

戦後文学に見えるアメリカの日本統治下における庶民感情に関する分析  
—大江健三郎著「不意の唾」・「人間の羊」、  
小島信夫著「アメリカンスクール」、  
野坂昭如著「アメリカひじき」を中心に—

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An Analysis of Japanese Attitudes During the American Occupation  
As Seen Through Post-War Japanese Literature

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要約

本論文は、大江健三郎の「不意の唾」と「人間の羊」、小島信夫の「アメリカンスクール」と野坂昭如の「アメリカひじき」を分析し、戦後の米軍の進駐に対する、一般の日本人の反応について研究したものである。この四つの短編は、戦後の日本人の「精神分析」と思われるもので、多くの人々が抱いていた不安や劣等感や恥辱等の気持ちに、焦点をあてている。この四つの短編では、アメリカ人が否定的に描写されているが、彼らの一番ひどく見える行為は、日本人によって引き起こされたものか、語り手の狭い視野から描かれた誤解の場合が多い。しかしながら、これらの短編は、アメリカ人の行動が悪く描かれているが、アメリカ人を批判しているのではなく、日本人の反応に焦点を合わせている。英語の問題も取り扱われているが、占領下の日本の庶民たちにとって英語ができないことは、明らかに外国兵とのコミュニケーションにおいて乗り越えにくい壁となっていた。それにしても、ほとんどの重要な誤解の原因は、庶民の英語のできないことではなく、権力を掴むために、アメリカ人を利用しようとしていた日本の首脳陣のせいであった。特に大江と小島は、日本の庶民たちが、日本の首脳陣によって裏切られていたと強く主張する。

**KEY WORDS:** *American Occupation, Oe Kenzaburo, Kojima Nobuo, Nosaka Akiyuki*

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## 1 Introduction

Oe Kenzaburo's "Sudden Muteness" and "Sheep," Kojima Nobuo's "American School," and Nosaka Akiyuki's "American Hijiki" are all set in occupied Japan and deal with Japanese reactions to the American occupation. The stories are similar in that they focus primarily on describing the complex feelings of the Japanese characters rather than on describing how those characters are treated by American soldiers. All four of the stories, then, might be considered "psychological studies" of the post-war Japanese mind set and to varying degrees explore the feelings of insecurity, inferiority, and shame that many Japanese felt after the war.

There are, however, subtle differences in how these stories treat these themes. Oe's stories, for example, are more serious and symbolic than the other two, and although he focuses on individual characters, it is clear that he is making a point about how Japanese authorities betrayed ordinary Japanese. Kojima makes a similar point in his depiction of Yamada and Shibamoto, and suggests that those vying for power after the war were sometimes those who were responsible for atrocities during the war. At the same time, his story lightly pokes fun of ordinary Japanese, like Isa, who felt incapable of dealing with Americans directly. Nosaka focuses more on the seedier sides of life during the occupation, especially prostitution, and his story is a comic betrayal of the "Great American Allergy" that Toshio develops as a result of his struggle to survive as a pimp when he was a young boy during the occupation.

## 2 Depictions of Americans

As both Edwin Reischauer and Theodore Cohen point out in their accounts of the occupation, Japan was in desperate straits after the war: approximately two million people had died, nearly half of city areas had been destroyed, and most people were poor and struggling to survive (Reischauer 221). The American occupation, although feared, turned out to be much more benign than expected, and American economic support did much to alleviate these problems. Personal contacts with American soldiers were also generally positive, and the frequent gifts of food, were often lifesavers. As Cohen points out, "The overwhelming majority of encounters were pleasant. . . and a very large number of Japanese were able to gain firsthand favorable impressions of the Americans somewhere along the line" (122).

Interestingly, however, none of the stories mentioned above present Americans in a particularly positive light, although they do vary in how negatively American characters are presented. Americans are depicted most negatively in Oe's stories: in "Sheep," several drunken soldiers humiliate a young Japanese man and other Japanese passengers on a bus by forcing them to kneel down like sheep with their buttocks exposed, and in "Sudden Muteness," it is an American soldier who shoots the village head after his dispute with the translator.

In both of these stories, however, the violence of the American soldiers is at least partly incited by Japanese: the woman of questionable morals in "Sheep" incites the soldiers to childish show off for her, and the arrogant translator in "Sudden Muteness" urges the soldiers to shoot the fleeing village head. The ironic suggestion in "Sudden Muteness" is that if it were not for the translator, there might have been some positive interaction between the villagers, who are naturally curious about the exotic soldiers, and the soldiers, who seem rather amiable, especially in giving chewing gum to and playing with the children.

In the early years of the occupation, when interaction with ordinary Japanese was encouraged, and there were no limits on where American soldiers could go, positive interaction was indeed the norm. In the

second half of the occupation, however, increasingly restrictive regulations, illegal seizures of supposed "contraband," and indiscriminate round ups of "prostitutes" tarnished the American image, and led many Japanese to view America with suspicion (Cohen 128-34). Oe's stories seem to reflect this reaction to the second part of the occupation, so that in his stories, it is clear that American overtures of "friendliness" are held in suspicion, and the suggestion is made that in the end, Americans are likely to resort to violence if any misunderstandings arise.

Nosaka's depiction of Americans is also negative, but he does not depict Americans as being violent and abusive. Rather, he focuses on American "fraternizing" with Japanese women — particularly with prostitutes, and the suggestion seems to be that American soldiers took full advantage of the post-war situation in Japan in enjoying themselves. Given the fact that the only female companionship available was Japanese, it should be no surprise that such problems did in fact exist, but many of the relationships were positive ones, and about several thousand Japanese-American marriages occurred (Cohen 124-5). As restrictions made it more difficult for American soldiers to interact with respectable Japanese women, the problem of prostitution worsened.

Even so, Nosaka's depiction of Higgins in "American Hijiki" seems especially stereotyped: Higgins is superficially friendly, extremely interested in pornography, a strong drinker, and rather selfish. Similarly, most of the Americans that Toshio remembers from the post-war period were soldiers looking for girlfriends or prostitutes, and who would get angry or violent if they were left unsatisfied. As in Oe's stories, however, the function of the stereotypes is not to condemn the Americans, as much as it is to highlight Toshio's own feelings of inadequacy.

Kojima's depiction of Americans in "American School" is the most positive, and the story depicts several instances of American kindness: soldiers give Michiko some cans of cheese, another soldier gives Isa a ride to the school, and a female teacher gives Isa some shoes and helps him with his feet. But Americans are also sometimes seen as being rash, condescending, and apt to resort to violence. The Negro soldier that gives Isa a ride points a "toy" gun in his face and orders him to speak English, and the principal of the school rather high-handedly forbids "any Japanese instructor to conduct a class here" and the wearing of high-heels. In both of these cases, however, the Americans are reacting to unusual Japanese behavior: the Negro soldier mistakenly believes that Isa is refusing to speak English, and is reacting to Isa's running away from him earlier. The principal's announcement seems less in reaction to Michiko's dropping the chopsticks than to Yamada's pushy insistence on doing a model class.

In spite of these negative depictions, however, the stories do not seem at all critical of the American characters, but focus instead on the varied reactions of the Japanese characters. Even in "Sheep," where the Americans soldiers act especially badly, the focus is on the shame the narrator feels, rather than on the intentions of the soldiers. The authoritative teacher, determined to expose the narrator's shame, is clearly presented as being much worse than the Americans.

In the same way, American acts of kindness, in particular the giving of food, are not particularly praised in the stories, and do not seem to be deeply appreciated by the characters. This is perhaps odd, given that large amounts of food were provided for the Japanese at the end of the war. As Tsurumi points out: "To the Japanese, the Occupation made a durable impression primarily as a provider of food" (10). Needless to say, the receiving of such gifts also triggered feelings of shame and embarrassment, especially when viewed later, after Japan's strong economic recovery.

### 3 Misunderstandings and Difficulties in Communicating

The difficulty of interpreting the apparently negative depictions of Americans in these stories, then, is that the point of view is limited, and sometimes even distorted by the Japanese characters through whom they are viewed. In other words, the Japanese characters often misinterpret or misunderstand the Americans they interact with, and this can lead the reader to similar misunderstandings. Certainly, many of the misunderstandings are the result of language difficulties, but quite often, the cause seems to be that intervening Japanese, who have their own special agenda, intentionally distort what Americans are attempting to communicate with ordinary Japanese. Both Oe and Kojima suggest that ordinary Japanese were betrayed by Japanese leaders, who attempted to control and manipulate the Americans in order to retain their own power. Oe's criticism was typical of Japanese liberals, who felt betrayed by the United States during the later part of the Occupation, especially after the break out of the Korean War, when Japan was expected to remilitarize to prevent Communist aggression, and more conservative Japanese leaders gained power.

Nosaka's story is different in that Toshio, the main character, attempts to communicate with the Americans directly, without a translator, but it is clear that his ability is extremely limited, and like Isa, Toshio develops a complex about using English. Michiko, in "American School," is unique in being able to communicate in English confidently and capably.

All of the stories, then, address the issue of English, and it is obvious that the inability of the ordinary Japanese person to communicate in English was a major barrier to communication between the American soldiers and ordinary Japanese during the occupation. The three authors seem to view the problem in very different ways, however. In Oe's two stories, the main characters do not seem particularly bothered or troubled about not being able to speak English: in "Sudden Muteness," the boy does not feel at all ashamed that his father does not speak English, and in fact, the father's dignity only seems heightened by his speaking only in Japanese.

Similarly, in "Sheep," the Japanese characters do not attempt to speak English. Rather comically, the woman with the soldiers speaks with them in Japanese, even though they cannot understand her, and when the narrator of the story is yelled at by the soldiers, he merely states matter-of-factly that he "did not catch a single word he uttered." He even refers to English derogatorily as being a language "full of sibilants." In contrast to Toshio, the characters in Oe's stories are not at all embarrassed about not being able to speak English; if anything, they are proud of not speaking English.

In the stories by Nosaka and Kojima, on the other hand, characters are clearly traumatized by their inability to communicate in English, or perhaps more accurately, by their being forced to use English, in spite of not having any ability. Isa and Toshio are rather similar in their hatred for the English language: "I d-d-detest it!" says Isa, when asked how he feels about speaking English. Toshio, too, detests English, and he tells himself that he will not speak English to the Higgenses. And yet, both characters are pushed to use the language, even if for very different reasons. As an English teacher, Isa is assumed to be able to speak English, and is pressed into service as an interpreter. Toshio, on the other hand, needed to use English to survive as a pimp during the occupation. For both characters, speaking English is embarrassing and humiliating, and yet they both feel that they should be able to use the language.

Two characters in Kojima's story, however, speak English confidently, and these characters are contrasted to each other. Michiko is an ordinary woman who lost her husband in the war, and she is

relaxed and confident in speaking English. She is kind-hearted, but not entirely selfless. Yamada, on the other hand, is arrogant and competitive about his English ability, and speaks English, not to communicate, but to maneuver himself into a position of power. Willing to humiliate ordinary Japanese, such as Isa or Michiko, in order to make himself look good, Yamada cares little about others, except as a means for his own advancement. He seems especially determined to prove that he is better than the Americans, and he uses his English ability as a weapon.

In spite of the difficulty that ordinary Japanese had in communicating in English, the greatest misunderstandings seem to be the result of Japanese leaders who attempted to manipulate Americans in order to achieve their own aims. For this reason, readers of the stories must view "translations" with suspicion, and should avoid making rash judgments about the American speakers, whose comments are not always translated accurately. Thus, the American soldiers in "Sudden Muteness" seem friendly and anxious to talk with the villagers, but the tone of the translator's "translation" is cold and demanding. Similarly, Yamada's "translation" of the principal's comments in "American School" makes the principal sound condescending towards the Japanese teachers, and although this might partly be the case, Yamada's "translation" should be held in suspicion, especially since Kojima makes clear that Yamada is untrustworthy and determined to make the Americans look bad.

#### **4 Criticism of Japanese in Positions of Authority**

It goes without saying that ordinary Japanese felt betrayed by leaders that led them into a war that proved so costly, and immediately following the war, the Occupation forces moved to eliminate many of those leaders. The "purge" of war leaders eliminated approximately 200,000 people from positions of authority immediately after the war (Reischauer 228), but when the Occupation ended, many of these leaders were able to return to power, and many in the bureaucracy were not affected. As Tsurumi points out, ". . . the Japanese system for training high officials. . . remained as it had been before the war" (6). The Tokyo War Crimes Trial, which Tsurumi criticizes for its arbitrary application, left the impression of being a kind of "modern legal cover for a primitive form of retaliation" (15).

In contrast to Nosaka, both Oe and Kojima pointedly criticize Japanese that were in positions of authority during the occupation. Oe's stories suggest that ordinary Japanese were betrayed by their leaders. In "Sudden Muteness," the interpreter, who is in a position of authority, treats the villagers rudely and condescendingly. His tone of voice and attitude make clear that he is determined to assert his superiority over the villagers, and when the villagers do not respond to his orders, he gets angry. Clearly, the dispute between the villagers and the translator has as much to do with the translator's egotistic demand for respect and the villager's refusal to give it as with the shoes.

The tension of the story, then, comes from the confrontation between the translator and the villagers, and the American soldiers seem to be in the background. It is important to recognize, however, that the translator uses the soldiers to enforce his authority with the villagers, even to the extent of getting the soldiers to shoot the village head. Clearly, the translator is the villain in Oe's story, and he represents those in positions of authority that betrayed ordinary Japanese, but it is easy for readers to miss the fact that the boy is also betrayed by the villagers, who coerce him into participating in their ritual of revenge. Oe's point is that ordinary Japanese, too, participated in the violence of the war, and that the younger generation was betrayed by the older generation.

In "Sheep," too, Oe's main point is how ordinary Japanese were betrayed by their leaders. In this story, the narrator suffers a humiliating defeat at the hands of the American soldiers, but the far greater humiliation is at the hands of the authoritative teacher, who follows him home, determined to make the narrator's shame known to the world.

Kojima's portrayal of Yamada and Shibamoto, both of whom are arrogant and tyrannical towards others, is especially condemning of the Japanese leadership. The hypocrisy and cruelty of the two men is made clear when they confidently brag to each other about their exploits during the war. Yamada brags that he "polished off" about twenty, but it is clear that most of these killings were cowardly murders: "Half of them must've been POWs" (128). Both Shibamoto and Yamada clearly relished the violence of the war years, and though they recognize the need to hide their past deeds, they are quite proud of what they did. The two men's espousing of education and teaching, then, is hypocritical in the extreme, and it is obvious that the men are mainly concerned with remaining in power.

The point that Yamada and Shibamoto are betrayers of the Japanese is made especially clear at the end of the story when Yamada tries to explain the commotion by saying that "It all proceeded from their pedagogical dedication" (143). It is, of course, significant that the incident was triggered by Michiko's dropping a pair of chopsticks, an insignificant Japanese object representing ordinary Japanese. Yamada's explanation, then, is also a denial of Michiko and Isa, and the principal's comment ("Ah, yes. The old kamikaze spirit.") makes clear that Yamada's attitude is the same as the attitude of Japanese leaders, who were willing to sacrifice ordinary Japanese in their desperate attempt to remain in control. Not surprisingly, the irony of this comment is lost on Yamada.

## 5 Conclusion

The stories by Oe, Kojima, and Nosaka, then, deal with similar themes and make some similar points about the occupation. All four stories depict Americans negatively, but the depiction is mitigated by the fact that the worst American behavior is incited by Japanese, or skewed by a limited point of view. Kindnesses, such as the giving of food, are alluded to in the stories, but none of the American characters in the stories are presented as being particularly kind. It should also be pointed out that no mention is made in the stories of Japanese atrocities during the war, or the Japanese occupation of other countries, which would have made the Americans' behavior seem generous by comparison. Indeed, few Japanese novelists focus on those events.

Although Americans are portrayed as being egotistical and apt to violence, the stories are much less concerned with American behavior than with the Japanese reaction to the Occupation. Though sometimes resulting from the trying economic situation following the war, feelings of shame and victimization are most often the result of how characters are treated by other Japanese, especially those in positions of authority.

The stories also point out how difficult it was for American soldiers and ordinary Japanese to communicate. Nosaka's story especially focuses on how the main character developed a complex about dealing with Americans and speaking English. This does not, however, seem to be the fault of the Americans so much as the circumstances of the post-war period.

Finally, the stories portray ordinary Japanese as being victims and are severe in their criticism of Japanese leadership, especially the post-war leadership that was more conservative than liberal writers like Oe would have liked. The same leaders that led Japan to war and defended militaristic values were also

often the same people who argued most vehemently for democracy and for working with the Americans. In his comic story "American School," Kojima suggests that such hypocrisy was the result of those leaders' desire for power and control. In his much more serious stories, Oe makes a similar point, but he also suggests that more ordinary Japanese could also respond with violence, and that those values had a disruptive effect on the young.

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