

Beyond the memory of displacement:
*Adios to Tears: The Memoirs of a
Japanese-Peruvian Internee in U.S.
Concentration Camps*

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Abstract

Adios to Tears: The Memoirs of a Japanese-Peruvian Internee in U.S. Concentration Camps (1993) presents the author, Seiichi Higashide's experience of immigrating from Japan, his native country, to Peru, his deportation and relocation in U.S. concentration camps during World War II, and his post-internment life in the U.S. As the naming of the "U.S. Concentration Camps" in the subtitle suggests a confrontation with the historical wrongs committed by the Peruvian and U.S. governments, Higashide's memoir attempts to recuperate and write into history what has hitherto been relegated to the corner of official history. While his memoir can function as a documentation of unfolding past events, what Higashide most clearly manifests throughout the book is his persistent ambition to become a self-made man and his aspiration for material prosperity in a Western country. Calling attention to the manifestation of his passion for economic triumph, this study examines how and why *Adios to Tears* declares itself as an immigrant success story, evoking a national discourse of assimilation and conformity which overshadows any critique of his deportation, displacement, and internment. First, this study attempts to demonstrate how Higashide's dream of finding a promised land is already formulated based on (the U.S. style) capitalist ideology even before leaving Japan, and how his ideology travels uniformly throughout the three continents; and then analyzes, through Jean Baudrillard's semiological reading of Marx's theory of commodity fetishism, how Higashide's consistent desire for financial success renders his cry for justice less visible than the subtitle suggests.

Introduction

Adios to Tears: The Memoirs of a Japanese-Peruvian Internee in U.S. Concentration Camps (1993) presents the author, Seiichi Higashide's experience of immigrating from Japan, his native country, to Peru, his deportation and relocation in U.S. concentration camps during World War II, and his post-internment life in the U.S. As the naming of the "U.S. Concentration Camps" in the subtitle suggests a confrontation with the historical wrongs committed by the Peruvian and U.S. governments, Higashide's memoir attempts to recuperate and write into history what has hitherto been relegated to the corner of official history.¹ *Adios to Tears* is a product resulting from Higashide and his oldest daughter Elsa's struggles for the recognition of that denied history, as C. Harvey Gardiner affirms in the forward to the year 2000 edition of the book: "Seiichi Higashide and Elsa [...] undertook the recollection, research, and writing that grew into a remarkable biographical-historical account. [...]. The book is an archetypal narration of the unvoiced wartime travail of innocent thousands" (viii). Gardiner concludes the forward by saying "*Adios to Tears* does cry . . . for justice" (ix ellipsis original). Other scholars, such as Daniel M. Masterson and Lika C. Miyake, treat the text as a testimonial reference for divulging the unnoticed history of Japanese-Peruvians' deportation and internment committed and justified by the Peruvian and U.S. governments during World War II. Masterson employs Higashide's quotes from *Adios to Tears* in order to uncover the injustices experienced by the Japanese-Peruvians and make their voices heard (149-78). Miyake refers to the text in order to provide a historical context concerning the Japanese-Peruvians' deportation and internment based on which she argues for the U.S. government's responsibility to acknowledge the unjust treatment of the Japanese-Peruvians and to grant them reparations (164 note 7).² Examining these studies, one may read *Adios to Tears* only as a revisionist historical account that resonates with a counter-hegemonic representation of mainstream history. However, such a conclusion would perhaps be premature. While his memoir can function as a documentation of unfolding past events, what Higashide most clearly manifests throughout the book is his persistent ambition to become a self-made man and his aspiration for material prosperity in a Western country. Calling attention to the manifestation of his passion for economic triumph, this study examines

how and why *Adios to Tears* declares itself as an immigrant success story, evoking a national discourse of assimilation and conformity which overshadows any critique of his deportation, displacement, and internment.

Some scholars of Asian American literary and cultural studies have argued that many Asian American writers use language and discourse which appear to represent cultural assimilation and conformity, and thus bedim a tone of criticism against historical wrongs committed by authority, as a narrative strategy for gaining public attention and ultimately talking back to authority.³ Others have examined the absence of a defiant and confrontational attack or bitter resentment against the U.S. government, specifically among the voices of the Japanese American internees, through explorations of the close relationship between silence and psychological trauma.⁴ These approaches could be useful if Higashide's memoir could be read as a text of contradiction in which the author positions himself in an ambivalent place between resistance/counter-hegemony and acceptance/assimilation. However, Higashide's writing does not hint at an ambiguous consciousness that often urges the reader to see one's unresolved struggles to redefine his/her identity or position in a dominant culture that has marginalized him/her. Rather, Higashide's life story is framed within a discourse of his unflinching quest for discovering economic success somewhere else beyond the East, consistently from the beginning to the ending. This study attempts to first demonstrate how Higashide's dream of finding a promised land is already formulated based on (the U.S. style) capitalist ideology even before leaving Japan, and how his ideology travels uniformly throughout the three continents; and then analyzes, through Jean Baudrillard's semiological reading of Marx's theory of commodity fetishism, how Higashide's consistent desire for financial success renders his cry for justice less visible than the subtitle and Gardinar's preface suggest.

Higashide's Pursuit of a Promised Land

Higashide's journey begins when he leaves his birthplace, a rural farming village in Hokkaido, the northern island of Japan, for Tokyo, in order to find an opportunity to study and work.⁵ Influenced by his readings on Japanese and European emigrants' successful stories in a foreign land, he dreams of becoming a self-made man and embarks on his odyssey of prosperity from Hokkaido to

Tokyo and eventually from Tokyo to Peru, as he states, "Like the characters in those 'Horatio Alger' stories, I wanted to pursue my studies no matter what hardships I faced" (24).⁶ In 1930, at the age of twenty-one, he arrives in Peru, where he later becomes a prosperous owner of two stores and a husband and father of five. However, his arrest and deportation carried out by the Peruvian and U.S. authorities in 1944 interrupts his pursuit of the "rags-to-riches" dream.⁷ He is interned in Camp Kenedy, New Orleans, and later in Crystal City, Texas, where he reunites with his family and spends almost two years. After the war ends, Higashide's family are treated as illegal aliens, as are the other former Japanese Peruvian detainees, and thus not allowed to stay in the U.S. even while they are also prohibited from re-entering Peru.⁸ Most of them are "voluntarily" deported to the devastated post-war Japan, but Higashide's family along with another three hundred people choose to remain in Seabrook, NJ, as low-wage contract laborers with a temporary work visa (Higashide 177-79; Brooks "Case" 219-20).⁹ While in Seabrook, Higashide starts dreaming about bigger possibilities for his family and himself, and later they move to Chicago, where he finally achieves his very initial goal of transforming himself from "the rag" into "the rich." This "horatio-algerian" story ends with his retirement years in Waikiki, Hawaii, where he and his wife become, in his term, "residents of the 'Paradise of the Pacific'" (238).

Higashide's coming to the United States is a result of the Peruvian and U.S. governments' collaborative, political coercion, yet his original plan for discovering a promised land is ironically to emigrate to the U.S. "My first choice was really to go to America. The books I had read about America described a great, vast country based on the principles of liberty and equality, with equal opportunity for everyone" (36). But since the immigration law of 1924 has prohibited him from immigrating to the U.S. (Takaki 209-10),¹⁰ Peru becomes his second choice over China, where "[a]t that time anyone could readily get a job working for the Southern Manchuria Railroad Company" (Higashide 36).¹¹ Higashide explains his decision:

For some reason, however, I did not feel like going to China. While China was a foreign country, it somehow seemed to me to be an extension of Japan and I could not work up any enthusiasm about going there. It may sound odd, but *I felt that if I were to go to a foreign country at*

all, it should be “what a foreign country should be.” (36-37 emphasis mine)

Higashide perceives Peru as an unfamiliar place that evokes enthusiasm for the discovery of a promised land and success – success that resides in a foreign land of the West, not in a familiar land of the East. In fact, his interest in Peru is driven by various stories he has heard of earlier successful Japanese immigrants in that country: “Aside from the United States, Peru had the next largest number of Japanese immigrants who had found success. Most of the Japanese [...] later moved to urban areas to build successful commercial enterprises” (38-39). Before leaving Japan, he pictures Peru as a utopian land, somewhere in the West, where he can achieve his dream of becoming a self-made man.

This theme of his search for an economically prosperous life in utopia recurs throughout *Adios to Tears*. Even after his deportation to the U.S. internment camps, the very topic of his journey of prosperity continues to be accentuated and never disappears from his memoir. It is this persistent voice of aspiration for an economic triumph that leads the reader to perceive the author, not as a person who attempts to shed light on the obliterated parts of history, but rather as a subject who shows his passion for his own pursuit of a successful life in the West.

Adios to Tears as a Story of an Unconscious Passion for Success

Jean Baudrillard’s concept of “commodity fetishism,” explored from a semiological perspective, can be instrumental for analyzing why Higashide’s memoir can be interpreted as a self-made man story based on the U.S. ideologies of capitalism, liberalism, and individualism and how his protest against institutional oppression fades away into those ideologies. In his essay, “Fetishism and Ideology: The Semiological Reduction,” Baudrillard explicates the concept of commodity fetishism as an ideological fascination with the signs, *not* as a desire for material commodities:

The concepts of commodity fetishism and money fetishism sketched, for Marx, the lived ideology of capitalist society – the mode of sanctification, fascination and psychological subjection by which individuals internalize

the generalized system of exchange value. (88)

Extending the range of application of Marx's generalized term of "commodity fetishism," Baudrillard, then, asserts that consumers are fascinated, not with the goods themselves or the values of the goods, but with the system or code which commodities communicate to them. In other words, the system or code functions as a magic dispenser for satisfying the consumers:

If fetishism exists it is thus not a fetishism of the signified, a fetishism of substances and values (called ideological), which the fetish object would incarnate for the alienated subject. Behind this reinterpretation (which is truly ideological) it is a *fetishism of the signifier*. That is to say that the subject is trapped in the factitious, differential, encoded, systematized aspect of the object. It is not the passion (whether of objects or subjects) for substances that speaks in fetishism, it is the *passion for the code*, which, by governing both objects and subjects, and by subordinating them to itself, delivers them up to abstract manipulation. This is the fundamental articulation of the ideological process: not in the projection of alienated consciousness into various superstructures, but in the generalization at all levels of a structural code. (92 emphasis original)

For Baudrillard, it is this "passion for the code" (the overall code of signs), not passion for objects, that drives consumers to desire commodities and treat them as fetish. Baudrillard asserts that it is the abstraction of the sign of an object that that manipulates consumers to fascinate themselves more and more with the overall code of commodities, to subordinate themselves to the encoded system of goods, and to trap themselves to the systemic social values and terms this abstraction of the sign as "the fetishism of the signifier" (88-94, 99-101). Baudrillard's concepts of "the passion for the code" and "the fetishism of the signifier" recall Higashide's passion for becoming a self-made man in a foreign country.

For instance, when he describes his interest in co-purchasing gift shops in Peru, he becomes fascinated with the encoded images provoked by the shops – in his mind's eye seeing the shops as the path to becoming a self-made man, to obtaining the status of entrepreneur, to economic prosperity, to being

a successful member of the society, and so on – images that go far beyond that signified by simply becoming the shops' co-owner. Thus, it comes, as no surprise to see that one of the predominant themes in his depiction of the fourteen years of his life in Peru is his learning to be a self-made man from the prosperous Japanese immigrant, Otani, who is the living representation the images encoded in his venture of entrepreneurship such as those above-mentioned. Higashide describes in detail his admiration for this predecessor's business philosophy and strategies: "[Otani] had built up a solid, upper class clientele with strong purchasing power. These customers were mainly American and British owners of the great haciendas and their families" (74). "According to Otani," Higashide quotes, " 'Rather than having a shop always crowded with poor laborers, a shop where the wealthy might frequent even just occasionally would be more profitable,' " and he applies Otani's "sharp business sense" to his own business (74). What Higashide exalts, more specifically, is Otani's entrepreneurial strategies of aspiring to develop relationships with the rich, American and British hacienda class and to disregard the poor, local Peruvian workers. Enthused and blinded by Otani's business tactics, Higashide obviously does not question his discriminative and exclusionist view of working class people.

Further, Higashide goes on to tell of Otani's business expansion in Manchuria and praises his success as a result stemmed from "his almost heroic decisiveness and splendid entrepreneurial spirit" (75). It cannot be denied that his voice echoes that of colonial and imperial power that pursues the invasions and exploitations of others' lands for the purpose of its economic and political expansions. Higashide does not hesitate to recognize that Otani becomes a hero of Japanese imperial glory in Manchuria, while he does not even mention the colonized Chinese and Korean population in the Japanese colonial state in his text.¹²

Such a one-dimensional, narrow point of view is perhaps subconsciously but strongly inscribed in Higashide's belief system. His inclination toward Otani's imperial plans for business expansion and his blindness to any motives or consequences of such an expansion can be attributed to his "passion for the code" in Baudrillard's term. His passion for becoming a successful entrepreneur like Otani incites him to co-purchase Otani's shops, to buy a gift store on his own after ending the previous business, and to buy another store to expand

his own business. What he consumes is, in reality, not the material substances or values of stores themselves, but the infinite, abstract images of the sign that Higashide perceives in shops, and thus his obsession with stores symbolizes what Baudrillard refers to as “fetishism of the signifier.” Higashide’s passion for shops is similar to that of the consumers who practice the “fetishism of the signifier” without knowing that they are manipulated by the “factitious, differential, encoded, systematized aspect of the object” (Baudrillard 92). In Higashide’s case, stores are a product “eviscerated of its substance and history” and reduced to the coded abstraction, which fascinates him and drives him to devote himself to “perverse autosatisfaction” (93, 96). Thus, he is lured into the endless circle of “the abstract totalization [of signs which] permits signs to . . . establish and perpetuate real discriminations and the order of power” (101).

The “real discriminations and the order of power” interpellated through “the passion for the code” into Higashide’s thinking system can be observed in his treatment of the Other. Throughout the section of the book that deals with his life in Peru, he barely mentions local inhabitants in Peru other than the Japanese immigrants and their descendants. When he mentions Peruvians outside of the Japanese community, his depiction of them almost always tends to underscore some sort of deficiencies or lack in the society. One of a few Peruvians whom Higashide includes in his memoir, for instance, is a driver of African descent, “Cario [who] was illiterate and could not even write his name” (56). Instead of providing further information about Cario, Higashide positions *himself* in contrast with the driver, who immediately disappears from the author’s sentences: “Fortunately, just before I left Japan I had studied Spanish for three months and could manage to write our invoices, receipts and order slips. [...] I was glad that I had studied some Spanish, even if only at the most rudimentary level” (56). Although Higashide’s intention of including this driver in his memoirs remains unclear, his emphasis is on the existence of illiteracy in Peruvian society, that is, a “lack” of literacy. Such a social “lack” seems not only to amaze Higashide, but also to lead him to locate himself in the realm of superiority in relation to the so-called Other. His amazement, facing an illiterate person, soon shifts into his appreciation of his own ability to write in Spanish. Through the contact with the Other/the illiterate, Higashide recognizes that he does not lack literacy. The Other/the lack here functions as an indispensable entity which reassures Higashide of his linguistic skills

and of his superior existence to the illiterate. As soon as the sense of the self is acknowledged, the African-Peruvian driver, Cario, never appears again in Higashide's memoirs and immediately becomes unnecessary and invisible.

As the African driver, there is the exclusion of the "typical" Peruvians, except "sharp and shrewd [...] merchants." Higashide seems to perceive most Peruvians as the inferior Other. Such a posture toward the Other is insinuated, as seen above, when Higashide shows his admiration for Otani's business tactics, and his positioning of the Peruvians in the category of the imperfect, deficient, and inferior Other continues to prevail in his book: "The majority of [the Peruvian shop owners who were seriously affected by the Japanese] were also 'beginning merchants' who had worked themselves up from the lower strata of Peruvian society. In that sense, they were *different from the typically carefree and exuberant Peruvian 'everyman.'*" (105 emphasis mine). What Higashide points out here is that hard-working Peruvian merchants who have recently emerged from the underprivileged section of the society have been most affected by Japanese merchants. Yet, his hidden, perhaps unintended, message that these words convey, without question, is an oversimplifying illustration of the rest of the Peruvian population as an inferior "carefree and exuberant . . . 'everyman'" (105). As Higashide's descriptions of the Peruvians above-cited show, Peruvian people never appear as anything more than shadowy figures at the margins of his narrative.

Higashide's ethnocentric superiority seems to be inescapably rooted in his view of the Peruvian Other, and it is possible to understand that his treatment of the Other as the inferior has resulted from the generalized code of social values, which he internalizes through his "fetishization" of the signs of commodities/stores. In the process of this "fetishization," the code saturates his identity and all his social surroundings. Consequently, following the code system, he views those who have shops as successful members of the society, while he defines those who do lack the same commodities as failures.

"Marvelous America" behind Barbed Wire

Higashide's passion for the status of success encoded in his fascination for the United States still remains visible even after his deportation and detention in the U.S. concentration camps. On the way to Crystal City, Texas, from a

temporary detention center in New Orleans, he is marveled by “a splendid train with Pullman cars” and “the superb planning demonstrated by the Americans” (6). His vision of the “marvelous America” seems to grow as his life behind barbed wire starts in Crystal City. Higashide frequently notices the abundance of material wealth and effective facilities in the camp, which “were much better than what was available in any equivalent Japanese or Peruvian small town” (165). He displays a detailed list of the available resources from a hospital, schools, stores, sports courts, a beauty shop, and many others and expresses his family “never once suffered from any lack of food” including a variety of traditional Japanese foods such as “sashimi with [...] beer ration” (165-66). He also shows his admiration toward the American administrators’ treatment of the detainees who resist the internment by breaking dishes: “I admired the responses of the camp’s administrators” who “simply replaced them with new ones” without reacting to the resistance or complaining about it (159).

In Higashide’s expressions of fascination and admiration for the facilities and administration at the camp, the reader might find a subtle critique of the internment. He depicts the camp as “close to being a ‘utopia’” (167), where “materially, there [...] existed adequate provisions” (167) and where the internees “were free to pursue anything [they] chose to without interference” (166), yet he highlights that the camp is a ‘utopian’ *confinement* where the internees are “birds in a cage” that “had to make incalculable material and spiritual sacrifices before being forced into it against their will,” yet they are provided with “adequate provisions to *survive* from ‘cradle to grave’” (166-68 emphasis mine). Similarly, at the end of his list of excellent and impressive facilities in the camp, he notes that a cemetery is one of the necessary sites for the life in the internment, insinuating that some people die there before they are freed (165). He laments such deaths within a barbed-wired confinement as well as the forced separation of families and never realized family reunions due to the internment. His choice of words and expressions does underscore the reality of the imprisoned life and alludes to his criticism against the unjust, irreparable displacement committed by the U.S. government. This sort of simultaneous presentation of the two seemingly contradictory visions – the marvelous utopia of the camp and the unjustifiable incarceration and tragedies caused by the internment – can often imply a contestation against and an unhealing of the official version of the “true” history legitimized and

disseminated by U.S. authority.¹³

However, on the contrary, his contradictory posture does not generate the questioning of or conflicts with the U.S. institutionalized and legitimized history. Rather, what he most consistently emphasizes in his discourse is, again, his marvel at and admiration for the Americans and the system at the camp. Some of his descriptions of the camp life, except his acknowledgement of the imprisonment, parallel those given by the American officials in their letters proclaiming their positions against the reparation of 1988 during the redress movement in the 80s. John J. McCloy, the Assistant Secretary of War during WWII, stresses the efficiency and humaneness of the operation of evacuation and relocation of the Japanese American population and writes “I would say that our Japanese/American population benefited from the relocation rather than suffered, as did so many others of our population as a result of the war” (Brooks “Letters” 223). Colonel Karl R. Bendetsen highlights the freedom, mobility and benefits that the Japanese American internees “enjoyed”: “Everyone was free to leave the assembly centers and the evacuation centers [...]. Their children were educated, they had free medical care and [excellent] food. [...]. Those of that age were sent to college and university free, at Federal expense. [...]. They worked near by and had free room and board. They had protection” (226). Though these American officials deny that the relocation is an internment, their observations of the treatment of the internees and their access to facilities resonate with Higashide’s description of the utopian aspects of the camp life.

A close look at how Higashide positions himself at the camp further evinces Higashide’s affiliation with the dominant discourse. He refers to some of the internees’ resisting behaviors as “*crazed* resistances” of “tiny frogs [...] against a large water buffalo” and condemns them as foolish and absurd actions as opposed to the Americans’ admirable reactions to them (159). In another occasion, he finds it “creative,” fanatical, irrational, and absurd that many of the patriotic Japanese internees try to rationalize the Americans’ decent treatment at the camp as resulting from their fear of facing retaliation by the Japanese government after the war (171-72). Unlike them, Higashide states, “The wealth and resources of the United States were awesome. [...] even if they were of an ‘enemy nation,’ I had to admire the magnanimity of the Americans who provided ‘prisoners of war’ such decent material conditions”

(171). Because of his critical attitude toward the Japanese patriots, he is labeled as “pro-American,” which he never even slightly denies in the book. On the contrary, he shares an anecdote of two internees who are interested in working in a farmland and come to Higashide for his advice because of his label of “pro-American” (160). Their concern is that they would contribute to the industry of an enemy nation, but Higashide encourages them to take this “opportunity” proudly not only because their farm labor is not a war-related work – it is simply filling labor shortages – but also because family reunion and financial security “with a good nest egg of U.S. dollars” are guaranteed (160-61). Higashide sees working as a farm laborer as an opportunity to earn some money and to secure a reunion with one’s family in the future; he does, not see it as a condition imposed by the U.S. government for the unjustly imprisoned subject to be able to go outside the camp and exchange their labor for money and a future family reunion. The possibility of the U.S. government’s political and economic manipulation toward the internees and their labor exploitation do not seem to enter his mind. Higashide’s image of confinement in barbed wire inserted previously in a subtle way does not appear here, and there emerges a sense of disconnect between what happens in the internment and what will happen in the future. In other words, he ultimately treats the life in the internment as one of the phases of (Horatio Alger-like) hardships that he has to undergo and overcome in order to acquire the status of success. Thus what frames *Adios to Tears* is not his memory of the internment life, but rather his internalized U.S. capitalist ideology that propels him with the passion for the status of success. Consequently, it is not surprising that Higashide’s “passion for the code” of success intensifies in his post-internment life in the U.S., as the focus of the text explicitly returns to the “rags-to-riches” story of an immigrant who surmounts obstacles.

A Pioneer of the “Concrete Frontier” and a Success Story in the U.S.

Higashide’s life story after his release from the internment begins with a series of hardships; from his and his family’s struggles to remain in the U.S. as “illegal aliens,” financially surviving their time as “working poor” in New Jersey, and to “a time of complete and ultimate poverty” without a stable job

or home at the beginning of their life in Chicago (198).¹⁴ His narration then shifts to an emphasis on his hard work and strong willpower, and ultimately to his realized dream of becoming a successful self-made man. His final economic triumph can be attributed to his “passion for the code” that continues to drive him with a desire for the images of success whose signifier is a fetish object. The fetish to which he is seduced in his post-internment life is no longer represented by the objects of stores, but appears in the shape of apartment buildings.

For the first two to three years in Chicago after leaving the life of a factory contract laborer in New Jersey, the Higashides face another hurdle. Unable to afford an apartment large enough for the family of eight, they live in a one-bedroom apartment, sharing a bedroom and a kitchen. But he soon makes the risky decision to buy an apartment building with borrowed money from the Japanese Trust Association and a finance company. Between him and his wife, they manage all kinds of chores and repairs of the building, while they keep their other jobs about ten years. Higashide and his wife’s hard work and ambition finally make them the owners of five apartment buildings in Chicago.

The topics of buying, selling, and renting their apartment buildings predominate in Higashide’s descriptions of his life in the U.S. As he saw the images of success in Peru through his shops, he pictures the status of success in the U.S. through apartment buildings. The symbols of apartment complexes function as fetishes which compel Higashide to associate them with the status of a successful life in mainstream America. One of the most concrete examples illustrating such an association appears in the following quote, which shows his feeling when he finishes remodeling the basement of his first apartment building:

Eventually, our home was completed. Even if it was my own work, I must say that it was splendid. I had to exert myself to do all the work, but I had the satisfaction of knowing that I was actually building our home. I looked at my self-built home and was content. I imagined that this was *what the pioneers moving westward in America must have felt when they opened new lands and built log cabins with their own hands. This home, I thought, was our log cabin that we had built in a concrete frontier. We were new settlers who, in a concrete frontier, continued to build on a legacy*

established by many forbears who had built this country. Operating the rooming house definitely required an extraordinary effort that seemed to parallel the superhuman effort necessary to open out the western areas of the country. (207-08 emphasis mine)

This analogy bears witnesses to Higashide's attempt to associate his life with the myth of American pioneers in the West, and this passage leads the reader to wonder why he chooses this particular group to compare himself to, and not to other groups, such as political refugees or undocumented immigrant workers, which share the similar experience of political displacement and survival in the U.S. He continues to describe his feelings as "something similar to the feelings of those pioneers who had looked out to the opportunities of the great land that spread out endlessly to the west" (208). If his first building offers him the symbol of "a concrete frontier," in which he begins to link his identity to the American pioneers, the other apartment-building properties that he accumulates provide him with the fantasy of becoming a productive member of society struggling to survive, overcoming hardships, and eventually reaching a successful life. In Higashide's fantasy, he aspires to become a pioneer of a "concrete frontier" who "look[s] out to the opportunities of the great land" through his apartment buildings (208).

Besides the myth of American pioneers in the West, Higashide also inserts his positive thoughts on the American work ethic based on the ideology of liberalism and individualism:

Since its founding by Puritan immigrants, America has held an honored tradition of viewing all work as sacred [...].

Here, the tradition of Adam Smith, who emphasized the iron rule that "those who do not work will not eat" and even demanded that even aristocrats work, had continued for over three centuries. It was held that all types of work had value and that sloth and laziness were sins. (213-14)

He presents Adam Smith's ideology with admiration in order to construct some sort of parallelism between his own work value and the mainstream discourse of the American work ethic. In the process of connecting his ideology to that of the American pioneers in the West as well as of the

Puritan Americans, Higashide seems to come to understand his poverty in the US not as something caused by the unjust treatment by the US government, but as something necessary to reinforce the “American” work ethic. Thus upon talking about his poverty, he focuses on the results of his children’s assimilation to this American cultural value:

Our poverty taught them to accept the proud American tradition of valuing work. From their earliest years they were raised to understand that they must work hard, study hard, handle material things with respect and care, and to live simply and frugally. Our family was able to pass through the depths of poverty because each of us, at our respective tasks, gave our utmost efforts. (214)

Higashide shows his eagerness to reside in the mythological land of mainstream American cultural values by attempting to present similarities between his “superhuman efforts” and the pioneers’ and between his work ethic and Puritan immigrants’ work ethos. Higashide, by expanding his apartment business and in the end owning five buildings, comes to gain a successful life as described in the myths of the pioneers and the Puritans. His pursuit of his dream of becoming financially comfortable and providing security for his children’s future is admirable.

However, it is interesting to note that he seems to attribute his economic prosperity only to his apartment business, as though apartment buildings alone could bring him a successful life in the U.S. Though there are other factors, such as the availability of financing through the Japanese Trust Association, his ethnic and racial background, gender, class, access to education, the images of “model minority,”¹⁵ etc., that contribute to his financial success, he falls into the danger of reducing his success only to his apartment business. As in the case of the fetishism of his gift stores in Peru explored above, Higashide treats apartment buildings as a fetish. Apartment buildings are signs standing in for images such as the spirit of the western frontier, the Puritan immigrants’ work ethic, assimilation into the mainstream American society, the status of success, etc. Again as seen in his life in Peru, he becomes fascinated by the abstract code that apartment buildings project and at the same time blind to other factors involved in his success story, and, more importantly, he seems to forget his own

recent past experience of forced displacement. His account of the experience of oppression melts into the story of exemplary success in the mainstream American society.

The last parts of *Adios to Tears* mainly centers on Higashide and his wife's retirement plans and actual retirement in Hawaii, which he describes as a paradise of "our tropical sun and sea" with the inhabitants who are " 'naked' or almost so" and seem to carry a life "open and natural as for a newborn infant" (242). In Higashide's discourse, Hawaii, "the Paradise of the Pacific," becomes an innocent, marvelous, and perfect place to pronounce his fulfilled pursuit of a great life in a utopian land and conclude his narration of a self-made man.

Conclusion

In the process of seeking a successful life in a foreign country, he encounters commodities – stores and apartment buildings – which drive him with an endless appetite for all levels of the code – as signified by those commodities – which are established based on certain systemic social values (Baudrillard 88-94). Since this commodity fetishism makes him subordinate to the order and rule of the society (99-101), Higashide's understanding of all social existence follows the order of power established by the code of fetishes. Higashide's description of Hawaii as a perfect, marvelous utopia thereby exemplifies the abstract sign of success for which the code of buildings drives him to desire, while feeding his appetite for that code. Higashide is so enthralled by his "passion for the code" that he tends to see Hawaii only as a utopia discovered to satisfy his desire for a successful life. His "passion for the code" thus obliges him to preclude a criticism of his nightmarish experience of displacement from his narrative of Hawaii, since the theme of displacement does not conform quite well with his fascination with the discovery of success.

In fact, the very end of *Adios to Tears* bears witness to the omission of the entire subtitle – "the memoirs of a Japanese-Peruvian internee in U.S. concentration camps." It is worthy of displaying the following long quote.

When I go out its balcony, or "lanai," the unending, open Hawaiian sky and deep blue sea spread out before my eyes; the inland vista provides a

backdrop of muted, green mountain patterns often found in the tropics. As I sit out on the balcony by myself and look out over the ocean, images of my past arise as an enveloping mist to fill my mind [...]. *Filled with impossible hopes, encountering obstacles to attaining such hopes, then resurrecting such hopes again, the days of my past form a continuum. Now, looking back at earlier days, I feel no regrets. After all this, I feel, it is well that I have had this life.*

[...] Hawaii is literally “a paradise on earth.” I have found, here, a word that is appropriate to end these recollections. The term is “aloha,” and it best expresses the essence of Hawaii., “aloha” includes everything that I have sought for over many years [...]. Simply to say “aloha” suffices – with it everything else that I feel is communicated. I feel much happiness that I can end my recollections with this word. So, again, I shall say, “aloha. ...” (244, emphasis mine; the last ellipses original)

Higashide's conclusion to *Adios to Tears* creates a monolithic edenic world in which he delineates total happiness. While Higashide's last words in the book are filled with ideal images of his life, what is lacking here is any critical “cry for justice” or redress regarding the rights which he and many others were deprived of by the U.S. government. For Higashide, his discovery of happiness in the paradise is the celebrating point of his life. In other words, all the historical events that Higashide has experienced are installed in the homogeneous category of “the recollections of the past,” and he treats his experiences as an all-encompassing Past which has led him to acquire the ideal future. Thus, his past exists as a unified and coherent entity, (which has helped him find a wonderful future), not multiple and mobile pasts which often produce tensions and negotiations.

By locating himself in the story of successful life and discovery of “paradise” in the U.S., Higashide, in the process of representing his own history, has come to show that he is a subject who has followed his “passion for the code” throughout his life and is happily and proudly associated with mainstream America. Higashide disseminates his memory of the experiences in U.S. concentration camps as if they were necessary steps in his past to fulfill his “passion for the code,” which leads him to the image of the “happy ending.” His words, “I feel no regrets. After all this, I feel, it is well that I have

had this life” (244), imply that he idealizes and legitimizes the injustice he has experienced. Thus, in *Adios to Tears*, Higashide does not “cry for justice,” but, rather, tells a story of a successful self-integration in the U.S. society, by storing his tears shed in the concentration camps in the closed archive of “the recollections of the past.”

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¹ I use the 2nd edition of the English version of the primary text, which was originally written in Japanese, in order to reach a broader audience. The purpose of this study is to conduct a textual analysis of the English translation, not to examine the *process* of publication or translation, though the latter might be worth exploring to add another dimension to this study. Further, though some expressions and contexts, generally speaking, are not fully translatable from Japanese to English, the English translation is mostly faithful to the original.

² In 1990, the U.S. government paid \$20,000 to each Japanese American survivor or heir, but this reparation excluded the Japanese Latin American survivors because they did not hold an American citizenship at the time of their internment (Small 249; Miyake 179). In 1998, the government offered \$5,000 to each Japanese Latin American survivor or heir along a letter of apology (Small 251; Miyake 179-80).

³ Lisa Lowe envisages how Asian American/Asian immigrant's cultural and literary writing becomes a site in which the colonial demands for fluency in the official language and reconciliation to its institutions paradoxically engender a space for articulating antagonism and criticism against those colonial demands (97-101). Patricia P. Chu also argues that many Asian American writers use the form of *bildungsroman*, which has been approved as the Asian American literary canon and accepted by “mainstream” American audience in order to call attention to larger audience beyond Asian American readers (15-17). The repertoire of *bildungsroman* serves as an alternative writing site where Asian American authors subtly purport their own views and experience beyond their articulation of Americanness (9-17).

⁴ Ronald Takaki has noted that the former Japanese American internees fairly recently broke their silence kept for more than forty years after World War II, during the 1980s congressional redress hearings held by the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) (484-85). Jeanne Sokolowski asserts that two post-internment literary texts authored by Japanese-Americans – Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660* (1946) and John Okada's *No-No Boy* (1957) – are good examples of showing

how reconciling with and forgiving the U.S. government's oppressive treatments during World War II allow the protagonists of the both texts to overcome their struggles to redefine and reconstruct their identity as an American citizen according to the social and gender rules and orders imposed by the U.S. government. Beyond the interpretation of silence as a coping mechanism, see Emily Roxworthy's *The Spectacle of Japanese American Trauma: Racial Performativity and World War II* (2008).

- ⁵ Seiichi Higashide was born in Hokkaido on January 18, 1909 as the fourth son to his parents, who were farmers (Higashide 12). He received the formal mandatory education of six elementary years and two post-elementary years (21). On April 7, 1930, he arrived in Peru (43) and resided there until 1944, when he was deported by the Peruvian and U.S. authorities (135, 140-41). On July 2, 1944, he was transferred to Crystal City from Camp Kenedy and reunited with his family (161). In the middle of 1946, he and his family were released from the camp and stayed in Seabrook, New Jersey (179). In January 1949, they moved to Chicago, where he became successful in his apartment business in the late 50s. (209). In 1974, he and his wife retired in Hawaii. In 1981, he testified against the U.S. government for violations of human rights during the congressional hearings in Chicago (Gardiner vii; Small 249). He continued to fight for redress till his death in 1997 (Small 249).
- ⁶ Horatio Alger (1832-1899) was a prolific late nineteenth-century American writer whose over one hundred books, known as the "rags-to-riches" stories, present the theme of the progress from poverty to wealth and fame of self-made heroes who possess a moral and ethical character ("Alger, Horatio").
- ⁷ Higashide's name appeared in the FBI's black list, simply because he was the president of the Ica Japanese Association, which was by no means a political organization (Higashide 114-16).
- ⁸ The Peruvian government did not accept the re-entry of the Japanese-Peruvian deportees until 1946 when the government allowed only seventy-nine Japanese-Peruvians of the original 2,118 detainees to reenter Peru because they held Peruvian citizenship. Meanwhile, three-hundred and sixty-four detainees remained in the U.S. (Higashide 177-78). Only in 1960, the Peruvian government began to permit the Japanese to re-enter the country (Ozawa 113).
- ⁹ The U.S. government wanted to deport all the former Japanese-Peruvian detainees to Japan as soon as possible, out of which many (about 930) were voluntarily deported (Higashide 177-79; Brooks "Case" 219-20).
- ¹⁰ The immigration exclusion act of 1924 barred immigrants from Asian countries (except from the Philippines, which were a U.S. territory) (Takaki 209-10).
- ¹¹ See Louise Young's "Manchuko and Japan," in *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism*.
- ¹² Young indicates that the colonized population of Chinese urban masses as well as the Chinese and Korean peasants who were exploited in the lands of Northeast China was erased from the Japan's official discourse of its empire building (15).

- ¹³ Homi Bhabha examines the contradictory mode of colonial discourse which he calls “colonial mimicry” – an “*ironic* compromise,” that is, “the sign of a double articulation” which results in a menace to colonial authority (86). See also Lisa Lowe’s *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics*, which draws a clear connection specifically between the ambivalence of colonial mimicry and Asian American/Asian immigrant’s culture and literature.
- ¹⁴ See the note 8 in this study.
- ¹⁵ The image of “model minority” was injected into the mainstream American society in the postwar era by Japanese-Americans (especially Japanese American Citizen League (JACL), social scientists, and the U.S. government (DiAlto 99-100; Murray 185-87, 190-92, 218-19; Roxworthy 179 n. 3).

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