

学 位 論 文 要 旨

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題 目 Assimilation, Sexuality and Racism: Japanese American Nisei Writer

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(和訳)同化、セクシュアリティ、人種差別—日系アメリカ人二世作家ヒサエ・ヤマモト—

学位論文要旨 (和文2,000字又は英文1,000語程度)

This dissertation discusses a Japanese American Nisei writer Hisaye Yamamoto (1921-2011), the Nisei main characters in her short stories, and Yamamoto's newspaper articles from the viewpoints of assimilation, gender, sexuality, internment and racial discrimination in order to verify the influence of racial discrimination upon her stories.

Chapter 1 compares the assimilation of Japanese American Nisei Yuki, the main character in Yamamoto's short story "Epithalamium," with that of a Vietnamese American Le Ly Hayslip in her autobiography *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* to show the unique situation of the Japanese American Nisei who suffered from the oppressions from gender and racial discrimination. To measure assimilation level, the following six benchmarks are applied: (1) Socioeconomic status, (2) Language assimilation, (3) Spatial concentration, (4) Intermarriage, (5) Racial discrimination, and (6) Influence of war.

Regarding socioeconomic status and language assimilation, there is a significant difference between American born Nisei and Vietnamese American first generation. Yamamoto's skill for English language is so much better than Hayslip's that the comparison by the benchmarks socioeconomic status and language assimilation does not provide any meaningful results.

As for intermarriage and influence of war, Le Ly's intermarriage with an American is just a means to emigrate to the U.S., but Yuki's intermarriage with an Italian American is a means to assimilate into white society. The difference of the two women should be largely dependent on their experience in the wars. Le Ly tries to survive by emigrating to the U.S. On the other hand, Yuki's life is not threatened by war, although she is persecuted with racial discrimination through her internment experience. The assimilation of Nisei is closely related to racial discrimination, gender and sexuality. Therefore Yuki's strong desire to assimilate into white society by leaving the Japanese community involves the complicated situation of the Nisei.

Chapter 2 discusses the sexuality of Nisei central characters in "Epithalamium" and "The Legend of Miss Sasagawara." The sexuality of Yuki is explicitly expressed in "Epithalamium." The main character Miss Sasagawara's sexuality and the internees' life with the details of the internment camp are depicted in "The Legend of Miss Sasagawara." Strong resemblance is seen in the sexuality of Yuki and Miss Sasagawara. Both of the main characters insist on their own ways of life through their sexuality. Although Yuki resists all objections against her sex and marriage and is anxious about marrying an alcoholic dropout, she makes her decision on her life all by herself. In this way Yuki shows her protest to gender discrimination and racial discrimination through her sexuality. This is a Nisei

woman's answer to the oppressions and she is different from Japanese American Issei women who cannot escape their situations.

Section 1 of Chapter 3 discusses the racial discrimination against African Americans in "A Fire in Fontana," which was published in 1985. The story dates back forty years to the period of World War II. The story can be regarded as a compilation of Yamamoto's thoughts about racial discrimination over the forty years. In relation to the racial discrimination in the story, two more stories "Wilshire Bus" and "Eucalyptus" are introduced for discussion.

In 1945, Yamamoto started working for the *Los Angeles Tribune* run by African Americans. She wanted to protest openly to the racial discrimination against African Americans, but as a Japanese American news reporter she felt restrained to do so. During this period Yamamoto experienced an incident, the death of an African American family by suspicious fire. Because she had written an article about the family's persecution prior to the incident, she was gnawed by a sense of guilt and regretted that she should have gone to great lengths to describe the situation. She tried to protest against the discrimination in a pacifist way which was not accepted by African Americans. Eventually she could not bear the situations and kept herself away from African Americans. She left the *Los Angeles Tribune* and became a writer and then a catholic worker. Yamamoto seems to have chosen to devote herself to the introspective life as a catholic worker.

Until 1985 when Yamamoto published "A Fire in Fontana," she had little talked about the racial discrimination issue of African Americans since she left the *Los Angeles Tribune*. She had been making desperate effort to atone for her guilty conscience towards the African American family's death. A strong sense of guilt and responsibility to rebel against the discrimination obsessed her and it developed into 'fear of responsibility.' Yamamoto was in a hospital for the treatment of her mental disorder and then she delineated this experience in "Eucalyptus."

"Wilshire Bus" is not a story about the racial discrimination against African Americans, but it is about Yamamoto's insight and anguish experienced at the *Los Angeles Tribune*. For instance, the comparison of the main character Nisei woman's sensitivity towards racial discrimination with a Chinese woman's shows Nisei woman's fearful attitude towards racial discrimination, which implies the dismay caused by the internment and hostility received as an enemy alien in the U.S.

Section 2 of Chapter 3 discusses the discrimination against African Americans in Yamamoto's newspaper column "Small Talk." Yamamoto's column is reviewed to investigate African Americans' attitude toward racial discrimination and how they protested against it, Japanese Americans' attitude toward racial discrimination and the actions they took against it, and African Americans' attitude toward Japanese Americans.

Yamamoto, as a member of the marginalized racial minorities, tried to resist racial discrimination by sharing painful experience with African Americans. As mentioned above, she tried to protest against the discrimination in a pacifist way which was not accepted by African Americans. African Americans had only blacks and whites in the palette of their hearts, while Japanese Americans were eager to enter the white mainstream and discriminated against African Americans. Under this situation it might have been impossible for the two parties to have 'dialogue' to understand each other. Yamamoto lost her way in the maze of the argument of binary opposition and she was depressed by facing the racial minority's self-centeredness. Yamamoto failed to improve the situation because of the lack of dialogue and "intercultural competencies" (Tsuchiya 56) and therefore there was no opportunity for the racial minorities to learn from other minorities at that time.

From the discussions of Yamamoto's stories and her life, it could be concluded that all issues taken up in her stories such as internment, assimilation, gender and sexuality are intricately related to racial discrimination which is a dominant undercurrent flowing through her stories.