Japanese-American Literature

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INTRODUCTION

Japanese-American literature tends to be ignored as well as other Asian-American literature such as Chinese-American literature. Even if it is not ignored, it tends to be regarded not as literature but as a documentary. It has a close relation with the image of Japanese-Americans.

Japanese-Americans used to be called "Japs" and excluded from society before World War II. During the war, they were put in concentration camps. However, since they made great progress after the war, they are now called "the model minority". Although almost one hundred years have passed since they first immigrated to the United States, their history and their great contributions to the West have been ignored. Such a situation is described in comparison to the black people as follows:

Asian-Americans are often asked "Where do you come from?" "How long have you been here?" and told "You speak pretty good English." Most Americans assume that Asian-Americans are foreign-born. This denies the history of and the contributions made by Asians in the United States. Textbooks provide little information on Asian-American contributions and that which is
available is often distorted. Asians played an integral role in
the taming of the West, the construction of the West, the
construction of the transcontinental railway, and the reclaiming
of valuable lands in California. Like the South, which was built
upon the shoulders of the blacks, so too, must the Asians be
credited for how the West was won.1)

In a situation where Japanese-Americans themselves have been ignored,
it might be natural that their literature has been also ignored. However,
it should be noted that an anthology such as Aiiieeeeee! was published
in 1974. The meaning of the title is explained by the editors as follows:

Asian-America, so long ignored and forcibly excluded from
creative participation in American culture, is wounded, sad,
angry, swearing and wondering, this is our AIIIEEEEE !. It is
more than a whine, shout or scream. This is fifty years of our
whole voice.2)

“Aiiieeeeee!” is the assertion of the racial equality and also the
existence of Asian-American literature. It should be noted that Bruce
Iwasaki wrote some articles about Asian-American literature including

1) Asian Americans for Fair Media, The Asian Image in the United
States: Stereotypes and Realities, New York, Asian Americans for
Fair Media, p. 5.

2) Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong,
Japanese-American literature in several books. An article such as "Response and Change for the Asian in America: A Survey of Asian-American Literature" is especially interesting. It is in Roots: An Asian-American Reader. It is interesting that it was published in 1971, which is almost the same time as Roots was written by Alex Haley.

In regard to the definition of Japanese-American literature, it is not Japanese literature nor Anglo-American literature. It was created by Japanese-Americans who are not Japanese nor Anglo-Americans. In order to understand their literature, it is very important to understand them through their historical and social background.

II. A BRIEF HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF JAPANESE-AMERICANS AND THEIR LITERATURE.

The first reported Japanese immigration began in 1869 north of Sacramento. It was called Wakamatsu Colony. Until 1885 the Japanese government did not allow Japanese nationals to emigrate. When they began arriving in substantial numbers after 1909, they started to be excluded because of the anti-Oriental feeling that was directed first against Chinese immigrants in the mid-nineteenth century. During the early decades of the twentieth century, racial prejudice on the West Coast took on the characteristics of an anti-Japanese movement, first among labor unions anxious to eliminate cheap Japanese labor, then among various civic and pressure groups such as the California Farm Bureau Federation, which were eager to protect the West Coast from the "contaminating" influence of Orientals. As Japan started invading Korea, China, and Russia, anti-Oriental feeling reached its culmination in the name "Yellow Peril", which meant the overrunning of the
West Coast by the Japanese or the invasion of the U. S. mainland by the Imperial Japanese Army.

In order to control the Japanese, anti-Japanese immigration laws were enacted. In 1907, the Gentleman’s Agreement passed. By this, Japan voluntarily agreed to limit emigration. In 1911, the U. S. Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization ordered that declarations of intent to file for citizenship could only be received from whites and from people of African descent, thus allowing the courts to refuse naturalization to the Japanese. This was followed by the Alien Land Law in 1913 which prevented aliens who were ineligible for citizenship from owning land in California. This prohibited the predominantly rural Japanese from not only owning and bequeathing and but also from leasing land for any period over three years. It was clearly intended to discourage the Japanese from coming to and setting in the United States.

Four years later, in 1924, the Immigration Exclusion Act passed, and among other things, it prevented Japanese from any further settlement in America. Anti-Japanese feeling was spurred by the economics during the depression and the aggressive stance of Japan in world politics, and surged up in 1938. As a result of such anti-Japanese feeling, General John L. Dewitt, then head of the Western Defense Command, revealed the confused mentality of a significant segment of the public: "A Jap’s a Jap. It makes no difference whether loyal or not."

In 1941, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, and the United States entered World War II. In 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which started the evacuation of all West Coast
Japanese to concentration camps. The Japanese on the West Coast, numbering over 117,000, were placed under strict curfew and forced to sell their property at prices that were absurdly low. It should be noted that among 117,000, 70,000 Japanese Americans were the Nisei and most of them were loyal to the United States.

During the war, the Nisei volunteered for the 100th Infantry Battalion and the 442nd Regiment and fought in groups in order to prove their loyalty to America. In 1944, the U. S. Supreme Court ruled that loyal citizens cannot be held in the concentration camps against their will, which was the first major step toward the closing of the camps. In 1945, Japan surrendered and the concentration camps were closed in 1946. In 1952, Congress passed Public Law 414, granting Japanese aliens the right to become naturalized U. S. citizens. Since the war, to a very great degree, they have achieved middle-class status, and they have attained higher education, employment, and income levels in comparison to other non-white groups. This is the reason why Japanese-Americans are called “model minority”.

There was a great change of the image of Japanese-Americans. Before the war, they were regarded as “highly un-American, inferior citizens, sexually aggressive, international menace”. It was very negative and full of prejudice. However, after the war the image was changed to “highly Americanized, well-educated, superior citizens, whose men are quiet and shy gardeners, and whose women are graceful, lovely, delicate and servile”. It is very positive and there seems to be no problem with it. But Dennis Ogawa explains the dangerous function of such a positive image as follows:

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The stereotype functions as (1) a justification that White America is non-racist; it demonstrates that a minority group can be accepted and become successful in the United States; and (2) a criterion for other minorities—blacks in particular—to follow.3)

Such analysis can be seen in a Yellow Power movement which was set into motion by the Black Power movement in 1968. They call such people who try to succeed among the whites as "Yellow Uncle Tom" or "Banana—yellow on the outside, white inside."

In 1974, a few anthologies of Asian-American literature were published including Japanese-American literature. Aiieeeeee! is one of them as I mentioned previously.

In 1975, a Nisei Writers' Symposium was held in San Francisco, featuring four Nisei authors—Hiroshi Kashiwagi, Iwao Kawakami, Toshio Mori, and Yoshiko Uchida. Other seminars and conferences as well are beginning to recognize the roots of Japanese-American literature—Nisei writers according to Counterpoint.

In 1977, the first Asian-American Writers' Conference was held at the University of Washington. "Conference aim is to further the recognition and stimulation of Asian-American writing as an authentic, unique voice in American literature", according to Stephen Sumida, conference coordinator. Conference co-sponsors are the University's Asian American Studies Program, Department of Comparative Literature, Institute for Comparative and Foreign Area Studies and Office

of Minority Affairs and the Asian Multi-Media Center in Seattle with partial funding from the National Endowment for the Arts. The conference was very successful and this will influence the future literary activities of the Asian-American writers.

III. MAIN JAPANESE-AMERICAN WRITERS AND THEIR WORKS

1. The Issei Writers and Their Works
   A. The Isseis’ Literary Activities

      It was about 1907 when Japanese literature could first be seen in the United States. The young people who were influenced by democracy immigrated to the United States and created “Japanese literature by the immigrants” through Japanese newspapers. They were eager to search for the truth in reality. The period between 1910 and 1920 is called “the golden age of Japanese literature in America”. The main writer is Rokkei Okina who wrote many works. His idea is interesting in the sense that the immigrants should live not as Americans nor as Japanese but as cosmopolitans according to Cosmopolitan wa kataru.

      Even in the concentration camps, many works were written. “Trek” was published in Topaz and “Manzanar Free Press” was published in Manzanar camp. However, after the war Japanese poems such as haiku and tanka have not been written as frequently as before, because the Nisei and the Sansei have not understood Japanese as well as their forebears.

   B. Main Issei Writers and Their Characteristics

      One of the characteristics of the Issei works is that their
materials are based on their real life. Therefore, it is easy to understand the Isseis' life through their literature. There are various themes such as their dreams to come to America, disillusionment, patience, conflicts of adjustment, prejudice towards them, the language barrier, nostalgia, pride as pioneers in the West, and the everyday life of people in the community. But most of all, the main theme is nostalgia. It is prominent because most Issei were planning to return to Japan after prospering in America. Because of both legal and social exclusionary forces, most of the Issei were not able to return. The main factor that prevented the Issei from returning was the expense incurred by the raising of their families in America. After the second generation, the Nisei, had grown up, some Issei were able to fulfill their dreams that they had held for so many years. But post World War II Japan was very different from the Japan of the Issei's nostalgic dreams. They remembered old Japan which had not been westernized. Needless to say, the Issei were disillusioned with what they saw of westernized Japan and consequently preferred living in the United States.

Most of the immigrants were poor in Japan and this is why they immigrated to America. Their dream was to earn much money and come back to Japan again. Ichiyoh wrote as "Endaina yume o idaite tobei no hi." (I immigrated to America with a great dream.) In spite of this dream, the reality of exclusion was very serious. Under these circumstances, the following work was written. "Hainichi wa kaite nakatta ryokohken." (There was no such word as Japanese exclusion in my passport.)

Some regretted their immigration and returned to Japan. Such Isseis' nostalgia is well described in the novel *Third Class Passengers*
(Santoh senkyaku) by Koh-ichiroh Maedagawa (1922). Their hope to start a new life in Japan is also well described. In contrast with such people who were disillusioned with America, some immigrants were disillusioned with feudalistic Japan and longed for American democracy. These dreams are well expressed in “Smith Tower” (Yonjuhni-kai no kohroh) by Kimishige Yoshida. Smith Tower used to be the highest building in Seattle and Yoshida called it “the symbol of the soul of American freedom, benevolence, and equality.” He also wrote, “Light a torch of racial equality in America.” This shows the dream to American democracy.

After a while, the Issei settled down and became proud of themselves. It is well described in Katsuko Hirata’s tanka; Kutsujoku ni taetsutsu areshi sohgen o yokudo ni kaeshi kaitaku no ase” (The sweat of pioneers who changed the wilderness into the fertile land enduring the humiliation of exclusion). Here the Issei’s pride that they contributed to the West is well expressed. In a word, Issei’s hardships are well described in their works. There are many other works by the Issei. They are listed in A Buried Past which is an annotated bibliography of the Japanese-American research project collection. It is said that there are unknown works in the basement of Japanese-Americans’ houses. It is because most of the Nisei and the Sansei can’t read Japanese and they probably don’t know what Issei’s works are. It is hoped that they will be kept as valuable works.

2. The Nisei writers and Their Works

The main theme of the Nisei is “the search for identity either as a Japanese or as an American.” The background is that they were put in the concentration camps although they were born in the
United States. During the war, they were asked if they were loyal to Japan or America. Such a thing did not happen to those of German or of Italian descent.

The characteristic work is *No-No Boy* by John Okada. This is the first novel Japanese-American produced in 1957. It describes the Niseis’ psychological conflicts vividly. The main character, Ichiroh, was put into prison for two years because he refused to be loyal to America during the war. This is because his parents were loyal to Japan. He refused to be loyal to America and to Japan. The title of “No-No” means this dual denial. After the war, he was condemned by one of his friends who fought in Europe. Even his brother called him “Jap.” This made him search for his identity. He started to escape from Japanese and tried to assimilate America. Such tendency can be seen in some Nisei and Sansei because they were educated in America and put in the concentration camps. Self-contempt is well described through Ichiroh.

I am not Japanese and I am not American... I wish all my heart that I were Japanese or that I were American. I am neither and I blame you (his mother) and I blame myself and I blame the world which is made up of many countries which fight with each other and kill and hate and destroy but not enough, so they must kill and hate and destroy again and again.4)

Here is no concept such as “Japanese-American”. Ichiroh’s agony

shows the Niseis' psycho-cultural frictions and social-political conflicts in the process of being Japanese-Americans.

In contrast to *No-No Boy*, it is interesting to read *The Man of Dual Nationality* (*Nijuh Kokuseki-sha*). It was written by Yoshio Abe in 1973. He was born in Portland in 1911, but came to Japan when he was ten years old and grew up in Japan. In 1936, when he was twenty-five years old, he went back to the United States. However, when the war started he was put in a concentration camp. During the war, he went to India to fight against fascism. After the war he stayed in the States, but he came back to Japan again in 1960. He wrote. "I might have tried to deny my dual nationality... The reason why I am not one of the new lost generation is that I fought against fascism in India without any illusions. Sometimes I wonder what a Japanese is".

There are three volumes; the first one is about Japanese-Americans' life in the assembly center in Santa Anita. The second one is about their experience in the concentration camp in Colorado. The third one is about a Japanese-American's experience in India.

The main character is Iwamura who is Kibei-Nisei. He was born in the United States, but grew up in Japan when he was young. Since he was involved in the anti-war movement, he was arrested and put in prison. He escaped from Japan and went to the United States longing for American democracy. However, when the war between the United States and Japan started, he was sent to concentrations, which, of course, disillusioned him about American democracy. He did not know what to do with his dual nationality. The search for identity is well described as follows:

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My parents are Japanese and I am Japanese. I am one of the Japanese. Since I was born in America, I am an American citizen. I am an American. Doesn’t “I am a Japanese and an American” mean “I am not a Japanese nor an American”? Since I am in the camp, it is denied that I am an American. However, it doesn’t necessarily mean I am a Japanese.... Although I am Nisei, I, a Japanese, hate the Japanese, or despise them. Who am I? What am I? 5)

He has been longing to become an international vagabond in order to escape from the social restrictions. However, the racial problem was really complex; the Japanese-Americans who were looked down upon by the white looked down upon the black. Although he wanted to escape from reality, he thought that he should do something. After he was influenced by the man who tried to solve the racial problem, he decided to go to India and fight against fascism because he thought that it was what he should do.

The literary activity in the camp is also well described. The Issei and the Kibei-Nisei tried to create “pure literature” (bungaku suru bungaku) rather than “literature of the immigrants.” Mieko Murata is one of them, and she thinks that the nostalgia is very important. The Nisei tried to create “the great Nisei novel”.

“'We're sure that the great literature will be created in the

war. We, the Nisei, should create the great Nisei novel” was the theme of the meeting. “The great Nisei novel” was discussed seriously and also for fun.6)

However, Iwamura thinks “they are discussing the literature where there is no cry of the hurt soul.” He also thinks, “What Mieko Murata asserts, the nostalgia, is not related to the literature, but it might be the dangerous romanticism identical with the militarism in Japan.” Iwamura is critical to both the Issei and the Nisei.

Japanese-American literature as “literature of protest” is also described. Frank says, “Anyway, we should disclose the reality and protest against such a situation where the love between the white and the Nisei is impossible. My literature is ‘literature of protest’” A poet says, “The problem is how we see the war, why we are put in the camp, what we should do to the militarism in Japan, and how we make the united front of anti-fascism. These are the basic things. Our literature would not exist if we escape from the war.” Seki says, “Yes, I know...but in literature we should discuss them in terms of human love and life and death.”

The Man of Dual Nationality could be compared with John Okada’s No-No Boy. In both novels, the search for identity is well described. However it seems that the social analysis of the theme is stressed more in The Man of Dual Nationality than in No-No Boy. Iwamura tries to analyze his identity in relation to the history whereas Ichiroh doesn’t. It is probably because of the difference of the view-

6) Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 113.
point between Abe and Okada. It is interesting that the theme (the search for identity) is almost the same, whereas the from is different in terms of the language.

The life of the Issei and the Nisei is well described in *Hawaii: End of the Rainbow*. This is a story of two Japanese-American families. There are five parts: the pioneers, the early days, the second generation, concentration camp, and homeward bound. When he read *Giants in the Earth* by O. E. Rolvaag, a novel depicting the life of Norwegian fishermen struggling to homestead in the Dakota Territory, he was so impressed by the book that he decided to write a story of the Japanese-Americans. The Issei’s motivation of the immigration, their new experience in Hawaii, Japanese exclusion, their camp experience, generation gap, the search for identity, and other aspects of the Issei and the Nisei are vividly written. He expects the young generation to understand Japanese-Americans’ background of their achievement in terms of not only good and pleasant experiences but also unpleasant and sad experiences.

In short stories, *Yokohama, California* was written by Toshio Mori who is considered the grandfather of Asian American writers. He has been published in many anthologies and periodicals. He and other writers and artists at the Topaz Center in Utah started the Trek magazine. *Yokohama, California* is a collection of short stories about the Issei’s and the Nisei’s life. His view is optimistic, but it is ironic that the publication of the book was postponed eight years because of his experience in the concentration camp during the war. From an Anglo-American viewpoint, there are many mistakes in his English, as it is said by William Saroyan in the introduction. According
to Saroyan, "His stories are full of grammatical errors. His use of English, especially when he is most eager to say something good, is very bad." In contrast to this criticism, the Sansei believes that Mori's English should not be regarded as "bad English" and it should be understood as the reflection of Japanese-Americans' historical and social backgrounds and cultural heritage. It is well explained in comparison with "Black English" as follows:

Japanese-American English and Chinese-American English are no less distinct than "Black English" and that these "languages" (which they do not consider as mere dialects) reflect a history and culture that drew heavily from the ghetto experience of the early Chinese and Japanese immigrants in the United States and represent a cultural heritage distinct from both Asia and white America.7

Toshio Mori had to work an average of twelve to sixteen hours each day as a nurseryman, then wrote in his "spare time." His works reflect the feelings, emotions, and conflicts of the Issei and Nisei of the 1930's and 1940's according to Counterpoint. Yoneko's Earthquake is also a well-known short story. This was written by Hisae Yamamoto and describes the inner life of a Japanese family in rural California. This was chosen for the 1952 collection of Martha Foley's Best American Short Stories. Although her materials are based on the life of Japanese-Americans, "she

skillfully generalizes this experience by a fascinating preoccupation with social deviance-sexual, and artistic. Treating such atypical themes with cool understatement, she exposes tensions of a socially oppressed, and emotionally repressed, minority group,” according to Bruce Iwasaki.

In regard to works based on the life in the concentration camps, there are works such as Journey to Topaz by Yoshiko Uchida and Farewell to Manzanar by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston. Both Topaz and Manzanar are places where there were concentration camps. Both works express fear of the war and the concentration camps and their impact upon the inner lives of Japanese-Americans. Since Uchida had conscientious white friends, her view of life is optimistic. On the other hand, Wakatsuki's view of life is pessimistic, since she was called “Jap” during the war and was hurt. She could not even talk about her camp life for twenty-five years.

In regard to poetry, Yone Noguchi was the first Japanese-American poet to publish in the United States. His collection, From the Eastern Shore (1905) reflects the traditional forms and images of Japanese verse. Sadakichi Hartman is called the most radical writer of new forms. It is said that he wrote haiku and tanka as early as 1898, long before the Imagists. However, both Noguchi and Hartman are called not “Asian-American” but “Americanized Asian”. It is because their forms are new from the viewpoint of the white people, but the content doesn’t express the life and the inner life of Japanese-Americans.

Although Yasushi Inouye is not a Japanese-American writer, his novel, Wadatsumi is very interesting to read. It is about the life of
a Kibei-Nisei who was born in America, but grew up in Japan and went back to America again. Through the main character, Sho-ichiroh, the life of both the Japanese and Japanese-Americans is vividly written. Sho-ichiroh was born in San Francisco in 1889 and came to Japan when he was small. He went back to America when he was twenty in 1908. The story ends when he came to Japan again and went back to America with his fiancée in 1921. If it is read in comparison to other works on Japanese-Americans, it is really interesting because it was written by a Japanese novelist. Included is the description "The Japanese in the United States are more Japanese than the Japanese in Japan." It may be because of Japanese-Americans' nostalgia. Wadatsumi makes us think what a Japanese is from a different viewpoint. The same thing could also be said of all other works of Japanese-American literature.

3. The Sansei Writers and Their Works

The main theme is the search for identity as Japanese-Americans. *Before the War (Senzen)* by Lawson Fusao Inada is the first collection of poems written by a Japanese-American published in book form. His poems reflect his experience in growing up in the multiracial ghetto of West Fresno, and being called "Jap" when he was teaching in the East. Being influenced by the black power movement, he expressed the idea of "Yellow is beautiful" in his poems. His language is also influenced by the black's English. However, his voice is Japanese-American. In his poem, "Japs," he expressed self-contempt and self-hatred, but his search for identity not as "Jap" but as a Japanese-American can be seen. His poems are criticized by Bruce Iwasaki, a Sansei, who says that he is responding to Anglo-American culture.
instead of confronting the actual root problems of the Japanese-American community. The following poem is "Japs".

Japs
are great imitators
they stole
the Greek's
skewers,
used them
on themselves.
Their sutras
are Face
and Hide.
They hate
everyone else
on the sly.
They play
Dr. Charley's
games-bowling,
raking,
growing forks
on lapels.
Their tongues
are yellow
with "r's"
with "l's"
They hate

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Janice Mirikitani wrote poems such as “Lullabye”, “Attack the water” and “Crazy Alice.” Most of her poems are related to the camp experience. In “Lullabye”, she is contrasting her mother with herself. She sees that her mother died not physically but mentally or psychologically because of her experience in the war. Therefore, she is waiting for the mental or psychological birth of her mother. Although her mother gave her physical birth, she is trying to give her mother mental or psychological birth by her poem, “Lullabye.” She sometimes uses Japanese in her poems as if she tried to express her identity as Japanese-American.

In regard to the drama, The Gold Watch was written by Monoko Iko and it was shown on T.V.. It shows a Japanese-American family who lived happily although they were poor because of the exclusion.

In 1977, when the first Asian-American Writers’ Conference was held at the University of Washington, “Nisei Bar & Grill” was played there by the Asian Exclusion Act, one of the three Asian-American theater groups in the entire United States. The play is set in a run-down bar in Chicago’s Asian community; the owner, Harry, a frustrated writer who dreams of returning to Hawaii, has sold out

8) Chin, op. cit. p. xlv.
to the Toyota Company, leaving a motley assortment of tenants, employees, and patrons without a home. His niece Colleen chastises him, assorted cast members trade ethnic insults, each one's neatly scrubbed "Dream" is trotted out and carefully inspected, neglected and/or rejected, there's an aimless farewell party and everyone leaves. According to Paul Gregutt, "Nisei Bar & Grill" by Garrett Kaoru Hongo was "unfortunately neither intriguing nor a statement, and hadn't progressed past the confusion of an early rehearsal."

Sansei's works are published in "Amerasia Journal" which is a semi-annual publication of the U. C. L. A. Asian-American Studies Center.

IV. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF JAPANESE-AMERICAN LITERATURE

One of the characteristics of Japanese-American literature is that it has been created in contrast to Anglo-American literature. It is because Japanese-Americans have been trying to identify themselves in contrast to Anglo-Americans. Therefore, the range of Japanese-Americans literature is very unique in terms of its variety of theme and form.

With regard to its theme, it shows the changes of Japanese-Americans' life from their immigration to their settlement in America. The Issei's theme of nostalgia shows how they felt about Japan. One of the reasons why they felt nostalgia for Japan was that they were excluded by Anglo-Americans. This is the background of the theme of nostalgia. The Nisei's theme of the search for identity either as a Japanese or as an American shows their ambiguous position in
America. They wondered how they could identify themselves in America because the Japanese fought against Americans during World War II. The Sansei's theme of search for identity as a Japanese-American shows that they are beginning to identify themselves in contrast to Anglo-Americans. Therefore, Japanese-American literature has been created under the background that Japanese-Americans have been trying to identify themselves in contrast to Anglo-Americans. Consequently, Japanese-American literature should not be evaluated in terms of the Anglo-American literary conceptions. It should be evaluated by considering its background.

With regard to its form, one of the main characteristics is its variety of language. The Isseis' works have been written in Japanese since their mother language was Japanese. The Niseis' works have been written in English, but this English was not the same as Anglo-American English. It is Japanese-American English, which can be seen, for example, in the works by Toshio Mori. The language used in the Sanseis' works is very interesting because the Sansei tends to use Japanese words on purpose. This can be seen in Mirikitani's works. It is as if they are trying to identify themselves as Japanese-Americans by doing so. Anglo-Americans might say that there are mistakes in the English which is used in the works of Japanese-American literature. But such criticism should not be given because it is not right to ignore the background of Japanese-Americans and evaluate their works from an Anglo-American viewpoint. Such variety of language should be judged as one of the characteristics of Japanese-American literature.

The other characteristic is that there are differences in the way
of descriptions of life among the generations. The Issei's description of life is rather realistic because they tried to write about real life. Also, the Issei's literary movement was chiefly influenced by naturalism in Japanese literature. On the other hand, the Nisei's and the Sansei's descriptions of life are not as realistic as that of the Issei's. *No-No Boy* is a good example of the Nisei's works because the emphasis of descriptions is put on psychological life much more than on real life. "Japs" is also a good example of the Sansei's works because the psychological description is very unique in the sense that even the influence by Afro-Americans can be seen. In short, the Nisei and the Sansei put the emphasis of description on their psychological life rather than on their real life. It is probably because of their exclusion during World War II. Such different ways of descriptions of life among the generations show the change of their literary way of expressions. Naturally, such changes have been influenced by Anglo-American literature and Afro-American literature. Thus Japanese-American literature has been regarded recently as American literature.

Japanese-American literature shows us America from the Japanese-American view-point. It makes both the Japanese and the Americans think of themselves when they try to identify themselves.

Now is the time when Japanese-Americans themselves become conscious of their own literature. It may be called a literary renaissance. Their future literary activities are expected to be more creative than ever.