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Narrative Perspective and Imagined Space: Understanding Japanese-American Experience in Hawaii through Murayama's Fiction

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Abstract

This paper contextualizes the intricate relationship between language, culture, and place in Milton Murayama's *All I am Asking for is My Body*, underlining the dynamic of the Japanese-American diasporic experience in Hawaii. The econarratological analysis delves into the spatial representation and homodiegetic narration employed by Murayama to immerse readers in the plantation labor experience and the linguistic landscapes of Hawaii. The study examines the complex dynamics between Standard English and Hawaiian Creole English (HCE) in Murayama's work, highlighting their role in shaping the cultural and linguistic identity of the characters. By employing immersive textual cues, such as vivid descriptive imagery and the strategic use of language styles, Murayama creates a mental model of narratives that accurately depicts the historicity of the Nikkei community, focusing on the plantation labor experience. This paper argues that the deliberate blending of Standard English and HCE in Murayama's fiction enhances readers' engagement and understanding of the Nikkei experience and contributes to broader discussions on language, culture, and identity within the context of diaspora literature.

Keywords: econarratology, Hawaii, language and place, Japanese-American literature, story world.

[\[Sustainable Development Goals: Reduced Inequalities\]](#)

Introduction

The definition of diaspora has been elusive and challenging to pin down. Historically, it referred solely to the dispersal of the Jewish people and their collective trauma of being expelled from their homeland (Cohen, 2008, p. 2). However, diaspora is now widely recognized as a phenomenon linked to the dispersal of people on a larger scale, often caused by unequal power dynamics within the global context. According to Ashcroft et al., diaspora encompasses not only the geographical dispersal of a significant number of people but also concerns with their identity, memory, and sense of home, which are all shaped by the experience of displacement (2013, pp. 217–218). The sense of being and becoming of a diaspora is constantly negotiated and reformed. Although the presence of diaspora in their new place of residing remains linked with the notions of homeland,

tradition, heritage, and ancestry, their conception is always in a state of flux within the shifting consciousness of the diaspora. Diasporic identities are constantly transforming and reproducing themselves anew through difference and transformation (Hall, 1990, p. 80). To experience diaspora is to recontextualize the notion of home and homeland, viewed through the scope of where, what, and how. As such, the ideas of homeland, tradition, and heritage are continually reinterpreted as alternative outlooks that continue to shape the diaspora's presence in their new residence.

The Japanese diaspora is one of the most notable migration phenomena outside their national diaspora. In 2017, the total number of Japanese diaspora was around 3.8 million. Historically, the emergence of the Japanese diaspora can be traced back to the 16th century with emigration to China and South East Asia; Japanese traders founded settlements in the Philippines, Ayutthaya (modern Thailand), and Dutch East Indies (current Indonesia). This early diasporic community was ended by the enforcement of an official policy of isolation in 1629 from Europe, and most of its colonies, and emigration was strictly controlled under the *Sakoku* (closed country) policy of the ruling Shogunate. Only in the Meiji Restoration in 1868 did Japan's rapid urbanization and industrialization bring about significant social disruption and agricultural decline (Walker, 2015). As farmers were forced to leave their land and the increasing competition by foreign workers, more and more Japanese nationals were attracted to the allure of having a better life abroad. The blossoming sugar industry in Hawai'i and the discovery of gold in California, the United States, were two primary destinations for the influxes of Japanese diaspora to the New World.

The historicity of the Hawai'ian archipelago is pivotal in shaping the experiences of Japanese immigrants in the USA, now referred to as Japanese-American. The first recorded account of Japanese emigration to another country was in 1868, when around 150 migrant Japanese workers traveled to Hawai'i -then an independent country- to work in its sugarcane industry (Kinoshita, 2002). In the 1880s, with immigration from China as the primary labor source largely restricted, the Kingdom of Hawai'i asked the Japanese government to send immigrants from its country who could provide a new workforce. The so-called *kanyaku-imin* (government-contracted immigrant labor) as the group of immigrants who went to Hawai'i began with the influx of around 900 immigrants, a number that went up to over 28,000 over the next three decades (MacLennan, 1997; Menton, 1989). As Hawai'i transformed from a sovereign nation into a territory of the United States (between 1894-1900), the environment encompassing the historicity of Japanese workers' experience changed enormously. Beginning in 1890, with the completion of their contract at various sugar cane plantations, many Japanese chose to permanently live in Hawai'i and moved to Honolulu and other urban centers. Besides the continuing influx of Japanese immigrants until the implementation of the Japanese Exclusion Act in 1924¹, the number of Japanese descendants also increased. As a consequence, the *Nikkei/Nikkeijin* (people of Japanese descent) community was taking shape in Hawai'i, which can be differentiated based on their generation and place of birth: *issei* (first-generation immigrant), *nisei* (second-generation born in the U.S.) and *sansei* (third-generation). By 1920, the *Nikkei* population rose to 110,000, representing 43 % of the territory's total population (Asato, 2008, p. 64).

Plantation labor experience plays an essential role in shaping the foundation of Japanese-American identity in Hawai'i, mostly pronounced in the case of *issei* and *nisei*. Unlike the Chinese

and Caucasian immigrant workers who intermarried with Hawai'ian and Portuguese women, Japanese males seldom intermarried because of the availability of Japanese women as 'picture brides'ⁱⁱ (Nurdyke & Lee, 1977). This situation ensures the preservation of family purity, heritage, and tradition remains entrenched among the Japanese diaspora in Hawai'i compared to other ethnicities of immigrant descent. As Kinoshita remarks,

"When the Japanese American elderly tell stories about their childhood at home, they focus on their experiences of interacting with Issei parents or grandparents and construct their ethnic identity based on their "Japanese" cultural roots passed on from the Issei. The Japanese American elderly were born in Japanese households managed by Issei parents or grandparents with their customs and practices. Growing up with the Issei in their childhood, they were imbued with "Japanese culture (2002, p. 5)."

The issue of class, identity, and generational heritage is interwoven within the shared collective memory of plantation labor, experienced directly by the *issei* and inherited across generations. Most of the *nisei* grew up during the period when Hawai'i was already an American territory with its ongoing 'Americanization' movement, spoke and wrote English, demonstrated their patriotism to the U.S, and applied for citizenship (Okamura, 2008; Tamura, 2002) Many sought American education as a way to ensure social mobility, entering middle-class city life and escape the harshness of plantation labor. Plantation-raised *nisei* respected their parents' perseverance and diligence as sugar workers and incorporated their work ethics while detesting the thought of staying in the same position (Okamura, 2002, p. 14).

There is a growing body of literature and studies dedicated to the experiences of Japanese-Americans, both on the West Coast of the USA and in the Hawai'ian archipelago. The field has gained significant attention recently, with scholars exploring topics such as Japanese-American identity, history, and cultural production. One example of a recent event is the "Japanese Diaspora to the Americas: Literature, History, and Identity" symposium hosted by the Macmillan Centre and the Council on East Asian Studies at Yale University in 2019 (*Japanese Diaspora to the Americas: Literature, History, and Identity*, 2019). Japanese-American experience on the USA West Coast is mainly shaped by the forced internment of Japanese-Americans during the Second World War. At the same time, the literary imagination of *Nikkei* in Hawai'i prominently explores the harshness of plantation labour experience and the subsequent clash of identity between *issei* and *nisei* (Naoto, 2010; Yamane, 1978). The stratified system of a plantation-based society, with its subsequent limited opportunity for social mobility, is integral in shaping the resulting tension between the *issei* and *nisei*. As Chang further elaborates,

"the life of Japanese immigrants in Hawaii during the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century was tantamount to a history of victimization under the sugarcane plantation. First, the Japanese laborers were treated inhumanely. The planters ordered and imported the Japanese into Hawaii as supplier, and then worked them "like machines." Then, based on a "divide and control" strategy, the Japanese were pitted against workers of other ethnicities (2004, pp. 157–158)."

One of the most influential writers of Japanese descent in Hawai'i is Milton Murayama (1923-2016), whose works delineate the historicity of Japanese Americans in Hawai'i by foregrounding the plantation labour experience as a central theme. His style of writing, as he

himself emphasized is driven by the need to record his first-and-second hand experiences of growing up in Mau'i island, schooling and working in the cane fields through literary form (Luangphinit, 2000, p. 253). Murayama's fictions explore the issue of *Nikkei* diasporic identity and the preservation of ethnic cultural values in a land dominated by American ideas of individualism, capitalism and freedom. He further emphasizes the Japanese diaspora's ties between and beyond generations despite the resulting conflict due to differing values held by the *issei* and *nisei* (Naoto, 2010, p. 298). His first literary production is a short story "I'll Crack Your Head *Kotsun*", published in the *Arizona Quarterly* in 1959 (which later become the first chapter in his seminal novel, *All I am Asking for is My Body* -originally published by Supa Press in 1975 and rereleased by the University of Hawai'i Press in 1988). This plantation-saga of Oyama family was followed by the subsequent novels, *Five Years on A Rock* (1994) and *Plantation Boy* (1998). In 1991, Murayama received the Hawai'i Award for Literature due to his contribution in forming a unique, 'local' Hawai'i literary scene. Sumida, on his anthology *and the View from the Shore : Literary Tradition of Hawai'i* posits how

"*All I am Asking for is My Body's* true import rests not on such generalization about cultures and nationalities but in a radically different, humane way of viewing relationship between its *issei* and *nisei* generations and envisioning the Japanese-American culture they share (Sumida, 1991, p. 117)."

Murayama's seminal novel of Japanese-American experience in Hawai'i, *All I am Asking for is My Body* contextualizes the conflict and tension of plantation labour experience, especially between the *Issei* and *Nisei* from the view point of Kiyoshi Oyama, the youngest son of the Oyama family. This novel is a fictionalized autobiography based upon Murayama's own upbringing on a Hawai'ian sugar cane plantation in the 1930's. The title of the novel itself was taken from the dialogue of Kiyo's elder brother, Toph, as he refuses the overly filial duty of Japanese children to help their parents meet their financial obligation in favour of a more Americanized sense of individual freedom. The thematic basis of Murayama's fiction identifies the irreconcilable differences between Japanese traditions and the culture of its adopted home. Kiyoshi Oyama, the American-born son of Japanese immigrants narrated the story using a mixture of Standardized and Creolized English, alluding upon the unique historicity of Hawai'i in forming Japanese-American diasporic identity.

As a seminal work of Japanese-American experience in Hawai'i, much scholarly attention has been devoted in analyzing *All I am Asking for is My Body*. Libretti's Marxist-oriented analysis focuses on the racial divide within the plantation system, highlighting the segregation of workers by race and the emergence of a pan-Asian, working-class nationalist consciousness (1997, p. 34). Another finding by Zhang examines Murayama's use of Hawai'i Creole English (HCE), a distinct linguistic variation, to problematize the unique identity and cultural differences of Japanese-Americans in Hawai'i compared to those on the U.S. mainland (Zhang, 1999, p. 31). Additionally, Young's argumentation (2002) identifies the plantation as a site of tension, where the racialized body, language, and education intersect, and explores how the racialized subjects struggle to reclaim full autonomy over their bodies. These scholarly analyses contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the complex themes and dynamics depicted within the novel.

This study contends that previous analyses of *All I am Asking for Is My Body* have neglected to explore the aspect of storyworld formation, specifically how Murayama's narratives provide textual cues that are essential for readers to construct a mental model of the Japanese-American plantation labour experience in Hawai'i. The cognitive turn in literary studies emphasizes the importance of forming a mental model of the narrative for effective comprehension, where readers must engage and immerse themselves in the reading process (James, 2015, p. 8), Reading, as a performative act, facilitates the relocation of readers from their immediate physical environment to an alternative space-time. As James further suggests,

"importantly for the considerations of narrative environments, the concept of storyworld calls attention to the worldmaking power of narrative, or its potential to immerse/transport readers into virtual environments that differ from the physical environment in which they read (2015, pp. 9–10)."

James' model of reading, referred to as econarratology, emphasizes the significance of constructing a mental mapping of the narrative within readers' minds, which contributes to the development of an environmental imagination rooted in the perception of place and space. This highlights the importance of spatiality, particularly in relation to the values associated with inhabited places, adding a cultural dimension to the discourse on abstract narrative spaces. In her exploration, James delves into how

"econarratology studies the storyworld that readers immerse themselves in when they read narratives, the relationship between these worlds and the physical/actual world, and the potential of reading process to raise awareness of different environmental imagination and environmental experience (James & Morel, 2018, p. 13)."

The process of storyworld formation involves the dynamic interaction between readers and the narrative's context and environments. It highlights the role of mental mapping in imaginatively transporting readers into the narrative world as they engage with the text. This immersive experience is facilitated by textual cues provided by the character/narrator, which manifest through spatial references that help readers mentally simulate the narrative world, as well as sensory appeals that evoke conscious experiences narrated from a subjective consciousness and the narrative voice of the narrator or focalizing character. These textual cues serve to enhance readers' engagement and immersion in the storyworld, enabling a deeper understanding of the characters and their experiences within the narrative (Indriyanto, 2022a, p. 159, 2022b, p. 92). As explored by Buell, spatial imagination and conscious experience "is not value neutral, but is loaded with the values and agenda of a particular perspective (2011, p. 85)." A story narrated from an immigrant/diasporic perspective will have a different understanding of a particular view compared from an insider/native point of view. This issue of subjectivity and spatiality proves a useful conceptual tool in foregrounding readers' active role in imagining Japanese-American diasporic experience from the perspective of Kiyoshi Oyama, a *Nisei*.

This study delves into the issue of storyworld formation within the novel "All I am Asking for Is My Body" by Milton Murayama, narrated through a first-person homodiegetic perspective. It examines how the protagonist's role as the narrator contributes to the construction of the storyworld, immersing readers in the Japanese-American plantation labour experience in Hawai'i. The analysis explores the textual cues and narrative strategies employed by Murayama to enhance

readers' understanding of the storyworld and evoke an intimate and emotionally engaged reading experience. Additionally, the study investigates the role of Hawaiian Creole English (HCE) in shaping the Japanese-American experience in Hawai'i within the novel. It highlights how the use of HCE, as a creolized language, creates a unique linguistic and cultural niche for the characters, mediating cultural encounters and contributing to the formation of a distinct Japanese-American identity. By examining both the narrative techniques and the linguistic aspects of the novel, this study provides a comprehensive exploration of how the first-person homodiegetic narration and the presence of HCE contribute to the portrayal of the Japanese-American experience in the specific context of plantation life in Hawai'i.

Spatial Representation and Homodiegetic Narration of Murayama's Fiction

Econarratological reading on Murayama's *All I Am Asking for is My Body* implores readers to abandon their presupposition upon Hawai'i, commonly construed as a tropical paradise (Mak, 2015) and instead relive a narration grounded within the historical circumstances of plantation labour experience. This mode of reading explores the world-creating power of narrative to emphasize how environmental imagination of plantation labour experience play a direct role in the social and material condition of Japanese-American diasporic experience. Spatial scene, narrated from Kiyō's perspective functions as textual cues to model a fictional mode of narrative which the readers must emotionally inhabit to understand the narrative they are experiencing. As is elaborated by Odo on his afterword of *All I Am Asking for is My Body*, "Milton Murayama's work has recreated and reinterpreted a world that no longer exist", the plantation labour experience in Hawai'i (1988, p. 109). An econarratological reading imaginatively transports reader to a subjective and local experience of what it is like to live in the segregated plantation labour life based upon racial divide and reimagine the socio-historical situation of Hawai'i during the early 1900's century.

This novel employs a first-person homodiegetic narrative, with Kiyoshi Oyama serving as the narrator from his own perspective. As the protagonist actively involved in driving the plot, Kiyoshi functions as a narrator-protagonist, or autodiegetic narrator according to Genette's terminology (Genette et al., 1990, p. 762). This narrative approach creates a more intimate and profound emotional connection between readers and the plight of the Oyama family, effectively representing the broader Japanese immigrant experience in Hawai'i. The textual cues provided are internally simulated from Kiyō's subjective viewpoint, enabling readers to immerse themselves in his perspective. It is important to note that the internal thought processes of other characters remain closed off from Kiyō's focalization. The novel adopts a singular voice, rather than employing multiple or polyvocal narration (Indriyanto & Darmawan, 2023, p. 61). Consequently, readers can only perceive events in which Kiyō is physically present, and his commentaries offer insights into those specific situations.

The limitation of perspective restricts the availability of information both from Kiyō as an experiencing agent and the reader. It involves spatial limitation, in which the narrator has no psychological privilege and is limited to the role of witness and agent. One example of how this narrative technique is presented in the story is Kiyō's unawareness of the illicit occupation of Mrs.

Suzuki, another Japanese immigrant family who live in Filipino camp with luxurious goods unreachable for others. Kiyō's inner thought is presented as follows,

"there was something funny about Makot. He always played with guys younger and he and the big guys his own age always made fun of him. His family was the only Japanese family in Filipino camp and his father didn't seem to do anything but ride around in his brand-new Ford Model T. But Makot always had money to spend and the young kids liked him (Murayama, 1976, p. 1)"

The narrator acknowledges that there is "something funny about Makot", but is unable to comprehend the exact detail from his perspective alone. The missing information is supplanted during a scene in which Kiyoshi is warned by his mother to no longer associate with the Suzukis, as "you will bring shame to your father and me if you go there to eat. His parents are *hoitobo* and *chorimbo* (Murayama, 1976, p. 3)." The reasons behind alienating the Suzukis become clear later in the story, Mrs. Suzuki works as a prostitute, entertaining Filipino men, a deep shame for the Japanese community who associate the Suzukis as *hoitobo* (beggars) and *chorimbo* (bums). This scene, presented in the opening chapter of the novel, provides readers with textual cues detailing the problems of class and ethnic difference on the plantations. The Japanese were not allowed to associate with those considered bringing shame or 'sickness' to themselves. Moreover, obedience and filial piety is of utmost importance, lets one invite shame toward their families, which became a site of tension between the *issei* and the *nisei*.

Through plethora of textual cues dealing with space, or spatialization, Murayama provides readers with necessary imagery to construct a fictional storyworld of plantation labour experience in early 1900's Hawai'i. These textualities slowly familiarize readers as they mentally chart a previously unexplored and unmapped abstract space and simulate the events as it unfolded from the first-person perspective of Kiyō. As the narration progresses, Kiyō and the Oyama family is forced to move to another camp in Kahana, a more run-down place than their previous Japanese Camp. This spatial representation of place, as Tally Jr argues, "situated the readers in an imaginary space and providing point of reference to understand the world in which they live (2013, p. 62)." In other words, spatialization familiarizes readers with the situation at the Kahana camp and thus able facilitates the modelling of a storyworld directly informed by Kiyō's subjective understanding,

"it was a company town with identical company houses and outhouses, and it was set up like a pyramid. At the tip was Mr. Nelson, then the Portuguese, Spanish, and nisei lunas in their nicer-looking homes, then the identical wooden frame houses of Japanese Camp, then the more run-down Filipino Camp. There were a plantation store, a plantation mess hall for the Filipino bachelors, a plantation community bathhouse, and a plantation social hall. The *lunas* or strawbosses had their own baths and indoor toilets (Murayama, 1976, p. 28)

The tone of this passage resembles a narratorial commentary where Kiyō illustrates the general outline of the Kahana camp. He mentions how at first everything seems identical with his former camp with identical company houses, identical structures, and also identical segregation of workers, divided by racial lines. Then, his own subjective opinion previously submerged under the detached and objective tone of previous passage begins to emerge as the other details about the Kahana camp slowly unfolded.

"the plantation had built pigpens along the four-foot-wide kukai ditch, and rented them to the workers. Every family kept pigs. The house we moved into, No. 173, was the last house on "PigPen Avenue" and next to the pigpens and ditch, and when the wind stopped blowing or when the warm Kona wind blew from the south, our house smelled like both an outhouse and a pigpen (Murayama, 1976, p. 29)."

In contrast to the previous passage, where the narrator provides a detached description of the situation, this particular description invites readers to actively immerse themselves in Kiyō's experience as he moves from one spatial scene to another. It becomes immediately apparent that both visual and olfactory cues play a significant role. The presence of pigpens is visually evident, while the olfactory cues are emphasized through the description that "our house smelled like both an outhouse and a pigpen." Throughout the narration, considerable attention is given to the undesirable smell of the Kahana camp in general, and specifically to 173 Avenue, Kiyō's place of residence. Even as the story progresses into the late 1930s, there is a continued emphasis on the damp smell of the outhouse lingering over Pig Pen Avenue (Murayama, 1976, p. 96). The focus on olfactory textual cues underscores for readers that Kiyō's dissatisfaction with the plantation labour experience extends beyond the visual undesirability of the place; it also encompasses the enduring smell of the pigpens.

In Murayama's narration, the plantation setting serves as a contested space where two contrasting cultural values collide: Japanese filial piety and American individualism. These seemingly distinct cultural aspects are intricately intertwined, particularly in the context of the Nisei sons who find themselves compelled to work on the plantations in order to repay a family debt of \$6,000 that has accumulated over three generations of their family history. While Kiyoshi may not express overt outrage towards the idea of subservience due to his parents' debt, he does yearn to liberate himself from the oppressive experience of plantation labor. This desire for liberation is evident in his internal monologue, where he contemplates

"it was like we were born in a cage and Snooky was coaxing us to fly off, not run away, but be on our own and taste the freedom and danger of the open space. Snooky gave me a glimpse of what it could be. I would have to get out and be on my own even if the old man was successful and he was doing me the favors, even if the plantation made me its highest *luna*. Freedom was freedom from other people's shit, and shit was shit no matter how lovingly it was dished, how high or low it came from (Murayama, 1976, p. 96)."

The previous assertion draws a parallel between plantation life, which becomes a site of contention between Japanese and American values, and a confining cage. The protagonist's dissatisfaction arises from the lack of autonomy over his own body and harsh occupation within the plantation camp, leading to a failure to develop a strong sense of place-attachment to the Kahana camp. Through emotive textual cues, readers are able to grasp and navigate the circumstances surrounding the Kahana camp, while also sensing Kiyō's persistent desire to leave. The concept of place can be defined as a space imbued with assigned meanings and serving as a focal point of emotional significance (Buell, 2005, p. 63)."

Despite the challenges and negative associations of the plantation camp, Kiyō actively contributes to shaping a unique Japanese-American experience in Hawaii through his use of

creolized English. However, the presence of Standard English remains predominant upon the utilization of Hawai'i Creole English (HCE), which could potentially hinder the fully established dynamics within the specific context of place. In the subsequent section, the analysis will delve deeper into Kiyō's engagement with the linguistic interplay between Standard English and HCE, examining how this language hierarchy influences his navigation of cultural identity and connection to his Japanese heritage and the Hawaiian environment. This exploration sheds light on the complexities and tensions that arise when cultural differences are mediated through language, and the challenges faced in maintaining a sense of authenticity and belonging within a diverse and multifaceted cultural landscape shaped by linguistic dominance.

Navigating Linguistic Landscapes: Standard/Creolized English in *All I Am Asking for is My Body*

The intertwined relationship between HCE and place in Hawai'i is evident, as generations of Japanese immigrants express their struggles and achievements through creolized English, contributing to Hawai'i's distinct cultural and linguistic identity. Pidgin serves as a vehicle through which three and four generations of Japanese immigrants voice their struggles and accomplishments, shaping Hawai'i into a distinctive realm with its own language (Wilson, 2008, p. 478). Known locally as pidgin, this unique and rhythmic dialect emerged as a means of communication among individuals from diverse racial backgrounds who were compelled to collaborate on Hawai'i's historic plantations. Milton Murayama, recognizing its significance, emphasizes the inclusion of Hawaiian Creole English (HCE) in his work, affirming that writing in dialect allows for a closer connection to the authentic experience. He advocates how "the aim of writing is to get as close as possible to the experience and if the experience is in dialect, you write in dialect (Murayama, 1977, p. 7)."

Murayama's writing highlights the connection between asserting cultural difference and the performance of language. The act of using language, in this case HCE, seen as a discursive 'body' creates a space where cultural differences can be reconstituted and expressed. Yet compared to other Japanese-American writers in Hawaii like Lois-Ann Yamanaka, Murayama predominantly employs Standard English in his tetralogy, with limited usage of Hawai'i Creole English (HCE) confined to dialogues between specific characters, Kiyō and his siblings or Tosh and his childhood friends (Boström, 2022). The dynamics of language performance within Murayama's function become a contested space, with Kiyō's narratorial voice predominantly mediated by Standard English, a language associated with power and authority of the white person (*haole*). This linguistic hierarchy creates a tension between the dominant language and Kiyō's use of creolized English. The intentional enforcement of this narrative strategy, as highlighted by Odo in the Afterword, underscores Murayama's deliberate choice in predominantly employ Standard English within the narrative.

"Murayama intended to reach the broadest possible audience with this book and thus limited his use of pidgin, confining it to conversation and, even there, tempering the language to make it accessible to standard English speakers (1988, p. 105)"

An econarratological reading of the text's storyworld suggests that Murayama does not so much capitulate to hegemonic discourse symbolized by Standard English as strategically negotiate the international marketplaces he made no secret of targeting. This novel can be read as a fictionalized account of Japanese-American experience in Hawaii, designed especially for wider reading audience familiar with Standard English, yet unfamiliar with the exact dynamic of the *Nikkei* unique historicity in Hawaii. The complex dynamic of language use in the novel is aptly summarized during this excerpt,

"Then at supper Tosh brought it up again. He spoke in pidgin Japanese (we spoke four languages: good English in school, pidgin English among ourselves, good or pidgin Japanese to our parents and the other old folks), "Mama, you better tell Kyo not to go outside the breakers. By-'n'-by he drown. By-'n'-by the shark eat um up." (Murayama, 1976, p. 5)

As aforementioned, the linguistic landscape of early 1900's Hawaii is a contested site of cultural encounter between White Americans, Native Hawaiians and *Nikkei*. Languages are separated from each other not only on the basic of syntax but also consideration of morality in which there are "good" English and Japanese. From an econarratological perspective, the reading the novel involves "transportation to a local understanding of what it is like" (James & Morel, 2020, p. 8) for the Oyama family to live in and understand *Nikkei* experience. Kiyō's narrative provides a sense of authenticity, capturing the linguistic reality of the time period and allowing readers to engage with local experience. For Murayama, immersing readers into the historicity of *Nikkei* in Hawaii meant exposing themselves with the creolized English used by the local inhabitants, while simultaneously mediating the storyworld construction through Standard English.

Tension between Standard and Creolized English is a recurring occurrence in Kiyō's narration. The narratorial voices often blends these two together, narrating Kiyō's thought using proper English, while simultaneously employs pidgin in voicing the creolized English through HCE. The tension within this linguistic divide is vividly depicted in an excerpt from the novel, showcasing the contrasting dynamics of how standard/creolized English is perceived,

She was acting too damn *haolefied*. Whenever anybody spoke goody-good English outside of school, we razzed them, "You think you haole, eh?" "Maybe you think you shit ice cream, eh?" "How come you talk through your nose all the time?" Lots of them talked nasally to hide the pidgin accent. At the same time the radio and haole newspapers were saying over and over, "Be American. Speak English." Pidgin was foreign (Murayama, 1976, p. 64)

This passage contextualizes Kiyō's thought upon seeing a *haolefied* Japanese-American girl, a derogative term used to describe someone overly influenced by white culture and language. As the excerpt transitions into HCE and the mention of "we" pronoun emerges, symbolizes the collective voice of Hawaiian *Nikkei* community, readers are invited to actively simulate their criticism toward the overtly use of American customs. "*you think you haole, eh ?*", vividly articulates the tension between different dialects of English, practiced across racial/social class divide. The use of HCE allows readers to vividly imagine the characters' conversations, hear the distinct accents and intonations, and experience the nuances and pride associated with

maintaining a unique language. This interplay between standard and creolized English helps readers understand the complex dynamics of language, cultural assimilation, and the preservation of cultural heritage, on how their immersion into a mental model of narrative is facilitated by both standard and creolized English.

On his analysis of Murayama's fiction, Wilson notes how Murayama aptly navigates this standard/creolized English tension and how exposure towards both languages is essential to fully simulate the authentic *Nikkei* experience. Wilson points out that speaking "good English" runs the risk of assimilation and losing one's cultural identity, becoming "haolefied" and homogenized in American society (1981, p. 64). On the other hand, solely speaking pidgin English confines individuals to a world with limited terms and values. From an econarratological perspective, it can be understated that the immersion of readers in *Nikkei* diasporic experience is facilitated by the intentional use of different language styles, incorporating both standard English and creolized English. The inclusion of both language variants contributes to the authenticity and realism of the diasporic experience, as readers are exposed to the complexities and social dynamics that emerge when moving between different linguistic registers

This intertwined relationship between Hawaiian Creole English (HCE) and standard English in Murayama's fiction creates a dynamic interplay that enhances readers' immersion in the *Nikkei* experience. Murayama strategically navigates the tension between these language variants, recognizing the significance and importance of both in shaping the cultural and linguistic identity of the characters. By incorporating both HCE and standard English, readers are able to fully grasp the complexities of the *Nikkei* diasporic experience in Hawaii. The use of HCE provides a sense of authenticity, capturing the local language and cultural nuances, while the presence of standard English allows for wider accessibility and engagement with a broader audience. This intentional blending of language styles not only reflects the linguistic reality of the time period but also deepens readers' understanding of the characters' struggles, cultural negotiation, and the broader social dynamics at play. Through this linguistic duality, readers are transported to a unique and immersive narrative world that embodies the historicity and richness of the *Nikkei* experience in Hawaii.

Conclusion

In conclusion, readers' storyworld construction depicting *Nikkei* diasporic experience is mediated through immersive textual cues, homodiegetic narration and a mixture of Standard/Creolized English to simulate the historicity of plantation labour experience. Through the incorporation of these narrative elements, Murayama offers readers a profound understanding of the Japanese-American experience in Hawaii. Readers are able to simulate and relive the plantation labour experience as a site of contestation between Japanese/Western values. Murayama's deliberate use of spatial representation and language performance, including the interplay between Standard English and Hawaiian Creole English, offers a nuanced exploration of cultural negotiation, assimilation, and the preservation of heritage. The use of standard/creolized English is essential to reorient readers within a local experience of place mediated through language styles. By capturing the complexity of the Japanese-American experience in Hawaii, Murayama's

work provides readers with a profound understanding of the intertwining dynamics of identity, language, and societal context.

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Notes

ⁱ The Japanese Exclusion Act of 1924, formally known as the 1924 Immigration Act/The Johnson-Reed Act limited the number of immigrants allowed entry into the United States through a national origin quota. More specifically, it completely excluded immigrants from Asia. The 1924 Immigration Act included a provision excluding from entry any alien who by virtue of race or nationality was ineligible for citizenship, which as a result, Asians previously not prevented from immigrating -the Japanese in particular – would not be admitted into the United States. This Act was intended to preserve the ideal of U.S homogeneity and preserving the racial composition of this country (Lee, 2007; Varzally, 2014).

ⁱⁱ Pictures brides refers to young women who were married by proxy in Japan to men whom they had never met or who married after meeting their intended husbands upon arrival in the Territory of Hawai'i. The first major waves of Japanese "picture brides" began in 1908 and before all immigration was stopped from Japan in 1924, these tens of thousands of women would reshape the Japanese community in Hawai'i. During the peak years between 1911 and 1919, 9,500 picture brides bolstered the Islands' female population (see Chai, 1988)

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