

John Okada: The Life and Rediscovered Work of the Author of *No-No Boy*

Frank Abe, Editor

Greg Robinson, Editor

Floyd Cheung, Editor

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John Okada's 1957 novel *No-No Boy*, his only full-length work, was the first novel by a Japanese American to grapple with the aftermath of internment during World War II. Edited by Frank Abe, Greg Robinson, and Floyd Cheung, *John Okada* examines the rest of Okada's story.

The book begins with a detailed biography of the author by Frank Abe, including his family's stint in a Washington state internment camp, his time in the U.S. military as a Japanese translator, and his postwar balancing of writing and pay-the-bills work.

The biography takes up about a third of the book, and the narrative is supported by context-providing quotes from Okada, his family, and his friends. Other essays discuss the importance of *No-No Boy*, analyze the novel and Okada's short fiction from a critical perspective, or look at the generational difference between born-in-America *nisei* like Okada and the earlier generation of immigrants.

Because so much of the book relies on familiarity with *No-No Boy*, it's particularly helpful to include Okada's short stories in the volume to demonstrate his writing style and sensibility. "The Silver Lunchbox" features a young boy about to win an award for perfect attendance at school, only to be waylaid in a magic-realism twist. "Without Solace" is the heartbreaking story of a father failing to process the death of his young daughter. "When in Japan" is a one-act play, a clever comedy mocking the official bureaucracy of the military-industrial complex.

These and other stories familiarize newcomers to Okada and his work, and provide those who know only *No-No Boy* insight into the author's full ability. This is a strong compilation, mixing Okada's writing with copious analysis of it, and telling a story of his life that both echoes and informs his best-known work.

JEFF FLEISCHER (University Press 2018)

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