshio and his wife going to visit Japan, but determined to return to Hawaii, grateful for the success of

their family.

The real-life success story told by Daniel Inouye in his autobiography Journey to Washington (1967), published a year after his election to the U.S. Senate, is full of the same praise for the American Dream that we find in Ota's and Harada's novels. It includes an element missing in the two earlier female versions of the success story--the Nisei war experience--that adds the appeal of patriotism to the story. Toward the end of the autobiography, Inouye places the story of his rise from a poor working class neighborhood in Honolulu to the U.S. Senate in the context of other European immigrant success stories:

My face and eyes and shape would be different from those of my colleagues. I was not of the Western world. But the fact is that there was really not so great a difference between my story and the stories of millions of other Americans who had come to this land from Ireland and Italy and Poland and Greece. They had come because America would permit any man to aspire to the topmost limits of his own talent and energy. I am proud to be one with these people. (293)

Although Inouye was not from Japan as the passage implies (i.e., he is not a first generation immigrant, but the grandson of one), Inouye's success goes well beyond the success of the average American, recalling as it does, the story of Abraham Lincoln's journey from log cabin to White House.

The longest, most complex version of the Hawaii success story is Kazuo Miyamoto's novel Hawaii, End of the Rainbow (1964). Miyamoto presents the stories of two immigrant workers rather than just one in order to give the reader a fuller picture of the Japanese American experience in Hawaii. The two immigrants come from two different social classes: Seikichi Arata, from a samurai family, immigrates to Hawaii in search of adventure and fortune after he is rejected as too short for the Japanese military; Torao Murayama, from a peasant family, immigrates to Hawaii because of a breach with his stepmother. Depicting the parallel successes of these two men and their sons, Miyamoto is able to praise American democracy by showing how immigrants from different social classes in a feudal society find equal, though different, opportunities in America and eventually achieve what Miyamoto feels is equality with other Americans.

Arata and Murayama represent different paths to Issei success. Arata is the entrepreneur. Unlike Ota's Taro Sumida and Harada's Yoshio Mori (men of modest ambitions), Arata is a risk-taker with big dreams. While working on the plantation, he meets a benefactor--Yone, another Issei immigrant who has become a successful merchant. Staked by Yone, Arata leaves the plantation and works as a peddler,

then buys and operates a store. At one point, he tries to take "a short cut to wealth" and goes heavily into debt:

Arata's dream of a mercantile empire, starting from a chain of grocery stores and branching out in export and import trade with agencies in the Far East and in the seaport cities of the continental United States, became a bubble rudely punctured. (192)

After his financial downfall, Arata retrenches and runs a humbler local operation. Miyamoto is mildly disapproving of Arata's overly ambitious dreams, but Arata's willingness to gamble fits the character of the risk-taking Yankee Arata has become in America.

Murayama, Miyamoto's other Issei protagonist, is more of a plodder than Arata and encounters more difficulties. He has the misfortune of being assigned to a plantation run by a cruel Scotsman. Because the workers are contract-bound and cannot leave the plantation, Miyamoto describes their situation as "not unlike slavery." Like the heroes of slave narratives, Murayama tries to escape, but after he is captured and returned, he decides to accept his bondage for the three years stipulated in his contract. When his contract ends, Murayama tries to become a hotel operator, but fails after an epidemic breaks out in Honolulu and a quarantine cuts off his supplies. He returns to the plantation dejected, but through the good offices of Mr.

Douglas, the plantation owner, he get a new start, becoming first Douglas's yardman, then a contract farmer under Douglas.

Sadao Arata and Minoru Murayama--the first-born sons in the two families (the most important offspring in the Confucian tradition)--represent different routes to Nisei success. Sadao is more worldly and rebellious--he has two affairs as an adolescent before leaving the rural island of Kauai for the more urbanized Oahu. His father's financial downfall prevents him from going to college, so he strikes out on his own, without a degree. By taking advantage of opportunities and working hard, he is able to start a successful contracting firm; later, he marries a Hawaiian woman, and one of their sons dies a patriotic death in Europe during World War II.

In contrast to Sadao Arata, Minoru Murayama is reserved, religious (a devout Buddhist), and studious. Minoru's life represents the route to success through college. Unlike the Nisei in Ota's and Harada's novels, however, Minoru goes to college not in Hawaii, but on the mainland, where he encounters racism. At Stanford, where he gets a bachelor's degree, he feels alienated and hears of a professor who dislikes anyone Japanese; at the Washington University medical school, he is the only non-white enrolled; after

graduation, he finds it difficult to get a internship because most hospitals won't accept a Nisei intern. Still--and this is Miyamoto's point--Minoru perseveres and becomes a doctor, setting up his medical practice in California before the war.

Minoru's main benefactor turns out to be an Issei--Tom Tanaka, "the biggest Japanese farmer of northern California," with 1,500 leased acres of fruit, potato, celery, and onions. Tanaka offers to pay for Minoru's medical schooling in exchange for using Minoru's name to lease his farmland because the recently passed alien land law will prohibit him, as an alien ineligible for citizenship, from leasing land. (Minoru, an American citizen by right of birth in a U.S. territory, is distantly related to Tanaka.) Tanaka's phenomenal success in California is in sharp contrast to the modest success of Minoru's father in Hawaii, who cannot afford to help pay for his son's medical education. Tanaka's success was not impossible on the West Coast, as the even more spectacular real-life story of George Shima proves:

Working in partnership with other Issei, Shima created his own agricultural empire, specializing in potatoes, then a new crop in California. . . . By 1913 . . . Shima controlled nearly 30,000 acres directly, and through marketing agreements, handled the produce raised by many of his compatriots. By 1920 it was estimated that he controlled 85 percent of California's potato crop,

valued at over \$18 million that year. He employed over 500 persons in a multiracial labor force that included Caucasians. When he died, in 1926, the press estimated his estate at \$15 million (Roger Daniel, Concentration Camps, USA 8)

Opportunities in agriculture were much greater on the West Coast than in Hawaii, where land was limited. Ironically, however, the greater economic success of the Issei on the mainland did not make them feel more secure than the Issei felt in Hawaii. On the contrary, because of the greater discrimination they faced, the West Coast Japanese Americans were more pessimistic about the future of the Nisei. Minoru's benefactor Tanaka feels his children don't have much of a chance in California and sends them back to Japan to be educated:

. . . there was very little future for the Nisei in their own country in white-color [sic] jobs unless some totally unexpected turn of events occurred to obliterate all anti-Japanese sentiment among California politicians. Such a miracle rarely happened in real life. A Jap was a Jap and destined to a servile, second rate citizenry. (244)

This insecurity and despair pervade early West Coast Nisei attitudes toward America.

But Minoru (and Miyamoto) disagree with such pessimism, and Minoru's success proves it false. Miyamoto contrasts Minoru's success in becoming a doctor with the failure of Mr. Brown, a Black with a medical degree who is working as a

Pullman waiter. While acknowledging the existence of racial prejudice, Minoru feels Mr. Brown was wrong in giving up on his medical career. Brown explains to Minoru that there were no hospitals that would take his patients and that his patients were too poor to pay. Minoru replies:

"I don't know that you have done the right thing. Maybe I am too young and inexperienced in the ways of life to appreciate realities, but perhaps you should have stuck to your first love and sacrificed your life with missionary zeal. You might also have sought new opportunities in other parts of the country when Birmingham was not as good as expected." (272)

Unlike Tanaka or Brown, Minoru believes that anyone who perseveres can succeed in America--in spite of racial barriers.

As if to drive home the point that no matter what barriers or misfortunes are encountered, a person should endure them and drive toward success because perseverance would pay off, Miyamoto describes Minoru's experiences in the Tule Lake, California, and Jerome, Arkansas, internment camps. The internment is not much of a trial for Minoru, the stoic Buddhist doctor who has overcome every barrier in his way: he accepts his fate and patiently waits out the war. After the war ends, he decides to return to his boyhood home--Hawaii. It is the end of the rainbow for him: he enters that ideal world at the end of the Hawaii Nisei

success story, where all the racial groups are equal and live harmoniously together. In brief prologues to each of the five books in the novel, Dr. Murayama appears ministering to the dying Seikichi Arata and attending Arata's funeral. Although the descriptions are brief, we sense from them that Dr. Murayama's medical practice in Hawaii has been prosperous.

The success stories told by Ota, Harada, Inouye, and Miyamoto characterize the Issei, for the most part, as diligent and self-sacrificing, and the Nisei as honest, persevering, talented, and successful. However, in 1975, Milton Murayama published a version of the success story, entitled All I Asking For Is My Body, which presented a different view of the Issei and Nisei. Like the works of Ota, Harada, Inouye, and Miyamoto, Murayama's novella features a male immigrant--Oyama--who comes to Hawaii to work on a sugar plantation. However, unlike the Issei in the earlier Hawaii Nisei stories, Mr. Oyama is never able to leave the feudal plantation: debt-ridden, unable to make a living off the plantation, he is stuck earning low plantation wages that allow him and his family to subsist, but don't allow him to repay his debt. Unlike the Issei in earlier stories, the Oyama parents do not sacrifice for their oldest son Tosh's education. Tosh wants to go to

college, but Mr. and Mrs. Oyama don't have the money; instead they want Tosh and his younger brother Kiyo to stay on the plantation and help the family pay off the debt. The disagreement between Mr. Oyama and Tosh leads to violent conflict. Furthermore, no benefactor appears to save the Issei parents or the Nisei sons. In the end, Kiyo manages to pay off the family debt and win his freedom only by cheating in a dice game--destroying the middle-class Nisei myth that the Nisei had escaped the plantation through honest hard work and education.

Murayama's version of the success story appeals to the American reader in a different way from earlier Hawaii Nisei success stories. Murayama establishes his American identity by attacking the oppressive Confucianism in the Japanese family and the exploitive feudal hierarchy on the plantation while praising American individualism and personal freedom. Also, in his refusal to idealize the Issei and Nisei, in his revelation of the underhanded means his protagonist uses to win his freedom, Murayama achieves an honesty in his narrative voice that Americans believe is one of their greatest virtues (cf. the story of George Washington and the cherry tree).

The conflict between Confucian father and American sons that is at the heart of the novella develops as Mr. Oyama

demands that his oldest son Tosh do for him what he did for his father: help pay off a debt. They justify their demand by appealing to the Confucian virtue of filial piety. They point to the filial piety of other sons on the plantation:

. . . he'd rattle off other names, Minoru Tanaka who's been working fifteen years and was still helping his family, Tadashi Yamada who'd worked thirteen years, Hideo Shimada who worked twelve years, Kenji Watanabe worked twelve years before he got married, Toru Minami eleven years . . . There were many number one sons who were doing this since there were so many large families in Kahana. (76)

"Children must repay their parents," is one of Mrs. Oyama's favorite sayings. In the Japanese school set up by the Issei to teach the Nisei Japanese values, the teacher also preach the virtues of filial piety, sacrifice, hard work, and patience.

Mr. and Mrs. Oyama can also point to their own family for examples of filial piety. In the second section of the novella, "The Substitute," we find out Mr. Oyama, along with his parents and his two younger brothers, came to Hawaii to earn money to help pay off the family's debt in Japan, and that Mr. Oyama, out of filial piety, worked for his father for twelve years. Mrs. Oyama came to Hawaii to help her mother-in-law with housework. Under the Confucian system, Mrs. Oyama takes on her husband's obligations to his parents and becomes a slave to her mother-in-law. Anshan, a distant

uncle, tells Kiyoshi: "Your mother, too, ooooooo, how she suffered! Your grandmother worked her like a slave, sunrise to way past sunset, seven days a week. But she didn't complain, she did everything she was asked to do when most women would've run away. . . ." (25). Earlier, he tells his own tale of woe: " . . . you'll never know, Kiyoshi, how much I suffered. I was only ten and my father farmed me to a carpenter as an apprentice. Ooooo, he was harsh. If I was slow or made a mistake, kotsun! right on the head with his wooden plane. Feel this bump? Plantation work is nothing compare to what I went through" (25).

The obligation of children to pay off their parents' debt is based on the notion of substitution--that the son, as a substitute for his father, inherits his father's debt. Through substitution, a person's life is intimately bound up with the fate of others, especially his or her family. Substitution applied not just to financial debts; a person could also be punished for someone else, as Murayama explains: "Bachi was a punishment you got when you did something bad and got away with it. The scary part was it didn't have to happen to the wrongdoer himself, it could fall on his children or any substitute" (20). In the second part of the novel, entitled "The Substitute," Mrs. Oyama worries she's dying for a bad deed someone else has

committed and is relieved only when Obaban (grandfather's sister) dies instead. All of the Oyamas are burdened by the bad luck and debt of the rest of the family. But the notion of substitution and family guilt and debt is the antithesis of the American notions of individual freedom and responsibility, and the Oyama sons, educated in American schools, rebel against becoming substitutes for their parents: "All I asking for is my body," each son pleads.

Tosh and Kiyo repeatedly condemn the feudal values of filial piety and obedience to authority. Tosh is outraged by the injustice of being responsible for someone else's debts and protests to his parents about having to work for them. How long does he have to work and how much does he owe, he keeps asking. He refuses to kowtow to his father's authority. He criticizes his parents for having so many children (seven in all) when they can't support them; he criticizes them for educating the girls because a girl marries out of the family and works for her husband's family. He calls his grandfather a thief for making off with all the money, and when his father takes a swing at him, he throws a left hook and knocks his father down. He tells Kiyo, "'I sick and tired getting hit all the time . . . From now on I going dish it out too. . . . If I start holding back I play right into his hands. Hard work,

patience, holding back, waiting your turn, all that crap, they all fit together to keep you down'" (46).

The novella is not only an attack on the Confucian hierarchy of the Japanese family, but the white-dominated hierarchy of the plantation: the oppressive patriarchy of the Japanese family reinforces the oppressive paternalism of the plantation, which Kiyoshi characterizes as a hierarchy of shit, with the Japanese workers near the bottom:

The camp . . . was planned and built around its sewage system. The half dozen rows of underground concrete ditches, two feet wide and three feet deep, ran from the higher slope of camp into the concrete irrigation ditch on the lower perimeter of camp. An outhouse built over the sewage ditch had two pairs of back-to-back toilets and services four houses. Shit too was organized according to the plantation pyramid. Mr. Nelson was top shit on the highest slope, then there were the Portuguese, Spanish, and nisei lunas with their indoor toilets which flushed into the same ditches, then Japanese Camp and Filipino Camp. (96)

The hypocrisy of the plantation system--where the white owners profit, but the workers are not supposed to be greedy or to profit--is exposed in the first section of the novella ("I'll Crack Your Head Kotsun"), about Kiyoshi's childhood adventures with a friend named Makoto. In order to buy a B-B gun, Makoto, Kiyo, and two other boys decide to sell coconuts, but unfortunately some of the trees are on Reverend Hastings' property. Hastings allows boys to pick

coconuts from his yard but only if they don't sell them--this moral injunction coming from a functionary of the plantation owners who had wheedled the land from the Hawaiians and were exploiting both the land and the immigrant laborers for profit. When Hastings realizes Kiyo and friends intend to sell the coconuts (they pick more than they could possibly eat themselves), he chases them off his property. Mr. and Mrs. Oyama also scold Kiyoshi for selling some mangos he's "stolen" from a tree at the kindergarten. The Oyamas believe in making money "honestly," that is, according to the rules of Confucian morality, Christianity, and the Plantation. All three sets of beliefs promote obedience to authority as a primary virtue, and the Oyamas believe firmly in obedience. They never question authority in a system designed to make it almost impossible for them to escape their poverty or pay off their debts, a system designed to exploit them and maintain inequality and injustice.

Tosh and Kiyo must look elsewhere for role models. One of the models for their rebellion is a woman, Obaban, whose death closes the second section of the novel. We are told she eloped with her first husband during the forty-nine day period of mourning for her father, an act of filial disrespect for which she was disowned--both because she

insulted the spirit of her father and because she married without family approval. Tosh explains to Kiyō: "So the family in Japan kicked her out for good, they cut her off and told her they considered her dead. Thass [sic] why she been come to Kahana" (17). Furthermore, Obaban leaves her first husband--another transgression against Confucian ethics--and remarries. Obaban is a rebel--one who acts according to her individual needs rather than her family obligations. Her actions foreshadow the rebellion of the two Oyama sons, though in the end neither son dares to make a complete break from the family, as Obaban had done.

Tosh searches for, but fails to find a way to pay off the family debt and win his freedom. He wants to go to school, then find a better job off the plantation, or at least get a better job on the plantation; but his parents refuse to send him to college. He takes up boxing in his spare time in hopes of making it big, but his dreams die with a defeat at the state boxing championships. Finally, out of desperation, he visits Mr. Takemoto, the Japanese school teacher, to ask him how long he must work for his parents:

We sat in the parlor with Mr. and Mrs. Takemoto, while Tosh told them about the family debt. "Father and mother think I should work for them indefinitely. But I don't want to throw away my life. How long must one work to repay one's obligation? I told them I'll work for another six years, and I'll live on my own after that, even if the debt isn't paid. I'll have worked ten years

then. Is ten years enough to repay one's debt of gratitude?"

"Hmmm," he rubbed the fingers of his right hand, then left hand, "Hmmm, I guess so. Since this is America and you have a different view of life, hmmm, I guess ten years is about all a parent can ask of a son for the payment of a debt of gratitude." (67)

Tosh rejoices that this authority in the Japanese community sees the situation his way, and after years of complaining about and protesting the injustice of working to pay off someone else's debt, he resigns himself to this compromise--working for the family for ten years before being free. Later in the novella, when he marries, his wife, like his mother, must also help with the family debt.

While Tosh compromises, Kiyo, at first less rebellious than his older brother, continues to look for an escape. He discounts the possibility of ever changing the plantation system. The workers can never achieve more equality or higher pay by striking because the plantation owners know how to keep the workers divided: the ethnic groups are housed in separate camps and pitted against each other--when the Japanese strike, the Filipinos are hired to break the strike; when the Filipinos strike, the Japanese are used to break the strike. Those who support strikes are fired. Unlike the Nisei in other versions of the success story, Kiyo is not keen about education as a means of escaping

plantation poverty:

But for a Japanese there were no jobs except the plantation, unless you went into business for yourself. Even if you went to college, all you could be was a grammar school teacher, and if lucky, a high school teacher. Unless your family had enough money to send you to dental or medical college, and then you came back and practiced in your old hometown. (71)

Like Tosh, Kiyo turns to boxing for a while, but his career is cut short by World War II. Kiyo is desperate. He struggles to repress, and succeeds at repressing, his raging sexuality and any thoughts of marriage to an admiring Sachan, because he knows marriage will trap him on the plantation as it has trapped Tosh.

Unlike in earlier success stories, no benefactor comes along to help Kiyo or the Oyama family out. When World War II breaks out, he decides to join the army to escape the plantation: "Everybody in Kahana was dying to get out of this icky shit-hole, and here was his chance delivered on a silver platter. Besides, once you fought, you earned the right to complain and participate, you earned a right to a future" (98). But it is not military service, the G.I. Bill, and college that provide a way out, as they did for many Nisei (including Daniel Inouye). At Schofield Barracks, he finds a quicker way to retire the family debt: cheating at dice. He learns how to beat the odds at gambling by

padrolling--throwing the dice in unison "like the wheels of a cart" (99), so they wouldn't bounce and only certain numbers would come up. After winning \$3,200 padrolling, he is forced to throw the dice against the wall by one of the guys who has covered his bet. Kiyo gets lucky and throws an eleven and wins the \$6,000 needed to pay off the family debt. Kiyo tries to rationalize his cheating:

And it wasn't really cheating, not like marked cards or loaded dice anyway. Besides, if I didn't take their money, another padroller would've. It was their fault if they couldn't spot it. In gambling it was dog eat dog, every dog was after something for nothing, you never gave a dog an even break.

But no matter how many excuses I came up with, I felt bad. (103)

The reader feels bad, too, especially because Kiyo, in order to pay off the family debt, has to cheat other Nisei (who are perhaps just as poor as he is) rather than cheat the plantation owners who have exploited them. Earlier in the novella, Kiyo acknowledges the importance of honesty and community. When his American school teacher Snooky asks Kiyo to name a primary virtue (one that cannot be used for evil purposes), Kiyo answers "honesty" (36). Mr. Takemoto, the Japanese school teacher had also spoken with Kiyo about the value of honesty: "'Honesty . . . is the glue to any society. Without it the best society falls apart. Dishonesty is almost always dishonesty about money. That's

why the merchant class is considered the lowest in Japan, below the samurai, farmer, and artisan. Without honesty there can be no trust, no sincerity'" (66). Later, Kiyo criticizes the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor because the Japanese are being dishonest, attacking without warning. Mr. Takemoto can only defend the Japanese by saying that they did it for their economic survival--the same motive that Kiyo has for his own dishonesty. At the end of the novella, the reader feels that Kiyo, by cheating the other Nisei in the dice game, has violated not only his belief in honesty, but the sense of community which he praises earlier:

There was another thing I'd come to like about the camp. The hundred Japanese families were like one big family. Everybody knew everybody else, everybody was friendly, nobody beat up anybody. I would've gotten into a couple of fights if I were a new student at Pepelau, but the guys in Kahana were open and friendly from the start. They made you feel welcome and invited you to go to the mountains or the ocean. Nobody was left out."
(45)

Despite his feeling for community, Kiyo decides to cheat to save himself and his family. (As he says earlier, it's a "dog eat dog" world and "you never gave a dog an even break.")

Just before leaving for army training at Schofield Barracks, Kiyo reflects back on Snooky's discussions of

freedom:

He talked of freedom, while everybody else talked of duty and obligation. It was like we were born in a cage and Snooky was coaxing us to fly off, not run away, but be on our own and taste the freedom and danger of the open space. Rumor was that he had gone to Spain to fight in the Civil War.

Snooky gave me a glimpse of what it could be. I would have to get out and be on my own even if the old man was successful and he was doing me the favors, even if the plantation made me its highest luna. Freedom was freedom from other people's shit, and shit was shit no matter how lovingly it was dished, how high or low it came from. Shit was the glue which held a group together, and I was going to have no part of any shit or any group. (96)

In Kiyo's embittered, cynical view of life, shit replaced honesty as the glue that hold society together. Kiyo interprets Snooky's freedom as personal freedom, not as freedom that would result from social justice and equality. Of course, Snooky was talking not about saving one's self, but about the second kind of freedom, about leveling the plantation hierarchy through political action. But for Kiyo, the system is too powerful to be overthrown, and the only way out is to save oneself. What the novella illustrates is the impossibility of achieving social freedom in an oppressive, unchallengeable system. It is both a critique of the system and an acknowledgement of the dishonesty necessary for a person to escape from the lowest levels of that system. Kiyo's final act doesn't challenge

the system, merely confirms its power.

Kiyo is not the only one that gives into vice as a means of escaping from the bottom of the plantation pyramid. In the first section of the novella "I'll Crack Your Head Kotsun," Kiyo's friend Makoto always has money to buy treats--"pie, ice cream, or chow fun" (5), luxuries to the kids whose parents can't afford to buy them bicycles or footballs. Makoto also takes his buddies to movies and invites them over for lunch. Makoto's father is the only Japanese in the plantation camp who drives a car. Kiyoshi's parents disapprove of his friendship with Makoto and order him to stop playing with the older boy, but are reluctant to tell Kiyo exactly why he shouldn't play with Makoto, except that Makoto's parents are "bad." At the end of the story, however, we find out that Makoto's father is a pimp and his mother is a prostitute servicing the Filipino bachelors living on the plantation.

All I Asking For Is My Body is a much more candid portrayal of Japanese American life in Hawaii than the earlier Hawaii Nisei success stories. Murayama notes that one of the reasons for repressing the negative in the Japanese American community is the desire of the community to maintain "face": "Face was pretending to be perfect or there was nothing wrong, and either way the losing of face

meant exposure and shame" (90). Part of Murayama's purpose in writing his novella was to pull down the wall of "face" the Japanese American community in Hawaii put up around itself with the success story in order to present themselves as good Americans. Murayama adopted a "no shame" policy in telling his story--talking about family debt, family fights, family failure, prostitution, gambling, and dishonesty, and not about filial children and self-sacrificing parents. In its criticism of Issei parents, Murayama's novella is similar to early 20th century Jewish American versions of the success story which depicted the immigrants or their children rejecting Old World traditions in order to make it in America (Fine, The City, the Immigrant, and American Fiction, 1880-1920). Although the novella ends with Kiyo paying off the family debt, the motive is not gratitude to his parents, but the achievement of freedom from family obligations.

Chapter Four

Down and Out in California

Unlike the early post-war Hawaii Nisei writers, the early post-war West Coast Nisei writers John Okada, Toshio Mori, and Hisaye Yamamoto, told stories not about Issei and Nisei who had climbed up the ladder of success, but those who were down and out or outcasts. Okada's Ichiro Yamada (No-No Boy 1957) is an outcast because he had been a no-no boy during the war. The characters in Mori's and Yamamoto's fiction are outcasts because of poverty, racism, sexism, or refusal to conform to social norms. The West Coast Nisei writers were attracted to the figure of the outcast because they saw in it the condition of Japanese Americans. Responding to a question from Russell Leong about stories focusing on misfits ("people who followed their own callings despite the odds, despite lack of acceptance by their families or neighbors"), Mori made the connection between himself as an unpublished writer, the outcasts he depicted, and the Nisei as racial outcasts in American society:

Yes, I believe I associated with a lot of unknowns or those who had ambitions in various fields but were not recognized. I felt akin to these fellows because I too was an unpublished writer. I felt sympathetic because everybody else was struggling to be recognized, not only myself, but these people who were trying their best to be accepted in the general field. As you quite remember the Japanese were more or less discriminated against in the early periods and the

students who took specialized fields had very little opportunities of being accepted in unions or in general practice. (100)

Mori's compassion for the down-and-out was rooted in the Japanese virtue of ninjo ("human kindness"), and he often embodied this virtue in the figure of an Issei woman or mother--a figure that reminds the reader of other mothers in ethnic writing, characters like Louise Erdrich's Marie Kashpaw and Lulu Nanapush (Love Medicine) and Toni Morrison's Pilate (Song of Solomon), who protect and nurture children of the ethnic group at odds with a cruel and racist society.

Like Mori, Yamamoto appealed for compassion for down and out Issei and Nisei. She also often broadened her appeal by writing about other outcasts in American society--both ethnic (Blacks, Filipino immigrants) and social (alcoholics), but her special concern was for Issei wives and Nisei daughters. While she understood the frustrations of Issei men trying support families in a country that had stacked the odds against them, she was highly critical of the oppressive and often abusive dominance of the husband/father in the Japanese American family. (One of her early Nisei male critics asked her to "go easier on the father figure" ["Writing," 131]). She considered it tragic that these husbands/fathers, victims of racism and

exploitation, victimized their wives and daughters rather than struggled against the system that victimized them all. Her compassion for the downtrodden had its roots in both the discrimination she and her family and community felt in America and in Christianity. In her essay "Writing" (1968), she alludes to her search for a way to apply in everyday life the compassionate morality of Christ's Sermon on the Mount that is at the heart of her writing.

Yamamoto's stories offer less solace than Mori's. There is no mother figure in her stories to comfort the outcast. But although the narrators of her stories often seem to despair over the dismal human condition they describe, the compassionate writer behind the narrators reminds us that human beings could be less cruel than they often are.

Mori's Community of Outsiders

Yokohama, California--the fictional pre-war Japanese American community Mori created in his short stories collected in Yokohama, California (1949) and The Chauvinist (1979)--appears at first to be the ideal American community. In "Lil' Yokohama," Mori describes the community engaged in normal, wholesome activities--they get married, open businesses, buy new cars, furnish homes, go on Sunday

outings, read the newspaper on the porch; babies are born, kids grow up and go off to college, the old get sick and die. The community comes together on a Sunday for the national pastime, a baseball game between the Alameda Taiiku and the San Jose Asahis. The only conflict in the community is the competition on the baseball field, between the two teams and the two heroes--Slugger Hironaka of Alameda and the southpaw from San Jose, Sets Mizutani. The game becomes symbolic of the community itself--fun-loving and friendly.

The community is industrious and productive. Many of the adults in Mori's stories are engaged in the gentle work of growing and selling flowers (Mori's parents' occupation) and the children are taught to help out: Tatsuo, the seven year old in "The Six Rows of Pompons," gets his first work experience when he earns twenty-five cents for taking care of six rows of pompons, with the help and prodding of Uncle Hiroshi. In "Business at Eleven," Johnny becomes an entrepreneur at age eleven, buying old magazines from the narrator and selling them at a profit; his ambition is to own the biggest bookstore in the Bay Area.

The Nodas, the ideal family in the community, are close and loving. Mr. and Mrs. Noda have seven children and are committed to nurturing and protecting them. "Nodas in America" portrays Papa Noda sitting contentedly in his

living room, smiling over his children, telling them amusing stories. "'Seven children,'" he says proudly, "'Seven treasures. I am not famous. I work all day and I am poor. But I have seven plants. Seven healthy, growing plants'" (110).

The Issei and Nisei are Puritan in their sexual morality and appealing in their innocence (not the threats to white women white racists claimed Japanese Americans were). Sexuality is confined within marriage, for the purpose of producing children. Male-female romance is in the background of a few of the stories, but never the focus of any; Nisei sexuality is mentioned only once, in "The All American Girl," where it is characterized as "ugly." (Perhaps there was more about Nisei sexuality in the original manuscript: Mori revealed in an interview with Peter Horikoshi that Yokohama, California was edited by his publisher from about sixty to twenty stories for a "library audience" and that what was "weeded out" was "the sordid, the rough side of life" [479]).

But although Mori idealizes the Issei and Nisei as wholesome and hardworking, Yokohama, California is not a collection of success stories. The Issei struggle financially. In "Three Japanese Mothers," three Issei mothers discuss the worries and burdens of raising

families. "Finances at Doi's" questions the myth of America as a land of opportunity: Satoru Doi makes money playing the stock market--but only in his dreams because he's too poor to risk buying the stocks he underlines in the newspaper's financial section; ironically, when he does invest a little of his money in the market, he loses it and becomes poorer. In "The Chessman," Mori portrays the tragedy of competition for scarce work during the depression: the owner of a nursery decides he must choose between Nakagawa, a loyal, middle-aged worker, and Murai, a new young, stronger worker. Because Murai outworks Nakagawa and Nakagawa hurts his back, the owner decides to let Nakagawa go. Murai is no villain in this story--he just wants the job because he wants to marry his sweetheart and plans to learn the nursery business and eventually start a nursery of his own. On the other hand, Nakagawa has three children, only one of whom he can send to college, and a wife who is depending on him to bring home money to pay the rent and gas bill; he has no other prospects for work. In "Operator! Operator!" (Chauvinist), Gunsuke Iwamura, a desperate former migrant farm laborer too old to do field work, places an ad for gardening work in the paper and waits in his room for a customer to call. The phone never rings. Meanwhile, the husband of the woman who rents Iwamura a room tells her the old man has to move out. This lonely, penniless, homeless

Issei man represents the immigrant who provided the labor to develop agriculture in California, but who never earned enough money to live decently or provide for himself in old age.

Along with the down and out, we find individuals at odd with commercialism and conventional notions of practical success. In "Say It With Flowers," Teruo, a Nisei flower shop clerk, questions the honesty of selling old flowers to customers when he knows there are fresher flowers kept in the back. Although the boss and his assistant explain to Teruo that the business can't make a profit unless they sell the oldest flowers in the shop first, Teruo remains unconvinced and eventually gives away some flowers so that the boss will fire him. After he's fired, he returns his wages for the week and leaves cheerfully, happy that he no longer has to lie to customers.

In other stories, Mori depicted rebellious young Nisei at odds with their conventional parents. Akira Yano ("Akira Yano") wants to be a writer instead of an engineer and runs off to New York to pursue his career against his parents' wishes. Tom Fukunaga ("Japanese Hamlet," Chauvinist) is disowned by his parents because he neglects a solid career in hopes of becoming a Shakespearean actor. (Apparently trying to make his stories "universal," Mori did not develop

uniquely Nisei angles on these stories--we are not told in the stories, for instance, that because of discrimination, there were no prospects for Nisei engineers, or for Nisei writers or Shakespearean actors either.) In "Between You and Me" (Chauvinist), a more violent quarrel of unknown origin erupts between a father and son, and the son leaves home.

Mori had a special affection for Issei eccentrics and loners who were searching for places in society, for validation of their existence. In Yokohama, California, we meet Motoji Tsunoda, an Issei bachelor laundryman who loves to expound on philosophy and religion in a comically incoherent manner ("The Seventh Street Philosopher"); Tsumura, a laundry truck driver who spends his days off in the park alone laughing to himself ("He Who Has a Laughing Face"); Sessue Matoi, an alcoholic who believes most people are living in eggshells ("The Eggs of the World"); a young Toshio Mori, who spends a lonely night wandering about the city with nothing to do, no one to visit, and no place to go ("Toshio Mori"); Hatsuye, a young Nisei girl who has little hope in life because of her ugliness, made more painful because her sister is pretty and popular ("Tomorrow and Today"). In "Slant Eyed Americans," Mori wrote about the Nisei who were outcasts after Pearl Harbor because of their

ancestry. In The Chauvinist, we meet Takanoshin Sakoda, who pretends he is deaf in order to "survive the living"--that is, put up with the trivial gossip and scoldings of his family ("The Chauvinist"); and Togo Satoshima, an aspiring shakuhachi player who is rejected by his family and neighbors because of his wretched playing, but who perseveres for his love of music ("The Distant Call of the Deer").

To all of these characters--the down-and-out, the rebellious, the eccentrics, the loners, the outcast--Mori gives dignity and significance with his plain, compassionate prose. In each of them he saw Every Person and the fate of human beings who are born, struggle, and die, ultimately alone. His portraits capture the sad beauty of humble, ephemeral human existence, called by the Japanese mono no aware--"the pathos of things." Of Tsumura, the laundry truck driver, Mori writes:

And this is the greatest thing happening today: that of a laundry truck driver or an equivalent to such who is living and coming in and out of parks, the homes, the alleys, the dives, the offices, the rendezvous, the vices, the churches, the operas, the movies; all seeking unconsciously, unawaredly, the hold of this sadness, the loneliness, the barrenness, which is not elusive but hovering and pervading and seeping into the flesh and vegetation alike, churning out potentially the greatness, the weakness, and the heroism, the cowardice; and therefore leaving unfinished all the causes of sadness, unhappiness, and sorrows of the earth behind in the laughter and the mute

silence of time. ("He Who Has a Laughing Face,"
126)

Mori believed the worst character traits were selfishness and greed because they disrupted the harmony of family and community. In "The Brothers" (Yokohama), two brothers quarrel over a desk their father has given the older one. The younger one tries to take over the desk and a series of arguments and fights ensues: "One of Tsuneo's eyes was blackened and George bore marks of scratches and bruises from numerous kicks" (160). The story, alluding to the Manchurian Affair (Japan's occupation of Manchuria), is allegorical, meant to expose the selfishness and greed of mankind and the resulting aggression and violence. In "Man with the Bulging Pockets" (Chauvinist), a character called "The Old Man" creates dissension by trying to steal away the children who follow a kindly old grandfather popular for giving away candy and telling stories. The story concludes:

The Old Man and [Grandpa] belonged to one big circle where no ill feelings and furtive deeds need enter. They should join hands and rejoice in the heart of a child. They should inspire and sing in the oneness of hope, but no. They were partisans, and the split in their circle was the enigma and blot of all mankind. (136)

Written in 1944 in Topaz internment camp and set at Tanforan Race Track, where the Issei and Nisei of the Bay Area were ordered to assemble before being sent out to Topaz, the story is Mori's expression of despair over the selfishness

that divided the Japanese American community, the people of America, and the nations of the world.

While blaming human selfishness for the disruption of social harmony, Mori praised characters who exhibited the virtues of tolerance and compassion, virtues that were the foundation of his ideal community. In "My Mother Stands on Her Head," a family discovers that the peddler who brings the groceries not only charges them much more than Safeway market does, but actually cheats them by padding the bill. The father orders the mother to stop buying from the peddler, but the mother ends up buying from him anyway because she knows he has come "down the ladder of success." She pities this man who has served her for twenty years and she feels an obligation to him for his years of service. "The Woman Who Makes Swell Doughnuts" (Yokohama) sings the praises of a woman who welcomes the narrator into her house "when his spirits wanes, when hell is loose" (23), and offers him a freshly made doughnut. Her welcome makes him feel a part of her, as if by eating her doughnut, he is also eating her, becoming a part of her life, partaking of her warmth. He calls her "Mama." This spirit of warmth and compassion was what Mori admired most in human beings. He wrote about characters like the woman who makes swell donuts in gratitude and with a feeling of oneness with her and all

the people of the world:

. . . Most stories would end with her death, would wait till she is peacefully dead and peacefully at rest but I cannot wait that long. . . Instead I take today to talk of her and her wonderful doughnuts when the earth is something to her, when the people from all parts of the earth may drop in and taste the flavor, her flavor, which is everyone's and all flavor; talk to her, sit with her, and also taste the silence of her room and the silence that is herself; and finally go away to hope and keep alive what is alive in her, on earth and in men, expressly myself. (25)

Mori said in an interview with Peter Horikoshi that his purpose in writing was to provide a truer picture of Japanese America than existed at the time (474). He did in fact undercut the negative stereotypes of Japanese Americans that were current in the white media when he was growing up. He repressed some of the negative side of Japanese American life because he wanted Americans to see the Issei and Nisei as fellow Americans whom they could trust and depend on as neighbors. At the same time, he recommended warmly the virtue of compassion, hoping his readers would sympathize with Japanese Americans and all outcasts and victims. The central figure in his community is the woman who makes swell doughnuts: like the author himself and unlike racists and profiteers, she invites the outcast into her house to share her warmth and wealth rather than trying to keep him out.

Yamamoto's Earthquake Country

Hisaye Yamamoto depicted a grimmer Japanese American reality than Toshio Mori. The characters in her stories struggle to survive as whole people in a world full of accidental terrors made more terrible by moral weaknesses inherent in the human character and a socio-economic system that allows individuals or groups to abuse or exploit other individuals or groups. This terrifying world is delineated in "Yoneko's Earthquake" (1951), in which a ten-year-old Nisei child--Yoneko Hosoume--bravely tries to come to terms with the incomprehensible sufferings of her family. The central event in the story, set during the Depression, is an earthquake that shakes California on March 10, 1933: ". . . a tremendous roar came out of nowhere and the Hosoume house began shuddering violently as though some giant had seized it in his two hands and was giving it a good shaking" (183). The earthquake exacerbates an already dismal situation: the Hosoume family, struggling farmers, partly because the Issei are prohibited from owning land in America, are forced to live outdoors.

In this terrifying, unstable world, Yoneko searches for a source of stability and finds none. Yoneko's faith in God,

never very deep (she wonders, at one point, who God's favorite movie star is), is shaken out of her for good:

Immediately on learning what all the commotion was about, she began praying to God to end this violence. She entreated God, flattered Him, wheedled Him, commanded Him, but He did not listen to her at all--inexorably, the earth went on rumbling. After three solid hours of silent, desperate prayer, without any results whatsoever, Yoneko began to suspect that God was either powerless, callous, downright cruel, or nonexistent. In the murky night, under a strange moon wearing a pale ring of light, she decided upon the last as the most plausible theory. (184)

Yoneko's loss of faith in God is accompanied by the diminishment of her father as a source of stability in the household. Even before the earthquake, his authority is tenuous: Yoneko finds Marpo, the Filipino field hand, more interesting than her father and gives Marpo the delightful appellation "Humming Wing," which sounds something like his last name. Marpo is not only a good worker, but an athlete (with a pair of track shoes and a Charles Atlas muscle-builder), an artist, a musician, and a radio technician. When the children begin to spend more time with Marpo's radio than with their father, Mr. Hosoume has to buy the radio from Marpo in order to maintain his prestige with them.

Mr. Hosoume authority is destroyed for good by the earthquake. His car touches a dangling live wire, and he is

electrocuted and never recovers: "He spent the larger part of his later life weakly, wandering about the house or fields and lying down frequently to rest because of splitting headaches and sudden dizzy spells" (183). Frustrated by his condition, he becomes a tyrant. When Yoneko's girl friends come over to play with paper dolls, he terrorizes the girls, sticking his finger up his nose and threatening to rub snot on their dolls. When Yoneko tries on some nail polish, he reproves her by saying "'You look like a Filipino'"; the narrators adds sarcastically "it was another irrefutable fact among Japanese in general that Filipinos in general were a gaudy lot" (185). When Mrs. Hosoume defends Yoneko, Mr. Hosoume attacks her, first verbally, then physically. When Marpo tries to defend Mrs. Hosoume, Mr. Hosoume orders him out of the house and later fires him.

Mr. Hosoume's next victim is an unborn child. Mrs. Hosoume becomes pregnant, apparently by Marpo rather than by Mr. Hosoume. Mr. Hosoume seems unaware that the child is not his, but he wants it aborted perhaps because they cannot support another child. On the way to the hospital, Mr. Hosoume runs over a collie and keeps on driving, unable to feel much compassion for anything. Yoneko, on the other hand, "wanting suddenly to vomit, looked back . . . (188).

The story ends with another tragic death. Soon after the abortion, Yoneko's younger brother, Seigo, falls ill. The family doctor, another potential source of help, also fails the family. During his first visit, he "smiled and said Seigo would be fine in the morning," but he has to be called back and when he returns, he can do nothing to save Seigo. Mrs. Hosoume blames herself for her son's death, believing she is being punished by God for the abortion. Earlier in the story, we are told Yoneko had admired her mother's beauty: ". . . she had at times been so struck with her mother's appearance that she had dropped to her knees and mutely clasped her mother's legs in her arms" (186). After Seigo's death, Yoneko's mother loses her hold over Yoneko. All Mrs. Hosoume talks about is God and Seigo. Full of guilt, she tells Yoneko, "'Never kill a person, Yoneko, because if you do, God will take from you someone you love'"; Yoneko responds glibly, "'Oh that, . . . I don't believe in that, I don't believe in God'" (190). Of course, Yoneko's declaration is undercut by the fact that she is only ten years old, but there is no hint from the narrator that after Yoneko grows up, God's order will become more comprehensible and acceptable to her.

"Yoneko's Earthquake" presents an Issei-Nisei world of almost unmitigated suffering, caused by poverty, racism,

natural disaster, and the failings of a frustrated father. At the end of the story, Mr. Hosoume, perhaps feeling guilty about his wife's abortion, does manage to feel some compassion for his wife: "Mr. Hosoume was very gentle with [Mrs. Hosoume] and when Yoneko accidentally caused her to giggle once, he nodded and said, 'Yes, that's right, Yoneko, we must make your mother laugh and forget about Seigo'" (189). Yamamoto wants us to feel some sympathy for the Issei father, whose tribulations she understood. But neither the father nor the mother can offer Yoneko any comfort: she is left to her own devices, composing songs to repress the unhappy thoughts of her younger brother's sudden death.

The figure of the failed Issei husband/father, a victim of poverty, racism, and misfortune who becomes a tyrannical victimizer of his family, also appears in "Seventeen Syllables" (1949). The Issei husband, Mr. Hayashi, a simple-minded, frustrated farmer, begins to resent his wife when she takes up haiku writing with a passion--her only escape from the dreariness of their farm life. When she wins a newspaper haiku contest and the editor of the newspaper comes to present her with a prize, she leaves the urgent work of sorting just-harvested fruit in order to drink tea and discuss haiku with him. Mr. Hayashi sends their daughter Rosie to call his wife back to the fields,

and when his wife sends Rosie back to tell her husband she'll be there in a minute, Mr. Hayashi explodes: he rushes to the house, sends the haiku editor packing, and smashes and burns his wife's prize.

Mrs. Hayashi, a woman with some literary talent, seems ill-matched with her simple-minded husband. At the end of the story, she recounts to her daughter how her marriage to Hayashi came about: in Japan, she had become pregnant by the son of a well-to-do family. Their marriage was forbidden because her family was without money--her father was a gambler and an alcoholic. After she gave birth to a stillborn son, her family treated her as an outcast and she became depressed. She could escape the oppression of her family only through suicide or by immigrating to America. By choosing to immigrate to America as a picture bride, she fell into another trap--an unhappy marriage.

Mrs. Hayashi is not without fault--she marries Hayashi only in order to escape her unhappy life in Japan. But she is a victim four times over. First, she is a victim of class prejudice--the son of the well-to-do family would not marry her because she was from a poor family. She is also a victim of the double standard for sexual behavior, ostracized by family and society for sexual indulgence, while her lover was not. Third, she is a victim of the

oppressiveness of the Japanese family which punishes transgression by making the transgressor feel eternally guilty for shaming the family. And finally she is a victim of her simple-minded, abusive husband. Writing haiku makes her life meaningful, but her husband tries to deny her even that.

As in "Yoneko's Earthquake," Mrs. Hayashi tries to impart the lesson of her bitter life to her daughter: "'Rosie,' she said urgently, 'Promise me you will never marry!'" The condition of Mrs. Hayano, a neighbor who is the mother of four girls, seems to confirm Mrs. Hayashi's warning about marriage: ". . . reputed to have been the belle of her native village," Mrs. Hayano has been broken by four birthings and now made "her way about a room, stooped, slowly shuffling, violently trembling (always trembling)" (491). But Rosie is shocked by her mother's request. Earlier in the story Rosie, a high school sophomore, tasted the sweet promise of love in the kiss of Jesus Carrascos, the son of a Mexican couple the Hayashis have hired to help with the harvest. Jesus invites Rosie to meet him in the packing shed, promising her a secret. In the shed, he stuns her with a kiss:

Thus, kissed by Jesus, Rosie fell, for the first time, entirely victim to a helplessness delectable beyond speech. But the terrible, beautiful sensation lasted no more than a second, and the

reality of Jesus' lips and tongue and teeth and hands made her pull away with such strength that she nearly tumbled. (493)

Rosie, intrigued by Jesus' promise (and his looks and good nature), does what is forbidden and is rewarded by a "terrible, beautiful" experience. When her mother tries to extract from her the promise of never to marry, she does not see the tragedy of her mother's life as her own, even though she has taken a step toward the kind of passionate involvement with a male that led to her mother's downfall. She tries to pull herself free from her mother, answering glibly, "'Yes, yes, I promise,'" and her mother, realizing her insincerity, calls her a fool. Rosie, still young and filled with the promise of love, cannot as yet understand the suffering growing up female will bring.

In two of Yamamoto's stories, "The Brown House" (1951) and "Las Vegas Charley" (1961), the Issei male figure becomes a burden on the family because of an addiction to gambling. In "The Brown House," Mr. Hattori, "seeing no future in strawberries," turns to gambling to try to get rich. Frustrated by his gambling losses and looking for a scapegoat, he berates his wife for allowing a black man to hide in their car during a police raid. Mr. Hattori despises Blacks in spite of a shared underclass status. (The gambling house, Yamamoto reports, is a true democracy

of the poor--"white, yellow, brown, and black" scattering in all directions when the police arrive.) Husband and wife argue until Mr. Hattori beats his wife "so severely that he had to take her to the doctor to have a few ribs taped" (119). Mrs. Hattori tries to rebel, leaving her husband and taking with her the two youngest of their five sons, but when Mr. Hattori refuses to give up the older boys, Mrs. Hattori is forced to go back. Her husband promises to gamble less frequently, but continues to visit the brown house. At the end of the story we are told that Mrs. Wu, whose husband runs the gambling games, "had never before encountered a woman with such bleak eyes" (122).

Like Mr. Hattori, Kazuyuki Matsumoto, the central character in "Las Vegas Charley" (1961) becomes addicted to gambling. Yamamoto calls Kazuyuki/Charley "tsumaranai"--worthless. Early in his life, while he is still in Japan, Charley is wounded by a nail and marked for life with "a deep purple scar" (101), symbolic of his flawed character and a foreshadowing of future sufferings. His life is a series of misfortunes: after immigrating to America, he discovers the lot of a farm laborer and farmer is sheer drudgery; his wife dies giving birth to a second son; he loses his farm when the Japanese Americans are interned; finally, his first son dies fighting for America

in Europe. After the war, he ends up in Las Vegas, a dishwasher and a gambler. His life in his old age is made meaningful only by his hopes of hitting a jackpot. As his health worsens, he becomes a burden to his second son Noriyuki and his daughter-in-law because he hasn't saved any money. When he finally dies of cancer of the liver, the doctor tries to endow his life with some meaning by suggesting Charley at least enjoyed himself. Charley's son "could not quite agree" (121); still he (along with Yamamoto herself) can't completely condemn Charley. There is sympathy, too, in the mixed emotions he feels toward his father:

. . . hate for rejecting him as a child; disgust and exasperation over that weak moral fiber; embarrassment when people asked what his father did for a living, and finally, something akin to compassion, when he came to understand that his father was not an evil man, but only an inadequate one with the most shining intentions, only one man among so many who lived from day to day as best they could, limited, restricted, by the meager gifts Fate or God had doled out to them. . . .
(121)

Like Toshio Mori's eccentric outcasts, Charley is a part of every person: Yamamoto seems to ask, "Can we deny him without denying a part of our own humanity?"

"The Legend of Miss Sasagawara" (1950), set in Poston internment camp, also depicts an oppressive Issei male. Unlike Mr. Hattori and Charley, though, the Reverend

Sasagawara is oppressive not because of an addiction to vice, but a desire for moral perfection. The victim in this story is his Nisei daughter, a former ballet dancer who is forced to live in the same room with her father because of the internment: we witness through the eyes of a young female narrator the mental deterioration of Miss Sasagawara. After Miss Sasagawara is sent to a sanitarium, the narrator discovers a poem written by Miss Sasagawara about her father, "a man whose lifelong aim had been to achieve Nirvana, that saintly state of moral purity and universal wisdom" (22). Out of touch with the suffering of real human beings, including his own daughter's, Rev. Sasagawara lives in a world of abstract perfection. He is described as someone who "always seemed to be wandering lostly":

This may have been because he walked so slowly, with such negligible steps, or because he wore perpetually an air of bemusement, never talking directly to a person, as though, being what he was he could not stop for an instant his meditation on the higher life. (12)

The narrator implies the Reverend's quest for moral perfection and his neglect of his daughter's emotional needs has driven his daughter insane.

Yamamoto was critical not just of the moral failings and oppressiveness of tyrannical Issei males, but of white bigotry and the special moral failing of her female

characters and herself--an inability to resist oppression. Unlike the Issei male, who reacts to his oppression by victimizing others beneath him in the social hierarchy, the females in Yamamoto's stories, tend to be, as we have seen, passive and weak, unable to speak out or fight back. In "Wilshire Bus" (1950), Yamamoto describes the bigotry of a drunken white man who verbally abuses a Chinese American woman on a bus and the silence of a Nisei woman named Esther who witnesses his bigotry, but does nothing. At first, Esther gloats because she, of Japanese ancestry, is not included in drunk's abusive anti-Chinese remarks; then she feels shabby for gloating and for not having done anything to help the abused woman: ". . . she was filled once again in her life with the infuriatingly helpless, insidiously sickening sensation of there being in the world nothing solid she could put her finger on, nothing solid she could come to grips with, nothing solid she could sink her teeth into, nothing solid" (22).

The same feeling of angry helplessness is expressed thirty-five years later in Yamamoto's autobiographical essay "Fire in Fontana" (1985): while working for the Los Angeles Tribune, a black newspaper, she heard the pleas of a Black husband and father who wanted the paper to publicize the threats he had received after moving into a white

neighborhood. After his house was burned to the ground and his whole family killed, Yamamoto lamented her editorial objectivity in writing up the story. ("Anyone noticing the story about the unwanted family in Fontana would have taken it with a grain of salt.") She tells us her failure to really help (save?) the Black family drove her to identify herself with a helpless, crippled, retarded boy in a wheelchair, whom she had noticed in the neighborhood.

In "Life Among Oilfields" (1979), apparently a chapter from her autobiography, Yamamoto depicts the poverty of her childhood and an early occurrence of helpless anger. The climax of the piece is an accident in which her brother Jemo is injured by a car driven by a white couple. Her parents try to get the couple to help pay the hospital bill, even enlisting the help of a lawyer, but the couple refuses, blaming the accident on Jemo. Yamamoto, in one of the few angry outbursts in her writing (she usually tempers her anger with irony), writes: "Were we Japanese in a category with animals then, to be run over and left beside the road to die?" Yamamoto associates the callous white couple with the privileged rich: the essay opens with a quote from Fitzgerald's Great Gatsby on the carelessness of the rich and closes by identifying the couple who run over Jemo with Scott and Zelda.

In "Fire in Fontana," Yamamoto noted that after the trauma of failing to be of help to the black family burned to death in Fontana, she quit working for the Tribune and eventually went travelling: "I guess you could say I was realizing my dream of travelling forever (escaping responsibility forever)" (17). One of the places she sought out and visited was a Catholic community in New York: "It was the Catholic Worker that had stuck in my craw for so many years, with its non-violence, voluntary poverty, love for the land, and attempt to put into practice the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount, which beckoned me now like a letter from home. So . . . I headed for Peter Maurin Farm on Staten Island" ("Writing," 132). At the farm, she seemed to have wrestled with the question of how to live morally in a world full of misery and suffering. That wrestling is captured in her story "Epithalamium" (1960), in which a young Nisei woman named Yuki is forced to choose between the abstract ideals of the Catholicism and her passion for a handsome, alcoholic Italian sailor, Marco Cimarusti.

Like Yamamoto herself, Yuki has left her home in California in search of a more meaningful life and ends up at a Catholic community on Staten Island. The community, serving outcasts, is founded on abstract ideals:

" . . . all would live together in Christian love and voluntary poverty, working on the land

and studying together, accepting all who came because they had nowhere else to go--the alcoholics, the laicized priests, the mentally disturbed, the physically-handicapped, the unwed mothers, the rejected Trappists, the senile, the offscouring of the world" (60)

However, instead of dedicating herself to the celibacy that the community requires of its members, Yuki meets and falls for Marco, who has come to the community to seek help for his alcoholism. He seduces her on a beach owned by a nearby monastery:

. . . --it was there that she learned for herself (pushed down with insistence onto the rocky ground amidst the trees) about man's desire. She had not known that it would be so painful the first time, or so quick. She thought, I am being killed! (58)

The love affair is not romanticized--Yuki feels guilty and ashamed, as if being watched. When they make love outdoors, she's bitten by mosquitoes and her dress gets stained with mud. She is described as "a physical, moral, and spiritual ruin." She gets pregnant, miscarries, and bleeds for twenty days.

Yuki's passion/compassion for Marco conflicts with the ideal of celibacy promoted by the community's founder, Madame Marie. Madame Marie tries to dissuade Yuki from marrying Marco. She tells Yuki anecdotes about young women who found only misery after marrying men seeking help from the community; about the wise virgin who had resisted her

temptation and was now "leading a happy and useful life with a group of Catholic laywomen" (60); and then there is Madame Marie's autobiography telling the story of how she refused an agnostic lover and dedicated herself to the church.

Yuki is also sure her parents would disapprove of the marriage--because Marco is alcoholic and not Japanese. Yuki recalls her mother's attempt to match her with Michio-san: "'What's wrong with Michio-san? He's such a fine boy. He would make a good husband. College education and everything, and a good job as a draftsman for the City.'" (65). But Yuki doesn't want a boring life of material security; she wants passion and compassion, and that is what she thinks she's found with Marco. She feels physical attraction, which even the repressed Madame Marie can't help but feeling for Marco. ("Oh, he is wonderfully made!") Yuki admires his courage as well:

Yuki could not understand why she loved him. Because he represented all the courage, moral and physical, which she had always felt she lacked (she was afraid of elevators; she had never had the nerve to learn how to drive a car)? Because in spite of all he had been through (wounded three times in the recent war, he wore a good-sized crater just below his left rib), he retained an enormous vitality? (63)

Finally, she admires Marco's passionate way of speaking:

Yet, looking into Yuki's plain brown face, he would say in puzzlement, "'I can't understand it. It's like you've got a rope tied around my neck

that won't let go.' Or, 'If I had a million dollars, I'd just sit here all day long and just look at you!'" (64).

So unlike Madame Marie (and the Reverend in "The Legend of Miss Sasagawara"), Yuki chooses passion and compassion for someone of flesh and blood who needs her rather than a search for spiritual perfection. She marries, not without trepidation for her future. Marco is drunk on their wedding day. She knows she is disappointing her parents and Madame Marie. She wants to be hopeful, recalling Hopkin's poem "God's Grandeur" about morning springing forth "Because the Holy Ghost over the bent/World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings." But the day of her wedding is the Feast Day of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist; she recalls "that very last, that devastating line of Flaubert's Herodias, about Iaokanan's severed head: 'As it was very heavy, they carried it alternately'" (67); and she recalls the beheading of a Roman widow who had been converted to Christianity--both stories somehow alluding to her own dangerous fate. But the life of passion and compassion in the real world, fraught with dangers as it is, Yuki (and Hisaye) conclude, is morally preferable to life in a nunnery.

Yamamoto's disdain for abstract virtue and morality is expressed in "The High-Heeled Shoes" (1948), her first

published piece, an essay on sexual harassment. In this essay, we find the seeds of many of the concerns Yamamoto explores more fully in later stories and essays: the abuse of women, their helpless anger, and the inadequacy of abstract morality. The essay opens with a description of an obscene phone call and proceeds through the narrator's meditation on the right response to sexual harassment. The narrator recalls other ways in which men terrorize women: a man once grabbed her roommate Mary and threatened to rape her unless she kissed him, a crime which seemed to amuse the police; another man, naked except for high-heeled shoes, once beckoned the narrator from the open doorway of a car; men have groped at the narrator in a theater, on a streetcar, on a street. After recalling these incidents of sexual harassment, the narrator recalls the saintly Mohandas Gandhi's answer to the question "What is a woman to do when she is attacked by miscreants?":

"For me, there can be no preparation for violence. All preparation must be for non-violence if courage of the highest type is to be developed. Violence can only be tolerated as being preferable always to cowardice. Therefore I would have no boats ready for flight. . . . " Then he had soared on to the nobler implications of non-violence, reproaching the world for its cowardice in arming itself with the atomic bomb. (1083)

The narrator is, of course, contemptuous of this moral authority claiming to have the answers to life's questions:

I understood. When I first read these words, I had said, "Why, of course," smiling at the unnecessary alarms of some people. But I had read the words at a rarefied period, forgetting Mary, forgetting the high-heeled shoes. I decided now that the inspiration they gave to his probably feminine questioner was small potatoes. Of all the men suspected of sainthood, Gandhi, measured by his own testimony, should have been able to offer the most concrete comfort here. But he had evaded the issue. In place of the tangible example, vague words. Gandhi, in face of the ubiquitous womanly fear, was a failure. All he had really said was: don't even think about it. (1083)

Yamamoto also expressed her contempt for philosophy, moral or otherwise, which she associates with men, in a 1953 book review:

It has been said that women are organically incapable of genius, and with this I agree, since I am unable to think of a single name to squelch the rhetorical questions, "Has there ever been a woman philosopher?" (At the same time, I am rather puzzled as to what has been added to the world by all these male geniuses with their intricate and conflicting systems of thought.) (Quoted by E. Kim, Asian American Literature, 162).

Yamamoto eschewed abstract philosophies because she felt they didn't really comfort anyone. She believed such philosophies resulted from guilt, fear, sentimentality, and pomposity, and that they were believed in for the same reasons. Admittedly, she, too, didn't have all the answers, or any answers: at the end of "The High-Heeled Shoes," after examining a number of unsatisfactory responses to the

obscene phone call (sarcasm, condescension, serious advice, reporting it to the police), the narrator ends up acknowledging that she has discovered "another circle to put away with my collection of circles" (1085)--circles of unsolvable problems. But Yamamoto wanted to replace philosophy with "concrete comfort," such as there might be, from "tangible example" of how others had lived and suffered, that is, with her short stories, which, like Mori's, appeal to the reader to identify with and feel compassion for the oppressed.

Chapter Five

The Passive Stance in Nisei Writing

Peasants in Japan had to assemble,
kneel and put their bruised heads
to the ground when the daimyo
that provincial lord, passed with his entourage
through the villages. They were forbidden,
on penalty of death (usually a public
and swiftly unceremonious beheading),
to look up at his jouncing palanquin.
So the evacuation might be nothing. . . .
The low have always bowed to the mighty,
farmers like us were always willing
to give up lands, crops, and women
to whoever held the sword or the gun.
That was duty, a simple thing, and
powerlessness.

Garrett Hongo, "Willingly to Camp;
Mythologies of Relocation"

In response to exclusionists and racists who had accused the Japanese immigrants and their children of being disloyal and unassimilable, the writers of the Nisei success story created an identity for the Nisei that characterized them as patriotic, culturally assimilated, and ideally middle class. Some of the exclusionists and racists had also argued that the Issei and Nisei were incapable of becoming good American citizens because the political values of their ancestral culture were antithetical to the values of democracy: the Confucian ethics the Issei learned in Japan and taught to the Nisei in Japanese schools in America promoted unquestioning obedience to political authority,

that is, servility, rather than American values such as freedom, self-reliance, and equality. This attack on the political character of the Issei and Nisei was based on the assumption that they could not learn American democratic values because Confucian values had been deeply ingrained in their character, and presumably would be passed on to all future generations. The attack was motivated by the racial arrogance and exclusiveness of Anglo-Saxons who believed that only they were capable of fully appreciating freedom and self-government; other non-Anglo groups, like the Japanese, preferred servility.

Sensitive to the argument they could not learn to value democracy, some of the writers of the Nisei success story depicted the Nisei actively participating in politics. Margaret Harada (The Sun Shines on the Immigrant) and Daniel Inouye (Journey to Washington) described the Nisei not only voting, but running for office as well. Harada's fictional Jack Mori is elected to the Hawaii territorial legislature; Inouye makes politics his career and eventually ends up in the U.S. Senate. Bill Hosokawa (Nisei: the Quiet Americans) described how, after the war, the Nisei went to court to seek compensation for property losses during the internment and how the Japanese American Citizens League lobbied to get the law prohibiting naturalization of the Issei overturned.

But voting, running for office, lobbying, and bringing suit in court are part of the rational democratic process in America. The Issei and Nisei were also victims of irrational, un-democratic laws and governmental decrees. They lived through two periods of government-sanctioned injustices: the plantation experience in Hawaii and the experience of discrimination on the West Coast that began with the arrival of the Issei and culminated in the internment. In shaping a political identity for the Nisei, the Nisei writers had to come to terms with the question of how an American should respond to social injustice. What should a citizen do when political authority acts unjustly or refuses to redress its injustices? What should the Nisei have done, for example, when, they were subjected to abuses on the plantations? When they were forcefully removed from thier homes and interned without due process? When, as Hosokawa points out, they received only ten cents on the dollar in compensation for property losses during the internment? Should a citizen obey unjust authority, silently endure a wrong, accept a legal decision that seems unfair? Or should a citizen resist injustices, engaging in civil disobedience or protest in order to subvert unjust authority?

To understand how the Nisei writers answered these

questions and why they answered them in the way they did, we first need to understand how Japanese Americans actually responded to injustices during the plantation era in Hawaii and to discrimination and internment on the West Coast. The historical record shows (1) a strong tendency among the Issei and Nisei to obey authority, even when it was unjust and (2) instances of resistance to authority.

The strong tendency to obey authority can be seen in the behavior of the Issei and Nisei both in Hawaii and on the West Coast. In Hawaii, there were prolonged periods of acceptance of plantation rule. From 1920 until after World War II, Issei and Nisei workers on the plantations did not go on strike and refused to support other ethnic workers who went on strike. On the West Coast, almost all of the Issei and Nisei cooperated with the government during the World War II internment. In Japanese Americans, Kitano describes the lack of resistance:

The evacuation was rapid, smooth, and efficient, primarily because of the cooperativeness of the Japanese population, who responded to the posted notices to register, to assemble voluntarily on time at designated points, and to follow all orders. (33)

The political passivity of the Japanese Americans was the result of several factors. The Confucian tradition predisposed the Japanese Americans to obeying authority. In

All I Asking for Is My Body, Milton Murayama notes the passivity promoted by Confucianism:

The worst thing you could be [according to Confucian tradition] was a crybaby, an upstart who didn't know his place. The noblest person was the man who suffered in silence, not protesting even when he was falsely accused. (66)

Most of the Issei and many of the Nisei conceived of their relationship to political authority in just such Confucian terms: the State was like the father, the husband, the lord who had to be obeyed; the Issei and Nisei were like the sons and daughters, the wives, the retainers who had to obey.

Murayama's novella describes the effects of Confucian ideology on the Nisei. During a 1937 strike by Filipino workers, Nisei students worked as strikebreakers. Mr. Snook, or "Snooky," the plantation school teacher (and apparently a communist or socialist), tries to awaken the social consciousness of the strikebreaking students. He characterizes plantation rule as feudal and Nisei behavior as servile:

"I waited in the breadlines of Detroit, I rode the rails, I shoveled potash in the Mojave Desert with a fellow traveler who had a PhD, but this is the first time I've seen the likes of it. Ray Stannard Baker called this the last surviving vestige of feudalism in the United States. He was absolutely right. The plantation divides and rules, and you the exploited are perfectly happy to be divided and ruled. Do you see what I'm driving at? The Filipinos strike, and you are all too happy to break that strike. It's a big deal.

The plantation raises your pay. Doesn't it prick your conscience just a little bit?" (33)

The students, brought up with the ethics of Confucianism, have no idea what he's trying to get at. One of them replies "'It give me chance to make some money.'" When Snooky asks the class to identify primary virtues, the same student blurts out, "'The best ones are filial piety, patience, knowing your place, loyalty, knowing your duty, hard work, guts.'"

Another tradition that predisposed the Nisei to passivity was a tradition of fatalism, summed up in the phrase shikata ga nai--"it can't be helped" or "nothing can be done." This fatalism in the political character of the Issei was a legacy of subordination in the feudal hierarchy of Japan. Politically powerless, the ruled classes equated political injustice with natural disasters, like earthquakes and typhoons: neither political injustices nor natural disasters could be resisted; they had to be endured. The Issei passed this fatalism onto the Nisei--and most of the Nisei were able to rationalize compliance with the internment by telling themselves "shikata ga nai." Issei and Nisei fatalism was reinforced by Buddhism. In Hawaii, End of the Rainbow, Kazuo Miyamoto compares Buddhism to Christian socialism in order to highlight Buddhism's passivity:

Christians were active and dynamic. They took

the bull by the horns. In contrast, Buddhists were satisfied with the status quo, leaving and resigning to Karma, the wheel of fate, any social injustice as an inevitable ugliness of life, the inescapability of that which was to happen despite human attempts to stem the inevitable things repeatedly taking place as the result of the law of "Cause and Effect." (228-9)

Buddhism provided a philosophical justification for fatalism: nothing could be done to change reality because everything was predetermined. Injustices had to be stoically endured until a person could escape from the wheel of Karma and achieve Nirvana.

Conservative Christianity (as opposed to radical or socialist Christianity) also predisposed the Nisei to passivity. The Nisei who had become Christians were encouraged to accept injustices without protest ("turn the other cheek") because God's love would compensate for the earthly injustices. When Monica Sone was upset by housing discrimination in pre-war Seattle, her mother, the daughter of an Issei protestant minister, did not encourage her to find ways to protest or change social reality; instead, she tried to inure Monica to discrimination (nothing can be done about discrimination, so just accept and endure it), then comforted her with Christianity:

"We have to bear it, just like all the other unpleasant facts of life. This is the first time for you, and I know how deeply it hurts; but when you are older, it won't hurt quite as much. You'll be stronger."

Trying to stop the flow of tears, I swallowed hard and blurted out, "But Mama, is it so terrible to be a Japanese?"

"Hush child, you mustn't talk like that." Mother spoke slowly and earnestly. "I want you, Henry, and Sumi-chan to learn to respect yourselves. Not because you're white, black or yellow, but because you're a human being. Never forget that. No matter what anyone may call you, to God you are still his child." (Nisei Daughter 114)

While philosophies like Confucianism, Stoicism, Buddhism, and conservative Christianity predisposed the Issei and Nisei to passivity, social and political realities reinforced it. Hisaye Yamamoto often expressed a sense of helpless anger in her essays and stories. On the West Coast, the Issei and Nisei lacked a population base for political power: they were a minute minority--less than 1% of the population. Also since the Issei could not become citizens, they had no political or legal rights in America, except those granted to them by treaty between the American and Japanese governments and by other international agreements. Discriminatory laws also weakened the Issei politically and economically. To have an impact on society at large, the Issei worker would have had to work in unions with other working class ethnic groups, but working class unity was difficult because of language barriers, ethnocentrism, and the racism of the white working class.

In Hawaii the Issei were one of the largest ethnic groups on the plantations, but, as Kazuo Miyamoto pointed out in Hawaii, End of the Rainbow, the Issei had "no recourse to the courts" because the courts were controlled by the white sugar planters, and the police and judges were "stooges in the employ of the moneyed faction" (104); only off the plantation are the Issei able to avenge brutal treatment: when a white contractor beats an Issei water boy, a team of Issei judo men confront the contractor and his cosmopolitan work gang and beat them up. On the plantations, the white sugar planters were unassailable; the owners broke Issei strikes in 1909 and 1920.

Resistance to economic exploitation in factories, fields, and plantations was also limited by the fact that most Issei and Nisei aspired to be middle class and therefore had little incentive or commitment to improving the lot of the working class. Many left the working class and became small businessmen, small farmers, and professionals. In an interview with Peter Horikoshi, Nisei writer Toshio Mori recalled that the West Coast Japanese American community he grew up in was mainly conservative--churchgoers and business people; only a few intellectuals were interested in radical ideas.

Political resistance to discrimination (which did affect

the Japanese American middle class) was rare among Japanese Americans in the first half of the twentieth century because there was no tradition of protest in the Japanese American community and because there were no Civil Rights leaders to show it how to protest discrimination or break down racial barriers. The Issei and Nisei accepted discrimination as the status quo and worked around it. Instead of protesting, many Issei parents considered returning to Japan a possibility for the Nisei if things did not work out well in America. Issei parents sent their Nisei children to Japan to be educated not just because they wanted their children to learn the ancestral language and culture, but because they were not convinced there was a future for the Nisei in America. At the outbreak of World War II, about 8,000 Nisei had studied three or more years in Japan (Weglyn 42).

Historians and sociologists have cited several additional factors to explain Nisei compliance with the internment. Kitano and Weglyn noted the youthfulness of the Nisei generation at the outbreak of the war; because their average age was 18 in 1942, the Nisei did not have the political maturity to challenge the American government. Also, the Japanese American Citizens League, the main Nisei political organization, was intent on proving Nisei loyalty to America by cooperating with the government. In the camps, the

government stifled resistance by segregating the resisters at Tule Lake and by allowing the "loyal" Nisei to leave the camps for relocation in the Midwest, East, and South. Finally, resignation offered psychological relief from anger, bitterness, and frustration; although principled resistance might have been a healthier alternative, it required more effort and sacrifice.

Despite the general tendency to resign themselves to injustices and obey authority, there was resistance and protest. Plantation workers tried to subvert plantation rule by recalcitrance, escape, and strikes (Takaki, Pau Hana: Plantation Life and Labor in Hawaii). Issei on the West Coast, while they felt they could do little to change the laws that discriminated against them, found ways of getting around the laws: prohibited from owning or leasing land, they bought or leased land in the names of their children; prohibited from marrying Whites in some states, they went to other states to get married. Issei and Nisei workers on the West Coast also formed or joined unions and engaged in strikes against factory and farm owners. (Yoneda, Ganbatte: Sixty-Year Struggle of a Kibei Worker). Three Nisei--Fred Korematsu, Min Yasui, and Gordon Hirabayashi--disobeyed the curfew and evacuation decrees and provoked arrest in order to challenge the decrees in court;

Mitsuye Endo challenged the government's authority to detain the Nisei in internment camps. (Kitano, Japanese Americans). Over 5,000 Nisei protested the internment by renouncing their citizenship (Weglyn, Years of Infamy). A handful resisted the draft and went to jail in order to protest the violation of their constitutional rights (Daniels, Concentration Camps USA).

In many cases, especially among the Issei, the motive for resistance was ethnic pride: the Japanese felt they were as good as, or even superior to, other races, and therefore should not be treated worse than anyone else. Yamato-damashii ("the fighting spirit of Yamato") was often the rallying cry. Ethnic pride helped unify the Japanese community during its strikes for better wages and working conditions against the sugar planters in Hawaii in 1909 and 1920. Ethnic pride took the form of pro-Japanese nationalism both on the plantations and in the internment camps. Some activists, like West Coast Nisei Karl Yoneda, were motivated not by ethnic pride, but by socialist or communist ideas and worked with other ethnic groups to improve the conditions of the working class. Finally, some activists based their resistance on the principles of American democracy. Fred Makino, one of the leaders of the Japanese American community in Hawaii and a supporter of the 1909 and 1920

plantation strikes, promoted democratic principles in his newspaper, the Hawaii Hochi. After leading a successful fight for the right of the Issei and Nisei to maintain Japanese language schools in Hawaii, he told an Issei and Nisei audience: ". . . it is the right of people living in a free democracy to advocate their rights guaranteed under the Constitution and to seek legal clarification of doubtful points in the enforcement of laws. . . . Individuals and organizations alike must never forget to stand up for their rights and freedoms" (Ogawa, Kodomo no tame ni: For the Sake of the Children 146-7). Korematsu, Yasui, Hirabayashi, Endo, and the draft resisters also cited the Constitution in their protests against the forced removal and internment.

In writing about the Issei and Nisei experience in America, the Nisei writers had to come to terms with their political points of view: What political traditions should they promote? What sorts of characters should they choose as representative and exemplary? What responses to racism and oppression would mark the Issei and Nisei as "good American citizens" in the eyes of their readers? While Nisei writers like Yamamoto and Murayama were critical of Issei and Nisei passivity and portrayed Nisei characters who protest injustices, or felt guilty about not protesting loudly enough, the Nisei writers, especially those who

promoted the success story, either ignored or criticized protesters and resisters and praised Issei and Nisei characters who obeyed and cooperated with authority and who endured injustices in silence. The typical hero of the success story is one who learns to resign himself or herself to discrimination and persecution and is later rewarded for his or her cooperation and patience with acceptance or success.

In the Hawaii success story, the Issei characters on the plantations decide that resistance is futile and resign themselves to plantation discipline. In Margaret Harada's The Sun Shines on the Immigrant, as Issei Yoshio Mori watches a laborer being pulled by the ear and another one being kicked, the narrator comments:

The laborers did not complain, but took the blame upon themselves and started to work faster. The Japanese are wonderful people, for they can endure any hardship, thought Yoshio, admiring the patience of the two laborers. (33)

Later, nishi, a friend, warns Yoshio not to try to escape the plantation before his three-year contract is up because he will be punished severely--if not by the plantation owners, then by fate. nishi tells a story about twelve men who had run away to California: four of them were eaten by crocodiles and alligators as they tried to cross the border from Mexico. Yoshio is thankful for the warning: it confirms

his belief that resistance is futile and he is determined to patiently endure plantation discipline until his three-year contract is up.

The Issei characters in Shelley Ota's and Kazuo Miyamoto's novels are, at least initially, more rebellious. The Issei try to avenge injustices on the plantation and resist plantation authority. In both novels, Issei workers attack and beat up cruel overseers. But these accounts of resistance are not meant to show the positive effects of resistance or to inspire resistance, but rather to illustrate the futility of resistance. In Upon Their Shoulders, the narrator describes the workers' revolt as ineffective mass hysteria. The workers who beat the cruel overseer are punished and fired. In Hawaii, End of the Rainbow, the workers' resistance is also in vain: the cruel overseer goes unpunished, and the leaders of the resistance are blacklisted and given the worst jobs on the plantation.

Miyamoto's Issei hero Torao Murayama makes one other attempt to subvert plantation authority: he tries to escape to another plantation where, rumor has it, the management is more humane and the working conditions are better. However, Torao is captured by a policeman and returned to his plantation. His capture marks the end of his rebelliousness and the beginning of his Buddhist fatalism:

Torao felt that there was some sort of fate linking him to this odious plantation. Perhaps he was predestined to stick to this place and it was not meant that he, a mortal should say anything about any arrangement that was surely beyond his ken and ability to alter. Therefore he became reconciled to his fate and thereafter acted like a good obedient laborer no matter what the nature of his work turned out to be. (110)

Later, when his contract with the plantation ends, and Torao becomes a free laborer and is able to bring a picture bride to the plantation and start a family, he feels he is being rewarded for "his silent uncomplaining acquiescence to the dictates of fate" (120). As in the novels by Ota and Harada, in Miyamoto's novel the socioeconomic status of the Issei hero improves, and the injustices of the plantation are forgotten as he turns his attention to educating his children.

The Nisei who wrote about the internment experience also promoted resignation to injustices and cooperation with the government. Mrs. Toda, the Issei grandmother who narrates Toshio Mori's Woman from Hiroshima (1979), advises her grandchildren to be stoic and accept injustices like the internment:

Beware of the storm, children. You too are preparing yourselves for the storm that is surely coming. Life is nothing but a storm, but you too can be a tree. You know how she accepts the snowstorm; you see how she absorbs the rain. (123)

Later she tells her grandchildren to learn to tolerate injustices and to look for the positive in their experiences rather than dwell on the negative because, she implies, dwelling on the negative will lead to bitterness and insanity.

Mrs. Toda sees this acceptance and endurance of life's storms as part of the ancestral heritage that has to be passed on to her children and grandchildren. There is ethnic pride in this stoicism: the Japanese and persons of Japanese ancestry have an inner strength that allows them to endure all hardships. Earlier in the narrative, Mrs. Toda tells her grandchildren about the endurance of their ancestors in Japan:

Yes, we had trials from the early days. It seems that we are never apart from sufferings. The days when your great grandpa had to take his little family to safety when the earthquake struck our island. That was when we lived for weeks in the bamboo patch where its roots held the ground firm. Your great grandpa was wise. . . . Hardships and sufferings never made him pause in his tracks. Perhaps I inherited some of it from him. Perhaps that is why I came to America. (4)

Suffering through earthquakes in Japan has prepared the Issei for enduring and surviving the political injustices and other hardships they encounter in America. By adopting this legacy, Mrs. Toda believes, the Nisei and Sansei, too, will be able to endure.

Like Mori's Issei grandmother, Kazuo Miyamoto saw resignation and cooperation with the authorities as the best responses to the internment. He believed the internment was caused by a few "crooked politicians and unscrupulous rascals in government places" (408), not by racism deeply rooted in American society and embodied in government policy toward the Nisei. America, he believed, would see its mistake and correct it later. When the camp authorities administer the loyalty questionnaire, Miyamoto's Nisei hero, Minoru Miyamoto, argues that the Nisei should declare their loyalty to America and willingness to serve in the armed forces. When a young man challenges Minoru by pointing out that since the Nisei are not free citizens, they should protest by not filling out the questionnaire, Minoru tells the young man he is a coward not to answer the questionnaire. Like John Okada's Ichiro Yamada, Minoru believes protest against the government is not only unpatriotic, but cowardly and selfish.

In the introduction to his novel, Miyamoto, like Mori's Mrs. Toda, compares the internment to a natural disaster and praises the Issei and Nisei for enduring it without bitterness:

The life in the concentration camps and relocation centers as depicted in this story is factual and is one man's experience. There is neither exaggeration nor bitterness. One of the

characteristics of any people, inured to natural calamities for generations, is a resignation to holocaust and an attempt to make life endurable. The Japanese are such a race because their country is in the path of typhoons and is periodically beset with violent earthquakes. (8)

Miyamoto, like Mori, believed "resignation to holocaust" was an innate characteristic of the Japanese.

Monica Sone's autobiography Nisei Daughter presents a more complex--and contradictory--response to the internment. Sone expressed her anger and her awareness that something is un-American and un-Constitutional about the internment: "What was I doing behind a fence like a criminal? If there were accusations to be made, why hadn't I been given a fair trial?" (177). She was even critical of the Nisei leaders who argued that the Nisei should comply with the evacuation order to prove they were loyal citizens: "I was too jealous of my recently acquired voting privilege to be gracious about giving in, and I felt most unco-operative" (159). But she ended up resigning herself to the internment and cooperating with the government. The chapters on the round-up and detention are filled with descriptions of how orderly and capable the Issei and Nisei were in assisting with their own incarceration--fixing up the barracks, procuring food and clothing, and policing themselves. The chapter on life in Minidoka internment camp is dominated by a humorous description of her brother's wedding.

Sone defined her choices as bitter cynicism or submissive optimism. Like Mori and Miyamoto, she never considered principled resistance as an alternative. A sermon by Rev. Thompson, a former missionary to Japan and pastor of Sone's church in Seattle (he followed the Issei and Nisei to the internment camp), helped Sone to repress her bitterness and look positively at the situation. After the sermon she concluded, "The time had come when it was more important to examine our own souls, to keep our faith in God and help to build that way of life which we so desired" (186). Sone argued that the internment was a blessing in disguise--it forced the Nisei out of their ethnic community and into the mainstream of America and helped them to become more acceptable to other Americans. But Sone never reconciled her claim that the Nisei were pursuing a "way of life which we so desired," with the fact that their relocation had been forced upon them by the government. At the end of the text, she declares:

I think the Nisei have attained a clearer understanding of America and its way of life, and we have learned to value her more. Her ideas and ideals of democracy are based essentially on religious principles and her very existence depended on the faith and moral responsibilities of each individual. (237)

Her conclusion is contradicted by the narrative. Her story is not about carrying out the moral responsibilities of an

American citizen, but about compliance with racist authority.

Why did most of the Nisei writers praise resignation and obedience to authority as virtuous? The Hawaii Nisei writers belonged to families that had achieved middle-class status and were not, therefore, concerned with the exploitation of the working class on the plantations; rather they wanted to celebrate their rise from that class and their newly achieved middle class identity. While West Coast writers like Mori and Yamamoto were sympathetic to the working class, they did not want to present that sympathy in a radical way because radicalism was associated with immigrants and foreigners in the first half of the twentieth century and considered "un-American" and "Communist" during the 50's. Such radicalism would have counteracted the main purpose of Nisei writing, which was to establish the Nisei as good Americans.

The Nisei middle class and their parents had suffered from racism, but the Nisei writers praised resignation and obedience because they felt that expressing resentment or advocating resistance, even in the interest of claiming Constitutional or human rights, would be taken as signs of ingratitude or disloyalty by white readers. On the other hand, they felt that the American reader would appreciate

the fact that the Issei and Nisei cooperated with authority and tolerated injustices without bitterness. Thus, the writers suppressed their anger. The suppression of anger was made easier by their Confucian upbringing: they had been taught that ga-man (suppression of anger, refusal to retaliate) was a virtue.

The Confucian code was embodied in Nisei texts: most of the Nisei writers perceived themselves as politically and socially subordinate to their readers and wrote in deference to their feelings. Although from one perspective the Nisei writing was subversive--the writers were proclaiming what the racists thought was impossible, that people of Japanese ancestry could become good American citizens--in the end it was not because it promoted political passivity rather than social or legal change.

At the end of his essay "Notes of a Native Son" (1955) James Baldwin wrote that in order for him to live in America he had to accept the reality of racial prejudice and injustice, and yet, paradoxically, commit himself to changing it:

It began to seem that one would have to hold in the mind forever two ideas which seemed to be in opposition. The first idea was acceptance, the acceptance, totally without rancor, of life as it is, and men as they are: in the light of this idea, it goes without saying that injustice is commonplace. But this did not mean that one could

be complacent, for the second idea was of equal power: that one must never, in one's own life, accept these injustices as commonplace but must fight them with all one's strength. (95)

Earlier in the essay Baldwin revealed why acceptance was necessary: he had seen his father's mind eaten away by bitterness over bigotry and hatred of Whites, and Baldwin did not want to suffer the same fate. He saw the tolerance and forgiveness of Christianity as a way out of bitterness and hatred; in the same way, the Issei and Nisei had seen stoic resignation as a way to protect themselves from such emotions.

But Baldwin also saw the need to fight injustices "with all one's strength." This was the legacy embodied in Thomas Paine's The Rights of Man, in Jefferson's "Declaration of Independence," in Thoreau's "On Civil Disobedience"--the American tradition of political protest. Except for Murayama and Yamamoto, the Nisei writers did not promote this tradition. Yet even Kazuo Miyamoto, one of the most conservative of the Nisei writers, was aware that there was something un-American in the quietism he was advocating. In describing the public school education of his Nisei hero Minoru Murayama, Miyamoto offered a critique of the Buddhist resignation to social injustices:

When Miss Agnew stressed the point that it was the birthright of all free men to rebel against the existing government if the trust of the people

was betrayed by officialdom, it was a very difficult philosophy for the Oriental students to digest.

She used to smile and it apparently was a source of considerable interest for she used to say, "How you Japanese and Chinese, especially Japanese, hold the existing government as almost infallible is interesting to me. Much like the Germans of Wisconsin, you are apt to follow the governing body without question. To try to change a corrupt government, first by ballot and by force if necessary, is the English way of life. In fact, in that way the United States of America got its start." (206-7)

Miyamoto went on to imply that Minoru later comes to understand this tradition, but Minoru's passive behavior during the internment doesn't indicate this. Miyamoto's text and other versions of the Nisei success story (excepting the version told by Milton Murayama) ultimately failed to fully establish the American identity of the Nisei because at its very heart was the tradition of Confucian obedience to authority.

Chapter Six

Active Voices: West Coast Sansei Poetry

During the 70's and 80's, a new generation of West Coast Japanese American writers, mainly Sansei, began to create a new mythology to compete with the success story that dominated Nisei writing in the 50's and 60's. This new mythology--a mythology of oppression and resistance--portrayed the Nisei not as successful middle class citizens, but as victims suffering from psychological damage caused by discrimination and the internment. The new mythology was related to the stories of Toshio Mori and Hisaye Yamamoto, which depicted the Japanese Americans as struggling outcasts, but it more explicitly blamed racism as the the cause of suffering. America was not a land of opportunity, but a cruel, racist country. The new writers argued that assimilation, which the Nisei writers had supported, was part of the racist oppression of Japanese Americans, a means of destroying their ethnic pride and culture. The new writers also criticized Nisei political passivity. They interpreted Nisei passivity not as a sign of inner strength and virtue, but as a sign of self-contempt and emasculation; and they called for resistance, the strength to resist coming from ethnic pride as well as an understanding of their democratic rights and

responsibilities.

The new mythology created a new identity for Japanese Americans. Reclaiming their ethnicity, the new generation of writers tried to establish Japanese Americans as an ethnic group, emphasizing ethnic differences rather than similarities with the white middle class. They described their victimization by white racism in order to identify themselves with other non-white ethnic Americans--Blacks, Natives Americans, and Chicanos--who had also suffered from racist oppression. By establishing Japanese Americans as an ethnic group that had been victimized by white racism, the new writers were able to make claims against the government for past and present discrimination (e.g., the internment). By criticizing Nisei political passivity and calling for protest, they urged the community to join in the liberal/progressive/radical attack on racial and social inequality in America.

The evolution of this new identity, under the influence of the Black Power, Third World, and Ethnic Consciousness movements, can be seen in the writings of three West Coast Sansei poets--Lawson Inada, Janice Mirikitani, and Garrett Hongo. In the first stage of the evolution, Inada and other writers adopted as part of their identity elements of black culture as well as the angry rhetoric associated with the

Black Power movement of the 60's. "Plucking Out a Rhythm," the first poem of Lawson Inada's collection Before the War (1971) describes a Japanese American jazz musician, "sweating, growling/over an imaginary bass--/plucking out a rhythm" until a "thick snow, strong snow" quiets the music and covers the player "completely/out of sight." The image of Japanese American jazz player suggests Inada's rejection of the Anglo American identity imposed on him in schools and an adoption of a black identity as the only viable ethnic identity available to Japanese Americans during the 60's. Inada's early artistic heroes were black Americans, mainly jazz musicians, and he referred to them frequently in his poems--Miles Davis, Charlie Parker, Ornette Coleman. (Kai-yu Hsu and Helen Palubinskas, editors of Asian American Authors, point out Inada used to hang out in jazz clubs in San Francisco and studied the bass.) "The Journey" contains a fantasy in which Inada is rowing in a boat with Miles Davis and Billie Holiday; the poem concludes, "Never have I been so happy." Unlike Monica Sone, who found happiness making friends with three white women in a T.B. sanitarium, Inada found it listening to the music of two black artists.

The new identification with black Americans was based on a common status as racial outcasts. As a young boy Inada was interned along with his Nisei parents. "From Our Album"

presents memories of the internment. Part II, "Mud," uses the image of mud to suggest the debasement the internment made the Japanese Americans feel:

Mud in the barracks--
a muddy room, a chamber pot.

Mud in the moats
around each barracks group.

Mud on the shoes
trudging to the mess hall.

Mud in the swamp
where the men chopped wood.

Mud on the guts
under a loaded wagon--

crushed in the mud by the wheel.

The chamber pot foreshadows the transformation of the imagery of mud into the imagery of shit later in the volume; the guts under the wagon wheel suggest the cruelty of the internment and the destruction of Japanese American spirit and strength. ("Guts" in the slang sense of "fortitude" or "courage").

"Song of Chicago" (part IV of "From Our Album") depicts the self-contempt that resulted from this destruction of spirit: one of Inada's father's friends, relocated in Chicago, "grew a mustache/and called himself Carlos" in order to disguise himself as an Mexican. (The image recalls Monica Sone and her family trying to blend into the

wallpaper of a restaurant in Idaho, or Sone "creeping" through the streets of Chicago after being let out from the internment camp, hoping to be mistaken for a Chinese.) The Nisei passed this legacy of ethnic shame on to the Sansei. In "Don't Know," Inada expresses a desire to hide, safe from persecution: "Don't know what's come over me:/like to keep covered up--/flappy caps, and turn away from lights."

Like black protest writers of the 60's, Inada saw America as cruel and exploitive. "Desert Songs" (part III of "From Our Album") depicts the cruelty of the guards in the camp: they shoot a stray dog, smash a tortoise so that "the shell/cracks open and the muscles ooze." The guards display the same disregard for life that allowed the government to attempt to destroy the Japanese American community through internment and relocation. Later in the poem, an anonymous "he," perhaps a guard or an adult, or the young Inada himself "jerks the eyes/from birds, feet/from lizards,/and punishes ants with the gaze/of a glass."

The internment was just one manifestation of the cruelty of America toward people and the environment. After the war in his travels across America, Inada began to see America as a predatory society, killing and destroying for profit or pleasure. "The Hunters" describes whalers slaughtering whales in the Antarctic seas (recalling Ahab and the

Pequod), and deer-hunters who shoot deer--and occasionally a newspaper boy riding by on a bicycle; "Coming into Oregon" is about the rape of the land by loggers; "Countries of War" refers to Vietnam and other war-torn countries where fathers, brothers, and sons are killed so America can hold onto its overseas resources and markets; and "The Inada Report" criticizes discrimination against Blacks who were welcomed as slave labor in America, but not as part of its educated middle class. America's cruelty is sometimes hidden beneath the frivolity of American culture--in the dance crowd on the American Bandstand TV program, mass murderer Richard Speck appears ("Bandstand"). "Report from the New Country" creates an surreal portrait of a society destroying itself--brains coming out of popcorn machines; a child electrocuted as he sticks a hairpin into a socket; kids chanting "Commodity! Commodity!" instead of "Vanity! Vanity!"; sex in the back seat of convertibles; a cowboy with a sequined penis crashing his car into a parade of Shriners.

Inada also confesses his own cruelty--the need of the victim to victimize others. "In These Encounters" describes a confrontation with one of his students: "I had one crying today./I thought his arm would break/as I gripped it to the bone./I thought his face would rip." At the end of

"Hunters," the poet accidentally runs over a dog, and acknowledges himself as one of the hunters. "Love, It Was" contains an image of brutal sadism: when a woman tells the poet to stop practicing his music on her spine, he waits until she falls asleep, then cuts out her frame with a pen knife and plays his music on it. When she awakes and demands her frame back, he tells her "The next time allow me to finish my tune."

Inada's collection is dominated by images of disease, decay, and desolation, which like Kenji's rotting leg in Okada's No-No Boy, symbolize America's moral corruption. "Disease," from the section "Utica, North Platte" containing poems about the Midwest, describes a strange fish-man who haunts the poet's sleepless nights, kissing him and making him die. In "Let Me," a diseased dog and a diseased cat, described in disgusting detail, emerge as icons of a corrupt world:

One is a range of mange that fells the hair,
leaving wrinkles and spot like a man.
What mange leaves, the ticks take,
puffed thick as pebbles on a riverbed.

The other is a sea of fleas, worms
breaking surface like dolphins
dipping in that twitching sea.

These are the dog and cat. Scrape them,
they pop and smear but never scream . . .

The poem "Utica, North Platte" ends with an image of

lifeless flowers produced on an assembly line rather than in an organic garden:

The night has grown
metallic flowers in her garden--

straight and hard,
all of the same color.

The section "In These Encounters" contains poems about the Northeast, where Inada saw the same moral corruption and desolation in the Midwest. "Children of Somersworth" describes the effects of greedy industrial exploitation of the environment:

The Salmon Falls River
is a larva pool, full
of detergent.
Power poles pray like mantes.

Somersworth almost died.
It sucked in some praying
Canucks, shoe factories,
the bad breath of a tannery.

"The bad breath" suggests decay, and even praying won't help. The roofs of the town are described as "scabby," like the cat and dog of "Utica, North Platte."

When Inada moved to Oregon, he couldn't escape the feeling of despair that the mud of the internment had sullied him with. The sound of a toilet flushing triggers a meditation on shit: "Shit/rich with chili, gathering./Closets of shit--/my shit,/your shit./Stores of shit./Shit/cook-out

pits./Shit roofs,/instant shit" ("Three O'Clock"). In "That I Know," dedicated to Malcolm X, the poet imagines himself being chewed, swallowed, digested, and shitted out--a metaphorical rendering of the minority experience in America.

The poems containing images of disease, decay, and corruption express Inada's despair, a despair that triggers death wishes ("Disease"), prayers ("Cloisters as Memory"), pleas for help ("Thresher"), and uncontrollable laughter and tears ("Don't Know"). In other poems, Inada is angry. Unlike the Nisei writers, who believed the most virtuous way to deal with anger was to repress it, Inada, like the protest writers of the 60's and 70's, expresses it in the form of sarcasm and threats. "For the E.H.W. [Eternal Honkies of the World]" begins with a sarcastic listing of questions most frequently asked of Japanese Americans by whites:

"How's the fruit this season?"
 "Are you sure the set was on?"
 "Are you sure you aren't Chester?"
 "Don't you know Roy Wong?"

The poem ends with a threat:

and one of these nights
 when you're slipping into your
 inside outhouse
 and unbuttoning the flap,

 I'm going to be there,

and, despite your drawl and twang,
there won't be any time

for questions or answers.

This poem recalls the scatological images of "Three O'clock" and "That I Know," the poet shitted upon and shitted out, here ready to strike back. "Three O'clock" also ends with a threat, "Burn Baby Burn" recalling the riots in the Black ghettos during the late sixties. In "Coming into Oregon," the poet expresses a desire to rape the mother of the man who invented logging:

I'm going to have his mother
for an evening--

him listening in the hall--

then let him in
come morning, to hush
and soothe her, try
to brush and smooth her over . . .

The final poem of Before the War, "The Great Bassist," dedicated to Charlie Mingus, ends with a plea and a threat addressed to his white readers:

But I need your love.
We need
each other.

So when I come down your street
with my Great Bass--

toss us your love--

we'll play you
love petals.

Love us back.

If you don't, we'll kill you.

All of you.

We will.

The anger is cathartic: through the expression of anger comes a sense of emotional restitution and rebalancing of the unequal relationship between Japanese American victims and white racist oppressors.

Inada's love poems in the collection reveal the possibility of replacing oppressor/victim relationships with relationships between equals. In these poems, the divisive inequality of racism is replaced by the wholeness of two equals matched--Inada and his wife Janet, who is white. The section "Into the Open" describes his growing love for Janet, who makes the poet feel whole: "I find what should have been there,/where nothing was before." They find in each other consolation for "bad loves" of the past, and fulfillment: "We are all the loves we ever lost." The first poem about their love, "In a Storm," describes the birth of their love in a winter storm; the last love poem in the volume, "Sequence for Janet," compares the coming of their child, still in Janet's womb, to the green growth of spring:

I think it is lovely that
my love, who
loves greenery, that
odd stuff
poking out of holes,

should have a child growing within her,
 from her own
 seed, finding its life
 from her soil, her light,
 to come up finally
 a curled, tendriled thing.

The equality of man and woman in love parallels the equality of Japanese American and White, transcending racism. The spring growth imagery, recalling both Roethke's greenhouse poems and Williams' "Spring," suggests the regeneration of a diseased and decayed America that is possible through love.

Like Inada's Before the War, Janice Mirikitani's's Awake in the River (1978) contains protest poems. But Mirikitani placed less emphasis on identification with black Americans and more on her Japanese American roots. By the time Mirikitani began writing poetry in the early 70's, Asian Americans activists had joined with other non-white ethnics and progressive Whites in attacking white hegemony in America and racial oppression and genocide in Third World countries like Vietnam. The Third World movement encouraged each American ethnic group to seek its own specific ethnic roots and issues while supporting protests of the other ethnic groups in America and other oppressed peoples in the world. An ardent participant of this movement, Mirikitani wrote about the victimization of Japanese Americans, other non-white ethnic Americans, peoples of the Third World in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Like Yamamoto, she writes

from a woman's perspective, attacking sexist as well as racist abuses.

At the heart of Mirikitani's poetic vision is her anger at the harsh treatment of the Issei and Nisei in America, which culminated in the internment. Mirikitani uses the image of the desert to represent the oppressive world the Issei and Nisei faced in America--the desert where her father tried to grow strawberries, the desert where the Japanese Americans were interned. Mirikitani also explores the ironies of the oppression: the way victims often acquiesced in their victimization because of their feelings of powerlessness and self-contempt; and the way victims, in need of scapegoats often inflict hurt and pain on each other--Nisei men often victimizing Nisei women (just as Issei men victimized Issei women in Yamamoto's stories).

Many of Mirikitani pieces are intended to evoke sympathy for victims. Mirikitani's's prose/poetry piece "The Winners" (a Sansei version of Yamamoto's "Yoneko's Earthquake") depicts the dissolution of a Nisei marriage. The internment has destroyed the pride of Aunt Sumi and Uncle Tets, and the low self-esteem of husband and wife destroys their marriage. Although Uncle Tets once seems to have been loving, after the the internment, frustrated at having to start all over again from scratch, he begins to

drink and he beats his wife when she nags him:

I overheard momma say that after the war, when times were so bad, Tets would get drunk a lot and stay away. Sumi, who could never keep her mouth shut, would nag him, and she'd come over wearing dark glasses because her eyes were so swollen and black.

Tets, the poet implies, beats his wife in order to maintain his male pride. Sumi is further victimized by her parents, who ostracize her for her divorce. When Tets leaves and Sumi marries their Chinese farmhand, her parents cut her off, believing a woman should remain faithful to her husband and worrying more about what others might think about the family than about Sumi's happiness.

Even more ironically, Sumi blames herself for driving Tets away. She has been brainwashed into submission, into believing the Confucian notion that the female should sacrifice herself in order to please her husband, a legacy of passivity she tries to pass on to her niece:

And she told me to be good. In everything. If you're graceful they will woo you forever. If you are quiet, they will want to marry you. If you are obedient you will remind them of their mother. You must never show them that you are smart. Or that you long for anything else except the world they can give you.

Despite her submissiveness, however, Aunt Sumi dreams of being a "winner." She tells her niece about her identification with Star, a winning horse that she used to

bet on, a horse "sassy with pride." Her identification with the horse is compensation for her weakness; but her wish to be like Star is ironic: while Star appears to Sumi to be free and proud, there is a jockey riding and directing him.

The difficulty of establishing wholesome emotional, sexual, and/or domestic relationships between Japanese American males and females is a recurrent theme in Mirikitani's poetry. She portrays Japanese American males preferring white females and Japanese American females desiring white males. She interprets the cross-preferences as lack of ethnic pride, as self-contempt. "Drowning in the Yellow River" contemptuously describes a Sansei girl's rejection of ethnicity: the girl, necking in the back seat of a car with a white boy, boasts that she's finally made it in the world. The refrain "who else am i?" suggests the girl's lack of an ethnic identity. The girl is too repressed to tell the white boy she has to pee and ends up putting her mother's silk scarf between her legs and peeing on it. The image implies a defilement/rejection of the mother and ancestry, represented metonymically by the silk scarf.

The source of this shame of ethnicity and the lack of identity, as in Inada's poetry, is white oppression, especially the internment. The longish prose piece "Spoils

of War," labeled an excerpt, though it is able to stand by itself, describes this oppression allegorically, in the relationship between a nameless Japanese American woman and a white man named Gerald. The relationship can't transcend the political context of white oppressor/Japanese American victim. Gerald's intercourse with his wife becomes a metaphor for his domination of her, her weakness defined by his power: "She flopped properly when Gerald fucked her, pressing her deep within herself, until she was transformed into that which his weight would define." His power comes from the power of white America: "What he represented . . . a power only they possessed . . . that they could turn minds into libraries, laboratories, brick buildings, bombs. Somewhere in the back of her being she was awed. They could demolish an entire people and no one questioned their supreme authority to do so." Gerald dominates the woman with his cold, pompous Machiavellian logic, telling her that atrocities are justified by self-interest. And the nameless woman submits to him, feeling a vague sense of guilt and believing, as Gerald tells her, she is inadequate.

Her passivity and lack of identity is a legacy of her parents, victims of the internment, who burn their Japanese things, symbolic of ancestry and ethnicity, before being taken to camp:

"Burn it." Yuki said, eyes flowing like spigots. Hard wet eyes, determined to see the red silk wrapping the emblem, the dense character filled, folded scroll for the last time. Destroy by fire. "So they don't find any trace of home here. Burn it." The fire leapt and swallowed paper silk, even porcelain.

The Nisei men have clammed up, unable to give anything of themselves to their women:

The men were a silent, commanding presence . . . wordless except for spurts of hostility and occasional glowing threats of violence. Perhaps because of the inflexible will of these men, bound tightly within, giving nothing of their deep selves for the women to nurture, that the women had little to reflect themselves. The cycle perpetuated was isolation/surface blank mirrors/unspoken seethings.

The nameless woman remembers how after the war, her uncle, one of these silent, repressed men, molests her in a field of toads. When she tells her mother about it, her mother blames her for provoking the incident.

Victimization is recurrent: the nameless woman remembers her mother's and step-father's determination to help her uncle and aunt file suit against a white man who runs over and kills her cousin Sachiko. The suit is dismissed, however, and they learn another lesson in powerlessness, the futility of resistance. (cf. Yamamoto's "Life Among Oil Fields," in which a white couple in a car injure Yamamoto's brother Jemo and refuse to help pay the hospital bill.) Later, the nameless woman is unable to resist the advances

of a black man who interviews her for a job and pushes her down, humping over her (it is not clear exactly how far he goes with her): "And she was left faceless. He had stripped her of even her body . . . the only means of her definition. He exposed, lay bare, revealed full, and finally rejected the empty shell. The deceptions upon which she had built her life."

But Mirikitani's story ends not with victimization, but with the woman successfully resisting her victimization by reclaiming her ethnic pride. She begins to angrily reject the white world that she has become a part of. As she and Gerald make love one night while on TV President Nixon is making a speech justifying the war in Vietnam and the My Lai massacre, she sees a parallel between Gerald's fucking her and America fucking Vietnam and the rest of the world. At the next dinner party she attends with her husband, the guests glibly discuss "war, politicians, My Lai, cuisine," and the "injustice toward ducks"; when they start in with "Angry indignation about whales and jap whalers," the woman, remembering the importance of the sea and sea food to her ancestor, explodes, hurling food and insults at the guests. Her awareness and anger, which have been slowly building in the second half of the story, gives her the strength to rebel. As she walks toward the sea, which Mirikitani

associates with rebirth, the nameless woman recalls the quiet strength of her stepfather, Haru: "He had beautiful arms, lean, taut. Long arms that lifted heavy sacks of grain." She also remembers her real father, whom she hated because he abandoned her, but whose weakness she's now able to forgive, and whose strength she now acknowledges as the strength of her race:

Gold skinned men
 firm lipped men
 black eyed, silent
 men--touch me.
 Turning, turning
 from myself
 i could not see you--
 dust covered hands
 pain wracked pride
 sweat tracked backs
 muscles popping from the weight.
 Dignity is to be unbroken . . .

At the end of the piece, having rejected an oppressive white husband and embraced her ancestry, she recovers her identity and her name--Hatsuko.

Mirikitani presented herself as a role model to women like Hatsuko; her poems protest injustices, exhort the oppressed to resist. "Watergate, U.S." expresses her disgust for "giants and cannibals" (the white male elite of America) and their women; "August 6" expresses her anger over the Hiroshima bombing; "Attack the Water" describes the cruelty of the U.S. policy of bombing the water supply in Vietnam to

destroy the morale of the civilian population. In "Attack the Water," a portrait of a suffering Vietnamese grandmother is juxtaposed with a portrait of Mirikitani's own grandmother, who after World War II lived through a drought in a California desert, flushing maggots from the rice for her grandchildren by chewing it and spitting the maggots out. "We, the Dangerous," "Breathe Between the Rain", and "Canto a Neruda" are calls to resistance.

As in Inada's poetry, there is blunt sarcasm. "Salad" ends with a stupid-questions-asked-by-whites, this one asked by a woman who watches the speaker making salad: "Do you orientals/do everything/so neatly?" "The Question Is" ends with the question of a racist trying to seduce an "oriental" woman: "Is/it true/your cunt is slanted too?" In one of her poems, "Ms.," the poet goes beyond sarcasm and literally screams out in capital letters "I HATE YOU/WOMAN" at a white woman who is miffed that the poet calls her "Miss" instead of "Ms."

The source of Mirikitani's strength to resist white racism comes from her pride in ancestry and ethnicity, something that had been repressed during the Nisei generation. In contrast to Inada's Before the War, which contains only one poem about his ancestry ("Father of My Father"), Mirikitani's collection, published seven years later, refers

frequently to her family. (During the seventies, Inada wrote more poems about ancestry.) Although Mirikitani's is critical of her mother's passivity and silence about the interment ("Lullabye"), she praises the Issei and Nisei for their strength of endurance. "For My Father," which opens the collection, describes her father, whose silence frightened and angered her, whose strength and determination filled her with awe:

He came over the ocean
 carrying Mt. Fuji
 on his back/Tule Lake on his chest
 hacked through the brush
 of deserts
 and made them grow
 strawberries

"The First Generation" expresses appreciation for her grandmother, comparing her to a vine, rooting in America in order to produce children and grandchildren. "Awake in the River" praises the Issei and Nisei, who like persevering tortoises survived the desert camps in order to produce a new generation:

Tortoise takes
 each step
 inevitable as time
 full with spawn,
 a new age
 to the shore
 where it will bury eggs.

Mirikitani believed once Japanese Americans had recovered their ethnic pride, they would be capable of loving each

other and others. Like Inada, Mirikitani used love as a metaphor for the possibility of mutual respect, caring, and sharing between races and sexes. "Song for You" (Awake in the River), dedicated to black community leader Cecil Williams, Mirikitani's husband, tries to describe a relationship between equals ("we will hold/the sea/you and i") but the imagery implies a woman catering to a man:

I want to
bathe your limbs
like trees
your roots
entangled hard in mine

and walk your back
from Tokyo
to Dar Es Salaam
lulling you with genmai tea.

In a later love poem, "It's Not Easy: For Cecil" (Shedding Silence 1987), love is more difficult: there is tension between two equals, both needing to give, yet protect the ego. She tells Cecil paradoxically: "I want to give you/everything/yet nothing" She confesses that "it would be easier" to submissive (as in "Song for Cecil"), to be the housewife who chatters over cup of tea, washes dishes, mends socks, to let Cecil ". . . pilot my passive/body into unknown ports" But she wants to give him everything, which means an independent equal, an active woman/poet who struggles to be independent against Cecil's "great expanse":

It isn't easy
 to bring to your hands
 a storm of bloodred flowers
 and brutal birthings,
 not easy
 this passion for power, my unbeautiful hunger,
 this selfish desire to be loud, bigger
 than light, this longing
 for movement, my own,
 this discovery of unveiled women
 rising up,
 and tongueless ones
 rising up . . .

In order to maintain equality, the poet has to guard against
 both the temptation to be submissive and the temptation to
 be to overpoweringly assertive.

Mirikitani's poetry celebrates the rejection of
 assimilation and Confucian passivity. The Japanese American
 identity she created is ethnic, angry, and assertive. It is
 particularly significant because she is a woman of Asian
 ancestry--usually stereotyped by white American males as
 docile and submissive. Mirikitani's poetry undermines the
 stereotype with a vengeance.

Garrett Hongo, the youngest of the three poets, published
Yellow Light in 1981, at the end of three decades of
 political activism in America. Like Inada and Mirikitani,
 Hongo was writing in the context of the internment
 experience. But Hongo took a less confrontational stance
 than Inada or Mirikitani--perhaps because his parents,

Hawaii Nisei, were not interned. (Hongo spent his childhood up in Hawaii and moved with his family to the West Coast after the war.) Inada and Mirikitani portrayed themselves and other Japanese Americans as outcasts and underdogs--knocked down, humiliated, but battling upward with insults and threats; Hongo, on the other hand, while acknowledging the anger he felt over the internment, also felt enlightened by his recovery of ancestry, ethnicity, and history. His enlightenment allows him to overcome his desire for revenge, to live with and go beyond the bitter knowledge of the past.

On the dust cover of Yellow Light, Hongo, like Inada and Mirikitani, is critical of the "cultural amnesia" of Japanese America that resulted from both the silence of the Nisei and America's ignorance of Japanese American history and culture. Like Inada and Mirikitani, Hongo attributed the Nisei silence to discrimination and the internment. In "Willingly to Camp; Mythologies of Relocation" (Quilt 1986), Hongo writes contemptuously about the Nisei repression of ethnicity and adoption of a generic American identity:

. . . as I've told you, it [the internment]
dispossessed us,
malformed our psychology to the point that
we wanted nothing more than to be blanks,
raceless Americans without color, history,
or strange clothing that might offend:
out of Camp . . .

. . . we tried to forget
 the language and the gestures, the cadences
 of our immigrant lives with their soiled
 clothes,

we wanted a kind of anonymity, to be pure
 as the babe of Locke's imagination,
 a tabula rasa of consciousness and being . . .

The Sansei, Hongo continues, "grew up cipherous, ready to add ourselves/to any cause or program that would give us/meaning and identity."

Journeying is Hongo's metaphor for his search for ethnic identity and enlightenment. The journey begins with family. The first poem of the collection, "Yellow Light," describes his mother coming home from work through Gardena, their neighborhood in Los Angeles. She is curiously anonymous, a tabula rasa that seems to mirror the neighborhood. "Preaching the Blues" tells the story of Hongo's brother Eldon on the occasion of Eldon's picking Garrett up at LA airport; "Off from Swing Shift," "Winnings," "What For" are about his father. In "Winnings" the poet thanks his father for buying him books with gambling winnings:

My father comes in from the Rainbow
 across the street, ten hands of jacks
 or Better, five draw, a winner
 with a few dollars to peel away
 from grocery money and money to fix
 the washer, a dollar for me to buy
 four pound of Pocket Wisdoms, Bantams,
 a Dell that says Walt Whitman, Poet

of the Open Road . . .

Whitman's poetry about American diversity is one of Hongo's early inspirations, and Hongo is intent on rewriting Whitman's song to include Japanese Americans. Later in the collection, we find poems about the Issei ancestors of Hongo's family ("Issei: First-Generation Japanese American," "C & H Sugar Strike, Kahuku, 1923," and "Kubota").

The sequence of poems "Cruising 99" moves from family to the California landscape as a source of identity. The poet describes a journey he took on Highway 99 in California with poets Lawson Inada and Alan Chong Lau in search of Paradise--both Lau's Californian hometown and the paradise of Amida. (By the mid-70's, Inada was journeying with two Asian American poets rather than with two black artists, and the three poets published a collection called Buddha Bandits Down Highway 99 in which "Cruising 99" was included). "Cruising 99" describes not just a physical journey in time and space, but a spiritual one in search of enlightenment, of oneness with Nature and with the Land. And it's also about Hongo's search for a poetic voice as he tries out different styles of speaking and echoes early influences on his writing (reviewer Lonny Kaneko says he hears "Walt Whitman, Frank Chin, Lawson Inada, the author of *Genesis*, and the Sansei kid"). "Why do I always wish I were Tu Fu?"

Hongo asks at the end of "On the Road to Paradise."

In "Pilgrimage to the Shrine," the first of Hongo's tutelary figures in his collection appears--a hermit whom the pilgrims meet along the highway:

He's wearing a kimono,
a dark-blue stovepipe hat,
his shoulders cloaked
in a wreath of chrysanthemums.

The hermit serves them tea, which changes them, gives them visions; Hongo's vision is described in "Confession of the Highway/The Hermit Speaks," in which the Hermit expresses his--and Hongo's--desire to sing, to become one with the land and nature:

I feel myself wanting to sit up,
begin to walk again, and thresh my way
across rice fields and acres of alfalfa.
For once I'd like to lift my face
straight above Shasta into the sky,
shout in unison with thunder,
roar with the assurance of Santana wind,
leap out of these bonds of copper and steel,
slough off this skin of cement,
and walk south or north or even west
into the weather and the sea.

The flatness of the highway erupts upward toward the sky, suggesting the poet's own longing for enlightenment.

The next group of poems in Yellow Light describes Hongo's journey to Japan to recover his family name and heritage, completing the movement toward ethnic enlightenment. Hongo

reaches further back into the past than Inada and Mirikitani, beyond the Nisei and Issei, to the ancestral homeland. Japan serves the same function in Hongo's mythology as the South does in Toni Morrison's Song of Solomon, as Mt. Taylor/Tse'pina does in Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony, as China does in Maxine Hong Kingston's Woman Warrior and China Men--these places are mythic realms of the ancestors where the soul can be made whole and enlightened. At first, Hongo, American-born, feels alienated from modern Japan and its people. He describes his aloneness and laments the fact that he can't read the newspaper ("Midnight in Tokyo"). The crowds of faces lack individuality: a train lets out "a small puff/Full of tiny Japanese people" ("Yamanote Sen"), and in a rain shower, the people on a trolley seem to be plants in terrarium ("Alone in a Shower"). He longs for California where his future wife waits for him and where he "appreciated the joy of street slang and jive," yet he praises Japan as a spiritual place where "Every mountain was a shrine . . ./and had spires of cindercone pine/that could snag a cloud or crane,/and bring it down to the human throat/in a throb of religious song" ("Roots").

The tutelary figures of this section are Basho and Sora, the two poet/travellers of 16th century Japan. Hongo,

following in their footsteps, seeks an enlightened poetic voice. In "To Matsuo Basho and Kawai Sora in Nirvana," he writes:

I wanted to fade out
like the thin wash of blue
misting over a far horizon,
speak in unison with the chorus
of sunset sounds
drifting in with the tide . . .

The yearning for unison with "the chorus/of sunset sounds" echoes the yearning for unison with thunder in "Confession of the Highway/The Hermit Speaks." "Roots" ends this section of the book with the poet claiming the enlightenment/voice/identity he's been seeking:

There are seven steps to heaven,
and enlightenment stares me in the face
every morning when I shave.

The discovery of the spiritual in the mundane suggests the Zen origins of this enlightenment.

An old artist--another tutelary figure like the Hermit and Basho--appears to Hongo in dreams. The artist inspires Hongo to discover the wisdoms of different cultural traditions and places, and to write poetry:

These days an old man hangs over my sleep,
mumbling behind a screen of dreams,
painting a landscape of sandspits,
fishing shacks, and terraced hills
struggling for space on a wave-hewn coast.
He walks on the sound of a snore,
the renegade sage and sorcerer,

laughing and laughing from his place
 in the corner of that scroll.
 It is his signature that scratches
 across my unconscious life,
 that leaves the luminous stamp of the moon
 on every month of my memory.
 It is for him I take the shakuhachi
 to the desert's shore
 and conjure up a melody of bamboo reeds,
 cryptomeria, or blue lotus flowers
 from the pastel silences of Mojave sage and
 lupine.
 It is for him I learn a buffalo dance,
 step out the trace of a dry wash,
 and speak the grammar of a trance.

Hongo's metaphor for his art, the shakuhachi, suggests his
 ethnic heritage, as does his "melody of bamboo reeds,
 cryptomeria, or blue lotus flowers"; but the desert's shore
 is America, where a buffalo dance alludes to Native American
 influence and Hongo's American roots.

Hongo's sutra, which comes toward the end of the poem, is
 a combination of a Buddhist chant and John Coltrane's "A
 Love Supreme," Eastern and Western traditions of compassion
 uniting:

MAKA HANYA HARAMITA SHIN GYO

A LOVE SUPREME

A LOVE SUPREME

SUPREME, SUPREME

A LOVE SUPREME

GAY TE GYA TE

HA RA GYA TE

HARA SO GYA TE

SOWA KA

HAN NYA SHIN GYO

Hongo, like Inada, borrows from black culture, but here Hongo tries to fuse black and Japanese cultures as sources of enlightenment.

The poet's enlightenment, achieved by reclaiming his ethnicity in the mythic realm of Japan, is suggested by the images of light that dominate the collection. Sunlight, moonlight, electric light, and fluorescent light illuminate the world for the poet. But light is also symbolic of the poet's knowledge of himself, his surroundings, and his history: in "On the Last Performance of Musume Dojoji at the Nippon-Kan of the Astor Hotel, Seattle, Washington," the poet lights a match to discover fragments of Japanese American History in an old theater: graffiti on the wall, the ghost of a former actress. In "Yellow Light," light also symbolizes the unity of being:

The moon then, cruising from behind
a screen of eucalyptus across the street,
covers everything, everything in sight,
in a heavy light like yellow onion.

The lights of the city, which sometimes make war with each other, are overlaid by universal moonlight, the common ground of being. The yellow-ness of the light suggests

Hongo's ethnicity. The universal light is not white, but yellow or Asian, a unifying light that "covers everything."

Enlightenment leads the poet to feel a healing compassion. He wants his words to convey a blessing on others, redeeming their suffering. "What For" expresses the poet's wish to be a word-doctor:

I wanted to become a doctor of pure magic,
to string a necklace of sweet words
fragrant as pine needles and plumeria,
fragrant as the bread my mother baked,
place it like a lei of cowrie shells
and pikake flowers around my father's neck,
and chant him a blessing, a sutra.

But the victims in Hongo's poems, unlike the victims Mirikitani's poems, are not necessarily wounded by racism; in "What For," the poet describes "the sores that work/and war had sent to" his father; in "Off Swing Shift," we learn that his father is "going deaf from a shell/at Anzio still echoing /in the cave of his inner ear,/ . . . blue chips of shrapnel still grinding/at the thickening joints of his legs." His father is also a victim of numbers, unlucky at horses, listening to the radio in vain for his horses' name to be called:

But no one calls
the horse's name, no one
says Shackles, Rebate, or Pouring Rain.
No one speaks a word.

Though "no one calls/the horse's name," the poet

sympathetically re-calls his father in his poem.

"Preaching the Blues" is a blessing for Hongo's brother, Eldon. Eldon's boyhood dream of becoming a musician, of "priesthood, preaching the blues," has been lost in "shoveling two weeks of shit/in the pile between paychecks." But the poet is grateful for his brother, whatever his brother is doing, praising Eldon's loyalty ("He's always there, waiting for me . . . ") and playfulness ("We run the give-and-go, pick-/and-roll through the parking lot . . . ") while acknowledging that their lives are controlled by "stoplights/in all the streets chanting Go,/Slow, and No Go to the night."

In "Stay with Me," the victim is a lonely woman named Gloria, "crying/in the back seat" of a bus. She takes the hand of a young black who shows some concern for her and clings to him:

He feels something hot
hit his arm, and, too late
to be startled now, sighs
and gives in, turning his
hand over, lifting it, clasping
hers, letting her bring it
to her cheek, white and slick
with tears, stroking her face
with the back of his hand,
rubbing the hollow of her cheek
against his fist, and she,
speaking finally, "Stay with me
a little while. Till your stop?
Just stay with me,"

The young black man is a figure for the compassion of Buddhahood, a compassion that can heal wounds, the same compassion that is in Hongo's voice.

Enlightenment also offers a way for the poet forgive the victimizers, once they have acknowledged their crimes. In "Stepchild," the poet recalls the internment and the history of anti-Asian laws and discrimination in America. He directs his bitterness not so much at the oppression itself, but at the attempt by Whites to cover it up:

Why do you ignore us?
We give you songs of grief
and you run to the liars
who would have you believe
that the past is to laugh at,
its lesson best told
in a fairy tale
about the Nisei
emerging full-grown
Americans at birth,
leaping from the pit
of a huge peach
the Issei found
tumbling along a dry wash
in the River of Angels.

This is a lie.
Our history is bitter:
a farmer's thick arm
slashed on the spiked teeth
of barbed-wire fences . . .

Nothing can change the historical past; but the poet by situating the struggle not in history but in language, he can combat the lies by telling the truth.

The bitter truth makes the poet want to take revenge, "to tear at the throats/of white children,/exterminate them/like the Angels of Auschwitz." But he remembers another tradition, the tradition of Mennonites and Quakers "who nursed the sick/at Manzanar,/who comforted the crying/at Gila River,/who rowed the long boats/of their outrage, their protest,/into the shoal of storms/gathering on the peaks of Heart Mountain . . . ," a tradition to which his wife, a Mennonite, belongs. This tradition, and the Buddhist tradition of compassion, remind him to "Teach a Blessingway," even as revenge "blisters" his tongue.

His recitation of the history and the oppression, the cover-up, the recounting of the sources of the truth has a cathartic effect on the poet. In the last section of the poem, he is relaxed, lounging near the seashore in Southern California, no longer threatened by the virulent anti-Japanese passions that flourished in the first half of the 20th century. He is able to achieve the blank mind of Buddhahood:

I think about nothing
for a change, think
what it is that flowers
from itself and shakes
the yellow dust of thought
onto the red cloisters
of my heart, my passions.

Not that the bitterness is totally gone, for as he looks

about the window, he notices "melons ripening on the sill,/the yellow ones we call bitter."

Yellow Light closes with "Something Whispered in a Shakuhachi," in which the poet speaks in the voice of an Issei who farmed California before the war and grew bamboo to fashion flutes. The Issei was interned during the war and returned to his land after the war. In his old age, he hears a call from the bamboo thicket "to come and sit/among the tall canes/and shape full-throated songs/out of wind, out of bamboo,/out of a voice that only whispers." The poem is one of Hongo's new myth of the Japanese American experience in America. There is no sense of the humiliation and victimization of the Issei that we find in the stories of Hisaye Yamamoto or the poetry of Inada or Mirikitani. The old man has a simple faith in his unity with the land. His music, singing from bamboo that grows from the land, gives the old man the strength to endure:

All through Relocation,
in the desert where they put us,
at night when the stars talked
and the sky came down and drummed against the
mesas,
I could hear my flutes
wail like fists of wind
whistling through the barracks.

The consoling music is not jazz, as in Inada's poetry, but the music of a bamboo flute. The poet, while acknowledging

the minority experience in America as part of his heritage, steps back farther into the ancestral past. However, he is not reclaiming a Japanese identity, but an element of Japanese tradition--something spiritual symbolized by music--that was brought to America by the Issei. Like Maxine Hong Kingston's Woman Warrior, Hongo's Yellow Light ends with the legend of a reed player; but while Kingston's myth is traditional Chinese, adapted to reflect on her American situation, Hongo's myth is self-created and American, having grown out of the California soil like the Issei's bamboo. The poem, like the works of Sone and Miyamoto, seems to ignore the suffering and bitterness caused by the internment; but read in the context of the collection, in which Hongo confronts his bitterness and rage, it is not so much an attempt to repress negative emotions, but an affirmation of the redeeming, healing power of Japanese American art.

Conclusion:

Ethnicity and Democracy

The Japanese American success story that emerged from post-war Hawaii during the 50's and 60's became the dominate Nisei mythology appealing strongly to the American middle-class because it affirmed middle-class values and the middle-class myth that America was a land of opportunity. Telling the success story with Nisei characters, therefore, helped Nisei writers undermine racist stereotypes, establish an American identity, and win the approval of their primarily middle-class audience. By the mid 60's, white middle-class writers began to praise Japanese Americans for the same qualities and achievements for which the Nisei writers had praised the Nisei. In "Success Stories, Japanese-American Style," published in The New York Times Magazine on January 9, 1966, William Petersen wrote admiringly of the Nisei:

Barely more than twenty years after the end of the war-time camps, this is a minority that has risen above even prejudiced criticism. By any criterion of good citizenship that we choose, the Japanese Americans are better than any other group in our society, including native-born whites. They have established this remarkable record, moreover, by their own almost totally unaided effort. Every attempt to hamper their progress resulted only in enhancing their determination to succeed. Even in a country whose patron saint is the Horatio Alger hero, there is no parallel to this success story. (20)

The Japanese American success story has continued to appeal to middle-class readers, and non-Japanese American writers have continued to tell it in the 80's. For example, black social historian Thomas Sowell, in Ethnic America (1981), applauded the Issei as "marvels of industry as well as thrift" (the description seems absurd in the light of Yamamoto's short stories) and reported the solid educational, economic, and political achievements of the Nisei, as well as their increasing structural assimilation into mainstream society (residential dispersion and intermarriage). Middle-class writers, both Japanese Americans and others, have also begun to tell the success story of a new generation--the Sansei--often in conjunction with the success story of other Asian Americans, with whom the Japanese Americans have been categorized in government statistics. The success story functions today, as it did in the 50's, not just to confirm a middle-class myth, but to teach white American to distinguish between Japanese and Japanese Americans and to affirm the American identity of the Nisei and Sansei in a society in which anti-Japanese sentiments are deeply rooted and likely to spring up whenever conflicts arise between Japan and America.

While the middle class continues to promote the Japanese American success story, the mythology of oppression and

resistance is less popular today than it was a decade ago. While a few writers like Janice Mirikitani have continued to write angry political poetry (her most recent collection, Shedding Silence, was published in 1987), most others, including Lawson Inada and Garrett Hongo, have abandoned the rhetoric of protest. But the mythology of oppression and resistance did have a lasting effect on the Japanese American rhetoric and identity. When the success story is told today, the emphasis is less often on the achievement of higher socioeconomic status, and more often on cultural achievement that reaffirms ethnicity. Magazine articles hail Japanese American filmmakers (Steve Okazaki), dramatists (Phil Gotanda), and Musicians (Nobuko Miyamoto, Hiroshima). Also as part of the legacy of the 60's and 70's activism, there is the inevitable questioning of why more Japanese or Asian Americans aren't making it in non-traditional careers (e.g., why aren't there more Asian American males in broadcasting journalism? why aren't there more Japanese American corporate executives?); the point, of course, is that discrimination still exists. Although Asian Americans are stereotyped as passive and quiet, the mythology of oppression and resistance helped make Japanese Americans more politically aware and active and more likely to protest discrimination and injustices rather than to suffer in silence.

The rhetoric of protest, with its emphasis on ethnic pride and integrity, also helped Japanese Americans create a healthier identity for themselves. The myth of 100% Americanization promoted by the early Nisei writers (understandable given the intense anti-Japanese racism in the first half of the 20th century) is no longer accepted by most Japanese Americans. By writing about their Japanese ancestry and heritage and their experiences and history in America, Japanese American writers have been able to validate in language and literature cultural values and norms unique to Japanese Americans. While culture in America is still Anglo-dominated and racist, courses in Japanese American studies have made Japanese Americans less likely to feel uncomfortable about their ethnicity and less likely to believe that they had to look like and imitate the behavior of white people in order to be "good" Americans. Becoming American no longer means repressing every aspect of one's ethnicity ("100% Americanization"); one can be both ethnic and American at the same time.

The assertion of ethnicity by Japanese Americans (and other ethnic minorities) has had a beneficial effect on American society. By asserting their differences with white Americans, the Sansei writers challenged America to live up to its democratic ideal of tolerance of diversity, to accept

the paradox that the Japanese Americans were both of Japanese ancestry and American. This paradox is at the core of a multiethnic democracy, making possible both unity and diversity. The American motto, E pluribus unum, embodies the paradox, as does Walt Whitman's America: "Of every hue and caste am I, of every rank and religion. . . ." The paradox encourages Americans to tolerate, even more, to embrace difference, without feeling that the differences are divisive. The failure to understand this paradox led to the internment: the simple-minded white racist could not see how someone of Japanese ancestry, someone who looked different from himself, could actually be the same--an American.

Besides promoting ethnic diversity, the Japanese American writers (and liberal white historians like Roger Daniels) have also helped to keep in the public memory racial injustices, past and present. In "The Fire Next Time" (1962), James Baldwin argued that it was the duty of the black writer in America to force white Americans to see the whole truth of their history, to see they were not morally superior to or more in love with democracy than other Americans and that the history of America's oppression of its ethnic minorities proved they were not. This truth, Baldwin felt, needed to be kept in the public memory in order to make Anglo-Americans less self-righteous: the less

self-righteous Anglo-Americans were, the less likely it would be that they would abuse minorities in order to prove their superiority, and the more likely they would attempt to live up to their democratic ideals.

As protest became less fashionable in the 80's, however, ethnicity rather than racial injustices became the focus of Japanese American writing, and ethnicity began to shade into ethnocentrism. Idealization of the ethnic self was always an element in the rhetoric of protest, but it was balanced with social concerns, as in the writings of Janice Mirikitani and Garrett Hongo. Without the social concerns, the idealization was merely a means to promote narrow ethnic interests or fascination with one's ancestry or heritage. Some Sansei writers (following Hongo) began to associate ethnicity with passive Japanese philosophies like Zen Buddhism that had become popular in America. These philosophies allowed Japanese American writers to claim enlightenment on the basis of their ethnicity and to spend more time contemplating nature than caring about what is happening in the streets of America.

This new ethnocentrism, coupled with middle-class success, has made it all the more likely that Japanese American writers would neglect social concerns and retreat into private meditations on their privileged middle-class lives.

But a few Japanese American writers, as we have seen, have also produced antidotes for the illusion of the idealized Japanese American self. In the Murayama's confessional novella, in Yamamoto's confessional essays, we find a rhetoric of honesty that encourages humility rather than idealization of the ethnic self. A handful of Sansei writers like Janice Mirikitani and Ron Takaki, have also tried to keep Japanese American writing focused on America's oppressed rather than the successfully middle-class. Although protest poetry has become less popular in the 80's, writers like Okada, Mori, and Yamamoto have shown that one doesn't have to write protest poetry in order to write compassionately about outcasts.

The central issue facing Japanese American writers today is whether or not the moral commitment to social justice that was the legacy of discrimination and the internment experience can be carried on, given that Japanese Americans are no longer the despised outcasts they were earlier in this century. Can writers who have grown up in the middle class, for whom the internment and the Civil Rights movement are past history, maintain a moral forcefulness in their writings? Or will they, like other non-ethnic middle-class writers indulge in the privilege of focusing their attention on personal problems or poetic craft? If any do write with

moral or political concerns, will they write, like the writers of the success story, in the service of middle-class Japanese American interests, or will they write with the broader moral appeal of Okada, Mori, and Yamamoto?

The poems in Breaking Silence: An Anthology of Asian American Poetry (1983) suggest that most of the writers aren't writing with moral forcefulness about social or political concerns. While the new, young Japanese American writers continue to promote their ethnicity, they do not have the sympathy for outcasts that we find in the writings of Okada, Mori, Yamamoto, Mirikitani, or Hongo. The writings of both the Hawaii and West Coast Sansei are mainly self-congratulatory celebrations of middle-class ethnicity or explorations of private concerns. Some, like Sansei Patricia Ikeda, yearn for "strong peacefulness and harmony"; she believes the poet should tell the reader to "'Look at the trees!'" Others have become concerned mainly with craft: Tina Koyama tells us that writing poetry is like baking bread and that she enjoys the making, the process more than the bread itself. Mark Osaki, on the other hand, talks of "moral ambiguity," acknowledging ethical concerns as important, but lacks a moral or political vision of dealing with them. David Mura is exceptional. He writes in his poetic statement:

In the past few years feminist writers have probably been more active than males in incorporating and formulating new insights in their poetry. Books like Susan Griffin's *Pornography and Silence* just haven't seemed to penetrate the psyche of many male poets and I feel this is wrong. I'd like to see a male poetry emerge in this country which has the political and historical awareness of Milosz, the generosity and fallibility of Hikmet, and the communal androgynous feeling of Whitman. (199)

The statement reveals a young poet's infatuation with his sources of inspiration, but also a search for moral vision that is lacking in the other Japanese American poetic statements in the anthology. If Mura can actually produce a body of work based on his influences, he will be able to extend the tradition of political consciousness in Japanese American writing. The five poems he has published in Breaking Silence--including poems in the personas of a survivor of the atomic bomb, a Vietnamese soldier, and some American soldiers who get lost in a jungle and become icons of a lost tribe--show great promise.

List of References

- Baldwin, James. The Fire Next Time. New York: Dell, 1963.
- . Notes of a Native Son. New York: Beacon Press, 1955.
- Bonacich, Edna, and John Modell. The Economic Basis of Ethnic Solidarity: Small Business in the Japanese American Community. Berkeley: UC Press, 1980.
- Bruchac, Joseph, ed. Breaking Silence, An Anthology of Contemporary Asian American Poets. Greenfield, NY: Greenfield Review Press, 1983.
- Chin, Frank et al, eds. Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Asian American Writers. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1975.
- Chock, Eric and Darrell Lum, eds. The Best of Bamboo Ridge. Honolulu: Bamboo Ridge, 1986.
- Daniels, Roger C. Concentration Camps USA: Japanese Americans and World War II. Hinsdale, IL: Dryden Press, 1971.
- . Politics of Prejudice. New York: Ateneum, 1972.
- Dearborn, Mary V. Pocahantas' Daughters: Gender and Ethnicity in American Culture. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Duus, Masayo Umezawa. Unlikely Liberators: The Men of the 100th and 442nd. Trans. Peter Duus. Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1987.
- Ellison, Ralph. Shadow and Act. New York: Random House, 1964.
- Fine, David M. The City, the Immigrant and American Fiction, 1880-1920. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1977.
- Gleason, Philip. "American Identity and Americanization." Concepts of Ethnicity. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1982.
- Harada, Margaret N. The Sun Shines on the Immigrant. New York: Vantage Press, 1960.
- Hongo, Garrett Kaoru. "Willingly to Camp: Mythologies of

- Relocation." Quilt. 37-43.
- . Yellow Light. Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1982
- , Alan Chong Lau, and Lawson Fusao Inada. The Buddha Bandits Down Highway 99. Mountain View, CA: Buddahhead Press, 1978.
- Horikoshi, Peter. "Interview with Toshio Mori." Counterpoint: Perspectives on Asian America. ed. Emma Gee. Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 1976. 472-479.
- Hosokawa, Bill. Nisei: The Quiet Americans. New York: William Morrow & Co., 1969.
- Houston, Jeanne Wakatsuki, and James D. Houston. Farewell to Manzanar. 1973. Toronto: Bantam Books, 1974.
- Hsu, Kai-yu and Helen Palubinskas, eds. Asian-American Authors. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1972.
- Inada, Lawson Fusao. Before the War: Poems as They Happened. New York: William Morrow & Co., 1971.
- Inouye, Daniel, with Lawrence Elliot. Journey to Washington. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967.
- Kaneko, Lonny. "Journey into Place, Race, and Spirit" (Review of Buddha Bandits Down Highway 99). Amerasia 6.2 (1979), 91-104.
- Kim, Elaine H. Asian American Literature. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982.
- Kitano, Harry. Japanese Americans: The Evolution of a Subculture. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969.
- Kotani, Roland. The Japanese in Hawaii: A Century of Struggle. Honolulu: Hawaii Hochi, 1985.
- Leong, Russell. "Toshio Mori: Interview." Amerasia 7.1 (1980): 89-108.
- Mead, Margaret, and James Baldwin. A Rap on Race. Philadelphia: Lippincott. 1971.
- Mirikitani, Janice. Awake in the River. San Francisco: Isthmus Press. 1978.

---. Shedding Silence. Berkeley, CA: Celestial Arts. 1987.

Miyamoto, Kazuo. Hawaii: End of the Rainbow. Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1964.

Mori, Toshio. The Chauvinist. Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 1979.

---. Woman from Hiroshima. San Francisco: Isthmus Press, 1978.

---. Yokohama, California. 1949. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985.

Murayama, Milton. All I Asking For Is My Body. San Francisco: Supa Press, 1975.

Murphy, Thomas D. Ambassador in Arms: The Story of Hawaii's 100th Battalion. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1954.

Okada, John. No-No Boy. 1957. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984.

Okimoto, Daniel. American in Disguise. New York: Walker-Weatherhill, 1971.

Ota, Shelley Ayame Nishimura. Upon Their Shoulders. New York: Exposition Press, 1951.

Sone, Monica. Nisei Daughter. 1953. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979.

Tanaka, Ronald. "On the Metaphysical Foundations of Sansei Poetics." Journal of Ethnic Studies 7 Summer 1979: 1-36.

---. The Shino Suite. Greenfield Center, NY: Greenfield Review Press, 1981.

---. "Shito, or the Way of Poetry." Journal of Ethnic Studies 9 Winter 1982: 1-64.

---. "The Circle of Ethnicity." Journal of Ethnic Studies 8 Fall 1980: 1-64.

Takaki, Ronald. Pau Hana: Plantation Life and Labor in Hawaii. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983.

Weglyn, Michi. Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of

- America's Concentration Camps. New York: William Morrow, 1976.
- Yamamoto, Hisaye. "Brown House." Harper's Bazaar Oct. 1951: 166+. Rpt. in Asian-American Authors. eds. Kai-yu Hsu and Helen Palubinskas. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1972.
- . "Epithalamium." The Carleton Miscellany 1.4 (1960): 56-67.
- . "Fire in Fontana." Rafu Shimpo 21 Dec. 1985: 8+.
- . "The High-Heeled Shoes." Partisan Review Oct. 1948: 1079-1085.
- . "Las Vegas Charley." Arizona Quarterly 17 (1961): 303-22. Rpt. in Asian-American Heritage. ed. David Hsin-Fu Wand. New York: Washington Square Press, 1974. 97-121.
- . "The Legend of Miss Sasagawara." Kenyon Review 12.1 (1950): 99-115. Rpt. in Amerasia Journal. 3.2 (1976): 10-22.
- . "Life Among the Oilfields." Rafu Shimpo 21 Dec. 1979: 13+. Rpt. in Seventeen Syllables: Five Stories of Japanese American Life. eds. Robert Rolf and Normitsu Ayuzawa. Tokyo: Krihara Shoten, 1985. 67-81.
- . "Seventeen Syllables." Partisan Review Nov. 1949. Rpt. in Counterpoint. ed. Emma Gee. Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 1976. 490-495.
- . "Wilshire Bus." Pacific Citizen 20 Dec. 1950: 17+.
- . "Writing." Rafu Shimpo 20 Dec. 1968: 14+. Rpt. in Amerasia Journal 3.2 (1976). 126-133.
- . "Yoneko's Earthquake." Furioso 6.1 (1951): 5-16. Rpt. in Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Asian American Writers. eds. Frank Chin et al. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1975. 268-283.
- Yoneda, Karl G. Ganbatte: Sixty-Year Struggle of a Kibei Worker. Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 1983.

VITA

Dennis Kawaharada was born in Agana, Guam on December 31, 1951. He received a high school diploma from Castle High School, Kaneohe, Hawaii, in 1969; a B.A. degree in English from the University of Hawaii at Manoa in 1974; and an M.A. degree in English from the University of Washington in 1976. He is on the faculty of Kapiolani Community College, Honolulu, Hawaii.