

The autobiography of a geisha by sayo masuda essay sample

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The commonly imagined world of the geisha is one of the romantic type; mostly living comfortably with wealth and an abundant social life outstanding of the others women not so lucky to acquire such attention for their beauty. However, Masuda takes the not-so-pleasant lifestyle and allows a realistic and unglamorous look into the lives of the geisha.

The definition of a geisha as defined by Merriam- Webster a Japanese girl or woman who is trained to provide entertaining and lighthearted company especially for a man or a group of men. Adorned by those men who have wealth and some even have celebrity, however, the world of the geisha is one of sales. The geisha sells her freedom, identity, love life, and sexual acts all for a price. Masuda takes these sold items and puts them into a funnel, he allows the reader to examine the hardship and sadness of the geisha, so similar to indentured servitude, with beauty and talent exploited.

Born in 1925 Masuda was raised by her uncle until she was about 5. The book begins as she tells of her memories of being a nurse maid or *komori*, depressing at most. At the age of six till twelve, she was tormented drastically as Masuda was to look after wealthy landowners children. She recalls the most brutal of beatings where she was fixed to a tree for eating a melon to be sold at market. She was also often called "crane" referring to her ways of keeping her feet warm in the fiercely cold winters with no socks. She told how she was "unable to go to school, unable to read, I had grown up as an abandoned dog does; and then, at the age of 12, I was sold".

The book creates a winding road of events, a life clearly evolving rapidly; she is eventually sold into a hot springs district of Suwa geisha house at the age

of twelve; she reminisces that “ The place I was sold to was a geisha house in Upper Suwa called the Takenoya. At first I was wide-eyed with astonishment at its splendor, like a palace in a dream. [...] But the rigors that began the following day taught me that this was not the soft life I thought it would be, that this was no haven or refuge.” She is sent there by her uncle to help her mother pay for her husband’s medical treatment. This is the core of the book where her life is clearly defined. She is tormented and gains so many battle wounds by both her Mother and Elder Sisters.

Masuda for the four years to come was a maid of many trades, cleaning and doing errands for her Sisters. Masuda tells of her learning talents such as the shamisen, dancing and other popular forms of art in geisha school, this is important in defining the difference in a geisha and a prostitute.

The uniqueness of this book examines the “ average” geisha house, many of the patrons were not of the wealthy kind and sex was more of a factor than the most believed. She soon became a geisha in her own right by the age of sixteen selling her virginity to four consecutive men. One of them was a gangster who became her Danna or financial benefactor was called “ Cockeye” who is three times her age. Masuda of course did not think very much of him, being that he was an awkward and “ creepy man. She falls in love with a soldier, something prohibited for the geisha life, but her profession could not allow her to freely be with him risking her losing “ Cockeye” also and she tries to commit suicide. Back to the poverty she knew before she soon was finding the occasional hard job and perseverance she

was able to in end find herself unabashed from the world she was thrown into.

The lessons proved by this book *The Autobiography of a Geisha* is the incredible ability of human the strength and resolve. Yet, it also shows the cruelty that exists in the world, a world that in some areas is still prevalent. However, with the fluidity and wonderfully written and translated autobiography she is able to capture her feelings of then and transfer the after thoughts all into the same page it seems. She is able to recall her miserable passed and value her present, I'm sure in a different light than in her course of geisha living was high risk and gloomy. Overall, I appreciated the book for its candidness in a time of false impression and delusion of fact for popular appeal.