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Generational Issues of Asian Americans in *The Wash*

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Zásady pro vypracování

Závěrečná bakalářská práce se bude zabývat zobrazením mezigeneračních problémů Američanů asijského původu ve hře *The Wash* autora Philipa Kana Gotandy. Autorka stručně nastíní historicko-kulturní kontext druhé poloviny 20. století v USA (pozornost bude klást především na asijsko-americkou komunitu, specifičtěji na Američany japonského původu). V teoretické části bude také nastíněn vývoj asijsko-amerického divadla a P. K. Gotanda do něj bude zařazen. Studentka také nadefinuje jednotlivé generace imigrantů (first generation, second generation, atd.) a pojmy bude specifikovat v kontextu Američanů japonského původu (nisei, sansei, issei, atd.). Kromě základních definic autorka také představí typická témata spojená s výše spojenou problematikou a bude analyzovat jejich zobrazení ve vybraných hrách Gotandy. Výběr her bude konzultován se školitelkou. Své argumenty bude studentka vhodně opírat o odbornou sekundární literaturu (případně recenze) a podpoří je úryvky z primárních děl.

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ANNOTATION

This bachelor thesis discusses the generational issues of Asian Americans in Philip Kan Gotanda's theatre play *The Wash*. The thesis outlines the development of Asian American theatre and places P.K. Gotanda into a relevant context. It also describes the historical-cultural context of the 20th century in the USA, focusing on Japanese Americans. In addition, the thesis deals with the analysis of various causes of generational issues that are described in *The Wash*.

KEY WORDS

Asian Americans, Philip Kan Gotanda, *The Wash*, generational issues, stereotypes

NÁZEV

Generační problémy Američanů asijského původu v divadelní hře *The Wash*

ANOTACE

Tato bakalářská práce pojednává o generačních problémech v divadelní hře *The Wash* autora Philipa Kana Gotandy. Práce nastiňuje vývoj asijsko-amerického divadla a zařazuje do něj P. K. Gotandu. Popsán je také historicko-kulturní kontext 20. století v USA, pozornost je kladena především na Američany japonského původu. Dále se práce soustředí na analýzu různých příčin způsobující generační problémy, které jsou v hře *The Wash* popisovány.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Američané japonského původu, Philip Kan Gotanda, *The Wash*, generační problémy, stereotypy

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Introduction

This bachelor thesis deals with the generational issues portrayed in Philip Kan Gotanda's play *The Wash*. The goal of this thesis is to determine the cause of the generational issues of Japanese Americans in the play. It also aims to analyze how different characters deal with the changes that happen in their lives, and how distinct perceptions of personal, historical, and cultural events can influence interpersonal relationships that lead to generational issues.

Philip Kan Gotanda is considered to be one of the most prominent second-wave Asian American playwrights. M. Omi expresses that *The Wash* is one of the plays that indicated a considerable change in Gotanda's popularity. Due to the success of the play, not only Asian American theatre companies, but other mainstream theaters were eager to stage his plays as well.¹ The quality of his plays marks the number of awards and honors he has been awarded for his successful career. Wenying Xu argues that these awards include, for example: "Guggenheim, Pew Trust, three Rockefeller fellowships, Lila Wallace, the National Endowment for the Arts/Theater Communications Playwriting Award, PEN Center West, LA Music Center Award, and Asian American Theater Company Life Time Achievement."²

In *The Wash*, several factors influencing generational relationships are discussed, and one of them is, for instance, racism. H. Muhamad states that even though Gotanda still writes about typical Asian American issues, the uniqueness of this play is based on his intention to expand the limits of his ethnic stage to show the importance of such topics.³ Gotanda comments he wanted to give attention to the fact that: "[e]very minority group – Hispanics, African Americans, Asian Americans – has inherent racial biases and I [P. K. Gotanda] think that it [is] imperative that we confront that."⁴

This thesis consists of four main chapters, each focusing on a diverse aspect in connection with the theatre play. The first chapter outlines the development of Asian American theatre, focusing on the first four founding Asian American theatre companies. It also discusses the author of the play, and the typical themes and literary techniques that occur in his writings.

From the second chapter onward, the theoretical and analytical parts are intertwined in order to maintain the coherence of the text and to present discussed topics on relevant examples

¹ Michael Omi, "Introduction," in *The Fish Head Soup and Other Plays* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), xvi.

² Wenying Xu, *Historical Dictionary of Asian American Literature and Theater* (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2012), 98.

³ Hisham Muhamad, "THE WASH: A Traditional Ethnic Play in The Mainstream Arena," in *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation* 4, no. 3 (March 2021): 57.

⁴ Philip Kan Gotanda, "The Wash," in *Between Worlds: Contemporary Asian-American Plays*, ed. Misha Berson (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1990), 33.

from the play. The second chapter summarizes the key events in the 20th century that influenced Asian Americans' lives in the USA. More specifically, this thesis focuses on events and immigrant laws that influenced Japanese Americans. The specific terminology that is used to refer to Japanese Americans is described as well. Furthermore, the experience of internment camps is included as well as an analysis of the psychological effects of internment camps that influences the characters' behavior and their relationships. To provide a comprehensive overview, key historical events that influenced the Japanese Americans after WWII are to be mentioned.

The third chapter discusses stereotypes, the influence of a patriarchal society, and Confucianism on gender roles. It includes both brief theoretical background of the terms, and a presentation of the topics on specific illustrations that occur in the play. Generational issues are to be presented on selected stereotypes.

The last chapter focuses on the topics of assimilation, inter-minority racism, and the generational gap. It also provides more historical background on the differences between Hawaiian and mainland Japanese Americans. All the terms are to be defined and presented in a relevant context of the theatre play.

1. Asian American theatre

When analyzing the theatre play, it is essential to place it in its literary context. Before describing the development of Asian American theatre, it is fundamental to explain the term Asian American. According to the *Merriam–Webster Dictionary*, the term refers to “American[s] of Asian descent.”⁵ Wenying Xu further explains Asian American as an extensive term including many different areas extending from East Asia to Southeast Asia, to South Asia, and to Western Asia or the Middle East.⁶ Esther Kim Lee explains that the term began to be used in the second part of the 1960s when the idea of Asian America was brought to the attention of academics, artists, and community activists across the nation.⁷ She elaborates on the topic by stating that one of the people who conceived the term was historian Yuji Ichioka because he and other members of Asian American Movement considered the previously used term “oriental” as racist because this term and the term “Mongolian” race did not distinguish between those who live in the USA and those abroad. However, the decision to coin the new term was mostly driven by the fact that “orientals” and “Mongolians” were among those races who were disenfranchised and not included in the public view of the new perfect country.⁸

E. K. Lee asserts that prior to 1965, neither the term Asian American nor Asian American theater existed. Yet, Asian immigrants and their successors have participated in theatrical productions since they resided in the United States, and Asians have occurred on mainstream American scenes ever since the eighteenth century.⁹ Nevertheless, the author of the play analyzed in this thesis is a second-wave writer, thus this part of the thesis focuses on the development of Asian American theatre after 1965. To specify the term Asian American theatre, E. K. Lee argues it can include: “Asian American theatre companies, rehearsal and performance spaces, meeting, and protest locations [as well as] geographical areas.”¹⁰ In other words, she suggests that anybody connected to such venues (performers, producers, spectators, or critics) is a part of Asian American theatrical heritage.¹¹

The development of Asian American theatre was influenced by the first four theatre companies. Wenying Xu states that the companies were: the East West Players (EWP), Asian American Theatre Company (AATC), which was originally named Asian American Theatre

⁵ “Asian American,” Merriam–Webster Dictionary, accessed March 4, 2023, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Asian%20American>.

⁶ Xu, *Historical Dictionary*, 1.

⁷ Esther Kim Lee, *A History of Asian American Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 2.

⁸ Lee, *A History of Asian American Theatre*, 7.

⁹ Lee, *A History of Asian American Theatre*, 7.

¹⁰ Lee, *A History of Asian American Theatre*, 5.

¹¹ Lee, *A History of Asian American Theatre*, 5.

Workshop, then Northwest Asian American Theatre (NWAAT), which was originally named Asian Exclusion Act, and Pan Asian Repertory Theatre (PART).¹² According to E. K. Lee, the beginning of Asian American theatre can be marked in 1965 when the first Asian American theater company East West Players was established in Los Angeles.¹³ She further adds that the reason behind establishing the company was to combat racism in the acting industry and to claim the right for Asian Americans to be given a chance to play both Asian and non-Asian roles.¹⁴ Furthermore, one of the plays that had a significant impact on the growth of Asian American theatre, and also became one of the most important works in the canon, *Chickencoop Chinaman*, written by Frank Chin, was awarded by the EWP the playwright competition in 1971.¹⁵

W. Xu states that Frank Chin was the person who established the Asian American Theatre Workshop in San Francisco.¹⁶ E. K. Lee adds that its main goal was to advance the development of Asian American plays. In 1974, Chin published his second play, *The Year of the Dragon*, which later became highly successful and gave him a chance elsewhere than San Francisco. At the same time, it was an opportunity for the younger generation of artists to diverge from Chin's perception of the company. Subsequently, their difference of opinions led to Chin leaving the company and renaming the company followed. It became known as Asian American Theater Company (AATC). Afterwards, the company lost its central members and produced only a small number of plays.¹⁷

According to E. K. Lee, another company that was established in the 1970s is the North Asian American Theater Company in Seattle. The company was established by students attending the dramatic club at the University of Washington. The members of the club started to produce creative plays about Asian American backgrounds and experiences. The company played an important role during the 1970s because it produced several major Asian American plays, for instance, the already mentioned *The Year of the Dragon*, and *And the Soul Shall Dance* by Wakako Yamauchi. Because of the high number of produced plays, NAAT gained its permanent audience and it continued to be the leader of Asian American theatre companies in the Pacific Northwest till its closure in 2004.¹⁸

¹² Xu, *Historical Dictionary*, 126.

¹³ Lee, *A History of Asian American Theatre*, 1.

¹⁴ Esther Kim Lee, "Asian American Theater and Drama from the 1960s to the 1990s," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Asian American Literature and Culture*, ed. Josephine Lee (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 1254

¹⁵ Lee, "Asian American Theater and Drama from the 1960s to the 1990s," 1257.

¹⁶ Xu, *Historical Dictionary*, 29.

¹⁷ Lee, "Asian American Theater and Drama from the 1960s to the 1990s," 1257–1258.

¹⁸ Lee, "Asian American Theater and Drama from the 1960s to the 1990s," 1258.

W. Xu informs that the last of the founding companies is called Pan Asian Repertory Theater, which was established by Tina Chang who wanted to offer more opportunities for Asian and Asian American actors.¹⁹ E. K. Lee specifies that Chang was an actress performing on Broadway in the 1960s, and her goal was to create working opportunities that would fit both Eastern and Western styles, and at the same time, she wanted to produce bilingual plays. She also intended to produce plays based on Asian cultural heritage. In the 1980s, it was the only company that was specifically described as Asian American. Nowadays PART and EWP are the only theatre company that remained active since the 1970s.²⁰

E. K. Lee explains that because of the distinct sociocultural milieu and specific location, every company has a different historical background. Moreover, the distinctive perceptions that the founders of Asian American theater had also led to diverse approaches. However, the main goal of the four companies was the same: they wanted to establish a place for the growth and production of Asian American theatre. Nevertheless, the methods each company has used have varied. The central topic of Asian American theater has been discussed by both the organizations' founding members and following leaders. It includes questions about the purpose, and production of Asian and non-Asian plays. Also, whether the goal is complete inclusion into American theatre which would mean the subsequent disappearance of Asian American theatre, and many other questions. There are no unequivocal answers to these questions and the companies have had to change and develop over thirty years. That is why the members frequently disagreed on the answers, thus, several individuals left, while others devoted their whole lives to fulfilling the main goal of their company.²¹

As E. K. Lee presents, the first four companies were crucial for Asian American theatre to become recognized as an institution, and their sustained existence for more than three decades shows the considerable impact they have had on the development of Asian American theatre.²²

The four founding theatre companies certainly played an important role in Philip Kan Gotanda's life. Randy Barbara Kaplan declares that Gotanda has been one of the major figures in the theatre movement since the 1970s. Together with David Henry Hwang, Momoko Iko, and Wakako Yamauchi, Gotanda belongs to one of the core members of second-wave dramatists who followed the initial leader Frank Chin to expand Asian American theatre.

¹⁹ Xu, *Historical Dictionary*, 209.

²⁰ Lee, "Asian American Theater and Drama from the 1960s to the 1990s," 1259.

²¹ Lee, *A History of Asian American Theatre*, 42–43.

²² Lee, *A History of Asian American Theatre*, 42.

Gotanda's first play – a musical called *The Avocado Kid*, or *Zen and the Art of Guacamole* debuted at one of the most significant companies the East West Players in 1979. Gotanda's second play *A Song for a Nisei Fisherman* was produced at all four Asian American theatre companies: AATC, PART, EWP, and NWAAT. As time went on, Gotanda gained more prominence and his plays have been produced both at Asian American and other culturally unspecific theatres across the USA.²³

The Wash is a two-act play about the breakup of an older couple and its effects on their lives and relationships, it also discusses the influence of internment camps on Japanese Americans' lives. Gotanda was born after WWII, thus he was not an internee, but he states that both his parents had to relocate to internment camps, and even though they rarely talked about their experiences during his childhood, he still considers it a significant part of his life. Gotanda explains that internment camps are mentioned in his plays because: “[w]hether you speak about the Camps or do [not] speak about them, the experience is passed on generationally. It [is] a physic scar.”²⁴ R. B. Kaplan explains Gotanda has another approach to presenting the topic of internment camps. While authors like Lane Nishikawa and Wakako Yamauchi portray what life was like in the camps, Gotanda discusses the deep-rooted psychological effect of the camp experience. The same topic appears in a series of his plays that were published in the same volume as *The Wash – Fish Head Soup*, and *A Song for a Nisei Fisherman*.²⁵ In general, Gotanda says that there are two topics that repeatedly appear in his plays: the Camps, and racism.²⁶

Gotanda expresses that *The Wash* was inspired by his friend's story whose mother left her husband, which was uncommon for an older Nisei couple. It is further based on his consecutive research on Japanese American widows and widowers. Another story that inspired him is about a woman whose ex-husband continued to cut her grass after their divorce. He also highlights that it was an intentional decision to “juxtapose quiet scene with very explosive moments”²⁷ in *The Wash*. Furthermore, Gotanda declares that Japanese American conversations are often indirect and they talk about all kinds of other things in their regular conversations, thus: “what [is] not said is often as important as what is said.”²⁸ This means that

²³ Randy Barbara Kaplan, “Philip Kan Gotanda,” in *Asian American Playwrights: A Bio-Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook*, ed. Miles Xian Liu (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002), 69–71.

²⁴ Philip Kan Gotanda, “The Wash,” in *Between Worlds: Contemporary Asian-American Plays*, ed. Misha Berson (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1990), 30.

²⁵ Kaplan, “Philip Kan Gotanda,” 74.

²⁶ Gotanda, “The Wash,” 30.

²⁷ Gotanda, “The Wash,” 33.

²⁸ Gotanda, “The Wash,” 33.

unspoken actions are often what moves the plot forward and some of the most important scenes are silent. Additionally, flashbacks are used to provide more information about the characters' lives, more specifically about the relationship between Masi and Nobu.

2. Historical-cultural context of the 20th century in the USA

To introduce the historical-cultural context related to the theater play analyzed in this thesis, it is important to define terms that are commonly used to refer to individual Japanese American generations. Jere Takahashi informs that the term Issei is used to refer to the first generation of Japanese immigrants who were born in Japan, and then came to the USA.²⁹ Uma Segal adds that the second generation of Japanese Americans is called Nisei, who were born in the USA, thus unlike Issei, were born as US citizens. The children of Nisei, third-generation Japanese Americans, are called Sansei, and the fourth generation is referred to as Yonsei.³⁰

To analyze the generational problems that are present in the play, it is important to summarize the journey Japanese Americans had to take to be accepted in American society, and also to mention key historical events that influenced their identities, and behavior.

Since the first wave of Japanese immigrants came to the United States in 1869, they were given many opportunities, but they were also about to face many difficulties. As mentioned by W. Scott Ingram, approximately 280,000 people of Japanese origin were counted in the continental United States and Hawaii in the 1930 U.S. Census, and Hawaii was home to more than half of those people. California, Oregon, and Washington were home to almost all of the 138,000 Japanese Americans who resided on the American continent.³¹

As claimed by Ingram, the efforts of anti-immigration organizations to stop Japanese immigration to the United States during the first three decades of the 20th century had been largely effective because The 1907 Gentlemen's Agreement had practically stopped the immigration of Japanese males.³² Kiyoo Sue Inui explains that The Gentlemen's Agreement is: "an understanding whereby Japan was to restrict voluntarily the emigration of her laborers to continental United States."³³

Another act that adjusted immigration to the USA was issued in 1924. Ingram mentions that The Immigration Act of 1924 effectively prohibited all Japanese immigration. Japanese households, however, kept expanding. As a result, in the 1930 census, more than 60 % of all Japanese Americans had been born in the US. In fact, it meant that the second generation of

²⁹ Jere Takahashi, *Nisei/Sansei: Shifting Japanese American Identities and Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 3.

³⁰ Uma A. Segal, *A Framework for Immigration: Asians in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 151, 156, 184.

³¹ W. Scott Ingram, *Japanese Immigrants (Immigration to the United States)* (New York: Facts On File, 2005), 52.

³² Ingram, *Japanese Immigrants*, 52.

³³ Kiyoo Sue Inui, "The Gentlemen's Agreement. How It Has Functioned," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 122, no. 1 (November 1925): 190.

Japanese Americans, also called Nisei, were raised with both American and Japanese cultural backgrounds. Moreover, the Nisei worked with their parents to create lifestyles based on conventional American values that prioritized family, school, and religion, like the majority of immigrant children at the time. Young Nisei assisted on family farms and in family-run enterprises after attending neighborhood public schools. Nevertheless, preserving Japanese culture was also significant to their parents – Issei as well. Thus, their children were required to attend Japanese language classes, watch Japanese plays and listen to Japanese music, and also to practice traditional religion.³⁴

Ingram specifies that many Issei and Nisei left the United States for Hawaii because of the persistent anti-Japanese bias in the continent. In Hawaii, Japanese immigrants had grown to create a sizable portion of the local population, and in the 1930s, more than 20,000 Japanese Americans relocated to Hawaii from the United States. Many Japanese people who remained in the country entrusted their legal and political representation to groups like the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL).³⁵ Madeline Y. Hsu states that the main goal of JACL was: “to attract the more educated, professional, and white-collar leadership members of their respective ethnic communities, while still sharing some major agendas with the immigrant generation.”³⁶

As Ingram argues, throughout the 1930s, while the United States tried to overcome the Great Depression, Japan entered a path that would ultimately lead to war. The sudden aerial attack by Japan on the American naval headquarters in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941, marked the start of that conflict. The United States officially declared war on Japan’s associates – Germany and Italy on December 8, 1941. With this act, America officially entered World War II. Like most Americans, Japanese Americans were deeply alarmed by Japan’s activities in the 1930s. Few people had deep ties to East Asian nation, particularly to the new military leadership and they also shared the same astonishment as the majority of other Americans, especially Japanese Americans were outraged by the attack on Pearl Harbor.³⁷ Madeline Y. Hsu suggests the destruction of the communities that Japanese Americans had worked so hard and so tenaciously to establish and continued to maintain on the West Coast, was the worst loss they could have imagined during World War II.³⁸

³⁴ Ingram, *Japanese Immigrants*, 52–53.

³⁵ Ingram, *Japanese Immigrants*, 53–54.

³⁶ Madeline Y. Hsu, *Asian American History: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 95.

³⁷ Ingram, *Japanese Immigrants*, 55–57.

³⁸ Hsu, *Asian American History*, 96.

This statement is confirmed by the actions of the US government. As stated by Hsu, on February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, ordering Japanese and Japanese Americans to be evacuated from the West Coast.³⁹ R. Tonai further adds that although the order did not mention any specific group or recommend detention, it was Executive Order 9066 that started the mass incarceration aimed at people with Japanese ancestry.⁴⁰ Other consequences of the order were, as it is acknowledged by Hsu that Issei leaders were quickly captured, a curfew of 8 o'clock was established, and bank accounts were blocked. About ten thousand Japanese were relocated willingly inland, beyond the military zone, as it became evident that even Nisei citizens would be detained.⁴¹ However, some Japanese Americans resisted the executive order, as the website *Center for Asian American Media* expresses, they addressed the Supreme Court presenting their cases opposing the validity of the restrictions, the mass evacuation, and the imprisonment. One of the first who opposed the orders were, for example, Gordon Hirabayashi, Min Yasu, Fred Korematsu, and Mitsuye Endo. These cases later helped with the end of the internment camps. One of them is Mitsuye Endo who successfully challenged imprisonment in 1944 and contributed to the closure of internment camps.⁴² On the other hand, Donna K. Nagata adds that the majority of people did not publicly oppose evacuation commands because, for the majority of Japanese people, it was unimaginable to reject a directive from the U.S. Army because of their cultural emphasis on obedience to authority. These ideals, along with a gap in community leadership, a shortage of political influence, and uncertainty about the future made it improbable that most Japanese Americans would oppose the regulations of Executive Order 9066.⁴³

The result of this order was, as Sundquist claims it, that nearly 70,000 American citizens (the Nisei generation) were among the more than 120,000 Japanese Americans who were detained in internment camps and distanced from their homes.⁴⁴ Ingram adds that Roosevelt's executive action stunned the Japanese American community. The majority found the suspicions quite offensive because they formerly felt themselves to be Americans, but now they were viewed as adversaries.⁴⁵

³⁹ Hsu, *Asian American History*, 97.

⁴⁰ Rosalyn Tonai, "A Short History of the Japanese American Experience," *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal. English Supplement*, no. 2 (1992): 32.

⁴¹ Hsu, *Asian American History*, 97.

⁴² "Court Challenges," The Center for Asian American Media, accessed January 17, 2023, <https://caamedia.org/jainternment/camps/court.html>.

⁴³ Donna K. Nagata, "Intergenerational Effect of the Japanese American Internment," in *International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma*, ed. Yael Danieli (Massachusetts: Springer, 1998), 127.

⁴⁴ Eric J. Sundquist, "The Japanese-American Internment: A Reappraisal," *The American Scholar* 57, no. 4 (Autumn 1988): 532.

⁴⁵ Ingram, *Japanese Immigrants*, 60.

To illustrate what the internment camps looked like, Ingram states that the barbed-wire walls were guarded by armed troops. The camps were carefully watched even at night to make sure no one could leave them. It was no comfortable place to live in because, for instance, families of eight and six people were housed in small areas, and smaller families or single people were gathered in shared rooms.⁴⁶ Spickard expresses that most Japanese Americans were unemployed in the camps, thus, each day was mostly the same – the only things to do were chat, stand in line for meals or the bathroom, read, or play board games.⁴⁷ Furthermore, Ingram mentions that there were also repeated epidemics of illnesses due to poor food standards and hygiene. Even though their life in the camps was difficult, they tried to lead regular lives. The camp life included activities such as political clubs, religious services, dances, and physical events.⁴⁸

Some Japanese Americans had to remain in the camps for up to four years. Ingram declares that the relocation of Japanese Americans proceeded until 1942. Ultimately, the widespread incarceration of Japanese Americans was stopped on December 17, 1944, by Public Proclamation Number 21 issued by Congress.⁴⁹

Even though the camps were officially ended, Hsu specifies that it took until March 1946 to close the last camp.⁵⁰ Ingram argues that many Issei and Nisei found it difficult to return to their normal lives after the camps. Those who were detained sometimes lacked the means to reclaim their houses, properties, or companies. In the urgency to evacuate, many were compelled to sell their possessions for far less than what they were worth. Others had to leave their farms and leased lands. Many Japanese Americans who returned to their homes and businesses found that they had been replaced by other Americans.⁵¹ Thus, it was difficult for them to start a new life all over again. Kenji Ima adds that no matter the socialization path they chose, the Nisei kept a low profile to prevent drawing attention to themselves and instead concentrated on assimilating into American culture.⁵² *The Wash* shows the difference between Nisei who could assimilate and those who could not free themselves from the suffering they experienced. The internment camps influenced not only individuals' behavior but also their

⁴⁶ Ingram, *Japanese Immigrants*, 61.

⁴⁷ Paul R. Spickard, *Japanese Americans: The Formation and Transformations of an Ethnic Group* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 119.

⁴⁸ Ingram, *Japanese Immigrants*, 61.

⁴⁹ Ingram, *Japanese Immigrants*, 63.

⁵⁰ Hsu, *Asian American History*, 105.

⁵¹ Ingram, *Japanese Immigrants*, 63.

⁵² Kenji Ima, "Japanese Americans: The Making of 'Good' People," in *The Minority Report: An Introduction to Racial, Ethnic, and Gender Relations*, ed. Anthony G. Dworkin and Rosalind J. Dworkin (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1976), 275.

relationships. One of the issues presented in the theatre play is the psychological effect of internment camps on individuals and their relationships.

The Wash is set in the years between 1986 to 1987, which is forty years after the closure of the last internment camps. Nobu, who is a second-generation Japanese American, often reflects on his past. His actions are to a large extent influenced by the experience and effect of internment camps. The experience influenced not only his personality but also the relationship with his wife and daughters. Nobu's wife – Masi is influenced by the experience as well. However, she has a different approach to the problem because she wants to move forward with her life, but Nobu tends to reflect on the past too much and live in it. As is illustrated in the play when Nobu and Masi come to visit their daughter Marsha and they talk about the place where she lives. Masi makes a comment that her place looks nice. Nobu answers: "Marsha's? Looks like the rooms back in camp."⁵³ Nobu's comparison suggests that he did not like life back in the internment camps, but he is unable to move forward and he keeps referring to his memories from the camp even well after the internment. Another mention of the camps appears in the same scene later in their discussion. It almost seems like Nobu starts talking about the internment camps out of nowhere because before he started mentioning the dances, their conversation was about completely something else, they were talking about the ceramics class and the products that Masi made. Nobu connects the two situations and thinks that it is where Masi must be when he calls her in the evening and she does not answer the call. On that account he says:

Nobu: Remember those dances they used to have in the camps? [...] Remember that fellow Chester Yoshikawa? That friend of yours? [...] Remember that dance you were supposed to meet me out front of the canteen? [...] Everybody else, they went on ahead. I waited and waited...

Masi (*interrupts*): Nobu, that was forty years ago. [...] How can I remember something like that?

Nobu: You didn't show up. Chester didn't show up either.

[...]

Masi: Nobu, didn't we talk about this? I'm sure we did. Probably something came up and I had to help Mama and Papa.

Nobu: Where were you, huh?

Masi: How am I supposed to remember that far back? Chester died in Italy with the rest of the 442 boys.

Nobu: Where the hell were you?

Masi: How in the hell am I supposed to remember that far back!⁵⁴

⁵³ Philip Kan Gotanda, "The Wash," in *Fish Head Soup and Other Plays* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), 154.

⁵⁴ Gotanda, "The Wash," 155–156.

This dialogue shows not only Nobu's sense of nostalgia but also the fact that he is still hurt by the memories and was never able to process them and that is why he keeps repeating those negative thoughts about his past. He suffers because of the memories of internment camps, and at the same time, he still cannot accept that Masi was apparently dating another man – Chester, who then died during World War II. Thus, their conversation does not move forward because Nobu is stuck in the past, which can be seen in the way he speaks. His style of speech is a cyclical conversation, so it seems like Nobu does not listen to Masi and is trapped in his own thoughts. R. B. Kaplan states that the characters refer back to camp dances and old acquaintances rather than discussing the physical, psychological, and monetary hardship of the experience. Yet, the characters' behaviors have been significantly influenced as a result of the internment experience.⁵⁵ The fact that Nobu lives in the past can be seen as a consequence of his experience which developed into post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD). American Psychiatric Association defines PTSD as a form of anxiety that originates from a psychologically upsetting situation that is distinct from the normal human experience, such as family issues, illness, or loss of profits. Typical symptoms of PTSD include “reexperiencing the traumatic event, avoidance of stimuli associated with the event.”⁵⁶ Reexperiencing the memories from the internment camps is exactly the behavior that can be seen in Nobu's actions.

On the other hand, it is apparent that Masi has moved forward and does not wish to reflect on the unpleasant memories. Masi barely talks about her experience, such as when she admits to Sadao (her new partner) that she liked someone else in the camps but in the end, she married Nobu. Masi declares: “There was someone else who liked me in camp. I liked him, too. I married Nobu. Something's wrong with me, huh?”⁵⁷ Masi suggests that she lost something, just like everybody else who had to be relocated to internment camps. She lost someone she liked and married Nobu instead. That decision influenced her whole life because later she admits she never really loved Nobu and was not happy in the relationship.

Nobu also reflects on the losses that he suffered because of incarceration. The losses are mostly connected to Masi's father and the family business. It is suggested that Masi's father was wealthy and had his own business, and Nobu feels to be wronged because he promised to help him in business. However, he was unable to do it because he lost everything because of the relocation. Also, Nobu did not have the same opinion on the business as Masi's father; he

⁵⁵ Kaplan, “Philip Kan Gotanda,” 75.

⁵⁶ American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (Third Edition: Revised)* (Washington DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1987), 247.

⁵⁷ Gotanda, “The Wash,” 174.

thinks that he would have run it better. However, World War II began and Japanese Americans' dreams and visions faded. Masi's father lost the store and Nobu blames him for it. Masi knows that it was not her father's fault, because he did not wish to be relocated just like the rest of the Japanese Americans. On that account, Masi states: "IT WASN'T HIS FAULT! (*Silence*) Who wanted to be in the relocation camps? Did you? Do you think he wanted to be in there? It broke Papa's heart. He spent his entire life building up that farm. Papa was a proud man. A very proud man."⁵⁸ Masi tries to explain the situation to Nobu but he keeps disturbing her and says: "He promised he could set me [...] up in business or anything else I wanted to do. [...] I'm just saying I'd run the business different. Shig [Masi's father] is a baka, a fool. That's all I'm saying."⁵⁹ In this scene, what is not directly said is even more important. There is an unspoken implication in the dialogue that if Masi's father had not lost the family farm and would have been able to keep his promise, everything would have been different. Nobu would have been happier, thus his behavior, and the way he treats others would have not been the same, possibly suggesting that their marriage would have been successful as well. Additionally, the conversation indicates that the possibilities that Nobu lost because of the internment are unbearable. First, he did not manage to fit in with American society as he was literally removed from the white society and relocated with his ethnic group, and most importantly, he did not fulfill his dream to be successful and have his own business. All of these losses not only influence his identity but also interpersonal relations – he is obsessed with the past, while everybody else moved on with their lives. According to Nagata, Kim, and Nguyen's text, the imprisonment of Japanese Americans during WWII can be described as social trauma.⁶⁰ Alexander believes that social trauma happens when representatives of a collectivity assume they have experienced a horrific situation that has left permanent scars on their collective consciousness, altering their future personalities in a crucial and irreversible way.⁶¹ Mass adds that even though this trauma can be described as cultural, it was not processed by Japanese Americans as a group, but the effects were mostly directed at each individual.⁶² The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians claims that the Nisei

⁵⁸ Gotanda, "The Wash," 179.

⁵⁹ Gotanda, "The Wash," 179.

⁶⁰ Donna K. Nagata, Jackie H. Kim, and Teresa U. Nguyen, "Processing Cultural Trauma: Intergenerational Effects of the Japanese American Incarceration," *Journal of Social Issues* 71, no. 2 (2015): 357.

⁶¹ Jeffrey C. Alexander, "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma," in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, ed. Ron Eyerman, Bernhard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser, and Piotr Sztompka (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 1.

⁶² Amy Iwasaki Mass, "Psychological effects of the camps on the Japanese Americans," in *Japanese Americans: From Relocation to Redress*, ed. Roger Daniels, Sandra C. Taylor, and Harry H. L. Kitano (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1986), 160.

responded to this event in several ways that are not necessarily exclusive and might alter over time. The most typical reactions include efforts to minimize or ignore the event and deny the importance of losses. Also, losing trust in white America, and continuing to adopt an overall prejudiced or untrusting attitude toward white people; limiting one's social interactions with Japanese Americans, which is also Nobu's reaction. On the contrary, some Nisei reacted by avoiding interactions with other Japanese Americans and everything associated with Japan.⁶³

After the Japanese Americans came back from the internment camps, it was certainly not easy for them to start their lives all over again. As claimed by Ingram, nearly all Japanese Americans resided on the West Coast in 1941. However, the majority of Japanese Americans had to start again after the war and imprisonment. Thus, more than 60,000 Japanese Americans decided to relocate inland.⁶⁴ Hsu argues that: “[a] visible minority never returned to the West Coast and remade their lives in the Midwest or the East, where they had been forcibly resettled.”⁶⁵

After the end of WWII, there were some attempts to help Japanese Americans. Ingram states that in the early post-war period, the American government and volunteer organizations aimed to help Japanese Americans. Nevertheless, the discrimination that Japanese Americans had experienced before the war was still present in 1948. The imprisonment was examined the same year and The Evacuation Claims Act was approved.⁶⁶ As Hsu explains, the 1948 Evacuation Claims Act introduced a form of monetary restitution for imprisonment.⁶⁷ Ingram adds that sometimes it was problematic to receive the money because Japanese Americans were required to present documentation attesting to the loss of their possessions. Nonetheless, they were often unable to present the documents because they either vanished or were ravaged.⁶⁸ It means that even after the end of internment camps, Japanese Americans had to face a difficult situation because in many cases they lost everything and had to start all over.

The situation in Hawaii differed from that in the continental United States. As Ingram argues, Japanese Americans in Hawaii could advance greatly, whereas others on the mainland of the United States had difficulty rebuilding their lives following World War II. By the 1950s, approximately 40 % of Hawaii's population was of Japanese origin. Japanese Americans living

⁶³ Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, *Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 299.

⁶⁴ Ingram, *Japanese Immigrants*, 66.

⁶⁵ Hsu, *Asian American History*, 105.

⁶⁶ Ingram, *Japanese Immigrants*, 66–67.

⁶⁷ Hsu, *Asian American History*, 106.

⁶⁸ Ingram, *Japanese Immigrants*, 66–67.

in Hawaii created the biggest population group on the islands. By the end of the 1940s, Japanese Americans living in Hawaii also managed to grow significantly in terms of political influence.⁶⁹ As it is further specified by Spickard, Japanese Americans did start to make some cautious inroads into politics at this time, yet it was a limited group of Nisei who actively participated in political affairs in the 1940s and 1950s.⁷⁰

Japanese Americans saw hope in The McCarran-Walter Act that was issued in 1952. As Hsu explains, along with other minor reforms, the McCarran-Walter Act completely eliminated the racial bar on citizenship and gave immigration quotas to all nations. Other reforms included, for example, granting close relatives of US citizens non-quota immigration rights. Nonetheless, several reform organizations condemned the act for preserving the exclusionary national origins quotas and for maintaining the racial monitoring of Asians through the Asian-Pacific Triangle, which restricted entry to 2,000 every year. That is why President Harry Truman rejected the legislation, but he was overruled by Congress.⁷¹ Ingram additionally states that even though the McCarran-Walter Act only permitted 2,000 Asian immigrants annually, it led to the immigration of thousands of Japanese students, corporate leaders, scientists, and other professionals over time.⁷²

However, the biggest group of immigrants during the 1950s came with the War Brides Act. As Ingram mentions, the act enabled the brides of U.S. soldiers to enter the land. Even though the law was passed, it did not mean that the brides would be accepted in the US. At first, they were not welcomed; on the contrary, they were dispersed throughout America and apart from other Japanese people. They were often lonely because they rarely associated with Japanese Americans and their own groups.⁷³ As time went on, Simpson suggests the public view on war brides changed from self-seeking to kind and dedicated wives and mothers. Consequently, the war brides became an early model for creating America's model minority.⁷⁴ Later in the 1960s, as Spickard claims, Sansei's (third generation of Japanese immigrants) social progress started to support the concept of the model minority. The concept was initially attributed to Japanese Americans and later extended to all Asians. The main idea of the concept

⁶⁹ Ingram, *Japanese Immigrants*, 67–68.

⁷⁰ Spickard, *Japanese Americans*, 152–154.

⁷¹ Hsu, *Asian American History*, 108.

⁷² Ingram, *Japanese Immigrants*, 69.

⁷³ Ingram, *Japanese Immigrants*, 69–70.

⁷⁴ Caroline C. Simpson, *An Absent Presence Japanese Americans in Postwar American Culture, 1945-1960* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 151.

was that Asians had succeeded in becoming middle-class Americans because of their work determination and beliefs.⁷⁵

Spickard argues that the Nisei generation settled in the convenient, relatively apolitical middle class as the postwar decades passed. They moved all across the country and into West Coast communities, and were not interested in revisiting the memory of their internment. Their only desire was to be treated as regular American citizens and to be given some privacy.⁷⁶

The lives of Japanese Americans finally improved in the 1960s due to significant circumstances in the United States. According to Ingram, one of them was an attempt to boost immigration. President John F. Kennedy spearheaded the initiative and declared that the 1924 anti-immigration legislation was un-American, unreasonable, and illogical. President Lyndon Johnson pushed Congress to change immigration regulations as a way to remember Kennedy after his death in 1963. Johnson's efforts led to the 1965 Immigration Act's approval, and under this act, the annual number of Japanese immigrants to the United States rose to around 4,500.⁷⁷ Ingram states there was also a lack of professional workers in the US, which is why the act enabled immigrants working in professional fields to enter the country. Subsequently, over 20,000 Japanese immigrants arrived in the country over the following ten years. The civil rights movement was the second circumstance that caused change for Japanese Americans. Several minority groups, including Japanese Americans, were motivated to fight for equal rights by the tenacity and dedication of African-American leaders. The Japanese Americans believed that the imprisonment had been neglected and many Japanese Americans began to wonder why the US government had never taken responsibility for the Japanese American internment.⁷⁸

As a result, the website *Reference Encyclopedia* argues that about 150 people held a protest that later became known as the Manzanar Pilgrimage to raise awareness of the problem. The pilgrimage happened in December 1969, and its primary purpose was to reflect on what Japanese Americans endured during the Second World War and also to ensure that oppression like the imprisonment camps would never happen again.⁷⁹ On that account, as Ingram suggests, the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) demanded that the American government compensate those who were imprisoned. This resolution was proposed in 1972 by Japanese American Congressman Norman Mineta.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Spickard, *Japanese Americans*, 156.

⁷⁶ Spickard, *Japanese Americans*, 154.

⁷⁷ Ingram, *Japanese Immigrants*, 73.

⁷⁸ Ingram, *Japanese Immigrants*, 74.

⁷⁹ "Manzanar Pilgrimage," Reference Encyclopedia, accessed January 4, 2023, https://reference.jrank.org/japanese/Manzanar_Pilgrimage.html.

⁸⁰ Ingram, *Japanese Immigrants*, 74-75.

According to Roger Daniels, the events in the 1960s and early 1970s led to a formal apology by the President of the US – Gerald R. Ford. In 1976 G. R. Ford issued a proclamation annulling President Franklin Roosevelt’s Executive Order 9066.⁸¹ President Ford declared: “[w]e now know what we should have known then – not only was the evacuation wrong, but Japanese-Americans were and are loyal Americans.”⁸² Ingram adds that Japanese Americans felt partially pleased by this declaration, but for a lot of people, it was only the beginning of the problem.⁸³

Ingram states that in 1980 most Japanese Americans settled in the western states of the US – Hawaii, California, Oregon, and Washington. By the 1980s, the majority of Sansei and Yonsei had successfully integrated into American culture. The marriage rate between Japanese Americans and non-Japanese has also been gradually increasing. In surveys conducted in 1990 in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Fresno, California, it was found that about 50 % of the Japanese Americans living there were married to people who were not of Japanese origin.⁸⁴

However, the wrongdoing of the internment during WWII was still present. According to Daniels, at the beginning of the 1980s, several activists in the Japanese American group started to talk about persuading the government to offer actual redress in addition to simply acknowledging that a serious wrong had been committed. A government board was formed to examine any wrongdoing and, if there is any, to suggest a solution.⁸⁵

Spickard further adds that the hearings of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) were crucial to the movement. During the hearings, over 750 Japanese Americans gave testimony, including state officers and academics, but most importantly, former internees. It was a significant event for Japanese Americans because many were given a chance to share their experience publicly for the first time. Then in 1983, it was suggested that more than 60,000 people who were interned receive 20,000 dollars from the US government. Nevertheless, several Americans and Congressmen still protested both the payment and the government’s admission of the mistake. This resistance prevented Congress from adopting the CWRIC’s proposal.⁸⁶

Ingram declares that what followed later was a bill proposed by Hawaiian senator Spark Matsunaga in 1987, and even though some parties were still opposing the measure, the bill was

⁸¹ Roger Daniels, “Incarceration of the Japanese Americans: A Sixty-Year Perspective,” *The History Teacher* 35, no. 3 (May 2002): 306.

⁸² Proclamation 4417 (February 19, 1976)

⁸³ Ingram, *Japanese Immigrants*, 76.

⁸⁴ Ingram, *Japanese Immigrants*, 79.

⁸⁵ Daniels, “Incarceration,” 306.

⁸⁶ Spickard, *Japanese Americans*, 168-169.

finally legislated.⁸⁷ Daniels adds that a commission finally proposed to pay a redress of 20,000 dollars to each survivor of the internment camps. The proposal was legislated as the Civil Liberties Act of 1988.⁸⁸ Spickard further comments that it lasted more than two years before the payments were made and the first one was finally made in October 1990, and it continued till 1994.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Ingram, *Japanese Immigrants*, 80-81.

⁸⁸ Daniels, "Incarceration," 306.

⁸⁹ Spickard, *Japanese Americans*, 169.

3. Stereotypes and gender roles

Since the major historical events that influence Japanese Americans have been summarized, this chapter discusses stereotypes and gender roles that can be seen in Japanese American culture. To analyze the generational issues in the Nisei generation, it is essential to define certain stereotypes that can be seen (or not) in their behavior. According to Els Rommes, a stereotype is a generally recognized, and condensed judgment about a certain community. Racial, ethnic, and gender identity as well as age, speech, financial situation, and other factors are frequently used to stereotype certain groups.⁹⁰

Additionally, it is also gender roles that influence the character's behavior. Alters and Schiff explain a gender role as "a pattern of behavior, attitudes, and personality attributes that are traditionally considered in a particular culture to be feminine or masculine."⁹¹ Gender roles in Japanese culture are determined by patriarchal culture and Confucianism. According to L. F. Villa, there are several cultures based on the patriarchal system, and Japan is one of them. It is mostly Buddhist and Confucian principles that have a significant impact on Japan's patriarchal society. These principles have helped to develop a common viewpoint on the roles of men, and women. During Japan's fast modernization, which led to a governmental structure that emphasized a gendered division of work as a crucial element for the prosperity of the nation, this viewpoint became particularly pervasive. This system upheld the idea that males should be the primary earners, and that women should stay at home.⁹²

To further explain the influence of traditional gender roles, it is imperative to introduce the concept of Confucianism. Tu Weiming claims that Confucianism is the way of life that Confucius taught between the sixth and fifth centuries BC in China, and his teaching gradually spread from China to Vietnam, Korea, and Japan.⁹³ Hiroko Sekiguchi states that Confucianism can be described as an ethical system based on "hierarchies of human relationships."⁹⁴ Kent specifies the duty of a subordinate to respect and follow his or her superior as the most fundamental principle of Confucianism. This rule was initially established inside the family,

⁹⁰ Els Rommes, "Gender Sensitive Design Practices," in *Encyclopedia of Gender and Information Technology*, ed. Eileen M. Trauth (Hershey: Idea Group Reference, 2006), 675–681.

⁹¹ Sandra Altres and Wendy Schiff, *Essential Concepts for Healthy Living* (Sudbury: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 2009), 143.

⁹² Louisa F. Villa, "Classical Patriarchal Values and Their Effects on Working Japanese Women," *Online Journal Mundo Asia Pacifico* 8, no. 14 (December 2019): 61.

⁹³ "Confucianism," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last modified November 13, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Confucianism>.

⁹⁴ Hiroko Sekiguchi, "The Patriarchal Family Paradigm in Eight-Century Japan," in *Women and Confucian Cultures in Premodern China, Korea, and Japan*, ed. Dorothy Ko, Jahyun Kim Haboush, and Joan R. Piggot (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 27.

where sons were expected to show their father unwavering loyalty and obedience.⁹⁵ Kent further informs that Confucianism helped to develop a gender system that portrayed women as fragile and unreasonable, and prevented them from making contributions to changes in politics, society, or economics. Men, on the other hand, were seen as reasonable, strong, and wise, and thus were best fitted to work in the worlds of politics, education, and economy.⁹⁶ The influence of patriarchal society and Confucianism will be presented in this chapter, after defining stereotypes influencing the characters.

Japanese culture has been associated with many different stereotypes, however, some of them are not valid anymore because of the changing culture and people's changing mindsets. According to David Matsumoto, Japanese culture now differs greatly from the past, conventional ideas, and from contemporary stereotypes. Commonly, people think of Japan as a place of "nobility and chivalry, where virtues like honor, pride, and perseverance are valued."⁹⁷ Matsumoto further claims that these moral codes have been associated with Japanese society for many generations. Nevertheless, modern Japanese culture at the beginning of the millennium appears to be based on "diverse values, attitudes, beliefs, customs, and behaviors."⁹⁸ Matsumoto adds that Japanese culture is changing and becoming unique.⁹⁹ Elaine H. Kim elaborates on the topic by saying that the 1960s, more specifically the era of the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War, were periods of increased racial and cultural identity awareness for many Asian Americans. Thus, Asian Americans have made literary attempts to affirm their American identity and to debunk long-held stereotypes as a result of the new realization that it is both feasible and desirable to identify as both an American and a person of color.¹⁰⁰ It is also one of the topics presented in *The Wash*. The difference between those characters who decide to stay traditional and those who acquire American values and are willing to assimilate into the new culture essentially creates generational issues.

As Matsumoto introduces, there are seven stereotypes that are typically associated with traditional Japanese culture and values.¹⁰¹ In Harris's review of Matsumoto's book, Harris summarizes them as: "collectivism, consciousness of others, perceptions of self, emotionality,

⁹⁵ Susan Kingsley Kent, *Gender And History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 10.

⁹⁶ Kent, *Gender And History*, 11.

⁹⁷ David Matsumoto, *The New Japan: Debunking Seven Cultural Stereotypes* (Yarmouth: Intercultural Press, 2002), 1.

⁹⁸ Matsumoto, *The New Japan*, 1.

⁹⁹ Matsumoto, *The New Japan*, 1.

¹⁰⁰ Elaine H. Kim, *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context* (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1982), 173.

¹⁰¹ Matsumoto, *The New Japan*, 35.

‘the salaryman’, education and lifetime employment, as well as marriage.”¹⁰² Generational issues that occur in the play will be presented on selected stereotypes.

The first stereotype to be described is collectivism. Matsumoto states that collectivist cultures place others’ ambitions and dreams above individuals. On the other hand, individualistic cultures value personal needs and freedom. Japanese culture is considered to be collectivist, while the United States is typically seen as individualistic culture.¹⁰³ *The Wash* shows the cultural shift of one of the main characters Masi from collectivism toward individualism. Masi has always valued Japanese culture and placed the needs of her family above her own. She finally starts to be happy after she leaves her husband and finds a new partner, but that is something she was not used to, and feels guilty because placing her own needs above others’ is completely unknown to her. When Masi talks to Sadao, she suggests that she does not feel well. Sadao is concerned and wants to call the doctor. Masi answers: “No, no, nothing like that. (*Pause. Thinking.*) I’m too happy. [...] Now you make me feel too happy. I don’t like it. It makes me...unhappy.”¹⁰⁴ M. Omi comments that the biggest change that Masi experiences after separation is doing things that makes her cheerful after a long period of denial.¹⁰⁵ However, as time goes on, she realizes that she does not have to suffer and has a right to be happy for herself. Masi says: “Because I want to be happy, Nobu. I want to be happy.”¹⁰⁶ Masi’s decision to start acknowledging her own desires contributes to the breakup of the marriage because Nobu does not go through the same change as Masi does, he stays devoted to the traditional ways and opinions. Moreover, her decision to leave the traditional behavior also adds to her assimilation into American culture.

The second stereotype to be described is a perception of self. Matsumoto specifies that this stereotype is closely tight to collectivism and the key concept of Japanese self-concepts is that being different from others is meaningless. People are presumed to act with regard to others when making crucial decisions and are expected to identify themselves within the roles determined by society, such as teachers, mothers, and fathers.¹⁰⁷ The whole time Masi identifies herself as a wife and mother. She lived in an unhappy marriage because she was supposed to take care of her husband and children. Also, she was scared because she did not know what was going to happen. When Masi comes to tell her two daughters – Judy and Marsha that she wants

¹⁰² Philip R. Harris, “The New Japan: Debunking Seven Cultural Stereotypes,” *European Business Review* 16, no. 4 (August 2004): 428–429.

¹⁰³ Matsumoto, *The New Japan*, 37–39.

¹⁰⁴ Gotanda, “The Wash,” 174.

¹⁰⁵ Michael Omi, “Introduction,” xix.

¹⁰⁶ Gotanda, “The Wash,” 189.

¹⁰⁷ Matsumoto, *The New Japan*, 49–50.

to get a divorce, Marsha asks: “Why didn’t you leave sooner? You didn’t have to stick around for us.”¹⁰⁸ Masi responds: I didn’t. I was...I was scared.”¹⁰⁹ Masi has now realized that it was not her obligation to stay in the marriage, however, back in the time she was just too afraid to end the marriage because it was something she was used to for a long time. M. Omi comments that Masi represents a long-suffering wife who lives her life helping others accomplish their goals instead of pursuing her own.¹¹⁰ Abbotson adds that living in the USA, a country with one of the highest divorce rates worldwide and strong cultural ideas of independence is undoubtedly at odds with notions of traditional Japanese culture. Masi had endured years of a miserable marriage since her Japanese heritage encourages her to stick by her family. Nevertheless, she finally decided to go against her culture and leave her marriage.¹¹¹ In the dialogue, it is also possible to see a clear distinction between the two generations – Nisei and Sansei. Judy and Marsha are much more influenced by American society, thus, they do not understand why their mother waited so long to leave Nobu when she was not happy for a long time.

Another stereotype to be presented is emotionality. Matsumoto suggests that the Japanese are perceived as modest, resilient people who manage to retain their composure even while experiencing fear, sadness, or other unpleasant emotions. These claims contributed to the notion that Japanese people are emotionless.¹¹² The difficulty to express emotions is another behavioral pattern that appears throughout the play in Nobu’s actions. It is suggested that Nobu never apologizes and cannot express his emotions properly. The only time he is able to express his emotions and break his behavior pattern is toward the end of the play when Nobu realizes that Masi is actually leaving him and wants a divorce. Nobu feels desperate and tries to explain what happened after they left the internment camps. As he was used to hiding his feelings and emotions, he never told Masi what happened. He reveals the truth after more than forty years. He tries to explain his actions by saying:

I tried, I tried, Masi. After the war, after we got out of camp? After [...] we got out I went to the bank like you told me. So your papa can’t give me money, that’s all right. [...] I’ll do it on my own. I got there and ask the man how do I sign up to get money. [...] He says, “Sorry, but the person to see you is sick, come back tomorrow.” I get so pissed off I throw the magazines all over the place. Everyone is looking. I don’t give a damn, I’m shaking I’m so pissed off. And then, and then... I’m filled with shame. Shame. Because I threw their magazines all over. After what they did to me, I’m ashamed, me, me. When I get home I feel something getting so tight inside of me. In my guts, tighter and tighter, getting

¹⁰⁸ Gotanda, “The Wash,” 185.

¹⁰⁹ Gotanda, “The Wash,” 185.

¹¹⁰ Omi, “Introduction,” xvi.

¹¹¹ Susan C. W. Abbotson, *Thematic Guide to Modern Drama* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2003), 42.

¹¹² Matsumoto, *The New Japan*, 58–59.

all balled up. How come I feel like this? I'm scared, Masi. I'm scared. Please. I need...you. I need you. You. You know. You understand how it is now. Please, please, you come home, you come [...] I'm sorry, I'm sorry, Masi.¹¹³

Nobu felt ashamed because he wanted to secure monetary help for his family but he failed. His personal failure influenced him so profoundly that he decided to keep it a secret, and he did not tell his wife about the incident. Nobu does not understand his feelings, why is he confused and angry when according to his culture he is expected to accept things as they are and not to protest? It is apparent that inwardly, he is angry and does not agree with Japanese Americans' oppression as shown in the bank. However, his cultural ties to Japanese culture are too tight and he tends to be a victim of his culture and follow the stereotype. Thus, after the outburst of his emotions, he still represses any animosity to deal with it (or not) by himself. M. Omi explains that for Nobu the biggest obstacle after the separation is to face his emotional needs and start expressing them once it is already too late to change Masi's decision to divorce him.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, the difficulty to express emotions can also be connected to masculinity because men are often considered to be emotionless or to keep their emotions inside. Henry A. Montero explains that men who grow up in a system that encourages masculinity have "complicated feelings towards their own emotions."¹¹⁵ In terms of masculinity and emotions, Montero also mentions toxic masculinity and specifies that it describes behavior that inhibits males from expressing emotions apart from anger while simultaneously encouraging conduct that makes the man dominant in a particular environment.¹¹⁶ Nobu is influenced by Confucianism and masculinity so he was never able to say out loud how he feels and how the experience of internment camps influenced him. He kept it secret for more than forty years and is only able to tell the truth when it is already too late.

Even though Masi's new partner and her husband both come from the Nisei generation, they have completely diverse attitudes. Sadao's wife died, and he told his experience when someone asked him: " 'How come you still wear your ring?' I [Sadao] began to cry. Like a little boy. I remember thinking, 'How strange. I am crying in front of all these people that I don't know. And yet I feel no shame.' The room was so still. All you could hear was my crying."¹¹⁷ Unlike Nobu, Sadao is not ashamed and he is able to express his feelings. It is possible to notice the difference between Nobu and Sadao; Nobu is a traditional Japanese because he is

¹¹³ Gotanda, "The Wash," 194–195.

¹¹⁴ Michael Omi, "Introduction," xix.

¹¹⁵ "Depression in Men: The Cycle of Toxic Masculinity," Psycom, last modified June 8, 2022, <https://www.psycom.net/depression/depression-in-men/toxic-masculinity>.

¹¹⁶ Psycom, "Depression in Men: The Cycle of Toxic Masculinity."

¹¹⁷ Gotanda, "The Wash," 146.

extensively influenced by Confucianism and its impact on gender roles. While Sadao is more assimilated since he is leaving the Confucian concepts because he is not afraid to express his feelings, and he is not ashamed of his emotions. Since Nobu and Sadao are so different, at first Masi has a hard time when Sadao confides to Masi and tells her about his feelings. After Sadao's emotional effusion, Masi reacts:

Masi (*bringing coffee over*): Cream? It's nondairy creamer.

(*Sadao shakes head*)

Masi: If you want tea?

Sadao: No, this is fine. I ran on a bit, didn't I?

Masi: No, no, it's all right. (*Pause*) It's just Sanka [coffee].¹¹⁸

Masi was used to emotional restraint and the fact that Nobu is emotionally isolated, so she does not know what to do and avoids the topic by speaking about something else. In the quote above, she shifts the topic to offering Sadao coffee and even though Sadao mentions the conversation again, she still steers the conversation to something else. After more than forty years of not speaking about emotions and feelings, she starts to experience the complete opposite and is unsure how to react to these conversations. Masi's reaction shows that at the beginning it was not easy for her to abandon the stereotype and start talking about emotions and feelings. However, as time goes on, Masi realizes that sharing emotions is common in a healthy relationship and she opens up to Sadao.

Although Nobu has difficulty expressing his feelings, he loves his family and used to try to show them in his own way. It is illustrated in the play when Masi says to Judy: "Daddy used to. [...] Get up and feed you kids.[...] He used to sing to you. No wonder you kids would cry. (*They laugh*)"¹¹⁹ His acts of love are not explicitly said, yet he used to express his love by taking care of the kids and by singing them a lullaby. The aim of a lullaby may differ based on the cultural background of a specific country. Mark W. Booth argues that one of the interpretations is expressing love through a lullaby because it shows parental presence and unconditional love.¹²⁰ Thus, Nobu is not completely emotionless but he does not know how to express himself and it may be difficult for other people to understand his expression of love.

The last stereotype to be defined is marriage. Matsumoto states that traditional Japanese marriage has a clear boundary between what men and women are supposed to do. Men earned money and handled the garden, while women were in charge of finances, and all the household

¹¹⁸ Gotanda, "The Wash," 147.

¹¹⁹ Gotanda, "The Wash," 159.

¹²⁰ Mark W. Booth, *The Experience of Songs* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 200–201.

chores and were responsible for the upbringing of the children.¹²¹ Matsumoto claims that: “[t]he husband was lord of his castle, expecting and receiving obedience and conformity from wife and children. Quite frankly, husbands were masters, and wives devotedly supported their husbands.”¹²² Throughout the play, it is possible to see male superiority in marriage. For example, in a flashback of Masi’s memories:

Nobu: No, Masi. I said size eight, size eight hooks.

Masi: You told me to buy size six, not size eight. That’s not what you told me.

Nobu: I get home from the store I expect you to... Jesus Christ...

Masi: Nobu, Nobu, you didn’t tell me to get size eight hooks. You told size...

Nobu: I said size eight. I said size eight hooks. (*Pause*) This is my house. Masi? After I come home from that damn store-here... This is my house.

(*Silence*)

Masi (*quietly*): I’m sorry. I’m wrong. You said size eight hooks.¹²³

It is evident that Nobu holds the view of traditional marriage and wants to be obeyed by his wife. Masi tries to defend the truth but eventually she stops trying because she realizes it is pointless and Nobu will not admit that she was right. Nobu follows the patriarchal concepts and Confucian principles, thus he is unable to treat his wife as an equal partner but treats her more like a servant who should respect and serve him. R. B. Kaplan comments that for Nobu, not expressing his emotions and his haughty behavior toward his wife are for him “defining elements of his manhood.”¹²⁴ She further explains that Nobu is unable to leave the internment’s mental barriers, and as a result of his inner emotions of culpability and inferiority, he spills his feelings on Masi.¹²⁵ Another illustration of Nobu’s haughty behavior towards Masi is revealed in the play when she tells her daughters about their marriage and the arguments they had. There is a flashback when Masi recalls the last argument they had before she left, Nobu told her: “Shut up, Mama. You don’t know anything. You’re stupid.”¹²⁶ Masi comments on his statement:

Masi: Stupid. After forty-two years of letting him be right called me that. And I understood. He didn’t even need me to make him be right anymore. He just needed me to be stupid. I was tired. I couldn’t fight him anymore. He won. He finally made me feel like shit.¹²⁷

¹²¹ Matsumoto, *The New Japan*, 79.

¹²² Matsumoto, *The New Japan*, 79–80.

¹²³ Gotanda, “The Wash,” 165.

¹²⁴ Kaplan, “Philip Kan Gotanda,” 75.

¹²⁵ Kaplan, “Philip Kan Gotanda,” 75.

¹²⁶ Gotanda, “The Wash,” 186.

¹²⁷ Gotanda, “The Wash,” 186.

This scene shows Masi's realization that Nobu will never let go of the established, traditional gender roles influenced by Confucianism that he strictly follows. Masi decides to leave her husband and eventually she manages to free herself from the marriage when she find herself a partner who treats her equally. One of the examples which shows the fact that Sadao treats Masi equally is shown in the play when he gives her a present – new fishing equipment and says:

Sadao: I told you I was going to take you. Now you can't refuse.

Masi: Yeah, but...

Sadao: Thought I was kidding, huh?

Masi: But this is so expensive. I know how much these things cost, 'cause of Nobu. I just pack the lunch and off he goes.

Sadao: Well, this time you're going and it's lots of fun.¹²⁸

It is clear from Masi's statement in the dialogue that Nobu never shared his interests with her. However, Sadao is not like Nobu, because he wants Masi to be involved in his life, and he wants her to be around rather than just taking care of him. Thus, he buys her gifts, takes her fishing, makes her breakfast, and in general, makes her feel worthy of happiness. Their contrasting approach to treat Masi can again be influenced by the fact that Sadao is not strictly following Confucian principles, thus he sees his partner as equal and not as his inferior.

¹²⁸ Gotanda, "The Wash," 148.

4. Generational issues in Nisei and Sansei generation

Stereotypes and the influence of Confucianism on gender roles have been discussed, thus it is time to address the source of generation conflict in the Nisei and Sansei generations. Before analyzing the specific generation issues presented in the play, it is essential to explain terms connected to this topic. Generational difference is the main source of generational issues, and Andreas Hoff explains that generational difference is based on the concept of a distinctive generation indicating that it is unique from other generations. Generational disparities in emotion, thinking, understanding, and behavior may be defined in terms of experiences in life as well as alterations in life. However, it is the history, and most common characteristic of a society's shared membership that provides the basis of generational differences. Generational differences can be seen both amongst individuals and across generations.¹²⁹

Intergenerational issues can be defined as the difference in behavior, values, and lifestyle between two generations. It is important to note that intergenerational issues occur due to innovations and changes in society, thus it is possible that generational issues appear within one generation as well. Generation issues within one generation can be seen in the play as a result of various individuals' reactions to changes in their life.

The Wash presents three diverse people from the Nisei generation. It is possible to divide them into three groups. First, those not assimilated (traditionalists), second, those partially assimilated, and third, those who are fully assimilated. Elizabeth Prine Pauls defines assimilation as a process through which individuals or groups of different ethnic backgrounds are adapted into a society's dominant culture. Assimilation entails adopting characteristics of the dominant culture to the point that the assimilating group is socially unrecognizable from other members of the community.¹³⁰

Nobu can be considered as not assimilated because, as it was already mentioned, he follows certain stereotypes and behavioral patterns. He is also unable to adapt to the changing culture and accept its changes. For instance, he does not know how to use an answering machine and is confused by it. As it is presented in the theatre play when Nobu calls Masi and does not reach her, instead he hears Masi's recorded voice giving him instructions. Nobu panics and has a hard time dealing with the situation: "*The beep sounds. He's panicked, not quite sure what to do.* Nobu: I'm Nobu Matsumoto. My telephone number is 751...damn. (*Checks the number*)

¹²⁹ Andreas Hoff, "Generations and Generational Identity," in *Generations, Intergenerational Relationships, Generational Policy: A multilingual Compendium - Edition 2017*, ed. Kurt Lüscher, and Andrzej Klimczuk (Baden-Württemberg: Universität Konstanz, 2017), 38.

¹³⁰ "Assimilation," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last modified September 21, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/assimilation-society>.

751-8263. (*Not sure if he has said his name*) I am Nobu Matsumoto.”¹³¹ In the confusion, Nobu forgets his message and only manages to say his name and telephone number, which makes it obvious that he is uncomfortable. At the same time, there is a contrasting scene where Masi practices how to work with the fishing equipment that Sadao gave her. As it is illustrated in the play: “*Masi lit in pool of light. Casting. She is working on perfecting her technique, putting together all the little things that Sadao has taught her. She goes through one complete cycle without a hitch. Very smooth.*”¹³² The fishing equipment is a brand-new technology for Masi because Nobu never let her go fishing with him. The above-mentioned scenes show a contrast between Masi and Nobu dealing with modern technology. While Nobu has difficulty, Masi is learning to fish with confidence, and she does it very smoothly. The contrast shown in the two specific scenes also symbolizes how they handle the change that is undeniably happening in their lives, specifically the disparate approaches to deal with their separation – Masi tries to move forward but Nobu is unable to do the same.

Another thing that creates a difference between Masi and Nobu is what they decide to do with the chance for a happy and fulfilled life that each of them gets. In Nobu’s case, it is an opportunity for a happy life with Kiyoko, who came to the USA as a war bride and is a widow now. Kiyoko cares about Nobu and offers him a fresh start. However, Nobu does not accept the chance and instead, he says: “She [Kiyoko] knocks on the door but I don’t let her in. She’s not Mama.”¹³³ Even though at first it seems that Nobu has moved on because he found a new partner as well, it is in fact the exact opposite. He does not take the relationship seriously and only waits for Masi to return. It is also shown in the setting where Nobu’s and Kiyoko’s interactions take place; it is always Kiyoko’s restaurant, never Nobu’s apartment. The setting signifies that he will not let her into his personal space because it is a place where he and Masi have always lived and he does not see any reason to let somebody else in. Nobu lives inside his own reality, thus he is unable to accept the happiness that someone else offers. On the contrary, Masi lets Sadao go inside her new apartment thus she lets him in her personal zone, which signifies that she is ready for a new life and does not intend to come back to Nobu.

The reason why Nobu has such a hard time dealing with this change is that Nobu hates change and is unwilling to adapt to any kind of it. When he goes to the restaurant he always chooses the same seat and orders the same food. Other people notice his repetitive actions as well. It is shown in the scene when Nobu visits the restaurant and the cook tells him: “And dat’s

¹³¹ Gotanda, “The Wash,” 168.

¹³² Gotanda, “The Wash,” 168.

¹³³ Gotanda, “The Wash,” 193.

your seat, huh? All da time you gotta sit in dat same seat. [...] And you always order da same thing.”¹³⁴ The comment is made by Curley who belongs to the Nisei generation as well. However, Curley is in his mid-fifties and Nobu is sixty-eight years old, so the dissimilarities in lifestyles and approaches towards life are what create the generational difference between them. Curley often makes fun of Nobu: “That’s the problem with you kotonks. You buggas from the mainland all the time too serious.”¹³⁵ It is also the place they come from that makes them so unlike. Nobu comes from the mainland USA, while Curley is a Hawaiian Nisei and speaks pidgin. According to Brian Niiya, Kotonk is a term used to refer to a Japanese American from the mainland USA. The term originated from a WWII dispute between mainland and Hawaiian-born Japanese Americans. The dispute came into existence when the Japanese American soldiers of the 442 Regimental Combat Team got together for training, and a gap between those born in Hawaii and those born on the mainland was instantly noticeable. The main cause of the dispute was “miscommunication, stereotyping, and differences in the culture that had developed in the two places.”¹³⁶ Niiya adds that the most visible difference was language because mainland Japanese Americans spoke English, while those who were nurtured in multicultural Hawaii spoke a form of pidgin English. English-speaking Japanese Americans in Hawaii were stigmatized as arrogant racial traitors who believed they were too superior to talk in the same way as everyone else. The Hawaiian group was perceived by the mainland group as being boisterous, vulgar, and bullies. The two groups stereotyped each other due to the very different environments in which they grew up; the largest ethnic group in a majority-minority environment in Hawaii versus a small minority group on the mainland that suffered from severe discrimination and whose families were primarily imprisoned in incarceration camps.¹³⁷

Thus, it is both the place they come from that makes them so distinct but also as Susan Abbotson suggests, that Curley accepts life as it is and enjoys it as much as he can. Even though both Nobu and Curley have a clear image of who they are, Curley is not afraid to express himself and does not restrain his behavior, and is more approachable. Despite being criticized, he drinks beer simply because he likes to and does not listen to others’ complaints.¹³⁸ When talking about Nobu, Curley refers to him as “[o]ld magnet butt”¹³⁹, implying his mockery towards him because he sees him as a traditional Japanese who is unable to change. On the other hand, Nobu

¹³⁴ Gotanda, “The Wash,” 145.

¹³⁵ Gotanda, “The Wash,” 176.

¹³⁶ “Kotonk,” Densho Encyclopedia, last modified October 16, 2020, <https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Kotonk/>.

¹³⁷ Densho Encyclopedia, “Kotonk.”

¹³⁸ Abbotson, *Thematic Guide to Modern Drama*, 43.

¹³⁹ Gotanda, “The Wash,” 151.

thinks that Curley's behavior is offensive and wants to be nothing like him. It is shown in a scene when Curley speaks to Nobu:

Curley (*takes a big gulp*): Know why I like to drink beer? Know why? (*As Nobu looks up, Curley answers his own question with a loud, satisfying burp.*) Ahh. I like to let things out. Makes me feel good. Don't like to keep things bottled up inside. Not good for you. Give you an ulcer. Cancer. Maybe you just blow up and disappear altogether, huh. [...]

(*Nobu glances back towards the door.*)

Curley: No worry, no worry. Kiyoko going be back soon. [...] Hey, you had lots of girl friends when you was small kid time?

(*Nobu shrugs.*)

Curley: Strong silent type, huh? Me? Lotsa wahinis. All the time like to play with Curley. [...] How come you all the time come around here and you still got one wife?

Nobu: We're separated.

Curley: So when you gonna get the divorce?

Nobu: No.¹⁴⁰

Even though Nobu never directly expresses it directly, it is evident from the way he acts when Curley speaks to Nobu. Nobu avoids answering his questions and instead stares at the door, shrugs, or does not answer at all. As shown in the dialogue above, when he answers, he uses only one-word answers or very short sentences. Thus, his way of speaking with Curley shows that Nobu thinks of him as not worthy of respect and unimportant. In the dialogue, Curley also mentions Nobu's emotional restraint and comments that it is also what will eventually destroy him. The difference between Nobu and Curley is, as Abbotson suggests, that Curley has none of the extreme self-restraint that forces Nobu to restrain his feelings. However, Nobu despises Curley because he could never act in such a brazen or demeaning manner.¹⁴¹

To further illustrate why Nobu is not assimilated, it is essential to highlight his repetitive acts because they are yet another part of Nobu's traditions and for him, it is impossible to let go of them. The play shows several examples of Nobu's repetitive acts and customs that Nobu keeps because he is trapped inside his traditional culture as a result of his trauma and PTSD from the internment camps. Nobu will not even drink a coffee when someone else puts cream and sugar in it, because he likes to do it himself. When Nobu and Masi visit their daughter Marsha, Nobu tells to Masi:

Nobu: You put the cream and sugar in. That's not mine.

Masi: That's right. You like to put the cream and sugar in yourself.

Nobu: I like to put it in myself.

Masi: It's the way you like it, the same thing.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Gotanda, "The Wash," 176.

¹⁴¹ Abbotson, *Thematic Guide*, 43.

¹⁴² Gotanda, "The Wash," 156.

Nobu likes things as they used to be and cannot accept anything else. As is indicated in the dialogue, people around Nobu are aware of the fact that he likes particular things and know there is an immovability in his actions. Nobu's inability to change is also indicated in the lullaby that he sings at the karaoke night. He sings a traditional Japanese lullaby and says: "My papa used to sing it to me."¹⁴³ Choosing a traditional lullaby and reference to his father might suggest that he is nostalgic for his carefree youth when he was not burdened with the consequences of racial oppression and trapped inside his self-made prison.

Nobu's inability to assimilate can also be seen in his racial discrimination toward other races and ethnicities, which is also the source of intergenerational issue between him and his younger daughter Judy. R. B. Kaplan suggests that Nobu's denial of accepting racial differences is more than his mere complaining about Afro-Americans, white people, and Mexicans because they moved into the neighborhood.¹⁴⁴ He cannot overcome the fact that his younger daughter married an African-American and has a child with him. Even before there is any direct interaction between Judy and Nobu, it is evident from Nobu's reaction at his birthday party that there is a conflict between him and his daughters. Kiyoko invites Judy and Marsha to Nobu's secret birthday party and the way he acts makes it obvious that he is not comfortable with them being there:

Nobu is first happy. Then he sees Judy and Marsha. He is in shock. [...] Nobu is attempting to appear happy, but he is becoming more and more upset that his daughters are there. [...] Nobu makes no move to blow out the candles.

Kiyoko: Nobu-chan, please.

Judy (*irritated*): Dad.

(Nobu still refuses to blow out the candles. Moment is now extremely awkward. No one knows what to do.)

Marsha (*gently*): Daddy.

*(Slowly Nobu leans forward and with a forceful breath extinguishes the candles.)*¹⁴⁵

Even though Nobu does not say anything, the way he freezes and is unable to say or do something makes it clear that this situation is very stressful for him and he does not feel comfortable when his daughters, and especially Judy, is around. The fact that she married an African-American is unacceptable for Nobu and he does not know how to reconcile their marriage so he decides not to deal with the situation by avoiding Judy.

¹⁴³ Gotanda, "The Wash," 145.

¹⁴⁴ Kaplan, "Philip Kan Gotanda," 76.

¹⁴⁵ Gotanda, "The Wash," 172.

Nobu is vehemently against Judy's marriage and does not want to see either her husband or their baby, and because he avoids them, he also lost touch with his daughter. Judy's mother suggests that she should call her father, however, Judy knows it would be pointless and believes that they have nothing to talk about because she cannot talk to him about her family and he reproaches Judy for marrying, as Nobu says, "kurochan"¹⁴⁶. According to *The Racial Slur Database*, Kurochan is a "Japanese derogatory term" referring to African-Americans.¹⁴⁷ Judy does not understand his behavior and asks:

Judy: Why can't he accept it? Why can't he just say, 'It's okay, it's okay, Judy'? I just need him to say that much.

Masi: He can't. Papa can't.

Judy: Why? Why the hell not?¹⁴⁸

Masi has been married to Nobu for forty-two years so she knows that Nobu cannot accept it but at the same time, she is not able to say why, because it is just the way he was and always will be. His racist behavior can be affected by several factors. For example, it can be associated with his reaction after the internment camps. Nobu decided to meet only Japanese people and be devoted to Japanese traditions and habits. It could also be seen as a consequence of the racial oppression that Japanese Americans had to experience as immigrants. However, Judy is the complete opposite of Nobu and does not see any logical explanation for his behavior when the only thing she needs is that Nobu accepts her and her family. When Judy decides to visit Nobu and brings Timothy with her and the first thing Nobu asks her is if her husband came as well. Their conversation results in a fight because Nobu thinks he is in control of everything:

Nobu: Tak's son married a Nihonjin, Shig's daughter did, your cousin Patsy...*(Continues)*

Judy *(overlapping)*: Okay, okay, I didn't, I didn't, all right.

Nobu *(continues)*: ... did, Marsha's going to.

Judy: But is that any reason not to see my baby? He's a part of you, too.

Nobu: No, no. Japanese marry other Japanese. Their kids are Yonsei—not these damn ainoko.¹⁴⁹

Nobu's unwillingness to accept other things than he was used to can again be seen as a contributor to his racial prejudice. He thought that his daughter would marry Sansei, because that is what everybody else did, but Judy is more progressive and did something else than

¹⁴⁶ Gotanda, "The Wash," 182.

¹⁴⁷ "Kurochan," *The Racial Slur Database*, accessed February 9, 2023, <http://www.rsd.org/slur/kurochan>.

¹⁴⁸ Gotanda, "The Wash," 159–160.

¹⁴⁹ Gotanda, "The Wash," 182.

everybody – a change that Nobu cannot accept. This intergenerational conflict makes it impossible for the two characters to interact because it creates an intergenerational gap between them. *Cambridge Dictionary* explains that the generational gap is based on the lack of comprehension between individuals of different ages due to their varied life experiences, viewpoints, customs, and attitudes.¹⁵⁰ Ramaa Prasad elaborates on the topic by saying that the generational gap happens because the youth of each generation view elderly people as traditional and lacking in compassion. On the other hand, the elder generation perceives the younger as radical in viewpoint and lacking in empathy and respect. Modern society is characterized by rapid shift, which intensifies parent-youth disputes, thus in a quickly evolving social structure, there is a gap between generations.¹⁵¹ It is important to state that the generational gap does not come from disrespecting each other, Prasad states that the main source is “the distance in time, not a dimensional distance of mind, heart or energy.”¹⁵² Thus, it is the experience each generation has that can lead to mutual incomprehension. Prasad further specifies the generational gap in terms of family relations. The social situations in which the parent and kid find themselves and their worldviews differ. The gap can be deepened when the child socially separates from his family through school, employment, marriage, and relocation. These interactions are complicated by potential conflicts of interest.¹⁵³ This is exactly what happens to Judy, she is ostracized from her family because she married an African-American.

When it comes to Nobu and his older daughter Marsha, there is no intergenerational conflict at first. Marsha seems to be more traditional than Judy and tries to bring the family back together. However, when she finds out how Nobu treated Masi she gets angry and it leads to conflict with Nobu. It is also the first time someone explicitly expresses what they think of him. Marsha talks about all the things Masi and Sadao do together and tells to Nobu: “I MEAN DID YOU EVER DO THAT FOR MOM!! Did you? You’re so...stupid. You are. You’re stupid. All you had to say was ‘Come back. Please come back.’ You didn’t even have to say, ‘I’m sorry.’”¹⁵⁴ Marsha finally says what has been unsaid the whole time and draws into light the attention to the repress, and at the same time reveals the intergenerational conflict between them because of the different perspectives.

¹⁵⁰ “The Generational Gap,” *Cambridge Dictionary*, accessed February 22, 2023, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/generation-gap>.

¹⁵¹ Ramaa Prasad, *Generation Gap, A Sociological Study of Intergenerational Conflicts* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1992), 10, 12.

¹⁵² Prasad, *Generational Gap*, 13.

¹⁵³ Prasad, *Generational Gap*, 9–10.

¹⁵⁴ Gotanda, “The Wash,” 192.

Throughout the play also appears a symbol of kite that symbolizes Nobu's traditional way of life, and eventually his departure from traditions towards new acceptance. Nobu is building a kite in a traditional way like his father used to do it and he is making a progress in building it throughout the play. When Masi suggests that he should at least try a new pattern, Nobu says: "My old man used did it this way."¹⁵⁵ He is overly cautious about his kites; he never flies them and does not allow anybody to touch them. Abbotson suggests that the kite can be seen as a sign of freedom that Nobu is not able to catch.¹⁵⁶ It is presented in the play in Nobu's imagination: "*He lifts the kite above his head and begins to move it as if it were flying. For a moment Nobu seems to be a child making believe that his kite is soaring high above in the clouds.*"¹⁵⁷ Abbotson further adds that Nobu's imagination shows his desire for freedom he used to know as a little boy, but his rooted habits and traditions keep him away from grasping it. Just as he never flies the kite, he never takes his chance to integrate into American society.¹⁵⁸ Another interpretation of the symbol could be that Nobu tries so hard to keep the traditional way of making kites that do not work, just as he tries to keep their marriage that has been dysfunctional. At the end of the play, Nobu gives the kite to his grandson Timothy whom he did not want to even meet before because his father is African-American. Abbotson suggests that handing the symbol of freedom to Timothy symbolizes Nobu's realization that Timothy has a bigger chance to grasp freedom than Nobu because he will not be so trapped by his culture.¹⁵⁹ It also symbolizes Nobu's acceptance of Timothy as his grandson, and in general, the end of the intergenerational conflict between him and Judy. By handing the kite to Timothy, Nobu symbolically ends the conflict that stemmed from Judy's interracial marriage and shows his acceptance. M. Omi comments that in the midst of the crisis, Nobu is able to change, find his self-worth, and overstep his helplessness.¹⁶⁰

The kite also foreshadows a major shift in the play because at one point Nobu gets so angry that he breaks the kite when Masi tells him about her new relationship. Breaking the kite symbolizes Nobu's abandonment of the traditions that he held for a long time because what follows is Nobu's realization. He tries to express his feelings and convince Masi to come back home but it is too late. Eventually, Nobu is left alone to deal with his destiny as a victim that is trapped in his own culture.

¹⁵⁵ Gotanda, "The Wash," 142.

¹⁵⁶ Abbotson, *Thematic Guide to Modern Drama*, 43.

¹⁵⁷ Gotanda, "The Wash," 166.

¹⁵⁸ Abbotson, *Thematic Guide*, 43.

¹⁵⁹ Abbotson, *Thematic Guide*, 43.

¹⁶⁰ Michael Omi, "Introduction," xxiv.

Thus, the main difference between Nobu and Masi is that Nobu is not even open to accepting change in his life, while Masi deals with the change with ease. Masi can be considered as partially assimilated because although she is inclined towards assimilation, there are still some traditions that discourage her from full assimilation. She managed to separate from her husband, move out and find a new partner. What indicates her partial assimilation is the fact that she chose another Japanese American, which can be seen as a part of her traditional view. However, the biggest problem that keeps her from full assimilation is the routine that she and Nobu established. Almost a year after their separation, Masi still comes to his apartment to collect his dirty laundry and to bring him food. This routine is the last thing that holds Masi back from accepting her new life with Sadao. Eventually, Masi manages to break the routine by leaving the dirty laundry behind. This completely unspoken action drives the plot forward and closes the play: “*She [Masi] makes up her mind about something she has been struggling with for a while. Masi returns to the kitchen and leaves the bag of Nobu’s dirty clothes on the table.*”¹⁶¹ Even though no words are spoken, it is clear from the stage directions that Masi freed herself from the suffering and is finally ready to move on completely.

¹⁶¹ Gotanda, “The Wash,” 198.

5. Conclusion

This thesis explores various generational issues that occur in the Nisei and Sansei generations in *The Wash*. The analysis of the play revealed that age difference is not the only reason for generational issues because the issues occur between two generations as well as within one generation. This thesis defined several reasons for generation issues extending from the experience of internment camps to stereotypes, the influence of patriarchal society and Confucianism on gender roles, deeply rooted traditions, the degree of assimilation, inter-minority racism, generational gap, and place of birth.

In regard to the historical context, this thesis deals with events that were crucial for Japanese Americans and influenced their lives as immigrants living in the USA. The central historical event for this thesis is Executive Order 9066, issued by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, which ordered Japanese and Japanese Americans to evacuate from the West Coast. Afterward, Japanese and Japanese Americans were detained in internment camps, which meant that they had to leave their homes and also lost most of their properties. The analysis of the experience proves that there are various reactions to the experience of the internment camps. Furthermore, the analysis highlights the different reaction of Masi and Nobu that intensifies their generational conflict. Even though they both lost something because of WWII and the internment camps, their reactions differ because Masi wants to continue with her life and not to remind herself of the unpleasant memories, while for Nobu the experience was so traumatic that it resulted in post-traumatic stress syndrome and he is unable to free himself from the memories.

Regarding stereotypes and the importance of gender roles, it has been proved that some characters like Nobu tend to be more traditional and follow certain patterns of behavior and let their cultural heritage influence their whole lives. While characters like Sadao are much more flexible and able to adapt to a changing situation in their lives. The difference between the characters is presented on stereotypes including collectivism, perception of self, emotionality, and marriage. It was proven that Masi is inclined toward assimilation into American culture because she underwent a change from perceiving herself as a part of collective culture toward individualistic. She starts placing her own needs above others', and also starts acknowledging her personal needs and freedom. Another fact that was proven is that Masi changed her view of herself and started acknowledging her right to be happy and stopped identifying herself only as a mother and wife.

The stereotypes of emotionality and marriage are described in relation to the influence of a patriarchal society and Confucianism on gender roles. The difference between Sadao, who is not that influenced by the traditional distinction of gender roles, and Nobu who follows the Confucian principles is highlighted. The possible influence of masculinity is discussed as well. It was confirmed that under the influence of patriarchal society, Confucianism, and masculinity, Nobu is not able to express his feelings, while Sadao is not ashamed to openly share his feelings. Regarding the stereotype of marriage, it was summarized that the patriarchal beliefs are what force Nobu to perceive his wife as inferior. Unlike Nobu, Sadao does not strictly follow the rules of patriarchal rules, thus he is able to perceive Masi as his equal partner.

This thesis also focuses on the topic of assimilation. It was concluded that the individuals of the Nisei generation are assimilated into the American culture to different degrees, they were namely divided into three groups: those not assimilated (traditionalists), those partly assimilated, and those fully assimilated. It was highlighted that Nobu, a second-generation Japanese American, has never managed to assimilate into American society. Nobu is often mocked or misunderstood by other characters because he never accepted American values and was always more inclined toward Japanese culture. On the other hand, Masi makes certain changes in her life that move her closer to assimilation.

In connection with assimilation, chapter four also deals with symbols that are used throughout the play to symbolize the character's development. One of them is using technology, which indicates the distinct approaches of Nobu and Masi in dealing with a change that is happening in their lives. Additionally, the setting where the scenes take place is discussed as well. It further supports the findings about the perceptions of a new life situation. Furthermore, the thesis refers to the symbol of the kite that accompanies the entire play. It was concluded that the symbol is used in order to illustrate Nobu's traditional behavior, and the inability to free himself from the traditions and stereotypes. At the end of the play, the symbol changes into a sign of acceptance of Judy's interracial marriage and symbolically ends their intergenerational problem.

This thesis also discusses the difference between Japanese Americans of Hawaiian and mainland origin. The difference between Nobu and Curley was highlighted and it was confirmed that it is mostly a different upbringing, perception of life, and various experiences living in the USA as second-generation immigrants that create the generational issues between those two characters.

Another topic this thesis focuses on is inter-minority racism and the generational gap it creates between Nobu and Judy. Their conflict stems from Nobu's unacceptance of Judy's

interracial marriage. It was pointed out that Nobu's behavior can be labeled as racist, and the reasons that might cause his behavior were summarized to be Nobu's reaction after the internment camps because he limited his social interactions exclusively to Japanese Americans. The second cause was defined to be a consequence of the racial oppression that Japanese Americans had to experience as immigrants living in the USA.

Resumé

Hlavní tezí této práce je analyzovat generační problémy Američanů asijského původu v divadelní hře *The Wash* autora Philipa Kana Gotandy. Dále také vysvětlit odlišné důvody, které vedou ke generačním problémům jak v rámci jedné, tak i mezi dvěma generacemi.

První kapitola se věnuje stručnému popisu vývoje asijsko-amerického divadla. Součástí je vysvětlení pojmu Asijští Američané, včetně popisu jeho vzniku a vysvětlení proč se termín začal používat. Práce dále nastiňuje vývoj prvních čtyř asijsko-amerických divadelních společností, konkrétně East West Players, Asian American Theatre Company, Northwest Asian American Theatre a Pan Asian Repertory Theatre. Tyto čtyři divadelní společnosti umožnily Gotandovi snazší vstup do povědomí veřejnosti. Společnost East West Players produkovala Gotandovo první dílo s názvem *The Avocado Kid* a následně se k produkci Gotandových děl přidaly i další tři zmíněné divadelní společnosti.

Práce dále pojednává o tématech, která se opakovaně vyskytují v Gotandových dílech a to konkrétně o rasismu a internačních táborech. Gotanda se ve svých dílech nezabývá pouhým popisem života v internačních táborech, ale soustředí se na silný psychologický efekt ovlivňující životy Američanů japonského původu. Z literárních technik je zde zmíněna retrospektiva, kterou Gotanda ve své divadelní hře *The Wash* využil pro bližší představení podstaty generačního problému mezi Masi a Nobu. Dalším Gotandovým záměrem bylo také využít nepřímou konzervaci Američanů japonského původu a poukázat na důležitost toho co není přímo řečeno. Klíčové scény v *The Wash* jsou tedy často prezentovány zcela bezeslovně.

Z hlediska historicko-kulturního kontextu jsou zmíněny události a imigrační zákony, které zásadně ovlivnily životy Američanů asijského původu. Práce se nejprve soustředí na vysvětlení termínů, které jsou používány ve spojitosti s generacemi Američanů japonského původu, konkrétně se jedná o termíny Issei – první generace japonských imigrantů do USA, Nisei – druhá generace Američanů japonského původu, Sansei – třetí generace a Yonsei – čtvrtá generace. Pro podání ucelených informací o životě Američanů japonské původu jsou nastíněny zákony jako 1907 Gentlemen's Agreement a The Immigration Act of 1924, neboť oba omezily japonskou imigraci do Spojených států amerických. Uvedeny jsou také hlavní rozdíly mezi situací na pevnině USA a Havaji. Nejdůležitější historickou událostí pro tuto práci je druhá světová válka, konkrétně exekutivní příkaz 9066 vydaný prezidentem Franklinem D. Rooseveltem jako reakce na útok Japonska na Pearl Harbour. Tento exekutivní příkaz nařídil Japoncům a Japoncům amerického původu evakuaci ze západního pobřeží. Poté následovalo nucené přemístění do internačních táborů, což pro mnohé znamenalo, že museli náhle opustit

své domovy, a přišli tak o většinu svého majetku. Součástí práce je analýza odlišného přístupu k začlenění Masi a Nobu do americké společnosti po prožití internačních táborů. Oba kvůli těmto táborům něco ztratili, přesto se jejich reakce liší, což umocňuje jejich generační konflikt. Masi chce pokračovat ve svém životě a nepřipomínat si nepříjemné vzpomínky, zatímco pro Nobu byl tento zážitek natolik traumatický, že vyústil v posttraumatický stresový syndrom a nedokáže se osvobodit od minulosti.

Práce se dále soustředí na shrnutí zásadních událostí, které ovlivnily životy Američanů japonského původu po druhé světové válce a po uzavření internačních táborů. Mezi zmíněné události patří McCarren-Walterův zákon vydaný v roce 1952, který zrušil diskriminující rozhodování o udělení občanství na základě rasy. Zákon byl schválen i přes kritiku vyvolanou snahou zachovat limity na celkový roční počet imigrantů vstupujících do USA. Dalším pojednávaným tématem je největší vlna imigrantů, která přišla po povolení vstupu nevěstám amerických vojáků v 50. letech 20. století. V souvislosti s nevěstami vojáků je také zmíněn koncept modelové menšiny. Popsán je také Zákon o imigraci a občanství z roku 1965, který zrušil jakékoliv omezení pro imigraci. Téma internačních táborů je uzavřeno na konci druhé kapitoly, kde je uveden zákon z roku 1988 Civil Liberties Act, který schválil vyplatit odškodnění 20 000 dolarů každému jedinci, který byl do tábora nuceně přemístěn.

Třetí kapitola se soustředí na stereotypy a význam genderových rolí v japonské kultuře. Nejprve se práce zaměřuje na definování stereotypu, poté na uvedení tématu patriarchální společnosti ve spojitosti s konfucianismem. Práce se zabývá čtyřmi vybranými stereotypy, a to konkrétně kolektivismem, vnímáním sama sebe, emocionalitou a manželstvím. Z analýzy chování postav vyplynulo, že Masi je více nakloněna asimilaci do americké společnosti než Nobu, protože je schopna se oprostit od japonských zvyklostí a přijmout americkou kulturu za svou vlastní. Jednou ze změn, kterou Masi projde, je uvědomění, že nemusí trpět v nešťastném manželství, ale že má právo na vlastní štěstí a spokojenost. Dalším prezentovaným stereotypem je vnímání sama sebe. V japonské kultuře je předpokládáno, že lidé jednájí s ohledem na ostatní a ne na sebe, když činí zásadní rozhodnutí. V rámci tohoto tématu bylo zjištěno, že Masi změní svůj život, když učiní životní rozhodnutí, které vede k tomu, že přestane sama sebe vnímat pouze jako matku a manželku a začne více vnímat své potřeby a touhy. Tento stěžejní krok jí dodá odvahu odejít z nešťastného manželství.

Jako další stereotyp je zmíněna emocionalita, která je spojována s konfucianismem a maskulinitou. Nobu, který je těmito faktory hluboce ovlivněn, nebyl nikdy schopen upřímně vyjádřit své emoce. Až když se ocitne v krizové situaci a nezbývá mu nic jiného, je schopen se emocionálně otevřít a přiznat, že prožití internačního tábora ho značně ovlivnilo. Naopak

Sadao, který se nedrží tradičních genderových rolí, je schopen otevřeně vyjadřovat své emoce a nestydí se za ně. Z hlediska manželského stereotypu práce pojednává o tradičním japonském manželství, které má jasně určené mužské a ženské role. Jelikož se Nobu řídí patriarchálními a konfuciánskými principy, vidí svou ženu jako méněcennou a chová se k ní povýšeně. Naopak Sadao vidí Masi jako rovnocennou a je schopen s ní sdílet své zájmy a pocity.

Dalším probíraným tématem této práce je asimilace. Jedinci z Nisei generace byli ve spojitosti s asimilací rozděleni do tří skupin: neasimilovaní, částečně asimilovaní a plně asimilovaní. Bylo zdůrazněno, že Nobu se nikdy nedokázal začlenit do americké společnosti, jelikož se drží svého japonského kulturního dědictví, včetně přesvědčení a tradic.

Tato práce stručně popisuje rozdíl mezi japonskými Američany havajského a pevninského původu. Byl zdůrazněn rozdíl mezi Nobu a Curley, ze kterého bylo vyvozeno, že odlišnosti jsou způsobeny především rozdílným přístupem k výchově, vnímáním života a odlišnými zkušenostmi v rámci druhé generace imigrantů žijících v USA.

Dalšími tématy, kterým se tato práce věnuje, jsou rasismus mezi menšinami a mezigenerační propast, která je popisována jednak obecně a jednak je i specifikována v rodinném kontextu. Uvedeny jsou důvody, které mohly vést k rasistickému chování, mezi které patří neschopnost začlenit se do americké společnosti po prožitcích z internačních táborů, což vedlo k omezení sociálních interakcí výhradně na Američany japonského původu. Další příčinou způsobující rasistické chování u některých jedinců z Američanů japonského původu může být rasový útlak, kterým si museli jako imigranti v USA projít.

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