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Stereotypes and Prejudice in *American Born Chinese*  
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# ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

(projektu, uměleckého díla, uměleckého výkonu)

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## Zásady pro vypracování

Závěrečná práce se bude zabývat stereotypy a předsudky v grafickém románu *Američan čínského původu* (*American Born Chinese*, 2006) autora Gene Luen Yanga. V úvodu práce bude představen kulturně-historický kontext primárního zdroje (např. imigrační vlny z Asie, legislativní úprava asijské imigrace do USA, (ne)přizpůsobování se přistěhovalců, nadefinuje stereotypy a předsudky s nimi spojené a jejich příčiny a proměny napříč historií atd.). Dále bude text zařazen do kontextu asijsko-americké literatury, a především pak asijsko-americké komiksové tvorby. Jádrem práce bude analýza výše zmíněného textu, a jakým způsobem zachycuje stereotypy a předsudky o Američanech asijského (potažmo čínského) původu. Své argumenty bude studentka vhodně formulovat a opírat o úryvky z primárního zdroje a relevantní sekundární zdroje (vč. literárních kritik). Závěrem práce bude vyvození obecnějšího závěru o tom, jakým způsobem jsou konkrétní stereotypy a předsudky zachyceny v primárním textu.

Rozsah pracovní zprávy:  
Rozsah grafických prací:  
Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **tištěná/elektronická**  
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- Cox, William T. L., Lyn Y. Abramson, Patricia G. Devine, and Steven D. Hollon. "Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Depression: The Integrated Perspective." *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 7, no. 5 (2012): 427–49.
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## **ANNOTATION**

The work deals with a cultural-historical context of Asian Americans, focusing on the legislation that influenced the lives of Asian immigrants, the Asian immigration waves and general relationships between Americans and Asian immigrants throughout history. Furthermore, this thesis focuses on the analysis of stereotypes and prejudice which influence the lives of the Chinese in the graphic novel *American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang. This graphic novel is also discussed in terms of Asian American literary context where other Asian-American authors are mentioned.

## **KEYWORDS**

stereotypes, prejudice, Asian immigration, the Chinese, *American Born Chinese*

## **ANOTACE**

Práce se zabývá kulturně-historickým kontextem asijsko-americké společnosti, soustředící se na legislativu, která ovlivňovala životy asijských přistěhovalců, jednotlivé vlny, ve kterých Asiaté přicházeli do USA a obecné soužití Američanů s asijskými přistěhovalci. Součástí práce je také analýza stereotypů a předsudků v grafickém románu *Američan čínského původu* od autora Gene Luen Yanga, které ovlivňují životy čínských přistěhovalců. Tento román je také zařazen do asijsko-amerického literárního kontextu s konkrétními příklady dalších asijsko-amerických autorů.

## **KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**

stereotypy, předsudky, asijská migrace, Číňané, *Američan čínského původu*

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## INTRODUCTION

The graphic novel *American Born Chinese* (2006) written by Gene Luen Yang, an Asian American writer, is an essential work in contemporary literature. Although it might seem like another colourful comic designed for children due to its simple illustrations and quite easy-to-follow conversations, the story offers a profound exploration of stereotypes and prejudice faced by Asian Americans.

The aim of this bachelor's thesis is to prove via analysing the graphic novel *American Born Chinese* that although Asian Americans were not segregated by laws in the United States anymore during the period of the year 2006, they still inevitably endured social problems, such as racism, based on stereotypes and prejudice created by the majority group. Thus, the lives of Asian Americans are influenced negatively because of this serious issue. Furthermore, this bachelor's thesis aims to discuss the background of the segregation and adaptation of Asian immigrants throughout history in order to better understand where certain stereotypes or prejudices might originate from. The specific examples of stereotypes and prejudice against Asian Americans will be analysed in the graphic novel *American Born Chinese*, as mentioned before.

The first part of this bachelor's thesis will explore the cultural and historical background of Asian American experiences, examining the various waves of Asian immigration to the United States and the social and political challenges, such as racial discrimination and laws, that the Asian community had to endure throughout the history. The historical overview is essential for understanding the stereotypes and prejudices that people of Asian descent had to endure in the United States.

Following this, the bachelor's thesis will explore the development of Asian American literature, highlighting the essential authors and works that shaped Asian literary history. This chapter will discuss the beginnings of Asian American literature and the connection to the cultural history of Asian Americans, in other words, how literature and history are interconnected. Furthermore, the general themes of Asian American writers will be introduced. Also, the definition and emergence of graphic novels will be discussed, with a focus on other Asian Americans who would write and use graphic novels as a medium for expressing crucial and serious topics of Asian American history and culture.

The main part of this bachelor's thesis will be an analysis of *American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang. The analytical examination will focus on the examples of stereotypes and prejudices in three interconnected stories from the book. These issues will be illustrated mainly

via the character of Chin-kee, a satirical representation of negative Asian stereotypes and related prejudice, the Monkey King from the interconnected mythical story, and the main character Jin Wang and his classmates. Jin is a second-generation Chinese American who just moved to a new city and has to attend a completely new school. Throughout the story, Jin is challenged by his classmates and some teachers to adapt to the new environment, which is a topic that will be discussed and analysed as well in contrast with the culture and history of Asian Americans.

# 1. CULTURAL-HISTORICAL CONTEXT

To ensure clarity and a better understanding of this bachelor's thesis, it is essential to highlight the crucial aspects of Asian American history and culture. These include the reasons for Asian migration to the USA during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the impact of the legislation on the Chinese migration, the migrants' lives in the USA, and lastly the adaptation processes that the Asian immigrants had to endure. All of these mentioned points had an undeniable impact on the Asian immigration process to the United States.

The starting point of the first major Chinese immigration wave to the United States is usually considered to be the California Gold Rush in the 1850s as the numbers reported by Ronald Takaki indicate the rise from less than 400 immigrants to around 20,000 in 1852.<sup>1</sup> The beginning of Chinese immigration to the United States is also mentioned by Keith Lawrence who also indicates that the years of the first immigration wave are considered to be the 1850s since around 24 000 immigrants of Chinese descent immigrated during the years 1851 and 1852.<sup>2</sup> The Chinese began to migrate with the vision of becoming rich, the fact based on an advertisement shared by the labour recruiters, mentioned in the book by Xiao-huang Yin, which stated "Americans are very rich people. They want the Chinaman to come. [...] Money is in great plenty and to spare in America."<sup>3</sup> As Erika Lee mentioned, what the Chinese did not know was that the news spread slowly to China, so by the time they arrived in the United States, only little of the gold was left for them. All things considered, Americans did not prepare a warm welcome for the Chinese. Lee mentioned that the immigrants had to work hard in mines in isolation from the majority of American society. Furthermore, since they had no choice but to work with American labourers, the Chinese had to endure harassment and discrimination from the Americans, such as robbing the Chinese and initiating violent conflicts.<sup>4</sup> All of this information indicates that despite being hardworking people, the Chinese had to work under terrible and hostile circumstances. They worked with the sole purpose of earning more money to support their families, according to Lee.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, Americans did not welcome them, and the Chinese had to endure harsh and hateful conditions.

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<sup>1</sup> Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore – A History of Asian Americans* (California: The University of California Press, 1998), Gam Saan Haak: *The Chinese in Nineteenth Century America*, [https://books.google.cz/books?id=mt\\_tw5cn8y0C&printsec=frontcover&hl=cs#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.cz/books?id=mt_tw5cn8y0C&printsec=frontcover&hl=cs#v=onepage&q&f=false).

<sup>2</sup> Keith Lawrence, *Asian American Literature* (Greenwood: ABC-CLIO, 2021), *Asian North American History*, <https://ereader.perlego.com/1/book/4164454>.

<sup>3</sup> Xiao-huang Yin, *Chinese American Literature Since the 1850s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 14.

<sup>4</sup> Erika Lee, *The Making of Asian America*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015), *Chinese Immigrants in Search of Gold Mountain*, <https://ereader.perlego.com/1/book/782128/20>.

<sup>5</sup> Lee, *The Making of Asian America*, *Chinese Immigrants in Search of Gold Mountain*.

However, as Lee described, the number of Asian emigrants began to rise even more with the second immigration wave in the 1860s when the labour recruiters started to hire more Chinese people for the building of the Central Pacific Railroad, also called the Transcontinental Railroad.<sup>6</sup> According to Duran, the railroad was constructed to connect the already existing rail routes from the east to the west. In other words, the reason for the building was to make the transport of not only goods, but also people, more efficient between the states.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, as Nakayama mentions, the Chinese were not the first labourers who would receive the offer to build the railroad. The first to whom the offer was extended was the white workforce, white immigrants from Ireland and other European countries, however, since the beginning of the construction, they managed to lay only around 80 kilometers of track in mid-1864. That is because, only a small number of people were interested in the job, even though the recruiters advertised it as promising work. After some time, the recruiters were able to recruit the Chinese, since they were quite experienced in manual work.<sup>8</sup> The company president Leland Stanford, mentioned by Chang et al., also expressed his attitude towards the Chinese:

As a class they are quiet, peaceable, patient, industrious and economical. Ready and apt to learn all the different kinds of work required in railroad building, they soon become as efficient as white laborers. More prudent and economical, they are contented with less wages.<sup>9</sup>

However, as Chang et al. continue, this was Stanford's opinion as a businessman. Before that, 3 years earlier, Stanford had a different point of view as a governor of California. He perceived Chinese immigrants as unwelcomed and degraded.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the hypocritical and disrespectful attitude towards the Chinese did not cease. According to Lee, these Chinese railroad workers, who comprised 90 % of the labour force, were not credited for their participation in the construction of the railroad when it was completed in 1869.<sup>11</sup> This crucially discriminating and underappreciated act towards the Chinese by the Americans could be spotted in the photographs taken by Andrew J. Russell during the celebration of this special historical

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<sup>6</sup> Lee, *The Making of Asian America*, Chinese Immigrants in Search of Gold Mountain.

<sup>7</sup> Xavier Duran, "The First U.S. Transcontinental Railroad: Expected Profits and Government Intervention," *The Journal of Economic History* 73, no. 1 (March 2013): 178.

<sup>8</sup> Don K. Nakayama, "Chinese Railroad Workers, the Transcontinental Railroad, and the Indispensability of Immigration to America," *The American Surgeon* 90, no. 2 (July 2023): 323.

<sup>9</sup> Gordon H. Chang, Shelley Fisher Fishkin, and Hilton Obenzinger, "Introduction," in *The Chinese and the Iron Road: Building the Transcontinental Railroad*, ed. Gordon H. Chang, and Shelley Fisher Fishkin with Hilton Obenzinger, and Roland Hsu, (California: Stanford University Press, 2019): 10–11.

<sup>10</sup> Chang, Fishkin, and Obenzinger, "Introduction," 11.

<sup>11</sup> Lee, *The Making of Asian America*, Chinese Immigrants in Search of Gold Mountain.

milestone.<sup>12</sup> This disrespectful behaviour of the Americans shows that discrimination and racism towards the Chinese have been part of American history for centuries. Based on the information mentioned above, a lot of Americans perceived the Chinese only as cheap labour that could profit the white population. They were not treated equally or taken seriously as individuals with the same rights or opportunities as the majority group.

It is also necessary to discuss what happened to Chinese labourers after the construction was completed and there was no railroad construction job left. Ong mentioned in his article that the Chinese would move to other states, for instance, San Francisco, where the Chinese would benefit the businesses in the field of shoemaking, textiles, or cigars. They would not only work in these industries, but they would also work in a variety of shops alongside the white population. As it was during the railroad construction, the Chinese workers would be rewarded with lower wages than their other colleagues from the white society.<sup>13</sup> All of this indicates another sense of inequality between the races of human beings which was quite inevitable for the Chinese during the mentioned period.

With the rapid rise of the number of Chinese immigrants in the United States, the concern among the Americans started to spread quite rapidly. According to Zhang, there were crucial key aspects that led to the passage of the first American immigration law excluding a group based on race, the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882.<sup>14</sup> As Zhang continues, the key factors that influenced the acceptance of the Chinese Exclusion Act were indicated by Horace Davis, a member of parliament in the House of Representatives, in his speeches on the anti-Chinese movement during that time.<sup>15</sup> Based on the Davis' speeches, he claimed that the Chinese with their cheap labour and hard work replaced other workers, mainly in San Francisco, where most of the Chinese would live after the completion of the construction of the railroad, as mentioned before. Davis perceived this situation as an act that the Chinese were responsible for, since he does not mention anything about the employers<sup>16</sup> who were the ones that should probably take responsibility for preferring the degraded cheap labour over American people. Furthermore,

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<sup>12</sup> "Photographs taken during construction of the Union Pacific Railroad [graphic]," Yale University Library, accessed February 1, 2024. <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/2014909>.

<sup>13</sup> Paul M. Ong, "Chinese Labor in Early San Francisco: Racial Segmentation and Industrial Expansion," *Amerasia Journal* 8, no. 1 (1981): 70–75.

<sup>14</sup> Xinyao Zhang, "The Historical Significance of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act: The Impacts on Chinese Immigrants in the United States," *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research* 664, (July 2022): 1737.

<sup>15</sup> Zhang, "The Historical Significance of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act: The Impacts on Chinese Immigrants in the United States," 1738.

<sup>16</sup> Horace Davis, *Chinese Immigration. Speech of Hon. Horace David, of California, in the House of Representatives*, (Washington: Bancroft Library, 1878), 3. <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/hb7h4nb21q/?order=3&brand=calisphere>.

Davis also stated that in San Francisco, large masses, around 20,000, of Chinese people densely packed in small blocks in the heart of the city raised his concerns. When entering, he described his feelings as entering a foreign country: “the buildings decorated with strange and fantastic ornaments, the signs and advertisements are in queer and mysterious characters, [...] the ear hears no familiar sound, but is assailed with an incomprehensible jargon.”<sup>17</sup> The description could be perceived as a misunderstanding of a foreign culture from the side of an American, or also as xenophobic behaviour. According to Cardwell, xenophobia is described as “a fear of strangers or strange places, [...] [or] a fear of foreigners.”<sup>18</sup> Futher, Sundstrom and Kim defined xenophobia as a term related to the feeling of envy, resentment, or incongruity.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, xenophobia is not connected only to the feelings of fear, but also the others mentioned. Another argument stated by Davis was that the high number of Chinese immigrants had a negative impact on California, where the American labourers would feel threatened by the Chinese and forced to leave their homes, since many of the Americans were unemployed because of the Chinese cheap labour.<sup>20</sup> In addition to that, Senator John F. Miller of California also presented a bill to exclude the Chinese from entering the country.<sup>21</sup> According to Gyory, while discussing the issues that Chinese immigrants apparently brought to the United States, Miller mentioned that he rather welcomed the immigrants from Germany, Ireland, Scandinavia, and Italy, in other words, the people of white origin, than having more Chinese immigrants in the country. Miller claimed that the reason for this argument was that the Chinese represented an economic danger, however, those economic opinions were closely connected to those based on race. Miller described the Chinese immigrants as unemotional robots that commit to hard labour in extreme conditions for low wages, thus the Chinese threatened the American labourers. Other senators agreed with Miller, moreover, they joined the discussion with the comparison of the Chinese to rats, beasts, or swine. Therefore, Miller proclaimed that voting for the Chinese Exclusion Act would benefit both the American labourers and the public good.<sup>22</sup> All of these aspects of the whole-nation anti-Chinese movement led to the Chinese Exclusion Act raised by the American government, which made it inevitably difficult for the Chinese. It is generally understandable that the Americans were harmed by the undeniable competition in many jobs, however, as Erika

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<sup>17</sup> Davis, *Chinese Immigration. Speech of Hon. Horace David, of California, in the House of Representatives*, 4.

<sup>18</sup> Cardwell, *Dictionary of Psychology*, X.

<sup>19</sup> Ronald R. Sundstrom, and David Haekwon Kim, “Xenophobia and Racism,” *Critical Philosophy of Race* 2, no. 1 (2014): 23.

<sup>20</sup> Davis, *Chinese Immigration. Speech of Hon. Horace David, of California, in the House of Representatives*, 8.

<sup>21</sup> Lee, *The Making of Asian America*, “The Chinese Must Go!”: The Anti-Chinese Movement.

<sup>22</sup> Andrew Gyory, *Closing the Gate: Race, Politics and the Chinese Exclusion Act*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 11, <https://ereader.perlego.com/1/book/538728/20>.

Lee mentions, the Chinese Exclusion Act perpetuated discrimination and a sense of inequality against the Chinese in the United States and defined a new relationship of the Americans towards immigration in general.<sup>23</sup>

According to Andrew Baxter and Alex Nowrasteh, the number of immigrants increased, and it is estimated that around 10.4 million people immigrated to the United States between the years 1861 and 1890. It is crucial to highlight that because of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, the immigrants mainly consisted of Southern and Eastern European descent.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, Lee mentions that from 1870 to 1880, the total number of immigrants to the United States was around 3.1 million people, from which only approximately 138,000 were Chinese immigrants, in other words, they represented only 4.3 percent of the total number. However, Americans still feared the Chinese more than any other ethnic group and their racist campaigns against people of Chinese descent influenced the regulation of migration around the world.<sup>25</sup> Concerning all that was mentioned, it indicates that the Chinese were discriminated based on the majority group's biases, the Americans' fear of unfair economic competition, and racist attitude towards the race.

Lee continues that the consequences of the discrimination created by the Exclusion Act and the racist attitude of Americans against the Chinese could be seen especially in the second-generation Chinese Americans who were born into a multicultural environment. Furthermore, many of their dreams of being full US citizens were dashed by racism. Limited work opportunities, discrimination and social segregation are inevitable challenges in the life of Chinese Americans.<sup>26</sup> Another legislation introduced by the US government also did not help with the situation. The Immigration Act of 1924, as Judy Yung mentioned, explicitly excluded “aliens ineligible to citizenship,” referring to not only the Chinese but also the Japanese, Koreans and Asian Indians who were prohibited from gaining US citizenship.<sup>27</sup> Because of this step from the US government, the Chinese felt a sense of alienation. This particular feeling is shown in a statement by a second-generation Chinese American from an interview mentioned by Lee: “I feel that I am more American than Chinese. I am an American citizen by birth, having the title for all rights, but they treat me as if I were a foreigner,” and other interviewee

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<sup>23</sup> Erika Lee, “The Chinese Exclusion Example: Race, Immigration, and American Gatekeeping, 1882-1924,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 21, no. 3 (Spring, 2002): 56.

<sup>24</sup> Andrew M. Baxter, and Alex Nowrasteh, “A Brief History of U.S Immigration Policy from the Colonial Period to the Present Day,” *Policy Analysis*, no. 919 (August 2021): 9.

<sup>25</sup> Lee, *The Making of Asian America*, “The Chinese Must Go!”: The Anti-Chinese Movement.

<sup>26</sup> Lee, *The Making of Asian America*, Chinese Immigrants in Search of Gold Mountain.

<sup>27</sup> Judy Yung, *Unbound Feet*, (California: University of California Press, 2023), *Unbound Feet Chinese Immigrant Women, 1902-1929*, <https://www.perlego.com/book/4258555>.

continued: "I find racial prejudice against us everywhere. We are American citizens in name but not in fact."<sup>28</sup> As the statements might indicate, the alienation created by the government has a deep impact on Chinese American identity and social life. The continuing feeling of being foreigners in their, referring to second-generation Chinese Americans', home country shows the persistent struggles against racial prejudice and the need for true equality for all citizens.

During World War II, the general opinions of Americans towards the Chinese shifted to a more positive perspective. According to Lee, it began with the Japanese invasion of China in 1937. Chinese Americans would start demonstrations as the answer to the invasion and related humanitarian crisis in their home country. Around 300 Chinese American communities, under the leadership of organizations like the Chinese War Relief Association,<sup>29</sup> collected over 20 million dollars for China through rice bowl parties, as mentioned by Yung. They included door-to-door solicitation, parades, bazaars, and war bond sales.<sup>30</sup> Lee continues, as support for China increased, the global profile of both the country and Chinese people living abroad significantly improved. China also joined forces with the United States to fight the common Japanese enemy after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour.<sup>31</sup> That was probably the first time when the Chinese felt inbound with the Americans and sensed the appreciation from the side of American citizens towards the Chinese communities. According to Yung, thanks to the Chinese determination, endurance and love for their homeland China, and the United States, Madame Chiang, a political figure and the second wife of the Chinese president, was able to speak for the Chinese nation and persuade the US government to repeal the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the change in American attitudes towards the Chinese during World War II marks the beginning of a crucial period of mutual appreciation between the nations.

However, in the contemporary world, the Chinese still endure the social challenges created by the Americans. Stereotyping, alienation, and racial prejudice are some of the examples of social issues. Gene Luen Yang explores the struggles of being a second-generation Chinese American in his graphic novel *American Born Chinese* via the main character Jin Wang. The sense of alienation is created by Jin's teacher when she introduces Jin to the class since he is a new student. The teacher mangled Jin's name and his place of birth from San Francisco to China.<sup>33</sup> Yang's portrayal of Jin's experience highlights the impact of

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<sup>28</sup> Lee, *The Making of Asian America*, Chinese Immigrants in Search of Gold Mountain.

<sup>29</sup> Lee, *The Making of Asian America*, Good War, Cold War.

<sup>30</sup> Yung, *Unbound Feet*, In Step the War Tears, 1931-1945.

<sup>31</sup> Lee, *The Making of Asian America*, Good War, Cold War.

<sup>32</sup> Yung, *Unbound Feet*, In Step the War Tears, 1931-1945.

<sup>33</sup> Gene Luen Yang, *American Born Chinese* (New York: First Second, 2006), 30.

misrepresentation and cultural ignorance on second-generation Chinese Americans that results in creating an environment where Chinese Americans are separated from the majority group and, thus, the issues of alienation are deepened. The graphic novel is from the year 2006, therefore, it is crucial to indicate that these struggles of Chinese Americans are still accurate even after the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act. This statement is supported by Lee who mentioned that in contemporary America, Asian Americans have still not reached full equality in their lives. Asian Americans carry a continuously shifting social position between foreign and American. They are also being labelled as good Asians, based on the stereotype of the model minority, which is explained later in this thesis, and as unassimilated refugees, therefore bad Asians.<sup>34</sup> It indicates that Asian Americans have still not achieved a stable position in contemporary American society.

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<sup>34</sup> Lee, *The Making of Asian America*, Introduction.

## 2. ASIAN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Firstly, to ensure a better understanding of Asian American literature, it is quite necessary to mark the early beginnings of Asian American rhetoric and how the history of Asian immigration to the United States reflects on Asian American literature.

According to Elaine Kim, although some of the typically Asian caricatures, such as a sensuous dragon lady, a comical loyal servant, or the power-hungry despot, have been a part of popular culture for a long time,<sup>35</sup> the Asian original rhetoric would not be heard until the late 19th century, as Lawrence mentioned.<sup>36</sup> Lawrence continues that the term rhetoric is defined as the art of communication serving multiple purposes, for instance, to inform, narrate, persuade, or entertain, therefore, it is an important part of social, cultural, and political situations. Having access to sharing thoughts without censorship is an essential measure of personal and group rights in general.<sup>37</sup>

Throughout history, Lawrence explains that Asians, with their rhetoric, were under strict censorship by the Americans, namely by their laws, traditions, customs, and cultural norms.<sup>38</sup> The work used to be edited and restricted. Therefore, the voices of immigrants of Asian descent could not be heard properly in comparison to the majority group, the Americans.<sup>39</sup> Similar behaviour towards people of Asian descent could be perceived during the Central Pacific Railroad construction period when Asians had enough of the unequal environment that the majority group, together with the management, created for them. Some of them were already mentioned in the previous chapter, for instance, hateful environment and harsh working conditions. According to Lee, while Asians had to endure all of that, they were also working long hours for little pay. When the minority group raised their voices and organized a strike, the management shortened their food allocation even more and, thus, made the minority group surrender.<sup>40</sup> All of the information presented suggests that the history of Asian immigrants and the history of Asian American literature are interconnected. Asians faced numerous challenges in expressing themselves, sharing their own culture and developing identities due to limited rights, as they were viewed as unwanted immigrants by the majority group in the United States. According to Lawrence, the reason for Asians having limited rights was Americans' perception

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<sup>35</sup> Elaine Kim, *Asian American Literature* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2021), Images of Asians in Anglo-American Literature, <https://ereader.perlego.com/1/book/3292082/24>.

<sup>36</sup> Lawrence, *Asian American Literature*, Early Asian North American Rhetoric.

<sup>37</sup> Lawrence, *Asian American Literature*, Asian North American Rhetoric and Literary Criticism.

<sup>38</sup> Lawrence, *Asian American Literature*, Asian North American Rhetoric and Literary Criticism.

<sup>39</sup> Lawrence, *Asian American Literature*, Early Asian North American Rhetoric.

<sup>40</sup> Lee, *The Making of Asian America*, Chinese Immigrants in Search of Gold Mountain.

of Asians through oppressing stereotypes that inevitably induced fear and villainised Asian American identities.<sup>41</sup> It was quite challenging for Asian American rhetoric to be heard under these conditions. Stereotypes were shaping not only the immigrants' lives but also the culture they brought with them to the United States. They were not able to express themselves freely using literary devices therefore cultural exposure was limited too.

These unequal conditions continued until the first pioneer authors of Asian descent decided to migrate to the United States with the vision of finishing one of the American universities. According to Lawrence, the first pioneer authors would be Yung Wing and Yan Phou Lee who immigrated to the United States to study and graduate from Yale, determined to learn English and share their stories where they would describe and explain Chinese life and culture. Wing with his first novel called *When I was a Boy in China* published in 1887 is considered to be the first Asian who wrote an American book in English.<sup>42</sup> This could be marked as a milestone for the early Asian American rhetoric culture fighting against the censorship of the minority group.

As Lawrence further describes, Asian American rhetoric began to be recognized by society in the 1960s. However, the first attempt to recover the forgotten Asian American literature is dated to the 1970s when Frank Chin et al. published *Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Asian-American Writers*.<sup>43</sup> That is more than 20 years after the Repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act when the Chinese were allowed to enter the United States without any limitations, as discussed in the previous chapter. The reason for the mentioning of the issue of the United States legislation is that, according to Monica Chiu, the legislation influencing Asian immigrants throughout the United States history significantly affected the cultural and political relations between the Asian minority groups and the majority group. Under these conditions, Asian American literature was highly influenced, for instance, in terms of themes of the literary texts.<sup>44</sup> Lawrence mentions that some of the literary works consisted of themes such as racism, orientalism, and neocolonialism.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, Lawrence highlighted other themes that are reoccurring in Asian American texts, for instance, the topic of searching for one's identity, life in the Asian family and community, or social class differences.<sup>46</sup> The overall reason for

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<sup>41</sup> Lawrence, *Asian American Literature*, Asian North American Rhetoric and Literary Criticism.

<sup>42</sup> Lawrence, *Asian American Literature*, Early Asian North American Rhetoric.

<sup>43</sup> Lawrence, *Asian American Literature*, The Beginnings of Asian North American Literary Criticism.

<sup>44</sup> Monica Chiu, "Scrutinizing Impossible Subjects," in *Asian American Literature in Transition, 1965-1996*, ed. Asha Nadkarni, and Cathy J. Schlund-Vials (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), chapter 1, <https://ereader.perlego.com/1/book/4230160/45>.

<sup>45</sup> Lawrence, *Asian American Literature*, The Beginnings of Asian North American Literary Criticism.

<sup>46</sup> Lawrence, *Asian American Literature*, Asian North American Literary Themes.

mentioning these harsh beginnings for the authors of Asian descent is to show that the history of Asian immigration is closely interconnected to the literary field and how the cultural norms, legislation and issues like stereotypes limited people's voices, and thus showing that it was extremely challenging for Asians to be heard until the second half of the 20th century.

Moving to the period of the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, the time when the author Gene Luen Yang published the graphic novel *American Born Chinese* (2006), which is the topic of the analysis of this bachelor's thesis. Also, according to Karin Kukkonen, moving to the time when graphic novels started to gain significant momentum in terms of popularity.<sup>47</sup> As for the explanation of what graphic novels are, it is crucial to understand that there are many definitions. However, according to Kukkonen, "graphic novel is a publication format for comics [...], it generally refers to a comic which is published in its entirety, as opposed to serialized comic books."<sup>48</sup> Importantly, Michael Pagliaro described comics as: "a form of sequential art, [...], in which images and text are arranged to tell a story."<sup>49</sup> As for some examples of graphic novels Asian American authors other than Yang, Lawrence mentioned, for instance, Adrian Tomine, who is a Japanese American cartoonist and illustrator. Tomine mainly focuses on comics and his graphic novel *Shortcomings* (2007) explores the topic of interracial relationships.<sup>50</sup> Lawrence also includes Thi Bui in the group of Asian-American graphic novelists. Thi Bui is a Vietnamese American, and it is worth mentioning her debut graphic novel, *The Best We Could Do* (2017), which depicts the migration of Vietnamese refugees to the United States.<sup>51</sup> Last example of an Asian-American graphic novelist is Miné Okubo, highlighted by Lawrence. Miné Okubo was a Japanese American illustrator, artist, activist and writer, whose book *Citizen 13660* (1946) could be considered a pioneer of the now widely accepted and mainstream graphic novel genre. The book illustrates the issues of the imprisonment of Americans and residents of Japanese descent during the World War II.<sup>52</sup>

During the time when Yang's graphic novel was published, the topic of assimilation of Asian immigrants was a topic for extensive discussion. Moreover, probably even in the future it will stay as a broad topic for the society. As Gene Luen Yang stated in one of his interviews, in his graphic novel *American Born Chinese* he highlighted the issues of second-generation

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<sup>47</sup> Karin Kukkonen, *Studying Comics and Graphic Novels* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), Novels and Graphic Novels: Adaptations, <https://www.perlego.com/book/1002813>.

<sup>48</sup> Kukkonen, *Studying Comics and Graphic Novels*, Novels and Graphic Novels: Adaptations.

<sup>49</sup> Michael Pagliaro, "Is a Picture Worth a Thousand Words? Determining the Criteria for Graphic Novels with Literary Merit," *The English Journal* 103, no. 4 (March 2014): 33.

<sup>50</sup> Lawrence, *Asian American Literature*, Adrian Tomine.

<sup>51</sup> Lawrence, *Asian American Literature*, Thi Bui.

<sup>52</sup> Lawrence, *Asian American Literature*, Miné Okubo.

immigrants because he comes from the same environment as the main character he created. Like many other Asian immigrants, Yang grew up between two different cultures and his everyday struggles used to be the questions of how to fit into these two cultural norms together.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, Yang's graphic novel *American Born Chinese* was inspired by the life of a true second-generation immigrant. Moreover, this whole issue indicates that many other immigrants struggle with similar problems of assimilation as portrayed in the graphic novel. Therefore, it could be considered a crucial work in showing the issues of immigration.

Gene Luen Yang was not the only author who would discuss such serious topics of immigration around the period of the millennium. Lawrence mentions other authors who submitted to the topic of immigration issues, such as assimilation, racism, stereotypes or searching for the immigrant's identity. For instance, he would mention Maxine Hong Kingston. She, as a Chinese American, would raise some of the issues in her work *The Woman Warrior*. The text discovers Kingston's viewpoint of the second-generation Chinese American female identity and the diversity of cultures the immigrant woman had to live in.<sup>54</sup> Another Asian American writer who would discuss the topic of immigration and the struggles related to coming from different culture, mentioned by Lawrence, is Chang-rae Lee. In his novel *Native Speaker*, he describes the issues of assimilation, ethnic identity and stereotypes, such as Asians being perceived as the model minority.<sup>55</sup> The term model minority is further explained and analysed in the next chapter of this bachelor's thesis. The last example of an Asian American author that Lawrence mentioned is Le Thi Diem Thuy, who, in his novel *The Gangster We Are All Looking For*, depicts the experiences of a Vietnamese refugee in America, closely interconnected with the topics of ethnic identity and cultural difference.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Gene Luen Yang, "NEWSMAKER: GENE LUEN YANG," *American Libraries* 47, no. 5 (May 2016): 20.

<sup>54</sup> Lawrence, *Asian American Literature*, Maxine Hong Kingston.

<sup>55</sup> Lawrence, *Asian American Literature*, Chang-rae Lee.

<sup>56</sup> Lawrence, *Asian American Literature*, Lê Thị Diễm Thúy.

### 3. STEREOTYPES

As mentioned in the previous chapters, discrimination against Chinese immigrants in the United States is perceived as an indisputable part of Chinese immigrant history. With that said, it is crucial to discuss another social issue labelled as stereotypes that influence immigrants' lives. There are various definitions related to stereotypes, however, most of them share the same core. As James W. Rinehart indicates, stereotypes are closely incorporated into the issues of discrimination. Furthermore, he defined stereotypes as:

sets of beliefs, usually stated as categorical generalizations, that people hold about the members of their own and other groups. These beliefs are ordinarily oversimplified and seldom correspond with the objective facts.<sup>57</sup>

In addition to that, Pedro Bordalo et al. agreed with the fact that stereotypes “are rooted in the true differences between groups.”<sup>58</sup> To simplify, and for the purpose of this thesis, stereotypes are defined as general assumptions about social groups, therefore, the generalizations are usually based on facts about a certain group which are most of the times exaggerated and rare to be fully true. It is also necessary to highlight that, according to Cardwell, stereotypes are mainly negative but can also be positive.<sup>59</sup> Bordalo et al. further mention that stereotypes can be divided into racial stereotypes, political stereotypes, gender stereotypes, demographic stereotypes, and situational stereotypes. In their article, they mention some examples of these stereotypes. An example of a stereotype about political groups can be highlighted in: “Republicans are rich,” gender stereotypes: “Women are bad at math,” demographic stereotypes might include something like: “Florida residents are elderly,” situational stereotypes usually concern a topic which is happening in the present time. Lastly, an example of a stereotype of racial groups could carry a form like: “Asians are good at math.”<sup>60</sup> Understanding these categories of stereotypes and their examples is necessary for challenging and reducing biased thinking while helping to create a safe environment for every person regardless the race, political preference, gender, or demography. In this bachelor's thesis, the crucial point of the

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<sup>57</sup> James W. Rinehart. “The Meaning of Stereotypes,” *Theory Into Practice* 2, no 3. (June 1963): 137.

<sup>58</sup> Pedro Bordalo, Katherine Coffman, Nicola Gennaioli, and Andrei Shleifer, “Stereotypes,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 131, no 4. (2016): 1753.

<sup>59</sup> Mike Cardwell, *Dictionary of Psychology*, (Routledge, 2014), S, <https://ereader.perlego.com/1/book/1578615/25>.

<sup>60</sup> Bordalo et al., “Stereotypes,” 1753.

analysis is the racial stereotypes to reveal the challenging aspects of living as a Chinese American.

For the purpose of this thesis, it is quite crucial to define racial stereotypes in more detail. Racial stereotypes are deeply rooted in the term racism, because, according to Cardwell, the ideological definition of racism is: “the division of people into ‘racial’ categories and the accompanying attribution of invariant characteristics to all members of that category (i. e. [...] all Asians are...).”<sup>61</sup> Comparing the general definition of stereotypes mentioned above and the Cardwell’s definition of racism, they share similar aspects, such as the fact that the people from the majority group make assumptions about the people of ethnic groups and create certain characteristics that may lead to, as Cardwell continues, implying the social worth of the minority.<sup>62</sup> In other words, people of the majority group start discriminating against other ethnic groups based on their racial identity.

The Chinese people have a long history of experiencing discrimination and violence from the people of the majority group, the Americans, as described in the chapter Cultural-historical Context. Unfortunately, as Gene Luen Yang indicates in his graphic novel, stereotyping, and dehumanization of people from minority groups, in this case, the main target was the Chinese, continued to be one of the crucial issues even at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Yang portrayed this problem more than once in his book through the interactions between the main character, a Chinese immigrant of the second generation, Jin, and his classmates. For instance, when Jin and his parents moved to a new city, Jin had to enrol in a new school. On his first day, he was introduced by his teacher to his new classmates. After the introduction by the teacher, Timmy, portrayed as the class bully, raises his hand and makes a racist comment by saying: “My momma says Chinese people eat dogs.”<sup>63</sup> Then, later on, while mindlessly eating his lunch, Timmy said aggressively: “Hmph. Stay away from my dog.”<sup>64</sup> The fact that Timmy, crucial to say, who is still a child, mentioned momma in his statement, indicates that he has been influenced by his parents’ attitude towards Chinese immigrants. Based on such judgments by his parents, Timmy creates false assumptions about the Chinese and believes that the fact that they consume dogs is true. However, the issue is that he is probably not aware of him being the bully uttering dehumanizing comments based on a racial stereotype. Simply, he has been taught to react like this by the people who have the responsibility for the upbringing

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<sup>61</sup> Cardwell, *Dictionary of Psychology*, Racism.

<sup>62</sup> Cardwell, *Dictionary of Psychology*, Racism.

<sup>63</sup> Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 31.

<sup>64</sup> Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 32.

of their child. What is probably more crucial to discuss here is why Timmy's parents hold such negative opinions toward the Chinese Americans. According to the definition of stereotypes, such comments must have originated from some piece of truth. As Claire Huot mentioned, historically, it is true that dog meat has been consumed in China.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, based on the article by Q. Meng et al., even today, some dog food festivals still occur in the country, which are, in fact, being illegally organized in the underground trading in China.<sup>66</sup> It is necessary to understand that not all Chinese consume dog meat and not everybody accepts it. Also, while the consumption of dog meat is associated with certain areas of China and other Asian countries, according to the statistics discussed by Hans-Volker at ResearchGate, dog meat consumption rapidly increased during the war period in some European countries, such as Germany.<sup>67</sup> This shows that even a European country has had an experience with consuming dogs. Therefore, although this stereotype may have some basis in truth, it has been exaggerated and is often used by individuals of the majority group as a means of insulting the Chinese and other Asian ethnicities only, which could be perceived as a hypocritical act against the minority groups.

Further in the graphic novel's story by Yang, a special character arrives at the scene, Chin-kee, who flew all the way from China to the United States of America. He is related to Danny, Jin's new identity since Jin struggles with his identity as a Chinese American. Thus, Yang illustrates how acculturation affects an immigrant's individuality, as discussed in the Cultural-historical chapter of this thesis where the Asian immigrants struggled with the adaptation process. However, going back to the racial stereotypes, from the first moment Chin-kee arrives at Danny's home, he is portrayed as the stereotypical Chinese character who wears traditional Chinese attire (see Appendix A), as mentioned by Zhao. The traditional attire is known as tangzhuang, which is worn during formal occasions. It is also worth mentioning that this clothing style has been worn since the Tang Dynasty and it is an important part of the Chinese culture.<sup>68</sup> Thus, it illustrates the fact that this character of Chin-kee carries the typical portrayal of a Chinese person. Besides that, Chin-kee's eyes are illustrated as two thin lines which is a method how to portray a person of the Chinese identity in a very exaggerated way.

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<sup>65</sup> Claire Huot, "The Dog-Eared Dictionary: Human-Animal Alliance in Chinese Civilization," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 74, no. 3 (2015): 600.

<sup>66</sup> Q. Meng, R. Li, R. Hamer, Hongmin Dong, Xiuping Tao, Jiade Bai, Yanju Liu. et. al., "Cancel Yulin's Annual Dog Meat Festival," *Science* 353, no. 6304 (September 2016): 1107.

<sup>67</sup> "Zur Kynophagie in Mitteleuropa - Nachweise zur Hundeschlachtung in den preußischen Ländern und der Stadt Erfurt," ResearchGate, last modified February, 2014, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260383281\\_Zur\\_Kynophagie\\_in\\_Mitteleuropa-Nachweise\\_zur\\_Hundeschlachtung\\_in\\_den\\_preussischen\\_Ländern\\_und\\_der\\_Stadt\\_Erfurt](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260383281_Zur_Kynophagie_in_Mitteleuropa-Nachweise_zur_Hundeschlachtung_in_den_preussischen_Ländern_und_der_Stadt_Erfurt).

<sup>68</sup> Jianhua Zhao, *The Chinese Fashion Industry: An Ethnographic Approach* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 69.

As Chin-kee arrived at the house, his greetings sounded like: “Harro Amelliica!”<sup>69</sup> Further, he greets Danny and notices a beautiful girl sitting at the table who was there with Danny to study: “Such pletty Amellican girl wiff bountiful Amellican bosom! Must bind feet and bear Chin-kee’s children!”<sup>70</sup> It is necessary to discuss how the message was delivered, and also to focus on the content of the message. Chin-kee Chinese accent is depicted in every utterance he expresses. This way, Yang indicates another racial stereotype connected to the way people speak when they imitate Chinese people. Based on the definition of stereotypes, this racial stereotype also carries some of the truth. It is true that Chinese people usually have a strong accent when they speak English, in fact, D. He and Q. Zhang described that as China English.<sup>71</sup> However, some people might think that the Chinese cannot speak English properly, which is not true since it is just their accent that makes them sound inaccurate. According to Deterding, although there are millions of English learners in China, some of the features of pronunciation are quite problematic for Chinese English learners, perhaps because the Chinese do not focus on learning the pronunciation too much.<sup>72</sup> D. He and Q. Zhang also inclined to the fact that China English should stand on the same level as British English, American English, or other World Englishes.<sup>73</sup> Regarding this topic, Deterding also stated:

As an ever-expanding number of speakers of English in China become proficient in the language, it is likely that distinctive styles of Chinese English will continue to emerge, and one day a new variety may become established with its own independent identity<sup>74</sup>

This indicates that Chinese English is being considered as a possible variation of English pronunciation, however, it still requires further development. While this became a stereotype used by the people of majority groups to exaggerate the Chinese accent, they failed to realize that mocking the accent may be similar to mocking the Chinese culture. Based on the information provided above, Chinese English is part of the Chinese identity just like American English is the part of the American identity. Again, it has become a common stereotype that the Chinese pronounce the English words differently. However, this does not necessarily mean that

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<sup>69</sup> Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 48.

<sup>70</sup> Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 50.

<sup>71</sup> Deyuan He, and Quanying Zhang, “Native Speaker Norms and China English: From the Perspective of Learners and Teachers in China,” *TESOL Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (2010): 769.

<sup>72</sup> David Deterding, “The Pronunciation of English by Speakers from China,” *English World-Wide* 27, no. 2 (July 2006): 175.

<sup>73</sup> He, and Zhang, “Native Speaker Norms and China English: From the Perspective of Learners and Teachers in China,” 772.

<sup>74</sup> Deterding, “The pronunciation of English by speakers from China”, 195.

the Chinese are less educated in English. Therefore, other people should not mock the Chinese based on this misconception. It is necessary to recognize that this particular stereotype is not based on fact and people should be more respectful towards the Chinese who learn English to be able to communicate with other people from different countries.

Regarding the content of the message that Chin-kee expressed, it portrays examples of gender and cultural stereotypes. The reference to “Amellican girl wiff bountiful Amellican bosom”<sup>75</sup> is a clear example of an objectifying language that reduces women to their physical features, specifically their breasts in this context. The statement supports a culture that values women mainly for their physical appearance, contributing to the idea that women's worth is based on the ability to meet certain beauty standards. Continuing further with the statement: “must bind feet,”<sup>76</sup> the phrase refers to the painful practice of foot binding that was historically practised by women in China, as mentioned by Xiongya Gao.<sup>77</sup> This could be considered a cultural stereotype since it exaggerates and misrepresents Chinese culture. In the context of this graphic novel, these issues, such as the objectification of women, might serve a satirical purpose to highlight the absurdity and harm of stereotypes. It is possible that Yang exaggerated the statement with the intention of provoking a strong reaction in readers, making them reflect and recognize the damaging effects of stereotypes.

As the story of the graphic novel by Yang continues, the character of Chin-kee meets another stereotype of the Asian community. Yang portrayed Chin-kee's character as a model minority by having him complete the teachers' sentences, demonstrating his knowledge of the subject, even though the teachers had not asked any question. To show this topic on an example, during the history lesson, the teacher began with naming the three ships of Christopher Columbus while showing them on the board: “The Nina, the Pinta, and the-” and Chin-kee immediately reacted with: “-Santa Malia”<sup>78</sup> using the Chinese accent. Furthermore, while attending the literature class where the teacher was expressively reading a passage from Shakespeare: “O Romeo, Romeo!”, Chin-kee passionately followed with: “Wherefore art dou Lomeo?”<sup>79</sup> Chin-kee also showed his knowledge in the Spanish class when the teacher started: “En esta historia, el perro de José es-” and Chin-kee immediately finished his sentence: “-Branco y muy glande!” Jin attended all of these classes with him, and his facial expressions,

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<sup>75</sup> Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 50.

<sup>76</sup> Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 50.

<sup>77</sup> Xiongya Gao, “Women Existing for Men: Confucianism and Social Injustice against Women in China,” *Race, Gender & Class* 10, no. 3 (2003): 114.

<sup>78</sup> Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 112.

<sup>79</sup> Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 119.

when Chin-kee interrupted the classes with his unnecessary but passionate answers illustrated embarrassment (see Appendix B).<sup>80</sup> By this exaggerated way Yang highlighted another stereotype of the Chinese, as mentioned above, the model minority. As Stacey J. Lee defined, a model minority is a stereotypical perception of Asian Americans who work hard and, therefore, are successful in education because their culture believes in the importance of education. Moreover, the term model minority is mainly connected with the Asian community who voluntarily came to the United States, the Asian Americans, to seek work and other opportunities in order to live a better life. That is because these Asian minorities tend to be successful at school since they perceive education as a necessary way how to achieve social mobility. Furthermore, their vision of overcoming the language barriers and cultural differences is a step toward how to succeed in the United States, and perhaps, be accepted by the majority group.<sup>81</sup> It is crucial to analyse the influence of this stereotype on an individual's life. While this stereotypical term might seem like a positive perception of the minority, it consists of negative aspects that may have an impact on the quality of an individual's life. Firstly, as mentioned in the definition of a stereotype above, generalization is one of the issues that comes with stereotypes, therefore, it might be perceived as one of the negative aspects. Every Asian American is an individual who has their own identity. Therefore, by stating that Asian Americans are the model minority people refuse their individuality. Secondly, the term model minority oversimplifies the hard work of the minority group to assimilate within the American community, as mentioned before by Lee. Furthermore, it ignores the barriers that the minority group has to face, for instance, differences between the cultures of the minority and majority group, namely the language barrier or the way of living. Finally, this stereotype may create divisions and hatred between minority groups. Based on the article by Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, the particular reason for the circumstance is that, generally, only people of Asian descent are considered as the model minority. That is because, historically, Asian Americans have been more successful in education and whose income attainments surpassed the majority group.<sup>82</sup> Therefore, this fact could lead to discrimination between other minority groups that are not of Asian descent, since using the term model minority leaves a perception of Asian Americans as a superior minority. As Wu continues: "the 'model minority' was a form of racialization that

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<sup>80</sup> Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 113.

<sup>81</sup> Stacey J. Lee, "Behind the Model-Minority Stereotype: Voices of High- and Low- Achieving Asian American Students," *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (December 1994): 413.

<sup>82</sup> Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, "The Origins of the Model Minority," review of *The Good Immigrants: How the Yellow Peril Became the Model Minority*, by Madeline Y. Hsu, and *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority*, by Ellen D. Wu, *Journal of American Ethnic History* 36, no. 2 (Winter 2017): 99.

presented a selective portrayal of Asian Americans and served broader political purposes.”<sup>83</sup> As mentioned in the cultural-historical overview of this thesis, the label good Asians refers to the term model minority. However, as discussed above, it creates a competitive environment between not only the Americans and the Chinese but also between the other minorities themselves. Thus, a sense of inequality is even broadened.

Last of the stereotypes portrayed in the graphic novel by Yang would contain a quite recently discussed topic, the SARS virus. In the graphic novel, when Danny finds Chin-kee in the library singing on the table and showing unacceptable behaviour that simply violates the general rules of the library, Danny passes by two students who look very concerned. He overhears them talking when one of the two students is complaining: “His spit got on me!”<sup>84</sup> The student was speaking about Chin-kee since a reader could see Chin-kee spitting everywhere when he was performing, violating the rules of the library (see Appendix C).<sup>85</sup> The other student immediately reacted with: “Dude, you’d better go get checked out for S.A.R.S.!”<sup>86</sup> Since the graphic novel was published in 2006, it is obvious that the author did not speak about the SARS virus spread in 2020. However, there was also another SARS virus outbreak in the history which occurred mainly in 2003, as the World Health Organization reported.<sup>87</sup> Since this virus disease, called as severe acute respiratory syndrome, originated in southern China, based on the information provided by the World Health Organization,<sup>88</sup> the Chinese have been associated with the stereotype of being the carrier of terrible diseases, as Yang portrayed in the graphic novel via the reactions on Chin-kee spitting while singing. The quite recent outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, classified as SARS by the World Health Organization, which originated in a Chinese city called Wuhan City,<sup>89</sup> also perpetuated the stereotypical perception of the Chinese as the disease carriers. This stigmatization of Chinese people has a significant impact on the Chinese culture and the Chinese themselves. Some individuals wrongly associate SARS with Chinese culture and hygiene practices, developing it into a stereotype about uncleanliness and, thus, the Chinese being disease carriers. However, Zhou Xun basically denies the fact that the Chinese have an unhygienic culture. Xun mentions the popular advertisements from the 20<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Wu, “The Origins of the Model Minority,” 99.

<sup>84</sup> Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 202.

<sup>85</sup> Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 203.

<sup>86</sup> Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 202.

<sup>87</sup> World Health Organization, “SARS Chronology,” *SARS: How a Global Epidemic Was Stopped*, (January 2006): 5.

<sup>88</sup> World Health Organization, “SARS Chronology,” 3.

<sup>89</sup> World Health Organization, “Origin of SARS-CoV-2,” *World Health Organization*, (March 2020): 1.

century about hygienic products as the necessity for a healthy and beautiful body,<sup>90</sup> meaning that the Chinese were thoughtful about their health and well-being even before the outbreaks of the SARS viruses. The stereotype of the Chinese having terrible hygienic habits is probably based on the general fact mentioned by Shang-Jen Li that people having hygiene issues are usually the ones in some kind of social and economic crisis.<sup>91</sup> Therefore, people being unhygienic has nothing to do with the fact that they are of Chinese descent, but it usually originates from people's social and economic status. People stereotype the Chinese as unhygienic because they are of Chinese descent, not considering that some of them might face an economic crisis. Thus, they cannot afford basic hygienic necessities. Furthermore, the World Health Organization mentioned that both SARS diseases from 2003 and 2020 have a natural animal origin. Moreover, the virus has most probably originated from bats.<sup>92</sup> This creates a connection with one of the stereotypes mentioned above that the Chinese eat dogs and other animals that are not considered usual to consume by other cultures. Thus, people might carry the opinion that when Chinese consume dog meat, they consume wildlife animals, such as bats. However, A. Zapatero Gaviria and R. Barba Martin mention that even 3 years later scientists do not fully know the origin of COVID-19. The main transmitter of the disease is indeed bats. However, it is suggested that people could get infected by their domestic animals to which the virus could transmit.<sup>93</sup> Therefore, it is quite unfair to state and stereotype the Chinese as disease carriers based on these probably unfortunate events. Furthermore, it is necessary to highlight the potential impact of this stereotype on Chinese people's lives. The issue with this stereotype might be that people become xenophobic towards the Chinese. Cardwell defined xenophobia as: "a fear of strangers or strange places, although it is popularly recognized as a fear of foreigners."<sup>94</sup> Yang portrays this issue in his novel via the reactions of others to Chin-kee's spit, as mentioned before. Since it is a graphic novel, a reader can see the facial expressions of the people around Chin-kee (see Appendix C and D). Yang does not explicitly show the xenophobic behaviour, since people around are most likely more concerned about Chin-kee's unacceptable

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<sup>90</sup> Zhou Xun, "Beauty and Health: Images of Health and Illness from 20<sup>th</sup>-Century China," in *Imagining Chinese Medicine*, ed. Vivienne Lo, Penelope Barrett, David Dear, Lu Di, Lois Reynolds, and Dolly Yang (Boston: Brill, 2018), 489.

<sup>91</sup> Shang-Jen Li, "Discovering 'The Secrets of Long and Healthy Life': John Dudgeon on Chinese Hygiene," *Social History of Medicine* 23, no. 1 (3 November 2009): 33.

<sup>92</sup> World Health Organization, "Origin of SARS-CoV-2," 2.

<sup>93</sup> A. Zapatero Gaviria, and R. Barba Martin, "What do we know about the origin of COVID-19 three years later?" *Revista Clínica Española* 223, no. 4 (April 2023): 241.

<sup>94</sup> Cardwell, *Dictionary of Psychology*, Xenophobia.

behaviour than him being the Chinese. However, this might be another exaggeration created by the author to illustrate the issues of being a foreigner in the United States.

The way how Yang depicts all of the stereotypes, such as the stereotype of the model minority, the Chinese being disease carriers, a stereotype about eating dogs, or the Chinese being uneducated in the English language, creates a challenge among readers to critically reflect on the effect of these stereotypes and their shaping of the perception of the Chinese community in the United States. Yang highlighted the Chinese stereotypes by creating exaggerated situations or through characters' behaviour. Moreover, he illustrated the situations and characters as humorous for the readers while providing thought-provoking points about Chinese stereotypes and their influence on an individual of Chinese descent. As it is a graphic novel, it is not too difficult to comprehend and visualize the situations thanks to simple illustrations throughout the whole graphic novel. Therefore, the work could be suitable for children or people having trouble with reading comprehension. Thus, they could be educated on the topic of Chinese stereotypes and elaborate on the issues connected with the topic in the Chinese immigrant community. By educating people on this topic and making them understand an immigrant's situation, society could avoid the problems connected with making assumptions about the other race, thus, creating a xenophobic environment that usually contributes to the hatred against immigrants and other races. Since Yang is a second-generation Chinese immigrant who had to endure the challenges of being born into a multicultural environment, as mentioned in the previous chapter, it could be said that the situations depicted in the graphic novel are authentic from his own experience. This indicates that Chinese Americans are still considered to be more foreigners than true US citizens with roots in a different culture.

## 4. PREJUDICE

Another term that is the focus of the analysis in this thesis is prejudice. Many people might believe that this term is probably the same in meaning as the term stereotype, mentioned in the previous chapter. Therefore, for the beginning of this chapter, it is necessary to explain the main difference between prejudice and stereotypes, moreover, define the term prejudice and continue with the analysis of prejudice in the graphic novel *American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang. In other words, provide analysis that highlights the examples of the behaviour classified as prejudice, and how this behaviour may influence the lives of individuals of Chinese descent.

According to Cardwell, prejudice is often perpetuated through the use of stereotypes, so they are closely related concepts. Therefore, it is necessary to show the difference between these two concepts. Cardwell stated that prejudice is considered as a mainly negative attitude towards a person or a minority group, whereas stereotypes are more about the beliefs “that all members of a particular group share the same characteristics.”<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, he defines prejudice as: “prejudgements that are resistant to reversal when exposed to contradictory knowledge. Prejudice involves more than just having preconceived ideas about another person or group – it involves forming an evaluation of them.”<sup>96</sup> In addition to that, Rinehart defined prejudice more as “a feeling of hostility toward the members of racial, nationality, and ethnic groups,” and continued with an agreement to the definition from Cardwell that stereotypes are sets of beliefs about the members of these groups.<sup>97</sup> Cardwell also mentioned that people often confuse discrimination with prejudice. However, discrimination is more related to a certain negative behaviour only, whereas prejudice is defined as an attitude that can be not only negative, but also positive, or neutral.<sup>98</sup> For instance, people may carry prejudices, however, those biases may not necessarily influence people’s actions towards the subjects of the prejudice.<sup>99</sup> Regarding discrimination, Cardwell indicates that discriminatory behaviour can be related to attitudes as a product of prejudice.<sup>100</sup> To simplify, for the purpose of this thesis, the definition of prejudice refers to preconceived, usually negative, attitude, opinions, or feelings toward minority groups or their members. In other words, prejudice involves prejudgements with no evidence or a fact, unlike stereotypes which are usually based on a piece of truth, as mentioned in the previous chapter. Moreover, discrimination can be perceived as one of the products of prejudice,

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<sup>95</sup> Cardwell, *Dictionary of Psychology*, Prejudice.

<sup>96</sup> Cardwell, *Dictionary of Psychology*, Prejudice.

<sup>97</sup> Rinehart, “The Meaning of Stereotypes,” 136.

<sup>98</sup> Cardwell, *Dictionary of Psychology*, Attitude.

<sup>99</sup> Cardwell, *Dictionary of Psychology*, Prejudice.

<sup>100</sup> Cardwell, *Dictionary of Psychology*, Discrimination.

however, people who carry a prejudiced attitude do not have to necessarily be impacted by the prejudice towards the prejudiced subject. Therefore, they may carry prejudiced opinions, but they do not change their behaviour towards the target of the prejudice.

Yang in his graphic novel *American Born Chinese* opens the topic of prejudice in many situations that the main character Jin and the others go through. The first of these situations is related to an interconnected story about the Monkey King, according to Keith Lawrence, a legendary figure from Chinese mythology,<sup>101</sup> who desires respect from the other gods in the celestial realm. However, the Monkey King was rejected by the gods because of his status as a monkey. Those who rejected him behaved based on their prejudice towards monkeys, for instance, they disrespected and did not accept the Monkey King's culture and called him: "You may be a king [...] but you are still a monkey,"<sup>102</sup> showing they simply do not care, and act based on their negative attitude towards monkeys. Despite this, the Monkey King, full of ambition, begins a long and challenging journey full of obstacles to prove his worth to the gods. Throughout his journey, he learns crucial lessons about self-acceptance, humility, and the necessity to appreciate one's true identity. Although the Monkey King's story is not depicted literally in the real world, it can be interpreted as a metaphor for the prejudice and challenges faced by the Chinese who immigrated to the United States. The Monkey King's struggles with the recognition, respect, and prejudiced behaviour of others illustrate the issues that Chinese immigrants have to endure. The Monkey King had to face the problem of discrimination when the gods did not let him enter the dinner party due to his different culture of not wearing shoes like the others. Based on this, the gods probably prejudiced that the Monkey King was not knowledgeable of hygiene practices. Therefore, they insisted on not letting him in, while completely ignoring his broad knowledge of the arts of kung-fu, in other words, his worthiness and individuality. However, the Monkey King does not wear any shoes because of his culture of being a monkey, in other words, for the Monkey King, it is a normal aspect of his everyday attire. Similarly, later in the story, the god prejudiced the Monkey King's hygiene practices by commenting: "None of the gods wanted to go anywhere near your mountain," speaking of the Monkey King's home. Then, the god continued: "Nothing personal - we just aren't particularly fond of fleas."<sup>103</sup> The god, without any evidence of the Monkey King having issues with fleas, made him think and, therefore, prejudice the fact that he, as a monkey, has problems with fleas. This behaviour toward the Monkey King made the Monkey King question his culture and made

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<sup>101</sup> Lawrence, *Asian American Literature*, Gene Luen Yang.

<sup>102</sup> Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 15.

<sup>103</sup> Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 62.

him consider adapting to the others. This whole concluding process is indicated by the narrator when the Monkey King arrives back home from the dinner party: “the thick smell of monkey fur greeted him. He’d never noticed it before. He stayed awake for the rest of the night thinking of ways to get rid of it.”<sup>104</sup> This shows that something that was closely connected to his culture, since he did not even notice it before, is now the centre of doubts and questions about why he is perceived as different and unequal to other species. Based on his previous experience related to prejudice by the gods, he decided to change and adapt so nobody could judge him anymore, therefore he could gain recognition and respect among the gods. The next day, the Monkey King ordered that every monkey had to wear shoes. Thus, the Monkey King started the adapting journey full of obstacles. Determined more than ever, he began his education in very difficult disciplines to gain recognition from the gods.

As mentioned before, the story of the Monkey King is a metaphoric interpretation of the life of Chinese immigrants, the issues they have to endure, and the adaptation process they are indirectly forced to go through by the dominant culture. Many of these aspects are apparent in the Cultural-historical chapter where the Chinese had to endure discriminatory behaviour mainly based on prejudice. The way how Yang portrays the mentioned problems using the Monkey King character and a simple story makes the meaning of the issues quite hidden. Simply reading the Monkey King’s story does not probably make the reader foresee the hidden meaning of prejudice and discrimination. However, the connection between the storylines of Jin, a second-generation Chinese American student in the United States, and the Monkey King creates an idea of the presumable purpose of the story, which is to inform the readers on the topic of immigration and the issues related to that.

The next issue connected to prejudice that is necessary to discuss is the problem of racial taunting and bullying which is quite apparent in the graphic novel by Yang. There are several examples of the attitude based on the prejudice of Americans toward the main character, Jin, a second-generation Chinese immigrant. One of the examples would be when Jin moved to a new city, therefore, he had to attend a new school. The day he went to school for the first time, Jin was introduced by his teacher: “Class, I’d like us all to give a warm Mayflower elementary welcome to your new friend and classmate Jing Jang!”<sup>105</sup> However, as it may be quite apparent, Jing Jang is not Jin's name. The reason for the teacher mispronouncing Jin's name might be from the lack of knowledge about her new student while unconsciously showing her quite

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<sup>104</sup> Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 20.

<sup>105</sup> Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 30.

ignorant attitude towards a new student from a different culture. It is necessary to highlight why the teacher mangled Jin Wang's name to Jing Jang. The name the teacher used is similar to a concept called Yin and Yang which is very important in indigenous Chinese philosophy, as Minli Nie mentioned.<sup>106</sup> Therefore, the teacher connected this concept to her new student, however, this act shows racial insensitivity and ignorance toward the main character. It indicates the lack of awareness of her new student's culture or the disrespect for Jin's identity and background. By consistently mispronouncing Jin's name, the teacher perpetuates a sense of alienation making Jin's assimilation to his new school environment much harder. The behaviour of the teacher constantly mispronouncing the main character's name could be related to behaviour based on prejudice. According to the definition of prejudice mentioned above, the teacher's behaviour indicates a dismissive attitude toward Jin's Chinese heritage and an unwillingness to respect cultural diversity in her class. Another example that could prove what was said before is that the teacher then made false assumptions about Jin that he moved all the way from China: "He and his family recently moved to our neighborhood all the way from China!"<sup>107</sup> Little did she know that Jin is a second-generation Chinese American, meaning he was born in the United States, as Henry G. Schermers explained this term.<sup>108</sup> Jin immediately corrected his teacher that he had moved from San Francisco while expressing his emotions with a disappointed face.<sup>109</sup> Later in the story, a different teacher does the same to a different new student of Chinese descent, Wei-Chen Sun. The teacher again mispronounced the student's name and created a false assumption about where the student moved from, making it difficult for another student to assimilate in a new school environment.<sup>110</sup> These situations and illustrations show that the teachers create these misunderstandings with no intention to harm anybody. However, they unconsciously create biases of their cultural norms and fail to recognize and respect other cultures. Moreover, this indicates that many people may create prejudiced attitudes toward a minority group unconsciously and, thus, create an unfriendly environment that makes it challenging for the people of a minority group to assimilate within the majority group and gives them a sense of alienation.

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<sup>106</sup> Minli Nie, "Yin and Yang, and the Hot and the Cold," *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 11, no. 1 (March 2016): 73.

<sup>107</sup> Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 30.

<sup>108</sup> Henry G. Schermers, "The Second Generation of Immigrants," *Michigan Law Review* 82, no. 5/6 (May, 1984): 1415.

<sup>109</sup> Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 30.

<sup>110</sup> Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 36.

Another example of the prejudice of the majority group toward Jin is the appearance of micro-aggressive situations where Jin and his culture become the main targets. For instance, while Jin was eating his lunch during a lunch break on the school playground, Timmy, the class bully mentioned in the chapter about stereotypes, and his friends arrived at the table where Jin was consuming his lunch. Jin was eating dumplings, which are a Chinese traditional meal boiled, steamed, or fried with usually pork and vegetable stuffing, as Junru Liu mentioned.<sup>111</sup> When Timmy sees what Jin is consuming, Timmy immediately begins to speak: “What the hell is that?!” “Dumplings,” Jin answers while Timmy is sniffing his meal because he has never seen such a meal before. Then, Timmy continues: “Hmph. Stay away from my dog.”<sup>112</sup> After a little conversation where Jin did not utter anything because he was enjoying his lunch, Timmy and his group left with the words: “Come on. Let's leave Bucktooth alone so he can enjoy Lassie.”<sup>113</sup> As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, prejudice is an interconnected concept with stereotypes, which means that the prejudiced attitude usually appears with stereotypes. In this situation, Timmy is not familiar with the food from different cultures. Therefore, he prejudices, based on the stereotype he knows from his parents, as mentioned in the chapter *Stereotypes*, that Jin is eating a dog or something disgusting, based on the reaction of Timmy. The prejudice created a negative attitude in Timmy, therefore, at the end of the conversation, he pointed out the name Lassie which is probably referenced as the dog from the well-known American story *Lassie Come-Home* by Eric Knight. At that moment, Jin did not respond to anything Timmy said, moreover, he sat quietly and consumed his food, appearing like he felt neutral with what Timmy expressed. However, throughout the story, the reader can notice that Jin has been indeed affected by this behaviour towards him. Three months later, Jin was consuming his lunch again, but now he did not have anything Chinese traditional for his meal, Jin was enjoying his ordinary sandwich<sup>114</sup>. Thus, Yang portrayed the impact of negative prejudice behaviour on the individuals of a minority group. Jin may have adapted to his new environment by having a typical American lunch so as not to attract too much attention to himself as a foreigner. This means that he is probably trying to distance himself from his origins and culture to avoid uncomfortable situations based on prejudice.

Another example of the avoidance of Jin's culture is probably the situation when Wei-Chen, a new student of Chinese descent who arrived at his new school about five months later

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<sup>111</sup> Junru Liu, *Chinese Food*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 46.

<sup>112</sup> Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 32.

<sup>113</sup> Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 33.

<sup>114</sup> Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 34.

from Jin's arrival, approached Jin when he was consuming his lunch. Wei-Chen began to speak to Jin in Chinese language: "Sorry to bother you, but you're Chinese, aren't you?" Jin immediately answered: "You're in America. Speak English."<sup>115</sup> Wei-Chen seemed quite surprised by Jin's answer and nervous when he tried to speak English, however, although Wei-Chen's knowledge of English was not too broad, he tried to repeat the same sentence he said in Chinese: "...You- you- Chinese person?" showing that it is indeed a challenge for Wei-Chen to speak English. Jin responded: "Yes."<sup>116</sup> At first it seemed that Jin was simply trying to avoid his own culture not to stand out. However, in this situation, Wei-Chen probably reminded Jin of his first days in the new environment, therefore, Jin wanted to indirectly help him, so Wei-Chen does not have to endure the same behaviour from others as Jin. Based on Jin's answer to the question of Wei-Chen, whether he is a Chinese person, it is quite apparent that Jin does not avoid his Chinese identity fully, moreover, he is simply helping Wei-Chen to adapt as quickly as possible, so he is protected from all the disrespecting behaviour Jin had to endure based on prejudice and stereotypes. On the other hand, Wei-Chen probably approached Jin first for the reason that they share the same culture, therefore, Wei-Chen felt that Jin could understand his situation of being a new student from a different culture best. Later in the story, when Wei-Chen is stuck in a storage room with his classmate, Wei-Chen explains his struggles of being a new student from a different culture and highlights how Jin indeed helped him adapt to the American cultural norms. Wei-Chen appreciated the fact that thanks to Jin he did not feel lonely.<sup>117</sup> Therefore, this supports the analysis of the previous situation of Jin helping Wei-Chen to adapt.

A behaviour based on prejudice toward people of a minority group carries a negative influence on the minority. As portrayed by Yang in his graphic novel, the behaviour can lead to microaggression originating in the majority group which is depicted in the situation of Jin consuming his lunch on the school's playground, as mentioned above. Furthermore, Yang indicates the issues of social exclusion through the main character Jin. Throughout the story, he is often depicted in the situation of being excluded from activities, such as on the playground where the other children are taking part in many entertaining games, for instance, the game of Hopscotch or Swingball, while Jin is sitting there alone.<sup>118</sup> However, it is essential to discuss the question of whether he was rejected by the children participating in the games, or whether he just decided not to participate. It is not fully clear from the story whether Jin decided not to

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<sup>115</sup> Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 37.

<sup>116</sup> Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 37.

<sup>117</sup> Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 102.

<sup>118</sup> Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 32.

play himself or not. In the graphic novel, there is no conversation between the main character and other characters about this topic. Jin is simply illustrated sitting alone with no further explanation given. It may be also possible that Jin was not familiar with any of the games the children were playing, as he comes from a different culture where children are used to playing other games. Moreover, based on the negative behaviour of his peers toward him, he probably decided not to even ask whether he could join them, therefore, it indirectly led him to social exclusion, as mentioned before. According to Jin's experience, social exclusion is another social issue that immigrants might endure while assimilating to their new environment. Immigrants may prefer to distance themselves because of the negative experiences with the majority group that may behave based on their attitudes related to prejudice of the minority group.

Throughout the whole graphic novel, the impact of prejudice on individuals of Chinese descent, Jin and Wei-Chen, is undeniable. It shows the fact how challenging it may be for immigrants to be respected as equals and not discriminated against or even bullied based on their origin. Although Jin is a second-generation immigrant, in other words, he was born in the United States, he was still perceived as a foreigner because of his cultural differences. Negative attitudes of prejudice toward him made him suppress his own culture and adapt to the American norms. Jin is not portrayed as if he is ashamed of his origin, however, the circumstances led him to the avoidance of his culture. Furthermore, some of the comments, such as those stated by the teachers while mispronouncing Jin's and Wei-Chen's names, may indirectly create a sense of alienation. It is crucial to address the cultural insensitivity and lack of understanding that the teachers showed toward their new students. This can contribute to the development of prejudice and lead to harmful situations that may influence the individuals of the minority group. Reading the graphic novel by Yang may be a valuable opportunity to learn about the issues of immigrant life. Moreover, education may be an essential step for helping the majority group to understand and support the immigrant community, making their lives less challenging.

## CONCLUSION

This bachelor's thesis explored the issues of Asian American immigration to the United States, the legislation that limited the freedom of these people and the behaviour of the majority group, Americans, towards the Asian minority groups. Due to these problems, Asian Americans were discriminated, and thus, they were challenged by the environment to adapt. It could also be said that the people of Asian descent were forced to adapt since when they insisted on getting better conditions, those requests were rejected, and the majority group made the environment even harder for Asian Americans. However, it is crucial to say that Americans behaved this way because of the uncertainty and doubts. Americans were afraid of Asian immigrants who would steal their jobs. That is because the bosses preferred hiring Asians since they cost less money. However, that was part of the discrimination that Asian Americans had to face, being paid less for large amounts of work with minimal food allocation.

Furthermore, the main focus of this bachelor thesis was the analysis of the graphic novel *American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang. The analysis focused on examples of stereotypes and prejudice towards the Chinese. Yang portrayed the examples via the main character Jin Wang, a second-generation Chinese American, his classmates, the Monkey King, and the stereotypical portrayal of the Chinese, Chin-kee. The analysis showed that even after the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943 when the Chinese started to be more appreciated by the majority group, they still had to endure challenging situations based on racial stereotypes and prejudice. Based on the stereotypes in the graphic novel, the Chinese are portrayed as the model minority while being uneducated in the English language, unhygienic disease carriers and consumers of dog meat. The main issue analysed might be the fact that some of the stereotypes are taught by children's parents. The example would be when Jin's classmate Timmy, was taught to believe that the stereotype of the Chinese eating dogs was true by his own parents. Timmy, as a child, was basically pre-programmed by his parents to believe that. Therefore, based on the analysis, this issue goes from generation to generation. Although the legislation does not limit Asian Americans anymore, due to deeply rooted beliefs about Asians and the sharing of opinions from generation to generation, this problem of racial discrimination based on stereotypes and prejudice might continue further.

While analysing the examples of prejudice in the graphic novel, they were mainly illustrated via the Monkey King. Although the Monkey King was not portrayed as Chinese, the analysis showed that Yang used this character as a metaphor for showing the struggles of Chinese immigrants in the United States. The Monkey King was discriminated based on his

culture and origin by the gods in the celestial realm. Moreover, since he was not let into the dinner party organised by the gods, he was perceived as someone who did not belong to the majority group. Therefore, the Monkey King began with the adaptation process, so he could fit the other gods. A similar situation could be perceived in the situation that Jin, as a second-generation Chinese, had to endure. This perception of discrimination towards the minority group was also indicated in the cultural-historical part where the Chinese immigrants were perceived as inferior by the Americans.

Based on the analysis, racial stereotypes, prejudice, and discriminatory behaviour lead to a negative influence on the lives of Chinese Americans. As a result of these issues, the Chinese feel a sense of alienation, in other words, they might feel like they do not belong to the American society even though they might consider themselves as US citizens. Furthermore, they also tend to avoid their own culture in order to evade uncomfortable situations, such as being prejudiced based on race. Yang portrays all of the issues connected to stereotypes in a humorous, satirical or exaggerated way to attract the reader to the situation. Yang by presenting such outrageous and sometimes exaggerated stereotypes and prejudice, intends to provoke strong reactions in readers, encouraging them to reflect on such crucial issues.

According to this bachelor's thesis, since discrimination, stereotyping, and prejudice have not ceased, it might be essential to find a possible solution to eliminate this behaviour. As said before, the crucial issue is that this behaviour, beliefs, and attitude are usually taught from generation to generation. For this particular reason, it is essential for people to be educated on this topic, especially for children. They should receive proper education on this topic so that the history of inequality and racial discrimination against Asian Americans does not persist. However, this topic requires further studies.

## RESUMÉ

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá tématem stereotypů a předsudků Asiatů na základě analýzy grafického románu *Američan čínského původu* od autora Gene Luen Yang. Přestože čínská menšina byla po roce 1943, tedy po zrušení zákona o vyloučení čínských migrantů do Spojených Států, více oceňována většinovou skupinou, stále se Číňané potýkali se sociálními problémy, které mohly vést až k rasismu na základě stereotypů a předsudků. Cílem práce je zjistit, jakým způsobem ovlivňují stereotypy a předsudky životy asijských migrantů a dalších generací asijské společnosti, konkrétně tedy Číňanů. Autor primárního zdroje se řadí mezi druhou generaci čínských migrantů v Americe, což znamená, že se ve Spojených státech již narodil. Z toho vyplývá, že jeho vyobrazení zmíněných problémů v jeho grafickém románu umožní více autentické nahlédnutí do obyčejného života Američana, jenž byl narozem do čínské rodiny.

Tato práce se skládá z úvodu, kapitoly o kulturně historickém kontextu asijské menšiny ve Spojených Státech, dále obsahuje kapitolu o asijsko-americké literatuře, a poté následují dvě kapitoly zaměřené na analýzu stereotypů a předsudků v primárním textu, a nakonec samotný závěr práce.

První kapitola se řadí do teoretické části bakalářské práce, kde je nastíněn kulturně historický kontext. Zaměřuje se již na počátky migrace Asiatů do Spojených států a jejich důvody pro migraci, americkou legislativu, která ovlivňovala asijské migranty, hlavně Číňany, a dále se tato kapitola zabývá chováním Američanů vůči těmto migrantům a jak toto chování ovlivňovalo životy této menšiny v historickém kontextu. Konkrétněji tato kapitola také řeší jednotlivé migrační vlny asijských migrantů do Spojených Států, které definují celou migrační historii v USA. Asijské migranti byli v historii například nedílnou součástí pracovní síly při budování transkontinentální železnice. Avšak, při budování se tito asijské migranti museli potýkat problémy, jako jsou diskriminace, rasismus či nerovnoprávnost v podobě menších přidělů jídla či menšího finančního ohodnocení. Asiati byli známí jako levná pracovní síla, proto byli upřednostňováni před americkou pracovní silou. Co se týče legislativy, ta se odvíjela od čísel migrantů, kteří přicházeli do Spojených Států, dále na legislativu měl vliv strach, xenofobie a rasismus americké vlády vůči asijským menšinám.

Druhá kapitola zařazuje grafický román *Američan čínského původu* do kontextu asijsko-americké literatury. Kapitola začíná definicí asijsko-americké literatury a jejími počátky, kdy je kladen důraz na stěžejní díla asijsko-amerických autorů, které napomohly k formování asijsko-americké literatury. Ta je totiž je úzce propojena s historií asijsko-americké společnosti, kdy

snahy o dostání se do povědomí byly většinou zmařené cenzurou. Dále tato kapitola vyzdvihuje společná témata, o kterých autoři asijsko-americké literatury často mluví ve svých dílech. Nedá se zcela jednoznačně definovat témata, která by stoprocentně definovala asijsko-americkou literaturu, ovšem autoři často tvoří díla na podobná témata kvůli sdílené historii utlačování, cenzuře, rasismu nebo nerovnoprávnosti a kultuře. Následně tato kapitola zmiňuje příklady asijsko-amerických autorů a jejich díla, která se zabývají tématy ze života přistěhovalců a jejich problémy spojené s tím.

Následující kapitola první kapitola praktické části této bakalářské práce. Třetí kapitola se zabývá analýzou stereotypů čínsko-americké menšiny v grafickém románu *Američan čínského původu* od autora Gene Luen Yang. Na začátku kapitoly je objasněna definice stereotypů na základě, které se poté odvíjí samotná analýza jednotlivých příkladů stereotypů ve třech propojených příbězích hlavního hrdiny Jina Wanga, jeho spolužáků, a příbuzného Chin-kee. Jin Wang je Číňan, který se narodil v Americe, tudíž imigrant druhé generace. Yang ve svém díle poukazuje na problematiku toho, jaký je to být cizincem, i přesto, že tím cizincem vlastně daná osoba není. Yang pomocí postavy Jina vykresluje situace, které vedou k příhodám právě spojený s čínskými stereotypy. Jin se potýká s problémy diskriminace, ignorantství jeho kultury, či rasismem, které byly vytvořeny jeho spolužáky či dokonce i učiteli neboli dospělými lidmi. Yang pomocí tohoto příběhu popisuje, jakým způsobem ovlivňuje toto negativní prostředí život hlavního hrdiny. Hodně situací spojené se stereotypy představuje právě postava Chin-kee, který představuje přehnané vyobrazení čínských stereotypů. V příběhu se Chin-kee potýká se stereotypy Číňanů, jako jsou modelová menšina, přenašeči virových onemocnění nebo lidé bez vzdělání. Yang využívá velké nadsázky k tomu, aby čtenáře donutil zamyslet nad až kolikrát nesmyslným zněním některých stereotypů a jak to může ovlivnit jedincův život. V této kapitole jsou jednotlivé příklady stereotypů zařazeny do historického kontextu, odkud vlastně pochází a proč negativně ovlivňují životy daných jedinců. Je také řešena problematika, proč některé stereotypy stále přetrvávají a lidé si o těchto stereotypech myslí, že jsou to reálná fakta.

V poslední kapitole se této bakalářské práce se pokračuje s analýzou v grafickém románu *Američan čínského původu*. Analýza se konkrétně zaměřuje na příklady přesudků vůči Číňanům. Kapitola začíná definicí přesudků, a jelikož stereotypy a přesudky jsou často spojovány dohromady jakožto termíny, tak kapitola řeší i rozdíl mezi těmito dvěma termíny. Yang ve svém grafickém románu jednotlivé příklady přesudků představuje přes hrdinu, kterým je Opičí Král. Jedná se o postavu z čínského folkloru, tedy o tradiční postavu vyobrazovanou v různých tradičních čínských příbězích. Postava Opičího Krále představuje metaforické

zobrazení čínské menšiny, jelikož v průběhu příběhu prochází negativními situacemi, které jsou založeny na předsudcích vůči opicím. Metaforicky tak tedy nastiňuje problematiku žití jako imigrant v jiné zemi. Yang dále ve svém díle poukazuje na důsledky žití imigranta v takovém prostředí a jak je víceméně donucen změnit své chování a jaký to má vliv na jeho kulturní identitu.

Závěrem této bakalářské práce je zjištění, jakým způsobem ovlivňují stereotypy a předsudky život asijských migrantů, konkrétně Číňanů. Na základě analýzy grafického románu, Yang nepřímo poukazuje na to, jak život v takovém prostředí vede Jina k vyhýbání se čínské kultuře a kompletní změně identity. Podobně to Yang indikuje u postavy Opičího Krále, jenž představuje metaforické vyobrazení migranta, který čelí sociálním problémům jako diskriminace, ignorantství jiné kultury a nerovnoprávnost. Stejně jako Jin, i Opičí Král mění svoje chování a vzhled na základě předsudků a stereotypů. Sám se například vyhýbá své vlastní opičí kultuře stejně jako Jin té čínské. Yang tedy ve svém grafickém románu vyobrazuje dané stereotypy a předsudky pomocí metafor a nadsázky spojené s humorem. Yang také poukazuje na velmi důležitý problém se stereotypy, a to je přenášení těchto názorů z generace na generaci. Z obecného hlediska, asijsko-americká menšina stále bojuje s problémy spojený se stereotypy a předsudky, které dále negativně ovlivňují jejich životy a chování vůči své vlastní kultuře. Jsou takto nepřímo nuceni změnit svou kulturní identitu a přizpůsobit se tak většinové skupině ve společnosti.

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## APPENDIX

Appendix A – *American Born Chinese*, page 48

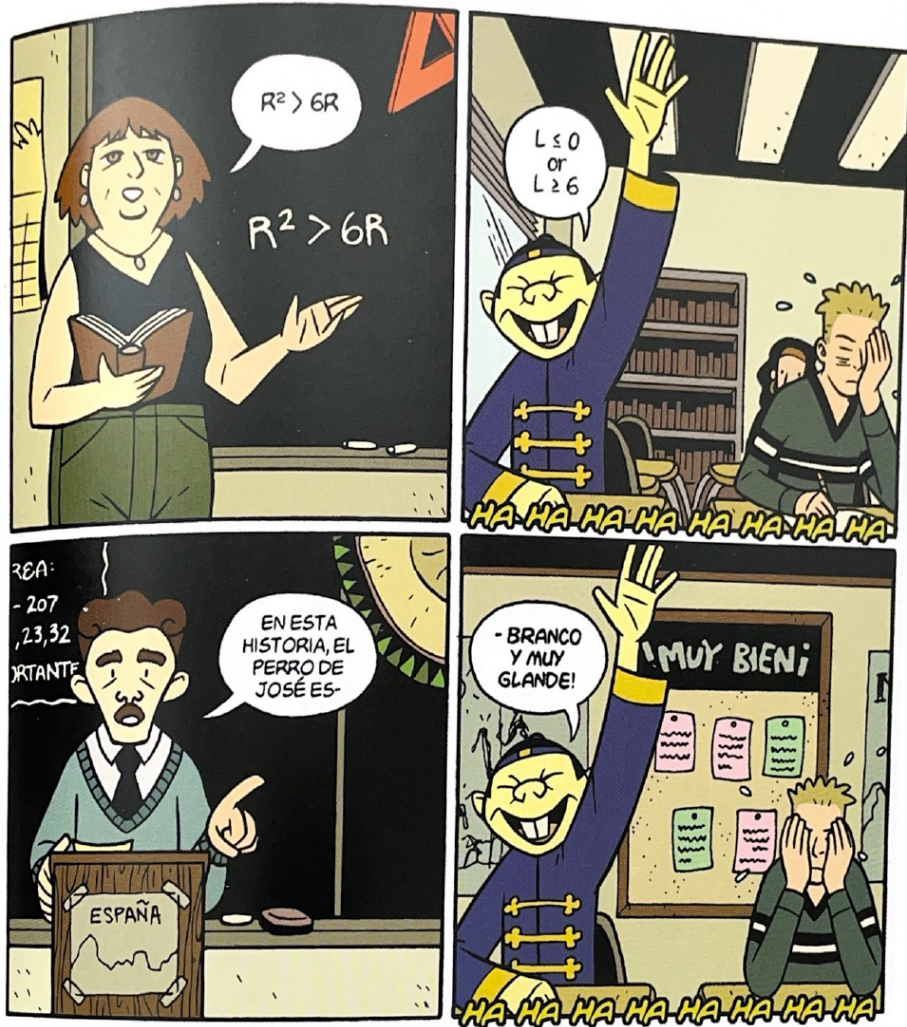
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<sup>119</sup> Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 48.



<sup>120</sup> Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 113.



<sup>121</sup> Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 203.



<sup>122</sup> Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 202.