A large, stylized red koi fish is positioned in the upper left corner, facing left. It has a white eye and a pattern of scales. The background of the cover is a light blue-grey with a repeating pattern of smaller, stylized koi fish swimming in various directions.

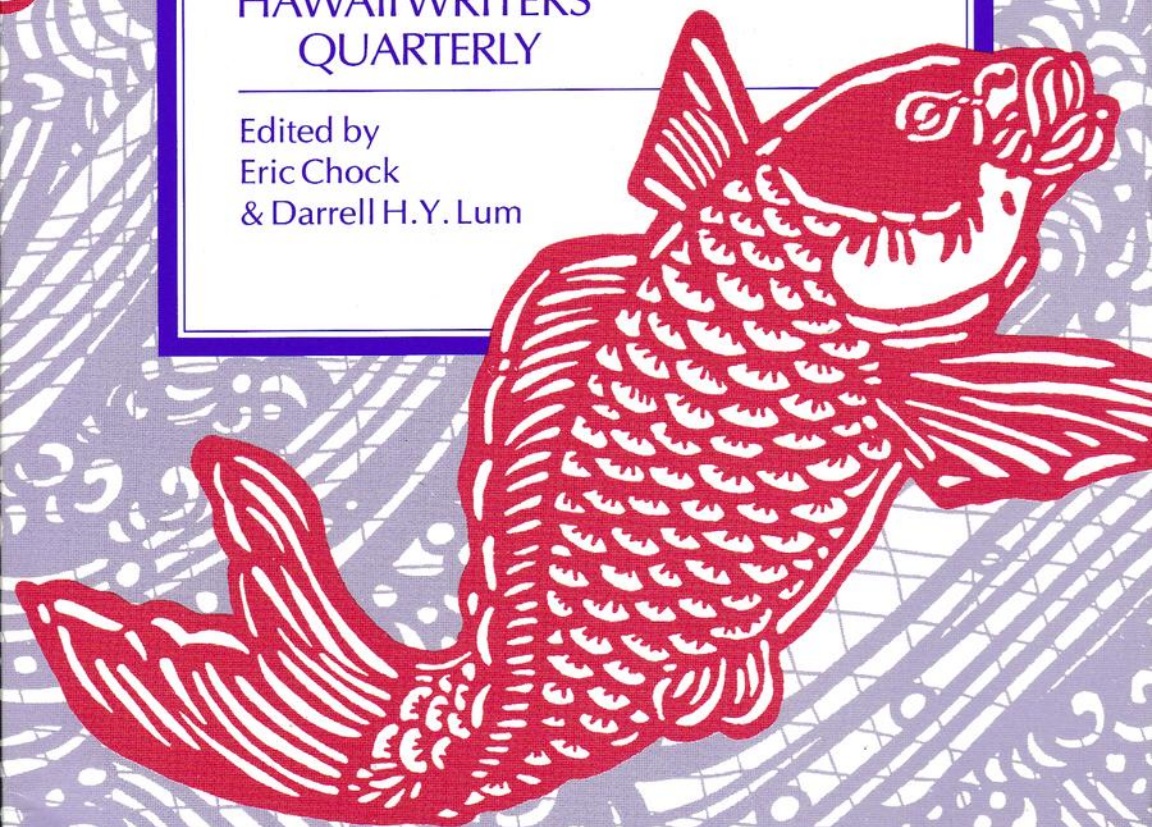
# THE BEST OF bamboo ridge

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THE  
HAWAII WRITERS'  
QUARTERLY

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Edited by  
Eric Chock  
& Darrell H.Y. Lum





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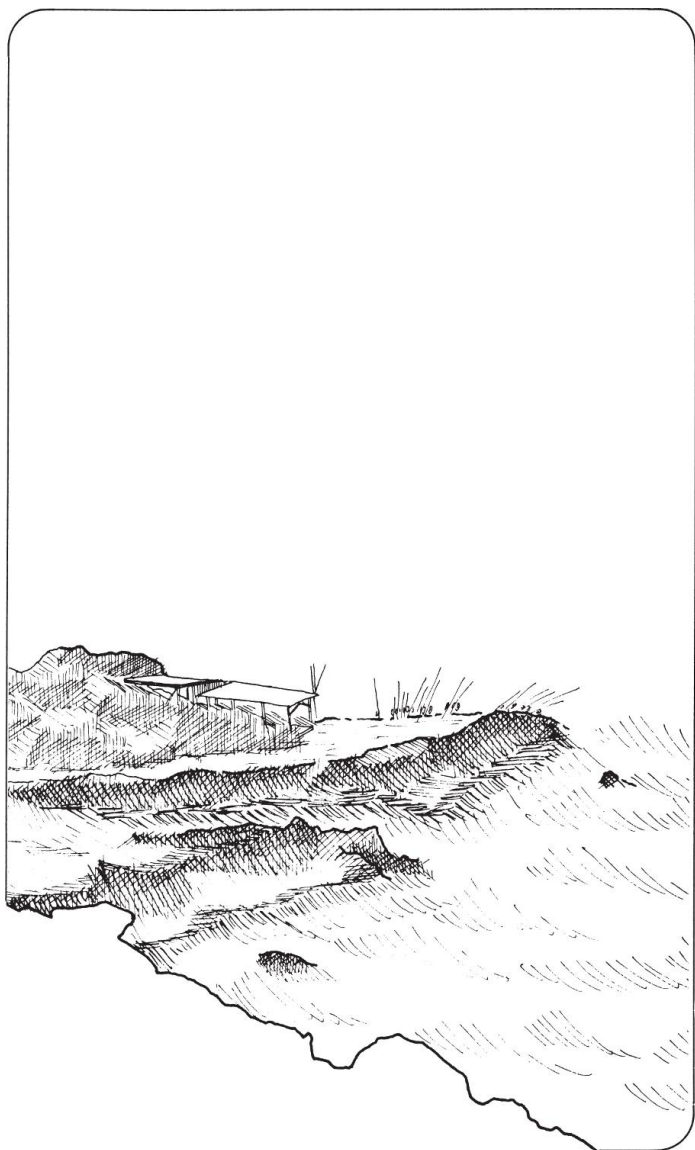
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# Darrell H. Y. Lum

## LOCAL LITERATURE AND LUNCH

There's an island surf shop called Local Motion where you can buy T-shirts that say "Locals Only." Anyone can shop there, even tourists. And locals and tourists alike buy "Locals Only" shirts because they're brightly colored, full of geometric New Wave designs, and they say "Hawaii" right there in front.

There's also a lunch that's quick and cheap that you can buy at drive-in restaurants and coffee shops called a "loco-moco." It's a bed of rice topped by a hamburger patty topped by an over-easy fried egg and smothered in brown gravy. Real locals then add salt, pepper, shoyu, and ketchup before digging in! And there's always saimin, a noodles-in-soup dish that you'll never find in Japan or China. It's a distinctly local invention along with the plate lunch. Watch where the truck drivers and businessmen and surfers always end up. It's usually at a lunch wagon (one of those delivery vans outfitted with a propane warming table and a flip-up side that reveals a serving counter), serving up a nutritional nightmare on a paper plate along the beaches, the waterfront, at construction sites, even right outside City Hall. A plate lunch of curry stew poured over two scoops of rice alongside a scoop of macaroni salad and a bit of kim chee (Korean style chili-pepper spiced cabbage) will run you about three dollars.

Then you can drive home to a nice little house in the suburbs: a modest twenty-year old, single wall, three bedroom, two bath place with a carport going for \$150,000 or so ... on leased land. This is all part of living in these islands. No wonder a number of Hawaii writers choose to describe themselves as local writers of "local literature" (as opposed to "Asian American" literature, largely a mainland term, or "Hawaiian" literature, which the locals know means native Hawaiian literature).

Things *are* different here. And, not surprisingly, the literature reflects it. Of course, there are the nature themes which according to some visiting writers appear too much and too often in local literature. But why shouldn't we write about

nature when we know that the EDB (ethylene dimethyl-bromide, more simply, ant poison) sprayed on the pineapples shows up in the drinking water years after they stop using the insecticide? This isn't standing-in-awe-of or ain't-it-beautiful nature writing that we're talking about. It's chemicals in the milk and the water, it's not washing the car or watering the lawn when there's a water shortage; it's volcanic ash in the air from an eruption two islands away or the sky grey with ash from burning sugar cane. It's the sting of wind-flung sand at the beach and going out even if it's raining because it'll probably stop by the time you get there. It's smashing a two-inch cockroach in your bathroom or listening to a gecko call all night from your ceiling. And you learn after the first time rolling around in the surf not knowing which way is up, "Never Turn Your Back To The Ocean."

Or at the first hint of a shipping strike, you find yourself in line at the supermarket behind all those mama-sans buying up the rice and Spam and vienna sausages. They have memories of shipping strikes that lasted months. They have memories of being a striker themselves or knowing someone who went hungry during a strike. And for many islanders, it doesn't take a lot of digging to find one's roots in the soil of Hawaii's sugar plantations: grandparents or great-grandparents who immigrated to the islands as contract laborers.

No wonder, then, the local literature which *Bamboo Ridge*, *The Hawaii Writers' Quarterly* has published over the years, has echoed this island life. Forget the "Golden Man" or the "melting pot" myths. The literature of local writers has a distinct sensitivity to ethnicity, the environment (in particular that valuable commodity, the land), a sense of personal lineage and family history, and the use of the sound, the languages, and the vocabulary of island people.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was sometime around five years ago that the idea of having a "Best of" issue came up. People laughed when I first suggested it. At the time there were only twelve issues to consider. Laziness and procrastination in completing the task of reading through the stack of back issues kept delaying the project. Naturally, with the addition of each new issue, the job just kept getting bigger and bigger. Even with the help of an editorial advisory committee, it took us three years to finally get this out. The literature, like the lunches, are diverse, tasty, and speak of who we are and where we've come from.

We end this collection with the only piece of writing that was not previously published in *Bamboo Ridge*. Steve Sumida's article, "Waiting for the Big Fish: Recent Research in the Asian American Literature of Hawaii," summarizes the history of local literature and offers some thoughts about why it has largely been ignored and even denied to exist. Sumida's article and his forthcoming book are the first serious look at local literature by a scholar. Sumida along with Arnold Hiura and Marie Hara were the founders of the Hawaii Ethnic Resources Cen-

ter: Talk Story, Inc., which for many years served as our own tax-exempt status. They put on the first ethnic American writers conference in Hawaii, “Talk Story: Words bind, words set free” in 1978 and published *Talk Story: An Anthology of Hawaii’s Local Writers* in the same year. The conference and the book and the founding of Bamboo Ridge Press in 1978 were instrumental in helping define local literature. We recognize their contribution to *Bamboo Ridge* and to Hawaii’s literary community. This is our past.

Getting this collection down to these 300 or so pages was a difficult task. This was supposed to only be lunch, but like all good local hosts, when you serve up lunch you should always have enough. Enjoy.

*Darrell Lum*

# Eric Chock

## ON LOCAL LITERATURE

*In October 1980, the Writers of Hawaii Conference convened at the Hawaii State Capitol Auditorium for six nights to an audience of 200 people each night. It was sponsored by the Hawaii Literary Arts Council and Talk Story, Inc. with support from the Hawaii Committee for the Humanities and the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts. The following is an edited version of the opening night introduction, most of which is still relevant today. It is excerpted from Writers of Hawaii: A Focus On Our Literary Heritage, edited by Eric Chock and Jody Manabe (Bamboo Ridge Press, 1981).*

### I

Welcome everybody, to “Writers of Hawaii: A Focus On Our Literary Heritage.” I am Eric Chock, president of the Hawaii Literary Arts Council. It was almost a year ago when the director of the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts, Mr. Preis, congratulated me on winning the HLAC presidency. And only half-jokingly he asked me, “Was this an election, or was it a revolution?” Must be my long hair, I guess. Some people are still afraid that the hippies are gonna take over.

Well, for Mr. Preis and everyone else, a late answer: I believe that this is part of not a revolutionary process, but an evolutionary process. And I hope that this is a process that will eventually lead to local literature being taught in the schools in Hawaii. Sounds a little strange, I know, to some people—local literature—Hawaii stories, written by Hawaii people, and taught to Hawaii’s children in the schools. Sounds almost redundant.

But I hope that it will happen someday, in the schools, even at the college level. Because it will lead to more pride among Hawaii’s people, and an awareness of Hawaii’s directions, past and present. And also it will provide more



opportunities for people, like me, who grew up here and want to be writers and who need clear models for exactly what that is—a Hawaii writer.

This process, this goal for the Hawaii Literary Arts Council, is as Mr. Preis once said, “To bring before the people of Hawaii the great importance of literature.” And this process is what we’re continuing tonight.

But literature, and especially Modern Hawaiian Literature, what is that? And why is it so important? Literature is an activity that happens in a society, a culture, a group, any group. It is a shared sense of belonging and identity, expressed in words. Like any other kind of art, it is a way to understand life, to appreciate living and therefore to participate in life to the fullest of your potential. It should make you feel inspired about your life.

And how can it do that? Well, theoretically, literature helps you intensify your sense of individual identity in such a way that you feel like a so-called “universal being.” What that means is that, in literature, the range of human experiences specific to your group is demonstrated to be characteristic of all people. Human traits are shown to occur naturally in all humans.

While the theory sounds simple, it’s not so easily achieved. You would expect that in Hawaii, the world’s most celebrated melting pot of cultures, we would have developed a literature which emphasizes and focuses on the humanity in people of all races. You would expect that with Hawaii’s cultural blending, a literature would naturally emerge which expressed the infinite variety of ways in which people can share their lives, develop common goals, and achieve a sense of community pride. A literature which, in effect, expressed a sense of the word “aloha.”

But what do we in Hawaii have as “our literature”? In Hawaii, which as John Dominis Holt said, “gave the world the word ‘aloha,’” it is ironic that the most commonly held notion of our literature is that it is non-existent.

It is no secret that language has always been a crucial factor in Hawaii’s history. It’s no secret that the so-called “blending of cultures” often manifested itself in a clash of languages, sometimes in a competition for sovereignty. It’s no secret that our own government, through its various organs, has attempted to suppress varying forms of languages in favor of one common language. And that ain’t pidgin they talking about.

And though it may be a practical necessity—and I believe it is—it is again ironic that this chosen form of a common language is seemingly unable—seemingly unable—to produce a literature expressing a common Hawaiian life. And what indicators do we have of a lack of common literature?

If we did have a clearly defined common literature, a Hawaii literary tradition, wouldn’t Hawaii’s educational systems teach it and use it for educational purposes? They don’t. And we wonder why they have problems teaching our kids to read and write. The answer is the problem, obviously. If there is no such thing as a Hawaii writer, how can you teach a Hawaii kid to write?

Should we also ask, why is it that there is so little emphasis in Hawaii's public educational systems placed on Hawaii's history? That is, of our sense of common background, our sense of common experiences—that sense of community again? Or should we take that a step higher and ask, why is it that in Hawaii's colleges and universities, in English departments and colleges of education, there is practically no mention, much less the study, of literature in Hawaii? In fact, there is denial that Hawaii literature of value exists.

And if you want statistics, take the Hawaii State Foundation on Culture and the Arts Report for fiscal year 1979. It reports that \$1.7 million was spent on the arts: painting, dance, music, theater, literature. Why is it that out of over 1.7 million dollars, just over 2% of that sum is for literature? Just over 2%.

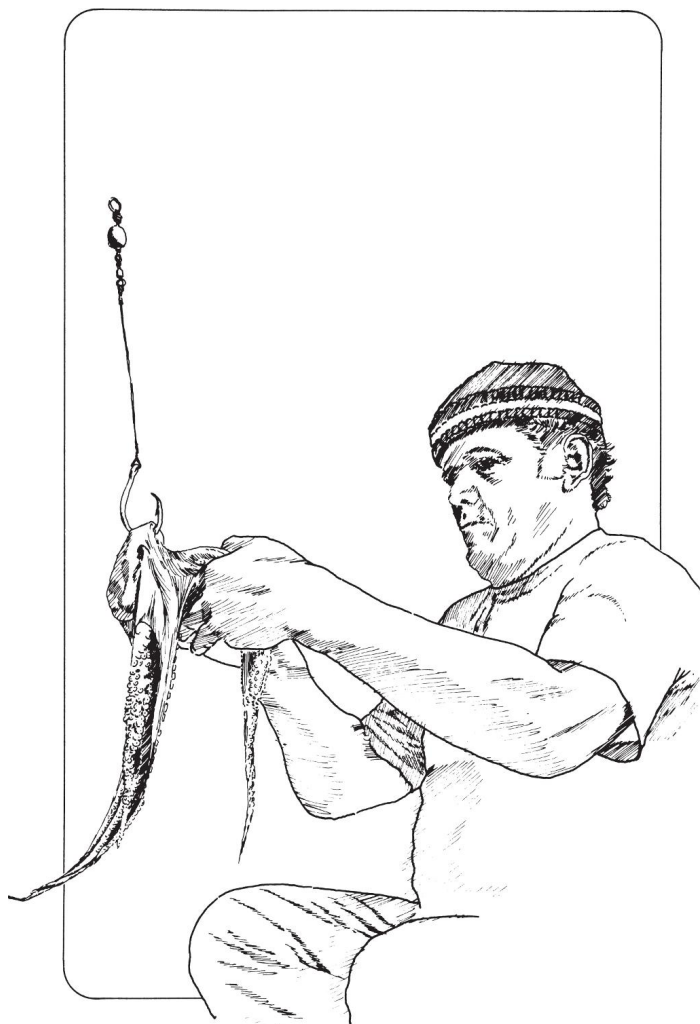
In all these factors, the main underlying point is that we in Hawaii are expected to believe that we are subordinate to the mainland. At best, we are expected to believe that we are really no different here and can even be *like* the mainland if we try hard enough. We are asked to reject the feeling that Hawaii is special. And when we become numbed and lose the feeling, it then becomes possible to accept mainland history and mainland culture as our own.

We are asked to accept mainland literature as the norm. In the process, our own literature loses its cohesiveness, our writings are categorized according to the framework of mainland, mainstream literary history, if at all. And without having had the chance to establish its own integrity and unique qualities, the literature of Hawaii is dissipated.

But there are those of us who believe *Hawaii no ka oi*. We know there exists a body of writings which we identify as the Modern Hawaiian Literary Tradition. We admit that it's a confusing conglomeration of writers representing a variety of cultures and viewpoints. We admit that much research must be done, much scholarship completed, before a working understanding of the literature becomes common knowledge here. But that's what scholars and universities are for, aren't they?

We know the literature exists. The art of writing has always occurred in Hawaii. And this conference is an attempt to make this tradition more visible, to clarify the different voices which contribute to the overall picture of the Hawaii we love.

*Eric Chock*



# Sheri Mae Akamine

## UNTITLED, *BAMBOO RIDGE* #3, JUNE 1979

We saw three different store-ladies.  
One couldn't stand us, almost daring us to buy.  
I thought I saw a gold blade tucked  
in her hair  
and her nails looked red.  
The second was nice. Like our mother—  
how reasonable! "Yes, the slippers are expensive,  
but they are cork ..." We ended up  
agreeing and praising the green slippers  
with the pale butterflies.  
The third was let's-get-down-to-business.  
Horo horo!  
"Yeah you can change the belt—you don't need the belt—  
take the side seam out—  
bargain yeah?"  
Two girls on River Street  
with a yukata in their hands.

*Sheri Mae Akamine*



These pages are blank because we have not been able to find the authors of these poems to obtain their permission to include their work in this digital archive. If anyone has information on how to reach *Tamatha F.* or *Kaipo*, please contact Bamboo Ridge Press at [read@bambooridge.org](mailto:read@bambooridge.org). We would then be able to add their work to this archive.









# Eric Chock

## TERMITES

On summer nights they swarm.  
They seem to come out of the ground,  
out of trees, they fill the air.  
They wander down the streets,  
wings glittering under streetlights.  
They've kept these wings  
all their lives  
folded on their backs,  
but in these insect starbursts  
they fly toward whatever shines  
in streetlights, headlights,  
reflections in windows, or eyes.

We turn off the lights inside.  
We watch as toads  
gather at the porch light  
and lick themselves silly.  
Lizards haunt the windows,  
stalking the winged or wingless bodies.  
Sometimes they remain stationary,  
content to eat what rushes past  
the half-inch reach of their roll-up tongues.  
If the creatures get in  
we have candles flaming,  
or white bowls of hot water  
grandma leaves under a lamp  
in a darkened room.  
Looking out from the window,

it seems as though they're all bent  
on living in our home.

Every summer they swarm.  
Thousands.  
Like drunken tourists  
lost on New Year's Eve.  
But in twenty minutes  
their eyes are glazed with the glare of light,  
their craziness for it so rapidly reversed,  
and once again they crawl  
for tunnels, baseboards,  
any dark opening they can find.  
On summer nights, thousands of wings  
form feathery wreaths around each house.  
Some of these have made it.  
But out in front under the streetlight  
mother shoots water like a gunner,  
picking off stragglers  
with the garden hose.

*Eric Chock*

## THE MANGO TREE

*"One old Chinese man told me," he said, "that he like for trim his tree so the thing is hollow like one umbrella, and the mangoes all stay hanging underneath. Then you can see where all the mangoes stay, and you know if ripe. If the branches stay growing all over the place, then no can see the mango, and the thing get ripe, and fall on the ground."*

And us guys, we no eat mango that fall down. Going get soft spots. And always get plenty, so can be choosy. But sometimes, by the end of mango season when hardly get already, and sometimes the wind blow em down, my mother, sometimes she put the fall down kind in the house with the others.

I was thinking about that as I was climbing up the tree. The wind was coming down from the pali, and I gotta lean into the wind every time she blow hard. My feet get the tingles cause sometimes the thing slip when I try for grip the bark with my toes. How long I never go up the tree! I stay scared the branch going broke cause too small for hold me, and when the wind blow, just like being on one see-saw. And when I start sawing that branch he told me for cut, the thing start for jerk, and hard for hold on with my feet. Plus I holding on to one branch above my head with one hand, and the fingers getting all cramp. My legs getting stiff and every few strokes my sawing arm all tired already, so when the wind blow strong again, I rest. I ride the branch just like one wave. One time when I wen look down I saw him with one big smile on his face. Can tell he trying not for laugh.

He getting old but he spend plenty time in that tree. Sometimes he climb up for cut one branch and he stay up for one hour, just looking around, figuring out the shape of the tree, what branches for cut and what not for cut. And from up there can see the whole valley. Can see the trees and the blue mountains. I used to have nightmares that the thing was going erupt and flood us out with lava, and I used to run around looking for my girlfriend so she could go with our family in our '50 Dodge when we run away to the ocean. But I never find her and I got lost. Only could see smoke, and people screaming, and the lava coming down.

The nightmare everytime end the same. I stay trapped on one trail in the mountains, right on one cliff. Me and some guys. The trail was narrow so we walking single file. Some people carrying stuff, and my mother in front of me, she carrying some things wrapped in one cloth. One time she slip, and I grab for her, and she starting for fall and I scream "Oh no!" and then I wake up. And I look out my window at the mango tree and the blue mountains up the valley. The first time I wen dream this dream I was nine.

Since that time I wen dream plenty guys falling off the trail. And plenty times I wen grab for my mother's hand when she start for fall. But I never fall. I still

stay lost on the cliff with the other guys. I still alive.

And my father still sitting in the mango tree just like one lookout, watching for me and my mother to come walking out of the mountain. Or maybe he stay listening to the pali wind for the sound one lady make if she falls. Or maybe he just sitting in his mango tree umbrella, rocking like one baby in the breeze, getting ripe where we can see him. And he's making sure no more extra branches getting in the way.

*Eric Chock*

## POEM FOR GEORGE HELM ALOHA WEEK 1980

I was in love with the word “aloha”  
Even though I heard it over and over  
I let the syllables ring in my ears  
and I believed the king with outstretched hand  
was welcoming everyone who wanted to live here  
And I ignored the spear in his left hand  
believing instead my fellow humans  
and their love for these islands in the world  
which allow us to rest from the currents  
and moods of that vast ocean from which we all came  
But George Helm’s body is back in that ocean  
I want to believe in the greatness of his spirit  
that he still feels the meaning of that word  
which is getting so hard to say

I thought there was hope for the word “aloha”  
I believed when they said there are ways  
in this modern technological world Oahu alone  
could hold a million people  
And we would become the Great Crossroads of the Pacific  
if we used our native aloha spirit  
our friendly wahines and our ancient hulas  
They showed us our enormous potential  
and we learned to love it  
like a man who loves some thing in gold or silver  
But these islands are made of lava and trees and sand  
A man learns to swim with the ocean  
and when he’s tired he begins to search  
for what he loves, for what will sustain him  
George Helm is lost at sea  
The bombing practice continues on Kahoolawe  
I want to believe in what he was seeking  
I want to believe that he is still swimming  
toward that aina for which he feels  
that word which is so hard to say

I want to believe in the word  
But Brother George doesn’t say it  
He doesn’t sing it in his smooth falsetto  
in the melodies of aloha aina



There is no chance of seeing him walk up to the stage  
pick up his guitar and smile the word at you across the room  
The tourists, they twist their malihini tongues  
The tour guides mouth it with smog-filled lungs  
Politicians keep taking it out, dusting off the carcass  
of a once-proud 3 syllable guaranteed vote-getter  
You find its ghosts on dump trucks, magazines  
airplanes, rent-a-cars  
anywhere they want the dollar  
They can sell you anything with aloha and a smile  
even pineapples that came here from  
(you guessed it) America!  
They'll sell you too, servants of the USA  
And if you don't believe they have the nerve  
think of the ocean  
They put up signs as close as they dare  
And when his spirit comes back to land  
the first thing he'll see is a big sign with that word  
painted on, carved in, flashing with electricity  
That word, so hard to say

I was going to believe that word  
I was going to believe all those corporations  
that seemed to spring up like mushrooms after a light rain  
I was going to believe when they divided up  
the home-land of a living people  
and called it real estate or 50th state  
or Aloha State  
I was going to believe we would still be able  
to go up to the mountains, out to the country beaches  
to the ocean where waves wash the islands  
the islands which remind us we've all traveled a long way to get  
here We all wanted a garden of our own in the world  
We believed we'd all have peace  
(and a piece of the aloha and of the state if we worked for it) We're  
all pursuing the same dream!  
So many of us are trying to get to the mountains, the beaches  
So many trying to swim in the waves  
legs kicking, arms paddling like the arms  
of George Helm stroking towards a familiar beach  
which he respected and belonged to by birth  
for which he felt something no word can express  
except for that word which is hard to say  
unless we all live it!

I want to live the word “aloha”  
But the body of George Helm is lost at sea  
the practice continues on Kahoolawe  
the buildings follow the roads  
the roads carry thousands of cars filled with people  
following their dreams of Hawaii or Paradise  
to Waikiki where girls sell their hips  
singers sell their voices  
the island which has been sold is lit up all night  
while the king with outstretched hand  
has forgotten how to use his spear  
George Helm is dead  
and that word is not forgotten  
It rings in my ears every day  
I want us to live the word “aloha”  
but it’s so hard just to say

*Eric Chock*

## TUTU ON THE CURB

Tutu standing on the corner,  
she look so nice!  
Her hair all pin up in one bun,  
one huge red hibiscus hanging out  
over her right ear,  
her blue Hawaiian print muu muu  
blowing in the wind  
as one bus driver blows one huge cloud  
of smoke around her,  
no wonder her hair so grey!  
She squint and wiggle her nose  
at the heat  
and the thick stink fumes  
the bus driver just fuffed all over her.  
You can see her shrivel up  
and shrink a little bit more.  
Pretty soon, she going disappear  
from the curb  
forever.

*Eric Chock*

# Herbert Chun

## PA-KE

you speak of shadows and  
I dream of journeys—

an old ship, iron and rusted  
plates. Chinese workers for sugar  
plantations. I move among  
broken sandals and jade-  
colored bile. once a week,  
they wash the hold. the water  
slides across the deck, over yellow  
bodies. it clings to the rusted hull.

from the vats  
of cooking rice, the steam  
rises in the twilight. we gather  
near the warmth with our wooden  
bowls. the brown rice  
is over-cooked. burnt rice  
scraped for those at the end  
of the line. someone says every man  
who can walk off the ship in Hawai'i  
is worth five  
dollars. there are no more  
men, only hollow trees. hunger,  
a sparrow, flutters  
among the branching bones, taking  
each grain of rice. it sings and its voice  
enchants the twilight  
into a shadowed sigh.

Ling Wan has died. I helped  
throw him into the sea. his  
feet were cold and stiff. his  
toenails were black. I wear his  
sandals. I keep his last  
words. they are,  
“do not let me die.”

the island, a broken piece  
of jade, rises with the dawn. and  
the deck is full of wandering  
eyes. behind me is  
Fan Wei, whose sickness covers  
him with sweat, as though  
he had been  
laboring instead of eating  
rats. gone is the pain  
in my legs, where the skin  
is raw from scratching at sores  
as I slept. now we smile  
into each other's faces. soon,  
soon ...

I push my way off the ship.  
I do not limp but walk  
onto the dock. a man passes  
and taps me on the shoulder  
with a stick. I am  
number nine. I throw my bowl  
into the sea. too soon  
I have need for another.

the night on this island  
also sighs. I have journeyed far,  
thinking that I had left  
nothing behind.

*Herbert Chun*

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# Wanda K. Fujimoto

## INHERITANCE

my grandmother died  
    before I had a face  
    she reclaims me now with silence  
    and a brown photograph:  
        her kimono, hair, face,  
        the instep of her turned-in foot

I have no stock in this place  
the woman in the picture is  
    the sole estate of my inheritance  
her immigrant's name and face,  
    her incomplete passage

blood  
there are no islands in its red surge  
where the ground wires should be  
    is only a space the color of sleep  
if you look long enough into my left eye  
    you will see my grandmother there  
sitting with tabied feet  
    and hands of silence  
sitting in constant passage

*Wanda Fujimoto*

# Caroline Garrett

UNTITLED, *BAMBOO RIDGE #13*, DECEMBER 1981

Some years ago,  
my grandmother preferred the hides of alligators  
to tuck her feet or money in—  
wore green or brown swamptones to match.  
Those alligators ranged  
the streets and stores and church  
of her small Iowa town  
and a sudden waiting wit  
would snap her cronies  
right in two.

By the time she got her snakeskin cane—  
moved to her son's  
West Virginia home,  
she used her eyes, more than her tongue  
to sting a thought your way.

One day,  
as she was poling down the driveway  
toward the mail  
she passed a copperhead  
snake enough to ditch itself  
in her wake.

At ninety-four  
scaled skin held her together still.  
Basking mosttimes,  
she'd crack an eye,  
rasp a word or two  
and leave you laugh  
or thrashing  
in her grip.



# Dana Naone Hall

## T'ANG FISHERMEN

I will recognize you  
by the way you appear  
                  robed in mist  
sitting on a boat  
                  beneath a bamboo shelter  
a teapot steams in front of you  
                  the wooden deck  
and the sleeves of your gown damp  
                  your hair fastened into a knot  
you are no longer  
                  as you are now  
driving in a blue truck  
                  to a green house on a hill  
we are pulling the boat up  
                  on the shore beneath dripping leaves  
our voices flow to each other  
                  like water over rocks  
parting and coming together again  
                  all the way from one  
                  cloud covered peak

*Dana Naone Hall*

# Gail N. Harada

## LETTER TO PARIS

Old letters accumulate like dust on my desk.  
Yours arrive decorated with stamps  
from another country.  
Across the valley the dogs are at it again,  
passing their messages along Palolo Avenue,  
following the musical ice cream truck.  
The ants keep crawling out of their holes, anti-  
Semitic Frenchmen paint swastikas  
on the Jewish confectioner's shop  
on your street,  
and the years keep slipping by.  
Ten, twenty, thirty ...  
the years fall behind us  
like crumbs in some dark forest.  
You write of our lives  
half over, lost, stewing in some witch's iron pot.  
I want to deny it,  
but the unwritten poems remain silent and dark,  
and less is accomplished than imagined.  
We blame the daily business of living  
that's consuming our adult lives,  
termites eating away at our dreams—  
the cooking, the cleaning, the laundry  
that never fails to overflow the hamper,  
the chores that wait like beasts with feral eyes. I  
remember a mutual friend's plaintive refrain:  
"There must be more to this life!"  
and I believe there is.  
You have a daughter with dark hair and a gypsy name  
and I just know that she must be beautiful.

*Gail Harada*

# Norman Hindley

## WATER BORN

Moomomi Beach, narrow and hooked like a horseshoe  
From centuries of wear, is reefless. Seas pound it  
And strong currents often cut through  
Carving pockets and cleaning stations out  
Of the lava. I brought you there to dive,  
To spear ulua, fish with an approach like a spaceship.  
We moved easy, consumed,  
Flippers never breaking the surface,  
Drawn into an unnoticed current, and carried  
Out to deep, purpling water.  
Alerted by the color I turned to you  
But you knew, your mottled eyes filled the window  
Of your mask like a single bruise.  
We pumped hard for shore  
Burning our lungs up, making no headway,  
I turned again, you'd fallen far behind,  
All timing gone from your stroke.  
I felt death by drowning  
And went to hold you, taste the last water in your hair,  
To slip under with you, and await the coming sharks,  
Their fins dipped, bodies arched,  
The beautiful pewter of their tails,  
To accept death and be finally brave for us,  
Bellow like an old hero  
Into a deafening white mouth.  
It lasted less than seconds  
And I remembered about a current,

Go with it, ride till it slows and lets you off.  
Panic lifted, order rose out of my chest  
Like smoke, we breathed and were limp.  
We hadn't gone far, a steady swim brought us in  
East of the beach. Through it all you'd held on  
To your 3-prong and stringer of poked fish.  
We rested on a pile of warm stones  
One of many that speckles Moomomi  
And marks the ancient fallen.  
You asked about them, their weapons and deaths,  
Putting our scrape into perspective.  
Picking up the spear and fish  
We headed back,  
Renewed, heroic, or as close as we'd ever get.

*Norman Hindley*

# Garrett Kaoru Hongo

## ASS WHY HARD

We sit out on the concrete slab  
of our backyard patio, catching  
the sun sifting through apricot  
and lemon trees, both of us  
studying: him, stacks of books  
high as the egg crates we piled  
in back of the old Hongo store;  
me, my sports page and guide  
to the races. He's getting ready  
for the long pull up Bachelor  
Arts Mountain. I'm trying to relax.

He's shrinking from what he was  
in high school—a balloon of  
a left guard or linebacker—  
I can't remember which because  
he was always on the bench  
or else the *kamikaze* squad  
on kickoffs, punts, and returns.

It's a scholar of a damn poet  
he wants to be now, and  
I guess they've got to be  
skinny as I was at McKinley,  
playing tailback and pounding  
through the line, playing center  
field and pounding the black  
pocket of my Mel Ott's mitt.

If skinny's all it takes, then  
I should have been the scholar.  
We said "Go For Broke!" and busted,  
"Suck Em Up!" and got screwed,  
"Lucky Come Hawaii!" and lost it.

So I brought them all to California  
on the G.I. Bill, studied amps  
and wattage, cycles of Franklin's Juice,  
flipped the lights on this house,  
and my finger to the F.H.A.

For what? For my son to tan  
himself under a canopy of smog  
filtered light, over some books  
that say Keats, Shakespeare, and Yeats?  
That's what the mongoose say  
chasing snakes through the Koolau.

Must be like my father-in-law  
tells me, the Gospel According  
to Kubota, "Ass why hard,  
eh, Hongo? Ass why hard."

*Garrett Kaoru Hongo*

## C & H SUGAR STRIKE KAHUKU, 1923

You waken to food,  
hot yellow tea on cold rice,  
a dash of *shoyu*,  
Louisiana Red,  
a few tangles of *daikon*

glistening like angel  
hair in the *chazuke* bowl.

You waken to a  
new wife, humming jazz  
tunes over the kitchen sink,

rinsing radishes  
as she coaxes water out  
of the iron pump.

You waken to the  
old worries, shining like loose

change in a churchplate,  
tears of light beading under  
gaslamps while the hymns  
rummage through shallow  
pockets, and the memories

flicker into bloom  
with the dawnlight bleeding through  
porchscreens into the  
kitchen where it falls  
at your feet like scattered rice.

A drift of incense  
migrates from over the hills  
behind the village  
of quonset barracks,  
rinses through the dirt sidestreets,

reaches the table  
and settles into your hands  
where you read it like  
a message—The burn  
has started. The strike is killed.

*Garrett Kaoru Hongo*

# Dean H. Honma

## TO BUDDY, ON THE EDGE

Buddy calls the other day  
tells me,  
“got some good deals, brah,”  
says the bay won’t break again  
till September,  
and the south,  
“got too much haoles.”  
He wants us to fly over,  
pick up a few deals  
and bring him Honolulu on the way home.  
But I remember the last time,  
the rented Cessna,  
the eight pounds Buddy packed  
in an old market box,  
keeping the cockpit windows open while we smoked,  
and the storm that nailed us  
twenty minutes out of Lihue.  
Oh, that was a mean mother,  
and when we couldn’t climb it,  
you rammed into its heart at full throttle,  
swallowed by that thick milk  
and screaming rain,  
air pockets big as craters.  
But that Buddy,  
laughing us right through it,  
loving the edge  
and living hard to stay there,



he wants to look for more storms.  
“Fuckin’ great ride,” he says.

So I’m thinking  
how that edge keeps lookin’ better everytime,  
and I want it all back again.  
I call Buddy,  
tell him we can get a plane this week.  
“I sold it to some haole already,”  
he says, “and the bay came up six feet yesterday.  
Sorry brah.”  
Well Buddy. The next storm  
comes in December,  
and you know how summer  
dulls the blade.

*Dean H. Honma*

## FISH STORY

Yeah that time when we went Kapoho,  
flew over that afternoon for catch ulua,  
“plenny,” you said had,  
so we went pack the big poles, the lights  
and cooler, the quart good whiskey from Christmas.  
You tell some stories back then,  
how much times you went lose big kine,  
“nighttime hard,” you said, “but that’s when they stay.”  
Okay, but me, my cousin tell Kapoho spooky,  
he hear stories, guys see ghosts li’dat.  
He tell the cliffs steep,  
the water most times rough, that nighttime  
maybe better go someplace more safe.  
But nah, not you, the fish more important,  
that you no come this far for nothin’.  
So what can I say?

By the time we reach Kapoho stay late,  
almost dark,  
wind picking up hard from the south.  
You almost broke the rennacar going down that road,  
fuckin’ thing grinding over the lava,  
but I figure you know where we stay.  
We come to this place, one short field  
where the flow came sideways,  
and in the back had big ironwoods, the pine tree kine.  
The edge of the field went drop straight down,  
could tell was deep,  
and the waves stay slappin’ high up the cliff.  
Brah, was hairy.  
The kine you fall,  
pau already.

After the lines out stay real dark cause  
no more moon, no can see shit.  
Only our fire, one small one,  
just like the only light forever.  
Come cold over there nighttime, the wind  
make noises from the ironwoods, the ocean  
just like breathing.

Sometimes the bells on the poles stay ring,  
the headlamps shine, but only the wind  
or strong surge.

No more human kine sound cept us,  
talking soft  
and drinking whiskey.  
I know you stay thinking,  
and you know I stay thinking,  
like us guys not supposed to be here,  
like darker and more noisy  
cause we stay.  
But we no say nothin',  
no even shine the light when just like get something  
steppin' on the rocks.  
And nothin' bite,  
long time we wait, the tide drop,  
the wind die and come quiet,  
like only get us.  
So we went to the car  
and locked the doors,  
left the fire behind, the poles still there  
in the cracks.

Morningtime your reel stay stripped,  
guarantee ulua.  
The bell musta been clangin',  
line singing from the spool.  
Funny but, sometimes,  
when you stay listen too hard,  
no can hear nothin'.  
Now, when you tell me you like go again,  
I figure it ain't the fish so much.  
You already catch plenny since then.  
I think maybe you like take one from them  
when stay dark and quiet,  
bring back the fear we went leave behind.

*Dean H. Honma*

# Diane Kahanu

HO. JUST CAUSE I SPEAK PIDGIN NO MEAN I  
DUMB

Pidgin short.  
Fast.  
Match.

If I say  
What are you going to do with that?  
No say how  
I feeling curious

What you going do with that?  
Now you know.  
I not just nīele.

I like know  
but I ain't  
no cop.

Pidgin safe.  
Like Refuge, Pu'uhonua,  
from the City.

*Diane Kahanu*

# Dennis Kawaharada

## ORDER

The fields seemed chaotic to him—  
butterflies flitting among the flowers,  
bees zinging by like bullets,  
dragonflies zipping at crazy angles,  
grasshoppers with springy legs  
leaping out of reach.

He captured them, one kind at a time,  
and put them in his death chamber—  
a mayonnaise jar with a paper towel  
soaked with Black Flag inside.  
He watched each go frenzied, then wind down  
like a little toy running out of spring;  
when it was still; he spread it out to dry.  
Then he impaled the soft corpse,  
the small tension in the pin  
sending an imaginary pain through his chest.  
He placed each new specimen  
in line with the last:  
neat rows like cars in a parking lot.

*Dennis Kawaharada*

# Gary Kissick

## RAIN QUIETUDE

In sleep made of sleep and remembrance, a few raindrops  
sound in the dark. Like a chieftain, the wind moves through  
leaves,  
and then the raindrops fall. But I am deceived by other  
nights and desires; these are only small hands  
shaken from the sky. No rainfall follows the path through  
the woods,  
the night is clear of its sounds, and I can hear the ocean  
open  
like a palm among small rocks.

I think of days when some ghost undulation  
moved through stillborn  
rain on the ocean.

I have seen that same movement of rain in the changing  
tones of sea  
seen from a great height on clear days; and in clouds paled  
by wind  
on the pali; and in a woman's distraction  
when love has carried her to awkward hours  
and the light in the room is strange; when she is exhausted,  
wet, suspirant with desire, and things are still moving,  
but moving less, and she wonders what of love will remain  
when she has handed it down to herself through the years  
and her hands have changed it, when even now it is  
strangely unapproachable  
like something in perfect balance, and offhandedly, she says,  
"I think it's going to rain."

*Gary Kissick*

# Jody Manabe Kobayashi

DEAR REIKO: 1968/1978

## *I Kula*

We buy books to keep our secrets:  
mine, a leopard's skin,  
yours, his wooden coffin.  
Every page is lined  
like your grandmother's field.  
Quietly we begin to plant  
among the rows of cabbages.  
Soon they are covered with first growth,  
aimless vines with no support.  
Somewhere a leopard opens his eyes.

## *II Ofuro*

Today I build the fire:  
yellow newspaper,  
too-green wood,  
and everything is smoke!  
Your auntie comforts me  
with sweet potato dumplings.  
There are new kittens  
behind the bathhouse.  
Soft as we are to each other.  
We put them in our slippers  
just inside the door;  
they are that warm.  
Tonight the bathwater

will smell of green fire,  
and it will not matter.

### *III Graveyard*

We carry water to your grandfather:  
some of it spills  
leaving withered footprints  
that follow me  
down the blank white steps.  
We wash his stone carefully.  
Solemn, we pull the weeds  
that fill his bed.  
We do not dig too deep.  
We leave the roots.

### *IV Memorial*

I am the proper kokeshi doll:  
my wooden hands bend harmlessly  
in my green lap,  
a field of daisies  
with dark pink centers.  
The priest catches me—  
“You don’t understand a word, do you?”  
I hide in the grass.  
I cannot find you anywhere.

### *V Omiyage*

Your grandmother takes us  
to her garden for the last time:  
we squat among flat, wet leaves,  
afraid of worms and centipedes  
and potatoes that will not let go.  
But she finds them easily—  
her fingers emerge,  
brown as the earth  
she has taken them from.  
We run to where the loquats dangle,  
already the size of a man’s thumb.  
We pluck them from the trees  
and poke them into egg cartons  
where each pale fruit glistens  
in its own moist compartment,



waiting.

Reluctant to leave,  
we race the length of the field,  
the cabbages clumsy and mute around us—  
our brothers' heads! No arms to hurt us!  
So we kick them toward the dim lines  
of the mountains.  
And there I see  
our grandmothers,  
their backs bent,  
carrying the sky.

*Jody Manabe*

# Juliet S. Kono

## GRANDMOTHER AND THE WAR

She memorized the Pledge of Allegiance,  
The Star-Spangled Banner.  
And everything “Japanese” was buried—  
Her Buddha, the Rising Sun, her family’s picture.  
She made a garden on this mound and all  
The days of war, she tended silence.  
But late at night, she’d shake off  
The dead leaves of her reticence and  
Rising from the garden of her voices,  
I’d hear her whisper,  
“Grandchild, grandchild, we are Japanese,  
Never forget that!”

*Juliet S. Kono*

## THE CANE CUTTERS

It is early morning. The brave  
Hawaiian moon sits in the saddle  
Of morning, bucking its light.  
A woman shivers as she trudges  
Briskly, behind a man. She carries  
The lunches and an old kerosene lantern  
That trails fumes heavily into the gloom.  
Surrounding them, piles of bagasse  
Sit silently fat and rank. Unmindful,  
The old-looking couple, stop to rest.  
The man takes out two long knives.  
They sparkle in the negligent light.  
He fingers each honed edge and tenderly  
Caresses the sharpness. Pleased,  
He hands one to his wife. Together,  
They work the tall burnt fields,  
Long into the tiring hours. They sing,  
And they dream to the pendulum  
Swing of their machetes.

*Juliet S. Kono*

## YONSEI

I hear the music  
Ride the updraft  
In this valley.  
It is not yours.  
You are thumbing  
Your way to the North Shore:  
Being dropped off  
At Left Overs  
Or Thompson Corner, first,  
Then making your way down;  
Shouldering a radio,  
Smothering the speaker  
Into your ear—  
The one with the gold star  
That glints and steals  
Studs of moonlight  
When your hair whips  
Away from your face.  
I can see the wide  
Swagger of your body  
As it moves.  
Shadows of firm bones.  
They hold your body  
Across roads as each  
Lean and tall muscle  
Ripples you forward  
In your dark, good health—  
Each sinew curved,  
Warm as sun.

You live so far away  
From what connects you.  
You have no recollection  
Of old plantation towns,  
Of rains that plummeted  
Like the sheafs of cane,  
The song of flumes,  
The stink of rotting feet,  
The indignities cast by hard labors.

Your blood runs free  
From the redness of soil.  
But you are mired  
Into this locality.  
A mixture of ideals  
Basked in sun,  
Wild surf and turbulent air.  
And yet once a year  
You come with me  
In your dark brooding—  
Like a craving—  
To visit the ancestors'  
Gravesites to pray.  
You say nothing  
About being held  
To these traditions.  
You pray, bow and  
Burn incense. You travel  
Backward in time  
For a brief moment  
And say dutiful words  
Do the respectful gestures  
And I know that  
In my longest sleep  
You would come  
And I would not want.

*Juliet S. Kono*

# Laurie Kuribayashi

## LIKE LOVE

What you will remember are his hands,  
his large hands that could encircle your arms  
and how your fingers could not even meet  
around his wrists. The coarse hairiness  
of his arms against your face, your arms, your body,  
and the roughness of his fingertips.  
If you were lucky, you were on the grass,  
not on hard concrete or dry dirt  
where little stones would leave imprints  
on your face, arms, and back.

    You would remember those little stones a long time  
    pressing against your cheekbones, shoulder blades  
    and tailbone.

And for a long time, the large hands of men,  
the hairy arms leading to large palms  
with fingers curling around  
steering wheels, cigarettes, water faucets,  
toothbrushes, spoons, and hammers  
will make you remember.

*Laurie Kuribayashi*

## FREEWAY POEM

He's right.  
Freeway driving, like everything else  
she's afraid of trying,  
isn't as impossible as she'd thought.  
He taught her, out of necessity  
more than love, to synchronize  
their travel with the other cars.

She learned not to think,  
while winding around the curve  
between Moanalua and Halawa,  
about the parallel impact between  
crashing at 50 mph on asphalt  
and falling fifteen stories  
to land spread-eagled on cement.  
Images of Lee being gutted  
by his stick shift on the H-1  
and Clara's windshield guillotine  
no longer come to mind  
as she accelerates on the onramp  
above Church of the Crossroads.

But he knows it's not enough  
to face fear with rationality  
and necessary action: he knows  
freeway driving, like everything else  
that frightens her, is filled  
with uncertainty and so requires  
a certain amount of faith,  
in herself and others,  
that she so rarely finds: as always  
there are just too many variables  
juxtaposing at too high a speed.

And she still can't tell, no matter  
how she peers into that little mirror  
screwed onto the car door,  
how fast a car is coming at them;  
she still feels that mystical anxiety  
whenever the shadow of an overpass  
passes through the car so fast

that it's almost non-existent;  
and she still wishes she had that faith  
to merge with the minimum of panic,  
to believe that together  
they could move safely forward,  
parallel with the others.

*Laurie Kuribayashi*



# Wing Tek Lum

## TAKING HER TO THE OPEN MARKET

Scales glisten;  
pink whiskers jut out.  
Some are the color  
of mud, others  
recall the embroidery  
of coats placed  
on babes one-month old.  
Fat, round, small:  
they lay on the crushed  
ice, stall after stall.  
“Look at the fresh fish!”  
I exclaim, eager to impress  
on her our respect  
for the old  
ways, and that I know  
how to tell the firmness  
a poached flesh will have  
by the bulging  
of its eyes, the blood  
in the gills.

“They are dead,”  
she replies. Taken aback,  
I see  
through her Hong Kong eyes  
that fresh  
means leaning over  
a galvanized pan, eyeing

closely through the running  
water at that  
cluster of darting  
shadows, seeking out the one  
swimming most  
vigorously: in demonstration  
that it  
has not yet  
passed the point of no return.  
“Sanitation,”  
I mutter, “has killed off  
more than germs.”

*Wing Tek Lum*

Wing Tek Lum

## I CAUGHT HIM ONCE

Gruff old fut  
never showed it  
even after Ma died  
even near his own end  
stomach mostly gone  
except one time  
I caught him  
in his room  
talking to his nurse  
wistful  
“I don’t know how much longer ...”  
him just sitting there  
face so pale  
not moving  
the nurse standing at his back  
leaning over  
expertly  
to wipe the tears  
as they welled up

*Wing Tek Lum*

## THE POET IMAGINES HIS GRANDFATHER'S THOUGHTS ON THE DAY HE DIED

This is the first year  
the Dragon Eyes tree has ever borne fruit:  
let us see what this omen brings.  
Atop one of its exposed roots  
a small frog squats, not moving, not even blinking.  
I remember when my children were young  
and this whole front yard was a taro patch:  
we would take them out at night with a lantern  
blinding the frogs just long enough  
to sneak a hook up under the belly.  
In those days we grew taro  
as far as the eye could see;  
I even invented a new kind of trough  
lined inside with a wire mesh  
so we could peel the skins with ease.  
The King bought our poi,  
and gave me a pounder one day.  
It is made of stone,  
and looks like the clapper of a bell, smooth and heavy.  
I keep it in my bedroom now—there—on the dresser.  
The fish we call Big Eyes  
lies on an oval plate beside it.  
I have not been hungry today.  
The full bowl of rice attracts a fly  
buzzing in anticipation.  
I hear the laughter of one of my grandchildren  
from the next room: which one is it?  
Maybe someday one of them will think of me  
and see the rainbows that I have seen,  
the opium den in Annam that frightened me so,  
my mother's tears when I left home.

Dear ancestors, all this is still one in my mind.

*Wing Tek Lum*

## RIDING THE NORTH POINT FERRY

Wrinkles: like  
valleys etched by glaciers  
lumbering coarse  
and deliberate, random  
traces pointing to  
that vast, dark sea. The skin  
is an ochre  
of old corn, with  
splotches of  
burnt embers from a summer  
of mountain fires.  
The brown  
from a lifetime of tea or  
tobacco or both  
has stained her  
uneven teeth. Ears and nose  
are small, pudgy,  
and on each  
lobe a little knob of gold  
tacked on.  
She sits with one  
leg raised, tucked  
into her body, the heel  
supported by  
the seat, her arm  
resting on her  
knee—unlady-like to be  
sure, though  
in her black garments  
a relaxed pose. I glance at  
her eyes, mottled  
now with a chicken fat-  
yellow in the  
pupils, gazing out at the harbor,  
the neon lights beckoning  
from the Kowloon  
shore.

Where  
was I prepared for this  
face? Not  
from the land of  
my birth, with our museums,  
glass cases filled  
with the porcelain of ancient  
dynasties, restaurateurs (cheeks  
of cupidity)  
proffering hot  
and sour delights, our bookstores  
extolling Shangri-las in  
paperback—all to deny  
our scrutable  
lives. We believe  
that somewhere in the world our  
exotica is real. Images  
of all fairy tale  
maidens: clear-eyed yet  
coy, hair pure  
as silk, skin like jade,  
the small hands so clever and  
refined—and when  
held in my own, how  
warm, yielding to the touch!  
They are  
fiction: like the wind-blown  
waves across this  
ferry's bow, an inconstant  
surface of  
reflection, glittering, oblivious to  
the swollen  
depths below.

I know  
that outward appearances are  
no judge for  
virtue within. And  
even this old  
woman, combing her loosed  
hair at dawn,  
must sometimes wonder  
at that mirrored form, peering  
from those eyes. Does

she recognize  
that dark glow as  
her own? We meet so many  
dreams, so many tales  
of woe. Which  
ones are true? Which ones  
our alibis? So hard to  
choose.

My grandparents  
I recall sailed by  
sea to settle in  
that place we now call home.  
I have crossed that  
ocean too, flying this time  
with the sun,  
searching for a vision  
for my own. The deck rocks gently.  
By chance I find  
myself beside this woman  
on this crowded  
boat: she is  
for me reason enough to  
have come here.

*Wing Tek Lum*

## CHINESE HOT POT

My dream of America  
is like *dá bìn lòuh*  
with people of all persuasions and tastes  
sitting down around a common pot  
chopsticks and basket scoops here and there  
some cooking squid and others beef  
some tofu or watercress  
all in one broth  
like a stew that really isn't  
as each one chooses what he wishes to eat  
only that the pot and fire are shared  
along with the good company  
and the sweet soup  
spooned out at the end of the meal.

*Wing Tek Lum*



# Michael McPherson

## JUNIOR GOT THE SNAKES

One Time  
Junior got  
the snakes  
real bad, an  
had only family  
was drinking  
in the cars  
up Piihana,  
and he was  
some wild,  
so brother  
Bobby tell,  
“Okay, Moke  
take it out  
on me, then,”  
an bumbye  
Junior stay  
confused,  
but still  
he like fight  
so Bobby  
tell go  
punch the stone,  
an Junior go,  
he blass em—  
then his hand  
stay all

buss,  
he sour,  
swell head  
mo worse  
was,  
but so much  
the pain  
he only hold  
his hand  
an walk  
behind  
the water tank,  
an bumbye  
I seen  
he wen write  
KILL YOU  
on top.

*Michael McPherson*

# Jiro and Kay Nakano, editors and translators

## POETS BEHIND BARBED WIRE

*The following is an excerpt from **Poets Behind Barbed Wire** (Bamboo Ridge Press, 1983), collected and edited by Dr. Jiro Nakano and his wife, Kay.*

Since early 1981, the Commission of Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, created by Congress in 1980, has held a series of hearings where many Japanese Americans attested to the injustice, abuse and mistreatment of innocent people by the United States Government during World War II. Very few people, however, are aware that many of the Japanese internees recorded their life behind barbed wires through the Japanese poetic forms such as tanka and haiku. These short poems, being less cumbersome than long diaries, were ideal forms for these internees to express their pent-up emotions in view of the scarcity of writing paper.

*Jiro Nakano, M.D. and Kay Nakano*

## ARREST

Torawaruru  
Toki wa kitarinu  
Ame no yoi  
Kokoro sadamete  
Kutsu no oto kiku

The time has come  
For my arrest  
This dark rainy night.  
I calm myself and listen  
To the sound of the shoes.

*Sojin Takei*

## AT THE VOLCANO INTERNMENT CAMP

Shokudo ni  
Kayou nomi fumu  
Daichi nari  
Ajiwau gotoku  
Fumite ayumeri

As if to relish  
Each step I take  
On this great earth,  
I walk—  
To the mess hall.  
The only walk allowed.

*Muin Ozaki*

## ON THE SHIP TO THE MAINLAND

Nobishi tsume  
Kamikirite futo  
Ko no uso o  
Shikarishi koto o  
Omoidasareshi

Biting down my overgrown nails,  
I suddenly remembered  
That day  
When I scolded my son  
For biting his nails.

*Muin Ozaki*

## FORT SILL INTERNMENT CAMP

Komi ageru  
Ikidori ari  
Hyakujyuichi to  
Munehada i bango  
Akaku kakareshi

A retching anguish rises  
As the number “111”  
Is painted  
On my naked chest  
In red.

*Muin Ozaki*

Haru Asaki  
Kimi ga chibusa no  
Fukurami ka  
Tsukitateshi mochi no  
Kiyoki tezawari

My hands lightly touch  
The freshly pounded *mochi*  
So like the swell  
Of a maiden's breasts  
This early spring day.

*Sojin Takei*

## SANTA FE INTERNMENT CAMP

Ashi no ue ni  
Ari noborikuru o  
Jitto mitsume  
Toki o sugoshite  
Kuinu kono koro

Ants climbing up my foot—  
I don't begrudge anymore  
The time I spend  
Just watching them.  
Such is my life nowadays.

*Sojin Takei*



## DEATH AT THE CAMP

Warera mina  
Sarinishi ato no  
Kono mushiro  
Tare ka touran  
Ikusa hate naba

When the war is over  
And after we are gone  
Who will visit  
This lonely grave in the wild  
Where my friend lies buried?

*Keiho Soga*

## HOMECOMING

Akibae no  
Yaseshi ga hitotsu  
Tobimawaru  
Nibuki yuhi no  
Heya no akarumi

A thin autumn fly  
Circling the room  
Lit by a dim evening sunlight

*Sojin Takei*

Ikuman o  
Kazofuru kuroki  
Tori no mure  
Kemuri o nashite  
Doyomi tobitatsu

A flock of black birds  
Ten thousand in number  
Creates a commotion  
As they fly up like smoke.

*Sojin Takei*

# Kathy Phillips

## CRACK SEED

The bodhisattva  
knew with a shock  
that a certain glass jar  
(misabeled “crack seed”)  
contained human hearts.  
Their owners had put them  
(shriveled  
and clinging  
and soaking in brine)  
out to bid.  
Still darkly oozing,  
the hearts vaguely remembered  
their days of plum sweetness.  
But mostly  
they hugged the sharp shards  
of the times  
they’d been broken.

The bodhisattva  
made a huge purchase.

Then she painstakingly picked  
and showed the hard hearts  
their still living  
center.

*Kathy Phillips*

# KUAN YIN MINGLES WITH THE GHOSTS, NOW ON GUIDED TOUR, OF THE SLAVE POPULATION WHICH CONSTRUCTED THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA

- I kept my self-respect by loving every stone I carried.
- I kept my self-respect by hating every stone I carried.
- You mean anybody who really wants to cross it can cross it?
- It has aesthetic value.
- Yes, it's like wrapping eleven Florida islands in six million square feet of pink plastic.
- Some would argue that aesthetic values keep out barbarity.
- Here's my carving: up yours.
  - I was blunt in those days.
  - My individual bluntness has survived the centuries!
- The airplane makes the wall a joke.
- This wall makes the airplane a joke!
- The wall still baffles the goats.
- The wall still baffles the ghosts.
- I never said anything at the time, but at night I could see Kuan Yin sitting on the wall.
  - Smiling. At ease.
- I never said anything at the time, but by day I could see Kuan Yin helping to lift stones.
- I kept working because I could hear Kuan Yin singing.
- I kept working because I could see Kuan Yin throwing stones down the mountainside.
  - She was shouting the curses I couldn't shout.
- I gave birth under the wall.
  - I prayed Kuan Yin to take the child before it grew bent picking stones.
- Did Kuan Yin take it?
- Yes

*Kathy Phillips*

## KUAN YIN TURNS HER PHOTO ALBUM TO A CERTAIN POINT

When pressed, Kuan Yin explains  
why she has not yet left the world.  
She shuffles to files,  
turns to a certain point,  
has to force a long look.

It is a famous photo.  
Thousands saw the girl  
tearing burning clothes  
from her napalmed body.  
The thin naked girl.  
The wide open mouth.  
“Quan Am,” she may have been screaming:  
Kuan Yin in Vietnamese.

The girl would be twenty-five by now,  
then forty-seven,  
and then sixty,  
if she survived:  
the photo doesn’t say.

“She may still be looking for me.  
She may not be able to forget.  
She may ask me,  
why?”

“I have unfinished business,”  
says Kuan Yin, packing her sparse bag with subtle salves.  
“How is it that some are able to say,  
‘It is finished’?”

*Kathy Phillips*

# Cathy Song

## THE YOUNGEST DAUGHTER

The sky has been dark  
for many years.  
My skin has become as damp  
and pale as rice paper  
and feels the way  
mother's used to before the drying sun  
parched it out there in the fields.

Lately, when I touch myself,  
my hands react as if  
I had just touched something  
hot enough to burn.  
My skin, aspirin-colored,  
tingles with migraine. Mother  
has been massaging the left side of my face  
especially in the evenings  
when it flares up.

This morning  
her breathing was graveled,  
her voice gruff with affection  
when I took her into the bath.  
She was in a good humor,  
making jokes about her great breasts,  
floating in the milky water  
like two walruses,  
flaccid and whiskered around the nipples.  
I scrubbed them with a sour taste  
in my mouth, thinking:  
six children and an old man  
have sucked from these brown nipples.

I was almost tender  
when I came to the blue bruises  
that freckle her body,  
places where she has been injecting insulin  
for thirty years, ever since  
I can remember. I soaped her slowly,  
she sighed deeply, her eyes closed.

In the afternoons  
when she has rested,  
she prepares our ritual of tea and rice,  
garnished with a shred of gingered fish,  
a slice of pickled turnip,  
a token for my white body.  
We eat in the familiar silence.  
She knows I am not to be trusted,  
even now planning my escape.  
As I toast to her health  
with the tea she has poured,  
a thousand cranes curtain the window,  
fly up in a sudden breeze.

*Cathy Song*

## EASTER: WAHIAWA, 1959

1.

The rain stopped for one afternoon.  
Father brought out  
his movie camera and for a few  
fragile hours,  
we were all together  
under a thin film  
that separated the rain showers  
from that part of the earth  
like a hammock  
held loosely by clothespins.

Grandmother took the opportunity  
to hang the laundry  
and mother and my aunts  
filed out of the house  
in pedal pushers and poodle cuts,  
carrying the blue washed eggs.

Grandfather kept the children  
penned in the porch,  
clucking at us in his broken English  
whenever we tried to peek  
around him. There were bread crumbs  
stuck to his blue-grey whiskers.

I looked from him to the sky,  
a membrane of egg whites  
straining under the weight  
of the storm that threatened  
to break.

We burst loose from Grandfather  
when the mothers returned  
from planting the eggs  
around the soggy yard.  
He followed us,  
walking with stiff but sturdy legs,  
curious at the excitement  
shuddering through our small spines.  
We dashed and disappeared  
into bushes,



searching for the treasures;  
the hard boiled eggs  
which Grandmother had been simmering  
in vinegar and blue color all morning.

2.

When Grandfather was a young boy  
in Korea,  
it was a long walk  
to the river banks,  
where, if he were lucky,  
a quail egg or two  
would gleam from the mud  
like gigantic pearls.  
He could never eat enough  
of them.

It was another long walk  
through the sugar cane fields  
of Hawaii,  
where he worked for eighteen years,  
cutting the sweet stalks  
with a machete. His right arm  
grew disproportionately large  
to the rest of his body.  
He could hold three of us  
grandchildren in that arm.

I want to think  
that each stalk that fell  
had brought him closer  
to a clearing,  
to that palpable distance.  
From the porch  
to the gardenia hedge  
that day, he was enclosed  
by his grandchildren,  
scrambling around him  
like beloved puppies  
for whom he could at last buy  
cratefuls of oranges,  
basketfuls of sky blue eggs.

I found three that afternoon.  
By evening, it was raining hard.  
Grandfather and I

skipped supper. Instead,  
we sat on the porch  
and I ate what he peeled and cleaned  
for me.  
The delicate marine-colored shells  
scattering across his lap  
were something like what  
the ocean gives  
the beach after a rain.

*Cathy Song*

# TRIBE

*for Andrea*

I was born  
on your fourth birthday,  
song of the morning dove  
spilling from the guava trees.

Grandparents came to look at me,  
the number two girl  
with dumpling cheeks and tofu skin.  
They pinched and cuddled,  
affectionately gruff, blowing garlic breath  
across my unflinching face.  
Lifting me into their brown speckled arms,  
you stood guard, proud and protective  
of this new fat sister, stern  
like a little buddha

I rolled and rebounded,  
gravity nestling its fist  
in the center of my stubborn belly  
whereas you were lithe  
with the speed of a rabbit,  
quick and cunning.  
You hopped to errands,  
fetching this and that.

We shared papaya boats  
Mother emptied of tiny black seeds  
that resembled caviar  
and egg shells Father hollowed for whistles.  
Our lungs expanded  
as though they were balloon fish  
fluttering out noiseless tunes.  
We blew our songs to the gulch  
that brought the eucalyptus smell of rain.

I don't remember  
going there into the forest,  
although you must have taken me  
where the lilikoi vines  
dripped sticky sap passionately,  
their blossoms curling like bells or tongues.  
I heard my first story from you.

Waving good-bye  
at the edge of the grass,  
you disappeared into the bushes  
like a huntress, the only girl  
in a gang of boys.  
I knew bravery then  
and what it meant to belong to a tribe  
when you returned triumphant  
just as the afternoon showers broke,  
with all their marbles  
bulging in the pockets  
of your leopard spotted pedal pushers.  
I heard your slippers slapping the mud  
and running to meet you  
at the screen door,  
I saw you laugh, tossing up something  
sunlit and flashing into the air:  
you told me how Arnold had cried  
to lose his precious tiger's eye.

*Cathy Song*

## THE WHITE PORCH

I wrap the blue towel  
after washing,  
around the damp  
weight of hair, bulky  
as a sleeping cat  
and sit out on the porch.  
Still dripping water,  
it'll be dry by supper,  
by the time the dust  
settles off your shoes,  
though it's only five  
past noon. Think  
of the luxury: how to use  
the afternoon like the stretch  
of lawn spread before me.  
There's the laundry,  
sun-warm clothes at twilight  
and the mountain of beans  
in my lap. Each one,  
I'll break and snap  
thoughtfully in half.

But there is this slow arousal.  
The small buttons  
of my cotton blouse  
are pulling away from my body.  
I feel the strain of threads,  
the swollen magnolias  
heavy as a flock of birds  
in the tree. Already,  
the orange sponge cake  
is rising in the oven.  
I know you'll say it makes  
your mouth dry  
and I'll watch you  
drench your slice of it  
in canned peaches  
and lick the plate clean.

So much hair, my mother  
used to say, grabbing  
the thick braided rope  
in her hands while we washed  
the breakfast dishes, discussing dresses  
and pastries.  
My mind often elsewhere  
as we did the morning chores together.  
Sometimes, a few strands  
would catch in her gold ring.  
I worked hard then,  
anticipating the blue hour  
when I would let the rope down  
at night; strips of sheets,  
knotted and tied,  
while she slept in tight blankets.  
My hair, freshly washed  
like a measure of wealth,  
like a bridal veil.  
Crouching in the grass,  
you would wait for the signal,  
for the movement of curtains  
before releasing yourself  
from the shadow of moths.  
Cloth, hair and hands,  
smuggling you in.

*Cathy Song*

# William Stafford

## ON BEING LOCAL

All events and experiences are local, somewhere. And all human enhancements of events and experiences—all the arts—are regional in the sense that they derive from immediate relation to felt life.

It is this immediacy that distinguishes art. And paradoxically the more local the feeling in art, the more all people can share it; for that vivid encounter with the stuff of the world is our common ground.

Artists, knowing this mutual enrichment that extends everywhere, can act, and praise, and criticize, as insiders—the means of art is the life of all people. And that life grows and improves by being shared. Hence it is good to welcome any region you live in or come to or think of, for that is where life happens to be, right where you are.

*William Stafford*

## FORGING A PASSPORT

On the north side where wind and water  
are turning even plastic into little  
colored pieces of sand, a frigate bird  
coasts over, its big W wings disappearing  
down the trade wind, like anyone who waits  
long enough and holds on, carried by a steadfast  
local stance no matter how the wind blows.

With the passport like that you too could come in  
over the guns, or hold that poise  
before descent when a wave breaks.  
You could be somebody else when the doves  
ask, hold your wings partly folded  
and float, saying, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry."

Out there where the water goes deep, something  
profound and blue keeps the island, holds  
a stillness none of us can overcome.  
Can a passport say it's ok to be born?  
The frigate bird strokes in from out there, telling  
us in a million ways how to move,  
how to stay still, how to live.

*William Stafford*



# Joseph Stanton

## THE KIM CHEE TEST

*for En Suk*

It wasn't because

I made your daughter happy,  
wore hair on all sides of my face,  
or voted for McGovern.

It was because on that day in 1972,  
in the only Korean restaurant in downtown LA,  
I passed what you called "the kim chee test."

My almost deft chopstick technique surprised you  
having no way of knowing  
that I had been practicing for weeks,  
trying to grasp  
even the greatest of difficulties—  
peas, peanuts, and jello.

"Is he eating it?" you shouted  
from the opposite end of that long, low table.  
"Yea, I think he likes it!"  
one of your friends shouted back.

Kim chee:

the best of it sears the tongue like a battle cry  
a warm scream of pride  
at being alive  
and Korean.  
It's hotter stuff  
than I was born to handle,  
but the taste is there.

That red-orange, peppery incadescence  
of won bok and daikon  
rose to me then as it has so often since,  
spikes of terrible light inexorably dawning.

I swallowed hard,  
struggling not to gasp  
or lurch too quickly  
for the salving, golden remedy,  
foaming icy at the brim.

Then I reflected:  
this beer comes from where I come from:  
the city of Cardinals, of mighty river meetings,  
of the world's largest croquet wicket.

Congratulations to you,  
my Korean father,  
you chose the right brew,  
you just passed the Michelob test.

*Joseph Stanton*

# Gary Tachiyama

## SOMEDAY, BUT FOR NOW

I take my place among you  
I sit in the back of a classroom  
and talk to the TV repairman  
fixing the set in a living room somewhere  
He picks up a piece of metal  
and says, "this is how the system works"

I take my place among you  
sit in the shade under a breadfruit tree  
on a green metal bench  
I talk to the farmer somewhere in the hills  
growing lettuce  
He has a handful of chicken shit  
He tells me, "it's the salt of the earth"

I sit on the hood of a '68 Camaro  
in a parking lot  
it's raining  
the manager wants to know where my raincoat is  
I say, "it's alright, I don't mind getting wet"  
He says, "get the coat"  
I take my place among you and get the coat.

*Gary Tachiyama*

## REVIEWING THE SCENE

### I.

“Eleanor, don’t do it!”

he cried out.

Only her name was not Eleanor.

Her name was Elaine,

and so,

she didn’t listen.

She bounced three times

on the diving board

and made her swan dive

into the empty pool.

Or her name was Eleanor,

but she just flipped him the bird,

tested the board and made

that spectacular dive.

### II.

In reviewing the scene,

each take had subtle differences.

Sometimes she bounced twice, not three times.

Sometimes it wouldn’t be a board,

just the ragged edge of a cliff.

And sometimes even endings would change.

There would be the dive,

then a wide-angle pan

of a clear, empty pool.

Or maybe, the dive,

then a cut to footage where young boys

in blue Acme pool cleaning uniforms,

looking so much like service men,

tossed handfuls of chlorine

as they created a procession

past the pool and into red light.

Understandably, the scene

never ended overtly bloody.

It would take too much money.

It would leave us no sequel.

It would cost too many bodies.

III.

No clear choice could be made.  
The panel of judges sitting on chairs  
fronting one end of the pool  
couldn't decide which image to project.  
Even the highest performance score  
averaged just below an 8.  
    the high of an 8.9  
    and the low of a 6.5  
    were tossed out.  
They all agreed, however,  
at least a 9.5 was needed.

They also agreed that they wanted  
the girl concrete and real—  
“with the nakedness of motive  
and action revealed, but not overtly so.”

But they could not decide—  
“Eleanor,” the innocent,  
the slut, the defiant,  
the bruised and abused,  
the cool and untouchable,  
and even the loved.

All the labels given to women  
and all their implications.

IV.

It was generally a crowd of men  
sitting stiff and anxious  
until the lights went out  
and “Eleanor” was shaded,  
then focused to form  
on the screen.

And when the scene appeared,  
it never occurred to them  
to think why this jerk  
was yelling, “Eleanor, don't do it!”  
All they could relate to or feel toward him  
was the urgency of his action  
and the pathetic but well-intended  
nature of his gesture.

No one would recognize him  
for his performance.  
It was like he worked at McDonald's.  
He was not the star, she was.

They saw her and when she dived  
they stuffed their faces with popcorn  
and took long sips on their Cokes.  
She was the hot number.  
She exploded in their minds.

Then it was over.  
The crowd of men scurried  
or lumbered out into the streets.  
“Damn, that’s what you call a woman!”  
  one said,  
“Damn good woman.” But no one listened  
or even cared why or how  
this movie affected him.  
It was none of their business  
what gestures would come and go  
like traffic lights  
as he walked the streets  
past “Eleanors” for sale.

*Gary Tachiyama*

# Raynette R. Takizawa

## TANSU I

in old tansu drawers  
the family crest disintegrates  
on rust mottled kimonos.  
what was once a wedding undergown  
i will fashion into silken robes  
for hostessing ... seduction.

brilliant obi—  
    threaded silver and fine gold—  
binds me until  
i cannot breathe  
and feet too large for tabis  
strut  
    without grace  
    before the mirror.

*Raynette Takizawa*

# Wini Terada

## FACES ON THE UNPAVED ROAD PAST MOKULĒ'IA

Your long dark hair streams behind you  
when you put on your tradewind mask.  
You pick a path through fields of beach-rock  
on the north shore of Ka'ena.  
Between waves  
you tap at the 'opihi navels  
on the low bellies of black rocks.  
The ocean spray dries in your eyes  
and crusts on your eyelashes.  
I pick off the limu stuck in the web of my throw-net.  
I tie suji across rips torn by coral.  
Your feet bleed from small cuts.  
That's what you get  
for walking on the beach-rock  
without tabi.  
I rub ice on the cuts.  
It melts on your warm feet.

*Wini Terada*



# Debra Thomas

## THE LAST TURNINGS OF THE SEASON'S WHEEL

as the last turnings of the season's wheel  
approach you  
the mango tree at the east window is  
fogged with thousands of brasspink blossoms  
waiting to be left alive by gusts of tradewinds  
and too much Manoa rain  
left to grow into something beyond a flower

one last journey on the wooden ship is all you ask  
though you are not spry and sturdy as at nineteen  
craning your neck to see on approaching Honolulu Harbor the face  
of the man in the photograph you held  
and he also meeting you the first time  
matching you to the image in his hand  
those vivid adorations of youth do not bind you still  
neither do the seizures of grief and confusion  
that sent you on occasion to the mental hospital  
raising nine children  
for though Yoshio the firstborn died of influenza  
and the third Seichi died also before his first year drowning  
you still had to raise the memories of them  
and those that might have been  
over the years in wartimes  
ironing shirts of canefield workers in your spare time  
as you worked in the pineapple cannery  
bringing home the cores for your children's snack  
remembering after your husband died in his late forties  
the touch of his shirts

and how he came home from carpentry  
to the smell of bread in the brick oven outside  
round loaves you baked Portuguese style  
and the songs he taught you that he learned at parties  
after you stayed up waiting  
where he cooked for extra money  
and carved beets into flowers  
and white turnip into fishnets  
and a papaya into a turtle with diamonds cut out over the back  
inserting Lancer matchsticks for eyes  
almost black the irises clouded vision  
of his last hours as he lay the cancer  
constricting purple and swollen his stomach

I can't stomach much of you these days  
remembering what you were like before  
and fearing what might have changed you  
the mysterious cold that kept you up nights coughing  
and wailing that demons were laughing at you  
and coming to get you  
though others suggested a psychiatrist  
I believed you and too jittered for sleep one night  
sat up in front of the TV blanking everything out  
even as you came crawling down the hallway stealthily  
like a cat craning your neck close to the carpet  
as though sniffing out a scent  
glancing furtive side to side  
like a secret agent hiding behind the fan  
and muttering to yourself you got to the kitchen  
and grabbed the scissors and masking tape from the drawer

it seemed appropriate somehow to me  
that you wrapped one by one in layers of old newspaper  
the black and white photographs of your deceased  
for though life could threaten them no longer  
you feared for the lives of their images  
the kimonos and gold threaded obi  
were folded up and wrapped along with the dried up umbilical cords  
of all nine children you saved  
in tissue  
indeed everything from the carved teakwood chest was salvaged  
and dumped in a king size white pillowcase  
which you slung over your creaky shoulder  
like the last burden

till finally I got Mom up  
who took it from you  
and promised to hide it  
at two a.m. on the porch  
as you were readying for escape  
she convinced you to go back to bed  
as I watched bleary eyed from the dim hallway

you were admitted to Kuakini for testing  
and given a strong diuretic  
by the doctor I was leery of  
because he was so offhand and old  
but everyone said “she trusts him he speaks Okinawan”  
and when Mr. and Mrs. Young from next door  
visited you lying there you covered your face in your hands and cried  
with some shame social or cultural  
as you plummeted twenty five pounds down the scale

you never recovered that weight  
or the smooth glow  
that kept you in the garden  
weeding or planting lettuce and comfrey  
and the garden never recovered  
from your absence  
it still records the sighs  
as you dropped to your knees in the soil  
to let some earthworm squiggle back between the roots  
and the faint sound of your white headkerchief flapping  
in the valley breeze  
as the mynahs stalked by  
I saw only yesterday  
the white crab flowers  
on the jointed cactus claws  
dropping down dusty green  
the petals ever so susceptible to bruising  
by any zephyr  
and their faint scent as I walked the baby past  
unmistakably sweet  
from such an untended annual  
in a rusted coffee can  
one of your hundreds still lining the house

in my dream last night  
I saw you no longer staring at your hands  
as you do hour after hour silent in the chair

or at the table  
complaining “nani kode mezurashii ne”  
no matter what is set before you  
I saw you at rest at last  
in some larger hands or roots  
cradling or branching through puddled water  
around you  
your back against the tree trunk  
brown and flecked with lichen  
and you were singing the nursery tune you taught me years ago  
about the children seeing birds on the rooftops  
on their way to school  
and holding hands in a circle playing  
then in the afternoon hearing the temple bells  
in the mountains and heading home together

I remember the words timeless  
like memory warps the heart  
for what still lives that cannot be shared  
as each leaves separate  
what was known with others  
like petals scattering on the waves  
a life  
circling its way out over blue water  
the bird only glancing back once over the wing  
at what was its home  
as the season turns  
opening the lotus  
the wind rides over the body  
its irresistible call  
to some more comfortable environment  
to rest  
but I know you will not pause for long  
you are too wise and pure  
and will walk into some other clime  
on a farther shore  
greeting those  
strangers to me  
around you  
with that same reserve calming  
and graceful  
and the work on your hands  
will reflect not as scars of another time

colored by age or custom  
but new clean and whole will enter  
into your strength  
as you fulfill some higher purpose  
to its end  
again

*Debra Thomas*

## WHERE YOU SLEEP

the moon nears our zenith  
you lie asleep  
the newborn hair spinning out from your scalp  
like a spiral galaxy

I want to sleep where you sleep  
is there music  
or a speech  
is a fairy dancing across green leaf stages  
or are the stars rearranging themselves  
into future clusters and systems

it is a gathered leaves and rain place  
a hollow off the mainstream  
a berth of clean silent air

*Debra Thomas*

# Jean Yamasaki Toyama

## ETIQUETTE

Eating a fish head is an art  
which must be done  
with refinement and  
gusto.

Refinement because  
as one dismantles the  
brain, the eyes, the head  
one must not offend the sensibilities of  
others.

Gusto so that they may be assured that the  
head  
is the most delectable of tastes  
and it is.

*Jean Yamasaki Toyama*

# Jo Ann M. Uchida

## FEVER

They had burned my letters,  
the ones from my brother,  
and they had burned my wife's lacquer dresser,  
and my daughter's porcelain dolls.  
But that was the first time,  
and it was I who smiled first at  
the white-shadowed face of my son  
against the curfew candlelight  
that time.  
My younger sons squealed at this  
game in the dark,  
at the swords in the attic unscathed,  
at the thick black paper on the windows.

Only my wife turning  
away from the yellow/white light  
did not see the glory of the moment.  
They had captured the saboteurs,  
held behind army green walls  
conspirators and patriots,  
kamikaze zealots  
and traitors,  
but we were mute, and they passed us.

My father's books of poems,  
my mother's koto,  
the family scrolls  
still wrapped in red silk  
holding their breath in the floorboards beneath me



were silent in the dark.

They had passed us;  
they, with their green/white eyes  
and purgation missions  
that smelled of kerosene.  
They were burning the temples,  
the schools,  
some houses too.  
But we had expected that,  
and we let the vengeance take its course,  
and let them take what they wanted,  
who they wanted,  
until they were quelled.  
We were safe this first time.  
Perhaps they had seen the plaques on the walls,  
and the books and the surgical tools  
in white cabinets,  
and the metal-framed beds that were draped  
in white sheets  
and so passed us,  
thinking perhaps,  
that we, that I  
with a Stanford degree  
once donning the whites of their  
surgical gowns  
would deftly and surely  
eviscerate  
my seventeen summers in Nara.  
Or perhaps they had simply known  
this was the first time.

So I worked in my office,  
in hospital wards,  
in wailing half-empty  
well-scrubbed houses of  
wives without husbands,  
mending and healing  
the bodies of the jaundice-faced people.  
Sometimes there were fevers,  
and I'd go in the dark,  
in my car, with black-covered headlights  
that let only slits of yellow through  
like cat's eyes.

I would go in the dark,  
and knock at hidden doors  
to find the sick blached ones  
with bodies on fire.  
These were the ones who had been held,  
the ones they had not passed,  
and in their eyes, reflected  
I saw the burnings of the shrines,  
their pictures,  
their tenuous links with homeland  
forever charred.  
So when they came that last time,  
and shattered the floorboards  
and the screams of my wife  
that last time,  
and scoured the attic  
where my samurai swords  
lay waiting, in white cloth,  
that last time,  
the faint upturnings  
at the corners of my mouth  
were not for glory  
but comradeship.

They are burning my father's books of poems,  
and the silk strings of my mother's koto  
curl in the flames,  
and the red wrapped scrolls  
of my family dance  
in yellow fire.

*Jo Ann Uchida*

# Martha Webb

## SONG AT HANAIEI

*for Robert Cazimero*

A gesture of the sea.  
This wave does not recede  
but unfurls until it's taken into sand.  
The bay is a voice which gives itself,  
wave after wave, and takes back nothing  
yet every wave sinks to it again.

I heard your voice lifted from you  
by a room of angles and spaces  
and saw your eyes widen in surprise.  
Is it silence or the constant untuned world  
which demands so much of you?  
Then you filled the room.

And if there were no walls

Could you breathe another wind into the world  
or into the long light between stars?

While others hoard their breath,  
thinking "my breath," as if it could be stolen,  
I see you stand and trust its going  
and its coming again.

There is something at the edge of your song  
like the darkness which confines flame.  
You travel to that edge, surrender into it  
to be borne again on another breath.

*Martha Webb*

## THE ANATOMY OF THE INFINITE

Woman. It is a word,  
a question I have asked  
of many men. I did not know  
you had the answer, your mouth  
with its tiny leap of tongue.  
Your hips are the bend of water down-  
streaming the place I was born,  
and you taste of oranges  
or cup-of-gold, which is a flower  
like your own. Just when I think  
you are all softness, you are bone;  
and if I touch you my voice  
moves softly from your throat, a surprise  
of doves.

Since I no longer know  
myself apart from you,  
I will be content in our confusion.  
As for that man whom we both love,  
I know him better now for wanting you.  
He has become the fire I could not feel  
and like a vessel glowing in the kiln  
I only harden to be broken, or be treasured.

Once again our bodies do not add  
but multiply: we are not three, but nine,  
or one, I cannot tell my numbers or my finites any more.

*Martha Webb*

# Jill E. Widner

## LAS HORAS DE VERDAD (THE HOURS OF TRUTH)

Would the hours of truth discourage her  
from breathing again from the dream?  
After midnight when the streetlight  
flooded her bed between the curtains' sway  
she remembered his voice and ached between her shoulder blades.  
She remembered the way he had shown her the constellations  
without pointing  
by shining his flashlight toward heaven.  
Were these the hours of truth?

Not a single thought contained her.  
Not her stallion limping in the wild lantana  
his left fetlock burned by a rope  
when he had bucked loose three nights ago  
not the sweet green stain left on her hands  
by the Hawaiian medicinal weed  
she had squeezed through a cloth to heal him  
not her sore thumb bruised  
nor her shoulders wrenched  
urging yesterday's gelding past the misted graveyard.

It was difficult visualizing his bed.  
Did he lie alone in the smell his wife's perfume had left  
in last week's sheets  
or had she stayed  
and were their long limbs tangled  
their boney elbows and ribs renewing acquaintance?

Unfinished wine slept in a Japanese teacup beside her own bed.  
The half she had drunk gave her mouth a sour taste.

The sound of the silent telephone unnerved her.  
She turned east then west  
her damp hair in twisted ropes slapped the pillow.  
Are these the hours of truth, she repeated.

In evening light she rode a red dust ridge  
upon the other horse  
the shining red gelding as tame as a mud puddle.  
Lyrics and arias pressed her mind  
out of tune, words misplaced  
but pressing  
the way atoms must  
when they expand and explode into another element.  
Is it possible to learn  
to go to the ones who come easily to us  
and to like them?  
These were the hours of truth.

*Jill E. Widner*

## TREMBLING

The butterfly was caught  
in an abandoned spider's web,  
no one's nourishment.  
She dismounted from her horse  
and unglued its orange wings.  
It followed her along the ravine for a while,  
petroglyphs to the left  
wasted overripe pineapple to the right.  
Later when she had to pass the lone man in the brown jeep  
with the rifle  
parked on the side of the road  
in the middle of the wilderness  
she was sure it was the butterfly's heart  
who kept her from harm.

*Jill E. Widner*

# Rob Wilson

## ANITA SKY

I marinated her heart  
oh Italian artichoke  
I threw in her delicate entrails  
parts I had touched in the dark of her moan  
I threw in all the oils she had ever  
soothed my bear-body with, basil, balm, musk, anise  
I threw in the red of her floating pain  
the black of her peasant eyes  
I stirred in all my suffering  
years in a factory, weeks on a train, a kid brother's death  
I threw in the blue of her hair, small of her back  
and for years after she left  
I feasted on her body, I communed  
with a landscape of sheep and cow and pasta  
I lived on the juice of a woman  
run off to her own infinite, Anita, Anita Sky

*Rob Wilson*



# Tamara Wong-Morrison

## STRANGE SCENT

*Written 1978—Hawaii's Bicentennial*

Hear the beating of the pahu  
distant and warning.  
Beware—a strange wave has washed upon the rocks  
even the crabs run from their homes.

In the night it passed over shining black water, gliding—not  
knowing where it came from  
or where it's going  
An omnipresence—there.

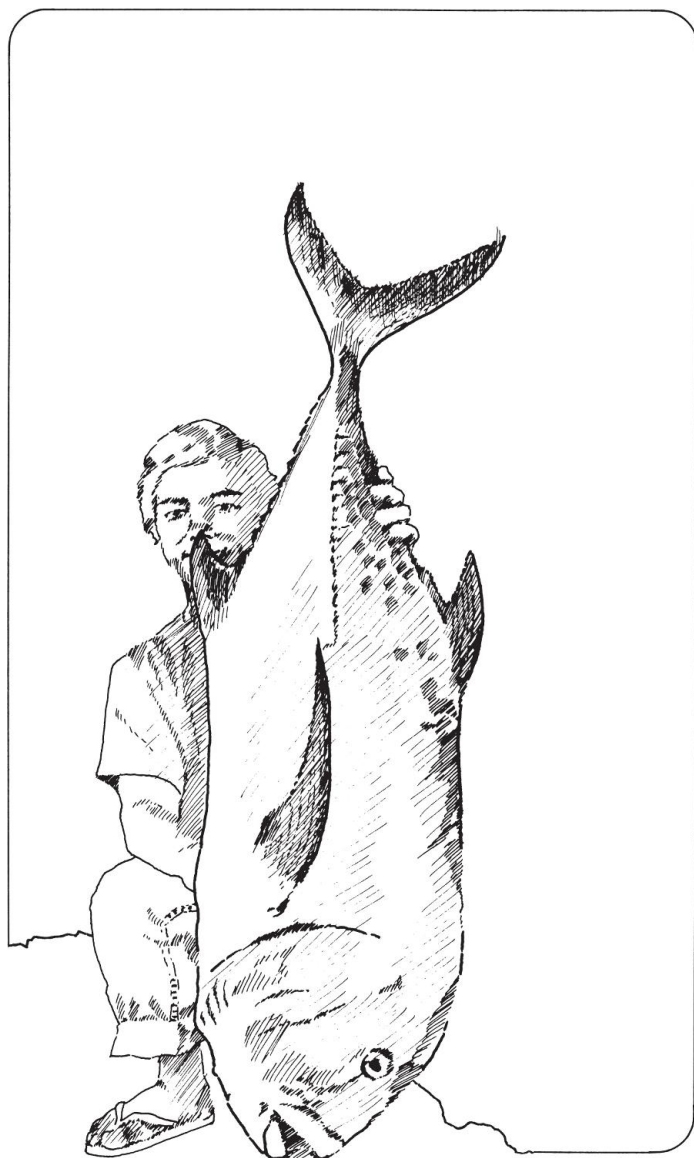
Me, I tried to sleep under starless sky  
but too dark  
too strange  
too still.

I feel I will never be the same again.

*Tamara Laulani Wong-Morrison*







# Marshall M. Doi

## THE LUNA OF THE LANDING

On a gusty afternoon, a lone mynah bird was startled out of a pine tree by the sound of footsteps rapidly approaching the edge of the cliff. He chattered angrily, then flew away as a youth with huge curious eyes stared up in his direction.

“Boy! Boy!” a voice called out hoarsely from the distance. The youth continued staring even after the bird had completely disappeared, until a wrinkled old man caught up to him.

“I tell you, no run away like that,” the old man scolded. “You like fall down and get hurt?”

A gigantic smile spread over the boy’s face. Then, without a word, he turned and immediately started down a winding trail which led across a sloped portion of the cliff wall. The old man started to voice a second warning but stopped because he knew that it would be of no avail. He hitched up an old knapsack, faded and frayed from years of constant use, and dropped out of sight after the youth.

The Hamakua coast on the island of Hawaii is a string of steep black lava cliffs dropping straight down into the sea. A man on shore can stand directly over the turbulent water and yet be hundreds of feet away from the surface, never being touched by the sea except for the salty mists which drift inland on days when the wind blows from the north.

Few are the coves which in past days allowed wary steamers to deliver supplies to the sugar cane plantations located at strategic spots along the coastline. Strong winches constructed at the top of the cliff wall stood ready to lift the cargo up to where mule trains waited. The job was long and difficult as well as hazardous because of the temperamental sea. Perhaps the ancient Hawaiian gods were alarmed at such intrusions upon their sacred burial grounds, for many hidden caves in the area contained the bones of kings and lords of old Hawaii. Whatever the reason for the turbulence, the ships had to approach the shore with extreme caution since there was no way of telling when the sea would belch forth a swell

capable of hurling the ships against the rocks. Many men vanished under the raging sea to be lain in submerged crypts or carried away by predatory sharks.

But when those days passed, the coves were forgotten and tangled underbrush covered the mule trains leading to them. No one visited the landings except for fishermen who told stories about hearing the rusty winches being operated again on dark nights when the sea was in a less angry mood.

One of the coves was even more isolated than the rest because the sugar mill which it formerly served had been abandoned many years ago. A wide grove of mournful pine trees circled along the cliff rim high above the sea. It was through this grove of trees that the old man and the youth had just passed.

The old man shuffled cautiously down the trail, sometimes gaining leverage by grabbing hold of the tough-stemmed grass growing on either side. He was still strong and healthy, his figure showing few of the physical impediments which usually accompany old age. But though his legs showed no signs of weariness, the old man was aware that his once-sharp reflexes were no longer suitable for the steep trail. Over places where the youth would have scampered heedlessly across, the man conveyed himself with all four limbs.

A length of manila rope was coiled around the old man's waist, serving to hold up an ancient pair of pants. Several holes in the seat were covered with crude patches while others remained exposed to provide ventilation. It was difficult to say whether his shirt was tan colored or just covered with dust, but it had the long sleeves which are common among the plantation laborers who work with the thorny leaves of the sugar cane. An obsolete safety helmet balanced precariously on his head. A piece of sheet metal was soldered around the side for added protection from the sun so that the helmet resembled a shiny metal bonnet. The metal bonnet completely hid the old man's white hair but not the two huge ears which protruded from below it. The old man attributed his good health to his ears because of Japanese superstition which declared that large ears portended a long life.

At the bottom of the trail, the youth was waiting impatiently on an old concrete landing platform which was faded and covered with seaweed where it entered the water. In his stubby hands he grasped two bamboo fishing poles which he had retrieved from a crack in the cliff wall. As soon as the old man set foot on the landing, the boy ran to the water's edge where he laid the poles down and beckoned furiously with both of his hands. The old man smiled at the way the youth jumped up and down in gleeful anticipation while he attached hooks and lines to the poles.

When the old man had baited his hook, the boy dropped the line into the water and sat down on the edge of the landing. His face changed from one of anticipation to one of the most intense concentration. His huge eyes were focused deep into the water where he saw shadows gliding back and forth. When one of them approached the hook, he held his breath in expectation, his face frozen and

his eyes piercing.

Suddenly, a small form moved where the water lapped against the slimy cement. The boy's attention was immediately directed to a black crab gathering seaweed with rapidly moving claws. How strange it looked with its eyes extended up into the air. The boy contorted his face into weird shapes, trying to extend his eyes into the air also. His face flushed and his eyes hurt but he could not get them to stand upright. A rage flashed through the boy. In anguish, he pulled at his hair and kicked his feet out wildly. He swung his pole viciously at the crab in bitter disappointment. With the crab's departure went the boy's rage. He turned his attention back to fishing and was soon hunched over with his former intense concentration, though he often paused to try to extend his eyes outward.

When the boy finally felt a twitch, he yanked the pole up hard enough for the fish to arch over him and land in back. With a triumphant cry, he jumped clumsily to his feet and fell on the fish as it squirmed furiously on the cement.

"Hooey," the old man chorused the boy's excitement. "As one nice size papio you catch, boy. Good eat, that one! We tell your mama cook 'um for you tonight."

The youth danced a happy victory jig over the landing, trailing the fish behind him. When he tired, the old man unhooked the remains of the fish and placed it in the knapsack. After his hook was again baited, the boy hunched over his pole with the same intense concentration. Each time the boy caught a fish, he danced for joy. But after a while, the sea grew restless and he lost all interest in fishing. He wandered away to chase crabs on the rocks off to one side of the landing.

Taking out a bag of tobacco from the knapsack, the old man slowly and carefully rolled himself a cigarette. After running his wet tongue over the cigarette, he raised his head to see where the boy was, then lighted up and settled back to fish. But his mind was not on fishing as he sat there blowing out blue clouds from under his silver bonnet. He looked out toward the horizon where the dark sky was creeping landward. Whitecapped swells were already arriving at the cove, speeding heralds of the approaching storm. The old man watched the waves hurl themselves at the peninsula which protruded from the opposite side of the landing from where the boy had gone. Each wave hissed angrily as it rushed upon the rocks, exploding into white foam at the impact. How often the two of them had sat and examined the same scene from the top of the cliff. Under the wailing pine trees they sat, each enjoying the sea in his own way. Sometimes the boy screamed encouragement to the pounding waves, rising to his feet in his excitement. At other times he sat in a trance, open-mouthedly staring.

The waves brought different emotions for the old man. They brought memories of the days when he had been the luna of the landing. At those times, he explained to the boy how to judge the wind and the sea in order to determine whether or not it was safe for a ship to enter the cove. He had spent many cold nights on the landing waiting for tardy steamers to come in. Many times he had

given the order to start the winches and many times had given the muleteers their instructions on where to deliver the supplies. The luna was in charge of all operations at the landing and few were more important than he.

Looking up once again, the old man saw that the boy was zealously pursuing crabs, hurling rocks away to his right and left as he attempted to corner the elusive creatures. He and the boy belonged together. They understood each other as no one else did. Or perhaps it was just he who understood, the boy only instinctively attaching himself to the old man. One thing was certain though, this little cove was their private world and no one had the right to disturb their bond with each other and with their friend, the sea. No, not even the boy's parents should be allowed to interfere.

Deep within himself, the old man sensed (though he was unwilling to admit it) that he depended on the boy just as much as the boy depended on him. It would be so very lonely to have to visit the little cove by himself again. It never occurred to him to ask himself why he still came to the landing. If he had asked himself that question, he could not have given an answer. Or else he might have answered simply, "Me the luna of the landing."

No other explanation was needed. The old man's life had never been one of expanding horizons. When he first came to work at the landing, he had set only one goal for himself, to wear the shiny hat of the luna. After he became the luna, the little cove became his world. Everything had changed since then, but not the old man. He was still the luna. This was still his world though he was long retired and the landing was long outmoded. He was content with his memories, except that he could not speak to memories.

Long after the old man resolved himself to being the solitary sentinel of the cove, the boy had come. At first, he brought the boy only out of sympathy toward his parents. The youth was an intruder who feared the powers of the sea. But the boy's intense curiosity was too strong to keep him afraid for long and now the boy loved the cove almost as much as the old man.

More important, however, the cove itself had accepted the boy. It had befriended him and it had washed away the impurities. The youth was all right here, with a place where he belonged. Nowhere else would he find an environment which suited him more. If he was kept in a cage, the dynamo of emotion and energy inside the boy was sure to explode, while here at the old man's side, the cove could absorb all of the outbursts. None of the complications, the confusions, and the restrictions of society existed here to bewilder him. All the boy needed was freedom, freedom to explore the strange world that existed within his disproportional head. Both the man and the youth were useless to the world beyond the pine trees, and it was useless to them.

The shock of cold water splashing over his feet awakened the old man from his reverie. The tide was coming in as well as the storm. Glancing over his shoulder, he saw that the boy was nowhere in sight. After packing his knapsack and



replacing the fishing poles in the crevice in the wall, the old man made his way over the moist rocks to the hidden spot where he knew he was most likely to find the boy. He walked until he came to the gaping mouth of an old lava tube which wormed its way into the cliff. Inside was the boy.

Lying very still on the floor, the youth was listening intensely to sounds coming out of a fissure. Apparently, the noises were produced by water rushing into a hollow chamber beneath the lava tube and somehow the fissure distorted the sound so that it resembled the clamor of distant voices. Whatever the voices were, they spoke intimate messages to the youth, for he never moved while he listened to them. They never spoke to the old man but it was obvious that the boy understood them so he was satisfied to sit and wait.

Having sat on the floor beside the boy, the old man said without looking at him, "Hey, boy. They sure making big noise today, hah? I think they talking about the big storm coming tonight."

The youth did not acknowledge the other's presence, which did not surprise the old man. He simply took out his tobacco and silently rolled himself another cigarette. His feet were folded under him and, with the boy close behind his back, he faced the entrance of the lava tube through which he watched the swells roll into the cove. The man and the youth sometimes spent hours here, the boy with his ear to the fissure and the man puffing on his hand-rolled cigarettes. For several minutes they continued as they were, man and boy together in comradeship, yet each engrossed in his own world. The old man knew that this was likely to be the last time he would ever share this silent bond with the boy. It marked the end of a phase of his life. As for the boy, perhaps occasionally a dim spark of remembrance would light in his mind, but for the most part, the old man and the voices would soon be forgotten.

Slowly, the old-timer turned toward his friend until he was staring directly at the prone figure, a great sadness shining in his eyes. He again spoke, more to himself than to the boy. "They telling you goodbye, boy. They know you not coming back no more. Your mama and papa sending you away to the city tomorrow." He had tried to convince them otherwise but they were sure of themselves and refused to be dissuaded. Each sentence was followed by a long pause, as though his words were intrusions within the silence. "You listen what they say and be good boy, okay?"

The youth still had his ear to the fissure, enthralled by the voices. "Get plenty nice things for see. You be real happy over there." He wished desperately that the boy could say, "No, I will not be happy." But the boy said nothing.

Tears trickled down the cracks on the old man's sunbaked cheeks. The fear and love poured out of his chest in one pleading sentence, "You no understand, boy?" The question was futile, merely a confirmation of fact. All self-control had left the old man. "How you can take care of yourself, boy? You almost one man but you no even talk yet. Nobody going to look out for you now."

Finally, the strange tone in the old man's voice caused the boy to look up at him. However, only curiosity appeared on the youth's face as he waited for his companion to give the usual sign that it was time to go. Two pairs of eyes met each other, one huge and waiting, the other moist and pitying. The old man looked deep into the other's eyes, trying to grab hold of just a little something inside the boy, but he could not see anything beyond the fog.

The eyes of the old man dropped first. He pushed himself to his feet and the youth quickly followed. From the landing, they watched the storm waves beating against the peninsula for the last time. One after another, as methodically as falling raindrops, the waves crashed onto the rocks. At regular intervals, an exceptionally large wave struck with such momentum that it hurled itself entirely over the piece of land.

After studying the sea for awhile, the old man looked thoughtfully at the boy's innocent face. No, it was not right for the boy to leave this place. It was unfair. He looked again at the peninsula as it was submerged by a giant wave, then he motioned toward it with his arm and said, "Come. We go catch some more crabs."

And together they set off.

*Marshall M. Doi*

# Virgilio Menor Felipe

## CHAPTER I. ONCE IN THE FIRST TIMES FROM *WHAT YOU LIKE KNOW? AN ORAL BIOGRAPHY OF BONIPASYO*

I was drenched with sweat, and so was *Tata*, Father. He had just taken off his squash hat and was wiping his salty lips with his short sleeves. I was already on my butt.

“Don’t slouch on your ass, my son. You get lazy that way,” he said.

And that’s true, you know. When you sit and don’t do anything with your hands, not moving, not talking to anyone, you can get lazy. And if you don’t watch out, your thoughts can go all over the place, but never get you anywhere.

I squatted comfortably and opened the water pot to dip the coconut dipper for *Tata* to drink so I could drink. Ay, was I thirsty! But water is tastiest that way. After a few hours of continuous movement, working in the sunlight following your animal around and around, starting from the outside plowing, and circling inward, getting caught in the middle like the body of a butterfly between two wings, then taking the freedom to break through all those plow lines of life—ay, you’re as hot as burning red embers. Sometimes you start in middle—that’s the best way—from the inside, churning and plowing around and around, spiraling wider and wider. And if your calculation is balanced, you finish just right, leading onto the trail for home. When the Lord Sun clears the long shade of those bamboos, your skin burns and you are winded and dry inside. You can drink like a water buffalo. If you are weak, you can get dizzy. But no matter what, you look forward to that water in the pot, cooling in the shade where the dried leaves are so thick and moist with dew.

*Tata* gargled with the first sip then spat out the staleness and cleared his breath. “Hayhhh! Sweet is this water, ahemmm!”

He swallowed the next mouthful slowly. You always do that so you taste all the sweet wetness and don’t choke. *Tata* handed me the water dipper, and I

dripped a drop to appease the spirits of dead people and non-people, then took a long slow sip.

“Those sprouts will be good to cook over the *inabraw*, broth of your *Nana*, Mother, for our day meal my son,” he said.

And I felt good and warm all the way around my ears. It would please everyone to taste it, and yes it’s delicious. Ever tasted it?

“Yes, Tata,” I agreed.

You answer parents like that. You address people by how you are related to each other. Not like nowadays here in Hawaii where kids just say, “Yes,” as if talking without salt. That’s tasteless and disrespectful in our custom, and if you ever spoke out of turn in those days, you got knuckles for lunch.

“Go on working hard, my son, that is the way of our life. It keeps boredom away which can confuse you to uselessness if you don’t know how to handle it and see it through,” he said in a breath of a lesson.

And like always, I answered obediently. That way I stayed silent and rested faster. Talking like this after work was the style of our Tata, his way of relaxing and thinking through the puzzles of his life-long curiosities.

“The soil is hard, and our animal is tired. But we have to harrow now so the soil won’t dry deep,” he said.

I was glad because it was really hot. I had gathered enough fresh feed for the day. That meant we didn’t have to come back in the afternoon, and I could go riding with my friends to graze, maybe by the river.

“Tomorrow afternoon we’ll plant ...”

Suddenly, we heard women and children screaming, “Eiiiiihhhh!” from our home to the east!

Tata took off like lightning, ripping his bolo knife in stride from the branch of the mother tree, and unsheathing it with his left hand, for Tata was left-handed, and our Apo was ambidextrous.

He charged down the pathway. I swallowed fast dropping the water dipper. Tying off the animal, I chased after him.

As he zigzagged, speeding through the corn rows, I entered the field pulling out my sickle from my right-hand pocket. Tata was hurdling the grass hedge when I came out of the corn rows.

Tata ran to the left of the house towards the north end by the grapefruit tree. I went to the south side behind the kitchen. The chickens were clucking danger and the dogs were barking for help at the corners of our front courtyard.

I was trembling when I peeked. Apo was flat on his back in the dirt with the big black boot of a *Kastila*, Spaniard, pushing on his stomach and a flashing silver saber pointed into his bare chest.

Apo had not let his head touch the dust. He held it up as if his heaving chest didn’t even feel the sword point on his flesh. His eyes were fixed steady and

strong, piercing with hate into the Spaniard above him.

Everything happened so fast. When Tata peeked and saw that, he screamed red, “Yaaahh!” with his bolo knife in front of him his eyes fiery with vengeance.

“Don’t touch Tata!”

But a *mestizo*, half-breed, shot his musket into the dirt, shocking Tata in the legs, and he fell to his stomach.

When I saw that, I flew to my feet screaming—that’s all I remembered. Like a lightning flash at night, the light went out in me. I had been smacked with a rifle butt.

Our Nana was cradling my head when my feelings came back. I was seeing fireflies twinkling against the blue sky, and hot blood was streaming down my nose into my mouth. That was the first time I ever really tasted so much human blood—my blood—and it tasted bittersweet.

Tata was held down by two Pilipinos at the whim of the Spaniards, you know, bossed around like their “boys.” Two other stoolies were chasing chickens, catching our fattest mother hens and Apo’s ace fighting cock.

Apo, seeing them *okininada*, cunt-of-mothers, take his cock, a winner killer of more than four battles, stared up at the towering Spaniard with the pointed helmet and leather chin-strap. Then with that fixed stare, he held the saber’s edge and pushed it up off his chest. Jumping to his feet, kicking a left to the Spaniard’s rib cage, he doubled the *yotniinana*, mother-fucker, croaking him in the dirt. But a mestizo butted him on the right temple! Apo went down, and his eyes did not move. For the rest of his life, Apo stared like that a lot—with sharp pointed eyes of concentrated love and hate.

“Do not be afraid for me,” he shouted to us. “Look out for yourselves!” But all the men were held down.

Some of the men in our *barrio*, our village, came running when they heard the gunshot, but they had no guns, like our family. They could do nothing but look. Some women cried with the children, and a few others trembled prayers, but there were no godly miracles to help them. Our men were beaten this time, but inside, their guts were strengthened with humility.

They didn’t say much in words, those robbers. They just commanded with fear and took what they wanted in greed; hit those of us who resisted, then left in a cloud of dust and a trail of horseshit.

The Spanish *tenyente*, lieutenant, led the way on a beautiful brown horse, while the two *Don*, Mister, mestizos followed. Behind them were two pairs of Pilipino peons on foot carrying on their shoulders the four lengths of bamboo where the loot was hung. The procession of looters, the powerful rich and their stooges, was brought up in the rear by another Spanish officer riding full-dress on a prancing white female horse.

I cannot forget this memory, and perhaps it will never be erased in the mind among some of us Pilipinos who think. I can still see that Spanish bastard galloping through our tomatoes and eggplants. If I had a gun, for sure I would have shot him right through his neckbone. That would have been a sight to see—a robber of life bleeding in the dirt with his eyes pleading for mercy to live. Against the Spaniards, this was wishful thinking, of course, but every injustice must be resolved in a lifetime if there is to be peace and joy for here and now.

For a long time afterwards, our Apo was very quiet. He changed like night and day before our eyes. He kept to himself now—you know, not free with company. That was the big difference. His nature as a person had been very light hearted with a lot of get-up-and-go, fluidly full of fun. But now, during dinner, he would be locked very deep in silence. And he affected all of us in the house. We lost our appetites, too.

He was like that for many weeks until one evening he took over the kitchen with a spurt of life and told everyone to stay out. He prepared the whole dinner, chicken with papaya and fern sprouts, for he was a good cook. That evening he told Tata to roll out a cask of *basi*, sugar wine, and we all drank spirit with the dinner. He got a little happy and was his old self again, bubbling with life with no mention of any past. We were so glad, hoping he was cured.

The next morning, he was stone silent again, as if nothing really earth-shaking had changed from the day before. We knew his thoughts were heavy so we let him be, for you must respect the silence of a man because most of the time he is making peace with himself and the world around him.

Apo just went on with his daily chores, sometimes like a machine talking to no one. He fixed fences, twined *maguay* ropes, some hemp, and wove the lining inside of his squash hat. Our dinner table was like a casket before the crying starts, as if someone had died, and we were all like him because we were so close. When someone is heavy with thoughts, you must feel with that person to lighten his weight of burden.

Let me tell you how his sickness was. Suddenly, he would go crazy, falling, shaking like a fish out of water, and his mouth would lock and bubble like a mad dog. That's when *Ina Baket*, Grandmother, would tell everyone to get away, and she would pull his penis to bring back his life. That's a true practice I know, because people believed in that. I was with my cousin when he saved the life of a friend who fell down from a plum tree. My cousin just pulled his penis, and his breath just pulled back in.

Since then Apo would stare all the time, sometimes for half a day. Luckily, he always got sick close to home because he always told everyone he wanted only Ina to pull his life. I don't know if I could have saved him if I was there and he had another attack. Maybe. Who knows what we can do when death is facing us?

Only once did I see Ina pull Apo. It happened one afternoon while they were

picking sweet potato leaves for the evening meal. They didn't see me coming after the animals. When I reached them, he was breathing deep and pale with cold, sticky sweat. After he came to, he walked around as if nothing had happened.

Clearly, Apo was dishonored. Dead air was all around him a lot. He was humiliated and degraded by the Spaniards and their collaborating peons. Dishonor shamed him speechless to us, his family, for allowing this kind of subservience to go on for so long. His parents had been subjected servants of the Spanish and their vices all the way back to the Grandparents-of-the-Foot and his Grandfather-of-the-Knee and their people of the same body.

Apo was a *Katipunero*, a revolutionary soldier in the war against the Spaniards. When the fighting broke out in the parts of Ilokos, most of the Spaniards fled our town of Laoag. Tata used to tell us children that after my eldest sister, Romana, the first child was born, there was no authority to hold them down in town anymore.

"Let's go live on our land," Apo had said, according to Tata, "Life is better there where you are not policed everyday, and you don't have to go far to find a living."

There weren't too many people then, and there was enough land for people to live on. These lands, which weren't far to the east of town, had been the land of our ancestors for a long, long time. While the Spaniards ruled, the land belonged to the church and to those who ruled and kissed the government. In their time, there were no papers to say who owned this, and who didn't own that. People just knew who owned what.

Those who lived in the barrios close to town were rounded up and made to live in town, and this made farming difficult because you had to stay out in the fields sometimes for weeks to tend the rice. It was the same when the harvest came. Tata would make a simple lean-to hut to live in for awhile when he was away from home.

The Spaniards could not fight much of a battle according to Tata. The war had started in the parts of the south of us close to Manila where the sugar plantations were. When the fighting began to spread like fear and fire to Pampanga, Katipunero runners came to Ilokos, but somehow the local Spaniards found out—you know if there is war you cannot hide it.

"They were fat cowards, really. They withdrew and escaped out of our grasps as if slipping on a slippery rock," said Tata. Maybe the victors of greediness must die cowardly.

The Spaniards escaped swiftly by boats from the town of Laoag because the river there in those days ran deep and wide and flowed swiftly to the sea. That river is adjacent to the grounds of the municipal building, the capitol, and the church. The Spaniards had guns to keep distance between themselves and the chasing Katipuneros.

In other towns farther from the river and the sea, like Pinili and Badoc, our Katipunero ambushed many of them. Tata used to laugh with his friends when they talked histories, drinking basi.

“We roasted the bodies over the fire sprinkled with holy water then fed them to the dogs and pigs!”

Most of the mestizos settled and became Pilipinos for the occasion of course, and managed to keep most of their land holdings.

Apo Lakay was old in years then, but he was as strong as a young man. He would still beat all of us pulling *cogon* grass for roofing when I was already a young man. People lived long and were strong in those days. Their bodies were not destroyed with over-work like us today who were abused in the canefields. The Lord Earth was fat and fertile. The soil was so fertile you didn’t have to farm much. Plants were fruitful. People lived long and healthy because they ate only fresh foods—foods that still had life in it. Not like today. We eat chicken from the store that has been dead for who knows how long! Remember, you are what you eat, and if you eat out of boxes and cans, then what are you? And the vegetables at the supermarket, why that *Japanee* has no shame to sell wilted everything! And the prices! There must be a hidden gun cocked behind every price to turn people into domestic dogs willing to pay whatever the price!

Ay, yes, Apo Lakay used to say that men would grow so old in years. They would stand around leaning on fences through all seasons gathering moss—some drinking basi, living so still they would stay in place for days, then work side-by-side with everyone when they were rested enough. They would not die! Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! Yes, that’s true. And it’s very possible. They were still alive when I was growing up. Some of them had no more memories. They were everything that was happening and behind their beards that were down to their navels, they balanced in a peaceful quietness that was clearly strong. They were the last I saw who had killed time by naturally living so old. They were always worthy of everyone.

I don’t believe that Apo Lakay killed anyone in the war against the Spanish, or ever in his lifetime. And yet he may have kept this a secret. If so, he became a stronger man and perhaps happier, too. But he died frustrated by a lifelong toil of patience.

There were some rich mestizos who were killed by other Katipuneros in our parts. This is to be expected when life has become a war just to make a living. The people who were high headed with education looked down on the have-nothings. You know those people—they are always formal because they don’t know how to live easily in laughter. They have to tense shit all the time to make money, and when they see you eyeing them, they act as if you have offended them. Just like the *Haoles*, the white people, over here in Hawaii, they think they are so ex-



pensive and untouchable, you have to pay to look!

Apo said that he looted the *Pake*, Chinese, stores after the Spanish left. Practically all the stores were owned by Chinese.

You can bet that the prosperous ones were all owned by them. They were helpless because their protection from their Spanish bosses was gone. You see, the Chinese were the middlemen like here along with the Japanese and the Haoles in Hawaii.

Funny thing, I can remember now what Tata said, “I spat in the face of one of them.”

And there isn’t nothing more humiliating personally than being spat on. Well, maybe getting shitted on, of course, is worse. But taking spit in the face is part of the protection they bought with taxes, legally paid or not.

The year after I was born the Katipuneros became active again. The New *Katipunan* is what they were whispering and calling the organization. Most of them this time were the peers of our Tata, who were family men. The rich were getting filthy cocky again because they got back into government. The *Amerikanos* put back those who had been prick sucking for the Spaniards. Only now, Pilipinos were promoted to most of the positions the Spaniards held.

What the New Katipunan did, Tata said, was to take from the farms of the rich. Katipuneros did not destroy. They just took what they needed for their respective families, which was the gravy profit that would end up in the market in the next few days. They were just helping the rich harvest. If the Katipuneros were discovered during a harvest raid, they had no choice but drag the owners away, and you’d never see them again. There weren’t too many killings mainly because everyone still knew each other, and from the beginning we were all related in blood. You could still reach the rich. There wasn’t this army of police we have today to pickle your senses to make sure you are okay! Soldiers of the *Amerikanos*, Pilipinos like us who had no jobs and went into the army, came patrolling even at nights. They had rifles that made the Spanish guns seem like water pistols. After losing a friend and having one maimed for life and seeing families left without a father for the home, Tata and Apo decided then the times were too dangerous. The government could now pick you off one-by-one. So Tata and Apo went into hiding, by going to work in Cagayan. Apo told me I was about one year old at the time.

*Virgilio Menor Felipe*

# Gail N. Harada

## WAITING FOR HENRY

I like the feel of a cat's head, the fur close to the bone. I like the feel of a cat's skull, the shape of it. It is soothing to stroke a cat on the broad flat forehead, feeling the sculpted surfaces under the fur. The tips of a cat's ears are cool. My fingers run through the fur of cats.

I have one lover and one cat. I call my cat Henry after O. Henry and Henry James. My lover is named Jonathan Henry. After his grandfather. Sometimes I call him Henry because it is so much simpler than trying to say Jonathan. And sometimes I call him Jon.

Henry my cat rejects me all the time. Come to me, baby, come to me, lover, I say. He walks away, tail twitching high. I can see his lightly furred two-toned balls when he walks away. I think they are so precious. Cat balls are so cute. Henry knows I love him. That is why he can scratch me and make me bleed. That is why he rejects me so much. Cats are like that sometimes.

Jon my lover, the other Henry, is very patient all the time. Sometimes I wonder what he is thinking, he is always so terribly tactful. He is strong but not heavily muscled. Some would call him a "prize catch" (he is a promising medical student) but I would prefer not to look at him that way. Maybe I love Jonathan Henry. He never rejects me. Some people are like that.

During the afternoon, after work, I play with Henry my cat. I rub him and stroke his head. His beautiful head. I tickle his stomach and admire his cute cat balls. I carry him around the house checking the windows. I secure the latches of the screens in the kitchen and the bathroom. I do not want Henry to leave me. I do not want him to be hit by a car.

At night, Henry my lover comes. In the dark, we play out our passions. We become sticky with sweat and fall asleep with the covers off our bodies. Sometimes I feel that Henry my cat is watching us and I feel embarrassed and somehow wanton. When I make love with Henry the man, I have to close my eyes to enjoy

it. I am afraid that if I open them, I will see Henry my cat staring at us, his eyes glowing in the dark.

It is a morning like other mornings. As usual, Henry my lover is ignoring Henry my cat. Henry my lover sits on the couch reading the morning paper. Henry my cat is sitting in the other corner staring at Henry my lover. They are so ridiculous looking, that pair of Henrys. Especially Henry my cat. He looks positively furious, twitching his tail at Henry my lover like that.

Softly I say, teasing, "Henry."

Henry my lover looks at me and says, "Why do you talk to your dumb cat like that? It's abnormal and unhealthy. Stupid cat."

He is not usually so touchy.

Henry my lover has never stroked Henry my cat's beautiful sleek head. He does not like cats. They make him uncomfortable. Perhaps he sees Henry my cat staring with amber eyes at us when we make love at night.

Henry my lover is asking me a very important question, one he has asked me several times before, one which I have never yet answered.

"Crystal, will you marry me?"

"Maybe."

"When?"

"I don't know." I always answer like this. It makes it sound like I do not care. But I do.

"When will you know?"

Jonathan is getting angry. I can tell. He is trying to control his anger. Why doesn't he just swear at me or something? I do not know what to tell him. How should I know when I will be sure? I do not even know if I really love him. What does it mean, to love?

"I don't know when I will know."

A pause. Jonathan looks at me with a suffering face.

"Do you love me?" he asks.

"Yes," I lie. I cannot stand that hurt look in his eyes. I wish he would talk about something else.

"What more is there?"

"It's not that simple," I say.

"Why?"

I pause, feeling the panic in my stomach spread. Sometimes Jonathan makes me feel cornered. He is always demanding that I explain myself to him.

"I don't know you," I say. I feel miserable. I wonder what put these particular words into my mouth. I wish that Henry my cat was here so that I would have something to do with my hands, and something to look at besides Henry my lover's face and my feet. I say things that I know will provoke Jonathan. I say things that will hurt him. Is it because these things are true? I say again, "I don't

really know you.”

He laughs a short bitter laugh. It is a hard, unpleasant sound. Softly he says. “You don’t know me.” He is incredulous. I am sorry I said that. Now it is his turn to hurt me.

“You say you love me when you don’t even know me? You sleep with me without knowing me. Come now, surely you can marry me too without knowing me.”

I cannot stand his sarcastic tone of voice.

“No!” I say. “No. You don’t understand.”

“I don’t think I’ll ever understand you, Crystal.”

I start to cry. I want to scream at Jonathan. How does he know that he loves me? But I am afraid that he will say that he really does not love me.

Jonathan holds me gently in his arms.

“I think I love you, Crystal. But if you don’t love me, I’m just wasting my time ...” his voice trails off and he sounds so sad and tired.

I wish things were nice and perfect. I wish I could say yes and make things simple. Sometimes I wish Jonathan would leave me alone. Sometimes I wish I never got to know him this way.

Henry my lover has left me. I do not like to think about the reasons why he left. I suppose I have driven him to it. Ever since he first started coming at night, in the dark, I have been slowly pushing him away. I was not really aware of what I was doing. Maybe I was just fooling myself into thinking that despite all the trying things about me, Jonathan would still wait for me to make up my mind. Now he is gone.

There was no big quarrel at the end. He was so damn tactful and nice about saying that things had gotten to the point where he did not enjoy being with me. I never meant to irritate him. He told me he thought we should get to know other people who might be more suited to us. He said it would be better for me. I did not cry until he walked out the door. His last words were so trite I would laugh if it did not hurt so much, “We can still be friends” he said before he left. Standard farewell lines. “I’ll be seeing you,” he said, as if nothing at all had ever happened. I never want to see him again.

Do I love him?

I talk with Henry my cat. I caress his head and tell him silly things. “Oh Henry Henry Henry. You’ll never leave me will you?” He miaows at me. I miaow back at him and laugh. I spend the night watching television with Henry on my lap. Nothing I watch makes much of an impression on me. I talk to Henry while the television goes on. I predict the eventual outcomes of each situation comedy and each serial. I laugh at the commercials. I tell Henry my cat what a lady-killer he is. I tell him what a handsome handsome tiger he is. I get tired of the televi-

sion. I take Henry my cat with me to my bedroom. I want to lie down. I find one of Jonathan's socks on the floor by my bed. I start crying. I miss his dark shape and his breathing by my pillow. Henry my cat just looks at me. He purrs and rubs his head against my hand. What would I do without him?

Instead of going to sleep, I play some more with Henry my cat. I cannot sleep. I run through the silent rooms, breaking the stillness with my running feet while Henry my cat chases me. Laughing, I run over the chairs and tables in the living room and the dining room. I leap on the kitchen counters. I laugh as I cavort all over the house with Henry my cat at my heels. It is three o'clock in the morning as the sound of my laughter fades. The house becomes very quiet. I pick up Henry my cat and cradle him like a baby. I think I miss Henry my lover. Suddenly I feel very lonely.

I think I hear noises in the parlor. I go cautiously with Henry my cat to check. It is only the curtain billowing with the breeze and scraping against the lampshade.

Three days later, I come home to an empty house after shopping. Henry my cat is gone. I do not know how he could have left. I am always very careful to secure all the windows before I go out. I open all the cupboards and all the closets. I call for Henry. I run around the house calling for Henry. I wail for Henry Henry. I run around the block calling for him. I walk back to my place, telling myself that Henry is alright and he will come back.

That night I wait for Henry my cat. I try not to think about cars and cat-nappers. I try not to think of how empty the house is. I do not want my Henry to be squashed to death beneath the wheels of some car. I do not want him to be dissected in some biology class. I do not want him to end up as part of some woman's fur coat. I have kept him so carefully. And now he is gone. He has left me and I am alone.

I hear cats crying nearby. Henry? I run outside and start calling again for Henry my cat. I see the cats but Henry my cat is not with them. I go back inside the house, listening for Henry. There is a faint rustling noise outside. Henry? "Henry!" But it is only the wind blowing the leaves in the trees.

Who would think the night could be filled with such sounds? I hear all the leaves that move with each passing night breeze. I can hear the crickets that are rubbing their wings together and vibrating their dry little bodies.

I fall asleep waiting for Henry. I have a dream. I dream of a black panther who comes near my bed, who comes with the night. His fur ripples over his big panther bones. He glistens in the dark. I am afraid of him. I touch his head. It is smooth. I lose my fear of him in his beautiful head. His fur is thick and seems to perpetually flow over his skull. His eyes are brown, like the eyes of Henry my lover. But this is not Henry my lover. This is a strong panther. He stands by my

bed as I stroke his perfect head. His ears are rounded at their cool tips. The fur on his body is also cool. It makes me think of mountain springs, and of dew on grass. He is so still. He stands patiently while I run my fingers through his rich black fur.

Henry my cat walks into the room. He is light and glistening. He is so small next to this panther. He is so tiny, the panther could probably kill him by simply stepping on him. The panther and Henry my cat start stalking each other. I do not know whether this is a game or not. I watch them gliding in their circles. I watch their immobile cat faces as they slide their soft paws over the smooth vinyl floor. It seems that they will forever glide and slither in their circles on their padded feet. I remember that their velvet feet hide claws.

The panther raises one paw. He raises it like a club. I think that he is going to club Henry my cat senseless; he will beat Henry my cat to death. I see the claws coming out of hiding. They gleam and flash. Cats are very clean. I see now that the panther is going to take the life out of Henry my cat with one clean and neat swipe of his claws. I want to save Henry my cat. I cannot move or scream. I am helpless as the panther's paw begins its descent towards Henry my cat. I cannot even close my eyes.

Suddenly, I see that it is the panther who is the victim after all. Henry my cat is under the panther. His tiny claws are moving upward in an arc. He is going to scratch the belly of the panther. I am afraid that I will have to see the panther's guts spill out. I am afraid that the pink guts will fall on Henry my cat and suffocate him. The big panther will fall on Henry my cat and crush him. I do not want Henry my cat to die. I do not want the panther to die. I want to save them. Henry my cat's claws flash like little mirrors as they continue upward. The panther's claws look like curved jewels, gleaming with the light of a hundred suns and stars, as they continue downward. I want everything to stop now. I want everything to start over again and end differently. I want everything to stop. Stop. Stop.

When I wake, I hear myself saying Henry Henry Henry. I reach for Henry my lover but he is not here. I want his arms around me. I want him. Why did I lie to him? I told him that I did not love him. Maybe I did not lie to him after all. Maybe I really do not love him. I do not know. Henry Henry. Maybe I mean Henry my cat. I miss Henry my cat. Where did Henry my cat go? How did he go? Henry my cat, if you will come back I will feed you good tuna every day. I will let you play outside more often. Henry. Henry my lover, if you come back I will even marry you. I will love you. I will be a good wife. And I will always call you Jonathan instead of Henry. Please come back.

The next morning, over a solitary cup of coffee, I consider an ad I could put in the classified section of the newspaper. "Lost: one cat and one lover. Call --- ---." People would only snicker. I would be plagued by obscene phone calls all hours of the day and night. Besides, neither Jonathan nor Henry my cat ever reads

the classified ads. I rip the ad into little flakes of paper.  
I wait for Henry.

*Gail N. Harada*

# Violet Harada

## THE SHELL GATHERER

I never spoke to Manuel, or he to me.

But whenever I came across him in our lane, I would stare curiously at him out of the corner of my eye and deliberately slow my pace to match his.

With his wizened frame and long scraggly whiskers, he looked to be at least a hundred years old. He always wore a faded cotton shirt, a torn tweed cap, and baggy khaki trousers that seemed too heavy for his spindly legs.

His burlap bag was slung over one thin shoulder. It contained the shells which he would later paint and sell to the tourists on the beaches.

Manuel never looked up. On one occasion, grandfather had scoffingly told me that Manuel had gotten stooped from picking too many shells along the shore.

“That’s the Filipino for you,” my grandfather had said, “not intelligent enough to find a better job. Kiyo-chan, remember that good little Japanese girls never speak to Filipino men.”

I had heard grandfather say this many times before. There was supposed to be something mysterious and sinister about Filipinos. I was told that they winked and whispered naughty invitations to young girls. They raised evil fighting cocks and watched the birds slash each other to gory bits with their flashing spikes.

It was no wonder that I stared wonderingly at Manuel.

Grandfather himself seemed to be everything Manuel was not. Now I realize that he and the frail shell gatherer must have been close in years. At that time, my grandfather seemed so much straighter and stronger.

He was lean with a wiry kind of strength and, like a soldier, he always sat ramrod stiff in his light summer kimono. I could easily imagine that he had been a brave captain in the Russo-Japanese War.

There was one person whom grandfather was unashamedly proud of. This was my older brother Takeo who was an army lieutenant stationed in Korea.

When Takeo had come home on a leave of absence the fall before, grandfa-



ther had insisted on having Mr. Taba and Mr. Shirai over, his cronies from early lumber-contracting days in Hawaii.

“Wear your uniform,” grandfather had instructed Takeo.

He and his friends had sat on the cool straw mats on our porch, toasting my brother with rounds of *sake*, the heady rice wine.

“How proud you must be to have such a fine grandson,” Mr. Shirai had said.

“Spitting image of you in your younger days,” Mr. Taba had added.

Takeo had been embarrassed by the old men’s admiring gazes and compliments, but grandfather had sat up very tall. He thrust out his narrow chest and said in a low but firm voice, “The American army is fortunate to have our Japanese young men fighting for them.”

I remember sitting on the steps of the porch listening idly to their conversation. The shadows were gathering in the lane and I saw Manuel slowly making his way home.

Soon he was passing in front of our house.

Apparently I wasn’t the only one watching him because I heard grandfather say:

“That one,” jerking his head toward Manuel, “has a son in the army. Watch him come home AWOL someday. One Japanese soldier is worth a hundred of his kind.”

The old men laughed secretly into their cups.

That had been last fall.

Now in the heat of the summer afternoon, I longed for the crispness of October again.

On the porch, grandfather was setting up the smooth white and black discs on his *go* board. Mr. Shirai would be joining him soon for a game.

He brought the round pieces down on the polished surface with smart little thwacks.

“Yaeko,” he called to my mother, “bring the *sake* out as soon as it’s heated. Today is indeed special.”

He was referring to the telegram we had received earlier that morning. It had come, special delivery, yellow and important-looking. Mother had trembled when she had taken it in her hands. A sixth sense told her it concerned Takeo. She had cried with relief when she had read that my brother was hurt, but not critically so.

The part in the telegram that had caught grandfather’s attention, however, had been the ending of the message: “... conducted himself valorously in battle.”

Mother had translated it into Japanese for him and grandfather had looked even prouder than he had that fall evening when Takeo had sat fidgeting under the approving scrutiny of the three old men.

Now it was the hottest part of the day. I sat on the porch steps cracking lichee nuts between my teeth, making the hard prickly shells give way to the juicy white

flesh inside.

From where I sat the heat seemed to send shimmering waves up from the ground. Even the leaves on our mock orange hedge were shrivelling along their tips.

In the distance, Manuel appeared mirage-like in the lane. His pace was even slower than usual.

An eternity seemed to pass before he was plodding past our front yard.

Perhaps it was the special excitement of the news about Takeo. Or perhaps it was the heady effects of the wine he had started to sip waiting for Mr. Shirai. But for the first time, grandfather actually hailed Manuel in broken English:

“Too hot for shells, Manuel. Go home, rest.”

The old shell gatherer took a few more steps before he seemed to realize that someone had addressed him. Like a marionette, he jerked to a stop. His head sagged lower. His bag of shells touched the dirt.

My grandfather continued, “My grandson, soldier. Fight brave. Get shot. Your boy ... how he doing?”

I watched Manuel, beads of perspiration gleaming on his brown forehead and falling tear-like to the ground. Slowly he raised his head.

I realized then that I had never really seen his face before. It was an ascetic's countenance with hollowed cheeks and thin, flaring nostrils. It was his eyes, however, that struck me most. Large and dark, they appeared at once to be shy, suffering. They saw and yet seemed not to see at all.

A minute went by before he spoke in a voice barely above a whisper.

“I get letter.”

There was a pause.

“My boy die yesterday. He stay back. Enemy kill him.”

For an instant, his cracked lips trembled.

That was all.

He lowered his head and resumed his journey, expecting no words of comfort or sympathy and receiving none.

There was a brief silence on the porch. Then with a sharp thwack, grandfather brought another white disc down on the board.

He muttered aloud in Japanese, “Just like a Filipino for you. Too scared to move when he actually saw the enemy. Eh, Kiyo-chan?”

I did not answer.

My eyes were following the hunched form of the shell gatherer as he crept like a ghost around the bend and disappeared.

*Violet Harada*

# Clara Mitsuko Jelsma

## EXCERPT FROM *TEAPOT TALES*

*Editor's Note: The following are excerpts from the biography of the author's mother, Iku Kubojiri, now age 89. The biography provides sketches of Mrs. Kubojiri's life in Japan, as well as her experiences as an immigrant homesteader in Glenwood, Hawaii, from 1908–1925.*

### **II. Snatched From The Fire: Her Life Course Set**

She was thirty years old and was entertaining thoughts of travelling next to Kobe, the gateway to the outside world. She was independent and educated. A liberated woman, you might say. But deep within her there were stirrings of a longing and a yearning for fulfillment as a woman. But she had cast all hopes aside of ever becoming a wife and mother. She was a scarred woman.

When she was about a year old, she had been left in the care of her older sister while her mother went to work in the barn. It was autumn, and the family was busy threshing the rice. Her older sister being only five years old soon forgot all about her charge and ran out to play.

The family cat was asleep in the straw nest the family had arranged upon some planks above the open fireplace. She went crawling up to grasp the sleeping animal. The planks tipped over and fell into the fire. The cat leaped out, but as a babe, she had no such reflexes to pull herself out of the fire.

Her mother, suddenly sensing an urgent need to check, entered the house and found the baby with her head stuck in the fire. Rushing up, she snatched the babe from the flames. The baby's crown was charred. The only sign that she was still alive was from the piteous cry that came from her burnt lips.

No doctor was available. In those days the country people had to go great distances to get any medical help. Her mother quickly put some ladies' hair oil on it, which should have been sufficient. But the neighbors began to come and

advise her of all sorts of remedies.

Her distraught, desperate mother, already filled with self-condemnation for her negligence, tried them all in an effort to prevent scars from forming on her daughter's face.

Infection then set in and the condition worsened. The entire head was so blistered and swollen that it was impossible to locate the eyes and nose. Only a small hole remained where the mouth should be, and her mother squeezed her milk into it.

No one could conceive of this child ever surviving. And even if she did, they conjectured, she would surely be blinded in her left eye because there were severe burns there and above her left ear.

The neighbors then concocted the most hideous remedy of all. It was called *tomo*, a paste made from a dead man's bones, charred and ground to powder.

The bones were dug up from some grave, probably one belonging to a grandfather. The paste was made and plastered on the burns.

At first it did seem to help. The burns dried up and seemed better. But the paste worked its way into the burnt flesh where it festered. Soon her entire head and face became a mass of pus.

Yet, miraculously, she survived. Her burns healed. Even her eyesight and eyebrows were restored, much to the astonishment of all. Except for the crown of her head, which was bald because the roots of her hair had been burned away, her facial features were spared of unsightly scars.

Her hair was carefully brought down over her forehead to hide the bald spot. She passed for an ordinary child. But her life was destined to take an unconventional path.

Her first three years in school were happy ones. She loved school and excelled in her studies. But in her fourth year, life in school became unbearable because of the teasing and taunting of the city boys who called her Burnt Scar Face.

In Japan all girls in the fourth grade changed their hairdo from the bangs to one where the hair was drawn back from the forehead. Because the Japanese observe tradition so religiously, it never occurred to her mother to make an exception in her daughter's case and allow her to wear her bangs.

Hurt beyond endurance Mother refused to go to school. No amount of pleading and threatening by her parents or the school authorities could compel her to attend school.

Compulsory education in Japan ended after the fourth grade. The school authorities were finally able to persuade her to return to school for the remaining three months of the year to receive her diploma and graduate.

What was life to hold for her? She was told and overheard people saying that she would never be able to marry because there was a stigma imprinted upon her life.

Her guilt-ridden mother felt she had lost her right to discipline and direct this child because it was due to her negligence that her daughter had been burned. Therefore, Mother was allowed to do as she pleased at home.

At about twelve years of age she did baby sitting for a neighbor. Then, at thirteen she went to a childless relative's home as a housemaid. During the summer months for three years she went to work at a silkworm farm unwinding the silk threads from the cocoons. Then, at seventeen she tended an aunt who was hospitalized for a long time. In those days, people lived and cooked for themselves in the hospital.

There she heard about another girl who had been more severely burned than herself who had received corrective surgery at Yamashita Hospital in Aichiken, Japan. Mother sought this girl out and found her healed and already asked for in marriage.

Much encouraged, she had her mother take her to the hospital in Aichiken. There they were directed to a good surgeon who did a skin graft operation to bring her hair line back to normal. Only a slight pink scar remains by her hair line.

### **III. The Call to Hawaii: A Chance to Get Married**

About this time Father's older brother, Soske, received a letter from his half brother, Umetaro, who had emigrated to Hawaii 16 years before. He had written that he had purchased 200 acres of land there and would like to have Soske find a wife for him and send her to Hawaii. He specified that she should be a country girl, but educated, and not too ugly.

Soske found this to be a very big order. Country girls were not very educated, and the pretty girls were in the city. Also, it seemed hard to believe that Umetaro, who had always been the black sheep, could really be doing so well that he could have bought 200 acres of land.

Since he was not sure whether it was true or not, he felt he could not ask for a bride from the village or from among strangers. So, he decided that it would be best to find a bride from among the kinfolk.

Thinking over the qualifications which had been specified Soske thought about Umetaro's first cousin, Iku Hayashi. She was not too homely and was a country girl. But she could be considered educated since she had studied in Tokyo and had been travelling around trying to be a nurse.

Soske wrote to Umetaro asking what he thought about his choice. Umetaro wrote back that he would trust in Soske's judgment and accept whoever he decided was best. If he considered Iku to be a suitable bride for him, that was fine with him.

So, Mother was notified.

If you want to go to Hawaii as a bride, come home immediately, she was told in the letter from Soske.

As she read the letter, Mother was not very much excited by the prospect of marriage. But the thought of going to Hawaii was enough to entice her to head home immediately. No one from her little village had ever travelled abroad.

Soske was only a farmer, but because the government had run a highway through his rice field and rebated him 20,000 yen, he furnished Mother liberally with money for her trousseau.

"If you're going abroad, you should go in good style. Buy the very best," he advised her.

So, Mother went shopping in Nagoya and bought the best of everything she thought she needed. She purchased her kimono, her *montsuki* (bridal garment with the beautiful *obi* or sash, her *haori* or outer garment, and her *jiban* or slip), her gold wedding ring, her Wittnauer gold watch, her umbrella, her *zori* (slipper), and her *geta* (clogs). She had never owned or worn such fine things in Japan....

Finally the day of departure came. It had been about two years since she had decided to go to Hawaii. She was thirty years old, and felt fully prepared for the life before her. Of course, she envisioned Hawaii to be a place like Nojiri where you could buy all the things you needed.

She was handed a three pound Crisco can of *ume* by Umezo Kongaki, a well travelled friend of Umetaro. The sour pickled plums were from his trees and were given to soothe the sea sickness en route. "Give the extra ones to Umetaro," he told her.

Umezo accompanied Soske and Mother to Yokohama harbor where she boarded the Taiho Maru. Last words were exchanged and a few tears shed. Then the men returned home. Mother was on her way.

The ship was full of other brides on their way to Hawaii. Most of them were women in their thirties. They were from various places and backgrounds, and all hopeful about a new life in Hawaii.

Many of the women had come well stocked with toothbrushes and tooth powder, evidently items which they felt could not be purchased in Hawaii. As Mother heard about all the different things the other women had thought to bring, she began to wonder if she should have done the same, although she did not see the necessity for it since she could buy them when she got to Hawaii.

The trip to Hawaii was hardly pleasant. Most of the passengers were terribly sea sick throughout the entire voyage.

On board was a young man who had gone to Japan to fetch his bride and was returning to Hawaii with her. During the course of the trip, he fell ill and died. He was buried at sea. The unfortunate young bride was left in a quandary as to what she should do. She decided to return to Japan. Whether she did go back to Japan or whether she found a happier life in Hawaii is not known....

#### IV. Arrival At The Homestead: The New Life

The disembarking from the Taiho Maru in Honolulu was one of relief for the weary, sea sick passengers. The immigration center was a place of confusion and loud activity.

Very prominent there was a large, talkative man of about sixty from Niigata by the name of Katsuno-san who was a sort of manager for the immigrants coming in and had some official position at the immigration office. Katsuno-san was loud and spoke very coarsely, joshing the women with his crude remarks.

The identification time at the immigration center was a joyful time for some and a shocking crisis to others. Some brides who knew their husbands only by the photographs sent them, many of which were very deceptive, were so shocked at seeing their mates that they fled from their husbands.

When Mother's name was called, she was startled to see a tall, ferocious looking man with overgrown hair and an unkempt, bushy beard coming toward her. Could this man really be her cousin, Umetaro, she wondered. She had not seen him for over sixteen years.

Mother heard the word, "kau kau" being hollered to all the people. It was the first Hawaiian word that she heard in the islands. Wondering what it signaled, Mother followed all the other people who were heading somewhere. She came to the dining section where some food was laid out on long tables.

Mother thought it proper for her to serve her husband. She was surprised to see the men, not waiting to be served, but helping themselves. Their manners were crude and self-reliant. She then noticed the disproportionate ratio of men to women. There were so many more bachelors than women there.

When it was time to leave the Center, Mother remembered that she had left her handbag where she had first been sitting. Umetaro took her back there but the place was deserted and no handbag was there. So Umetaro took Mother by horse and buggy to the lost and found office. There she saw rows and stacks of other people's bags and purses. She looked for hers but could not locate it.

No money had been in the bag. Only Umezo Kongaki's three pound Crisco can of *Ume* had been in it....

*Clara Jelsma*

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# Jody Manabe Kobayashi

## IN SEARCH OF GIRLS' DAY

Her name was Baby Teardrop. I remember Girls' Day because of her. Because my grandmother gave her to me wrapped in Christmas paper, and it wasn't Christmas and it wasn't my birthday, and because that March 3rd we were having our house fumigated and I insisted on taking her with us to Camp Kokokahi despite my mother's prediction that I'd lose one of her accessories. Which came true. I lost her teething ring. I remember that as clearly as her name.

I remember that Girls' Day at Camp Kokokahi because it was there that I discovered my first real fireplace, with its lethal-looking pokers and the battered wire shield that was supposed to protect us from flying sparks. I remember that we sang about a strange white man named Jack Frost who nipped children's noses off and how we roasted chestnuts on that open fire and how they came out rather dry and tasteless.

I remembered how my father found oysters when we waded along the rocky shoreline laying crab nets, how he sent me back to the house for something to pry them loose with and how I flew, so full of the gravity of my mission that I ran into someone's clotheslines full of sheets drying in the cold air. I returned with butter knives and I remember that we bent quite a few trying to separate rock from rock.

When it started to rain, cruel hard rain, and he sent us all back, I was the last to go—I always felt I had to protect him, I don't know why—and I remember turning back one last time to see him crouching by the rocks, a small gray figure knee-deep in the windchopped water. I ran to the house through a landscape turned suddenly hostile by the rain, the billowing sheets on the clothesline now limp and dejected as I left them far behind.

Perhaps I had always wanted to be a son, another son, to my father. To watch him hang a third koi on the bamboo pole on our front porch on May 5th, Boys' Day. *Tango-no Sekku*, when he would proclaim to all the world and Palolo Valley that, like the koi who swim upstream, his sons were strong, his sons were power-

ful.

one year he made a kite out of one of these koi. There was a big contest, and all the cub scouts and their fathers participated. My father went to the mountains to cut the bamboo for my brother's kite. He soaked and stripped and split it to make the bones of the kite, tying the crosspieces with string. Then he took one of the huge paper koi from its storage place in the basement and cut it up, gluing it to the frame with a paste made from old rice. As a finishing touch he cut out the eyes and, chuckling to himself, glued them on cock-eyed.

It was the most beautiful kite in the sky that day—a rainbow-scaled diamond looking down on all of us with those laughing eyes: my brother looking up, squinting a little, too intent on directing its course to smile back; my father watching him, too proud to smile; and the rest of us urging it higher with our own eyes, heads thrown back, throats aching with the effort. As if it were our combined breath that kept it airborne. It became my koi too, then, transformed as it was. And we were all strong koi, swimming upstream together into the blue sky.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I'm writing an article on Girls' Day," I tell my friend as we pause beside the chocolate eclairs and cream puffs, row on sticky row behind the sterile glass cases at King's Bakery Coffee Shop. "Do you remember it?"

She smiles, her eyes thoughtful. "Yes," she says slowly, "I remember the dolls."

She looks past me at the tables, most of them occupied even at this late hour by young couples, after-the-big-game bowlers, a half-dozen or so policemen sitting in the THIS SECTION CLOSED section, looking uncomfortable and defensive without their hats on.

*Have I said the wrong thing?* I wonder as she motions me ahead of her to an empty table. We sit silently, watching the waitress clear away the previous party's meal. Someone has left a dainty last piece of French toast. Someone has eaten his beef stew and rice separately—no rice in the stew bowl, no trace of stew on the half-mound of rice left on the plate. Someone doesn't like green onions. I try to find a pattern in the flotsam beached along the rim of the saimin bowl before the waitress takes it away. My friend watches her wipe the table in slow semi-circles.

I feel frustrated. Other people I've talked to have not told me much more: the special food, the dolls. I feel as if I've been looking for some great revelation in the pages of a cookbook, under the subtitles FESTIVAL FOODS or CULTURE. As if knowing what people eat or how they eat it or why they eat it would tell me who they are and how they think. As if a multiethnic cookbook could ever bring about racial equality.

The waitress brings our menus. We order coffee and watch her leave.

"I don't remember really," my friend says, looking up from her menu almost

shyly. "I seem to remember a photograph. I'm being held up in front of tiers of glass boxes, all larger than me. I am in a kimono—I don't know what color—probably it was bright, red or pink, the kind young girls wear."

She laughs apologetically, looking down again. "I hardly remember the dolls even, just that they had very white faces and very skinny hands."

The hands holding the menu are strong, tanned, the nails cut straight across. She is perhaps 50, a little younger than my mother. I try to imagine her as a child, soft and bewildered among the glass cases, a doll herself, propped up by someone else's strong hands. Her mother's hands perhaps, peeking out from the long sleeves of her daughter's kimono. Hands cut off at the wrist, the rest of her body swallowed up by a black page in a photo album, pieces of her tucked into the small mountings at each corner of the photograph.

Our coffee arrives. We both order french toast.

My own mother has no pictures like this from her girlhood. "We couldn't afford the dolls," she told me when I asked her about it. Yet she knows them all: the emperor and empress, the samurai and retainers grouped around them, the delicate ladies poised at their feet. Each case dusted off lovingly for *Hinamatsuri*, each carefully stored away again when it was all over. I also know of people who burned their dolls during the war, fearing for their own children's safety in the racist hysteria of the times.

"I never got a Japanese doll for Girls' Day," I say, watching the cream spiral down then swirl up again like smoke in the darkness that fills my cup. "Except one Girls' Day, I remember my grandma gave me a regular doll, a baby doll with her own teething ring and bottle and diapers, *you* know."

"Yes," she says stirring her coffee slowly, "I know. I didn't have too many regular dolls."

A regular doll. A non-Japanese doll.

I think of the harlequin doll I had once, its plush body half-red, half-yellow, its face cool and plastic, friendly, soft. I named it after the first black child I ever met, a boy named Paul.

We were washing clay-working tools in a bucket outside our kindergarten classroom one day when two 6th grade boys came by and called him Black Sambo. It was a book I loved, a story I could hear over and over again and not get tired of, especially the way my mother read it. So I couldn't understand at first why he cried.

Then I reasoned that it was the way they said it. Like it was the worst name imaginable. Like you could get mean lickings if your father ever heard you say it, even though he might have said it himself just the other day.

Paul left sometime after that and I forgot about him, until it was time for class pictures and I insisted on holding my clown doll when the photographer came to arrange us in rows.

"It's Paul," I explained, and Mrs. Shimizu let me hold him next to me.



Maybe I did it just to get my doll into the picture, but either way, the irony was lost to me then. He was no substitute for the living child.

I am about to mention it when our food arrives. *Perhaps mercifully* I think; we are grown women after all—all this talk about dolls is embarrassing. We speak of our latest projects, of love, inflation, war, redress. It gets later. Our hostage emotions drift irresolutely along safer tangents. The waitress stops coming after delivering our check, and our half-empty coffee cups get colder.

We finish everything on our plates and leave.

\* \* \* \* \*

I am holding a picture in my hands, an unsigned oil painting I found one day in a Salvation Army store in my unending search for old hats to add to my collection and old clothes full of other people's histories. A picture of a girl and her doll.

The girl is small, Asian, the familiar chawan-cut of my childhood framing her very determined eyes. She is sitting on a curbing somewhere, wearing t-shirt and jeans, knees together, one slippered toe barely reaching the ground, the other foot dangling. I hear the impatient sound of her slipper, flapping against her bare heel like a small bird taking flight.

She is looking down the street toward a future I can only guess at, holding an open umbrella—the smelly oilpaper kind—bamboo handle crossing over one knee. The doll is propped stiff-legged on her other knee, ice-blue eyes staring in the opposite direction. It is wearing a white dress with red specks, a white bonnet, black shoes.

It is a crude picture. Neither of them have clearly defined hands, for instance, and the umbrella is out of proportion—it seems flat although she is holding it at an angle. Perhaps it is the composition of the piece, the strange incongruity of the subjects, that drew me to it more than anything else. An Asian girl and her Caucasian doll. As strange to me as the photograph of my friend among the mythical figures of her past. Yet somehow just as real, just as familiar, as my own dolls.

To *be* that girl, holding her doll, waiting for something to happen. And, to watch her, paint her, photograph her, write about her, order her life into something whole!

I have decided that she and her doll will be rewarded very soon by beautiful *pa'u* riders in flowing skirts and fragrant leis and wonderful hats. That there will be marching bands and baton twirlers and beauty queens and floats. Maybe a few clowns, but no politicians. And not a funeral. And *certainly* not a formation of soldiers young enough to be her brothers, who will march past her, bayonets flashing, who will look straight ahead and not see her, perhaps mercifully.

As if I alone had the power to decide her fate.

Jody Manabe

# Charles M. Kong

These pages are blank because we have not been able to find the author *Charles M. Kong* to obtain his permission to include his work in this digital archive. If anyone has any information on how to reach *Charles M. Kong*, please contact Bamboo Ridge Press at [read@bambooridge.org](mailto:read@bambooridge.org). We would then be able to add his work to this archive.









# Tony Lee

## NOWADAYS NOT LIKE BEFORE

Danny stretched his massive body along the wooden bench that he often used as a bed. It was a windy night and he covered himself with an old shower curtain, feeling the warm plastic cling to his sweaty arms. He really did not mind the cold weather. The black coffee and the tin roof over his head provided ample warmth and security. What bothered him the most was the windy sound that stirred his imagination, keeping him awake throughout the entire night. He closed his eyes and wondered if the other men had the same problem.

Suddenly the wind disappeared, as if someone had captured it in a bottle, and the once churning white water lay flat and cold like the palm of a hand. Danny could sense that something was awfully wrong, the way the night birds started heading back to the mountains as if the black clouds that lay along the horizon were scaring them away. The dim glow from the lantern began pulsating like a heart beat, casting distorted figures along the concrete floor of the shack. Slowly the other men were climbing out of their sleeping bags, focusing their eyes on the angry clouds that were now rumbling right above them. Junior suggested that everyone tie all their shower curtains together. That way the eight of them could hide under one large plastic tent. Everyone worked at a frantic pace, collecting their gear together, tying shower curtain to shower curtain, and glancing every so often at the gloomy sky. No one, however, seemed to notice the changing tide—as it slowly rose over the ridge and completely surrounded the entire shack.

Danny could not recall ever praying so hard in his life, but the waves were hitting them with such a tremendous force he could not think of anything else to do but mumble the Hail Mary over and over again. The shack was close to fifteen feet high, so he could imagine how huge the waves were, the way they kept pounding on the corrugated tin roof. It was like being locked inside of a car trunk while someone with an angry fist kept beating down on him. He was holding on

to Junior, fingers grasping three of his belt loops, while both of Junior's arms were hugging one of the wooden beams that ran perpendicular to the roof. Somewhere in the distance the men could hear the booming sound of a cannon—waves hammering the side of the cliffs. Then immediately in front of him, he saw their gear slowly float away. First the lantern, then the wooden table, then he closed his eyes and prayed a little harder.

Throughout the storm Danny could hear Junior's bellowing voice telling everyone to hold on to their positions. Danny himself thought it would be easier to make a run for it, but deep inside a little voice kept reminding him to trust Junior's decision. Over the past thirty years Junior had been caught in a number of sea storms and Danny remembered Junior telling him about the tombstones that lay scattered along the rugged cliffs. So many men had been swept to sea while trying to run away from the awesome waves. There was Gordon Pang in 1945, there was old man Harry in 1953, there was Walter Cobey in 1976 ... the list seemed endless. All of a sudden the tombstones meant more to Danny than ever before. It was a strange feeling, like being close to someone that he always took for granted. He held on to Junior and tried to hide his fear like the rest of the men, patiently waiting for the sea storm to pass them by.

In the early 1920's an old Portuguese pig farmer often lent his donkeys to a handful of young Japanese fishermen. The men would back-pack their way across the steep lava sea cliffs on Southeastern Oahu until they reached Halona Point—their favorite fishing ground. The next day they would return to the farmer and provide him with enough fish for a month.

This bartering system continued until the coastal road opened in 1931. Soon, fishermen from all over Oahu began casting at Halona, and on a good night a multitude of bamboo fishing poles would line the perimeter of the point, which was given the name "Bamboo Ridge." And even today—some fifty years later—the men at Bamboo Ridge continue to tell the story of the old Portuguese pig farmer and the young Japanese fishermen.

In 1929 a group of fishermen founded the former Honolulu Japanese Casting Club, the forerunner of today's many casting clubs. In spite of their caution in fishing off the rocky lava ledges that are found along O'ahu's coastline, every year a number of their members and fellow fishermen were swept away and lost in heavy surf. In 1935 members of the club began a community service project to erect concrete warning markers at dangerous spots around the island. Each marker had the Japanese character "abunai," or "danger," carved on two of its sides. The markers were usually placed at a spot where a fisherman had lost his life; they can still be seen along the coast in Nanakuli and Kaena as well as the Koko Head area.

In addition to setting up the warning markers, the members of the Hon-



olulu Casting Club pooled their money and sent away to Japan for a carved statue of O-Jizosan, the guarding god for people at all dangerous waterways and coastlines. When the statue arrived it was placed on top of Halona Point, overlooking the ridge and cove below. With the outbreak of World War II, however, O-Jizosan's head was broken off, because he was the god of the "enemy," and eventually his body was demolished entirely. The post-war cost of replacing the statue was too prohibitive for the club members, so they decided to have his figure carved into a large stone. This was done, and today O-Jizosan stands again in place, watching over the fishermen and swimmers near Halona.<sup>1</sup>

Freddy takes his fishing reel from his back-pack and attaches it on to his fiberglass rod. Ricky does the same, mentioning something about the advantages of being first. It is a very hot afternoon: the type of day when none of the clouds in the sky seem to be moving. Normally, no one would be at the ridge as early as one thirty, but both men are construction workers participating in the iron worker's strike. That gives them time to assemble their gear and cast their lines, long before the rest of the men. Freddy and Ricky continue to work silently, stopping every so often to study the movement of the changing tides and the blowing trade winds. Meanwhile an elderly couple wearing straw hats slowly work their way down to the ridge.

They turn out to be two red-faced tourists. One of them is an old man in Bermuda shorts lugging a Nikon camera strapped around his neck. His wife, dressed in a bright red muu-muu, seems to have a constant habit of giggling for no reason. He picks up one of Freddy's fourteen-foot fishing poles with authority and begins to examine it from butt cap to tip. He lets out a frown and says that back in Canada he does a lot of trout fishing, but never has he seen anything so ridiculous as this. Freddy smiles, then shrugs his shoulder, mumbling something about never having met a person from Canada before. Then the old man walks into the shack and begins to examine all of the fishing gear on the wooden table. He lets out a gasp of air as he picks up an ulua hook as big as his palm. Attached to the hook is a wire leader made from piano wire. Back comes his frown and he asks Ricky if he could keep the hook as a souvenir, so he could show it to his trout-fishing buddies back home. Ricky nods, telling the old man that he and Freddy never tasted trout before. By now the old man is practically shouting his disbelief. He runs outside again and picks up Freddy's rod. He tells his wife that no one could cast a pole as heavy as this. She giggles. Then he examines the ring at the end of the wire leader and demands an explanation. Ricky demonstrates

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1 John Clark, *The Beaches of Oahu*, (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1977), p. 28.

how the ring can be snapped on to someone's line, enabling a baited hook to slide all the way down to the sinker. The old man thinks it's the craziest idea he has ever heard. He takes out his camera and starts clicking away at the ocean, the shack, and especially Freddy and Ricky. He stares at the poles for the last time, then heads back up the trail, shaking his head all the way to his car.

It's called the slide-bait method and is one of the oldest ways of fishing in Hawaii. And yet even the most experienced fisherman may not be familiar with its technique. You won't find it being used at Honolulu Harbor, or any of the sandy beaches around Oahu. Slide-baiting calls for a rocky cliff and a lot of guts to withstand the angry waves that constantly threaten you.

When fishing from a ledge, the slide-bait method will ease the physical difficulties that an ulua fisherman encounters. Enormous size baits—such as a whole octopus—make long distance casting with a fourteen foot rod quite difficult. The slide-baiter, however, avoids this problem by casting out a baitless line with only a sinker. Attached to the sinker is a wire hook which catches on to the nearest coral head. This enables the fisherman to keep his line in a taut position. When his line is finally set, he slides down a baited hook with a short leader. This is done by passing the line through a small connector, which is usually a split ring or a pigtail loop. There are several advantages to this type of fishing: a long distance cast may be made; with one cast several baited hooks can be sent down at intervals; the reeling in of the line to see whether the bait is still on is unnecessary; fewer sinkers are lost. And if you are a complete stranger to this type of fishing, like a trout fisherman from Canada, the usual response is that nothing short of a whale can ever be caught.

The sun is rapidly falling behind the mountains in Hawaii-Kai and Junior realizes that he does not have much time to work with. Standing on the edge of the ridge, he stares at the familiar blue water, patiently waiting for his body to relax. It is like watching a baseball pitcher. He takes a deep breath and waits; something is wrong with his footing and he knows he will lose control the moment he releases his line. He jerks his hip in a circular motion, then repositions his footing along the lava rocks. Once again he gazes at the horizon, timing his breath with the ebb and flow. Slowly he raises his left leg into the air until his entire body is balancing on his right leg. Then he takes a final dip to the right and his fourteen foot pole comes flying around his body in a powerful roundhouse fashion. It is a good cast, maybe eighty or ninety yards. But the rough current makes it difficult for his sinker to anchor itself onto the coral reef and he starts over.

The rest of the men are gathered around the wooden table, waiting for Junior to finish his casting. David glances at his watch for the second time in ten minutes and then mumbles something about not being able to wait any longer. A rumbling noise vibrates through his stomach but no one takes him seriously. David himself knows that he can really wait, even if Junior takes another hour; time is

not important here. Their pot luck dinner has always been a tradition; a time of relaxation and the sharing of home cooked meals: Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Portuguese style.

The table is filled with a number of local delicacies. Junior provides enough Portuguese sausages and shoyu chicken for everyone, Howard brings a bottle of homemade kim-chee, and Allen opens a plastic container filled with fresh bamboo shoots that he picked in Tantalus. Everyone has something to contribute and for the time being the men forget about their daily problems, engrossed in the good food and warm conversation.

“Eh, David, you went Tamashiro Market? Man, that’s what I call scraping the bottom of the barrel.” Everyone laughs at Junior’s jeering remark but the cardboard container—filled with raw fish—is empty in no time.

“Da sashimi was on sale,” David replies, “And anyway, you guys all know—nowadays not like before.”

Almost twenty years ago, men like Junior and David could make a few dollars on the side by selling their daily catch to the fish markets around Honolulu. Today, however, they find themselves depending on the fish markets to provide them with their bait. Over the years, they have watched a number of Hawaii’s fishing grounds turn fallow. Yet, in spite of all the drawbacks of shore casting, they continue to fish, season after season.

Freddy seems to put everything in a nutshell when he talks about “finding his God at Bamboo Ridge.” Like the rest of the men, he realizes that the ulua is “very, very scarce.” But through the years he has learned to enjoy the simple things in life, like the sound of the blue ocean and the brown sea birds. “Besides,” he adds, “where else can you find a group of guys who can sit down together, every weekend, and still find something interesting to discuss? I mean, I can’t even do that with my wife ... I just run out of things to say to her.”

Allen nibbles on a piece of chicken and tries to visualize David’s favorite diving spot off Punaluu. The two men—sitting directly across from each other—exchange questions, then David draws a map with his finger on the wooden table. Allen studies the invisible map for a while, then suddenly his face lights up with understanding. He nods his approval, then takes another bite from his chicken.

At the far side of the table, Ricky holds up his left arm to show Tiny a small gash under his elbow. Tiny lets out a roar of laughter and so do the other men who are familiar with the “peeping Tom” antics of construction workers. Ricky stands on the bench and pantomimes the entire event: how he hides his body behind a slab of dry wall then cuts two holes big enough for his binoculars. Feeling brave enough, he decides to move a little closer “to get a better look,” only to trip on a

piece of scrap lumber. "A serious injury," he jokes, "but all in a day's work."

Freddy tells about the conflict he is having with his wife. How she cannot seem to appreciate his constant fishing habit. Allen pats Freddy on the back and stresses the importance of "wife training." Ricky nods his approval, telling everyone that long before he got married he made an agreement with his wife-to-be: if she had any nights off from work he would stay home, other than that, nothing would interfere with his fishing. Ricky remembers getting married during the peak of the ulua season: "I wuz so excited I neva no what to do. So I figga, I get married, but I skip da reception. I went throw all da presents in da back of my jeep, and me and Val went spend our honeymoon right here at da ridge."

Howard picks up a dog-eared section of the Star Bulletin that someone has tossed on the concrete floor. He mutters something about the rivalry between Ariyoshi and Fasi and before you know it—it's election time at Bamboo Ridge. Surprisingly, everyone seems concerned about Hawaii's political future.

"Ariyoshi going lose," says Freddy with authority, "I bet you any much."

"How you know?" asks Danny, "You no like him cuz he Japanese right? Well dat not good enough."

"I no care what nationality him," Freddy replies, "I just know he not going get as many votes from the Japanese community cuz da obligation is over."

Freddy explains the obligation the first generation of Japanese (issei) had for John Burns. "And that's how Ariyoshi got in, but the obligation is over, and Ariyoshi is out!"

The friendly argument continues until Danny throws in his two cents which seems to touch home base with everyone. "I no like vote, because da state always jam up everything at da end. Dey always do dat." Danny mentions the mongoose; how it was brought into the Islands to control the rat population in the cane field. "Dat ting went eat everything but da bugga, and now we get one problem trying to control da mongoose!"

"And what about the Talapia and the Ta'ape?" shouts Howard. "That's another mistake. I tell you, those two fish are eating everything in sight." To his understanding, both fishes were brought in as a source of food. "But they're disturbing the natural cycle, especially that Ta'ape. None of the other fishes have a chance to spawn anymore. I tell you, in five years Hawaii will be in big trouble, all because of that stupid fish."

"And what about over population?" gripes Junior. "It's just not fair to us shore casters." He explains what the Ridge is like during the day. How the water is filled with weekend divers and commercial trappers. "My neighbors, they always ask me why I'm not catching any more ulua and I just shrug my shoulders. But I know why, it's those trappers catching all of the small fish. And when you don't have small fish, none of the bigger fish come around."

"Dat's right, and more worse, dey like fool around," grumbles David. "Da

other day I had one big strike, but when I pick up my pole I no feel nothing fight back, just something real heavy. So I figga I get one big eel and I all happy cuz dat good bait for ulua. But when I pick up my line, I find somebody went tie six beer cans to my hook. And den I see all the divers out there waving to me, like I suppose to wave back and laugh too. I tell you, if I wuz Governor, da first ting I do is make one restriction. Tell all those divers dey gotta stay two hundred yards from the shoreline. I mean, if dey get aqualungs dey get da whole ocean ... why dey gotta bother us?"

All night long, the conversation flows as smoothly as the waves. And in many ways it is an ideal society. No social ladder exists: the youngest man holds equal weight with the eldest, and everyone is entitled to his share of compliments as well as criticism. The men realize that the fishing will never be the same, and the future looks as bleak as ever. But still, they continue to fish and wish at Bamboo Ridge.

*Tony Lee*

# Darrell H.Y. Lum

## BEER CAN HAT

### I

You know, Bobo stay lolo in da head. Mental, you know. But he good fun sell newspaper and he smart fo' go by da cars when get stop light and sell to ladies, old ladies ... and to da mokes who tell stink kine stuff about he belong in Kaneohe Hospital la' dat but in da end dey buy newspaypah and tip too! Most times dey give quartah and tell, "Keep da change," but sometimes dey give more.

Bobo he smart fo' time 'em good, him. He take long time get change fo' quartah at red light, bumbye da light change green and da guy tell, "Ay, ass okay, keep 'em," and step da gas. Bobo smile big and tell, "Tanks, eh." He time 'em real good. Me, everytime I get da real chang-kine guys and ho-man, dey wait 'til da light turn red again fo' get dey ten cents change.

Coming-home-from-work time is da bes' time. I go after school sell papers wit' Bobo—supposed to go straight after—but I stay fool around school little while 'cuz Bobo always stay dere and watch my papers fo' me. Mistah Carvalho, mah district manager, get piss off but he no can do nutting, nobody like work fo' him already. He get smart wit' me I would tell 'em, "Ay, no make la' dat. I know one time you went dump all da inserts inside one big garbage can 'cause was late and nobody came fo' help put 'em inside da home deliveries." Ass what I would tell 'em. Yeah, you know.

One time I went ask Bobo what he do during da daytime when I go school. He tell he go by da supermarket and wheel da cart around. Used to be he wheel 'em around inside da store but da manager tell him no can, so he wheel 'em around outside in da parking lot.

I ask him what he saving up fo' and he tell, "One Motobecane, jes' like motorcycle dat. Tired pump my bike." Bobo's bike stay all junky, old style goose-neck and one-speed and one old newspaper bag hanging on da handlebars. Was

shetty.

Me, I saving up for one skateboard, Cobra kine with heavy duty trucks, and one college edja-kay-shen. Ass what my fahdah tell me.

So me and Bobo, we stay together pretty good. Plenny guys tell, why I stay wit' Bobo. Dey tell he talk crooked, his mouth funny kine and sometimes drool lil' bit. I tell, "Watch out bra—he know kung fu and make like da wrestlah, da Missing Link, 'Whoaaa ... yeah!'" But I went show him how fo' wipe his mout' before he sell newspaper to da custamah. I went buy him hanka-chief too. I wanted da kine wit' initials on top, "B.B." for Bobo. But I couldn't find, so I went buy one with "W" I tink, at sidewalk sale. Make 'em feel good, boy—I feel good too, though. He learn good, wipe his mouth first before he go to da customer. He no talk too good. Everytime guys tell, "Hah? What you talking, stupid." He only can try his best but no come out clear, "Heef-teen sants, pay-pah." But me, I used-to to it already.

Chee, one time one guy went run over his toes. Good ting he strong, boy. My fahdah said good ting he was wearing his rubber shoes, stay all had-it but it save his toes or maybe da guy went go so fast that never have time fo' smash his feet. But Bobo never tell nothing jes' like no sore, but must've been, yeah? One time he go show off, he tell, "I show you one trick," and he go poke one safety pin through his skin, you know da thick part by da thumb? Suckin' weird looking, safety pin through his thumb skin and him smiling up wit' his bolo-head. My fahdah said dat his fahdah no like him already and like throw him out of da house but da social worker say no can. Bobo no tell nothing about his fahdah but my fahdah tell, "Ass why he bolo-head everytime. Da fahdah no like when he bring home little bit money, he tink Bobo go spend 'em or lose 'em on da way home so he give Bobo lickin's and shave his head." Ass why I ask my muddah fo' make him one, da kine, beer can hat. I go ask Bobo what his favorite team and he say, "Mah-keen-lee Tikahs." So I tell my muddah, "Can make 'em yellow and black? ... For McKinley Tigers?" Tough man, da way my muddah can make 'em. She fast wit' da needles for knit. My fahdah laugh and tell, "I help. I help you Mama. I drink four beers right now so you can have da empty cans fo' make hat."

"Here Junior," he tell me, "You like taste beer?"

"Daddy!" Mama come all mad, not real mad, just mad voice, "No give da boy beer, wassamattah you!"

"Mama, I can make 'em like one real present? No stay Christmas or berfday, but can make 'em like one real present please?" Mama look at me and tell, "Okay, go get da wrapping and ribbon box ... No, wait boy, come here first." And she tell me I good boy and how she proud I tink of Bobo. She hug me and I tell her, "Nah," but I feel good. Den I go get da box wit' all da old Christmas and birthday wrappings. My muddah save 'em from everytime get presents and da ribbon too. She lemme pick da paypah. Never have black and gold kine but had one with tigers so I went pick dat one even though was pink. Mama put da hat in one box

and wrap 'em wit' da paper and I went help put my finger when came time fo' tie da knot.

Bobo was so happy when he went open da box. Was little bit big but he put 'em on and went by one car and tell, "Pape?" and da guy tell, "No tanks," and Bobo stay by da car and use da mirror on da side fo' make da hat good on his head, you know, so get one beer can label straight in da front.

"Tanks, eh. Tell you mama tanks eh. You sure fo' me? Tanks eh." Ass all he say over and over. And everytime when get green light, he take 'em off and look at 'em ... make sure no mo' dirt on top. Me, I feel so good I miss couple customers at da red light.

So had me working da sidewalk and Bobo walking between da cars (my fahdah no let me go between da cars), and one shaka van went come: fat tires, mag wheels, teen-ted glass. Was just some mokes playing da tape deck loud and smoking pakalolo. I know 'cause more skinny da pakalolo cigarette and dey share 'em. One time I saw Cummings brother guys smoke dat.

Da mokes tell, "Eh, look da guy. He nuts yeah? Eh, go call 'em. Eh paperboy. Eh paperboy, where you get so nice hat? I like borrow. Ay, fit me good yeah? Ho man, perfeck dis. Eh try look, he stay bolo-head. Whoo, whoo, Kojack, man!"

Bobo he only stay try grab back da hat but da mokes only pass 'em around inside da van. Bobo try say, "C'mon, no fuss around," only ting he coming excited and no can understand what he saying.

"What you said lo-lo? You give us your hat? Okay, chee tanks eh?"

Bobo stay crying already and stay hitting da van, da side part. Pang! Pang! his hand stay slapping da outside and inside only get da guys laughing. I tell, "Bobo nevamind dat, dose guys no class. Bobo, come already!" I like go get him but my feet stay stuck by da curb. I no can go inside da street cause my fahdah said no go but I like help Bobo.

"Eh, paperboy, paperboy. Here, I like one paper," da driver went call, and Bobo went stop hitting da van and go give 'em one newspaypah.

"No give 'em, Bobo," I went tell him. But he went give 'em and den hold out his hand fo' da money and da driver guy only laugh and drop his cigarette butt inside Bobo's hand.

"Fucka, you fucka," Bobo go swear at him.

Da light went change and Bobo he stay standing in da street yelling, "Fucka," until da cars behind start tooting their horn and da van driver only laugh and spit and den burn rubber away.

Oh yeah, da guy on da other side went throw Bobo's hat out da window. Bobo almost went run into da street without looking fo' grab 'em but I went hold him back and den one car went run 'em over and Bobo he turn and look at me jes' like was on purpose dat I went hold him back for see his hat smash. Bobo tell me fucka, too. I get piss off and I call him dat back but little while more I come



sorry I call him dat cause Bobo no can understand dat good.

Bobo no tell me nothing after dat. He go by da wall and scrunch up really small into one ball, you know, and only cry. He cry so hard he begin to hit his head on da wall ... his head bang da wall, but no sore fo' him. But I get mad 'cause jes' like my fault but not my fault, you know, and I know dat but I get mad at him anyway.

"Shaddup already," I tell him, but he no hear nutting. "Shaddup, I tell you! You no mo ear? You lo-lo? Wassamattah wit' you? Mo' bettah send you Linekona School, da school fo' da mental guys!" And more he cry and more I get mad.

Good ting had one car went stop, green light and all, and toot his horn fo' one paypah. I tell, "Go Bobo, you go ... ass Mistah Kim ... he give big tip everytime." But Bobo still cry, so I go.

"Wassamattah wit' Bobo," he ask me. I tell some mokes went swipe his hat and tease him den dey went throw 'em away and da car run over 'em and den he cry and hit his head. He no can stop.

"Why no pick 'em up from da street?" Mistah Kim go tell me. "Ass da one in front da car?" I never tink of dat so I go get 'em. Look kinda had-it but still can wear.

"Eh, what about my paper?" Mistah Kim tell me.

"Oh, sorry eh."

"Here, you share dis wit' Bobo, go buy something nice." And he gimme one dollah tip.

I went by Bobo and try give him da dollar but he only push my hand away and cry and hit his head mo' hard. So I went put da one dollah undaneath da rock dat stay holding down his paypahs. I went put da hat by his paypahs too. I went go back by da street and little while more, Bobo go real quick by his paypahs and grab da hat and put da one dollah inside his pocket and den go back by da wall. He nevah hit his head no more but he still went cry little bit. I knew bumbye would be pau.

So me and Bobo stay fren's again. He still wear his hat, smash and all and sometimes I go sell in da street wit' him (I no listen to my fahdah *all* da time). Good fun. We only laugh when da cars come close. Sometimes when he tink I not looking, he take da hat off and try fo' make da smash part mo' smooth. You know, he try bend da iron part back so no mo' wrinkles on top. Sometimes I tink though, what going happen to Bobo. He been selling paypahs long time ... before me and still going sell bumbye even after I quit (when I get my skateboard and my college edja-kay-shen). I hope Bobo be all right. He gotta have somebody take care him. Maybe mama make him one 'nudda beer can hat ... I go ask her.

## II

One time after dat, one small kid went come by us when we was selling pay-pahs. He went put one box down by our newspaper pile, right next, and den he went pull out sweetbreads. Da stupid kid try carry four sweetbreads all one time. One under one arm, one under da uddah arm and one inside each hand. Da stuffs stay slipping down so he go smash 'em wit' his elbows. Cheez, I wouldn't buy da smash-up kine bread, man, besides must get all his B.O. on top. He go come by us and tell, "You like buy sweetbread?"

Bobo's eyes came big. He like sweetbread, you know. He jes' look. I stay tinkin he better wipe his mouth, look like he stay drooling over da sweetbreads. Mo' worse, da small kid tink Bobo like buy.

I ask da kid, "What you selling fo'?"

"Fo' school, fo' raise money fo' go feel' trips and fo' see feelums."

"Fo' what?"

"Fo' go feel' treeps, you know, escursions. And fo' see feelums, movies."

I went tell him, "I gotta sell carnival scripts fo' my school too. You like buy?" I nevah sell nutting yet. Everybody in my class went sell ten dollahs worth at least. Even da smash-face, Shirley, went sell almost two hundred dollahs worth. She tink she hot. I tink her fahdah went sell 'em for her. But I nevah sell nutting so far. So I went tell da kid, "I buy one sweetbread if you buy my carnival scripts."

"I like see your scripts," da kid went tell me.

I went show him my pack.

"How much all dis?"

"Ten dollahs."

"You crazy," da kid tell me, "sweetbread only dollah half!"

Bobo came for look at the scripts too. He tell, "I know what dat. Dat carnival scripts, yeah? Good yeah, carnival. Get anykine, yeah? Good, yeah?"

"Yeah. We go carnival, Bobo. You go ask your fahdah fo' let you have some money fo' buy scripts from me and I go ask my fahdah too. Den Saturday after pau newspaper, we go see if my fahdah take us." I went make 'em sound real good so da small kid would like go too and buy scripts from me. Me and Bobo was jes' having good fun talking about carnival stuff. Da kid was jes' looking at us, his head going back and forth, wishing he could go wit' us. Make him jealous, boy. But he only went by the cars fo' try sell his smash sweetbreads. I no tink anybody went buy.

Bobo, he only stay talk about going carnival. He really thought he was going go already. I was jes' trying fo' get da small kid fo' buy some script but I no mind going carnival too. So I was real nice to my fahdah and tole him I would help him wash and polish da car if he buy da scripts from me and take me carnival. I tole him dat Bobo was going ask his fahdah if he can go carnival too. Daddy just rough up my hair and tell, "Shoot. Wash and polish, eh?"

Saturday, we went pick up Bobo, he was waiting outside his house. He said he no like go carnival, dat he raddah go sell newspaypah at da baseball game. "My fahdah gimme da bus-fare. See, twenty five cents fo' go, twenty five fo' come back." Bobo said dat and den he just stand by da car scraping da dirt with his rubber shoes. My fahdah look at Bobo, den at da apartment building where his house stay. He look long time den he breathe long and sad and tell, "C'mon Bobo. You come carnival wit' us. You help Junior wash and polish my car bum-bye and I treat you to carnival."

Bobo came all happy. He smile up. When Bobo smile he make everybody like smile 'cause he stay so happy.

Had anykine, man, at da carnival: plenny people, plenny rides, plenny food booths. My fahdah took us cruising all around da carnival first. He tole us which ones we could ride (some was too dangerous he said, so no can). And he tole us which games was gyp (too hard fo' win, he said). And den he said he wait for us at da Beer Garden. No stay one real garden, just get folding chairs and one man stay selling beer. He said dat me and Bobo go half half da scripts.

Me and Bobo went cruise da carnival again fo' decide what one we was going play and fo' see which ones had da good prizes. Bobo everytime wanted to go back watch da guys chrowing baseball, but dat was da one my fahdah said was too hard fo' win. Had some guys chrowing, trying for win one big doll. Dey was making big noise and never let anybody else play 'cause everytime dey lose, dey pay again for play somemore. Da guys could chrow real hard but fo' win you gotta knock down six heavy iron stuffs, dey call 'em milkbottles. Dey jes' like bowling pins dat stay stack on top each other. Get three on da bottom, den two on top and den one on top. Dey must be real heavy 'cause even if you crack 'em square, dey no all fall down sometimes. Da guy dat was chrowing was getting little bit piss off 'cause he couldn't get 'em all. After he chrow his three balls, he tell, "Sucka, gimme tree more, I get 'em this time." I stay getting tired watch da guy but Bobo no like go yet. So I had to stay and watch da guy somemore wit' him. Anykine stuff I went watch ... how he hold da ball, how he aim, how he chrow da ball. He had one tattoo on da back of his uddah hand. I seen dat before someplace, three daggers tattoo. Pretty soon I went remember dat dat was da mokes dat went steal Bobo's hat. I went pull Bobo and tell, "We go Bobo, dry ovah here already. We go eat something."

"Play dis. Play dis," Bobo tell me.

"Nah, Bobo. Junk dis, we go."

One nudda guy was trying fo' chrow now but da guy wit' da tattoo was razz-ing him up. "You plug, you chrow like one panty. You call dat good? C'mon. You no can chrow bettah den me. Give up. Me next, me next." And he went try give da worker somemore scripts for play again, but Bobo went already give da worker scripts for play next so da worker told da moke dat he had to wait until Bobo was pau.

Bobo no can chrow hard. I know 'cause sometimes we play chrow-chrow with tennis ball but he jes' like me, not so hot. Only can chrow soft. So Bobo went try chrow but he only could knock down one bottle with his three balls. After Bobo went chrow da three balls, da moke guy went try pay again but da worker told him, "Dis guy went pay fo' three dollahs worth." I never know dat and I went tell, "Bobo, why you waste your money. We go already." But Bobo hard head. He only like stay and chrow da balls. Da moke guy get more piss off 'cause Bobo take his time and he only chrow soft.

"Yeah, why you waste your money. Pau already," he told Bobo. I no tink da moke went recognize Bobo. Could tell he was getting piss off though 'cause he had to wait and watch Bobo chrow.

Me, I went give up. I no can change Bobo's mind so I jes' watch him chrow. Jes' like he no aim. He jes' chrow as hard as he can, but still yet soft. Da most he ever hit down was tree, I think. And he take long time watch da worker guy stack up da bottles. I thought he was jes' slow but little while more, I catch on. Bobo sly, da bugga. He stay watching for when da worker line up da bottom row of bottles little bit crooked so dat get more space between da bottles on one side. Den he aim for da space 'cause da bottle fall down more easy on dat side. Bobo he pretty smart. Couple times when Bobo went crack da right space, everything except one went fall down. But Bobo went miss with da other two balls and couldn't hit da last one down. I was figuring dat my fahdah was right, dis game was gyp ... no can win.

Bobo had his last chance for chrow and he went crack da space right-on again. Only had one bottle left and he had two more chances. He was sweating real plenny and he nevah care about nothing but da last bottle. He went warm up real plenny and make plenny form and chrow real hard but da bugga went crooked and never even come close. He only had one left and da moke went tell him, "You like me chrow 'em for you. I can crack 'em you know." Bobo jes' went look at da moke and I thought he almost was going give 'em his last ball. Almost I went tell, "Bobo no give 'em, das da guy!" But funny, I never say nutting. Bobo finally went say, "Nah," and wipe his mouth with da back of his hand and chrow real fast without warming up. I seen da ball hit da table right in front of the bottle and bounce off and knock da last bottle down. He went win. Bobo went win! "Bobo you went win!" I went yell. And Bobo was jes' smiling and clapping his hands.

Even before da worker went ask him, Bobo went point to the biggest stuffed tiger hanging from da string.

"I like dat one," Bobo went tell real slow and real clear. Was gold wit' black stripes and was almost as big as me. Was one happy tigah, had big smile.

Bobo went hug da tiger and went show 'em off to me and he let me hold 'em little while. Bobo wanted to show my fahdah right away so we went to da beer garden place and my fahdah went listen to me tell da story about how Bobo went

win da tiger. Bobo never even like leave da tiger wit' my fahdah for hold so he went carry 'em all around wit' him, even on da rides. And everybody went look at him. I bet dey was wondering how he went win 'em.

Going home, Bobo was talking anykine. Real fast. I couldn't even understand da stuff he was talking about. Only when we came by his house, he went stop. My fahdah came quiet too and went ask him, "You like me talk to your fahdah and explain dat I took you carnival?" Bobo only went shake his head. He went get out of da car and tell, "Tanks," to my fahdah and den he went push da tiger back inside da car window.

"Fo' you mama. I win 'em fo' you mama. You give to her?"

"You sure, Bobo?" I went tell him. But he jes' keep telling, "Fo' you mama."

My fahdah went start da car and I went say "tanks" to Bobo. Bobo was waving to us from da sidewalk, smiling up. We was smiling up too.

*Darrell H.Y. Lum*

## PRIMO DOESN'T TAKE BACK BOTTLES ANYMORE

"Four cases, that's one dollar and seventy-six cents, Rosa." Harry of Receiving Bottle Empties wrote up the ticket for Rosa and made change from the register. Rosa K. dropped his load of empty Primo bottles on the counter and figured out his profit. If he walked home he could save a quarter busfare. Rosa used to list his occupation as "construction laborer" whenever he got picked up by some rookie cop for being a "suspicious person" rummaging through garbage cans. But now that he only collected empties to turn in at the brewery, he figured himself to be a "collector" It was forty cents a case, even more for the bigger bottles.

"Tanks eh, I see you," Rosa said and shuffled out of the brewery, the money carefully folded into his handkerchief and jammed into his front pocket. He hoped that Harry wouldn't check the last case until he left. It was short three bottles. The three unbroken ones he should have gotten if that old lady hadn't caught him.

Harry checked the cases and smiled as he filled the empty slots in Rosa's last case with some extra bottles he always saved for Rosa. He remembered the first time Rosa had come in all shabby and ragged, a pair of tattered jeans buttoned underneath his pot belly and a silken aloha shirt with hula girls and Diamond Head and "Honolulu-Paradise" written all over it.

"Sorry man, read the sign, can't refund any amount less than three dollars. Come back when you have seven cases," Harry had said.

"Look Bruddah, I no can carry all dis back home, I nevah know about the rules. C'mon give a guy a break. As means I no mo' busfare home."

"Okay, look I'll cash in your three cases now and add 'em to the next guy's load. But just this once. My boss finds out and I'm in trouble, you understand?"

Rosa had smiled and had given him a little thumb and pinkie wave. "Thanks eh," he had said. Since then Rosa had been coming in every week with his pickings in his arms, catching the bus to the brewery and walking home to save the quarter.

Sometimes he brought something for Harry, some seaweed, a small bass, a little opihi in a smelly shopping bag along with his empties.

*We used to have kick haole ass day in school One time this one kid, little ass buggah with one big mouth, his fahdah was one manager of someplace or something, he went come inside the bathroom, cocky and smart mouth, went push Willy so I went kick the shit out of him. Nothing on the face so no can see the marks, just in the balls. The little shit started cry. He say, "I going tell my father*

*... I going tell my father ...” So I tole him, “Look boo, you tell your fahdah and you going get somemore.” Yeah, we used to think we was big stuff. Go smoke in front the teacher for see what she do. She no can do nothing One time she call my muddah though, and my fahdah beat me up bad. He tell I gotta get one education. I nevah go school for one week. The social worker had to take me hospital. Willy, he just one mahu. The kids used to tease me that my bruddah one tilly, but I take care of them. Willy, he wanna be one mahu, he be one mahu, as okay. One time Willy and his frens go make one mahu day in school, come all dress up. Whooo, make the girls jealous.*

Rosa peered through his dark glasses out at the large metal garbage bin of the apartment building. He had to squint because the flimsy lenses did little to cut the glare. He had found them outside the theatre about two months ago when there was a 3-D movie. It was a good pair with plastic frames and looked like regular sunglasses except for the small print at the top of the frame which said, “For 3-D Panavision only. Do not use as sunglasses.” The garbage bins looked a funny shade of white, the glasses cancelling the green paint of the metal. Large bins rarely held empties because only places like business offices and schools used them. But this was an apartment building and it was sure to have at least a case or two of empties. If someone asked him he could always say that he lost something in the bin. Rosa figured that apartment building garbage was surely anybody’s. No one could tell whose garbage was whose. His search yielded a case of Miller, two six-packs of Schlitz, and only one six-pack of Primo. “Fucking haoles only drink shit,” he muttered and stuffed the Primos into his shopping bag.

*I used to think all the haoles look at me funny so I kick their asses and they still look at me funny. I wasn’t that bad though. When I make “search take” on one guy, I everytime give ‘em back busfare. Bumbye they gotta call their fahdah for come pick them up after school.*

The entry on the police record said, “Assault and Battery, Petty Theft, Item—Bottles, empty, six dozen; Bottles, unopened, approximately one dozen; Location—Jay’s Bar and Grill, suspect apprehended boarding Municipal bus (Aala Park) 10:55 P.M., owner James Nakayama reported prowler in back of premises, scuffle ensued; Damage—Two dozen empty bottles, broken, one dozen unopened Primo brand beer, approximate cost \$3.50; Previous Record—Rosario Kamahale, A & B, Central Intermediate School, enrolled student, grade 9, 17 years old, charged as adult on request of school authorities and referred to Department of Social Services; Present Occupation—Unemployed laborer.” The sergeant at the desk had said that he was an unemployed laborer when Rosa was brought in and booked. The lady at the welfare office had also told him that after he got kicked out of the ninth grade of his third and final school. He was just a kid

then, a smart ass kid who beat up on anybody who didn't pay protection money. He was the bull of the school and ruler of the second floor lavatory. Some haole kid had told his father and the judge had sent him away to the Boy's Home for three months. When he got out he joined the union and was a laborer. He almost became a carpenter's apprentice when he and half the crew got laid off. That was when he started collecting bottles. For awhile the money from empties was all he had to live on until the welfare came.

*After I come out of the Home, the judge tell me I join the army or go work, 'cause I too old for go back ninth grade. The judge he say I can go night school with older people so I no beat up people no more and then he assign me one social worker, one hook lady, Miss Pate, for check up on me. I tell Miss Pate that I like live with Willy, that I gotta take care Willy. She say I no can, that mahus, that home-saxtuals like live with their own kind. I tell her, "... but that my bruddah." She tell I gotta get one healthy family relationship and attitud. So Miss Pate she find me one place with one Portagee family and man, they thought I was one servant. Rosa do this, Rosa do that or we going tell the social worker for cut your check down. So one time I get fed up and I say, "Shove it," and I split.*

The sticky smell of stale beer at the brewery always made Rosa thirst for a "tall, cool one." A dollar seventy-six was enough for a six-pack and still leave extra for busfare. Almazon, the Filipino bookie expected his ten bucks today. Almazon sold everything from lucky number chances to a "social worker home," a place where guys like Rosa could claim legal residence in a respectable home for the social worker's visits. Ten bucks a month to Almazon kept the family quiet.

*The one time that I was scared for beef one haole after school was with this six-foot guy from California. He was in the smart class. I went tell one of my guys for let him know I wanted for see him, to tell him who was the big shit around Central He was one show off too, that guy. He had his driver's permit and drove one car to school everyday. The day I was supposed to beef 'em I went skip class and went send Willy for steal some booze for me. Willy come back with Mama's bourbon inside one empty jelly bottle. Willy say the guys was talking that the haole's fahdah was a Marine. I tell, "So what," and drink the liquor down real fast and started for punch the wall of the lav for practice. The wall was hollow cement tiles and the pipes inside 'em went make one "tonk" everytime I punch the wall I thought of all the haoles in the whole world and I went punch the wall somemore. Willy, he come scared and say something about Mama and I say to him, "Fucking mahu!" and Willy come real quiet. Ass the first time I call Willy that and he come real quiet. That make me more piss off and I punch the wall somemore until my hand it start for bleed and I no can feel no sore but I still punch the wall and then the teacher come and tell me for stop and I no can stop*



*and my hand it keep making one fist and keep going and then I cry and Willy, he cry too, but Willy cry easy. I no cry, I no supposed to cry, but I cry. And then the teacher he take me to the dispensary and I try punch the nurse and get blood on top her nurse dress ... They say that the haole was looking for me after school for beef me and I wasn't there ...*

Rosa got off the bus with a stinking paper sack and one case of empties under his arm. He had spent most of the week picking opihi from the rocks at low tide and only had had enough time to collect one case of empties. But he had a mayonnaise jar of opihi to give to Harry.

Workmen were painting over the old red brick of the brewery when Rosa shuffled up with his load. The "Receiving Bottle Empties" sign was painted over and the old smells were replaced by those of fresh paint and turpentine. Harry had acted brusquely last week and had mumbled something about bums who trade in bottles below the minimum refund amount and get employees in trouble and new management and aluminum cans but Rosa had just smiled and walked out quickly because his cases were short again.

One of the painters noticed his empties and said, "Eh man, you can't bring back empties anymore. The new man doesn't want them. Ought to just throw them away."

Rosa felt an old rage and the tight clenching of his fists, the punching feeling. He turned to the painter and said, "Why you paint over the sign, why you no want my bottles, why you do that, I bring something for Harry today, and you do that, where Harry my fren', Harry my fren' he no do that..."

The painter shook his head and said, "Not me fella, why don't you talk to the boss." He turned and left. Rosa walked around in little circles, clenching and unclenching his fists, finally stopping before the blanked-out sign. A brush and paint can sat on the ground before him. Rosa grabbed the brush and in several quick motions wrote "F-O-C-K" on the sign. The paint was the same color as the sign but the work was visible as the sun glistened off the dripping letters. Rosa crossed the street and sat at the bus stop watching his word dry in the afternoon heat. The painter never came back and the word disappeared as the sun dried the glistenings and the streaks melted away.

*Darrell H.Y. Lum*

## PAINT

Sometimes I feel mean. I like go bust something. Some guys like bust car antennas but I only like go spray paint. I donno, I feel mean and I feel good at da same time, you know. It bad, but still yet I like spray paint. I donno why. Make me feel mean when I stay painting but feel like I stay doing someting. Someting big you know, so dat I stay big, too. I no paint swear words la dat. I paint my name and make um fancy wit curlicues undahneat. Sometimes I paint my babe's name but I no like do dat too much, bumbye everybody know, you know. Sometimes I paint one surf pickcha. One real tubular wave with one guy jes making it ... cranking through, you know.

When you paint on one new wall, j'like you stay da first one in da world fo spray paint. Even if you know get someting undahneat dat you went paint before, when da wall stay new, I mean, when dey jes paint up da wall fo cover da old spray paint, j'like, stay da first time you painting. You can feel da spray paint, cool on your hand. You can smell da spray, sting your nose but sweet, j'like. I no sniff, you stupid if you sniff, bumbye you come all stoned and you no can spray good. But j'like it make you feel big. Make you feel good dat your name stay ovah dere big. Like you stay *somebody*.

Coco. Ass my name. "Coco '84" is what I write. I no write um plain, I make um nice, you know. Fat lettahs. Outline um. Wit sparkles. Da kine dat you can make wit white or silvah paint, like one cross or one star. From far, j'like your name stay shiny. I stay undah da freeway aftah school fo watch my wall. I watch um from across da street by da school parking lot. Everybody who pass look at my wall everyday. I try put someting new everytime so get someting new fo everybody to see. Only little bit at a time, like somemore lines on da wave or one different color outline on my name, stuff la dat. Jes about everybody look at my wall, even if dey pass um everyday, dey look. Sometimes when get some other guys by me aflah school I no can paint new stuff but da people dat pass still yet try look fo figgah out what stay new.

Aftah school I gotta wait fo my muddah pau work pick me up. Sometimes I stay by da guys when dey no mo baseball practice la dat but most times I stay by myself. Everyday gotta plan how you going paint. When you paint, you gotta plan um good. You gotta be fast. You gotta know what you going do. And you cannot get nabbed. How many times I almost got nabbed, man.

One time somebody went put "Rockerz Rule" on my wall. Was anykine way. Wasn't nice. Had some guys hanging around da wall and I went ask dem, "You went make dat?"

"So what if we did?" one of da guys went tell me. I told dem, "Eh I know da guy Coco, and he going bust your head if he find out you went spray on his wall.

He big you know, Coco.”

Dey went look around first fo see if I had backers. Since nevah have nobody, dey went ack like dey was tough. But finally dey went go away. Deh nevah spray nutting else except fo dis one punk kid went spray and walk. Had one crooked black line all da way across my wall. I would’ve beefed um but I nevah like. I would’ve given um lickins. I could’ve taken um.

Nobody know I spray paint. Nobody even know I stay Coco. If they knew, they would say, “Naht, dass not you. I heard Coco stay one big guy. You too runt fo be Coco.” Funny yeah, but dass me. Ass me, Coco. One time I going paint one big mural and everybody going know ass me. Would be good if you no need paint fast and hide when somebody come. Could make um nice and people would even buy da paint for me. I would make da whole wall wit spray. I would paint faces, my face ovah and ovah and I would make um look mean and tough. And I would look *bad* and I would be feeling good. I would make sparkles and you could see dem shining in my eyes. I would use silvah and some black paint. People would tink, “Who did dat nice one.” Dey wouldn’t paint um ovah. Dey would buy me paint. Dey would gimme money for paint da walls all ovah da place. Wouldn’t need to do work in school. Da teacha would gimme one spray can, not brush and paypah, la dat. Junk, when you paint in school. Gotta do certain tings, certain way. No can be big. No mo feeling. Ass why spray paint mo bettah. Make you feel mean. And bad. And good.

One time had one lady came by da wall. She wasn’t one teacha or nutting cause she had long hair and had jeans and tee-shirt la dat. I had to hide my spray can when I seen her coming. I nevah like her bust me. But you know what, she had her own spray can and went look right at me den she went spray on my wall:

### ***REVOLUTION FOR THE 80’S MAY DAY.***

Den she went little mo down and went spray out my “Coco ’84” and went put, “WORLD WITHOUT IMPERIALISM, NO IMPERIALIST WARS,” right ovah my surf pickcha.

When she was pau she went look at me and say, “You know what dat means?”

“No,” I told her.

“Dat means we gotta tell people to fight da government. Gotta get da people together and tell da governments not to have wars. Gotta give da poor people money and food and power la dat.”

“Oh,” I said, “But lady, why you went spray um ovah da wall? You nevah have to spray um ovah Coco’s stuff. You could’ve put um on da top or on da side or write smaller. Look how you went jam up my pickcha, I mean Coco’s pickcha.”

“Sorry,” she went tell kinda sassy.

“Why you gotta paint da kine stuff?”

“Cause I like. So what, kid.” She was coming little bit piss off.

So aftah she went go away, I went try fix my wall up. But she went use red. Hard to cover, red. She nevah have to put um right ovah my writing. I wanted dem fo come paint da whole wall awready, erase um so dat could start ovah. I jes went get my can spray and I went stand in front da Lady’s words. I was feeling mean. Not good kine, jes mean. I went write, “LADY—HATE YOU,” not nice with fat lettahs or sparkles but jes anykine way. I nevah care. Was ugly, jes like her’s one.

When my muddah came pick me up, I seen her reading da wall. “Who went do dat?” she went ask me. I told her one lady with long hair and tee-shirt. I went ask her who dat kine lady was and she went say, “Dat Commanists dat. Not Americans. Hippies,” she told me. “Dey good fo nuttings.” I was looking out da window when we went drive away. Couldn’t even see “Coco” anymore.

I couldn’t tink about anyting except what I was going paint ovah da hippie lady’s words. First I thought I could paint somemore surf pictures but I went check my colors and I figgahed would be too hard fo cover da words. Da lady, she went write big. I thought I could do “Coco ’84” mo big but still couldn’t cover da lady’s words. Would use up all my paint.

Aftah school da next day, I went to my wall. Could see da lady’s words from far away. I jes went look at her spray paint words. Ass all was, jes words. Ugly words dat nobody like read. Not like mines, not nice wit sparkles la dat or curlicules or one pickcha of one surfah in da tube. Jes words ... anykine words. Everybody going say, “Whoo da ugly. Who did dat?” What if dey tink was me? Betchu da painter guys going come paint da wall fast. J’like the time somebody else went write “Sakai Sucks” and everybody knew dey was talking about Mr. Sakai, da principal. Dey came right away fo paint da wall dat time.

Nevah feel good anymore fo look at my wall. Wasn’t mine anymore. Wasn’t Coco’s. Wasn’t even da hippie lady’s cause she no care. Was nobody’s.

And den da next day had posters pasted up on da wall. Was somemore stuff about May Day and had one pickcha of one guy holding up his fist. Dey nevah only put one, but dey went line um up. Had maybe six or seven or eight all line up. Cover everyting: my surf pickcha, my name, even my “hate you” words. And dey went paste um on good. Dey went use someting dat stick real good to da cement and den dey even put paste on da top so dat da ting was stuck extra good. No can peel um off. Hardly can scrape um even. Only little bit. I seen da hippie lady aftah school looking at da posters.

“You went do dat?”

“What you tink?” she went tell me.

“I donno. You went do um, eh?”

“So.”

“You shouldn’t have done dat. Coco going come piss off, you know. Dis his wall. Maybe he might even call da cops or someting.”

“Who’s dat, Coco? Dat you? Betchu da guy no stay. If he so big, how come he no come talk to me himself? From now on dis is everybody’s wall. Not only Coco can paint on dis wall. Anybody can paint. Me. You. Anybody.”

She jes went keep on talking, “Eh, you no need be scared of Coco. He ain’t so tough. What he going do to you?”

“Yeah but, not supposed to be writing on da walls ...”

“Who said? Da government? Coco? Coco went paint first. He went li-bah-rate dis wall first time. But now he no can hog um. Dis wall is fo everybody I tell you. Uddahwise he stay making up anykine rules. J’like one nudda government.”

“Hah?”

“Howcome you gotta watch dis wall for Coco? You jes being Coco’s stooge you know. You shouldn’t have to be scared of Coco. Dat’s jes like da people who scared of da government. I mean you no need be oh-press by somebody else ...”

Couldn’t tell what she was saying cause one truck was going on da freeway and from far could hear one police siren. Da lady went stop talking and we went look up at da freeway listen to da siren coming closer. Went pass.

I jes told her, “No paint on top Coco’s wall, eh. Or else you going be in trouble. Coco, he big, you know. He *somebody* you know.” She nevah say nutting. She jes went walk away but I was still yet telling her anykine stuff, “You no can jes cover up my wall la dat. Was *my* surfah. Was *my* wave. Was *my* name! I hate you hippie lady!”

I went get my can spray and I jes started for paint one face right ovah her words. I donno who’s face. Jes one face. Was black and red. Had plenny lines in da face. Was one mean and sad face. I jes went keep on adding lines to da face and came mo black and mo black until was almost like one popolo but wasn’t. Jes was one face wit plenny lines on um. Da paint went run out when I was fixing up da cheek. Went drip. I couldn’t finish um. I went cross da street and watch my face.

Had some guys in one truck, regular fix-da-road guys, went come and look at da posters. Dey took out anykine scrapers and some real strong kine thinner fo take da posters off.

“Awright,” I went tell dem.

“Damn kids do anykine yeah,” one guy went tell me.

“Naht, wasn’t kids. Was da hippie lady.” I went tell um.

“You know who was?”

“Yeah, da hippie lady who come around here sometimes.”

“You not da one, eh?” da man went ask me.

“Nah, but da guy Coco spray.”

“Coco spray dis kine words?” da man was pointing to da word “hate” between da posters. Could only see “lady” and “hate” left.

“Nah he make nice kine stuff. He no paint ugly stuff.”

Dey went clean off all da posters and started to paint da wall.

“What fo you paint da wall awready. Da hippie lady only going paint um again? What fo?”

“At least going look nice fo little while,” da boss guy told me.

“Eh, try look dis face,” one of da guys went point to my pickcha wit his roller. “Not bad yeah? Look almost like somebody crying wit dis red drip ovah here. You know who went do this one? Pretty good artist. Too bad gotta cover um up.”

I jes went turn around. I started for cry. I donno how come ...

*Darrell H.Y Lum*

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# Susan Nunes

## THE CONFESSION

“A sacrament is an outward sign, instituted by  
Christ to give grace.”

—The Baltimore Catechism

The call came long and slow as if from a great distance. Amy put down the pocket knife, scooped up the largest pieces of wood and stuffed them into the back pocket of her jeans. She had been shaping a panax branch into a sword. After testing the tip with her thumb, she folded the knife and brushed all traces of wood from the concrete surface of the survey tower. A faint breeze raised gooseflesh on her arms and left faint indentations in the California grass. She hated to leave. The tower sat like a small fortress on the crest of the hill, and from this vantage point she had an unbroken view of her surroundings: the town strung out around the wide curve of the bay, then the breakwater and the sea, behind her the two great peaks. There was another reason the place held such an attraction. The tower was forbidden. “You are never to go there,” she had been warned. Amy’s mother often spoke in absolutes, yet these dictums lacked the restrictive nature of other commands and frequently enticed rather than hindered. To disobey mother was venial, To disobey the church was mortal. The problem was keeping the two separate, to know one from the other. Venial and mortal. She had been struggling with such distinctions all afternoon.

The call came again, sharper, insistent. She turned toward it. “Coming,” she answered to herself. Directly below were the gabled roofs of the houses on her street. Beyond were cane field, scrub forest, and because there was no rain, the blue volcanic hills on the horizon.

She slapped the back pocket that held the knife and, sword in one hand, climbed down the seven pipe rungs and dropped lightly to the ground. Reluctantly, she hid the sword at the base of the tower, then entered the shoulder-high

grass. Long blades whipped her arms and face. A Christmas berry tree separated wilderness and garden, its branches reaching over a metal fence into a well-tended back yard. She scaled this last obstacle quickly, and once on the other side felt safe. Now all she had to do was skirt the terraced bank, walk the lava wall along the side of the property, and cross the street. When she heard the call again she was turning into her driveway.

She stopped by her father's DeSoto to catch her breath. Bernice, the Portuguese woman who helped around the house, was waiting for her. "I'm home," Amy said.

"Your mother was worried." Bernice put an ample arm around Amy's shoulders. "Where'd you go? You're supposed to be home at five o'clock." When Amy didn't answer, she asked, "What's the matter?"

"Nothing, Bernie. Don't worry."

A somewhat troubled looking Bernice opened the back door, and Amy followed her into the house. A pressure hinge kept the door from slamming, and Amy heard it hiss before she was enveloped in the heat of the kitchen, the smell of food. Her mother was taking a large casserole out of the oven. She put it on top of the stove.

"Where were you?" she asked.

"I was up at Teddy's," Amy said, tugging at her sleeve. "In the eggroom. I came as soon as I heard." She turned to go.

"Amy?"

"Yes." She faced her mother, who regarded her with a raised eyebrow.

"Bernice called you three times."

"I know," said Amy, aware that her lie was surfacing. One more question and it would be out. But she was reprieved.

"Mrs. Freitas," said Bernice, "I have to go. My brother's here. He got the truck today."

"I'm sorry, Bernice. I completely forgot. Go ahead. I'll talk to you in the morning."

"You sure you don't need anything?"

"No. No, everything's fine." She turned to Amy. "Go get cleaned up. You're a mess."

Her father was engrossed in the paper. Sara, Amy's youngest sister, played at his feet. Maybe, thought Amy, she should begin with the sword. Yes, he would like the part about the sword. Then she could tell him why she made it. And he would understand. After all, he too was a soldier of Christ. But before she could begin, her mother called for help from the kitchen. From behind his newspaper, he said, "Go help your mother, OK?"

"I have to clean up," she protested, showing her hands.

"Well, then call Lizbet." He lowered the paper, smiled, then added, "For

Daddy?”

Amy went quietly into her parents' bedroom. The large windows faced east toward the bay. She closed the blinds and turned on the light. A double bed covered in green was flanked by identical maple nightstands and two old pewter lamps her mother treasured. Three Japanese woodcuts were centered above the headboard. Amy's favorite showed a persimmon tree, the fruit bright orange against the black branches. Near the closet was her mother's uncluttered vanity. The alabaster jars were from Italy—Uncle Tadashi had brought them back after the war—and the tortoise-shell hand mirrors were a gift from Japan.

On the other side of the room was her father's dresser. A familiar assortment of his things lay on the bureau top—blue tin of Old Granger tobacco, pipestand, calabash for loose change, ashtray heaped with matches and discarded pipe cleaners. There was a photograph of her parents on their wedding day, and next to it a small gold-framed picture of Jesus holding open his robe to expose his heart. Amy read the words: “I will bless every place where a picture of my heart shall be exposed and honored.” Amy opened the top drawer and laid the knife under a pile of folded handkerchiefs. Then, remembering her father's request, she went down the hall to her sister's room.

“Daddy says help Mother.”

Lizbet put down her book. “I bet you went to the tower,” she said. “The fence is bent. But I won't tell if you take me. Please Amy?”

Amy ignored her and stormed into the bathroom, slamming the door behind her. The tower was not her sister's place.

The face in the mirror above the sink was neither Asian nor Caucasian. There was little color difference between hair and skin; both were light brown. Her hair, cut severely, fit like a little helmet. The face was long, angular, with high cheek bones, amber eyes, and full lips. Dark brows met faintly over her nose in an almost perpetual frown. It was a face capable of, but not given to, animation. Amy did not like it. “Tiga-eye, tiga-eye,” she said to her reflection. Once, for a whole month, she had slept with a clothespin clipped to the end of her nose because her mother said it looked like Grandma Freitas'.

Her ministrations done, Amy threw the towel carelessly over the rack. Hesitating, she studied the towel for a moment as if contemplating an opponent. Then, whipping it off and holding it lengthwise, the end under her chin, she folded it and draped it carefully back over the rack.

“Bless us O Lord and these thy gifts which we are about to receive from thy bounty through Christ our Lord and Amen.” Amy studied her father over the centerpiece as he helped Sara finish the blessing. “In the name of the Father, Honey, in the name of the Father, yes, and of the Son, no the left first, and of the Holy Ghost. Good girl, Amen.”

Meals were an occasion. Amy put her left hand on her lap and picked up her fork with her right. She loved the circle of faces over the white tablecloth,

the heavy feel of silver, the ritual of serving. Yet the attention to behavior both irritated and confused her. Surely meals in other homes weren't so formal. At Bernie's they just grabbed and ate, and whoever grabbed more got more. Everybody laughed and talked with their mouths full. At Grandma Kinoshita's house, they ate with chawan and hashi. Uncle Tadashi slouched on his elbows and made noises into his ricebowl, but no one said anything about manners.

She wiped her mouth with her napkin and thought about how to tell him. Maybe she should begin with the hard part first.

"Daddy?" she asked, "can only Catholics go to heaven?"

"What?" he said, a forkful of food suspended between mouth and plate.

She repeated the question.

"Well," he began, putting down his fork. He looked quickly at his wife. "Not necessarily"

"I told Harold Deikman he couldn't go to heaven."

"You did what?" Amy now had his attention.

"Because he's a Protestant, and Father Goodman said Protestants can't go to heaven."

"When did you say that to Harold?" her mother asked. Amy didn't want her mother to take the lead, but there was no way to avoid answering.

"Today."

"At school?"

Amy nodded. The truth was getting out of hand. She looked over at her mother's fingers, which were tapping gently on the edge of the table. Her mother's hands were fine-fingered but large enough to span ten keys on the piano. Amy tried desperately to remember the lesson on lies.

"Amy." Her mother again. "Is there something you're not telling us?"

Amy looked up at her father from under her brows. "I said it in Mrs. Dever's class. She was asking about what church everyone went to, and Harold bragged about his church, about the missionaries starting it and everything. So I told him."

"Right in class? What did Mrs. Dever say? Was she angry?"

Amy took a deep breath, the memory of the humiliation still fresh. "Yes. She said we have freedom of religion in this country. She made a face like this—"

Lizbet giggled, and Amy turned on her. "Shut *up*!"

"Don't speak that way to your sister."

"I'm sorry."

"Well, then what happened?"

"She made a horrible face at me"—Amy glared for a moment at her sister—"and said no church is better. Everyone can go to heaven. Even Buddhists!"

No one said anything.

"But she was wrong," Amy insisted. "I told her sin makes your soul look like a leper to God, all full of sores and no toes or fingers. Only confession can take it away. I was going to say about how good it felt, but she told me to sit down."

Amy turned to her father. “We *are* the true church, aren’t we Daddy? Daddy, *look* at me.”

“Yes,” he sighed finally. “We’re the true church.”

Amy felt a wave of relief.

“But you don’t tell people they aren’t going to heaven.” her mother added.

“Father Goodman said only Catholics can go to heaven. He said it,” Amy insisted, repeating the words she had memorized in preparation for her confirmation: “Unless you eat of my flesh you will not have life in you.”

“Look,” her father began, using the same voice he did with Sara, “Mother’s saying you don’t tell people that. OK? Not just anybody. You hear Daddy? Keep it to yourself.”

Amy thought about that for a moment. Something was wrong. In the book of martyrs they gave her at catechism, Saint Dorothy died on the wheel for speaking the truth. And what about the missionaries and the poor pagan children?

“But if you don’t tell them, they might go to hell. Shouldn’t you tell them so they can do something about it? I told Harold if he came to our church he wouldn’t burn ...”

“That’s enough, you two,” said her mother. “Look at me, Amy. You don’t have a monopoly on heaven just because you’re Catholic. I’m not a Catholic. Grandma and Grandpa aren’t Catholic. Are we going to hell, Amy? Is that what they teach you in your church?” Sara began to whimper. “Don’t cry, baby. Mommy’s not angry.”

But her face looked as if it couldn’t decide to cry or be angry. Amy had seen that look once before, and as she did at that time, she felt helpless and confused. Her mother had waited and waited, then cried after she got angry. That was when Daddy came home too late for a party. They said things to each other. Angry things. Amy had never seen her mother cry before, and she was mad at Daddy for making Mommy cry. The dress had been so beautiful, black velvet with long, wide sleeves lined with pale, flesh-colored silk. “Here, Amy-chan. Feel this. See? It’s silk, Amy-chan.”

Her parents looked at each other over the lilies. Lizbet left the table without saying “Excuse me” and no one said anything. Sara climbed down to the floor. Amy watched her mother’s hands resume their quiet tapping. “You see?” her mother said into the lilies. “This is what comes of it. I should never have promised. It was a mistake. Sometimes I think I’ve lost her.” She paused for a moment. “What on earth will Mrs. Dever think?”

The light from the street filtered through the Venetian blinds, making pale stripes across Amy’s bed. She held up her arms, and they were marked too. The brass chain on the ceiling fixture gleamed. Amy crossed her arms over her chest, turned on her side, and pulled her knees up close. The closet door was open, a great black portal that made her shut her eyes and think about something she had

heard. About the darkness, the lights far away. The tower on the hill. Wild dogs in the cane fields. Grass against her face. Amy thought about the wind in the California grass. She had not had a chance to tell her father about the sword, about the name she had chosen for herself.

The house creaked and settled. In the next room Lizbet murmured in her sleep. Amy wished she could crawl in bed with her sister. She heard her father's footsteps and waited for the sound of the shower. Her mother had been quiet for the rest of the evening, Amy tried to think of something else.

"Fuck," she whispered, and felt the mystery of the forbidden, the pleasure it gave to say the word. Like the mystery of the mass. "Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus. Lord God of Hosts, Heaven and earth are full of thy glory."

The shower stopped, then a few minutes later her parents' voices reached her. They were arguing. "I'm sorry, Mommy and Daddy," she whispered. Thoughts crowded in on her, rustling like dry leaves. That word! "Oh my God, I'm heartily sorry for having offended thee, my Lord, who art all good and deserving of all my love." Her last prayer ended. "And blessed is the fruit of thy womb." And what was fruit of thy womb? Fuck, she thought sleepily, she would ask Father Goodman. He would know.

*Susan Nunes*

## THE GRANDMOTHER

She was ninety-five years old, Frances said. That was old, but she could have been one hundred and fifty for all the difference it made to me. I believed Frances. Mrs. Furuisato was the oldest person I had every seen, and in those years we lived on the hill, she never changed. Frances teaches school in Honolulu now. I hear she is married and has two children. Her grandmother is long dead I know. And yet I cannot separate the old woman from the place, and I think I do not want to go back and see the house and the garden because she will not be there.

Nostalgia tends to select. I have never forgotten how she looked that first time, before I met her granddaughter who would be my best friend throughout childhood before the frail bent figure had become a part of the place, a fixture both fascinating and terrifying, like the hothouse with its sweaty flasks or the cooking shed with its strange smells. We had only days before moved into the house on the hill, and because my parents were busy, I was left to wander about on my own, quite forgotten. A row of hibiscus bushes separated our yard from theirs, and I was sitting in this hedge near the cooking shed when the old woman walked past.

First I saw her feet, withered and veined, the color of dried shrimp, with chalk-white nails so long they grew into the flesh. She was wearing grass slippers. Through the hedge I could see her white dress, and moments later I could hear noises coming from the shed. Curious and a little scared, I emerged from my hiding place and on hands and knees crossed the narrow path where she had walked only moments before. Carefully I edged along the side of the hut and peered around the corner. There was no one there.

The room was small, windowless, just three walls and a dirt floor. Along the back walls were several shelves crowded with empty bottles and odd-shaped flasks. Just inside the open front was a small cooking pit lined with stones and covered with wire grating. Next to the pit was a low table and on it a wooden rice pot, a blackened water kettle, and a plate of dried fish with long wooden chopsticks laid across it. The room smelled of old things and charcoal burning.

I don't know how long I stood there, the old woman forgotten, but suddenly I sensed a movement behind me and heard a low laugh. That impression, in the moments before I ran, has never left me completely, and because of the strength of that impression I remain in awe of Frances' grandmother. She comes to me sometimes, even now, just as she was that first day, a shriveled-up shell of a woman standing sideways looking at me, her head sunk low into her narrow shoulders, her veined hands bent as if they clutched at something, her dress falling loosely from the hump on her back, hanging as if there were nothing underneath. And the low laughter.



"Furancesu," she called her granddaughter, enunciating each syllable, "Fu-ra-n-ce-su."

"She's calling you," I said. We were sitting in the old guava tree below the last terrace.

"I know," Frances said nonchalantly. "You want to come?"

We went up toward the cooking shed, and standing at the top of the last rise was Mrs. Furuisato, holding something in her apron. She didn't say a word as we approached but turned into the shed and knelt at the cooking pot. We stood behind her, watching as she emptied the contents of her apron onto a newspaper. They were little knobs, brown and wrinkled. I said to Frances, "They look like fingertips."

"Sweet potatoes," she replied. "She saves them for me. Watch."

The old woman poked at the ashes with her chopsticks and made a hole in the middle of the heap. Under the grey ash the coals glowed for a moment, then faded into pinpoints of orange. She put the potato ends into the hole and covered them with hot ashes.

"It doesn't take long," Frances said. She helped the old woman sit down. We waited there, the three of us, Mrs. Furuisato on her low stool, Frances and I on the floor close to the fire. I could feel the heat against my legs and face. No one said anything, but occasionally the old woman would murmur "Furancesu" and chuckle to herself. Frances watched the heap of coals. I tried not to fidget.

When we could smell the potatoes, Mrs. Furuisato reached for a newspaper, got up from her stool, and squatted before the fire. She thrust the chopsticks through the ashes and searched out the little knobs, now grey and steaming, and put them one by one on the newspaper. When she finished she handed the paper to Frances.

"Come on," said Frances, "let's go down to the tree."

We retraced our steps down the hill, Frances holding the newspaper in front of her with both hands. I looked back, just once, and Mrs. Furuisato was standing in front of the shed at the top of the last rise, old and bent in her faded dress with the white apron. Sitting in the tree, we ate the potatoes. They were sweet and earthy, but what I remember most is the lingering aftertaste of ashes.

Who can remember precisely when wonderment gives way to something else? Mrs. Furuisato was old—I could see that. She was also a grandmother. I knew that because Frances said so. But to me, grandmothers were different creatures. When they smiled their gums didn't show. They were tolerant people, closer to you than your own parents, easy to talk to, easy to love. Mrs. Furuisato *was* Frances' grandmother, and because everyone loved their grandmothers, I reasoned that Frances had to love hers. I had not pondered upon this logic. It was just so. Still, I saw that her face was more skull than flesh, and there was always about her the aura of old wood and charcoal burning.

Frances' family raised orchid hybrids, and their back yard was terraced. Rows of tree fern lined the flat portions. Each trunk had been shorn of its foliage and fixed to the ground. Tied to them with wire and twine were countless orchid cuttings. From some of them sprays of orchids shot out every which way, and we had to be reminded again and again not to run down the cinder paths or we would break something.

Our favorite place was the greenhouse. It stood in a corner of the yard sheltered from the wind and was partially shaded by a wall of giant tree fern. A red cinder path lined with azalea bushes led to an entrance framed with hanging wire baskets of maidenhair. Inside, all was transformed. Sunlight filtered through in patterned stripes, intensifying the greens and purples. The flasks glowed with a light of their own, and their air was laced with the damp smell of tree moss and the heady fragrance of cattleyas. The flasks contained hundreds of orchid seedlings in a water medium. They were particularly vulnerable to disease, so they lived in their sealed containers until they were old enough to be transplanted. I don't know how long it took them to mature and flower, but I believe it was a long, long time.

Frances and I often played there, but sometimes I came alone, just to be in that otherness. When I left it would be quietly, aware of the cinder beneath my bare feet. It was at such a time that they found me there, Frances and her grandmother. I had not heard them approach, so the old woman's low laugh startled me. She brushed gently past, and I caught the smell of old wood and charcoal burning. A few feet in front of me she paused and reached among the clay pots and singled out one plant with three deep purple blooms. The roots had traced a complex pattern around the clay pot. She spoke something in Japanese I couldn't understand. I kept thinking that the cinder hurt my feet.

After a few moments of silence Frances said, "That's the oldest. All the others come from this plant." She stepped around me to join her grandmother. "My father says this one's older than he is." She took the plant from the old woman, placed it back on the shelf, and pulled at some bits of moss.

Again the old woman said something, most of which I didn't understand. But I didn't miss the last word.

"Purebred."

And Frances said again, "It's very, very old." I hardly heard her, though, because I was staring at her grandmother's face, at the toothless mouth, at the purple flesh. Something in the meeting of the word and the experience had alienated me. I was alone. Not like them.

That is all I remember. I don't know what we did after that. It might have been any number of things, all lost. But I do know that it was in the weeks after that chance meeting that I decided to destroy the plant, to deliberately crush each flower, to snap the stems and grind them into the cinder, to pull from the pot the moss that held the plant and sustained it, to rub from the pot all traces of the white

roots.

They never told my parents. Never complained. Frances and I played together until we reached intermediate school and different interests pulled us apart. She was my first and only Japanese friend. But she is as alien to me as that part of myself which is like her. As alien as her grandmother was. Old Mrs. Furuisato.

*Susan Nunes*

# Ty Pak

## GUILT PAYMENT

"If I'd had the right teacher, I wouldn't have failed in the Western Regionals," says Mira bitterly.

"But you've won the Hawaii audition," I point out. "Look how many competitors you had to put behind to get that far. John Singleton's daughter, Mary, who everybody said had a heavenly voice, placed only third. You hold the crown here."

"I'm no tractable Polynesian lass to be content with an island title. I want to go all the way to the top. I want to sing at the Metropolitan. I want to show the whole world what a Korean-American girl can do."

"There is always next year, and besides you have to learn to be content ..."

"With a thousand-dollar cash prize? And end up salesgirling or teaching a bunch of tone-deaf kids, occasionally singing on the side at churches and ceremonies for a pittance? I don't want any part of it. I must go to Florence and study under Maestro Vincenti."

"Isn't Florence where he comes from, that Italian snob hanging around you all the time, Peter, Petro, or whatever his blasted name is?"

"Piero. I haven't seen a man with a worse memory for names. I really don't see how you could have become a professor of English, which presumably takes a lot of memorizing. Well, after all, it's only the University of Hawaii you are a professor at."

"Young lady, we are discussing this Piero fellow and your fantastic scheme of going to his native town at a great cost for no purpose at all ..."

"What've you got against him? Anyway, Piero has nothing to do with it. It's just a coincidence that the world-renowned maestro happens to reside now at the place where Piero was born."

"Where his parents and relatives live, no doubt."

"Will you or will you not make this little sacrifice? When I get the big roles,

the money you are investing now will seem like nothing. I will pay you back every cent with interest. I simply have to go to Italy”

“But what have the Italians got that this great country of ours hasn’t? Go back to Julliard and take graduate courses or private lessons from Professor Bertram whom you used to think so highly of.”

“He is old fashioned. Passe. Played out. He is old. Period. I have to breathe fresh air, learn new styles and techniques, receive new inspirations, get out of this old country.”

“Since when has the U.S. become an old country?”

“Father, I respect your knowledge of English, but you know very little about musicianship, especially operatic singing and the training and discipline that go with it.”

Haven’t I paid full tuition for all her special lessons ever since she was three? But of course I hold my tongue.

“Trust my judgment, father. If it was avoidable, I wouldn’t ask. This is the only way. I know Mother would see it my way if she were alive.”

That vanquishes me for good. Oh, the burden of remorse and self-recrimination! It was quite by accident that Mira came by this infallible formula for neutralizing my resistance. She was about seven and wanted to go to a carnival at the other end of the island. She had been to a dozen already, and they were of course all such dreadful bores to me. Besides, I had an important paper to finish for a journal. I couldn’t spare the time. Pettishly she remarked that her friend Joyce’s mother was taking her children, adding that if she had a mother like everybody else, she would not be left at the mercy of a selfish father who did nothing for others and just read and read all day long. Life was no fun at this house of ours, she said. Her mother, whom she had never known, would see it her way, she was sure.

Silently, like a sleep-walker, I drove her 50 miles to the Haleiwa Beach Park carnival grounds. I had been her slave ever since. Not that she was reckless in the exercise of her power. Like a discerning monarch she let me, her subject, enjoy a degree of independence—even an illusion of sovereignty—in small things, but when it came to things that really mattered, matters of money and time, out came the mighty club to beat me flat. She must wonder at the efficacy of this weapon, for invariably she asked me, a smile twinkling in her eyes, what wicked thing I had done to her mother. But she never really gave me a chance to tell her, as she bolted away humming or singing merrily over the fresh reaffirmation of her supremacy. After all, when you have it good, why jinx it by looking into the whence and wherefore? But would I have told her if she really wanted to know? Not in a million years.

\* \* \*

We had been married only eight months, Yoomi and I, when the war broke out, on Sunday, June 25, 1950. On Monday I went to the university as usual. We were to carry on our business as usual, Syngman Rhee told us over and over on the radio. The whole affair was nothing but a border skirmish, for which the provokers, rash North Korean communists, would be soundly thrashed by the South Korean army, backed by the U.S. with its atom bombs. The spring semester was winding to a close, and the finals were not too far off. The monsoon had started early and it rained dismally, incessantly. Neither the faculty nor the students could keep their minds on their books. I called on my class to translate some passages from Hardy but could not get their attention. When I called a student's name, he would look briefly at me with indifference, then turn away to resume his talk with his friends. There was no point in dragging on. When I came out of the classroom, I noticed the same restiveness had possessed all the other classes: students had poured out into the school yard, milling around like lost ants. The general assembly bell rang and the dean mounted the rostrum. The school was to go into recess indefinitely until further notice. I left for home, wondering whether the indefiniteness included the end of the month, pay day.

Hayhwa Avenue was filled with trucks of khaki-clad troops in netted helmets heading north up Miyari Pass. There was an intermittent distant boom like suppressed thunder, which got louder and more insistent by the minute. At nightfall cannon shells whirled overhead, freezing the blood. Shrapnel tore the rain-drenched, blacked-out air. Machine guns and rifles rattled. Grenades exploded. The terror-stricken populace, caught in the crossfire, ran blindly for shelter, getting maimed and mauled in the process. They had to get away, to run, no matter where. The artillery shells seemed to be aimed directly at their homes, the places they had known so long and well, and they sought refuge by running right into the hills where the shells pelted like hailstones. The next morning the sky opened and the indifferent sun shone, disclaiming all responsibility for the nightmare of the previous night. Russian tanks were already in town. Rhee had fled south after destroying the Han bridge, making sure that nobody, neither the invading army nor his trusting people, followed him.

A wave of mass arrests swept through the city. All those who had managed to make a decent living were counterrevolutionaries, enemies of the people. Their houses, their jobs were proof enough of their treachery. The dregs of society rose to the top and banded themselves into Youth Leagues, Women's Leagues, People's Leagues. Armed with fixed bayonets, the gift of the victors, these upstart self-decreed legislators and justices, flaunting their red headbands and armbands of authority, ferreted out the enemies of the people who had committed the colossal crime of supporting their families with all the diligence their training and aptitude afforded. The Soosong Elementary School, packed full to bursting with such undesirables, was posted with armed guards. Other public places also served as collection and detention points. A percentage of the prisoners were taken out

at regular intervals and shot at public squares, where their bodies were left to be spat on and kicked at, to rot for days. First to go were all government employees, however lowly: office clerks, guards, even custodians. But top priority was given to the so-called power sectors, policemen, tax officials, and soldiers. There was a whole division of Rhee's soldiers, stragglers and wounded, who hadn't gotten away before the bridge fell.

I went into hiding and managed to elude the first searches. We had just moved to the house a few months before, and nobody in the neighborhood knew about my teaching position at the university. But they caught on soon enough, and Yoomi, nearing her time and anemic from malnutrition, had to go to the district office to account with browbeatings and threats for my absence. With the intensifying American air raids, which did not distinguish between military and civilian targets, it wasn't too uncommon to be reported missing, unless there were witnesses to the contrary. There was no food in the house, and Yoomi had to drag her heavy body laden with clothes, utensils, and other valuables for barter at the nearest open market, until we had nothing left. Even the bedding was gone, and we shivered at night.

The only news we had of the war was what the communists gave out. The fall of the Pusan perimeter was imminent, the last holdout of the American running dogs. They would be driven into the sea to drown, and the fatherland would at last be one. As the days lengthened into weeks, I wondered whether there was any point in my continued hiding, which meant overworking Yoomi to death. I contemplated seriously giving myself up, but Yoomi wouldn't have it. Sangjo Kim, the historian, Wongyong Chay, the criminologist, and all those we knew had been coralled and marched away God knew where.

One day after carrying home a sack of barley for the last of my winter clothing, she collapsed at the gate. Since I could not go out and help lest the neighbors should see, she crawled on all fours, undid the latch, and came into the house. Her labor had started. The placenta had burst. It was our first birth, but I had heard that this was an emergency. Her life was at stake, but when I made ready to run for the midwife who resided in the neighborhood, Yoomi clutched my ankles with an unbreakable grip. She would not let me go. I watched helplessly, biting my lip as the pangs tortured and twisted her. Mira was eventually born. Yoomi, delirious with fever, lay unconscious for days. I hated the bawling lump of flesh, the cause of the impending death of my beloved.

I made barley broth and fed it to the baby, but she rejected the food after a few sips. She raised hell, her face turning red and blotchy. In spite of her delirium Yoomi heard the child, hugged it close and fumbled about her breast. I offered no assistance; either the baby had to survive on barley broth or perish. It would not further endanger its mother's health by leeching. With an uncanny homing instinct the little brute deftly sought out the teats. Then, gathering her lips into a snout, she cupped them over one with a flopping sound and sucked away vo-

raciously, draining her mother's life blood. She sucked and sucked, until the previously swollen sacs sagged and shriveled. Then she bawled for more.

I was furious and could have strangled her. Marveling at my unnatural disposition, I wondered what the poets who spewed ardently about parental affection could have meant. The crying, wetting, misshapen, grotesque bundle of newborn flesh did not inspire me with anything but loathing. I resented her untimely intrusion. Already her birth could be kept secret no more. The neighbors had heard her cries and came officiously to assist and give advice to my half-dead wife, while I had to scamper away to my perch under the roof, erasing all traces of my latest descent.

Miraculously Yoomi survived the days of fever, near starvation, and constant suction by the little vampire. She was back on her feet to feed all three of us, now carrying the baby on her back. We had sold the stereo and records, the clock and radio, the guitar and accordion, even the harmonica and cymbal. The time had come to part with our wedding gifts, her half-karat diamond ring and my Omega watch, which we had sworn never to sell. I again proposed to give myself up. Surely the communists must have use for an English professor. Maybe I could be their translator, intelligence decoder, or what not, but again Yoomi prevented me.

It was early September and the food from our wedding mementos had lasted only a week. Yoomi hired herself out as a kitchen maid at a neighbor's, Char somebody, who was some kind of a big wheel with the new regime. We had been smelling his barbecuing beef all through the summer. The place seemed a Mecca for the Communist cadres to congregate and celebrate, their drunken, raucous singing lasting through the night. These communists didn't seem to know choral singing at all and everybody always sang in unison. The repertoire was limited to the Red Flag, the Glorious Leader Il-sung Kim, and other Party and Army songs which they never seemed to tire of, which were too sacrosanct to allow accompaniment by any musical instrument other than their own vocal cords. Occasionally they tried some traditional folk songs. At this point some rank amateur banged down on our Baldwin grand, off key.

One of the first things every citizen had to do was report to the authorities special luxuries such as the piano. Yoomi volunteered and contributed it to the cause to forestall its inevitable discovery by the search parties, which might keep looking to find more. Perhaps such cooperation might mollify their suspicion and antagonism toward our house, if not quite win their favor. The piano was moved to Char's. Yoomi's father had bought it on her graduation from college with top honors in her piano class. She had brought it with her when she married me. We had planned a recital sometime in September at the Municipal Hall with the Seoul Philharmonic. Of course none of the Communists had kept up with the musical scene of the south and nobody knew her. To them she was just another miserable housewife, a reactionary's deserted wife, with an infant child to feed. But when they seemed to murder the good music and ruin the piano, I felt an urge to show



to Char and comrades what a good musician like Yoomi could do with it. Even their musical travesty stopped altogether and the piano was never heard again. We learned later that the grand had been moved to some public hall for the Liberation Day ceremony on August 15, but the place was bombed and a piano was the farthest thing from anybody's mind.

Her pay was the burnt layer of rice scraped off the bottom of the pot and occasionally the leftover goodies from their tables. At that time, when a peck of rice was worth more than a piano, we had to consider this a generous remuneration. But the strain of work so soon after childbirth ruined her health despite the improved diet. She hemorrhaged continuously. Her shining eyes receded deeper and deeper into their bony sockets, and her skin grew sallow. Sweat stood on her forehead and dizzy spells forced her to steady herself by holding on to the wall or furniture. I told her to stop working; we could skimp, and the burnt rice, which we ate by soaking in water, would see us through a week. By then surely the Americans would be back. Witness the almost round-the-clock air raids by the American Air Force, completely paralyzing all daytime mobility of the People's Army.

But Yoomi wouldn't listen. She had to do it for her baby, who indeed prospered. Her cheeks filled out nicely, and her earlier formlessness gave way to a proportioned articulation of features. When she smiled and crooned in her contentment after a lengthy feeding at her mother's breast, there was even a hint of the innocence and beauty of the Raphaelite Christ child. While she was the epitome of health, her mother withered. I resented the little selfish creature and resisted my growing fondness for her.

September was drawing to a close, yet Seoul was still solidly in the hands of the Communists. The air raids seemed a mere surface irritation to the dug-in, deeply-entrenched ground forces. After what seemed to be a thorough devastation of anti-aircraft bunkers in a given area, the new formation of fighters and bombers the next day would be greeted with as vigorous salvos of flak as before from the same area. Time was said to be running out for the Communists. But it might run out for the Americans, too. After all, planes and bombs couldn't be inexhaustible. And time was definitely running out for us, our little microcosm of three, a nameless and lost speck in the vast macabre chessboard of indiscriminate death and destruction.

Whole streets were turning into honeycombs of pillboxes and bunkers. Naval bombardment had begun from American ships off Inchon, systematically erasing the city off the map. Fires broke out everywhere. A few houses down the block from ours got hit. What had been a sturdy concrete structure disintegrated, leaving a huge crater, while the ensuing fire spread and stopped just before our house. Yoomi and Mira had been moved out, and I was almost smoked out myself. We might absorb a direct hit ourselves at any minute. Wistfully I looked at the repaired walls of our main bedroom, how we had spent days looking for the right

color and pattern, how upset we had been whenever a fly left a black spot and what meticulous care we had taken to remove the blemish without staining the rest of the paper.

Last-minute roundups of reactionaries were going on, which now included just about every civilian still left in the city who could not be positively identified as an activist in the new regime. As the first U.S. Marines crossed the Han, the detainees at various basements and temporary lockups, emaciated, bruised, mangled skeletons who had somehow survived the torture and interrogation without food, were led out and shot. Both banks of the Chonggay Drain were strewn with their bodies. Some were packed into abandoned air raid trenches and buried alive. Many were simply shot on the streets and left there to be trampled. Whole families, including the very young and old, were executed. The Communists became more vicious and wanton; if they were to die, they would leave no survivors to curse their memory and exult over their end. They killed anybody for no cause at all.

One night there came a loud knock at the gate. Our hearts were tight knots. Our legs wouldn't move. Mira started crying frantically, bringing us to our senses. Yoomi snatched her up and went to the door, at the same time motioning me to the attic. But there was no time for it. There seemed to be half a dozen of them and they were already through the gate, apparently having broken the latch. They were beaming their flashlights all over the house, especially toward the attic. One was going into the kitchen, another to the basement, a third to the back of the house. I had barely gotten into the outhouse latrine by the fence, when I realized one of them was coming toward it. In the three-by-five compartment I had no alternative but to jump into the tank, feet first, my hands pushing down the slippery sides. The thick mass on top closed over my head without a ripple. I was conscious of a flashlight overhead. The stamping feet on the creaky boards left and the door banged. I nevertheless stayed submerged as long as I could.

I heard Yoomi shriek. She thought they had found me in the attic when three of them vaulted into it through the access trap and turned over every piece of furniture stored there, poking into the corners with their bayonets. It was painful not to go out and reassure her of my safety. Mira went on screaming harder; probably Yoomi had dropped her. At one point I thought they were coming back to the latrine and was ready to duck again, but they didn't. About half an hour later, what seemed like an eternity, I issued out of the outhouse and ran to the inner courtyard. Hair disordered and face ashen, Yoomi was suckling Mira. She gave a start as if she had seen a ghost. She had passed out and regained consciousness only minutes before. She thought they had taken me away. Only then did we notice my odoriferous condition. We laughed like two lunatics. Thank God I had postponed installing the flush toilet. The cost of the new plumbing and septic tank system, there being no city sewage, had been prohibitive.

We had to leave the house. A shell had gouged a big hole on the street next

to the stone fence, which had been blown off like dust. The roof had collapsed and we were squeezed between the sprung closet door frame and a fallen beam. A window slit dug into my calf, but Yoomi and Mira were unhurt. We had to get out fast. The dry wood had caught fire, and the smoke pierced and blinded our eyes. Shells were falling everywhere. The night sky was lit with a reddish glow that gave the illusion of soaking the whole city in blood. But the alleys were pitch dark, except for occasional flickering through the openings.

Just as I turned a corner, with Yoomi and Mira close behind, rifle shots rang out. Instantly I drew back. Pressing close to the wall we retreated into the alley we had emerged from. A patrol of the People's Army passed. They paused briefly at the corner to peer into the darkness, but apparently more urgent business elsewhere didn't allow them to tarry. We came out of the alley, rounded the corner, and swiftly went along the other street. Dry plane leaves crackled at our feet, startling us. We kept walking fast, backtracking and detouring whenever a shell crashed near, a roadblock loomed ahead, or a patrol was audible. We were going in the general direction of the Han to the south, but the topography, jumbled beyond recognition by dugouts and shellings, was thoroughly confusing. To the south the sky was bright with flares, probably attesting to the American beachhead. Only the Americans would try to expel darkness, and we had agreed that our hope lay in getting through the Communist battle zone to the brighter sky.

Sudden tommy gun bursts were followed by the noise of people shouting and running.

"Stop or we'll shoot," a voice yelled. The tommy guns burped. Instinctively we had crouched flat to the ground. Shots whizzed past. Cannonade continued with their booms and crashes. A highrise down the block tottered and broke up. Whole walls and floors flew overhead and dumped all around us. We got out of the alley and suddenly came to the broad Namsan Avenue, pale with the shimmer of flares and fires and explosions. The avenue was full of enfilade. We had to get away from this highway of flying metal.

"Let's find a trench, an air raid shelter," I said.

"They say they're filled up with bodies," Yoomi said.

My spine crawled. I shuddered at the thought of what must have happened to the man who had been fleeing in our direction a minute before. A half circle of grey was fanning slowly in the eastern sky, eroding the redness of artificial illumination. The chilly morning breeze buffeted our noses with whiffs of rancid smoke, the overpowering compound of burning gunpowder, wood, paint, earth, concrete, and human flesh. There was a flare right above our heads, disclosing our shapes. For the first time we looked at each other's face in the eerie light and were shocked at our skeletal haggardness, as if all the meat had evaporated. But we were not allowed the luxury of mutual scrutiny for long. A few feet from us lay a headless man's body, drenched in blood, still warm, kicking. The brains had spilt out of the bashed head a few feet away. Dark patches of blood stippled the

whitewashed wall. Yoomi trembled and hid her face in my chest.

"Let's get into a trench before we get it ourselves," I said, pulling her behind me into an alley. There was a tearing explosion. The place we had just stood disappeared in a cloud of fiery smoke. More mortar shells rained upon the same spot. We could see fire spitting out of a machine gun emplacement a little distance away. Near South Grate we found and jumped into an unoccupied dugout, about four feet by ten feet. The floor was covered with a sheet of water. The walls were slimy. The smell of mildew, feces, and decay staggered us. Fresh pine trunks, their green-needled branches sticking up here and there, supported the ceiling of earth packed in straw bags. Where the bagging was torn, earth cascaded into the puddle of water on the floor with each ground-shaking explosion. Yoomi uncovered the flap of cloth she had put across Mira's face. She slept on soundly, quite unconcerned. One shell fell almost on top of the trench. The ceiling and walls shook, ready to cave in. The dust was suffocating. Instinctively Yoomi hid Mira's face against her bosom. The infant's nostrils fluttered, her eyelids quivered, her clenched hands waved uncertainly. Then she went back to sleep, her facial muscles relaxing, even hinting a smile. I was gripped with compunction. The little innocent life seemed the dearest thing in the world. I recalled how beastly my attitude had been toward this sublime being, free from taint and impurity. Her faint, still-lingering smile seemed the climax of all life, as if all previous generations had existed only to culminate in this perfection. So many lives had been plowed back into the soil to sprout this exquisite flower.

A hot puff of air, as if somebody had suddenly opened a heated oven, filled the trench, sizzling the wet floor. Flames darted into the trench from the opening. We gasped for breath. Our bodies were like burning brands. We doubled up and burrowed our heads into the ground, but the floor was aflame, too. Outside were rushing feet and loud voices.

"Napalms, napalms," shouted somebody running past our trench.

"Retreat to Position Two," another voice shouted, as the trotting feet scattered. Shortly afterward, there were other voices.

"Stop!" somebody yelled. Tommy guns clattered away, followed by screams. Cool air came into our trench and we could breathe. Mira let out a piercing cry. Her face was flushed like a ball of fire. Yoomi tried to comfort her but Mira kicked and thrashed, crying louder and louder. We heard footsteps approaching us. Yoomi bared her breast and tried to pacify Mira, but it did not work. The child dodged her head left or right, thrusting her hands mightily against her mother, and her face contorted with the effort, her cry growing louder. We didn't know what to do. Discovery by the Communist soldiers would be certain death. Anyone other than themselves on this battle line would be enemy agents or undesirables summarily to be executed. At that moment, just as the detachment of troops were almost above our trench, more napalms fell around our trench, and the footsteps ceased. Hot flames hissed past the entrance, and some leaped in, al-

most licking us. I pulled Yoomi to the other end of the trench, our feet sinking in the mud. Mira expressed her disapproval of the jolt by doubling the decibels of her cry.

“Help, good people. Help!” said a voice at the mouth of the trench. Our hair stood up and our breath stopped. A young man of about twenty was crawling into the trench. He dragged one leg, his torn flesh showing through gaping trousers. His entire face was sleek with blood.

“I heard you, good people,” he said. “I knew you could not be bad. People with crying children can’t be bad. Give me anything to tie up my wound with.”

Yoomi tore a strip from her skirt before I had a chance to protest and handed it to the wounded man. He hurriedly tied up his thigh, stopping the bleeding in his leg. He stretched out his hand for more strips of cloth and Yoomi was about to oblige, which would have left her practically bare. I stopped her. The young man noticed it. He tore off his torn trouser leg, split it along the seam, and wiped his face. There was an ominous gash in his upper left forehead from which blood kept oozing. He bound his head above his eye and just below the wound, which seemed to stem the bleeding somewhat.

“Can’t you stop the baby’s crying?” he said, looking at us with annoyance. “They’ll hear us for sure, just as I heard you, and we will be done for. They shoot any civilian. It is their last vengeance.”

“Do they really?” I said incredulously.

“You’ll find out soon enough if you let the child carry on,” he said, urgently, imperatively. He made a lunge toward Mira but stopped short when Yoomi gathered Mira closer to her and shrank from him.

“Don’t you hear them coming this way? I’ll be damned if I’ll get shot in this stinking hole because of a crying baby,” he said, crawling out of the trench. A few seconds later, amid the crashes of artillery and mortar, we heard the nervous chatter of tommy guns and a long scream, which could have been the young man’s, but we weren’t sure. There were more feet rushing back and forth, more explosions.

“He was right. We’ll get caught if we stay here with her crying her head off like this. We’ve got to leave her and get out,” I said.

“Leave her?”

“Yes. But we’ll come back for her. They won’t kill a baby.”

Horried, she backed away from me, holding Mira tightly.

“If you want to live so badly that you have to abandon your own child, then go away from us,” Yoomi said in disgust.

“It’s not a question of abandoning. It’s a question of avoiding suicide. It’s survival, survival of us, you and me.”

“What about Mira?”

“A lump of flesh, hardly conscious of its own existence!”

“Why is she crying if she’s not conscious?”

“That’s precisely what I mean. If she was truly aware of her position, she wouldn’t cry. We have perception, a fully-developed adult consciousness, but hers is not even human yet. It’s not much different from that of bugs. Besides, we made her. We can make many more like her.”

I heard another detachment of troops approaching, their voices growing louder. Mira seemed to time her crying for a crescendo. In immediate reaction I put my hand across her mouth.

“Get away from her,” Yoomi shrieked shrilly above Mira’s crying, at the same time bending down and biting my hand so hard that a bone crunched. I jumped back in pain. The detachment was unmistakably coming directly toward us.

“Get out! Get out! I don’t know you. We have no need of you,” Yoomi was shouting. I had no time to think. I bounded out of the trench. Tommy guns burped behind me. A giant had grabbed me by the thigh. I fell down. Something warm suffused my leg. There was a loud thunder that completely deafened me and knocked out my senses.

The next time I noticed anything, it was broad daylight. I was lying before the gaunt remains of a building. Down the street, on both sides, I saw crumbling pillboxes and barricades with machine guns and dead soldiers slung across the sandbags. Farther down the street, around the Taypyongdong Rotary, a motorcade of American amphibious tanks, armored cars, and trucks was approaching, followed by thousands of Koreans waving flags and shouting hooray to the saviors. Where had they all been? I thought they had all been murdered or starved and no soul had been left alive in Seoul. In between the shouts and the rumble of the engines I heard a baby’s subdued, hoarse whimpering. For the first time I remembered what had happened. I stood up and tried to run, but the big hand pulled me down. My left leg was a useless stump. It was the very same leg from whose calf a splinter had been extracted earlier. The bullet, entering at a small neat hole, had departed on the other side after wrenching out a big chunk of steak, bone and all. The rest of my leg hung by mere skin. How foolish the Korean saying that one doesn’t get hurt twice in the same place!

I crawled across the street to the heap of earth from under which the sobbing of the baby continued intermittently, inaudibly. I started digging away frantically with my hands. Soon the nails broke off and the fingers bled. The crowd arrived. An American Marine walked up. To his surprise, I explained in English that my wife and baby were underneath. He had several of his buddies come with shovels. First came to sight a People’s Army soldier with a broken back. Then, under a log, in a cubic foot of space, Mira was safe, although her legs were trapped in earth. The jagged end of a beam had rammed through Yoomi’s chest.

\* \* \*

“All right, Mira,” I say. “I’ll get the money ready tomorrow, and you can make the plane reservations and other preparations. But please write to me when you get to Florence.”

“Oh, Dad, you are an angel,” she says, hugging me. “I’ll remember this always and pay you back, all of it and more. I know what kind of a sacrifice this is to you.”

Does she? Perhaps. Strangely, she doesn’t ask this time the usual question of what wicked thing I have done to her mother. Well, no matter. It boils down to the same thing, me picking up the tab, sweating and toiling to fulfill her big decisions. I’ll have to withdraw from my Christmas Club savings, which I have intended for my next sabbatical trip to England. I’ll be signing a note at the University Credit Union to pay back within three years. I thought I had finally gotten out of all those debts, those eternal monthly salary deductions, for the car, the TV, the stereo, the piano, everything except the house mortgage, but here I go again, accepting more installment payments. Mira may indeed go on to sing at La Scala or the Metropolitan, but even if she doesn’t, well, she won’t bring her mother into the picture again, at least not for a while. But why do things have to be so tough for Americans now? I remember the times when an average American income commanded princely accommodations abroad. It is quite the other way around now. Damn Arabs, damn Japanese, damn Italians, damn Koreans with their exports and favorable trade balances!

*Ty Pak*

# Patsy S. Saiki

## COMMUNION

It was quiet, deathly quiet, and that was strange, for Morio Tamura's life had always been full of sounds. There had been the crickets and cicadas on the Tamura farm in Japan, and the rustle of canefields and harsh commands of foremen on the sugar plantation on Hawaii. Here, in Honolulu, the sheathed thunder of cars, buses and trucks from below his locked and heavily draped bedroom window merged with his everyday life. Sound and noises were taken for granted, like the air around him, yet now there was this depthless, monotonous silence.

Was it time to get up? He had to be at the delicatessen by four if he wanted the coffee and doughnuts to be ready by five. A few faithful customers always came early for breakfast. What time was it anyway? He tried to open his eyes but couldn't. He then tried to reach for the clock by his pillow and again he couldn't. He didn't even hear the tick-tock tick-tock that put him to sleep every night. Am I dreaming, he wondered. Then he fell into motionless sleep once again.

The next time he awoke he noticed not only the silence but the chill in the air. It was ... it was ... was there such a thing as antiseptic chilly? As if one were being preserved in a tub full of alcohol?

The tub reminded him of his iron vat with bubbling oil in which he made his doughnuts. How many more cases of oil did he have in his storeroom? And flour ... should he order another forty bags? The newspapers talked about a shipping strike in a few weeks. But if the strike wasn't called, then he would be stuck with the flour and somehow the mice always got to the flour sacks. The health inspectors didn't like that.

Time ... time to get up ... what time was it? Surely it must be almost four. Why was it so quiet and cold? Where was Mama? Where was the alarm clock? I must be really exhausted, he thought, and fell asleep once more.

Two nurses entered the room in the morning, one with some towels and the other with a tray of thermometers. The first one said, "Mr. Tamura ... Mr.



Tamura ... I'm going to wash your face, okay?" The second slipped a thermometer under Morio's tongue.

The first nurse asked, "How many days is it since he's been in a coma? Forty? Fifty?"

"More like ninety," the second nurse said, examining the chart at the foot of the bed. "Ninety-seven today, to be exact."

"You think he'll ever come out of it?"

"Hard to tell. He's a tiny man ... only five feet tall and weighed 110 pounds when he was brought in. He's 76 pounds now. But he looks like a scrapper, a fighter. The other day I was giving him an alcohol rub and it seemed like he tensed his right arm. First time I felt that. So he could be coming out of it."

"Sad ... being pistol-whipped for a few dollars. Honolulu was never like this. I can remember when we used to leave our windows and doors unlocked all the time ... even at night."

"I know. Now I don't feel safe even in my own garage. And I lock myself in the car when I drive."

"Kind of a shame, isn't it, someone in a coma lying in this private air-conditioned room. He can't even appreciate it, yet he has to pay for it."

"I think the police wanted him here. Anyone coming here has to pass through two stations."

"Must cost the family a fortune. I heard a rumor Admissions suggested the family take him to another hospital, when they found out he didn't have any health insurance."

"You can't blame the hospital. But we took him, didn't we?" She picked up her tray. "Hey there, Mr. Tamura, brave man, you in your secret world, have a nice day, huh!" She left, followed by the other nurse.

Morio Tamura, in his secret world, faintly heard Mama calling him. Or was it his mother in Japan? No, it was Mama. "The paper cranes," he thought. "The paper cranes Mama's making for my 61st birthday party. What fool originally thought of making 1000 paper cranes for a 61st birthday party, and what fools made this into a tradition? Fools with time, that's for sure."

I wish we had a daughter, he mused. A daughter-in-law is okay, but a daughter is different. Now I understand why Mama used to say that if we're going to have only one child, she would have preferred a girl to a boy.

He thought of Tom, his son, and Evelyn, his daughter-in-law. They were good kids, kind and considerate, but somehow not as close to them as a daughter would have been. His friend Shoda had a married daughter and always on Sunday afternoons this daughter brought some food over for her parents ... "so you don't have to cook tonight" ... she said. Then she cleaned the kitchen and bathroom and sometimes the inside of the refrigerator while her husband talked to her father. How lucky the Shodas were!

It must be time to get up and go to the shop. Must be close to four. What

would the workmen say if the shop wasn't open by five? They depended on him for coffee, doughnuts and biscuits. Where would these truck drivers and construction workers have their large but cheap breakfasts? I must get up. But I can't open my eyes. Am I drugged? How could I be? Am I dreaming? Wake up, Morio Tamura. You don't have time to be sleeping. But he fell into another deep, unconscious sleep.

A few days later, Mrs. Tamura sat folding her paper cranes in the hospital room, as usual.

"*Oto-san*," she whispered. "*Oto-san*, papa, can you hear me? Wake up! Try! You've got to come out of this coma. You can't die without saying goodbye to us. At least to me. Wake up! Look, I already have 800 cranes. Only 200 more to go, and remember your birthday is only a few months away. You've got to be well by then. I sewed your red kimono for the party, and we have the guest list. So wake up, *Oto-San*, for how can we have your party without you?"

Mrs. Tamura sighed. After three months she was exhausted with anger and worry. What would happen to them now? Should she sell the shop? Maybe the new owner would hire her. After all she was still strong at 57, and she knew all the customers. Would she have to depend on charity in her old age when she had worked steadily for 35 years, minus 6 months before and 6 months after Tom was born? Thirty-four years of hard work in America, the land of the free and the home of the brave, Tom used to sing. The land of justice, of plenty, of love. And a land where someone wanted to kill her husband for a few dollars!

"What kind of country did you bring me to?" she asked. "I gave up a country where I had relatives and I could understand the language. In that country I don't think anyone ever pistolwhipped another person from the back, even in the feudal days of long ago. The Japanese fought man-to-man, from the front, with warning. Why did we come here? What happiness have we had, working from four in the morning to nine at night, every day of the week?"

She pounded her husband's body in anger, heedless of different tubes attached to his body. "They say this country has justice, but there's no justice. The police didn't even bother looking for the boy. They said they had no clues. They just wrote something down on a piece of paper, that's all. They just accepted it ... it wasn't anything unusual to them to have someone almost killed by another. When I try to talk to them they just move away. *Oto-san*, how can you die now? You didn't have your party. You didn't see the 1000 crane tree. What about that trip to Japan? You said we would go back on your 65th birthday ... when you retire. Lies ... all lies! You aren't even trying to come out of your coma. It's easier lying in this air-conditioned room than working in a hot delicatessen and standing on your feet all day. You don't care about us ... you're taking the easy way out."

"What? What?" her husband mumbled. "Four already? Time to get up, Mama?"

Mama ... Mrs. Tamura ... was so shocked she forgot to ring the bell to call

the nurse. Instead she ran to the door and yelled, "Nurse! Nurse! Come quickly. My husband just talked to me!"

Two nurses came running. "Mr. Tamura, Mr. Tamura, do you hear us? Can you understand? You're in a hospital and we are taking good care of you. You have nothing to worry about. Your wife is sitting right here. Mr. Tamura ... Mr. Tamura?" But Morio Tamura was back in his deep, deep sleep.

"Are you sure he spoke?" a nurse asked. "It wasn't a moan? Or a gurgle?"

"No," she answered. "He asked if it was 4 o'clock already."

"Four o'clock? Why four o'clock?"

"That's when he used to get up to go to work every morning."

"You're sure it wasn't wishful thinking? You didn't imagine it?"

"I'm sure. He spoke clearly." The nurses waited. But they had many other chores, Mrs. Tamura knew. So she said, "Thank you. Maybe I did dream it, after all." She picked up her bag from the floor, extracted some paper, and began folding a crane.

After the nurses left she leaned over Morio and whispered, "So! You make me look like a fool! Why did you stop talking? Listen, Papa, I know you can hear me. By the time I have my 1000 cranes, I expect you to be out of your coma. You understand?" She scolded gently.

When, several days later Morio next awoke, he felt his mother pushing him. "Morio-chan, Morio-chan, wake up. Wake up and work in the fields for a few hours. Remember your brother is sending you to high school. You must work hard before and after school since he's making this sacrifice. Be grateful to him."

Be grateful to his older brother? But Morio knew why his brother was sending him to high school. Ever since Morio had contracted diphtheria when he was 12 he had stopped growing. Now he was 15 and still so small he was of little use on the farm where strong labor was needed. His brother was hoping that with more education Morio would go to some city and not be dependent on his older brother.

"I would be grateful if I hadn't heard my brother discussing this with my sister-in-law late one night," Morio thought. "They were talking of ways to get me off the farm for good. They made me feel so unwanted. I wish I had never heard them talking about me."

So he continued sleeping although he could feel his mother pushing and pulling him ... maybe even washing his face? Now why would his mother wash a 15-year-old's face? He wanted to protest, but instead he fell into his deep sleep again.

Five days later Mama said, "Well, that's the 1000th crane. Now I'll have to tie them to the tree branch Papa got from a friend. We have the invitations ready ..."

"Mama, did you get white print on red paper or red print on white paper?" Morio asked, as if he had been in conversation with Mama all along.

Mrs. Tamura trembled and dropped the crane she had been holding. It took her a few moments to say quietly, "White print on red paper."

"Good. It'll be easy to read. Remember we had an invitation once with red print on black paper and we had to hold it a certain way to read the invitation? Poor Mama, 1000 cranes! But now you can relax a little."

"I enjoyed making them," Mama said, hoping one of the nurses would walk in on the conversation. "Somebody come ... somebody come ..." she prayed.

"Come to bed, Mama. We have to get up early tomorrow morning as usual. I had a long day, standing on my feet, and they feel like lead bars attached to my body. I can't even move them. You sleep early, okay?"

"Sure ... sure ... as soon as I put my things away."

She pressed the bell. When two nurses came in she said, "My husband spoke again. Right now. He asked about the color of print on the invitations we made for his 61st birthday."

The nurses looked at each other. "That's wonderful, Mrs. Tamura. That's a good sign he might come out of his coma. Now listen, there's nothing more you can do for your husband now so why don't you go home and rest? We'll take good care of him."

So they still didn't believe her. But it didn't matter. It was a matter of days or weeks before he'd come out of his coma completely. Papa was getting better and look what a clear mind he had. "Yes I think I'll go home and rest," she reassured the nurses.

It was a week before Morio spoke again. "Where am I? I dreamed I was in Japan with my mother."

"You're in a hospital, Papa," she told him. "Remember someone hit you on the head with a pistol?"

A muscle twitched in his face. "Oh, I remember. A boy ... a man ... came in and bought doughnuts. One-half dozen. He paid me and as I was going back into the kitchen I felt something hit me. That's all I can remember. How much money did he take?"

"All that I left in the cash register before I left. About six dollars in bills, nickels and dimes."

"Strange ... he looked like such a nice boy. He talked so softly. I gave him two extra doughnuts because there were two left. He told me he wanted only six and I said the extra two were free. He said 'Thank you.' By the way, when can I leave here? I have to order some flour, in case we have a shipping strike later in the month."

"We already had a shipping strike, Papa, and it's been settled so don't worry about the strike."

"We had a strike? But it was supposed to begin June 15!"

"It's September 9 today."

"September! How can that be? It was June 2 yesterday."

"You were in a long coma, unconscious, Papa. But thank heavens you're okay now. Listen, I'm going to call one of the nurses. They didn't believe me when I said you talked the last time. Talk to them ... the nurses ... so they'll know you can really talk."

When Mrs. Tamura returned with one of the nurses, Morio was again in his deep motionless sleep. The nurse sighed in exasperation, but with sympathy. "Hang in there, Mrs. Tamura," she comforted her.

For another long ten days Morio Tamura slept, like an empty sack with tubes going into and out of him. Mama talked to him, pushed and pulled him, whispered, shouted, scolded, whimpered. Had he really talked to her? Even Tom wouldn't believe her, so she herself began having doubts.

"You know, Mama, when we wish and dream for something, it seems true," Tom told her. "You wanted Dad to come out of his coma and you wanted him to talk to you, so you heard him. It had to be in your mind, because how come he doesn't talk when anyone else is around?"

But the very next day he opened his eyes for the first time, although he couldn't move his head or hands. "Mama, forgive me," he said. "I lied to you. Well, I didn't exactly lie, but I didn't tell you how short I am, when I asked my brother to find me a wife in Japan."

Mrs. Tamura was surprised. He was now talking about what took place 40 years ago. How his being short must have bothered him!

"I didn't want to tell you how short I am because I was afraid you wouldn't come to marry me. The white people on the plantation used to call me "shrimp" and the plantation boss told me to work in the kitchen because I was so small ... like a girl, he said."

"So what?" Mama answered. "I lied to you too. I told the go-betweens not to tell you I'm 5'3" tall. At all my *miai* in Japan the mothers turned me down because they said I looked big and clumsy. They wanted a dainty daughter-in-law."

"Mama, remember when we were first married? When we took snapshots I always took them on steps. I would stand one step behind you so I would look taller. How it bothered me, being shorter, yet I was happy because I had a tall wife and I wanted tall sons."

Mama waited for his next words but he closed his eyes, sighed, and went back to sleep.

The doctor and nurse came in, just a little too late to hear Papa talk. By now Mama refrained from telling the nurse about Papa holding a conversation with her.

"How's my husband?" she asked the doctor.

"As well as can be expected," the doctor answered.

"When will he be completely out of his coma?"

"What do you mean ... 'completely out of his coma'?"

"Well, sometimes when he talks to me he's clear about things, but then other

times he thinks I'm his mother, I think. When will he not go back to sleep again for days at a time?"

The doctor and nurse looked at each other. "We've had cases where patients have been in coma almost ten years," the doctor said. "Then we've had patients who came out of a coma perfectly normal and patients who couldn't remember anything or recognize anyone. We don't know about Mr. Tamura."

"Papa's mind is clear, and of course he recognizes my voice."

"Remember, when your husband does regain consciousness, if he ever does, he may not remember much because of the brain damage and massive hemorrhage," the doctor warned.

"But he does remember," Mrs. Tamura insisted. "He even asked about the color of print I used on his 61st birthday invitations."

The doctor looked at his watch. "Fine ... fine ... let's keep working and waiting and hoping and praying. Miracles can happen. Now would you mind waiting outside for a few minutes?"

"What about this case, Doctor," the nurse whispered after Mrs. Tamura left.

"Damage was extensive to the brain area ... plus the hemorrhage ..."

"It's a wonder he's still alive, isn't it?"

"He got hit two or three times in the back of his head, at the nerve center. I think the paralysis is permanent."

"Poor man. Better if he had died right away. Now maybe he'll be a burden on his wife for years and years, and they don't even have health insurance. Personally I'd rather die than be a vegetable fed by tubes."

"Sometimes you don't have a choice. Sometimes the next of kin don't have a choice too. Unless laws are changed." They left, and Mrs. Tamura entered to find her husband sleeping peacefully.

Seven days later Morio opened his eyes and said, as if he had not been unconscious for more than a week. "Listen Mama, will you promise me one thing? Listen carefully, now. In case I turn out to be a bed-ridden invalid, if I'm completely paralyzed, promise me you'll help me to die."

"No, how can I do such a thing ..."

"Mama, please. Won't you help me?"

"Even if I wanted to help you, what could I do?"

"I don't know. A healthy man can die in a car accident or drown in the ocean or fall from some tall building. But if one is bedridden and especially if he's like a vegetable, how can he die when he wants to? I don't know, Mama. That's where I have to depend on you."

"What are you talking like this for, just when you're getting well. Every day you're getting better, you know. I don't want to hear anymore. Besides, visiting hours are over."

"Please, Mama?"

"No."

"It's my only request. From my only life partner. For the sake of my life partner."

"I don't know what you're talking about." But she reached out to him. His thinness pained her. How could a man's arm really feel like a stick?

"Mama, is it daytime or nighttime?"

"Nighttime."

"Could you open the window and please turn my head so that I can see out?"

"There's nothing to see out ... only a few stars."

"Stars? Oh, I want to see the stars ... I never had time to see the stars while I was working. Remember when Tom was in kindergarten and he had to sing 'Twinkle twinkle little star' all by himself for a Christmas play and we practiced and practiced together with him?"

"And the teacher scolded him because he sang 'Twinkoru twinkoru litoru star ... raiki a diamondo in za skai.'"

Did he chuckle? Mama thought so, and she too smiled. But then he seemed to have fallen asleep again so she left.

Morio opened his eyes and saw the stars. As he gazed at their shiny brilliance they seemed to break into little pieces and slide earthward, together with his tears that slid down his cheek to the pillow.

The next morning the nurses called cheerfully, "Good morning, Mr. Tamura. And how are we today?" But instead of wiping his face, the nurse called the doctor right away.

"Too bad Mr. Tamura passed away without regaining consciousness. 136 days in a coma so he's really skin and bones," the nurse said.

"It's a wonder he lasted this long," the house doctor agreed.

"Kind of sad," the nurse said. "You know, there was such love between them, Mrs. Tamura is sure Mr. Tamura spoke to her several times. But that's physically impossible, isn't it? His throat muscles were paralyzed as much as the rest of his body, so he couldn't have talked, could he?"

"Most likely not," the doctor agreed. "But then there's a great deal we still don't know ..."

The nurse pulled the pillow case from the pillow. Strange ... it was wet, as if with tears.

*Patsy S. Saiki*

# Wini Terada

## INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL HAPAI

just the other night

Val a junior at UH

me four years older than her and cruising

I was tuning up my car the other night when my sister Val came up to me and asked, “Eh, Vince. You get some dope or what?” Just like that, out and out, with no beating around the bushes. “Eh Vince. You get some dope or what?” Usually, when you talk to your brother or sister, you just make conversation and you talk-story about really useless stuff like “Eh, your turn for wash the dishes tonight,” or “What you doing?” or “You went play around with my guitar or what?” The other night, not Val. She just came up to me while I was tuning up my car and she asked, “Eh, Vince. You get some dope or what?” What a little punk.

I was trying to get the distributor gear lined up with the camshaft gear. Real pain in the ass business. Especially for one GTO—Pontiac, that’s why—the distributor stay way in the back of the motor. I was lying on the fender, holding the Accel dualpoint distributor, the one Duki got for me free so no can complain, trying to keep the two sets of points at top-dead-center open, while trying to match the two angle-cut gears. Then she asked me that. I gave her a stink side-eye and kept on with my business. She was probably only joking anyway, and I wasn’t going to let her pull my leg.

“Vince!” She insisted, “You get some dope or what? I asked you one question.” She was still standing there at the front of my ’64 Goat, obviously determined to get some kind of answer from me.

I figured too-bad-for-you and shook my head while I kept on with the distributor.

“Come on, Vince. You get. I know. Just the other night you bought one O-Z from Duki for 90 cents.”

I gave her a meaner stink-eye, looking straight at her this time. And I went



back to my work.

“Vince, no make stink. Come on.” She was still standing there at the front of my car, leaning against the nose of the Goat.

Apparently she wasn’t satisfied with the subtleties of non-verbal communication. Goddam it. I put the distributor down on the aluminum intake manifold and slithered backwards off the fender. I hopped to my feet and looked at her.

She was going out tonight. She was dressed, maybe not to “kill,” but she was set at least on “stun.” Tight, dressy jeans and a silkie top that wasn’t too shiny in a semi-aloha print theme. Looking good. A white loose-mesh sweater was draped over her shoulder and this thin clutch purse was tucked under her armpit. The purse was supposed to be rabbit fur, but the poor skinned rabbit must have either been scrawny or just given a grunt crewcut.

Once I told her, “Eh, that’s not rabbit skin, Val. Look more like cow fur.”

She looked at her purse and then at me, saying, “Doubt it. Cow fur! Who ever heard of cow fur!”

So I told her, “What you think—cows stay bolo-head or what? You and me, we went go Lani-Moo Farm down Kahuku-side when we was small kids. We both went go pet Lani-Moo and her baby cow ...”

“‘Baby cow!’ Try ‘calf!’”

She probably still thinks it’s rabbit. She was standing at the front of my car, waiting for an answer. She was barefoot.

“Val, honey. If you going out, I think more better if you wear rubber slipper at least. How you figure?” I was talking sassy.

“Ne, later. I going back inside the house.”

“Howz about the grease all over the ground?”

“Grease!” She looked down at the garage floor, stepping carefully backwards.

“Ne, I just kidding. Fool you, eh? So what you like again?”

“Eh! You think you wise, eh, Mr. Speed-Racer with the pseudo-fast car that no can catch up to one Z-28!” She was teasing me. I was sure about that when she started singing the chorus from the theme song of the old “Speed-Racer” cartoon. “Go, Speed-Racer! Go, Speed-Racer! Go, Speed-Racer, go-o!”

“Funny, funny, funny. You ever thought about getting one job as one knee-slapping comedian? And what’s this about some plug Z-28?”

“Oh, yo! No make, Vince! Duki told me about the time you got dusted by the red ’68 Camaro!”

“Duki? Fuck that shet! I gave the guy in the Camaro one chance and the bugga took advantage of my kind generosity. Never mind that. You went ask me something or what?”

She was singing again, “Go, Speed-Racer. Go, Speed-Racer ...”

“Okay. If you going make like that ...” I started to lean over the fender again.

“Ne-ne-ne-ne-ne! You no can take one joke or what? Shi, what a sourpuss.”

I stood back up. "So what you like then!"

"Gee, no need get all piss-off."

"Okay, okay, okay. I not. What!"

"I just wanted to know if you had some dope."

"Ye, I get. So what?"

"I can have couple J's or what?"

"Magic word?"

"Shet."

"Oh! Sorry, you lose. That is definitely *not* the magic word."

"May I *please* have a few J's then, Vince-sir?"

"For what?"

"I was going clean out my ears with them."

"Well, in that case, why you no try the Q-tips in the bathroom? Mo' better."

"Come on, Vince."

I looked at her. Who does this junior-in-college child think she is? To ask her big brother for some rolled-up sweet cannabis buds? She's still yet four years younger than me!

"Ye, okay. Stay in my guitar case. You know where."

"Eh, thanks, ye, Vince." Val smiled. She has such a pretty smile with these cute tiny dimples. Her eyes sparkled in the glare from the trouble-light dangling from the raised hood of my car, and she kind of skipped off to the kitchen door.

I called her, "Eh, Val."

"Ha?" She turned before the kitchen door. Ye, she had her eyelashes on. I told her how many times before, "No need!"—her real eyelashes were long and thick enough—but she still always wears those things when she goes out anyway.

Her hair is black touched with brown. I told her once that it was "almost 'ehu" and she said, "I doubt!" And her hair isn't the dried-out brown of peroxide or lemon juice or sun scorch. I have the same kind of hair but not as thick. Her hair is full and curling with soft waves, but it's not severe enough to be kinky or Brillo pad. She had it cut to just below her shoulders and it curled at her forehead, away from the sides of her face. She was always worried about the frizzies when she hardly had any.

"Ha?" She asked again from the kitchen door.

"Ah, nothing," I told her.

She gave me her "how bizarre!" look and turned back to the door. Val has a nice figure—she takes care of her body. She's almost slender but not skinny like a bony baby Bambi-deer. "Try 'fawn,'" she would probably tell me. Ye, ye. She opened the kitchen door and went inside the house.

Val's four years younger than me. She's a junior at UH, easing into an English degree, the same thing I was going to go into. But I quit UH, for a little while at least. I'm working at Times now—I got hired after I got turned down three times—the McCully branch, the one across from Washington Intermediate and

Zippy's. I figure I'll go back to UH maybe next year—I'm doing okay, I guess. At least I have a full-time job. My friend Duki doesn't even have a job and he's older than me. I'm doing okay.

Inside the house, Mom called, "Val! No forget, your turn to wash the dishes tonight. And did anybody feed the dog?"

Val answered from my bedroom, "Mommy! Not my turn tonight! I washed 'em last night. Vince's turn now. And I think the dog was fed already."

Mom said, "I hope so."

I was going to protest this laying-on of the chores on top of me, but I figured, Whatever. BD's. Val, what a liar. And Taro wasn't fed yet. I could see him from the garage. The old shaggy poi dog was sticking his head out of his doghouse, looking sad and starving. One paw was resting in his empty food dish, his way of hinting to us about feeding him. No worry, I going feed you. If Val was to feed Taro when she was in a rush, all she would give him would be the dry dog food, not the Kal Kan.

"Eh, Vince. You get some dope or what?" Just 'cause she's a junior at UH, she thinks she's pro-Joe grown-up mature. Tsa! She's still yet four years younger than me! She still has all her stuffed animals like the chubby snow-white bear with the red nose. She still goes to sleep with her Winnie-the-Pooh bear, the one I gave her for Christmas when she was in tenth grade.

five years ago

Val in ninth grade  
me at UH

Back then even, she thought she was so grown-up. When she was in ninth grade at Kawanakoa Intermediate, she was going out with this senior guy from 'Iolani. Well, not really going out with. It was more like hanging around with—they weren't going steady or anything like that. I remembered the guy from high school—he was one grade below me at 'Iolani. I guess that's how she met him, through me in the school.

Was the summer after her ninth grade. She was all excited about going to Roosevelt come fall. Big duduz, ye? I had finished a harsh first year at UH-Manoa. Now it was in the summer, after most of the high-school graduation parties were pau. The guy from 'Iolani was taking her around to all the parties and sometimes he would bring her home real late at night, if not early in the morning. Mommy and Daddy, they were concerned about the late night hours of their baby girl. I told them, "Ah, let her. Stay graduation party time, that's why. Only for little while, going be. Plus the guy taking her around, he's okay. He just graduated. I know him—he's a good guy." The guy was really later, but I said that just so that they could let Val go out. Val had begged me to talk to Mommy and Daddy. Reluctantly, they let her stay out late, since it would only be for a little while, being graduation party time, and since big brother seemed to know what he was

talking about.

That summer, after the graduation parties were pretty much pau, I was moping around the house early one Saturday morning, thinking of what to do. School was pau for me and no way was I going to go to summer-school session. I had been turned down by Times Supermarkets and about five other places and I wasn't in the mood for going job-hunting again.

The sun wasn't high enough in the sky to make the morning hot. A tradewind easing down Pauoa Valley rustled the leaves of the mango tree in our yard. The weak drying leaves dropped off the tree's branches and scattered themselves in the yard, around the rose bushes along the back stone wall, onto the green onion and string bean patch in the corner, into the garage.

That afternoon I was going to go to Al's house to help him pull the motor out of his '66 Chevy. But I had nothing to do in the morning. I turned on the TV and clicked through all the channels couple times. I looked out the parlor window at the old gingerbread-type house across the street. The old haole man was sitting in his fat padded recliner in his living room, staring blankly out the window. At me. "Fucken senile old shet," I mumbled, giving the old man a stink-eye. The old man slowly leaned forward, got out of his chair, and shuffled off to another room.

I walked to Val's room. I knocked softly at the closed door. I turned the door-knob and pushed the door open a little. I looked into her room.

The midmorning sun was shining through the yellow curtains on the windows facing the front yard. Val's stuffed animals on the shelf above the head of her bed were all leaning back or lying down, taking in some of that sun. Rhinos, dogs, cats, elephants, and even turtles. A monkey hung from the end of the shelf, practicing for a starring role in some upcoming Tarzan movie. In the middle of that row of upholstered beasts sat the chubby snow-white bear with the red nose that I had won for Val at the Hongwanji carnival long time ago, small-kid time.

twelve years ago

Val in second grade

me in sixth grade

I was in the sixth grade, she was in second. I remember I had to stay with her at the Hongwanji carnival 'cause Mommy and Daddy said so. I walked with her, holding her hand, as we played all the games the carnival had.

"We get some more scrip, Vince?"

"Of course. We get plenty. What you like play?"

We played all the games. We rode most of the rides too. Except for the Round-up, 'cause we saw this guy get off the ride and puke his guts out. How sick. We saw my friend Duki who snickered at us.

I said, "What!"

He said, "Look the tilly holding hands with the baby girl."

Duki was razzing, but Val was my sister. I gave him a "how bizarre!" look

and I led Val away to the Giant Ring Toss game.

“Play that one for me again, Vince!”

“Why you no like play?”

“Cause I not tall enough for throw the ring over the animals, that’s why.”

“Oh. Okay.” I elbowed our way through the crowd, to the front of the booth, and nodded to the fat middle-aged Japanese lady with the mochi-dango face who was tending the booth. “Eh, lady. Excuse me, I like three rings, please.”

“Nandeska?” She smiled a mochi smile.

I had to fumble into my pidgin Japanese. “Ah, boku, mitsu that kind man-marui rings suki des. Chodai. Onegai. I think.”

“Ah! Guru boi, ne! Anta no Nihongo wa tot’temo joozu des, ne! Guru boi! Guru boi!” She wiped her hands on her white cotton apron. She patted my arm.

I forced a smile and mumbled under my breath, “Ye, ye. Howz about the rings, obasan?”

“Hai, hai.” She heard! “Mitsu wa jyuu-go mai scrip nari-mas yo!” She held out three rings.

“Ha?” I gave Val a side-eye and whispered to her, “What she said?” Val shrugged.

I looked back at the lady. “What? I mean, nani?”

She smiled mochi. “Ara, ara. An’nani joozu ja nai, ne! Hai, ‘Mitsu’ wa ‘three’ des. You like three ringuz, ne? Boy-san?” Ye, ye. I know what “mitsu” means. “To, ‘jyuu-go mai’ wa ‘fifteen scrip’ des. You give me, ne?”

Oh I knew that all along. This was such a jiu-fut game anyway. So cheap-skate, five scrip got you only one ring. More worse, three scrip could get you one ride on the Ferris Wheel. But this manju booth had all the good prizes—the giant stuffed animals that were thick and fluffy, with none of them having any eyes missing. I gave the lady fifteen scrip and she smiled, handing me three almost basketball-size wooden hoops.

“Here, Val. Go try one.” I gave her a hoop.

“Well. Okay. But you gotta go first.”

She took a hoop and stood to one side to let the pro do his thing. I leaned forward carefully and softly tossed the hoop towards a monstrous fluorescent orange walrus. The hoop floated down and snagged an upholstered walrus tusk. No good—shet.

“Almost though.” Val was trying to be encouraging. I leaned forward again, this time putting my weight on the knee-high wooden beam around the edge of the booth. I aimed for the fat Filipino pig—it was purple—next to the walrus. Again I softly tossed the hoop. Again I missed. I caught the pig’s curlicue tail.

“Oh, shet. Your turn, Val.”

“Okay.”

She didn’t even aim. She didn’t even take her time. She tossed the hoop overhand even. She was aiming for a chubby snow-white bear with a red nose. It was

*all* the way on the other side of the booth. She just threw the hoop at it. No wonder she missed. The hoop didn't even go above the bear. Instead, it hit the bear on its pon-pon.

"Aw." Val was disappointed. But that's the way it goes.

"Hai, hai." The smiling Japanese lady again. "Too bad, ne, kawa-i gyoru! Here, I give mo-shtotsu chance!" The lady was smiling dango as she held out one more hoop in her mochi hand for Val.

Val looked at me and I nodded at her to go take it. She took it from the lady and mumbled, "Thank you."

"Nihongo de? Nani yuu ka?"

"Ah, arigatoo." Very good, Val. I knew you knew that one.

"Here, Vince. You throw for me. Aim for that bear I was going for." She handed me the hoop. The fat lady managed to frown while she was smiling. Apparently, I wasn't kawa-i enough for her.

I was figuring what a junk game anyway. Juice, in other words. Disgruntled, I just threw the hoop away in the direction of the bear.

"You got 'em! You got 'em!" Val was so happy. I was so surprised.

"Talent," I told Val.

The fat lady got off her dango ass and took the white bear off the square base around which the hoop I had just thrown nestled snug. She handed the big stuffed animal to Val, not to me, all the while smiling mochi at Val and frowning koge-gohan at me.

So I told her, "Thanks, eh, Babasan!"

When we walked away, Val hugged me and the chubby snow-white bear with the red nose. I grinned and said, "Only talent."

She said. "No act. You just lucky," and she took my hand and we went looking for our parents.

seven years later, back to five years ago

Val in ninth grade

me at UH

That same chubby snow-white bear with the red nose was still on the shelf in Val's room seven years later. She had been taking care of it—its smooth white fur wasn't even dusty.

Val was wrapped up in her blanket, the thin quilted futon that Obaachan had sewn for her long time ago. She was lying on her side, curled up, facing towards me at her door.

"Hui! Val! Val!" I just wanted to bother her.

She groaned and moved under her blanket. She lifted up an edge of the blanket and squinted out at me. Her eyes were red and puffy. She had been crying. She dropped the edge of the blanket back down and turned over to face the wall.

I looked behind me to make sure Mommy and Daddy weren't around. I

walked into her room, closing the door behind me. Stepping over her summer school books, I sat on the edge of her bed and touched her shoulder.

"Eh, Val. You okay or what?"

"Leave me alone."

"Val-baby. Something the matter?"

"Leave me alone, Vince."

"You sure?"

"Vince. Come on." She wasn't mad. She just wanted to be left alone for now.

So I tucked the blanket in around her and left her in her room, closing the door again. I went into the kitchen and looked out the window at Taro. Mommy walked in from their bedroom.

She said, "You look like you looking for something to do."


"Not really." I wasn't looking forward to doing *chores*.

"How about cleaning out the garage?"

"Mommy!"

"I think that's a good idea. Most of the junk is yours anyway." She walked away.

I walked out the kitchen door and scratched the matted fur on Taro's back on my way to the garage. There were some car parts in the back of the garage. Greasy. I looked over the sheets of plywood leaning on a side-wall of the garage. Ah, righteous! My old paipo board! The one I used to use when I was in intermediate school. Heavy duty! This was a beauty. I had carved this out of three-quarter inch marine plywood. Most everybody else's paipo boards were just flat pieces of plywood with rounded edges. Mine was *contoured*, with no flats anywhere. It was carved, planed, and sanded smooth. It was a bust-ass job. But it turned out

beautiful. It looked like this:  maybe three feet tall and a little less than two

feet wide. It was still beautiful. I hadn't used it since intermediate school time. The seven coats of marine varnish still gleamed with the dark brown wood grain showing through. Dings had been filled with linseed oil putty and revarnished.

I got this brilliant inspiration to paint a design on the top. I went into the storeroom and got some sheets of number one-fifty and four-hundred sandpaper. With the one-fifty I roughed an area of the top's varnish in the center of the board. I smoothed the sandpaper scratches out with the four-hundred paper. I got a small can of appliance-white paint and medium pointed brush. I imagined the design: a Hawaiian petroglyph of a guy throwing net. I pried open the can of paint with a screwdriver and I started painting. I figured—if look ugly, look ugly.



It looked ugly. Besides, Daddy once told me that the ancient Hawaiians didn't know how to throw net in the old times of petroglyphs. The art was introduced by some crazy Japanese fisherman immigrant who had decided to bring his throw net along with him to Hawai'i, to the sugar plantations. Think—what good would a throw net be when you had to katchi-ken and hole-hole all day long.

I pounded the lid back on the paint can, rinsed the brush in some old paint thinner, and put everything away. I leaned the board against the back of the garage to let the ugly design dry. It looked stupid.

"Vince."

"What!" I was thrown off. It was Val. "Oh, You scared me, baby-girl. Good morning, Val." She had just gotten up. She was still in her sleep clothes—her red play shorts and the oversize 1973 'Iolani Carnival t-shirt I had given her last year. Her hair was a mess. She was looking down at the ground. She had on Daddy's bust-up leather zoris. Something was heavy on her mind.

She just stood there next to me, looking down at her toes sticking out of the zori straps. The quiet red nail polish she had brushed on her toes about two weeks before was showing its age—dulling and chipping. She rubbed at the nail polish on one big toe with the front of the zori on her other foot. The hard nail polish became scratched—thin flat-white lines on the fading red gloss. She bent down, licked her thumb, and glided spit on the scratched nail polish on that big toe. The wet glistened over the shallow scratches, over the dulling red. The wet gloss of spit temporarily rejuvenated the old nail polish, making it look freshly brushed on. Like an illusion of nice and new all over again. I sat down next to her and put a hand softly on her shoulder.

"Hey, Val. How's everything?"

She was quiet, still intent on inspection of her big toe's nail polish.

"Val."

"Ah ..." She looked at me. Her eyes were still red and puffy. "Everything's cool. Pretty much."

"Well, that's nice." I wasn't going to press the issue.

"Vince." She hesitated, and continued. "Except, you see ..." She was looking at her big toe. One tear splashed on it.

"Vince." She was whispering. "I scared."

"How come?"

"'Cause I think maybe I might be hapai." She was talking so soft I could barely hear her.

But I heard her. I stifled this "What!" that I felt forced to say. 'Cause I heard



her. I managed a weak “Oh.” She was still bent down on her ankles, looking at her toes. They were wet with her tears. I stood up and pulled her up too.

“Come, Val. We go take one walk, to the park maybe. We no can let Mommy and Daddy see you all sad like this.”

“But look the way I ...”

“Ye, ye. ‘Look the way I dressed!’ I knew you was going say that. Big duduz. Let’s go take a walk, Val.”

We walked down the driveway. I had my arm around her shoulders.

Mommy called to us from in the house, “Eh! Where you two kids going?”

I shouted back without turning around, “Ah, we just going to the park, look around little while. We come back.”

“Everything okay?”

“Ye, ye. No worry.”

We turned onto Pauoa Road and walked towards the park. Val wasn’t crying or anything anymore.

She told me softly, “Was your friend, ye, but wasn’t his fault, see, we got drunk at one graduation party at this hotel, and, we was feeling good, you know, and, you know, we went into the bedroom, and ...”

“Ye, I know. You no need tell me about it.”

“I missed my period, two weeks already. You mad?”

“No. Why should I be mad? No can help, so no use come huhu. You went go see one doctor?”

“No.”

“Well, you gotta go see one doctor. He can give you one pregnancy test.”

“But I missed my period.”

“Ye, but this way we can make sure. You know, if yes or no, stay for reals.”

“Okay. Vince, no tell Mommy and Daddy.”

I looked at her. She was pleading with me. “No worry, Val.”

We walked to the park.

“Tell you what, Val. Duki’s Uncle Sei, he one doctor. And he’s cool. I know him. He not going tell nobody.”

“Not even Mommy and Daddy?”

“Course not.”

“Not even Duki?”

“*Course* not!”

“Okay.”

We sat underneath a monkeypod tree.

“Vince, what if I for real hapai? Pregnant.”

“You no can have one baby, no way.”

“Ye, I know.”

“Uncle Sei can fix that up. Abortion.”

“Abortion? Scary, eh?”

“Ne, safe. Easy. He do ’em, and you stay in his office overnight, and then pau.”

“Ye? How you know all this?”

“Duki’s cousin Lei ...”

“Lei? Ne! Lei?”

“Ye. She had. Duki told me.”

“How Duki went find out if Uncle Sei so cool and quiet?”

“‘Cause Lei told Duki. They close, that’s why.”

“Oh.”

We sat under the tree for little while and then we walked back home. Val was okay. I was surprised—I didn’t know my baby sister was this strong.

I called up Uncle Sei that afternoon. He said to bring Val in to his office Sunday morning so he could take urine and blood samples for the hapai test. He was real cool about it.

When I left to go to Al’s house to help him fix car, Val was washing clothes. I came back home after the sunset. Mommy said that Val had gone out. She went out with that guy, the one who ... I didn’t understand. I was tired and all greasy from working on the car. I took a bath, ate dinner, and sacked out.

I woke up when I heard Val and the guy come home little before midnight. They came inside the house and Val turned the TV on soft. I didn’t want to eavesdrop but I could hear them talking.

The guy was all sad about something. I think he was starting to sniffle. What a tilly. I heard him ask Val, “You sure you don’t want to see me anymore?”

Val’s voice was soft. “Yes.”

“Why?”

“I just think would be better for you and me.” Val wasn’t going to comfort the nakimiso. Good.

“Oh.” The tilly was sniffing. Shi, what a crybaby. More worse, he’s only one year younger than me. I should slap his head for what he did to Val. Tell the muff off, Val!

The tilly squeaked, “Val. I was wondering. I don’t want to worry you, but, you know, from that time, I was wondering if you could be pregnant or what?” The tilly kept on sniffing.

Goddam it. This was becoming unbearable, especially to a samurai like me. Chiksho! Aksame yo! Ukininam! What a sensitive performance. Give the silly-willy a Tony award. What a crybaby and a half! I wanted to run into the living room and scream the tilly. Just for scare the shets out of him.

I wanted to scream out with all my might:

Fuck, no cry. What crying going accomplish? What a dumb-shet panty! You supposed to flip out. You supposed to go pupule-kitchigai-mento. You supposed to get this blank look in your face as you think, think hard!

Hapai? pregnant? hara ga futoku nat'ta? remember something about that from Health class? one late period? period—menustration, menstruation. ovals, ovaltine, ovulation and uterine linings. blood, not blood, that's the menstrual FLOW. rags, tampax, kotex, modess—every month or so like the full MOON. rag-out 'cause of puberty. rag-in, rag-out, ovaries and fallopian TUBES. uterus and cervix and vagina. you cunt and clit. water retention and uncomfortability. that bloated feeling, hymens and hairy lips. if I was back in Health class, I'd stand up and scream the teacher, "WHATS IT ALL ABOUT, BRA!"

But this is not Health class. and the big deal is not about where the shi shi puka stay. no, not the scrotum bags and the testes balls—nuts and vas deferens. no, not kohes and bilots and botos and uleules. no, not the bone. no, not the anatomy of the genitalia, no, not the horrors of VD. this no stay one wet DREAM when you wake up sticky tomorrow morning. when you wake up, the girl still stay hapai. it's too late to "rap" about the problems of contraception and responsible parenthood with one of the good fun counselors. it's way too late for anything, kids.

Fuck, this not Health class anymore. no ways. nobody's giggling-snickering-cracking futs and dirty jokes in the back row with friends. no, everything's pretty serious now. pretty fucken serious.

Nobody paid any attention in Health class. everybody figured they knew all about all that shet. they all heard about it before. you know—balling, fucking, blowing, finger banging and K-Y jelly and rubbers and foams that taste gross. you know, the dick-cock, the two nuts-balls, the cunt, the clit. fucken ding-ding and ching-ching. big fucken shet. all the dirty pictures, all the positions all the moves.

Fuck that! You crybaby! Fuck that!

But I stayed in bed, lying very still. Screaming never helps the situation. I listened. Val let the crybaby sniffle a little bit more. I could tell she wasn't even patting his shoulder. She was probably sitting at the other end of the sofa. That's the way it ends, pal. The sofa springs squeaked as she stood up.

She told him, "It's time for you to go now. And no worry about me. I not pregnant." She's not? Since when? Ha?

She clicked the TV off and pulled him up from the sofa. She opened the front door for him. He put on his shoes. He got no goodbye-goodnight kiss. He stopped sniffing as he walked to his car.

Val locked the front door shut. On her way to her room, she stopped at my bedroom door. She pushed the door open and whispered to me in the dark, "What time tomorrow morning?"

"Nine."

"I thought you was sleeping, big ears." She shut the door. She was teasing me again.

Next morning I drove Val to Uncle Sei's office. He took urine and blood samples from her with no lectures. He knew me, so he figured he knew her. Val and me, we ate lunch at Rainbows'. We drove to Diamond Head Road and watched the surfers from the cliffs. I called Uncle Sei up before we left for home. The tests were negative. Val wasn't hapai. That Christmas, I gave her the Winnie-the-Pooh bear.

five years later, back to just the other night

Val's a junior at UH

me four years older than her and cruising

The kitchen door opened and Val skipped back out of the house.

"Eh, dreamer! What you doing?" she called out to me.

"Ha?" I was leaning against the fender of my car. I hadn't gone back to fixing the distributor. I was doing nothing, just daydreaming. She slipped on her cork-and-leather sandals and walked up to me.

"I found 'em in the guitar case. I took two. Thanks."

"Nihongo de?"

"Arigatoo!"

"Who you going out with tonight?"

"Carol."

"Movies?"

"Ye."

Carol's car drove up into our driveway. Taro barked lethargically—he was old and hungry. Carol beeped her horn at us. I nodded at her. Val turned to go.

"Eh, Val. Try come."

"What?" She walked to my side and I kissed her on her cheek. She said, "Oh, yo! What was that for?"

"Nothing much."

"Gee, I hope you never mess up my make-up."

"What?"

"Ne! Just kidding."

"Go already. Carol stay waiting."

"Bye then, Vince." And she kissed me on my cheek and walked to Carol's car.

"Bye, Val."

In the car, Carol asked Val, "What was that all about?"

"I don't know. He was fixing his distributor. He's always a little bit stony. Maybe too much mosquito punk when he work on his car outside at night."

"For real." Carol drove off with Val.

I left the car as is and washed up. I fed Taro some dry dog food. I went into the house and, in passing her room, I saw the chubby snow-white bear with the red nose on the shelf and the Winnie-the-Pooh bear on her bed. I washed the

dishes that night.

*Wini Terada*

# Toshi

## BORN OF THE PACIFIC

“My mother had a saying—‘Grow up into a good Japanese and become a good American.’ That was the whole genre of the Japanese school and community. It’s okay as a child, you understand. But when you grow older, you see a contradiction. I had to acknowledge whether I was a Japanese or American.”

—Toshi

The following is an excerpt, or more correctly, the remnant of the work which Toshiaki Fumio Suematsu began as a young writer in Waimea. Part of this work was published in the late 30s in a Honolulu Star-Bulletin column entitled, “I Am An American.”

While he tried to accurately portray the plight of the Japanese in Honolulu surrounding the war years, Toshi was acutely aware of the sensitivity with which many of his people received what was written about them and how they felt it would affect their image—and future—in these islands. Having felt the pressure from friends, and after struggling to depict the situation among the local Japanese, Toshi gave up his writing. “You can’t trust words,” he would say often.

He turned, instead, to numbers. Building his mathematical towers which could “out-compute any computer” and endlessly scribbling figures; in notebook after notebook—he sought to bring to light lost knowledge which he believes would benefit the young and bring hope for the future.

### **Book I** **A Letter to Hisae**

Although conceived in Hawaii, she was born in Japan.

The cause of it was her grandfather’s illness, which recalled her immigrant mother to Japan shortly before she, Hisae, was born. She was brought to Hawaii

soon after her birth, but by then it was too late where American citizenship was concerned. As an oriental, naturalization, by law, was closed to her.

Thus, Hisae was doomed to the life of an alien in America.

That was a dark secret in her life. She guarded it as though it was something shameful to admit. As a result, only a handful of people outside of the family knew about her Japanese citizenship. Hisae herself was not aware of it until she started going to school. But still being too young then to let the accident of her birth in Japan bother her in any way, a few more carefree years passed before the import of not being an American citizen struck her.

When it did, she suffered a stunning blow she found difficult to overcome. Like a sensitive child who learns belatedly about his adoption, she deviated from what might have been her natural tendencies. Overnight it seemed, and like the sudden darkening of a summer day, her gay laughter succumbed to a gravity induced by a premature emergence from the age of adolescence.

Her friends could not understand why she, who used to chatter along with them like mynah birds of the evening, suddenly became quiet, reserved, and after a time, withdrew altogether from their circle. Her parents knew the cause of the change that came about in their daughter, but they were at a loss to understand why her being born in Japan and not in America should afflict her so. Besides, as they saw it, there was an easy way out: Hisae could remove herself from the scene that was somehow making her unhappy; Hisae could return to Japan. And this, they urged her to do.

Hisae, while brooding over her misfortune, was almost persuaded. Not unconsidered was the desire of her parents to bring up at least one of their offspring in the authentic atmosphere of their beloved homeland, and thereby convert that child into a bona-fide Japanese, inculcated with what they considered incomparably admirable Japanese virtues, as well as refinement of culture. Hisae knew that her Japanese citizenship made her particularly fit for that role and how much her willingness to be educated in Japan meant to her parents. Cheerfully fulfilling that desire of theirs, without having to grapple with an awakened consciousness of her being, was something she honestly wished she could do.

Now if only she happened to be another Japanese American ...

But no, she wasn't. She was a Japanese, period.

The finality of it was hard to accept, and hopeless as she felt it was, she fought against it. And because she felt that to leave America was to run away from the reality of the life she must face irrespective of where she lived, she decided against returning to Japan ... trusting that she would have a better chance of finding herself, if not happiness, in America, American citizen or not.

She was to oftentimes wonder about that. However, as in the years that followed, she tried to reconcile herself with, first, her new status, and second, this now alien land. And as though her life—the form and texture of which depended so much upon amicable relationships between America and Japan—weren't com-

plicated enough already, the Manchurian Incident had to break out ...

That they were years of transition from being a Japanese to an American she was not to realize until a year afterwards. But the irony of trying to regain America only after losing her did not escape the poor girl.

For until she was overwhelmed by the circumstance of her life, it had never occurred to her to give serious thought to herself as an American. Well, yes, America was a wonderful country and it was good to be an American. That simply had been something she was taught in school, a lesson to be learned. Questioning where belief, with its personal touch called conviction, entered had never crossed her mind. She at first even doubted that she had been taking America for granted. Yet she must have been, she had to admit. For when all things commonly called American were wrested from her, she realized how closely she had been all along associating herself as a part thereof. And they became at once heartbreakingly precious and desirable. And there was remorse that she could have been so callous about American birthrights as to matter-of-factly assume that they were there merely to be enjoyed. And with deepening perception of American values her sense of loss deepened in proportion. And this, she wasn't sure, but probably it was out of a desperation to hang on to something tangible, she could act upon. She became obsessed with a passion to pattern her life as closely as possible to her concept of an ideal American.

And so it was.

The change came about slowly but surely. And people, noticing only its physical manifestations, were critical of her.

There was the way she carried herself—her back straight, her head held high, proud-like. (“I am proud to be an American, even if only in make-believe.”)

There was the way she dressed—colorfully and distinctively; the way she fixed her hair in a unique combination of braids and bangs that formed a crown of a head. (“Well, why not? This is a free country!”)

There was the way she spoke, grammatically correct and each word accorded its proper pronunciation and precise enunciation. (The Japanese-Americans were being criticized for their poor spoken English. “Think what they will of me, I am not going to speak like them.”)

Then there was about her an air of aloofness, as of a person who holds an inordinately high opinion of herself. (This last was not intended, but the inevitable by-product of a guarded behavior.)

Add them all together and what do you get? Certainly not naturalness.

Hisae, in the idiom of the Japanese Americans, was “haolefied.”

One night, I stayed up until dawn, writing a letter.

The Year: 1939—about a year and a half after Japan provoked the China Incident (1937) and invaded China.

The Place: Waimea, Hawaii—a small farm and cattleranch village, located



some fifty miles from Hilo.

The Scene: A shabby room of a farmhouse, standing isolated at the edge of a field planted with corn and an assortment of vegetables, mainly head cabbage.

“Hisae-san,” the letter began ...

I am writing by the light of a kerosene lamp.

It is in a room, furnished only with a table, a chair and a bed. The floor is covered with Japanese straw matting; the wall, with store wrapping paper. Overhead, there is no ceiling to hide the rafters and the roofing of corrugated iron, turned brown with rust. There is no closet either, and clothes hang loosely from nails on the wall. A battered suitcase together with several cardboard boxes, filled with personal items that are normally kept in bureau drawers, are shoved underneath the bed.

The table where I sit writing is pushed flush against a corner of the room, facing the room’s one window. Two layers of shelves, lined with books, protrude over the left edge of the table forming a part of what is my desk. The books look worn, both with age and usage. Among them are high school textbooks and classics of English Literature—Charles Dickens’ *David Copperfield*, to mention one; George Eliot’s *Silas Marner*, to mention another. Also, there are books by American writers: Washington Irving, Cooper, Hawthorne, Emerson, Dreiser, Sinclair Lewis, Hemingway and others.

Many of the books are inscribed with the name of my older brother, Masao. Also inscribed are the schools he attended together with dates, 1913 through 1927.

Masao, rare for his day, was permitted to leave home and go to live in Kohala, a plantation town about 28 miles away in order to work his way through high school.

Apart from the books mentioned, there are several other books bearing Masao’s name. Printed in Japanese and dating back to 1914, there are Japanese school textbooks Masao used while attending the Waimea Japanese Language School.

I have found these textbooks a great deal more formidable than the books published and distributed ten to fifteen years later by the Hawaii Japanese Educational Board, which is the governing body of the Japanese educational system in Hawaii. I remember trying more than once, to read Masao’s sixth-year reader but failing. It contained too many kanji—Chinese characters—that were not included in my own reader of the equivalent year.

Evidently, the Hawaii Japanese Educational Board recognizes the fact that the later children of the Japanese encounter greater difficulty than the earlier ones in learning to read and write and even to speak Japanese. Accordingly, it has revised the textbooks in keeping with the trend of the times. The curriculum, too, has been somewhat revised. For one thing, traditional Japanese brush writing has

given way to pen-writing in the penmanship class.

Clearly, this is a significant sign of the cultural evolution taking place in the lives of the Japanese Americans.

But that this cultural evolution has run its entire course, or that, culturally, the Japanese Americans are already alienated from their Japanese parents, as our leaders are claiming, I cannot agree.

For it is only presently, in the thirties, that the Japanese Americans are tentatively emerging from their Japanese background and becoming aware of themselves. And not necessarily as Americans.

(Of course, this is an opinion I can share with Hisae alone.)

“Hisae-san,” the letter began ...

I first knew her as a fellow student.

Her home was in Hilo; mine as already noted, in Waimea. The fact that the Waimea School ended at the 7th grade determined my going away to a school in Hilo. First of all, though, I had to gain permission from father, who preferred to see me go to work for the Parker Ranch. He could have used my help on the farm, but this he never considered, farming being so poor in those days. Parker Ranch offered the best outlet for the young men of Waimea—boys, really—who were forced by the necessity of helping out with the family finances by going to work as soon as they finished grade school, or even sooner, in many cases.

“Hisae-san,” the letter began ...

The ancient alarm clock, with its dome of a bell, says it is seventeen minutes after nine. Having lived for three years in Honolulu, I know that 9:17 for a city is still early. But the hour is already late for Waimea, where the farmers and the ranch hands go to bed as soon as possible after nightfall. Apart from having to get up early in the morning, there is hardly anything doing in the village to keep them up. Indeed, life outside the hastily closed front door is practically nonexistent once the sun disappears behind the distant mountain (Hualalai) and the chilly night wind sweeps down from the Kohala mountains, at the foothills where Waimea nestles. The best place is in bed, under heavy covers.

The house, a crudely put together collection of rough 1 x 12 boards, with gaps between them covered with lathings from the outside and stuffed with rags from the inside, serves as poor protection from the penetrating cold. The cold intensifies as the night deepens and the morning finds the grass almost white with frost-like dew.

In Waimea’s cold climate must be compounded the beneficial elements that are so invigorating to all things that grow here, including rosy cheeked children. But for inducing out of its fertile soil the green of the vegetables and the golden yellow of the ripened corn on a commercial scale required settlement by the Japanese who fled from the sugar plantations.

Not many farms are discernible from the eucalyptus bordered roadside, nor can the grandeur of the vast reaches of the Parker Ranch be appreciated from the wire fence picketed highway. But climb any one of the grassy hills overlooking the village and you will be able to see, in panoramic view, the picturesque squares—green, yellow, brown—that are the farmlands, interlaced with wind-breaks of trees. And beyond this, the cattleland, the amber-green expansiveness which stretches away for miles and finally gives way to the imposing height that is Mauna Kea, which at times looms near; at times, hazy blue and purple in the distance, depending upon your own mood or the atmospheric condition of the day.

Standing there, atop the grassy hill, my hair and clothes tugged at by the incessant wind that blows there, my eyes measuring the width and the length of the valley below, I have oftentimes wondered how Waimea managed to escape coverage by sugar cane.

I am glad that it has though. Glad too, that my parents left behind them the sugar-mill camp, where I was born. Not that I can recall experiencing life there, but I have heard too many stories told by the Japanese about that life on the sugar plantation.

“Hisae-san,” the letter began ...

“Haolefied.”

No other single word could have described her so aptly.

Not a compliment. For a “haolefied” Japanese American to another was one who was ludicrously out of character; bluntly speaking, a Japanese American who appeared to be aping the haoles. Behind it was the jeering opinion that such a person ignored the fact that the Japanese shape of eyes and color of skin will never be denied.

Moreover, “haolefiedness” connoted “high-tonedness,” superficiality, and other unfavorable characteristics that were said to be inherent in haoles; and these characteristics were considered to be all the more reprehensible when manifested in a Japanese American.

But for my part, Hisae’s “haolefiedness” was not an intermediary object of the Japanese American’s antipathy toward the haoles.

Partly this was because I grew up in Waimea, where its handful of haoles were personalities we villagers hardly ever encountered. Consequently, my mind was relatively free of disparaging thought association with haoles. But perhaps more pertinent was my familiarity with the characters in the books by Charles Dickens, Robert Louis Stevenson, Victor Hugo, plus a host of other writers.

A bookworm, I had started reading at an early age and had, by the time I finished grade school, read many of the required readings of high school.

Now I am not saying that I understood all that I read. But whatever I got out of all that reading must have given me a broader outlook on life than I would have

had otherwise.

Anyway, haoles or no (as a matter of fact, raceality never entered the mind) the characters in the books I loved to read were people with whom I vicariously shared love, honor, duty, with the attendant sorrow and joy, despair and hope, defeat and triumph ...

After reading, say, the life of David Copperfield, how could I not reflect that he, David Copperfield, was more human than I, or believe that he would not try to understand me any less than I tried to understand him.

Ah, yes! There I was loitering in the corridor of a world created by art ... drenched, as it were, with an idealism that must, sooner or later, leave me high and dry on the ebbtide shore of reality.

In no other frame of mind, however, could there have developed such friendship as developed between Hisae and myself. Normal reaction to her "haolefiedness" would have repelled me from her.

As it happened, her peculiarness—her singular individualness, rather—raised her in my eyes above the rest of of Japanese Americans. And meeting her was like meeting a character out of a book. This impression was enhanced by the impression she gave of one cast in a tragic role.

For there she was, attractive (this in more ways than one) and with a studied indifference about her, as though nothing on earth could ruffle her composure. Yet, watching her, I detected signs that betrayed her; signs of inner despondency, as though carrying out her role was at times too much of a burden. Her shoulders would sag, and I could almost hear her letting out a sigh or two during some quiet interval in the classroom, when everyone was ostensibly occupied with his or her problem of a lesson. At such moments, with her defenses down, she looked almost pitiful, and I for one suspected that the face she was putting to the world was only a brave front after all. And I wondered about the nature of the tragedy that must have jarred her young life and which had not only left its mark on her but was affecting her still.

What neither I, nor anyone else in the classroom knew was that she was not an American citizen.

I do not know what difference it would have made to any of us even if we had.

"Hisae-san," the letter began ...

I am the only one awake in the house.

A little while back, mother came, sleepy-eyed and muttering something about not staying up too late. Force of habit, I suppose. For she needn't have bothered, tomorrow being Sunday. I do not have to get up at 4:39 in the morning to work at the Parker Ranch store.

Force of habit on mother's part, I say, because from the time I was a little boy, a light burning in my room has made her get up once or twice in the night

to check on me, whether I had passed on to sleep while reading. Looking back, it is a wonder that the house never caught on fire, reading as I used to do while lying in bed, laid out on the floor, with the kerosene lamp with its open flame close to my head. Of course, mother was watchful. Still, I remember waking up some mornings to find the lamp still burning or having flamed out of its own accord from lack of fuel, the chimney all blackened with soot.

With everyone else asleep, the house is quiet of human noise. All the windows are shut tight, but there is a current of air circulating through the house, what with its many cracks and openings. Now and then, gusts of wind rush at and slip into the house and set the flame of the lamp to flickering—which brings to eerie life the shadows of the objects in the room the lamplight casts.

Sleeping in the house are father and mother as well as a younger brother and sister. There are two other members of the family. Masao, I have already mentioned. An older sister lives in Hilo and it was at her home that I stayed while attending school in Hilo. Both are married, and each has a growing family. I had another sister immediately below me, but she died in infancy and lies buried in the cemetery, which is located in the backyard of the Japanese language school.

So the original couple, who are my parents, have now increased to seven—no, twelve, when grandchildren are counted.

With Japan's extraterritorial ambition creating tension in the Far East, we are headed toward some kind of a crisis. I am nevertheless glad that my parents immigrated to Hawaii.

But what about them ... parents?

Our birthrights as Americans mean little or nothing to them.

They came to Hawaii, expecting to stay here for not more than three years. Yet here they are, more than a quarter of a century afterwards, still looking forward to that day when they can return to Japan. True, as they saw their children take root in this, to them a foreign soil, the motive behind their returning to Japan has changed. Now it is only for a pilgrimage home, to see their homeland at least once more before they died.

They came to Hawaii believing that money here was lying on the ground, and all they had to do was pick it up in order to gain riches. So what bitter disappointment theirs must have been to find out that all the wonderful stories they had been told about Hawaii were nothing more than part of a scheme to lure cheap Japanese labor to work in the sugar cane fields.

Looking back, it is a wonder how they endured their disappointment.

But endure it, they had.

Paradoxically, what helped them most was an added burden upon their hard-pressed lives—children.

Yes, it was in the birth of us children that they reassembled what meaning to working and suffering and striving that was for a time, shattered within them; even as the waves which bore them across the Pacific curled against themselves

and crashed and broke upon these then dispassionate, foreign shores. It was also in us children that they transplanted what hopes and dreams they had once had as man and wife, but which they now despaired of realizing on their own account.

And so it was for the sake of us children that they had set their hearts to establishing some semblance of home ... trusting, in the meantime, that with proper inculcation of Japanese virtues, we would eventually do right by them, as duty-conscious children, within whose veins course Japanese blood, and whose hearts and minds were instilled with the spirit of Yamato.

“Hisae-san,” the letter began ...

Thus, Hisae ... a strange girl, was different from any Japanese girl I knew up to the time I met her, and for a long time afterwards as well. A decade or so later, Japanese girls with suggestions of her likeness were to be a common sight. Back there in the early thirties, however, while the Japanese Americans were still strictly disciplined by the proud, unrelenting “Japaneseness” of their immigrant parents, her sophisticated manner of carriage, dress and speech, was radically ahead of the times.

And on first impression, she was the last person from whom I expected the kind of friendship she extended me. Yet, apart from all others, it was she who seemed to sense the loneliness and the misplaced feeling I was experiencing as a new student in a large school, away from home. For upon learning that I was from Waimea, she seemed to go out of her way to show kindness toward me. And when I began contributing stories to the school literary magazine and newspaper, she began showing an uncommon interest not so much in me, but in my hometown. She would ask searching questions, thereby eliciting from me stories about the people and life in Waimea, many of which I hadn’t thought I remembered.

In effect, she made me relive my boyhood in the village.

As to what purpose it all was, I did not, in the beginning, question. It was enough to talk to her; to have something to talk about in which she evinced keen interest.

“Hisae-san,” the letter began ...

Why Hisae’s interest in me and my life in Waimea?

She had a definite purpose in mind. But it was only afterwards, after I left school and Hilo, returned to Waimea and began working on the farm, that it occurred to me that she had subtly tried to make me see myself for what I was: a Japanese boy raised in a closely knit Japanese village. In short, a hyphenated American who had grown up more a Japanese than an American.

“Hisae-san,” the letter began ...

Hisae-san, I wrote, what can I say in reply to your last letter? You sounded so troubled and unhappy. As a matter of fact, in all your letters of late, you sound both troubled and unhappy.

I know—it is this trouble in China, dissonant with undertones of war. It has reopened that old wound you suffered back in 1931, when Japan first incurred the enmity of America by invading Manchuria.

Why did the China Incident have to break out, just when you were emerging at last from the darkness of America Lost to the dawn-light of America Regained? Fate, would you say? The self-same fate that made you be born in Japan?

As I recall, you did not use the word fate. You blamed “chance and circumstance.” “When I think how chance and circumstance can, and does alter one’s life, I cannot begin to express my fear of them,” was what you said, prefacing that to your telling me that you were not an American citizen.

But to tell you the truth, I was not able to understand what difference that should make to you. After all, Japanese or Japanese American, weren’t we both being regarded as one and the same? And even after you told me how affected you were when you realized the full import of not being an American citizen, I was not able to fully understand why that should be so.

I sympathized, yes. I said it was a shame. I said it was sad and tragic and all that sort of thing. Moreover, I made you think that I understood how it must have been to grow up thinking that you were a part of all that you learned about America, and then to find out that you were not a part of it. That perhaps you could never be, because the diplomatic differences between America and Japan seemed so great you did not think they would be able to amicably resolve their differences.

I have been pondering over it these past weeks—this night, especially—as I sought for words that might be of some encouragement and comfort to you. I have been looking into the past of my life, weighing the part you have played in it against what my life might have been if I hadn’t known you. I have done all this as objectively as possible, and the conclusion I have reached is this: I was not able to understand why you should be affected as you were because I had yet to know and feel what it meant to be an American, of what it should mean.

This is not to infer that I do now. If I did, I certainly would know what to tell you to relieve you of the anxiety you must be feeling this night.

How I wish I could tell you that the current war in China does not mean a thing. That it too, like that other war in Manchuria, will soon pass and that one of these days we will wake up to find that the fears we feared were utterly baseless.

Can I though, when I myself am affected by it? What grave concern America is manifesting over the situation in China! You want to close your ears to it, but you cannot help hearing disquieting whispers that before this crisis in the Far East is over, there will be war in the Pacific. Of course, war between America and Japan is still difficult to imagine. But it is not so far-fetched as it was at one time. For now that the prediction—“After Manchuria, China”—is a reality, the motive behind Japan’s troop movements coinciding with tell-tale military activities within the security-bound border of Germany is becoming clearer. All in all,

it is doubtful that America, this time, will stand idly by and watch China meet the same fate as Manchuria.

One thing is certain where we of Japanese blood are concerned: feelings against us will run at a higher and higher pitch, in relation to the rising criticalness of the times.

Already the newspapers are creating an atmosphere suggestive of war. Day after day, news dispatches from the warfront in China are featured on the front page, topped with banner headlines. Inexorably the Far East, which at one time seemed remote, is being drawn nearer and nearer. The general effect is that, while there may be some doubts to China fighting America's battle, there is little doubt that Japan is America's enemy.

... Japan is America's enemy, and what are you, Japanese in Hawaii, going to do about it? What are you thinking? What are you planning? What will you do, if and when America and Japan fight?

Gratingly, the oft-asked questions resound in our ears.

Now I ask you, is this a time for us to be looking ahead to the day when we expect to be accepted as bonafide Americans?

It appears not.

Faced as we are, with a future that is dark in its uncertainty, this appears to be a time when we ought to be satisfied—grateful even—just to be allowed to retain our status quo.

What do you say, Hisae-san?

Do you agree?

No, I do not think that you will.

At the moment you are troubled and unhappy, despondent. The pendulum swung, lethargically, to the other extreme. But given time, you will find your way out. You are bound to, just as you did that other time.

This I have to believe. At the moment, when it seems much easier not to care, I have to believe in you ...

There was a time when I thought that I would be less perturbed by the attacks made against us if I were, in truth, a Japanese—say, like yourself. For then I would neither have the right nor the privilege of defending my rights and privileges as an American. And not having said rights and privileges and, also, not entertaining any ideas about the so-called Promise of America, I would not be giving up anything—sacrificing, that is, any of the ideals and principles of America—even if I were to let myself be beaten down to utter submission.

For it is because we know that we, as Americans, are entitled to the rights and privileges guaranteed us by the Constitution that when they are abridged and portions of them denied us and there seems nothing we can do about them, that we become frustrated, angry, bitter and perhaps in the end, turn our thoughts against America.

That is what I thought.



But then, I came to know you, and as I learned more and more about you, I realized how wrong I was. I realized that I was only trying to justify my shortcomings, not to mention my poverty of understanding.

For I found out that you are, in fact, a Japanese. And yet I did not know of any Japanese American who was more concerned about the dilemma of their problem. Still, I could not say that you were bitter. And though you held on to no hope of becoming an American citizen, you were always trying to think and live as though you were. And on the rare occasions you showed traces of anger, your anger was directed to your own self, rather than to anybody else. You were impatient with yourself for letting yourself be angered by something somebody said or something that happened on the racial front.

Now, I must confess that that was something I could not very well understand. But that your general attitude was related to something you once told me about ideals and principles, I was quite certain. You told me that American ideals and principles cannot represent the people. That it is people alone who can represent them. That some people may not live up to them, but the ideals, as ideals, and the principles, as principles, remain the same. That they do not change. You then went on to tell me that it was important that the Japanese Americans recognize whatever outrageous things said or acts committed against them for what they actually are, and not confuse them with anything else that might tend to make them think the less of America.

There I felt, you expressed the basis of your belief in America. And as I kept thinking about it, in time I let myself think that you succeeded in imparting that belief in me. But this was in the relatively peaceful year we enjoyed prior to the outbreak of the China Incident.

Well, what now? Now that an actual test of that belief is here?

Alas, I find myself falling flat on my face.

So there, now you know.

And I'm telling you that I am feeling tenfold worse than if I had never stopped to consider myself in relation to America in any way.

Who was responsible for it?

It was you, Hisae-san.

Now, don't misunderstand me. I am not blaming you in any way. I am simply stating a fact. For it is true, is it not, that if it hadn't been for you, I would today be like most Japanese Americans, irritated to be sure by the sharp words of those who choose to antagonize us, but not too much. Not at least, to the point of being waspish about it, as I sometimes suspect I am. And since there seems little or nothing that can be done, perhaps it is better not to be all fired up with ideas, not be overly sensitive to the situation at hand. One is less liable to get hurt, under the circumstances. So the apparent listlessness and indifference for which the Japanese Americans are being criticized, may be good for them for all we know. I don't know ...

All I know is that I am not the fellow I might have been, if I hadn't known you. For which I am glad, though you may not think so considering the preceding paragraph. But I am! For, is not this problem you have made me face a problem all Japanese Americans must face if America is to mean anything to them?

What I am leading up to is this: that you, having brought me this far, cannot now give in to the apparent blank-wallness of the times. If you were to give in now, it would be the same as telling me to forget all that you have told me of what you believe.

I think your beliefs are sound, although God knows I am in no position to qualify them. They have helped you out of your first crisis. If they seem to crumble before the current crisis, is it your beliefs that are crumbling, or should it not be your belief in your beliefs?

There must be a better way of putting it. Anyway, what I am trying to tell you is that, if you find yourself doubting America, you are only reflecting your doubt in yourself.

Does that sound familiar? It should. I am only repeating what you have told me often enough. Yes, I am giving the thought back to you. I don't see what use I can make of it, if you can't.

Am I being ironic? Believe me, I do not mean to be. I am merely trying to impress upon you the fact that you have been in the past, and are today, the medium through which I judge America.

Judge, I say. That is a wrong word, judge. What qualifications have I to judge America? What qualification does anyone have to judge America?

Here might lie the root of the whole trouble with us: that we dare to judge. And judging, we are in turn, judged. And although irresponsible and insensitive to the consequence of the verdict we pass on to others, we on our part, react most illhumoredly to the verdict handed down to us.

That also, has a familiar ring to us.

Why, of course! Is not that the sum of what you have been trying to tell me all along? Quoting scriptures from the Bible, even ...

Strange how in the quiet of this night, they are all coming back to me, the many things you have told me, the views and opinions you have expressed on a thousand and one things. Stranger still, how I find myself receptive to them as though they originated in my own mind. Could this mean that I am finally thinking in the light of your understanding, and thus, observing myself all the more clearly for that?

Something is happening here ...

Time seems to be standing still, and I am held in the sensation of being detached and elevated about the immediacy of my being, the immediacy of my surroundings. And though I have always thought of the past as the irretrievable past, I sense an intermingled intimacy of the past and the present. The past it seems, is coming back and relating itself to the present. Nay, the past, it seems,

has never been the past, but an inseparable part of the present, and the way I have always thought of the past as the past, was only in the sense of it.

Am I making sense? I doubt it, but to me it is all very clear.

There is this kerosene lamp, giving off its yellow, flickering light. It could very well be the same lamp by which I, as a boy in grade school, used to read, late into the night. It is a wonder that the house never caught on fire, reading as I used to do: in bed, laid out on the floor, the lamp, with its open flame, close to my head. Of course mother was watchful. Still, I remember waking up some mornings to find the lamp still burning or flamed out of its own accord for lack of fuel and the chimney all blackened with soot. How I used to hate the chore of taking care of the lamps—refilling the fuel bowl with kerosene and washing the chimney I blackened ...

Am I talking of the past? What I have said in connection with this lamp by which I am writing is more real to me now than it ever was.

There is this lamp, as I began ... and the strawmatted floor, the store wrapping paper covered walls, the ceilinglessness overhead, showing the rafters and the roof of corrugated iron turned brown with rust ... and there is the wind outside, rustling dryly through the plantings of corn and the scraping of the branches of the peach tree against the wall of the house ... and there is the occasional stamping sound of the hoof of the horse tethered in the yard ... and there is the distant moaning of cattle being driven by cowboys from pasture to seaport ... and there is mother whom I expect any moment now to come sleepy-eyed and muttering something about not staying up too late ...

These and many other familiar associations which would require pages to list, are the same as when I was a child. And I guess they will always remain the same, in fancy, if not in fact, for the rest of my life.

Where then, is the past? Where the present? Where the future?—except, in the sense of them?

So, again, I am standing atop one of the grassy hills overlooking this peaceful village. Here, where the outside world nudges itself in only through the newspapers. Here, where in most instances, momentous happenings of the world are no longer so by the time they enter because the newspapers arrive two to three days after publication. Yes, again, I am standing atop that grassy hill, my hair and clothes tugged at by the incessant wind, and I can see in panoramic view the picturesque squares—green, yellow, brown—that are the farmlands, interlaced with windbreaks of trees. And beyond that, the cattle land, the amber-green expansiveness of which stretches away for miles until it finally gives way to an imposing height that is Mauna Kea—at times, looming near; at times, hazy blue and purple, in the distance, depending upon your own mood, or the atmospheric mood of the day. And standing there, my eyes measuring the width and breadth of the vast valley below, I am wondering again how this place ever escaped coverage by sugar cane, but am concomitantly glad that it had. Glad, too, that my

parents settled here, away from the sugar-mill camp where I was born. Not that they improved their lot by settling here and setting themselves up as independent farmers. In fact, they were having a worse time of it, being so poor. And yet, here was a measure of independence. What did these Japanese people here, living together, in a closely-knit community, feel and think and aspire? And what about their children, for whom they were trying to create an atmosphere reminiscent of the home country? What did they, in turn, feel and think and aspire? Parents and offspring though they were, there was conflict between them. And what about their common conflict with the larger American community? When reflected in the light of these questions, was life in the village below as peaceful as it looked from here? No, no! Even as ocean tides flood and ebb, beneath the conventions of what outwardly appears to be an easy-going, leisurely country life, floods and ebbs a deep-set human tide ...

I do not quite realize it yet, but I am thinking of the people and life in the village as you, Hisae-san, might. I am trying to visualize how I grew up here, as you yourself might. Then as I begin to see the picture you meant to evoke in mind, I know at last why you showed such uncommon interest in the stories you made me tell you about the people and life in my home town.

That was the way it was, many years ago, when I returned from school and Hilo, disappointed and maybe bitter too, for having had to start out in life long before I felt prepared for it. And it was to shut out the shame of the baseness of my thoughts, that I had gone off by myself to the grassy hilltop as though climbing to higher ground would cleanse my mind. And that is the way it is at this moment, when I sense no past, no present, no future, but only a great awareness of the now and its intimacy with that experience on the hilltop.

So the arc, you might say, has come full circle. I am back again to that beginning when you made me see myself for what I actually was—a Japanese boy, born of Japanese parents, raised in a Japanese community.

That first time, I was not able to accept this basic truth about myself. I don't see how I could be blamed for it, though. (Not that you have.) For the simple truth is that I was then not yet ready. There were so many other things you had to first awaken in my mind.

So I may have found myself, you might say. And I am going to be all right. Already, an idea of a story is developing in my mind. I am sure you can guess the nature of it without my having to tell you.

When, earlier this night—how ages ago it seems now—I sat down to write this letter, I did not know how to begin, did not know where I was headed. After I began, I did not know how and where I was going to end. Such was the muddled state of my mind. However, struggling along with this letter has clarified many things in my mind and I feel encouraged and exhilarated in a way I have not felt in a long, long time.

Now, let me check ... Yes, the idea of the story is still there, and growing,

and I am getting excited. I may still get to write that great American novel!

The flame of the lamp is fluctuating—becoming long then short, and black smoke swirls upward from its tongue, blackening the chimney. Symptom of the bowl running dry of fuel. Seems that I just made it. Something symbolic here ... for though this flame is about ready to pass on, so too is the night, and I sense the quickening pulse of the dawn.

One last thought before I leave: I began this letter with the idea of comforting you and I end up by finding myself comforted.

Hisae-san, what will I ever do without you?

Fumio

*Toshi*

# Mary Wakayama

## GO TO HOME

My mother enjoys telling my young daughters scary stories about the plantation days. The girls always ask to hear about the Coffin Lady. Mama sits down by the kitchen table, her face busy thinking. Her childhood and Obaban, her own mother, are ready to be called back. Mama pours us our sodas, passing out mochi-crunch or candy. Then she wipes her glasses, she has cataracts now, and clears her throat.

A long time ago, when Obaban was still new in the camp, she used to be the midwife for Union Mill Camp, outside of Kapa‘au town. Obaban was young and pretty, yeah? But she had to do too much backache labor, because she was stuck with the housemaid work for Greenwoods and for the whole Sam Wells place, too. Also early in the morning she had to cook for all the single men down at Camp. Plus she had two or three kids, but I wasn’t born yet.

She knew all the people living around there at the time, must have been 1890s, 1900. Those days Kohala was important like a small Hilo town. Union Mill was so dry and brown, though. Not like now. Not like when you folks went. In fact no more Union Mill now, right?

One family over there was not too lucky no matter how you look at it. When everyone was real poor, they were so poor people felt hurt even to look at them. Not just ricebag clothes like Obaban them, this family’s came boro-boro falling apart and too junk for rags. They were shame, too. What was the name? Kaneyama, Tanegawa, Kurokawa? The lady was always sick, even from the day she got to Hawaii. Ten years later on, when she already had four children, the haole doctor found out she had tuberculosis. Her husband was working that time as a stevedore at the docks in Honolulu, because Kohala-side had no cash money.

When she found out she was going to die, because those days there was no hope if you were poor and had t.b., she cried and cried. All the four children cried,

too. All the camp ladies who heard about it cried and cried with her. Pitiful, you know. But they were careful not to touch her or her clothes or her kids. The others would move far away if she even coughed.

Quickly somebody wrote a letter to her husband for her, because the poor thing could not write at all, not English, not Japanese. And no telephone, right? The letter was in Japanese writing, but the neighbor's son tried out the English school lettering he was learning. So the outside of the envelope had on it, "Go to Home" in big, neat pencil letters. Obaban took it to the plantation office. She always remembered those English words from looking so long at that message while she took care of sending it to Honolulu. She use to practice when we were small; wrote it in the dirt or the air, "Go to Home," "Go to Home," while she told all us about the lady dying.

The mother. So young to know that she would be gone soon. And she looked at the little faces, the children so young to lose the mother's love. They hugged each other tight and cried until they would have drowned in each other's tears. But Obaban said to the missus, "You have to hold on, yeah? You have to be strong for the children until your man comes back." So Obaban cried some more with them until she had to leave their shack. Later on she told us she would never forget how the lady looked: j'like a little girl herself, j'like somebody who got hit with a stick for no reason by nobody you could see. She was surprised and sorrowful, but she didn't want to let go of those children. No, they sat together holding onto hands, legs, arms, necks, so skinny—those days they had only can evaporated milk, you know. Nobody had vitamins, only rice, rice, rice—all one heap of sad, bony children and the small lady blowing her nose on one rag.

So they waited. But in those days the boat between the islands never did run on time, and anyway only two times a month, maybe. So it could be the mister missed a boat or never had the money right away or didn't get the letter in time or what? Nobody found out. He got back in time for her funeral.

The camp was taking it hard; yet plantation days people pulled together when the time came for whatever it was they needed to do. All the folks took care of the ceremony. The church people made the service just the right way, and the neighbors took care the kids, because no more outside family, right? They were all walking to the graveyard with the casket, just a plain wooden box, slowly moving under the hot sun. Nothing around but burned out, chopped down canefields, miles and miles of nothing. Was pretty near the old Kohala town temple, yeah, but they were so sad, all those people, be cause it was so unfortunate, that they had to take their time, step by step, remembering all the sorrow.

Well, the husband comes running up the steps of the temple and far away he sees the line of all those friends; everybody was there, and the coffin that they were dragging with ropes, and he faints. Right there. After all, he had to rush from the harbor at Kawaihae, jump in a jitney all the way to Union Mill and then down his house place. And when he saw nobody anywhere, empty, empty, all gone,

he knew right away she was make-die-dead. All pau. He knew where to find the people. He knew where she would be.

He got up hard on wobbly legs. He rushed to the road towards the hateful box.

“Wait, wait, wait,” he waved, yelled and screamed at uncle them til they all spotted him running from far down the dirt road, kicking up dust.

A big man. Strong, after all, he could do stevedore work, you know. Throwing huge boxes around. He could match the Kanaka boys, not like the other short Japanese fieldworkers. Though they were steady, hard workers. But that’s how lots of those old men use to be those days. Try look at all the old photos Mrs. Hamada’s house. The big box. Some were sumo wrestlers, giants. How they could find enough to eat, I don’t know. Some other ones liked to do cowboy work, heavy labor and low, low pay. Paid in beef. You would never know how strong and big they use to be with muscles all over, when you see them old and hunching down. J’like the grandpas sitting around at Ala Moana Center nowadays. But those are just the sons. The first old ones were tough guys, hard-headed though. Pakiki. They had to be.

They saw him. His children came running back when they heard the commotion. But they didn’t touch him. No, it was out of respect and fear. They stayed back, hanging around and watching up at his face. They were so sad to see him too late.

He gripped the box crying, choking up with sadness. And then he went force them to pry up the thing. He was one hard one, a mean big man, aching so bad that nobody would argue. They must have thought he was pupule already, anyway.

He was looking down at his wife’s dead body. Now he cried. Tears were rolling off in two wet paths. And everyone who saw him felt pitiful and cried at the uselessness of the waste. Poho.

He talked to his woman. He kept saying, “I’m sorry. Forgive me. I didn’t know. Couldn’t get home. I’m too late.” Over and over.

And then he reached for her cold body, so they had to try to pull him back while he pushed them off with the other arm. She was dressed so nice and neat. Pretty looking at the end.

“Give me a sign that you hear me, let me know you understand,” he was shouting into her face, into her ear as if she could hear him. Her body was almost pulled out, because he had to struggle against all the neighbors holding on to him, begging him to stop

That’s when it happened. She gushed out blood. Her jaw fell slack open, and it spread out all over her face and the front of the man. Soft red-black. Everyone backed off. But he was satisfied. She heard him. Stopped the tears. He put her down carefully and said a prayer kneeling on the ground with his head against the coffin: trembling, moaning, coughing, but not angry, not bitter now.



Our Obaban said everybody left that family alone for a long time after the burial. The oldest girl was in charge until they all grew up. They hanaied the baby brother with one Hawaiian family up in Waimea. Died already, but used to live in Makiki, long-time carpenter. That's the man who use to come see Obaban when she was sick. He said he wanted her to guide him after she died, the way his mother would always come home to visit his father in dreams.

"Baba, are you going to watch us, too?" My girls exchange looks and delighted shivers. They each look away as if lost in a long-forgotten landscape, but they always remember to ask the question.

"Sure, I'm going to do that for you folks later on." My mother looks around at our faces, notices that we are all paying attention properly.

"I will always watch everything that you do. So that you will do the right thing. And I can show you how to come home when you get lost." She looks so tired now.

"What if we don't listen?" says the little one. She giggles.

"Then I will choke you." My mother doesn't smile.

There is a long silence for us all. I change the subject. But I watch her gentle face knowing she'll keep her promise.

We are very lucky.

*Mary Wakayama*

# Sylvia A. Watanabe

## THE PRAYER LADY

In late summer, when the spirits of the dead returned to eat with the living and to walk under the sky again, the villagers in the Japanese plantation camp put food out for the hungry ghosts and celebrated their coming with dance. On the last night of the festival, as time drew near for the lantern procession to light the spirits down to the sea, the old head priest woke from a dream of falling water and called his wife to dress him in his white silk laying-out kimono. It was nearly time for Kitaro to come for him, he said. Okusan stood in the doorway of her husband's study, trying to catch the drips from the wooden spoon she'd been using to stir the red bean soup, and stifled the impulse to point out that Kitaro wasn't likely to come back now that he'd finally gone to the only peace that anybody was ever likely to know. Instead, she said, "Papa, are you all right?" The old man sat in the musty darkness among shadowy stacks of dog-eared journals and sheets of rice paper covered with Chinese characters. "I would be a lot better if other people did not stand around asking foolish questions," he snapped. "Hurry, old woman! Kitaro will not wait."

Okusan walked over to her husband and looked closely at his face for signs of the falling down sickness. She wasn't sure exactly what she was looking for; three different doctors couldn't name the first attack which had come on suddenly during an argument with the new head priest at the annual huli huli chicken sale a few months before. Sensei had violently opposed his successor's latest revenue-making scheme of bringing in a popular singer from Japan to appear at the festival. "I built this temple with my own hands before you were even a smile in your Papa's sleep!" Sensei had shouted just before the ocean roared up inside him and the blackness came. The "fit," as Okusan called it, had passed as quickly as it had come, leaving him paralyzed in both legs. The villagers said that the old priest had finally been defeated by progress. For Okusan, who did not put much store either in progress or in medical science, her husband's "fit" had been an al-

most magical event—like all of the events that made up time; it worried her that she did not yet know the proper rite of propitiation. The old man was not making matters any easier.

“Ugh,” he said, as Okusan bent over him. “You smell of chives.” Each week, his wife smelled of a different miracle cure for arthritis that she’d heard about on the People Speak radio show. There had been lemon balm, mint, aloe, clove. He remembered favorite smells. The aloe had been worse than the chives. “I must make ready for Kitaro,” he replied.

“Hush, old man,” his wife chided. “Why are you in such a hurry to go away from me? The doctors didn’t do any good ... but they never do ... we can still ... let’s ... let’s...” She did not know how to go on. She did not know how to stop losing him. “I know you don’t really approve.... But it won’t hurt to try. Let’s ask the Prayer Lady to come. I know she will.” Taking her husband’s silence as a sign of encouragement, she pressed forward. “Didn’t Nobu Kobayashi, the fish vendor, go to the Prayer Lady for that heart condition that the doctors swore would kill him inside a year, and here he is, here he is, fifteen years later, even better than new? And what about Mr. Ah Sing, the vegetable man? On a rainy day, he couldn’t get out of bed to make his deliveries, his gout was that bad. And remember, oh remember, the Koyama store lady?”

Sensei remembered. It was said that the Prayer Lady could heal people just by touching them with her hands; that the woman had acquired her special powers in a moment of revelation on a rainy summer afternoon when she was emptying the trash. As the story went, a sudden gust of wind had blown the torn page from a sutra book across a neighbor’s yard into her hand, and as she held the page, the full meaning of the text had flooded her mind with an infusion of light. From that moment on, it was believed that she had a special connection with the kami, the spirits of the ancestors, who gave her the power to heal with her touch. For years, Sensei had regarded her as a less than creditable rival for the loyalty of his congregation. Who knows, he thought. If it hadn’t been for that woman carrying on her services down the road, church attendance might have been higher. Maybe he would have been able to stop.... The image of the barely pubescent rock star with the duck-tail hairdo flooded into his consciousness.

“Humph,” Sensei grunted.

Okusan pushed on, “I’ve heard such good things, such encouraging things, really. Mrs. Koyama and I were just talking about the Prayer Lady the other day....”

“Oh, foolishness!” the old man cried. “That old crank! That garbage can Buddha! You will kill me with your foolish ideas before Kitaro even gets here!” His wizened face had drawn taut; his eyes were bright. The air between them shimmered like spun glass, then darkened again.

Outside, the last tour bus rattled in from Kaanapali. The doors hissed open, spilling out a metallic stream of tourist voices that flowed into the hum of the

crowd across the temple yard. "That should be Tanji's vegetable wagon bringing the musicians from upcountry," Sensei said. He stared directly at his wife. His voice was suddenly very quiet. Tanji had been a friend of Kitaro. The sea had taken them both in the same fishing accident.

Okusan sighed. Old man. Old man, you will scare everyone away with this craziness and that will be worse than being dead. She did not say the words.

"Hot noodles! Hot dogs! Genuine good luck charms!" the hawkers cried, raising their voices above the sound of the crowd. Okusan wrapped her husband in funeral silk the color of old photographs. The old man closed his eyes. The silk flowed like falling water over him. The scent of camphor rose from its deep folds, like memory.

The dream seemed painted on his closed lids. Always the same dream. The sea. The boy. Strong brown limbs flashing against the white sand, hands reaching up to free the luminous white shape into the bright sky, like a prayer, "Oh look!" And up the kite soared—a dancing shape in that dream of blue. The boy had been the last. He had always belonged to the sea. The others were buried in the temple yard.

The priest had built the temple with his own hands—hauling stone, mixing mortar, sawing wood until his hands bled and it seemed he would never stand straight again. As he raised walls and roof, the temple shaped what he became. His body grew brown and taut. He hammered the roofbeams down, singing to the sky. He married in the temple and buried his stillborn sons in the graveyard, one by one, knowing that it was not the end of things. Each year, time was renewed for that brief while in summer when the spirits of the dead wakened and the dusty glow of the festival lanterns burned into the early morning.

In the dream, time held him like an embrace, continuous and whole. It seemed he could not tell the boy who sang from the roofbeams from that other boy who ran upon the sand, reaching eager hands toward the sky.

The old woman finished dressing him. "There," she said, settling him on the living room couch with a book of sutras on his lap and his legs stretched out before him. "How handsome you look." The reflection from the reading lamp behind him glinted off his smooth, bald scalp like little stars.

From across the temple yard, the bamboo flute sang out, calling the dancers to the dance. The drums began to beat and the singers to chant. Okusan went to the window and peeked out through the blinds. "Is he coming?" the old man called. "What do you see?" Within the ring of lights formed by the festival lanterns, the dancers in summer kimonos circled the musicians' tower, their sleeves fluttering like white birds in the wind.

"Only dancers dancing, Papa," the old woman said. She sensed, rather than heard, the stirring of the sea that seemed to come from everywhere, like the quickening of touch.

The sound of footsteps crossed the porch and someone knocked at the screen

door. "Konban wa!" a bright voice called. The door pulled open. The Prayer Lady stood on the stoop, with the light from the festival lanterns burning in the night behind her. She wore a Mama-san dress with tiny star-shaped flowers, and her white hair was pulled back neatly into a bun. She carried a bag of strawberry guavas and a bunch of golden chrysanthemums in her hands. "Hello, Okusan," she said, giving the flowers and the fruit to her. The Prayer Lady looked at Sensei installed in his funeral clothes upon the couch; she looked him up and down. Her voice was grave. "I heard you weren't feeling well and decided to pay my respects, but if I'd known it was this serious, I would have come sooner."

"You...." Sensei glared at his wife.

"I'll go and get some tea and things," Okusan said, hastily leaving the room. "I won't be long...."

The Prayer Lady turned back to the old priest. "To look at you," she said, "one could never tell...."

"Um," Sensei grunted.

"I see it depresses you to talk about it, though I must say you are taking the whole thing very bravely." She went from window to window, pulling up the blinds. "Ah, but it's a splendid night, isn't it?" The night filled the room. The music swelled.

Sensei's lips were an angry white slit. "I heard you were in a retirement home," he hissed.

"No ... the things people say! You wouldn't believe what they are saying down in the village—that you've lost your grip ... oh, all kinds of things. No one has faith anymore, you know? Miracles aren't impossible, after all, though they're a bit out of style. But of course, I've considered it. Going into a retirement home, I mean." She glanced about the room at the kegs of rice and saké, the plates of sweets, and the fruits that well-wishers had brought. "How fine it must be to lie about on a night like this...."

The old priest looked furious. "Oi!" he called for his wife. "... with well-wishers streaming in the door ... and nice things to eat...."

"Omae!" he yelled louder. Where was that old woman?

"... everyone making a fuss over you...." The woman was relentless. "You wouldn't have to lift a finger...."

"Get out!" Sensei shouted. He was shaking with rage. "Get out, get out!"

The Prayer Lady walked to the door. "Oh, Sensei," she said. "Don't you know?" Her smooth pink face suddenly looked old. "Neither of us could have held back what is happening." She quietly turned and left.

"What is all the fuss?" Okusan asked, carrying a wooden tray of tea and cakes into the room.

The old man did not answer. He sat very still. Then, he laboriously got to his feet, hobbled past the old woman—waving aside her offer of help—and walked out the door. The night was alive with stars and the sound and smell of ocean.

Okusan watched from the porch steps as he made his way across the temple yard and followed the procession of lights down to the bay. “Arya sa, koryaa,” the singers chanted. “It has been so. It shall always be.” The lanterns glowed on the dark water. The singers said the words, like the chant of memory through time.

*Sylvia A. Watanabe*

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# Stephen H. Sumida

## WAITING FOR THE BIG FISH: RECENT RESEARCH IN THE ASIAN AMERICAN LITERATURE OF HAWAII

Ignored and even denied to exist by all except its creators until the 1970s, the Asian American literature of Hawaii is now gaining long overdue recognition in its birthplace. This report on that literature—three generations of it—stems from research to which many contributed, we hope so that there will be no further claims that there is no such thing as an Asian American literature of Hawaii.

In 1959, Hawaii gained U.S. statehood, having been a territory since annexation in 1898. Not by mere coincidence, in 1959 two books important to Hawaii's literature were published. Although one far surpassed the other in popular appeal, both internationally marked historical and contemporary Hawaii's place in literature. But if today we are not particularly aware of Hawaii's literary distinction, if we hardly acclaim Hawaii as a truly literary setting, seriously, of any stature, it is no surprise. For the two landmark books published in conjunction with the granting of Hawaii's statehood are of dubious benefit to Hawaii's literature. One is James A. Michener's novel, *Hawaii*. The other, much less known, even obscure, outside of Hawaii, is an anthology edited by A. Grove Day and Carl Stroven, with an introduction by Michener, entitled *A Hawaiian Reader*.<sup>1</sup> The former has enjoyed worldwide fame. It fleshes out an attractive and popular dream of Hawaii as the setting for both paradisaical indolence and, in sensational contrast to the indolence, the heroic adventures of men and women building an island civilization. It is magnificently the sort of stuff that readers would not want to take entirely seriously. Meanwhile, the anthology edited by Day and Stroven, meant to be taken seriously indeed, is crippled by glaring deficiencies which I shall shortly point out. These two works, it could well be said, were ostensibly summations of nearly two centuries of written literature and many more than that of the native Hawaiian oral tradition. And yet they made it seem somehow that nothing of real literary

consequence was ever created in Hawaii by Hawaii's people.

Michener's *Hawaii* and Day and Stroven's *A Hawaiian Reader*, however, have a far deeper significance to the development of Hawaii's literature than the former's label of being mainly "popular" in appeal and the latter's weaknesses and relative obscurity may suggest. The two statehood works helped to tighten the hatch that held down an indigenous Hawaii literary development in this century. Michener's came to be known as *the* novel of Hawaii. Whatever one may have thought about the novel's literary merits and demerits, the general feeling was that it, after all, was even by its sheer mass the most and the best those small tropical islands could muster. Why should anyone try to surpass it? Or why should anyone look for older works that have told Hawaii's story with any more authenticity or imaginative flair? Hawaii's criticism of the novel—unfavorable criticism which was quite abundant—lashed Michener for factual inaccuracies or, when he told the truth, for casting our ancestors in the lurid light of scandals involving family characters closeted generations ago. Michener and scholar A. Grove Day counter these charges with the obvious disclaimer that the novel is, after all, fiction.<sup>2</sup> But there has also been another dissatisfaction with the novel among certain people in Hawaii: that the novel considered to be *the* novel of Hawaii has been written by an outsider. Why did no one born and raised in Hawaii, someone steeped in the ways and the knowledge of Hawaii's cultures and history, write the novel? Why did no one among each of the major ethnic groups of whom Michener writes tell his or her people's story from the inside out? The dissatisfaction was also that somehow we in Hawaii had been robbed, and now it was too late to overtake the thief. And it was our own fault—somehow.<sup>3</sup>

But Michener of course is not to *blame* for his novel's popular success, so great that it would appear to have drowned out all other voices anyway. The real damage comes in his confirmation of a subsidiary and insidious popular notion: in this supposed paradise, hard-working Asians did not write, did not cultivate verbal expression while they cultivated Hawaii's soil, much less indulge in verbal creativity. There were utterly no Asian voices to drown.

The novelist's assertion of this belief is explicit. In his introduction to Day and Stroven's *A Hawaiian Reader*, Michener praises the editors' selection of works which "give recognition to the fact that Hawaii's population today is about fifty percent Oriental in ancestry."<sup>4</sup> These selections include, for example, May Sarton's autobiographical tourist sketch, "Sukiyaki on the Kona Coast," a reminiscence of an evening the author spent dining in a Japanese American family's farmhouse.<sup>5</sup> The central image in the sketch is a lizard scurrying about the dining room walls. That lizard is imaginatively linked, whether deliberately or not, with the visitors' host, who comes and goes, waiting on the guests and seeing after their comfort. Such comparisons, needless to say, are not exactly relished by Hawaii readers of Sarton's sketch, though Michener, Day, and Stroven are apparently insensitive to the belittling inference that the Japanese American, Hawaiian

host is like the lizard: charming and elusive, yet somehow alien to normal life. Still, one anthology selection in particular does nevertheless draw Michener's criticism in this regard. The selection, the only one in the anthology that employs an Asian as its central character, Jack London's "Chun Ah Chun," prompts Michener to point out that through such stories London "denigrated an entire body of people largely on racist grounds." Yet he goes on to praise the story's "sly warmth" and "much wit."<sup>6</sup> Why are such stories the anthology's only recognition of the very existence of Asian Americans in Hawaii? Why are there no selections authored by Asian Americans? Michener explains: "Having arrived in the islands as laboring peasants, these Orientals did not produce a literature of their own...."<sup>7</sup> For nearly twenty years after it was published, Michener's statement was believed, or at least not seriously challenged, if anyone paid special attention to it at all, as far as I know.

I am very fortunate. Having gained a bit of knowledge on the matter, I can see now what a falsehood Michener perpetuated. I do not mean to imply that Michener was solely responsible for the idea that up until and beyond 1959, there was no Asian American literature of Hawaii. He was by no means alone in making the claim. In his company were those who presumably researched Hawaii's literature thoroughly: Pacific literature experts A. Grove Day and Carl Stroven, for example. And it is as if the rest of us were sitting dumbly in their class. Even in the next decade, in 1967, another Hawaii anthology editor, Gerrit P. Judd, found it necessary to fly pretty far afield to find some writings by an Asian which have something to do with "the Hawaiian experience." Judd's sole Asian "author" is Mitsuo Fuchida, with a true-to-life testimony excerpted from U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, bluntly titled, "I Led the Air Attack on Pearl Harbor."<sup>8</sup> Are we to understand that this galling selection represents, up to 1967, Asians' most significant contribution to Hawaii's literature and history?

I have presented this lengthy introduction to my paper in order to establish a context—both intellectual and emotional—in which Arnold Hiura and I conducted research in the Asian American literature of Hawaii, funded by a grant from the U.S. Office of Education's Ethnic Heritage Studies Program, 1978–79. The results of our research were the limited publication of *Asian American Literature of Hawaii: An Annotated Bibliography*, and an American Studies graduate course making use of our findings, offered primarily to thirty teachers who have gone on to introduce Hawaii's Asian American and other ethnic literature to their own classes in an impressive variety of ways.<sup>9</sup> This is literature that has not only been neglected, but whose existence, as we have seen, has been denied. As we were to find, it is a literature that goes back at least three generations, in some instances more, with hardly a break in the activity of writing imaginative works since the immigrants' arrivals in Hawaii from Asia through the later 19th and early 20th centuries.

Our published bibliography was limited to include only the publicly available works written in English by people of Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, and Korean descent in Hawaii. When we began the project, we frankly did not know whether we would find even ten pages worth of bibliographical entries. But the amount of material we found stunned us. Our bibliography, with some twenty pages of introduction, a subject index, and other apparatus, ended up being 210 pages long. We found nearly 750 works ranging from novels through two-act dramas to individual lyric poems and poetry collections. All of these, again, are imaginative works written by Hawaii's Asian Americans in English; and all are available either in published or in typescript form in public libraries in Hawaii, notably the University of Hawaii's Hawaii-Pacific Collection.

The account of three main generations of Hawaii's Asian American literature, however, reaches behind those written in English by the Hawaii-born. It was on the Big Island of Hawaii, in particular, that we saw how vital the history of Hawaii's literature in Asian languages has been and continues to be today. We were introduced to two still-active *haiku* clubs and a *tanka* club begun by immigrant Japanese who devoted spare moments to writing and perfecting poetry following traditional Japanese conventions, using the Japanese language, yet in many instances adapting the poetry to its new setting. On another occasion, welcomed into the home of a Filipino immigrant couple long active in Hilo's polyethnic community, we were shown a treasure: an epic composed in Ilocano and cramped into the lines and margins of a thick, homemade booklet of now yellowing paper, an epic created in Hawaii by an inspired Filipino American immigrant, but as yet unread by anyone else, its present keeper being a Tagalog rather than Ilocano speaker. We could see what further work and reading we could look forward to, when the time and opportunity should arise to help make such Asian language works available to readers today.

Furthermore, we learned some rather startling facts about the history of Hawaii's Japanese immigrant poetry, which is especially vigorous even today. In a conference we devoted to the literature of the Big Island, in the summer of 1979, it was reported by members of the Hilo Shōu Kai (the Literary Society) that their haiku club, founded in 1903, is the oldest active one in the world. We were astonished to hear this. We asked the speaker to repeat himself. He did: this haiku club is the world's oldest, still active. He might as well have been discussing the island's volcanoes, we were so impressed.<sup>10</sup> In its eighty years, the Shōu Kai and its individual members have published a number of anthologies, collections of individual artists' poems, literary studies of their poetry, and individual poems in newspapers and haiku magazines, mainly in Japan. In a related development, four different *tanka* (31-syllable Japanese verse) clubs in Hilo joined together in 1923 to form the also still-active Gin-u Shi Sha, the Silver Rain Society, whose name is finely descriptive of Hilo's prevailing climate. Even the mere fact of the aptness of the name raises another: a Japanese poem by convention is required to contain

mention or a suggestion of the season for which it is composed. How, the question was asked, have Hawaii's haiku and tanka poets been accommodating their works to Hawaii's far-from-Japanese seasons? The oldtimers on the panel were not at all surprised by the question. One replied that Hawaii's Japanese poets have developed a unique vocabulary of "season words" conventionally employed in their haiku and tanka. These words are based on growth cycles of tropical fruits, flowers, and crops, such as sugar cane; or on the seasonal appearances of certain fish or other wildlife; or on the apparition of snow on the distant peak of Mauna Kea. Indeed, it was reported, in the 1930s a Japanese literary scholar published, in Japanese and in Japan, a study of the season words and symbolism unique to Hawaii's Japanese poetry. The question arises, then, is this "Japanese poetry" at all?

Thus we find haiku such as the following: "Dawn's moon,/Remnant snow on Mauna Kea/Still slumbering."<sup>11</sup> Another plays with the seeming paradox still fresh to the speaker, when she is struck by the sight of wintertime tropical greenery: "Amid winter verdance/Mynah birds feast on/Garden delicacies."<sup>12</sup> Some haiku go further than the use of place names, plants, animals, and seasonal imagery distinctive to the locale. As in the following, they evoke the mythology of the islands' original settlers: "Rising in darkness/Pele's red flame of ardor/Consumes the night rain," Pele being the Hawaiian goddess of eternal fire and thus of the island's volcanoes, her home.<sup>13</sup> The fire and the rain meet spectacularly in the haiku just quoted.

Yet somehow the most deeply moving fact we were to learn from the issei poets of Hilo came not from the high nor the middle reaches of literary art, but from folk arts. As in Japanese and Japanese American communities elsewhere, during the summer in Hawaii a festival is observed, the O-bon celebration honoring family ancestors and paying gratitude for the year's harvest. Over the century, plantation communities scattered throughout Hawaii have created their own lyrics for some O-bon folk songs to which the people dance. Members of the Hilo Bon Dance Club reported at the Talk Story Big Island Conference that since the town's resumption of observing the Japanese festival sometime following World War II, the old folks first introduced a song, and have expanded it year after year. This song, the Hilo version of Yamaguchi, Japan's "Iwakuni Ondo," tells the story of the famed 442nd Regimental Combat Team on which Hawaii's nisei served, fought, and many died.<sup>14</sup> Unable to understand the stylized Japanese language of the song, even those in the audience who had grown up dancing to the song once a year were warmed for the first time by its meaning. The lyrics' significance struck deeply home: here is a growing folk epic, in a sense, of the Japanese American people. As the sansei, or third generation, members of the Hilo Bon Dance Club read a translation of a small excerpt from the song, then sang a few verses, young and old alike in the ethnically diverse audience wept quietly. Three generations were bound by the experience, a momentarily shared

understanding of a major event in the recent history of Hawaii's people.

Asian immigrant literary activity continues to thrive today in each of the major Asian ethnic communities of Hawaii. The Chinese in Hawaii have literary societies with rather long histories and impressive successes. They have, for instance, presented elaborate classical Chinese dramas adapted to being performed in Hawaii. Meanwhile the Japanese, as we have seen, have cultivated the poetry of their homeland through their literary clubs. Poets among them have published extensively in Japan. Some have won Imperial poetry awards and recognition for their work, though they have long remained virtually unrecognized in their permanently adopted country. A notably active Asian immigrant literary association is GUMIL-Hawaii, whose purpose is to perpetuate the Ilocano poetry of the members' Philippine Island origin. In the 1970s alone, GUMIL-Hawaii published four anthologies of poetry, drama, and essays written by its members. The organization annually holds a drama writing contest, and the winning play is performed at a community cultural extravaganza little-known outside the recently immigrated Filipino community. Gradually the organization is turning to the composition of poems and dramas using Hawaii and other American settings and themes, and using the English language. These immigrant writers are in Hawaii to stay; the development of their writing reflects this fact. New immigrants from Korea, meanwhile, which is providing another major and growing Asian ethnic group in Hawaii, find some outlet for literary expression and creativity in the Korean language newsletters of the Korean community's Christian churches.

Like the writers among their parents' generation, the Hawaii-born Asian American writers first emerged in our research as members of literary and social organizations. But now, one of the common bonds holding the organizations together was not only ethnic heritage, but also education. In the 1920s and early '30s, the second generation writers were student writers, some still in high schools sparsely scattered through the islands, but most of them among those fortunate enough to be attending the University of Hawaii. With very rare exceptions, it appears, these students subsequently entered business and professional careers without later publishing more mature literary works of their own. But this does not mean that they made no contribution to Hawaii's literature. While they did write, they wrote prolifically—and sometimes very well.

Beginning with the 1919–20 volume of the *Chinese Students' Alliance Annual*, we were excited to find a yearly harvest of stories, poems, a drama or two, and essays prominently showcased in the yearbook's "Literary" section. Though we as yet have found no earlier literary works in English by Hawaii's Asian Americans, the student writers of the early '20s apparently saw themselves as heirs to an established literary tradition. What earlier tradition might the *Annual* editor of 1923 have in mind, when he exhorted the Alliance members to redouble their literary efforts, to emulate "the artists, the poets, the dreamers, literary ge-

niuses of yesterday”?<sup>15</sup> Whoever the geniuses of yesterday, the passionate editor goes on to point out the direction the literature must now take:

Who but we are more equipped to interpret the romance and tragedy of our own people—their passions, sentiments, desires? Is it not imposed upon us to overthrow such misconceptions as others sometimes so stupidly bring on our heritage? Yes, we Chinese students are the ones who must truly interpret the East to the West, formulate our views and opinions of the many complex problems confronting Hawaii, China, and the world at large, and share in bringing about a mutual goodwill throughout the world.<sup>16</sup>

As the editor implies in his exhortation, these early second generation writers looked to both the East and the West for literary material. But the matter is not really so simple as it may sound. Two stories by one especially talented member of the Alliance demonstrate the East-West duality and the complexities it entails.

One story by James Chun is a melodramatic romance entitled “Fate?” and set in China—a timeless China existing apart from the currents of world history, a China typical of works by this early generation of Hawaii-born Chinese American students. The story’s elaborate plot seems so improbable that one is tempted to read the story as a fable.<sup>17</sup> Here is how we summarize Chun’s tale in our annotated bibliography:

Ah Kwong is adopted by Mr. Su, wealthiest man of Silk Grove. The young man falls in love with Bau Lin, daughter of Ah Kwong’s teacher, Professor Lum of Green Plain. A marriage, however, is forbidden by the fathers because the neighboring home-villages of the Su and Lum families are hostile to each other. It turns out, however, that Bau Lin is actually Mr. Su’s daughter who had been kidnapped as a child and taken to Green Plain. Professor Lum, knowing this, had forbidden marriage between brother (as he thought Ah Kwong to be) and sister. When it’s found that Ah Kwong and Bau Lin are not brother and sister by blood, the two are wed—uniting the families and the feuding villages.<sup>18</sup>

Yet despite the timeless and exotic China setting of the story, the plot should not appear entirely implausible to an audience familiar with Western literature. Think of what a Shakespeare would do with this germ of a comedy.

James Chun’s other story, “In the Camp,” is set in contemporary Hawaii.<sup>19</sup> Like the earlier story, this one pivots on a twist of fate—but this time, twisting with a tragic irony. Here is our annotation:

The first-person narrator of this strongly naturalistic story recounts the tragic life of Wong Mun Sing, a plantation laborer who fails to return to

China to be reunited with his wife and his mother. At age 25, Wong was the camp's best worker, "strong, good-looking, ... sprightlier than any of his companion workers." Having worked in a rainstorm, Wong falls ill and resorts to taking opium to relieve his pains. He explains to the young narrator, the son of a plantation storekeeper, that he's been unable to save enough money to return to China. Upon recovering from his illness, moreover, Wong remains addicted to opium. Twelve years pass. The narrator has established a career as a physician. He once more sees Wong, now a wasted gambler and opium addict. Wong wins a considerable sum by gambling but is informed by a letter from China that his wife has passed away. Wong at the end lies dying of an overdose of opium and liquor....20

The author Chun, who perhaps figures in the story as the young physician who narrates it, charges the air with sunshine and with moldering gloom, as the season and the occasion demand:

Outside the rain was pouring. It beat drearily upon the roof, dripped into the cracks and wet the walls within. It fell on the dirty porch, making it slippery and slimy. It flowed from the old clothes that hung on the line. It formed puddles of brown water in the yard, filled up the empty cans scattered about, and ran into the pig pens where the animals wallowed in mud and mire.

Inside the men were immersed in their game, unmindful of the storm outside.... Like the buildings that furnished them scanty shelter, their lives were moldering away.<sup>21</sup>

The Hawaii tragedy, unlike Chun's China romance, somehow seems both plausible and close to the author's own experiences and observations, as one would well expect of a young writer probably born and raised in Hawaii, and who perhaps has never been to his forebears' homeland.

But while the Hawaii writers of the 1920s, such as James Chun, wrote on the one hand about Asian or Asian American characters in Asian or Hawaiian settings, some of these same writers on the other hand questioned and sometimes rejected their identification with Asia.<sup>22</sup> James T. Hamada's novel, *Don't Give Up the Ship* (1933), poses some questions in this regard.<sup>23</sup> This novel is the earliest published of those we found, and it may very well be the first novel in English published by any Japanese American. And it cannot be faulted or slighted for being mainly autobiographical in nature, for this novel contains no Japanese American characters, despite its contemporary Hawaii setting. Hamada now and then decorates his narrative with details of Honolulu's Asian neighborhoods—a Shinto shrine, a Japanese grocery. But the hero is Bill Kane, "a white man," who, like Natty Bumppo, has his Chingachgook: in this case a couple of native Hawai-



ian pals. Hamada patterns his *Don't Give Up the Ship* after popular "epic" novels such as *Beau Geste*, Hamada's own being a tale of adventure climaxing on the high seas somewhere south of Hawaii. Lacking Japanese American characters of any consequence, Hamada's novel is virtually alone among all published novels subsequently authored by Japanese Americans. One wonders why he wrote it that way. It may be that Hamada wanted to forestall identification of his novel with somehow being "Japanese," or autobiographical. He perhaps wanted his novel to be seen as unquestionably "American," as Japanese Americans' "Americanness" was already being sorely questioned at that time. At any rate, one cannot help now but wish that Hamada had told a story of Hawaii's Japanese Americans as well, for he appears to have been a careful, a talented, and a dedicated enough writer to do the job.

The problem of dual Asian vs. American identification of Japanese Americans in particular had severe ramifications when the Japanese raided Pearl Harbor. The confusion persists through the decades since then, as when Gerrit Judd includes in his Hawaiian anthology a piece by the Imperial Japanese leader of the Pearl Harbor air attack, as I noted earlier in this paper. The confusion of identities persists today, when the general American public and scholars alike tend to think of Asian American literature as literature written in Asian languages and conforming to Asian literary conventions.

Yet World War II washed away some of that confusion, enough, at any rate, so that authentically local, Hawaii literature began unmistakably to sound its voice in the postwar years. This development was fed in part by a University drama writing class, where the use of local settings, situations, and colloquial language was encouraged. Moreover, the writers seemed now to be confident in identifying their work not with their parents' Asian traditions, nor with the Mainland American settings, language, and culture that Hawaii's people read about in books and saw in films; but with their own experience, even though many of its distinguishing features, it was thought, had never before been etched in literature.

The hallmark of authenticity was (and in some respects continues to be) the skillful use of Hawaii's pidgin English and creole. As early as 1936, members of the University of Hawaii drama writing class employed pidgin for more than merely comic effect in their work.<sup>24</sup> After World War II, a few locally widespread publications began carrying stories containing pidgin dialogue. One of the earliest published examples is "The Forgotten Flea Powder," by a young writer who had only recently graduated from high school, Philip K. Ige.<sup>25</sup> In his sketch of two Japanese American brothers and an incident involving their fleabitten farmdog, Ige deftly illustrates setting, speech, mannerisms, and values that local audiences have delighted in recognizing in the printed word: for example, a distinctively "local" and particularly Japanese American relationship between the older brother and the younger; likewise, the command that the boys' father has over the older boy, who commands the younger, who seems sometimes to be on

the verge of taking it all out on the hapless dog. The pecking order is inviolate. And it may very well be universal.

But most clearly “local” of all is Philip Ige’s use of pidgin English dialogue in “The Forgotten Flea Powder.” The sketch begins:

Two blocks past Johnson’s Five and Ten in the town of Kaimuki, Satoshi Ikehara, standing in the rear of a jam-packed Honolulu bus, woke up from his stupor with a start, looked outside, and nudged his little brother who stood beside him. “Hey, Yuki, we pass da store again.”

“Huh?”

“We forget to get off by Johnson Store an’ buy flea-powder—you know, for Blackie.”

“Oh, yeah. How many times we goin’ forget anyway? Four times already, no-o?”

“Yeah. We no can get off now—too late. We got to go home.”

“At’s okay. We can buy ’em tomorrow—Saturday.”

“I know; but Blackie cry, you know. He get so many fleas. He feel itchy an’ he cry, you know.”

“Yeah, I know. Yesterday I saw him scratchin’ up. He no can scratch da back part ’at’s why he onny cry, so I been scratch his back for him. He *f-e-e-l* good. He no cry.”<sup>26</sup>

Ige’s handling of pidgin was to become quite typical: standard English narration frames the pidgin dialogue, often with an implicit, ironical interplay between the two languages and the different worlds they represent. In the case of Ige’s story, the clash between standard English and pidgin English is all but explicit. Immediately after the two boys talk excitedly about getting the flea powder for their dog Blackie, we see that “An old Caucasian woman, sitting in a seat before them, looked up and smiled at them. The boys smiled shyly back and quickly turned their eyes away. They stopped talking.”<sup>27</sup> Whatever the woman’s apparently kind intentions in smiling—not even talking—at the boys, her looks silence them, for, I would infer, through no personal fault of her own she represents a whole Mainland of standard English zealots, especially schoolteacher types, who sit in righteous judgment against the abominable pidgin English and its speakers. And yet of course, Ige and his fellow Hawaii writers are indebted to those who guided their literary talent and taught them the English language of books.

The postwar era of Hawaii’s second generation Asian American literature also saw publication of the first of several works of fiction that chronicle Hawaii’s Asian immigration. One author, Kazuo Miyamoto, specifically acknowledges Ole Rolvaag’s *Giants in the Earth* as both a model and an inspiration for his, Miyamoto’s, *Hawaii: End of the Rainbow*.<sup>28</sup> Miyamoto’s more than two decades of meticulous note keeping and writing, outside of his professional work

as a physician, resulted in the 1964 publication of his Hawaii Japanese American immigrant and second generation novel. In addition to providing a fictional narrative of immigration and settlement, a fictional narrative stubbornly rooted in fact, Miyamoto tells the fullest story we yet have in literature, whether fictional or non-fictional, of Hawaii's people incarcerated in American World War II concentration camps. Miyamoto was among them.

Kazuo Miyamoto's chronicle appeared after statehood was granted to Hawaii. But the first of these immigrant sagas was published in 1951, well before Michener's novelistic account of Asian immigration in Hawaii. Shelley Ayame Nishimura Ota's turbulent novel, *Upon Their Shoulders* (1951), begins with a tale of abject poverty, injustice, and bigotry in Meiji Japan.<sup>29</sup> The novel's hero, Taro Sumida (whose very name, like "John Smith," signifies the common man), is driven to seek a living in Hawaii. What faintly resembles the Japanese immigrant success story that has become a stereotype is punched and battered again and again by reported or depicted incidents of rape, violence, economic setbacks, and other tragedies suffered individually and communally among the novel's Japanese American characters. Near the novel's end Taro Sumida dies, by then an esteemed grandfather, financially comfortable, yet weary to the core. He hears of Japan's surrender, is momentarily elated by the thought of modern reforms now to occur in Japan, and dies at least recognizing that he and his wife have given their descendants a better future, in Hawaii.

Sharply contrasting Ota's and Miyamoto's renditions of the Asian immigrant story in Hawaii is Margaret Harada's indeed sunny novel, *The Sun Shines on the Immigrant* (1960).<sup>30</sup> Here is the usual success story not necessarily written anywhere else in novel length but which is still thought of as being typical of Japanese Americans. Harada's narrative concludes just prior to World War II—that is, prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor. It is somewhat strange that Harada should end her story there, her first and second generation Hawaii Japanese American characters fairly beaming with self-satisfaction as they gaze off toward sunny horizons of the future. I do not think that Harada wanted or intended the nonetheless inescapable irony, that Japanese warplanes led by Mitsuo Fuchida were speeding to Hawaii from just beyond those same horizons. I want to believe that Harada simply could not bear to tell about the impact of Pearl Harbor on Japanese Americans, whether in Hawaii or elsewhere.

But whatever their authors' views, none of the immigrant sagas I've named should have to bear the burden of presuming to speak for every Japanese American family's history. Nor should Michener's *Hawaii* be presumed to speak for all Hawaii. But unlike Michener, each of these Hawaii writers—Shelley Ota, Margaret Harada, and Kazuo Miyamoto—shouldered a heavy thought, a responsibility: that she or he was writing alone, without knowing what predecessors each may have had in Hawaii's literary history. The entire weight of family, community, and public criticism and praise fell squarely upon the *only* person, each of

these writers must have thought, to write the saga through both the point of view and the personal experience of the Japanese American subjects of the novel. Thus the title of Ota's novel, *Upon Their Shoulders*, applies not only to the Japanese immigrant pioneers and the load they carried for posterity's sake, but certainly applies to Ota's own act of writing her pioneering novel as well.

And so it is that a third generation of Asian American writers is now active in Hawaii. Thankfully, we have our predecessors' shoulders now to stand on; for now the predecessors are known, the burden shared. Broadly speaking, this generation has deep cultural roots in Hawaii, taking as its Asian heritage an eclectic mix of customs, traditions, foods, and values that their Asian immigrant grandparents adapted to the new climate. Much of Hawaii's literary activity today is polyethnic, with writers making deliberate use of elements of other heritages in Hawaii than one's own. There is an especially great admiration and even reverence for native Hawaiian culture, as it is undergoing a "renaissance" headed by new and revived legends, chants, and lyrics, the original literature of Hawaii. If a Hawaii writer today were called upon to choose a label for him- or herself identifying his or her cultural source, the writer would sooner answer "local," before thinking of "Asian American" or, say, "Japanese American." Of course, some would refuse any such labels altogether, for a complex of reasons usually having something abstractly to do with "universality." But the active creative energy at present, anyway, seems to be with those who do acknowledge a local, Hawaii identity—an identity which automatically implies one's recognition of one's own ethnicity and a respect for others. Current activity also cuts clear across generational barriers that perhaps separated the Shelley Otas from the writers among the immigrants, whose works, we found, were rarely read by their own children. Second generation Asian American writers such as Kazuo Miyamoto, the much younger Milton Murayama, Philip Ige, Maxine Hong Kingston, and others are gradually becoming "elders" in the literary culture of Hawaii, both role and the culture itself in many ways lacking and unfilled when the second generation began writing, passionately, in earnest, but ignorant of their predecessors.

Yet current activity among Asian American and the rainbow host of other writers of Hawaii has followed the lead of the two preceding generations in at least one more important respect: their activities have been organized within associations aiming to serve both the arts and the communities from which they spring. Thus, in 1978, a then-new organization called Talk Story, Inc., held a conference that drew nationwide participation yet served to bring the young and the old generation of Hawaii's writers together for the first time.<sup>32</sup> The gathering has led in turn to some important continuing work, such as the publication of a journal, *Bamboo Ridge: The Hawaii Writers' Quarterly*, edited by poet Eric Chock and fiction and drama writer Darrell Lum. The 1978 Talk Story Conference itself has been succeeded by others: the Talk Story Big Island Writers' Conference of 1979, the Hawaii Literary Arts Council's Hawaii Writers' Conference of 1980,

and, just to make sure we don't take ourselves too seriously, a zany, innovative, and very welcomed 1981 Talk Story Conference on local humor in literature, arts, and stand-up comedy, entitled "Crack Me Up."

In speaking of three generations of Hawaii's Asian American literature I have had to mention more writers by name than I could possibly discuss in any detail; and I have had to leave many, many names and titles unmentioned. After all, my partner Arnold Hiura and I found over seven hundred titles, hundreds of authors, where surely a good many of the stories must have been better than the account of "Sukiyaki on the Kona Coast" or "I Led the Air Attack on Pearl Harbor," to represent the existence of Asians in Hawaii and in Hawaii's literature, not only as characters, but also as authors.

But though I cannot supply here all the details on the works and authors I have mentioned, I would like to close with a general question relevant to all of them. And I wish to supply some speculative answers.

Why would Michener and Hawaii literary scholars A. Grove Day and Carl Stroven and others in word and effect deny the existence of this literature growing in their own yards for sixty, seventy, eighty years?

Lack of availability? No. These works are housed and are available precisely where the famous novelist and the anthology editors did much of their own research and reading: the University of Hawaii's Hawaii-Pacific Collection. Some of the Asian American works stand right alongside works by other writers whom the scholars do cite and anthologize.

Lack of a tradition in which to place and by which to understand and assess the works? This would be a problem, especially if one were expecting to find Asian, rather than American, literary works as examples of Asian American literature, whether in Hawaii or elsewhere. Among a few Hawaii Asian American writers in the '60s, it became fashionable to affect Asian literary forms—Japanese haiku, for instance. But aside from that transitory phenomenon and, as discussed earlier in this paper, the use of Asian settings in the '20s, the second and third generation Asian American literary works have been based in American literary traditions, with English as the authors' native tongues. Still, not much attention has been paid to the first generation writers, writing in Asian languages and traditions, by outsiders to these groups, anyway.

Lack of literary merit? Are the Asian American works in English somehow simply too poor in literary quality to be considered "literature"? I must say that for me, in our research, this was the most profoundly disturbing question of all. Told all my life that Hawaii's Asian Americans did not write—and were not verbally skillful enough even to understand—imaginative literature, I frankly was astounded by what we found. I realized how deeply I, too, had taken the claim for granted, or, worse, had always been afraid that it was true: that locals could never hope to write decent literature. Then I found myself denying that the works we

were finding and poring over had any “literary merit,” in my vain attempt to preserve my lifelong misconception. But the denial was useless. There finally was no doubt that there indeed are such things as Asian American literary works written in Hawaii, about Hawaii, by and about Hawaii’s own people. Once I capitulated to the force of evidence, my own career as an Asian American involved with literature is not quite so strange to me as it had been.

I do believe, though, that the works I have discussed did not go totally unnoticed by previous literary researchers. This raises my final speculation. Might there have been a lack of enough respect for these works and their authors to prevent one from “borrowing” stories and their elements without acknowledgment or recognition? Hawaii novelist O.A. Bushnell has charged on many public occasions that “outside” writers have shamelessly raided Hawaii for materials—and have mostly botched the job of writing them up. Indeed, some keepers of the community’s culture in Hawaii are so sick of being pillaged that they refuse their knowledge to virtually every prospective or already proclaimed expert from the outside. One elderly man in Hilo calls visiting scholars and writers “steal baits,” like the thievish little fish who nibble the bait off the hook, their mouths too small to be snagged—real pests. They leave nothing for the real catch. That man in Hilo is the local Japanese American community’s self-appointed archivist and interim historian. His house is crammed with bait: news clippings, rare publications, photos, and memorabilia of the island’s plantations and the families who made the sugar sweet with their sweat and labor. Grown reclusive through decades of continual vigilance, peering through the living room curtains to scrutinize the stranger approaching his porch, that man will not even open his door for any steal bait. And he waits still, today, for the Big Fish.<sup>33</sup>

20 November 1981

*Stephen H. Sumida*

# Notes

- 1 James A. Michener, *Hawaii* (New York: Random House, 1959); A. Grove Day and Carl Stroven, eds., *A Hawaiian Reader* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1959).  
For an account of Michener's writing his novel in order to meet the Hawaii statehood deadline, which Michener barely missed, see A. Grove Day, *James A. Michener* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1964), pp. 111–18.
- 2 See, for instance, A. Grove Day, *Books about Hawaii: Fifty Basic Authors* (Honolulu: The Univ. Press of Hawaii, 1977), p. 31; and Day, *James A. Michener*, pp. 112–15.
- 3 For an expression of this sentiment, see the reprint of a speech by Hawaii-born, historical novelist O.A. Bushnell, "Hawaii writers stifled at birth, one of them says," *The Sunday Star-Bulletin and Advertiser* [Honolulu], 25 June 1978, p. F-3. Bushnell laments the scarcity of "local" writers of any worth, castigates Hawaii for not nurturing creative literature, and looks forward with horror to further prospects of "'Outsiders' . . . writing the novels [and] telling us what we are and what we think. They will turn out the stuff that the rest of the world will read. 'Outsiders' will be writing 'the great Hawaiian novels.'" Delivered as a keynote speech opening the 1978 Talk Story Conference on Asian American and Hawaii's ethnic American writers and their works, Bushnell's remarks aroused a nice stir.
- 4 Michener, "Introduction," in *A Hawaiian Reader*, p. xiv.
- 5 May Sarton, "Sukiyaki on the Kona Coast," in *A Hawaiian Reader*, pp. 299–307.
- 6 Michener, "Introduction," *A Hawaiian Reader*, pp. xiv–xv.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. xiv.
- 8 Mitsuo Fuchida, "I Led the Air Attack on Pearl Harbor," in *A Hawaiian Anthology*, ed. Gerrit P. Judd (New York: Macmillan, 1967), pp. 109–27.
- 9 Arnold T. Hiura and Stephen H. Sumida, *Asian American Literature of Hawaii: An Annotated Bibliography* (Honolulu: Japanese American Research Center and Talk Story, Inc., 1979). Portions of the present paper are

found in the “Introduction” to the bibliography.

- 10 Information provided by Dr. Jiro Nakano, speaking on a panel entitled “Issei Poets of Hawaii” at the Talk Story Big Island Writers’ Conference, 13 July 1979, University of Hawaii at Hilo. The information, to follow, on the Hilo Gin-u Shi Sha is supplied by Mr. Saburo Higa.  
The Japanese American term *issei* refers to the “first” or immigrant generation. Used subsequently in this paper, the term *nisei* identifies the American (Hawaii-) born, or “second” generation of Japanese Americans.
- 11 Haiku by Ryoseki Igawa. This and the following two haiku quoted in the text of my paper are translated from the Japanese originals by Dr. Kay Nakano and paraphrased into English haiku by Carol Reynolds. The haiku are from a collection entitled *Sei-u-kai Haiku* (Banana-Plant Rain Haiku Poetry Anthology), selections from which were sent to me by Dr. Jiro Nakano of the Hilo Shōu Kai. I am deeply indebted to Jiro and Kay Nakano, Carol Reynolds, and the other poets of the Shōu Kai for their making these poems available.
- 12 Haiku by Tsurujyo Miyada.
- 13 Haiku by Keijyo Shiba.
- 14 Information provided by Ken Okimoto of the Hilo Bon Dance Club, speaking at the Talk Story Big Island Conference on the panel identified in n. 10, above.
- 15 “Literary Lethargy,” *Chinese Students’ Alliance Annual*, 6 (May 1923), p. 5.
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 James Chun, “Fate?” *Chinese Students’ Alliance Annual*, 3 (May 1920), pp. 43–48, 50.
- 18 Hiura and Sumida, *Asian American Literature of Hawaii*, p. 69.
- 19 James Chun, “In the Camp,” *Chinese Students’ Alliance Annual*, 6 (May 1923), pp. 27, 29–31.
- 20 Hiura and Sumida, p. 70.
- 21 Quoted in Hiura and Sumida, p. 7.
- 22 Interesting early examples of this questioning are found in the works of Gladys Li, a member of the Chinese Students’ Alliance and a writer, not for the Alliance, but for the Hawaii Quill, the University of Hawaii’s first literary society, founded in 1928. See her “The Submission of Rose Moy,” *The Hawaii Quill Magazine*, 1 (June 1928), pp. 7–19; “The Law of Wu Wei,” *The Hawaii Quill Magazine*, 2 (January 1929), pp. 20–26; and “The White Serpent,” *The Hawaii Quill Magazine*, 5 (May 1932), pp. 24–31. The first two of these dramas center on conflicts between presumably traditional Chinese marriage dictates and supposedly American freedom of marital choice. Though the Chinese-Hawaiian or Chinese-American heroine’s sympathies are with the American way, she ends up subject to the Chinese laws of cus-



tom, in both these plays. The third play is set and styled entirely in China, in a Chinese manner, dramatizing a Chinese legend of an evil white serpent tormented by her love for a mortal.

Gladys Li appears to be one of the few Hawaii writers of her generation to pursue a career in writing. According to information on the dustjacket of *Life Is for a Long Time* (New York: Hastings House, 1972), a biography of a Chinese family in Hawaii, the author now-known as Li Ling Ai has been “playwright, performer, director, and moviemaker” in connection with producing film documentaries on China and serving as a director for Ripley’s “Believe It or Not” Far Eastern Department. And according to Mr. Kum Pui Lai of the Hawaii Chinese History Center in Honolulu, this adventuresome and creative Li Ling Ai is the same one once known as Gladys Li at the University of Hawaii in the late ’20s and early ’30s.

- 23 James T. Hamada, *Don’t Give Up the Ship* (Boston: Meador Publishing Co., 1933).
- 24 See Wai Chee Chun, “For You a Lei,” *College Plays* (University of Hawaii Department of English, 1937), pp. 57–72, for the earliest example of this use of pidgin.
- Typescripts and carbon copies of dramas written for classes and playwriting contests connected with the University of Hawaii are collected in bound, annual volumes in the University’s Hawaii-Pacific Collection.
- 25 Philip K. Ige, “The Forgotten Flea Powder,” *Paradise of the Pacific*, 58 (November 1946), pp. 24–25; reprinted in *Bamboo Ridge: The Hawaii Writers’ Quarterly*, no. 1 (December 1978), pp. 56–59.
- 26 Ige, “... Flea Powder,” *P of P*, 58 (November 1946), p. 24.
- 27 *Ibid.*
- 28 Kazuo Miyamoto, *Hawaii: End of the Rainbow* (Rutland, Vt.: Charles Tuttle Co., Inc., 1964), p. 7.
- 29 Shelley Ayame Nishimura Ota, *Upon Their Shoulders* (New York: Exposition Press, Inc., 1951).
- 30 Margaret N. Harada, *The Sun Shines on the Immigrant* (New York: Vantage Press, 1960).
- 31 Milton Murayama is the author of a revolutionary little novel, *All I Asking for Is My Body* (San Francisco: Supa Press, 1975), the first novel employing pidgin dialogue, set in a Hawaiian sugar plantation camp, and authored by one raised in such a camp to gain a widespread readership in Hawaii. Murayama was in fact the first Asian American author to appear in a Hawaiian anthology edited by Day and Stroven, when in 1968 his story, “I’ll Crack Your Head *Kotsun*,” was reprinted in Day and Stroven’s *The Spell of Hawaii* (New York: Meredith Press, 1968), pp. 323–35. Originally published in the *Arizona Quarterly* 15 (Summer 1959), pp. 137–49, and later as Part I of *All I Asking for Is My Body*, “I’ll Crack Your Head *Kotsun*” inspired the antholo-

gists to remark rather belatedly that here is evidence of Hawaii's young Orientals' "becoming aware of their background as a source of unique literary material" (p. 323). A drama by Murayama on the historical Japanese figure Yoshitsune is scheduled to be produced in Hawaii in May of 1982.

The author of "The Forgotten Flea Powder," discussed above, Philip K. Ige wrote the only scholarly commentary on selected writings in English by Hawaii's Asian Americans, prior to our bibliography. In 1968 Ige completed his massive dissertation, "Paradise and Melting Pot in the Fiction and Non-Fiction of Hawaii: A Study of Cross-Cultural Record," Diss. Columbia Univ. 1968, which he has been revising for publication. Without segregating Asian American writers and their works from others, Ige implicitly shows how these writers have contributed their visions of what Hawaii is or ought to be. In recent years Ige has been active among Hawaii's writers as a scholar, critic, and a creative writer himself.

- 32 For the fullest single account and analysis yet published centering on the 1978 Talk Story Conference, see Katharine Newman, "Hawaiian-American Literature: the Cultivation of Mangoes," *MELUS*, 6 (Summer 1979), pp. 46-77. Newman was a busy participant in the conference. In rereading her article, I find that Professor Newman calls attention to a number of points that I have touched upon in this paper. I thank her for discussing our shared topic with me in our previous talks and meetings.

For a sampling of Hawaii's contemporary poetry, fiction, and drama, see Eric Chock *et al.*, eds., *Talk Story: An Anthology of Hawaii's Local Writers* (Honolulu: Petronium Press/Talk Story, Inc., 1978).

- 33 First hand information supplied to me by Arnold T. Hiura, who in a recent year spent several unforgettable, fascinating hours learning from the gentleman to whom I allude.

## Contributors' Notes

**Eric Chock** sold the celebrated '64 Valiant "Bamboo Ridge" (metallic blue on rust white) staff car. Let him take you for a ride in his new silver blue 1986 Honda Civic.

**Janice Day Fehrman:** Even though I'm now living at the bottom of "Big America" on the last bit of Delta, I think of Hawaii every day. I like it down here with the Creoles and Cajuns but there's something about Hawaii that never leaves you. Aloha to my friends in the Kauai Writers Group, a.k.a. Saimin's Last Stand.

**Wanda Fujimoto** works as a paralegal in a downtown law office. She is a member of Nāhuluāho'oulu lāhuihou under kumu hula Ho'oulu Cambra.

**Caroline Garrett:** Frost said "... that every poem solves something for me in life. I go so far as to say that every poem is a momentary stay against the confusion of the world." And as predicaments continue to arise throughout life, so do the poems.

**Dana Naone Hall** is the editor of *Mālama, Hawaiian Land and Water* (Bamboo Ridge, No. 29). "T'ang Fishermen" reflects her Hawaiian-Chinese background.

**Violet Harada** is a School Library Services Specialist with the Department of Education. She has taught a course in Asian American children's literature at the University of Hawaii and presently coordinates the "Children as Authors" project for the D.O.E.

**Norman Hindley's** collection of poems, *Winter Eel*, was published in 1984 by Petronium Press.

**Dean Honma** lives in California, working, writing, and regretting that he ever left home.

**Clara Mitsuko Jelsma**, country girl, vividly recalls the "good old days" in Glenwood and Mt. View, Hawaii and writes about them as she presents the Issei story in *Teapot Tales* and *Mauna Loa Rains*.

**Diane Kahanu:** Wini Terada is my hero. His pidgin English poetry is mystical; he's made a believer out of me. I know he looks like he works in a service station, but he's taught me. Mahalo, Wini!

Contributors' Notes

**Dennis Kawaharada**, formerly the Managing Editor of Bamboo Ridge Press, currently lives in San Francisco.

**Hiroshi Kawakami**: When my essays were first selected for publication in *Bamboo Ridge*, I was just a retiree with more time than money. Thanks to Darrell Lum and the Bamboo Ridge, "Who Da Guy" has become a series publication for the *Hawaii Herald*.

**Gary Kissick's** "rain quietude" won first prize in the 1975 Honolulu Commission on Culture & the Arts Poetry Competition. He received a writing fellowship grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1982 and won the Pacific Poetry Series Competition for *Outer Islands* (University of Hawaii Press, 1983).

**Jody Manabe Kobayashi** lives on the island of Kauai with husband Joseph and daughter Julie Alisa. She teaches in the Poets-In-The-Schools program and weaves baskets for the Waioli Fishing Company in Hanalei.

**Juliet S. Kono**: I was born and raised in Hilo, Hawaii. I presently work for the Honolulu Police Department and am the office manager for the Hawaii Chapter of the Sierra Club. I am a graduate of Hilo High School and am currently attending the University of Hawaii.

**Laurie Kuribayashi** lives in Honolulu.

**Tony Lee**: I ran into Junior the other day at Holiday Mart. He no longer fishes at Bamboo Ridge, but he gave his gear to his grandson.

**Darrell H.Y. Lum** is the proud husband of *Mae A. Lum* who, on August 4, 1978, became the proud mother of *Lisa Terumi Kwai Oi (T.K.O.) Lum*. A knockout! (From "About the Contributors", *Bamboo Ridge* #1, December 1978.) Darrell is still very proud of wife and daughter. Lisa, like *Bamboo Ridge*, is eight years old.

**Wing Tek Lum's** first volume of poetry is scheduled to be published by Bamboo Ridge in 1987.

**Michael McPherson** still lives in Maui. His second book of poems, *The Alien Lounge*, is forthcoming from Petronium Press.

**Rodney Morales** is a lifelong resident of Oahu and has been living there all his redundant life.

**Susan Nunes** was born on the Big Island and now lives in Honolulu. Her short fiction has appeared in *Hawaii Review*, *Bamboo Ridge*, *Hapa*, and a high school anthology *Asian-Pacific Literature*. A collection of her Hilo stories, *A Small Obligation*, was published by Bamboo Ridge Press.

**Ty Pak**, on leave from the University of Hawaii, is in California writing a novel.

**Kathy Phillips** teaches English at the University of Hawaii.

**Patsy S. Saiki**: Bamboo Ridge Press is a real boon to Hawaii writers for the Press encourages hopefuls like us to continue putting our thoughts and experiences into words to share with others.

**Cathy Song's** first book, *Picture Bride*, won the Yale Series of Younger

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Poets Award in 1983 and was nominated for the National Book Critics Circle Award. Her new poems appear in *Seneca Review*, *Columbia*, *American Poetry Review*, and *Poetry*. She has been recently included in *The Morrow Anthology of Younger American Poets*.

**William Stafford**, well-known poet, teacher, critic, Poetry Consultant for the Library of Congress, conscientious objector in World War II, husband, father, biker, hiker, and photographer says, "Thanks for your kindness to my work!"

**Joseph Stanton** grew up in St. Louis, where he developed a fondness for Michelob beer and Cardinal baseball. He now lives in Aiea with his wife, his two children, and his kim-chee-loaded refrigerator. Since 1972 he has worked for the University of Hawaii as a researcher, writer, and editor of textbooks on literature and language. His latest text is *British & European Literatures*. His poems have appeared in most of Hawaii's literary magazines—*Bamboo Ridge*, *The Paper*, *Hawaii Review*, *Ramrod*, *Hapa*, *Seaweeds and Constructions*—as well as in many mainland publications.

**Stephen H. Sumida** is an assistant professor of the Departments of Comparative American Cultures (Asian/Pacific American Studies Program) and English at Washington State University, Pullman. His full-length study of Hawaii's literature is forthcoming from Bamboo Ridge Press and Topgallant Publishing.

#### **Raynette Takizawa:**

my father fished bamboo ridge thirty years ago  
when fish were bigger than the stories told of them  
and hiss of whirring reels became poetry to men  
dad, i've followed you to cast my line here too—  
the first strike goes to you.

**Wini Terada**, keiki o ka 'āina, farms kalo Hawai'i at the Kānewai Cultural Garden in Mānoa and teaches at Farrington High School and at Pūnana leo o Honolulu Hawaiian language pre-school. E aloha 'āina Kākou.

**Debra Thomas**, age 30, was born and raised in Honolulu. She is an assistant editor for *HONOLULU Magazine* and a teacher of the Transcendental Meditation Program.

**Jean Yamasaki Toyama** was born and bred in Hawaii. She teaches French at the University of Hawaii and is now learning Japanese. Aside from poetry and scholarly articles she also writes short stories.

**Mary Wakayama:** My purpose as a writer is to celebrate what it means to live in Hawaii with truth, justice and concern for the beauty here. The Talk Story motto still holds me: "Words bind; words set free." As one of many in the fragile network of local writers, I would like to thank Ozzie Bushnell and Stephen Sumida for their steady encouragement and solid scholarship ... and Chock, Lum and Co. for keeping something intangible alive for all of us.

Contributors' Notes

**Sylvia Watanabe** lives in Honolulu. She teaches English and is currently working on a collection of short stories.

**Martha Webb** and her daughter, Helen, are once again living in Volcano. She is now working on the translation of a biography of Robert Wilcox from Hawaiian into English.

**Frederick B. Wichman** is a haku mo'olele, telling the ancient tales of Kauai so that they will not be forgotten.

**Rob Wilson's** poems have appeared in American and South Korean journals. The 25th Anniversary issue of *Korea Journal*, a UNESCO publication, features fourteen of his poems on Korea. He is an avid basketball player for "Sakuma Productions."

**Tamara Wong-Morrison** is Hawaiian, Chinese, English, Irish and Scots, and the seventh child of Larry Ah Chin and Miriam Mundon Wong of Koloa, Kauai. She teaches poetry writing on the Big Island of Hawaii where she lives in Volcano Village with her husband, artist and designer Boone Morrison.

