

CULTURAL HYBRIDITY AND VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE
IMMIGRANT JOURNEY

by

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the visual representations of the immigrant journey from assimilation to community to hybridity. A sample of Asian-American and Asian-Australian picture books and graphic novels *Hannah Is My Name: A Young Immigrant's Story* (written and illustrated by Belle Yang), *The Arrival* (written and illustrated by Shaun Tan), and *American Born Chinese* (written and illustrated by Gene Luen Yang), were examined for an understanding of visual representations of the cultural hybrid identity of Asian immigrants to inform classroom practice. This literary analysis is framed by five areas of scholarship: the power of picture books for young readers; Asian-American literary theory; perspectives on multicultural literature; the move from multicultural literary theory to postcolonial theory; and in particular Bhabha's postcolonial theory of cultural hybridity. The analysis concludes that the immigrant journey moves from assimilation to community to resistance, resulting in the most current representation of the Asian immigrant as negotiating a culturally hybrid identity.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Origins of Interest

As a second generation Chinese-Canadian, I have always been plagued with the question “Where are you from?” When I answer I was born in Canada, I get a blank stare followed by the second question “No, where are your parents from?” When I answer that they were also born in Canada, I get a second blank stare. Either the questioner gives up or he/she will ask “Where are your grandparents from?” When I answer that they were from China/ Hong Kong, the questioner is happy and states “So, you’re Chinese.” That’s when I state “No, I’m Chinese-Canadian.” I believe that this answer validates my nationality and ethnicity. After all, I was born and bred to be “Canadian”, a person from the country of multiculturalism and the country that celebrates diversity. Yet, to solely state that I’m “Canadian” almost seems like I am ashamed of my ethnicity or that I value the West over the East. I often wonder why I still need to hyphenate my identity since Canada is a land of diversity. By default, if Canada is so multicultural, shouldn’t being Canadian just automatically include all cultures and ethnicities? While I recognize the complexities in defining what the Canadian identity is, the question in defining my identity as Chinese-Canadian is one of the motivating factors in my literary analysis of the immigrant journey and identity in different literary works from Asian-American and Asian-Australian author/illustrators.

This question of the relationship between immigration and identity stems from the changing views of the immigrant identity. In my parents’ generation, as children of immigrants, their sole purpose was to be as “Canadian” as possible to the point of ignoring their own ethnicity and culture. They were encouraged to only speak English at

school and at home, to listen to Western music, and to watch Western television shows and movies. Yet, they still had to eat Chinese food, have Chinese cultural mannerisms, and go to Chinese school. Although my grandparents wanted to force assimilation into Canadian culture onto my parents, they still wanted to hold onto their Chinese identity and culture. Even in implementing assimilation, my grandparents felt tension with this method, but felt restricted in their options as immigrants. This attitude for raising children of immigrants changed for my generation as there was a sudden realization and fear of how these second-generation children were generally inept in speaking Chinese, let alone writing in Chinese, and lacked Chinese cultural customs and traditions. This shift in thinking is partially affected by China's change in status as a global power in the world, with many clamouring for business endeavours in China and the skill of speaking Mandarin Chinese. A second factor was the wave of immigrants from Hong Kong during the 1990's who stamped a stronger and more vocal Chinese cultural imprint onto Vancouver. However, I think the driving force is the global change in valuing cultural diversity. Instead of focussing on being a "melting pot," Canada has embraced the "mosaic" image of multiculturalism. As such, my generation, I believe, is trying to reclaim our ethnic history of being "Chinese" while still having a "Canadian" national identity. The hyphenated "Chinese-Canadian" identity and the "CBC" (Canadian-born Chinese) identity are wrought with different definitions. For me, to be Chinese-Canadian represents the hybrid identity of children and grandchildren of immigrants who are Chinese by ethnicity with some Chinese cultural values and attitudes, but also some Canadian cultural values and attitudes as Canadian citizens. We have claimed that space between two cultures and chosen parts of each culture that suits us personally. To be a

“CBC” almost represents those who identify themselves as being a Chinese person who is geographically placed on Canadian soil, but who values and holds Chinese customs and values to a larger degree over Canadian customs and values.

While I conduct my literary analysis on immigrant identity and the immigrant journey on works from Asian-American/Australian author/illustrators, I believe that the portrayal of immigrant identity the author/illustrators present is related to our Canadian context as the United States of America is our neighbour to the south and affects Canada culturally through media and Australia has the shared history of being a Commonwealth country like Canada with a strong base of Chinese Diaspora.

Aside from pondering my identity as a Chinese-Canadian, another second motivating factor for my literary analysis is my identity as an intermediate elementary school teacher. One of the sections of the British Columbian Social Studies curriculum is on Canadian and British Columbian identity. In order to examine how students construct the Canadian and British Columbian identity in the classroom, one of the areas of discussion is to discuss the immigrant history of Canada and the connections of immigration to students. To propel discussion and to build on prior knowledge, I typically employ a variety of media including literature and media. Thus, I believe that this study into picture books and graphic novels that present the immigrant identity issue is important to help examine my classroom practice of discussing immigrant identity and experience.

The Literary Analysis

Children’s books reflect the ideological structures of the cultures of the world (Hunt, 2005). The importance of children’s books in the dissemination of cultural values

and ideology is the driving factor for this study of the messages by authors and illustrators through literature. In this literary analysis, I examine three literary works for children, *Hannah is My Name* (Bella Yang), *The Arrival* (Shaun Tan), and *American Born Chinese* (Gene Luen Yang) as reflections of the cultural issues and struggles present in our world associated with increased mobility and immigration. The changing face of immigration and the tolerance of cultural differences has always been an issue within society.

Through the study of Belle Yang's picture book, Tan's wordless picture book and Gene Luen Yang's graphic novel, I will study how the immigrant experience is represented in these works. I suggest that through the examination of these texts, the construction of the hybrid identity of the Asian immigrant will be represented as complex and encompassing as immigrants move along the continuum of the immigrant journey from assimilation to community to hybridity. Each of the authors/illustrators uses their images to present the struggles of immigrants in their journey, and in building a new home and community. Through the examination of images from Asian-American/Australian authors/illustrators, I will present the journey of immigrants as they move from positions of relative powerlessness from being uprooted to positions of powerfulness as they form communities and resist dominant discourse. The purpose of this analysis is to examine how each of the authors/illustrators vary in the visualization of the construction of the complex Asian hybrid identity and how these differences help enrich the classroom discussion of using different Asian-American/Australian works in the classroom to teach about attitudes towards immigration and multiculturalism. As well, framed in postcolonial theory, the examination of these three works and the images

they perpetuate of the hybrid identity of the Asian immigrant are useful in order to open discussion into resistance of Western ideals of the Asian immigrant and how Asian-American/Australian authors/illustrators are supporting or resisting the stereotypes of dominant Western society.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine the construction of the hybrid Asian identity through the images created by the authors/illustrators in order to inform educational practices for the incorporation of literature in the classroom. Questions guiding this literary analysis are:

1. How is the identity of the Asian immigrant hybrid visually constructed within these texts?
2. How will a literary analysis of the three texts inform classroom practice to enrich discussion into issues of immigrant voice and legitimacy?

Significance

By examining children's literature and young adult literature, we are able to examine how immigrant identity and the social relationships between immigrants and the naturalized citizens of a country are constructed in images. Ultimately, through this analysis, we can examine how immigrants build identity and community in society as they adapt to a new home and use this information to enrich discussion about the issues of the voice and legitimacy of immigrants in the school and community spaces. With Vancouver's high immigrant population, these three works potentially provide the platform to open discussion on the newer definitions of Asian hybrid identity and culture

to help students create a better understanding of themselves and the world around them through examining their past and future within different spaces of home and identity.

Limitations

In my examination of the immigrant identity constructed in these three works, I do not focus on the role of gender in affecting the construction of identity. As the main protagonists of Tan and Gene Luen Yang's texts are male, and Belle Yang's protagonist is a female child, the silent voice and stereotyping of the exotic Asian female adult as a sexual object or subservient wife (Guerin, 2005) is not examined. Rather, the silencing of the Asian immigrant voice is examined. The ethnic identifiers of the Chinese ethnicity are also problematic, as there are many different identifiers such as the Mainland Chinese, Hong Kong Chinese, Taiwanese Chinese, and Diaspora Chinese groups. Thus, the examination of these texts focuses only on the Taiwanese-American immigrant experiences, the Chinese-Australian experience, and the Chinese-American experience.

In addition, a limiting factor in the generalizability of the three works stems from the fact that the works are from Asian-American and Asian-Australian author/illustrators. Although the different socio-political climate and the differences in attitudes towards immigration (e.g. the American "melting pot" versus the Canadian "mosaic") exists, the historical journey of assimilation to community to hybridity may be more widely applicable.

Definition of Terminology

Hybrid

Following Bhabha's definition that the hybrid space is the "difference 'within', a subject that inhabits the rim of an 'in-between' reality" (Bhabha, 2006, p.19), for the

purposes of this study, the hybrid is the immigrant who is occupying the space between the ethnic culture and the national culture.

Asian-American or Asian-Australian

This term is complex as the term “Asian” itself can encompass many different definitions. The Asian-American/Australian is defined as a “multiple consciousness” with a “shifting positionality of the self as subject-in-the-making” as a result of cultural positioning (Goellnicht, 1997, p.340). Thus, the Asian-American is not restricted to binary opposites as “insider” versus “outsider” or defined by geographical or biological identifiers of East versus West, but rather the identity defined in relation to cultural influences. The Chinese ethnic group can further be subdivided into smaller communities defined by locality, dialect, or social class further complicating the definition of what it means to be Chinese-American or Chinese-Australian or Chinese-Canadian. For the purposes of this study, Asian-American/Australian refers to Asians of Chinese descent, primarily from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Mainland China and the Chinese Diasporas group in Malaysia due to the backgrounds of the authors/illustrators. While the term Asian-American is used to generally refer to the first or second generation Chinese immigrant children as a whole, it should be acknowledged that the experiences or stereotypes resisted by the authors may not necessarily apply to all Asian-Americans/Australians.

Model Minority

This term is used to reflect the East-West relationship between Western countries and Eastern countries according to how the Asian immigrant is portrayed as unthreatening to Western supremacy. This relationship is maintained with the feminization of the Asian male or hyperfeminization of the Asian female to reflect the

relationship of Western countries and Eastern countries for Anglo-Saxon male supremacy (Ling, 1997). Also, it is used to represent the ascribed stereotypes of Asian passiveness and an Asian pattern of existing as a unitary group in relation to individual Western citizens (Shklanka, 1990). In the context of this paper, the term ‘model minority’ represents how Asian-Americans/Australians are not viewed as minority populations that threaten the dominant Anglo-Saxon social practices or norms and are viewed as “safe” law-abiding individuals that follow existing cultural practices.

Multicultural Literature

For the purposes of this study, I use Junko Yokota’s (1993) definition of multicultural literature as “literature that represents *any* distinct cultural group through accurate portrayal and rich detail” (p.157). As this study focuses on the Asian-American/Australian experience, multicultural literature refers to the literature of Asian-American/Australians.

Outline of Chapters

In chapter 2, an extensive literature review of the immigrant experience is framed in five areas of scholarship: 1) the power of picture books and graphic novels for young readers; 2). Asian-American literature; 3). multicultural children’s literature; 4) multicultural theories to postcolonialism; and 5) Bhabha’s postcolonial theory of cultural hybridity. In Chapter 3, I outline the method for analysis and the parameters of the analysis. In chapter 4, I analyze one Asian-American picture book, one Asian-Australian wordless picture book and one Asian-American graphic novel: *Hannah is My Name* (2004) by Belle Yang, *The Arrival* (2006) by Shaun Tan, and *American-Born Chinese* (2007) by Gene Luen Yang. In Chapter 5, I discuss the continuum of the immigrant

journey from assimilation to community to hybridity and the connections to classroom use, and suggest further implications and applications of this study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literary study is informed by a variety of theoretical frames. The literature review situates the analysis of the continuum of stages in the immigrant journey towards hybridity in picture books and graphic novels by Asian-American and Asian-Australian author/illustrators in the context of five areas of scholarship. These areas are the power of picture books and graphic novels for young readers, Asian-American literature, Multicultural children's literature, Multicultural theories to postcolonial theory, and Bhabha's postcolonial theory of cultural hybridity.

Power of Picture Books and Graphic Novels for Young Readers

The picture book genre has been given scholarly attention due to its not being just a childhood form or genre, but rather a form of literature that embodies many codes, textual devices and inter-textual references that push at the boundaries of convention (Hunt, 2005). The power of picture books is that the visual images and texts have an inter-dependent relationship to help define and amplify each other and thus create meaning for the reader (Nodelman, 1988). According to Nicholas Mirzoeff (as cited in Nodelman, 2005), picture books are contextualized within the specific culture that produces and receives them. Thus, through examining these picture books by first and second-generation Chinese-American and Chinese-Australian author/illustrators, we are provided with a cultural voice of the Chinese immigrant experience and the identity they want to claim.

Samuels' (1970) study of the effects of pictures in readers finds that pictures help children to develop positive attitudes towards reading. This positive relationship towards reading helps children to develop a response and connection to picture books. Kiefer

(1986) found that children responded to picture books in a variety of ways. First, children used language for informative purposes to retell the content. Second, they used heuristic language to predict or infer. Third, picture books had an imaginative function as it allowed children to enter the story of the picture book. Fourth, children used picture books for a personal function to build connections. These ways helped children to develop “critical thinking not only about cognitive factors but about aesthetic factors as well” (Kiefer, 1986, p.65). Kiefer argues that the picture book helps build a relationship between the author/illustrator to enlighten the minds of children. In another study by Kiefer (1991), she found that the picture book has the ability to draw emotional responses from children and engage them in expressing their opinions about the quality of picture books. In addition, despite the preference for coloured illustrations, children were even more engaged in black and white photos as it shapes “children’s deepest aesthetic understandings” as it “makes you think more” (Kiefer, 1991, p.72). Her study showed that when children have the time and opportunity to interact with picture books, they can build an understanding of the illustrator and develop deeper understanding of images. The illustrations in picture books enhanced the textual narrative of picture books, and evoked greater relationships between the child reader and illustrator. Thus, the analysis of the picture books in this literary analysis will help guide an understanding of the images used by the author/illustrators and provide implications for classroom use of these two works analyzed.

The power of the graphic novel genre is demonstrated in B. Norton’s (2003) study examining the relationship between Archie comic readers and motivation. She suggests that the ownership young readers claim of comic books and the belief that pictures help in

construction of meaning leads to more active engagement, and is reflected with young readers voluntarily interpreting and critiquing issues that arise through the text and images in comparison to school prescribed texts or approved chapter books. The use of graphic novels in the classroom has been posed by various literacy educators. The variety and new medium of graphic novels and its connections to media appeal to young people, while capitalizing on the effect of visuals. Schwarz (2002) argues that the cognitive skills required to read graphic novels may be more complex than text alone and graphic novels can encourage students to examine the uses of the medium such as how “color affects emotions, how pictures can stereotype people, how angles of viewing affect perception, and how realism or the lack of it plays into the message of a work” (p.263). Another benefit of the graphic novel medium is that they “present alternative views of culture, history, and human life in general in accessible ways, giving voice to minorities and those with diverse viewpoints” (Schwarz, 2002, p.264). Through the incorporation of graphic novels, reluctant readers and young adults were reported in a study conducted by Frey and Fisher (2004) to have higher engagement with text features and teachers were able to use graphic novels as a stepping stone to help students become more reflective and critical writers. Through employing graphic novels as a representation of popular culture, students can use their multiple literacies to enhance their own understanding of text beyond traditional school literacy. For many struggling readers, “the limited amount of text [allows] students to read and respond to complex messages with text that better matched their reading levels” (Frey and Fisher, 2004, p.20). Also, the pictures provide contextual clues to help young readers and providing students with a diversity of reading materials helps to engage them into lifelong reading (Crawford,

2004). The graphic novel format scaffolds writing instruction into writing techniques such as dialogue and mood while providing a medium for students to be “more knowledgeable consumers of ideas and information” (Frey and Fisher, 2004, p.24) through using the graphic novel format to present content.

Gene Luen Yang’s 2008 article “Graphic Novels in the Classroom” poses two strengths of the graphic novel medium as an educational tool. First, graphic novels are visual and most students love visual media for bridging the media we watch (i.e. TV) and the media we read (i.e. books). For this reason English-as-a-second-language learners and struggling readers can use the relationship between text and image to form an understanding of the narrative. Second, Yang argues that graphic novels have “visual permanence” where the reader can control the pace of reading and sense of time within the graphic novel so that students can review concepts as quickly or as slowly as they desire. The analysis of Gene Luen Yang’s *American Born Chinese* will help guide classroom use of the graphic novel to discuss the complex identity of children with hybrid cultural identities.

Asian-American Literature

The relationship between the power of picture books in affecting children’s perceptions of the social norms and the portrayal of hybrid Asian identities is evident in Mingshui Cai’s (1994) survey of the images of Chinese and Chinese Americans in picture books. His study surveyed 73 picture books and is motivated by the fact that children’s books about other cultures have a great potential to impact the first impressions of children about other cultures. The picture books in his sample are classified into the three categories of folktales, stories about Chinese Americans in the United States, and stories

about contemporary Chinese in mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. He found that many more contemporary picture books presented more truthful portraits of the Chinese but had the flaw of being potentially culturally unauthentic in visual representations. Many of the stories were concerned with the continuation of cultural tradition such as the New Year's celebrations instead of everyday reality. Cai (1994) argues that the "cultural heritage from their homeland constitutes only half of the identity of Chinese Americans and Canadians. Another half is their experiences in America and Canada. This is a more important half because they are Americans and Canadians first" (p.183). In his argument, Cai implies that children with hybrid cultural identities can benefit from picture books that represent their experiences within the hybrid space. Cai's article, published in 1994 concludes with the statement that "we need more picture books that feature flesh and blood contemporary Chinese and Chinese Americans to promote mutual understanding among children living in this culturally diverse world" (p.188). In this study, I will examine the portrayals of the Asian-hybrid and use the insights gained to guide classroom instruction.

The field of Asian-American literature commonly includes literature written by people of Asian descent in the United States (Guerin, 2005, p.297). Moving from the earlier limitations of defining Asian-American literature as being "neither Asian nor white American" (Cheung, 1997, p.2), new conceptions of Asian American literature examine defining the multiple constructions of the Asian-American beyond binary oppositions of race or nationality. The term "Asian-American" itself is limiting as not all writers of Asian descent are the same or share the same cultural history: for example, Chinese-American writers versus Filipino-American writers. Cheung (1997) argues that

the term “Asian-American literature” is needed to “amplify marginalized voices, however dissimilar” due to the fact that “they still look very much alike to the larger American populace” (p.5). The need to legitimize one’s right to being “American” in the past caused Asian-Americans to distinguish themselves as American-born or foreign-born, creating artificial barriers within the same ethnic group. With the influx of immigrants and changing Asian populace, Asian-American literature has become flexible enough to include foreign-born and American born Asian writers.

The term “Asian-American literature” loosely encompasses first and second-generation authors. Common themes in early examples of Asian-American literature include the “paper son”, “confessions”, and “picture bride” stories at the turn of the twentieth century. The autobiographical nature of early Asian-American literature centered on the theme of how identity may be individually known within but is not always at home in the outward community (Guerin, 2005, p.298). The pioneers in Asian-American literature centered on these themes of trying to be either “Asian” or “American” and the turmoil of characters was assumed to mirror the life experiences of the Asian-American writer. This notion was challenged following postcolonial theory, with the construction of the identity as being multiple and unstable, leading “history itself [to become] suspect” (Cheung, 1997, p.15). Current trends in Asian American literature have extended the boundaries of Asian American literature to avoid unitary identities and artificial binary oppositions. Stereotypes of the Asian-American range from the emasculation of the Asian-American male to the hyperfeminization of the Asian-American woman. These stereotypes according to Kim (1990) serve to “define the white man’s virility and the white race’s superiority” (p.69). For instance, in Gene Luen

Yang's graphic novel *American Born Chinese*, Jin's future with Amelia is hindered by Greg's influence and Chin-Kee's asexuality is used for comic relief. The emasculation of the Asian male is a "displacement of Asian male subject position in society" (Ling, 1997, p.314) further alienating the male Asian immigrant and reaffirming the Western-Eastern power relations as Ling (1997) argues that the feminization of Asian males within American society historically helped to show how the position of men traditionally viewed as "embodiments of civilization, rationality and aggressiveness" (p.314) is no longer attributed to the Asian male immigrant in a dominant American society. By portraying Asian men as asexual or effeminate, the relationship of the East versus the West is reduced to a lord/servant binary opposition instead of an egalitarian relationship. The hyperfeminization of Asian females or feminization of the Asian male serves to juxtapose White male supremacy. This relationship according to Ling (1997) allows for the "model minority" stereotype of Asian-Americans as they do not subvert Western dominance, and instead appear to willingly accept Western supremacy. This "emasculatation allows Asian-American males to incorporate into American society" (Ling, 1997, p.315) with relative ease in comparison to African-Americans.

In resistance to this ascribed identity, the three works analyzed here demonstrate the changing stages in Asian American literature. Belle Yang's *Hannah is My Name* can be seen as a representation of the earlier Asian immigrant desire to be the "model minority" to assimilate and the anxieties around identity that this raises, Shaun Tan's *The Arrival* as the Asian immigrant's steps to carve a space within dominant Western society, and Gene Yang's *American Born Chinese* as the resistance of the "model minority" stereotype and the attempt to navigate the space between assimilation and acculturation.

This portrayal of identity and questions of nationalistic borders is applicable to the three texts chosen in this study as the protagonists of each narrative must create a new identity in a new homeland, ranging from Belle Yang's *Hannah is My Name* reflecting the initial trend of Asian immigrants to choose American nativity to Gene Luen Yang's *American Born Chinese* dispelling notions of a unitary identity and resistance to ascribed characteristics based on race or gender to create a hybrid identity. In the discussion of the changing position of Asian immigrants within a dominant Western culture, Goellnicht (1997) argues that the "shifting positionality of the self [is] a subject in the making" (p.340) as our positions and identities are culturally produced and socially learned, and thus negotiable dependent on the power of our voice. Therefore, as the stories of the protagonists in the three works studied are based on true life experiences, the author/illustrators are "reclaiming the body" (Goellnicht, 1997, p.352) of their social identity and space.

Multicultural Children's Literature

The term "multicultural" is debatable—its meanings include the concept of using multiple cultures to teach about diversity, to a concentration on people of colour, to the idea that all literature is multicultural. Cai's (1998) article "Multiple Definitions of Multicultural Literature: Is the Debate Really Just Ivory Tower Bickering?" examines the different types of definitions and the implications for classroom implementation. The definition of "multicultural literature" to include all cultures and to focus on diversity is problematic for Cai as it ignores the power struggles of marginalized cultures to empower themselves. The second definition presented is that multicultural literature should focus only on people of colour which reduces multicultural literature to being defined by race.

The third definition, that multicultural literature is all literature “has the merit of expanding our understanding of literature from a multicultural perspective” (Cai, 1998, p.316). This definition means that all literature could be read to examine all cultural issues in it, but multicultural literature and analysis is a focused examination of marginalized cultures. When combined with Yokota’s (1993) definition that multicultural literature represents any cultural group, I use the term multicultural children’s books as literature written for the purpose of sharing the experiences from a marginalized group, and in the parameters of this study, it is the Asian experience of cultural hybridity.

In examining multicultural children’s books, I am applying my analysis to inform the inclusion of the three works in the classroom within a postcolonial space of redefining and reconstructing identity. Through the use of various multicultural texts, a dialogue of voices will emerge so that a form of “harmonious tension” (Goellnicht, 1997, p.356) will emerge to create discussion into the fluidity of identity and the hybrid space occupied by Asian immigrants in a Western society. To include multicultural literature in the classroom is vital to help in developing understandings of other cultures and to help break down borders (D. Norton, 2009) so that readers respect individuals and the contributions of cultural minorities. Many popular picture books or Asian folk lore for children focus on teaching readers about the different values and traditions of minority groups and adjusting to conflicting social values between as Asian cultural background and a Western upbringing. However, a 1976 study by the Asian American Children’s Book Project concluded that many of the 66 books examined presented stereotypes that “all Asian Americans look alike, choose to live in “quaint” communities in the midst of large

cities, and cling to “outworn, alien” customs (cited in D. Norton, 2009, p.205). The project also criticized the books because they tended to measure success by the extent to which Asian Americans have assimilated white middle-class values because they implied that hard work, learning to speak English, and keeping a low profile would enable Asian Americans to overcome adversity and be successful (D. Norton, 2009).

In the three works I analyze, the progression in the changing Asian-American identity from creating an identity focused on assimilation to an identity of hybridity is discussed. The examination of the changing representations of Asians in multicultural literature is vital as a study produced in the 1970s from the Council on Interracial Books for Children found the sample studied to be grossly misleading (Shklanka, 1990, p.81). From their findings, the study concluded that the best multicultural picture books depicted ethnic Asian characters with individuality and identifiable facial experiences, and avoided perpetuating stereotypes. In examining the three works, it is important to notice the aesthetic ability of the author/illustrators to individualize their faces to discourage the notion that “Chinese all look alike” and all Chinese are “inscrutable” (Shklanka, 1990, p.83). The importance of analyzing these works is to examine how much or how well they resist stereotypical portrayals in visual depictions of Asian characters by avoiding portraying Asians as inexpressive, as solely functional when part of a group, or as having weak, unimportant and uninteresting women that perpetuate the hyperfeminization of Asian females in relation to Anglo-Saxon males. Another important feature when examining the visual representation of Asian characters is to include crosscultural interactions, so the Asian community is not presented as existing in isolation apart from the dominant society (Shklanka, 1990, p.95). Each of the three

works examined portray the different stages of the representation of Asian characters from being based solely on stereotypes or the exotic features of Asian communities to the resistance of ascribed Asian identity by the dominant Western culture.

Multicultural literature is important to classroom practice, as critical multicultural analysis believes that the use of multicultural literature in the classroom and the messages implied in the production and use of multicultural literature affect the development of identity in children. Sleeter (1998) as quoted in Maria Botelho's (2009) *Critical Multicultural Analysis of Children's Literature*, states that such analysis is vital to stop the "social myth that we live in a classless, equitable, and just society, and that everyone has access to the 'American Dream' as long as they demonstrate initiative, effort, and ability" (p.xiv). By acknowledging that all literature is a product of history and culture and establishes meaning through representation, critical multicultural analysis of literature allows readers to create identities between their own position and their socio-political circumstances. In order to effectively analyze Asian-American literature, attention needs to be placed on the power relationships and the cultural context of the language and images of picture books, which shapes the construction of identity of readers. By understanding the depictions of images by the three author/illustrators, this study will help create a deeper understanding for classroom teachers in the use of these three works beyond a superficial representation of ethnic cultures. To study multicultural children's literature is to study the social movements and political actions of underrepresented populations (Botelho, 2009, p.73), and these three works outline the historical background of immigrant identity from assimilation to resistance to hybridity as minority populations gain a voice.

Louise Saldanha (2000) in her chapter in *Voices of the Other*, “Bedtime Stories: Canadian Multiculturalism and Children’s Literature” questions the unofficial cultural and social hierarchies that prevent the official enactment of the Canadian mosaic promised in the Canadian Multiculturalism Act proclaimed by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau in 1988. She questions why white Canadians are not marked by their ethnicity and can claim to be “Canadian”, while visible minority groups have hyphenated identities. For Saldanha, the Canadian image of the “mosaic” creates official multicultural atmosphere that celebrates the superficial nature of cultural differences as diversity becomes “the expression of one’s ‘difference’ as an alternative lifestyle rather than as an oppositional subjectivity” (2000, p.167) and multicultural children’s books used in the classroom are at risk of being included as a classroom exercise to promote tolerance and acceptance of cultural difference in opposition to the dominant Western cultural values, rather than creating a discourse into difference being a form of identity that is not positioned as the “Other”.

Multicultural Theories to Postcolonial Theory

Dieter Petzold (2000) argues in his chapter “Multiculturalism in Canadian Children’s Books: The Embarrassments of History” in *Voices of the Other* that the Canadian “mosaic” and the American “melting pot” rely on building a new unity out of different cultures, leaving the question of who determines how this new unity is formed. In his analysis of multicultural children’s books, many books are based on teaching tolerance and acceptance without examining issues of prejudice and racism. For Petzold, some of the faults in multicultural children’s books is to show the “happy ending’ in the Land of the Free or the assimilation into dominant Western culture while accepting one’s

ethnic roots. The postcolonial perspective needed in multicultural children's literature is important to prevent multicultural children's books from being used as a superficial classroom exercise to teach tolerance and acceptance of cultural differences as an "Other" instead of cultural differences as an accepted identity to have within the dominant society.

Postcolonial studies examine how politics influence the construction of language and identity. As colonized countries are responding to the Western stereotyping of non-Western cultures, many postcolonial writers attempt to "resurrect their culture and to combat the preconceptions about their cultures" (Guerin, 2005, p.303). The Chinese-American and Chinese-Australian authors/illustrators in these three texts recreate their history and take the cultural stereotypes and reposition themselves in positions of power. The three texts chosen show the progress towards a postcolonial space in Asian-American literature. Belle Yang's picture book *Hannah is My Name* shows the initial stage of assimilation while Shaun Tan's wordless picture book *The Arrival* shows the displacement and creation of a sub-community for immigrants. In particular, Gene Luen Yang's *American Born Chinese* demonstrates the reclaiming of space and voice in the resistance of dominant culture as he appropriates the cultural stereotypes of the Chinese immigrant in his graphic novel to redefine the Chinese-American identity.

Ashcroft et al. (2005) in *The Empire Writes Back* discusses the displacement of literary place and time and the myths of identity and authenticity. A postcolonial lens is used to determine the amount of assimilation or resistance in each of the three texts as the immigrant protagonist of each work is displaced geographically and must re-negotiate his or her identity as being dynamic and borderless. In this way, the immigrant must change

to accept their difference as a form of equality instead of as a form of powerlessness. Through this reclamation of voice and resistance of Western stereotyping, the colonized writer demonstrates how “cultures are engaged in constant processes of change as they adapt to circumstances and events” (Bradford, 2007, p.20). Through dealing with the marginalisation and history of perceptions of dominant culture, the writers are able to create their own identity as a separate construct without being confined as a binary opposite to dominant Western culture. The three texts are examples of the movement towards postcolonial literature as they question race, identity, and power in the immigrant experience and thus identity (McGillis, 2004). Through this examination, I show the stages as immigrants begin to move from assimilation to a “Third Space” of the hybrid identity

Xie (2000) argues that postcolonial discourse about the differences between cultures has to be legitimized in order for this otherness to be recognized and appreciated. It is only through this examination of Western dominance to marginalize the ‘Other’ that “difference [will turn] into a fountainhead of counterhegemonic agency” (p.4) so that the ‘Other’ doesn’t exist solely in opposition to the self in isolation. McGillis (2000) argues that people cannot escape otherness as any form of living in any society means sharing “a oneness with others” (p.223) and it is important to reconceive our true self-other identity (as cited in Xie, 2000, p.4). Thus, in order to truly embrace a multicultural society, we must not try to ignore our differences to find commonality with others, but embrace our differences to identify ourselves and accept these differences as part of who we are. The dominance of the West, through capitalism and military superiority, meant that the non-West other was portrayed as prehistoric or formless and for the non-West to exist, it had

to conform to Western standards. Xie (2000) argues that through positioning cultural otherness as a difference that is to be accepted and celebrated helps to “realize cultural multiplicity, . . . beyond imperial binary structures of self/other” (p.13) so that the ‘Other’ is not always existing outside of the boundaries of Western dominance or the ‘Other’ is forced to conform to Western standards.

Xie (2000) argues that “the world always ultimately belongs to children” and children’s literature is responsible for educating the minds of the next generation towards a postcolonial education so that they are “encouraged to understand and appreciate racial/ethnic differences” instead of understanding cultural differences as the Other. McGillis (2000) mentions how others including Jacqueline Rose and Perry Nodelman have pointed out that those who write for children assume that they understand children as children are “shaped and organized by a larger and dominant group” (p.225) leaving children, like indigenous peoples and marginalized communities, silenced and colonized with a certain set of ideals imposed by adults. Nodelman and Rose suggest that in writing children’s literature, the power relations between adult and child and notions of values for childhood are controlled. Similar to the West’s control of the East, adults “write books for children to provide them with values and with images of themselves [that adults] approve of or feel comfortable with” in children’s literature (Nodelman, 1992, p.30). The comparison of the Western dominance of the East for power to adult authors trying to control the values and morals of children in children’s literature shows how children’s literature exists in the postcolonial space of power relationships (Nodelman, 1992, p.32). The study of multicultural children’s literature opens the space for using a postcolonial lens to examine the relationships of power and resistance in children’s literature. This

literary study into the acculturation or resistance of the three authors/illustrators to define their own immigrant journey and the celebration of their own cultural identity is vital as it affects the education of children into forming their own identity. Through the examination of the “Other”, the immigrant, as defined by the authors/illustrators, the ideals imparted to children can be examined and opened for discussion in the classroom setting.

Bhabha’s Postcolonial Theory of Hybrid Identity

Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) presents the relationship between the East and West as a stable static definition focusing on the imposition of colonial power. Instead of acknowledging the self-representations of the colonised and their resistance, Said’s definitions leave no room for change or negotiation (Loomba, 1998, p.46). Bhabha defines identity as shifting hybrid constructions beyond traditional binary constructions of self and other, or colonized and colonizer (Guerin, 2005). He defines the hybrid identity as originating from a “Third Space” that questions the assumptions of the past binary forms, and instead sees relationships and thus identity as the interaction between the colonized and colonizer. In the texts, the immigrant protagonists question their space of representation and their difference in comparison to dominant Western culture and they conform or resist the identities ascribed to them. Bhabha (2006) in *The Location of Culture* argues that this space “in-between the destinations of identity” and the “interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumer or imposed hierarchy” (p.4). In terms of ethnicity, the hybrid may mean an “individual having access to two or more ethnic identities” (Easthope, 1998, p.342), a status each of the immigrant protagonists

reflects as they juggle their homeland and new immigrant status or their native ethnicity and national ethnicity. Easthope (1998) argues in his article “Bhabha, hybridity and identity” that the simplistic notion of hybridity as a merging of two or more ethnic identities is problematic as the definitions of ethnicity becomes problematic. Instead, he poses that the notion of Bhabha’s hybrid is defined against what is not hybrid. In this case, the non-hybrid represents a unitary identity and that Bhabha’s hybrid is essentially the “Derridean difference applied to colonialist texts-the presence of a dominant meaning in a dominant culture...called into question by referring to the hybridity or difference from which it emerges” (Easthope, 1998, p.343). Thus, Bhabha’s notion of the hybrid or hybrid space is the resistance of dominant meaning and symbolism to prevent authoritative authority in meaning or unitary identity.

The hybrid exists in the borderline space where immigrants engage in colonial mimicry of the “recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (Bhabha, 2006, p.122), creating a power imbalance. His ideology of the colonial mimicry demonstrates how the initial stage of the immigrant is to mimic the native-citizens, but eventually this creates a power imbalance. The image of the Other as a mimicry of the colonial authority creates a gap between the relationship between the authority and the Other that becomes the site of resistance as the dominated and dominator are interdependent on each other and you cannot have one without the other (Loomba, 1998, p.149). Relegated to the outsider position, the dominated are forced to be the “Other”, but within stereotypical confines of what this “Other” is to Western standards. In resistance, the cultural hybrid space is formed as immigrants begin to protest the limiting identifiers of race and nationality and re-define their identity, to

reveal the “borderline” experience as it “resists the binary opposition of racial and cultural groups” (Bhabha, 2006, p.296) and moves beyond limiting identifies such as race and nationality.

Through defining the “Other” as a difference where identity exists of the self and other, Bhabha provides a conceptual framework of redefining the in-between space occupied by immigrants between cultures and racial borders. His concept of the hybrid allows the “colonial subject and the colonial discourse [to be thought of] in terms of the in-between” (Xie, 2000, p.2) so that we resist the Western hegemony of binary definitions of identity and instead view the complexity and multipositionality of identity.

The three works examined demonstrate the multiplicity of identity as each protagonist navigates the space between their ethnic identity and their national identity. These two concepts of identity, as hybridity or mimicry, highlight how the author/illustrators of the three analyzed texts use their visual representations of the immigrant journey to create a discourse over the changing stages of immigrant identity. Through the use of symbols and colour, relationships of objects, and framing, they open discussion to re-define the immigrant identity. By entering this in-between reality or “Third Space”, the author/illustrators demonstrate how the imagined communities of nations “have been altered by mass migration and settlement” (Bhabha, 2006, p.316), leaving binary definitions of citizen and immigrant inadequate. Rather, these three texts present varying degrees of resistance of the binary opposition of racial and cultural groups to create new hybrid identities on the borderlines of home and adopted country and culture. The examination of if or how the immigrant protagonists resolve the tension

between conflicting identities will help create a deeper understanding of the immigrant identity and help inform classroom practice about teaching diversity and acceptance.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD FOR ANALYSIS

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the visual construction and representation of the hybrid identity of Asian immigrants in contemporary Western children's literature. The three works studied show the continuum of Asian immigrant identity from assimilation to community to hybridity through the immigrant journey. These identities reflect the fluidity of identity as multiple and complex, and are also a representation of different trends in Asian immigration to the United States of America or Australia.

Theoretical Frame and Method for Analysis

I mobilize Nodelman's (1988) theory of the narrative art of children's picture books, which combines elements of different theories such as semiotics and reader-response theory to examine the relationship between the texts and visual images of picture books. His theory focuses on the qualities of pictures and texts to reveal the relationship and inter-relationship between text and picture. For the purposes of this examination, I will use a combination of three elements outlined in Nodelman's theory of the narrative art of children's picture books as a tool to analyze the visual representations of the hybrid identity of Asian immigrants in the three works examined. Through the use of these elements, I will demonstrate how immigrants come to form their identity as multiple constructs, and move from positions of assimilation to resistance in the three texts. In using Nodelman's three elements, I will analyze how the visual representations create an image of the immigrant journey towards creating a new hybrid identity in the Third Space outside of traditional binary representations.

Relationship of Visual Objects to Each Other

Nodelman's (1988) theory of narrative art outlines the relationship and unity of a series of pictures in a picture book to reach a conclusion at the last picture. As the purpose of each picture is to show the series of continuing action driven by the plot, they violate the "conventional ideas of aesthetic wholeness" (Nodelman, 1988, p.126). The relationship of objects to each other is used to form an analysis of the power positions of the characters throughout the visuals as they continue their journey to defining their hybrid identity. Through analyzing the use of rounded or sharp edges, I will use this feature to demonstrate how objects and people are positioned in relation to the immigrant to show their changing identity and position of power. For example, straight lines are associated with harsher situations, and when the immigrant is positioned surrounded by unwelcoming straight-edged objects, the immigrant is positioned as an outsider. On the other hand, when the immigrant is positioned surrounded with rounded objects, they are more welcomed in the visual depiction, demonstrating the change in their identity as they navigate through their new life. In the first stage of immigration, the immigrant is undergoing a situation of colonial mimicry where the immigrant functions as a "recognizable Other...a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha, 2006, p.122). However, as they resist the stereotypes of dominant Western society, they begin to build their own hybrid identity within their own space. Aside from the shape of objects, other features that influence the perception of the relationships in the picture include size, location of objects to each other, background and foreground, and the geographical indicators of objects within the page. These factors affect the reader's perception within the two-dimensional space of the picture book. For example, the

analysis of the location and size of objects to each other can demonstrate their current relationship of relative power. When the immigrant is positioned smaller in relation to other characters, the immigrant is ascribed a position of powerlessness. Thus, these features are used to help analyze the relationship of objects and the immigrant in relation to other objects to demonstrate their changing identity and to examine the immigrant experience over time.

Contextual Meaning of Visual Objects

Visual objects in picture books become meaningful dependent on the “visual weight they have” (Nodelman, 1988, p.101), as the illustrator uses various symbols to represent the hybridity of the immigrant navigating life in a new country. However, this weighing of pictures and symbols is dependent on the context of the reader’s prior experiences and background knowledge in the significance of objects. The symbols used by the authors and illustrators help create an image of the construction of the immigrant journey through the different stages. Through the attachment of symbols to specific traditions, they create specific unspoken texts (Nodelman, 1988) which build a richer narrative about the immigrant’s experiences. However, the symbolism associated with objects is dependent on the visual weight ascribed to objects through the placement within the frame. The symbolic connections in the pictures are used by the author/illustrators to build a richer narrative and modern depiction of the immigrant experience towards hybridity beyond superficial meanings.

Aside from the symbolism associated with visual objects, the colour of objects and the visual space also “evoke specific emotions and attitudes and thus can work to convey mood more exactly than any other aspect of pictures” (Nodelman, 1988, p.60).

The visual weight of objects is elevated through the emotional connotations associated with the choice of colour used by illustrators such as blue being associated with melancholy, yellow with happiness, red with warmth, green with growth and fertility, and gray with bleakness (Nodelman, 1988). The use of colour by the author/illustrators in the three works examined help to position the reader to feel empathy with the emotions of the immigrant protagonist through the immigrant journey which affects the visual weight of the images.

Pictorial Conventions for Framing

In picture books, framing is used to imply detachment and objectivity and to create tidier organizations of images (Nodelman, 1988). The use of frames helps to control the emotional quality of images whereas white space implies emotional intensity and disturbance. When images are not framed, there may be objects within the image that serve to frame particular parts of the pictures that “heighten the dramatic focus, forcing us to pay attention” to specific objects (Nodelman, 1988, p.51). In the analysis of the picture books, I will use framing within pictures as a tool to highlight the relationships of power between objects and the characters as they move along the continuum of assimilation to community to hybridity. In regards to framing used in graphic novels, I will incorporate McCloud’s concept of the “gutter” space. McCloud argues that the framing and use of the “gutter” allows readers an opportunity to augment the visual information presented in illustrations. In graphic novels, framing and the “gutter” space are used to depict physical action and emotion. The framing and “gutter” space, for instance, can be used by the illustrators to depict movement, such as the movement of the immigrant from relative powerlessness to powerfulness, as the framing

and “gutter” outlines the position of the immigrant protagonist in relation to dominant society. The use of framing helps to highlight the position of power of the immigrant protagonists in their immigrant journey and the changing relationships of power.

Selection of Books

This examination will involve the close textual and visual analysis of three focal books. The primary selected texts for analysis are:

American Born Chinese (2006) written and illustrated by Gene Luen Yang; *Hannah is My Name: A Young Immigrant's Story* (2004) written and illustrated by Belle Yang; and *The Arrival* (2007) written and illustrated by Shaun Tan.

These texts were chosen for being authored/illustrated by Asian-American and Asian-Australian immigrants or immigrant offspring who were using their personal experience growing up as hybrid immigrant child or offspring. These three texts were chosen for a) dealing with the visual representations of the immigrant experience, and b) being published in the last 10 years. As the field of Asian-American literature changes and an increase of awareness of the importance of multicultural literature have occurred, the immigrant experience and formation of hybrid identities may be of interest to educators. In these texts, the authors admit to using stereotypes and symbols reflective of the immigrant experience to highlight the journey for immigrants to reach the ‘in-between’ reality as immigrant and later on as citizen of an adopted country or as second-generation immigrant offspring. In each text, the immigrant protagonist undergoes an experience that is reflective of many different immigrant stories, and thus, can provide a representation of the different immigrant voices. Also, they were chosen for being

representative of the different trends in forming the Asian-American or Asian-Australian hybrid identity through changing Asian immigrant patterns.

Belle Yang's *Hannah is My Name* (2004) is a picture book using gouache illustrations that reflect her own personal immigration experience. It was chosen because it is loosely based on her personal experience of immigrating to the USA in the 1960s and reflects the trend of immigrants at that time to form an identity based on assimilation. As an immigrant from Taiwan to San Francisco, her picture book reflects the aspirations of all immigrants to achieve the "American Dream" and to gain the green card status. The obstacles faced by her child protagonist Hannah, presents a more romanticised reflection of the obstacles faced by immigrants. The struggle in this picture book is the fear of deportation while the family waits for the arrival of their green cards. This lack of documentation positions the immigrant family as illegitimate in their new country and as the "Other" in the USA. Belle Yang's picture book was chosen for highlighting the initial attitude of immigrants to achieve assimilation.

Shaun Tan's *The Arrival* (2007) is a wordless picture story following a migrant's move from his homeland to a new foreign country. Awarded the Community Relations Commission Literary Award for 2007, Tan is credited with re-creating the immigrant and migrant settlement experience through his digitally re-worked hand-drawn images. Bound in an imitative leather-bound book, the book chronicles one immigrant's journey towards forming an identity and a home in his new country with help from sympathetic strangers. The immigrant protagonist is not given an ethnicity or nationality. His lack of physical identifiers gives a voice to all immigrants who deal with some common issues such as separation and change in social status. While the immigrant protagonist is not

necessarily reflective of solely the Asian immigrant experience, Tan based the themes of immigrant loss and displacement on the stories of his Asian father's immigrant experience to Australia. In this sense, the lack of ethnicity and the lack of words in the picture book help to connect various readers to the trials of the immigrant protagonist. This immigrant experience brings up issues of origin, the sense of detachment from one's roots, and how to form an alternative definition of identity within a dominant culture.

Tan's decision to position the reader within a fantasy world with peculiar animals, curious floating objects and indecipherable languages creates a more unsettling sense of disorientation. Tan justifies this due to the fact that when people's sense of "comfortable reality" or expectations is defied, they are forced to reinvent the notion of 'belonging' (Tan, n.d.). The immigrant protagonist is forced to re-navigate his identity within his new space. Tan's pictures create an image of the distorted journey of the immigrant, yet in continuing the style of graphic novels, has a sense of sequence and unity between each picture. The visuals created by Tan help to situate the reader within the immigrant experience and reflect the hybridity of identity of immigrants.

Gene Luen Yang's graphic novel *American Born Chinese* (2006) was met with both criticism and praise for its direct portrayal of racism in the United States and the complexities of the Chinese-American identity. As the winner of the 2007 American Library Association's Printz Award and the first graphic novel to be nominated for the National Book Award in 2006, Yang's graphic novel is credited with introducing a new style to the graphic novel genre, while examining the themes of alienation and cultural hybridity. He combines three seemingly separate stories to create a unified story of wanting to belong and the path towards accepting one's identity as a multiple construct.

The struggles of integration for immigrants and their offspring often result in questions of identity. Through his graphic novel, Yang explores the identity crisis and journey of Asian-Americans through examining the attitudes, behaviours, and identity exploration and commitment of American-born Chinese. He examines these issues through the experiences of his characters Jin Wang, Danny, and the Monkey King. All three characters undergo the process of wanting assimilation, transformation into what they think represents dominant society (being human, or being white) and their acceptance of their own cultural identity in relation to dominant society to form an integrated identity that reflects their hybridity in society.

These three texts were chosen for the power of the picture book and graphic novel genre to help readers construct meaning and engage them with reading. Belle Yang's picture book is examined for its depiction of the Chinese-American immigrant journey from the voice of the "Other", the immigrant, who demonstrates the sense of unity and power in an immigrant community, despite their turmoil in belonging in their new home and the initial stages of Asian immigration of trying to assimilate. Shaun Tan's picture book *The Arrival* is examined for its depiction of the multi-faceted nature and journey of immigrants as they navigate their location in their new country, trying to claim a voice, identity, and space within a larger society. Gene Luen Yang's graphic novel *American Born Chinese* is examined for its depiction of the hybrid identity of 1.5 generation immigrant-children and Yang's mockery of stereotypes, which reflects the resistance of Asian-Americans of ascribed characteristics and the attempt to create a unique individualistic identity that moves between Asian and American identity spaces. To address issues of cultural authenticity, I chose author/illustrators writing/creating from an

“insider” perspective. Belle Yang’s picture book is based on her experience immigrating to the United States, Shaun Tan’s *The Arrival* is based on the narratives of his immigrant father and other immigrants in his life, and Gene Luen Yang’s *American Born Chinese* is related to his experiences as an Asian-American with a hybrid identity and also from his experiences as a high school teacher. As Yokota (1993) points out, “an inside perspective is more likely to give an authentic view of what members of the cultural group believe to be true about themselves” (p.158). As each of the author/illustrators identify themselves within the Asian cultural hybrid group, their authenticity as representatives of the voice of the cultural hybridity of Asian identity is validated.

CHAPTER 4: THE ANALYSIS

Introduction to the Analysis

In order to achieve the objective of this study examining the visual representations of the immigrant journey, a sample of picture books/graphic novels published from 2004-2006 are analyzed. The sample comprises of works from author/illustrators who identify themselves as being Asian-American/Australian. The premise of the narrative content in the sample is the personal experiences and connections of the author/illustrators to the immigrant experience.

The analysis of images from these three works is based primarily on Perry Nodelman's (1988) theory of narrative art focusing on three areas: (1) the space relationships between visual objects, (2) symbolism associated with objects and colours used, and (3) the use of framing. In the analysis of Belle Yang's picture book *Hannah is My Name*, I primarily use Nodelman's tools of the spatial relationship between objects and the symbolism of objects. For Shaun Tan's *The Arrival*, I focus on using Nodelman's theory of symbolism of colours, the spatial relationships of objects, and the use of framing. With the analysis of Gene Luen Yang's graphic novel *American Born Chinese*, I focus primarily on the symbolism of objects and colours used and the use of framing. The analysis is organized according to the visual images in depicting the representations of the immigrant journey, with a variety of tools used in the analysis of each image to build the different stages of the immigrant journey.

Belle Yang's *Hannah is My Name: A Young Immigrant's Story*: Immigrant Journey to Assimilation

Belle Yang's picture book *Hannah is My Name: A Young Immigrant's Story* (2004) is the narrative of a Taiwanese girl's family immigration and settlement in San Francisco. Her journey undergoes three stages: uncertainty of identity, illegitimacy as an immigrant, and legitimization through assimilation. The story of Hannah is based on author/illustrator Belle Yang's own personal experience of immigrating to the USA with her family in the 1960's in the hopes of a better and more prosperous life. The protagonist's life in San Francisco is initially fraught with anxiety as she is an illegitimate citizen until her green card arrives. In my analysis, I will use a variety of Nodelman's tools in the analysis of each selected image for the portrayal of the immigrant journey. I focus on the spatial relationship of objects, symbolic representations of objects, and framing to demonstrate the identities and positions of immigrants during the 1960s as they begin the immigrant journey towards assimilation.

Immigrant Journey to Assimilation: Uncertainty of Identity

In the initial two-page spread of the picture book (Figure 1), the uncertainty in identity for the immigrant is seen primarily with the loss of mother country and culture. The "old country" is depicted as a primitive society, with an ox cart for transportation and outdated farming clothing. The family is viewed as leaving a village, depicting a romanticized view of Taiwan as a primarily agricultural country with rice paddies and farm animals. This 2 page spread uses dark colours of blue, purple, green and yellow to reflect the seriousness of the journey. The faces of the waving villagers are featureless, while Hannah and her family have minimal strokes to depict their eyes, nose and mouth.

The neighbouring farmers are in rice paddy hats waving good-bye, giving the sense that the Lin family will never return. The clouds in the sky are large and loom over the sun, creating a sense of doom and pain in the picture. The picture is from a far angle and Hannah and her father are positioned seated but with one leg up, giving the impression that they are ready to run from the “old country”. Hannah’s mother is standing and waving, like a queen waving to her adoring subjects, as if the Lin family is lucky to be leaving. The lack of detail in the members of the Lin family and the neighbours’ facial expressions give the impression that life in Taiwan is inferior to life in the United States. The portrayal of Taiwan as a primitive agrarian society provides a juxtaposition of life in San Francisco in an urban and modern city, legitimizing the need for the Lin family to immigrate. The romanticized portrayal of Taiwan as a rural country positions the USA as a more desirable and dominant society, and foreshadows the Lin family’s need to assimilate to the USA urban lifestyle.

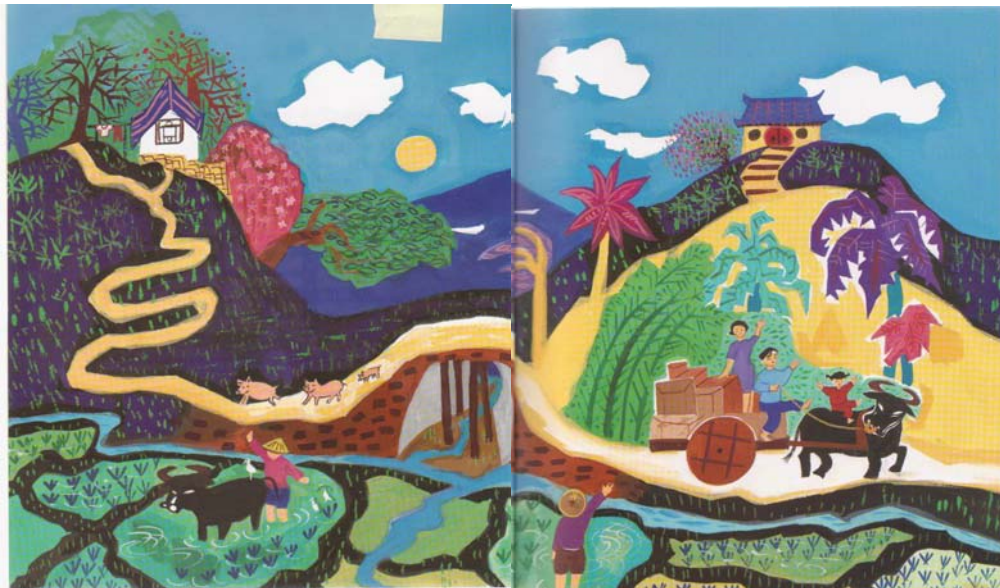


Figure 1: Hannah and Her Family Leaving Taiwan
From *Hannah is My Name* by Belle Yang
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Hannah, the protagonist, begins her narrative with “Hannah is my name in this new country. It doesn’t sound at all like my Chinese name, Na-Li, which means *beautiful*” (B. Yang, 2004, p.2). The importance of the name is vital to her sense of identity; as she says it “feels strange to become Hannah all of a sudden” (B. Yang, 2004, p.2). Her security with her name is altered, as she reverts to her nickname, Tadpole, because it is more comfortable to her and the tadpole symbolizes Hannah being in the early stages of growth in a life cycle. In this case, her life cycle is the cycle of turning from being Taiwanese to being Asian-American. In the next image, Hannah is lying on the beach, playing in the waters of Taiwan, with frogs and tadpoles surrounding her. She has a slight smirk on her face, but looks content, surrounded by the symbols of her nickname. The smirk on her face and her relaxed body portray the binary opposition of her identity crisis as she is content yet unsettled after being uprooted to a new country. As well, this image serves as the transitional image from leaving Taiwan to settling in San Francisco.

The idealization of life in American is seen when Hannah says “When we are Americans, Baba says we will be free to say what we think. An American girl is free to be anything she chooses, says Mama.” (B. Yang, 2004, p.2). For the Lin family, America represents the land of wealth and prosperity, because Hannah and her family want to be “free” and to “become Americans more than anything in the world” (B. Yang, 2004, p.2). For the Lin family, assimilation into being “Americans” is their goal for immigration.

The immigration to America causes distress for Hannah who holds onto her nickname “Tadpole” as the tadpole represents her connection to her self in Taiwan, but also her self in San Francisco, as she is still called “Tadpole” at home. Thus, this

nickname helps her bridge her sense of identity as Na-Li and as Hannah. The tadpole is also a significant symbol as a tadpole is the preliminary stages of the frog life cycle, until it grows to become a frog. The tadpole is legless and vulnerable to the environment, similar to how Hannah as a new immigrant is left vulnerable due to her lack of legitimacy without a visa.

Immigrant Journey to Assimilation: Illegitimacy

The Lin family, in their journey to American citizenship, are left labelled as illegal bodies. When finding a home or employment, Hannah and her parents have limited choices. Their first home at 636 Bush Street does not allow children. However, Jewel, the building manager, decides that Hannah can stay as long as she is quiet. Hannah is forced to believe that she must be as quiet and invisible as possible to not disturb others as she is technically not allowed to live in the building. Belle Yang (in Figure 2) depicts how Hannah, with an unhappy and worried expression, tries to hide behind her mother as much as possible to show Jewel that she can be quiet and undistruptive. Her toes are pointed forward, as if she is tip-toeing to minimize her noise production. In their first home in the USA, Hannah is forced to pretend that she doesn't exist and already as a new immigrant is told she isn't welcome. Hannah's father is depicted behind the elevator doors, like the bars of a jail cell, which Hannah describes as being like "a lion's cage". Already, the Lin family is trapped and limited in their choices as Jewel, the manager, is the one holding the power and key to their new home. Jewel's glasses are cat-shaped, and her eyes are mirrored in her cat's expression, with an almost wicked expression of power. Even the pet of the manager holds a more prominent position, as Hannah's father is located behind the cat within the picture. The use of

geometrical shapes creates a 2-D effect of the Lin family almost in a cell that appears to overpower them.



Figure 2: Elevator
From *Hannah is My Name* by Belle Yang
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The second step in their immigration process is to file immigration papers. Powerless without language, the family relies on Mr. Choo in Chinatown for his English skills. Hannah and her mother visit Mr. Choo who is depicted as an imposing unsmiling man who sits at his large brown desk with a line up of other people waiting for his assistance. His message that all they can do is wait provides little comfort as Hannah's mother and father are not allowed to work without green cards. Hannah has to comfort her mother who sits despondently on the couch after being fired from her job sewing buttons at the factory. There is a lampshade on the left that provides some light in the room, but the window shows that it is dark outside with a half moon. The house key is left outside of her mother's purse, as if even ownership of their home eludes them without the green cards as America is not their home until they are citizens.

The greatest symbol of their fear as illegitimate bodies in America is the threat of the immigration inspector. The inspector is depicted in a dark trench coat and hat that covers half of his face. Aside from the side profile of the nose, the inspector is portrayed as a dangerous and frightening figure who could be anyone, even the bell hop that Hannah's dad relies on to elude deportation. In the background, Hannah and her father are shown as small figures in the same space as the dangling spider that could be squashed or ignored by humans. Similar to the insects, Hannah, with her immigrant status, is left barely higher than an insect in the social hierarchy. Instead of using bright pastel colours of previous pages for the hotel diner, Belle Yang uses dark blue and green tones to show how the diner becomes a place of danger for her and her family, instead of as a casual place for her to find missing coins.

The fear of deportation is especially poignant when Hannah's friend Janie is deported after her father was caught working illegally. When Janie leaves, she gives Hannah her pink rabbit's foot and wishes of luck, while Hannah gives Janie her name bracelet to remember her by. At a young age, Hannah must deal with the loss of her close friend as Janie's absence leaves "a big hole inside [her] chest" (B. Yang, 2004, p.15). Their parting scene shows how the two immigrant children are separated on the playground by a cement barrier while other children on the other side are playing happily on a swing set and slide with the Bay Bridge and Coit Tower behind. The division of the picture emphasizes how the legitimate civilian children are able to enjoy the sights and landmarks of San Francisco, while Hannah and Janie are left separated as immigrant children.

Immigrant Journey to Assimilation: Becoming Legitimate

Hannah and her family's purpose of immigrating to America are to have the hope of becoming "American". When the green cards arrive, Hannah sees her English name "Hannah Lin" on the cards. She states "It has my name printed importantly on it. Not Tadpole, but Hannah Lin" (B. Yang, 2004, p.22). For Hannah, she has assimilated her identity through being officially labelled "Hannah Lin". She no longer refers to herself by her Chinese name, Na-Li, but feels that "Hannah doesn't sound like a stranger's name anymore. It's my name. Hannah is my name. And America is our home" (Belle Yang, 22). With the green cards arriving, Hannah believes that she can fully assimilate into her new identity as "Hannah" and that she can finally be safe in America as she doesn't have to "stay quiet and make ourselves small" (B. Yang, 2004, p.22). In the last scene, Hannah and her family finally have full smiles on their faces, and the background is in bright yellow tones which symbolize happiness and comfort, rather than the dark blue and green tones of previous illustrations. For Hannah, her sense of identity is confirmed when she is finally able to embrace her American name, Hannah, as her own, instead of solely identifying herself with her Taiwanese name of Na-Li.

In contrast to the beginning, the last two page spread of the picture book (Figure 3) after the Lin family receives their green cards is a different visualization of their life. The last two pages show the Lin family waving from a taxi cab, with fully detailed facial features and rosy cheeks. Yang uses bright pastel colours of green, purple, pink and yellow, with a large sun and the sun beams shining behind the buildings to signify the brightness of their new life and also their legitimacy as they no longer have to hide in the shadows. San Francisco is depicted as a modern urban city with houses, cars and stop

lights. Instead of having farm animals, there are domesticated animals as pampered pets. The Bay Bridge and Coit Tower are in the background and the bystanders in the background have full facial features as well. The Lin family is also viewed with a closer shot, and this time the father is not driving the ox cart, but instead can wave like a celebrity as well. Their transformation into American citizens represented through a taxi ride in the streets of San Francisco, fulfills their attainment of the “American Dream” and their belief of a new and better life in the United States.



Figure 3: Celebration
From *Hannah is My Name* by Belle Yang
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Shaun Tan’s *The Arrival*: Immigrant Journey to Community

Shaun Tan’s wordless picture book *The Arrival* (2006) is a collection of images of an unnamed immigrant as he journeys to his new country. Tan’s *The Arrival* is a physical manifestation of the hybrid space occupied by immigrants in their journey. As a picture book that uses the conventions of graphic novels, it reflects the immigrant journey of creating a new space within the dominant society. Tan’s picture book occupies the space

between traditional definitions of the picture book where the relationship between text and image is interdependent for meaning (Goldstone, 2002, Wolfenbarger & Sipe, 2007) and the graphic novel genre with frames to indicate the passing of time, and the visual vocabulary and gutter space to create meaning (McCloud, 2000). Based loosely on the stories of Tan's Chinese father's own immigrant experiences and the stories of other immigrants, Tan weaves a visual narrative of the quest to form a community in a new home by an unnamed immigrant of unknown ethnicity. *The Arrival* is set in a futuristic country which bears many physical landscape similarities to the United States, but draws on symbols from many different cultures. From the anecdotes of his father's own immigrant experience, Tan concluded that "it was the day to day details that seemed most telling and suggested some common, universal human experiences" (Tan, <http://www.shauntan.net/books.html>) and helped demonstrate the struggle of the immigrant journey. Through the threads of many immigrant voices, Tan found common themes of linguistic difficulties, poverty, and homesickness to name a few. These themes help Tan build a visualization of the immigrant journey to define a sub-community within the space of the dominant Western society.

In this analysis of Tan's *The Arrival*, I will use the tools of spatial relationships, symbols of colour and objects, and framing for each selected image as they visualize the immigrant journey to community. Using this analysis of images, I will present how the images contribute to Tan's representation of the immigrant protagonist building a new community within the space of dominant society in the second stage of the immigrant journey towards community.

Immigrant Journey to Community: Losing a Home

The pictures are formatted as photos or postcards, in the graphic novel layout of panels on a page. Each scene is created with a different angle of vision, similar to film techniques of silent movies to tell a story. Before chapter 1 begins, the first image of the immigrant protagonist frames him as being powerless, as his head is turned away and tilted upward. The image of the immigrant protagonist is framed from an aerial view, giving the reader a more powerful status. In the opening chapter, the husband and wife are positioned in the centre of the frame giving the impression that the journey through immigration will begin.

The tendrils of black shapes against the white buildings give a sense of doom and evil, associated with the colour black. The contrast between the black tendrils and the white of the building further emphasize the lines of the black tendrils as it gives a sense of the harshness in the homeland. Unable to control circumstances in the homeland and feeling unsafe in his own community, the immigrant is forced to leave his family and homeland to find a new home. At the end of chapter 1, the immigrant's wife and child are positioned at the lower bottom of the frame to show how threatened they are as they view the empty street with the tendrils of evil in shades of grey floating through the sky.

As the immigrant crosses the water to the foreign country, the panels of images fluctuate between shades of black, grey, blue and orange. The harshness of the journey is conveyed with the blue tones giving the immigrants a sense of melancholy as they are trapped on the ship leaving their homeland. Upon entering the new country, Tan uses grey to show how the stream of immigrants become characterless as they are not given an identity in their new country other than that of 'immigrant'. The helplessness of the

immigrant protagonist is apparent during his physical exam. Relentlessly tagged by each exam he undergoes, the immigrant protagonist is left unable to communicate his history due to linguistic differences. The series of frames depicting his attempts to communicate and his resulting frustration are mirrored by series of frames of the immigration officer granting his visa. The variation in shades of color on the same page show the fluctuating emotions of the immigrant protagonist as he moves from feeling a sense of despair without the language to communicate his thoughts, to his relief at being granted a visa. Aside from using colour, the frames reflect the immigrant's relief with his relaxed but clasped hands and his journey in a moving booth to his new home. His birth as a new citizen in a new city is further solidified with the image of the bird-like creature holding an egg. As the immigrant protagonist navigates throughout the city, he becomes lost and asks for help. Eventually, as his comfort with his surroundings increase, he is no longer placed at a lower angle but at a more equal and centralized angle indicating that he is no longer subordinate in his new community but becoming equal.

The predominant symbols throughout the immigrant's journey to his new community are the clouds and the origami dove. For the immigrant, the origami dove is an artificial substitute used to give himself and his daughter hope for the future. At their parting, the father injects a bit of humour and entertainment by hiding the origami dove under his hat and magically presenting it to his daughter. On his travels on the immigrant ship, he folds himself another origami dove, an act that demonstrates his own need for comfort in his journey. The immigrant's journey is tempered by the clouds that constantly overshadow his journey. The power of the cloud symbol is seen in a two page spread of the ship's journey across the water where the dominant image is the foreboding cloud

towering over the miniscule ship. The following two pages of the wordless picture book have 60 frames of the cloud in various states showing the danger of his journey. The fourth page continues the cloud imagery with a smaller portrayal of the cloud and ship relationship. The ship is moving forward in relation to the cloud sailing on the right instead of the left of the page, signifying the ship's stability. The gloominess of the immigrant journey is seen when Tan presents an image of the immigrants crowded and clustered on the bow of the deck of the ship with faces filled of misery and pain, with their bodies draped in blankets for warmth and some minimal comfort. However, upon entering their new country, there is a flock of doves that give the ship of immigrants hope. The change in colour tone reflects the change in the immigrant's journey. Initially starting with warmer brown sepia tones as the immigrant is still with his family, it quickly changes to shades of black onboard the immigrant ship. Only upon entering the new country do the tones change to warmer tones of grey. The changing colours represent the changing position of the immigrant from being an accepted member of society to entering a new land with an undetermined status.

Immigrant Journey to Community: Finding a Home

Tan tells the story of immigrants and migrants in the graphic novel style without text. As such, it depends on cultural assumptions for us to derive information from the gestures and postures of animal and human characters (Nodelman, 1988). A common symbol is the clasping of hands. From the beginning, the immigrant and his wife have their hands clasped together, as a symbol of their unity and her attempt to reassure him. In his journeys, he meets different strangers who continue this image. For the young family the immigrant character meets, the clasping of hands demonstrates the unity of the

family who escaped out of their troubled homeland. For the soldier, the clasping of hands symbolizes friendship during times of war. In turn, when these strangers meet the immigrant character, they continue this trend by clasping his shoulder and having open palms in a gesture of trust and welcome. Tan uses this simple gesture to show how immigrants from different countries can maintain a sense of unity with others, despite their personal differences.

Posture is used to convey the meaning and expression of the various characters. When the immigrant first tries to find work, different people angle their bodies away from him or have their backs turned towards him to reject his job applications. In contrast, sympathetic strangers are positioned facing the reader, or if their body is angled away, their heads are still turned towards the reader. The gestures and postures of characters reflect how the different citizens of the new country may react positively or negatively to the immigrant as a newcomer.

The sense of journey is controlled with the use of sepia colours, and the use of pencil to create images which control the different tones of the colours used. The variation of colour changes to reflect the mood of the different characters, from times of peace to memories of war and pain. The darkness of the immigrant's homeland demonstrates the pain and danger, but the hope the immigrant has for a new beginning in his adopted country is indicated by the colour orange. The colour orange complements the image of the statue cradling an egg as it signifies the immigrants being re-born.

The undefined characteristics of Tan's created city require the reader to draw on his or her own personal cultural assumptions to create the narrative of the immigrant protagonist navigating the everyday life demands. The image of the immigrant

protagonist drawing pictures to communicate his needs situates the reader as the naturalized citizen who must direct him. The use of pictures empowers the immigrant protagonist as he is able to express his needs without being isolated through his lack of oral and written language. Within this wordless picture book, Tan emphasizes the universality of pictures to create meaning, as the immigrant protagonist uses visuals to communicate.

Eventually, the immigrant protagonist begins to adapt to his new home and forms a new identity in his adopted country. The bond between immigrants is evident as each time the immigrant runs into trouble; he is assisted by a sympathetic stranger who used to be a new immigrant. Each of the strangers has their own personal story of struggle. When switching between the immigrant character's journeys to the stories of the strangers', Tan switches to darker frames of black and dark blue. This creates a darker tone surrounding the strangers' past than the immigrant protagonist's journey whose images are framed in white. This contrast in framing demonstrates how each person's journey is filled with danger and uncertainty too, and as the reader is re-positioned in the role of the immigrant character, the reader is still able to feel a sense of safety and assurance in the relative comfort of the journey currently being experienced as the immigrant protagonist. The inclusion of other immigrant experiences gives a sense of validity to the immigrant voice and authenticates them as valuable citizens. The immigrant voice is evident as the immigrant meets other immigrants who listen to his story and in response share their stories. Common themes of war, poverty, escaping bondage or persecution bind the stories of the immigrants. By sharing their past experiences, they build friendship and a sense of community in the new country. The

darkness of their past is evident in the use of dark black and purple in solid tones, emphasizing the negative conditions of their homeland. Through sharing their history, the immigrants build new friendships and a sense of family when all the immigrants join together for dinner. Their acceptance of each other and their stories are shown in the warm golden tones of the dinner frames. These dinners allow the immigrant protagonist to create a space for him and other immigrants within the space of the dominant society. Their newfound sense of community is validated with the glows of the candles as it lights up the darker spaces around their dinner table. The circular images also creates a softer and more comfortable setting, and the positioning of the reader at the same level further validates the immigrant in his new community.

Objects are used by Tan to represent the hybrid space occupied by the immigrant as he incorporates connections to his past with new objects of his adopted country. The amphibian-mammal hybrid pet already living in his new home welcomes him to his new country and serves as a comfort, a change that signifies his new space. However, within the same series of frames, the suitcase represents the immigrant protagonist's connection to his family as he imagines seeing his wife and daughter having dinner. As he finds employment, the different animal-like creatures invented by Tan serve to connect the immigrant protagonist to others in his community and to initiate conversation between different ethnic immigrants.

Immigrant Journey to Community: Creating a Community

Tan's use of black and white creates an impression of the realism and serious nature of choosing to immigrate as the use of black and white is commonly associated with uncompromising truth and a sense of the images being a documentary (Nodelman,

1988). This automatically demands the reader to acknowledge that the subject matter of this work is not frivolous or for enjoyment purposes and gives the story of the immigrant experience legitimacy. By allowing the different immigrants a chance to have a voice in describing their journeys to immigrate, Tan empowers the immigrant characters. Tan uses various symbols and colours to signify the power of the immigrant in his new home as he creates his own community.

When the different immigrants are joined together, they form a circle, interlaced within a pattern of circular objects and lines. The use of circular lines create a sense of the immigrant journey and their experiences being similar to the cycle of life as each immigrant beings a journey and concludes it by creating new spaces for other immigrants to join him. In the background, the sunlight is portrayed in circular rays of light, over rounded bodies of hills. The rounded shapes in the landscape can create an image of a sleeping dragon with his head curled up. The use of an abstract dragon shape behind the circle of immigrants give them a sense of power, as the dragon in Eastern mythology and culture as a representative of the emperor's power and a wise and strong creature that transcends the boundaries of culture, religion and politics. Thus, the immigrant characters, in creating their own space, are given legitimacy with a dragon protector.

In Shaun Tan's work, animals are important as a source of comfort for the immigrants and help them to establish a feeling of community. Through his images, Tan creates a sense of cohesiveness with the incorporation of animals, in particular the cat-like creature that is the immigrant protagonist's companion. As Tan states, "One key character in my story is a creature that looks something like a walking tadpole, as big as a cat and intent on forming an uninvited friendship with the main protagonist. I have my

own impressions as to what this is about, again something to do with learning about acceptance and belonging” (Tan, n.d.). In *The Arrival*, the animal-creature serves as the biggest representative of the wordless picture book’s message of wanting to belong. Throughout his journey, the animals serve as a source of comfort and way to build relationships. As Nodelman (1988) argues, objects possess symbolic value only to those who know the cultural significance of those images and in this case, the animals represent peace and comfort. As the immigrant character leaves his home, he folds a paper crane for his daughter. The crane represents loyalty, peace, and harmony, and in passing the crane to his daughter, the immigrant wishes to offer comfort to his daughter as he leaves. In this case, the immigrant tries to establish some control over the forced exodus to a new land. When entering his new country, a flock of animals that look similar to doves fly overhead. Tan uses both the crane and dove, which are Eastern and Western symbols respectively, to act as symbols of peace and comfort. In this way, Tan signifies a sense of hope and new beginnings for the immigrant. As well, when he enters his new world, there is the image of a bird-like creature giving birth, similar to the immigrant starting anew. In this sense, the immigrant feels his identity changing as he is geographically transposed and is being re-born as a citizen of the new nation. The continuation of the animal symbolization employed by Tan allows the immigrant protagonist to make the transition between communities more smoothly.

Since the immigrant is entering a foreign world, the constructions of animals are different from our world, and I can only draw similarities between the animals in Tan’s fictional world and our world. I make parallel connections between Tan’s creations and real animals. As the immigrant character finds an apartment, he meets his new pet,

similar to a dog. This pet is his new companion in a strange world, and wakes him up each morning and readily accepts him as a legitimate person of the new nation. This dog-like creature offers the immigrant comfort in his new surroundings, creating the impression that even in foreign lands, animals will always be a source of companionship, and that the relationships between man and animal will never need a linguistic connection. Tan uses the owner-pet relationships as an everyday event for the immigrant-protagonist to be building a sense of community within the larger dominant community of his new home. This is supported with Tan's inclusion of a lonely man who has a pet similar to a frog as a pet, and another stranger has a cat-like pet. Through their mutual relationships with animals, the immigrant protagonist builds a friendship with the strangers. With the use of animals, Tan offers hope that people of different cultures can still be joined by their mutual appreciation for animals. As well, the common belief of the acceptance and bond between man and animal is used by Tan to highlight how easy acceptance and could be between humans.

The immigrant protagonist establishes a new life for himself in his new country. His employment in a factory allows him to gain legitimacy and allow his wife and daughter to join him. During these times, the protagonist is depicted on the level plane and this indicates that the immigrant has found his "home" within his new land, as the image no longer positions the reader in a powerful position above the immigrant protagonist. The cycle of immigration is repeated as the daughter begins to help another new immigrant settle down by offering directions in the last frame of the book.

The change and merging of identity is seen in the first and last image of the immigrant's kitchen. With similar everyday objects, the last frame shows how the

immigrant family's life is richer and more enjoyable. There are more pictures of the family posted, the shelves are full and the walls are decorated. The people are smiling, and images in groups of three are present. The phonetic sound for the number "3" in Chinese is a homonym of the English word for "birth" and the immigrant family has achieved a new life as seen in the food with three petals and the father's fingers showing 'three'. There are connections to their past life with the origami dove, but now there is a new family pet. Instead of harsh linear objects, the immigrant has many curved and circular objects that create a softer image of peace.

Tan uses colour and shapes of futuristic objects, animal symbolism, and different angles of perspective in each frame to indicate the immigrant's changing position in relation to his new country. The immigrant's journey allows him to move from a position of powerlessness as he is initially limited by his lack of language and lack of a home to a position of power as he is able to navigate his life in his adopted country to build a sense of community. Interspersed in the unnamed immigrant's journey are the stories of other immigrants he meets who share their reasons for immigration, showing how immigration is not the story or experience of one person or one culture, but of many. Each immigrant is unable to forget their past history in their home country, and instead bring that narrative with them, which allows them to share their knowledge and history with others. Through the wordless visuals, Tan demonstrates how the past experiences of immigrants and their reasons for immigrating help them build a new understanding and hybrid identity in their adopted country as they combine the identity of their past homeland and the one they create in their new homeland to create a stronger identity. Also, through the

communication of their past histories, they build the bonds to form an immigrant community within their new homeland.

Gene Luen Yang's *American Born Chinese: Immigrant Journey to Hybridity*

In Gene Yang's *American Born Chinese* (2006), the symbols and racial stereotypes interlaced in the graphic novel help present a context for his representation of the immigrant experience to forge a hybrid identity. In my analysis, I use the tools of symbols of objects and colour, spatial relationships of objects, and framing to examine the images in Yang's graphic novel to determine the visual representations of the immigrant journey to hybridity and the resistance of Western notions of Asian immigrant identity. To help with the understanding of Yang's weaving of the three different narratives, I first examine the dominant symbols of hybridity used by Yang. I continue my analysis of the different stages towards claiming a hybrid identity, and conclude with the images of hybridity within the physical structure and layout of the graphic novel.

The Dominant Symbols of *American Born Chinese*

Yang uses many Western and Eastern symbols to link the journey to hybridity for the Asian-American character Jin/Danny Wang and the Monkey King as a link between his three supposedly different vignettes. The internal struggle in Jin for acceptance in a primarily Anglo-Saxon community ignites a desire to change himself to meet what he perceives as the Western ideal. Jin's journey towards a hybrid identity begins with the denial of his ethnic self, a path mirrored in the Monkey King's journey to accept his monkey status. The resolution to Jin's journey is triggered by his cousin's Chin-Kee's arrival. Chin-Kee embodies many immigrant Chinese stereotypes that are mocked by Yang and help Jin to come to terms with who he is. Yang uses these stereotypes for

comedic effect and also through hyperbolic representations of these stereotypes highlights the absurdity of such stereotypes. The conclusion of Jin's journey is his acceptance of all the different parts of his identity, culminating in his hybrid identity.

Yang interweaves the Monkey King character, who is himself a hybrid: a monkey and a deity. The character of the Monkey King is a respected East Asian mythical creature from *Journey to the West*, one of the Four Great Classical Novels of Chinese Literature. The Monkey King is credited with helping the monk Lai-Tsao to obtain sutras, ancient Buddhist texts. Yang presents the Monkey King's quest to find his own identity among the gods as he is mocked for being essentially a monkey. To eradicate his monkey identity, the Monkey King tries to transform himself into the "Great Sage, Equal of Heaven" unleashing a reign of terror on the other deities and gods. When Tze-Yo-Tzuh ("He Who Is") states that the Monkey King was created to be a monkey and cannot change who he is, the Monkey King tries to remove the monkey part of his identity and is thus imprisoned in a rock cave.

The Monkey King's quest to change his identity is ignited when the gods imply that the Monkey King's lack of shoes diminishes his status as a deity, leaving the Monkey King humiliated and feeling illegitimate. To change this, the Monkey King decrees in his monkey kingdom that monkeys must wear shoes, a human-like characteristic, which render them incapable of climbing trees and in essence, from being monkeys. This attempt to physically change one's physical identity is a theme carried on by the human protagonist-Jin Wang, who tries to eradicate his Chinese identity and become Caucasian. The inclusion of the Monkey King's experience is used to link Chinese mythology with the American-Chinese hybrid experience, as later on in the

graphic novel, the Monkey King, as a disciple of Tze-Yo-Tzuh, tries to impart his knowledge with Jin.

The Western equivalent of the symbol of the hybrid identity is the *Transformers* action figurine, with the accompanying text of the old herbal master's wife stating that "it's easy to become anything you wish...so long as you're willing to forfeit your soul" (Yang, 29). Thus, the text highlights the idea that to change one completely means to lose one's sense of identity and soul, and in the Monkey King's experience, to be trapped. In this situation, the concept of eradicating part of one's pre-existing identity for another self-created identity is possible, but does not necessarily bring the peace or happiness one is seeking. The connection between Western and Eastern symbolism is seen when Wei-Chen brings a Monkey Toy Robot which is the combination of the Monkey King and Transformers symbol. Both these situations- monkeys trying to be human and humans trying to change their ethnicity- demonstrate the journey towards navigating the hybrid space-one where you do not have to forfeit your soul in order to be happy or accepted and to accept more than one aspect of your identity. For the Monkey King, that means accepting his deity status and monkey identity, and for Jin, being Chinese and American.

Each "chapter" of Yang's graphic novel is indicated by the use of the Chinese red seal. These provide the visual cues to indicate the interweaving of the three separate plotlines of the Monkey King's Journey to the West, Jin Wang's experiences of growing up in a predominantly Anglo-Saxon neighbourhood, and the Chinese sitcom of Chin-Kee. The use of the Chinese seal gives Yang's artwork a sense of legitimacy as the Chinese seal is a sign of ownership, and highlights the hybrid nature of Yang's medium-the graphic novel. Yang uses the Western graphic novel format, but includes the Chinese

seal to identify each section. Yang's *American-Born Chinese* discusses the immigrant minority experience of navigating between internal and external pressures through the graphic novel form which in itself is a hybrid genre. Yang interweaves many symbols-Asian and Western, and formats-novel and comics, to create a hybrid story in a hybrid format.

Immigrant Journey to Hybridity: Initial Denial of Self

The Monkey King is a Chinese deity credited with protecting the monk Wong Lai-Tsao on his journey to retrieve the Buddhist sutras. Initially, he is presented as an unruly and unrepentant monkey who fancies himself only as a deity instead of accepting the form given to him by Tze-Yo-Tzuh—that as a monkey. After being rejected from the Front Gate of Heaven for not wearing shoes, his first reaction upon returning to Flower-Fruit Mountain is to get rid of the smell of monkey fur. In his meditations, he strives to physically change his form to resemble a human, with an elongated torso, lanky arms and legs and a smaller head. Despite unleashing a reign of terror on the other deities and gods by achieving god-like powers, the Monkey King is unable to find acceptance amongst his peers with his new identity as the “Great Sage, Equal of Heaven”. The other gods request help from Tze-Yo-Tzuh, who tries to enlighten the Monkey King to accept what he was made to be—a monkey. When the Monkey King refuses to accept the monkey aspect of his identity, he is punished by being trapped under a pile of rocks and a seal that prevents him from practising his kung-fu martial arts skills. The Monkey King's refusal to acknowledge this aspect of himself results in the loss of his freedom.

Jin Wang's storyline begins with an old Chinese parable, describing how a mother moved her son around until they were living near a location that would help him become respectable as a scholar. This parable highlights a phenomenon of immigration-assimilation, based on the belief that the environment decides who you will become. In the parable, when the family lives near a marketplace, the son becomes a haggler, when they move near a cemetery, the son burns incense, and when they move near an university, the son becomes a respectable scholar. This parable precedes Jin's family's move to suburbia, and out of San Francisco's Chinatown. This family relocation causes Jin to follow the path of the parable, and desire to become like everyone else in his environment-Caucasian. Jin's reinvention mirrors the Monkey King's experience, as Jin begins to imagine himself with blond curly hair as he becomes a teenager. The blonde hair colour is a decidedly advantageous physical characteristic as it is a recessive hair colour that is harder to achieve, and is one of the biggest indicator of a desirable Western characteristic. The stick-straight nature of Asian hair demonstrates Jin's desire to completely transform himself as he craves two hair characteristics alien to his natural genetics. Similar to the Monkey King's journey of wanting to change himself due to his own insecurity, Jin believes that his Chinese ethnic physical traits prevent him from chasing the girl of his dreams-Amelia. Instead, he imagines that Amelia would match someone like Greg, who has blond curly hair, and leading Jin to dream of having blond curly hair (G.L. Yang, 2006, p.97). In his belief that he is inadequate compared to Greg, he perms his hair which causes his friends Suzy and Wei-Chen to question his decision. In his attempts to change himself, Jin ironically causes himself to be labelled a geek by those who have accepted him as an Asian-American. When Jin finally courts the girl of

his dreams, Amelia, he is ecstatic. Unfortunately, his own insecurity causes him to agree to not date her after a request from Greg, the blonde curly haired popular boy that Jin idolizes. Greg's claims that high school reputations depend on who you associate with exacerbates Jin's insecurities with his own identity. Jin replays the scene in his mind, wishing that he had the voice and courage to say "No" when asked to not date Amelia. The reason to "hang out with the right people" and the need to watch for "appearances" (Yang, 179) causes Jin to feel obligated to Greg and promise to end a possible burgeoning inter-racial relationship. Jin wants to reject these stereotypes, but instead reaffirms these beliefs. As a second-generation offspring, Jin is left feeling voiceless and powerless. This causes him to loathe himself even more and his increasing insecurities make him act awkwardly with others, which causes Greg to label him as "kind of a geek" and to ask "What's with the hair?" (G. L. Yang, 2006, p.184), further alienating him from the community he desires to join.

The Monkey King and Jin both experience turning points in their lives where they are unable to accept their identity. When he refuses to accept Tze-Yo-Tzuh's wisdom, he is left to fall off the middle of a rock road under a pile of rocks. In his human-like form, the Monkey King is left helpless under a "trapping" seal to prevent him from using his martial arts skills. The closing frame of that chapter of the Monkey King's story shows the Monkey King imprisoned with the seal which can be loosely translated into English to mean "What You Have". In this context, the "trapping" seal reinforces the image that it is the Monkey King's own reluctance that imprisons him within the rocks. The pile of rocks dominates the frame and position the Monkey King as a small figure within nature. It serves to emphasize the point that without acceptance of oneself within the dominant

space, in this case, the Monkey King without an acceptance of his monkey body within nature, one is trapped in a prison of one's own making. The cost of self denial for Jin is the loss of his two friends, Suzy and Wei-Chen. When Suzy mentions her own experience of being isolated and alone, and then labelled a "chink" (G. L. Yang, 2006, p.187), Jin feels a connection to another 'lost soul' and kisses her, his best friend's girlfriend. Wei-Chen confronts Jin, telling him "We're **brothers**, Jin. We're **blood**" (G.L. Yang, 2006, p.190), and Jin attacks Wei-Chen who he perceives as lower than him because Wei-Chen is a newer immigrant and thus even more illegitimate. In response, Jin tells Wei-Chen, "Maybe I just don't think you're **right** for her all right? Maybe I don't think you're **worthy** of her. Maybe I think she can do **better** than an **F.O.B.** like **you.**" (G. L. Yang, 2006, p.191). By labelling Wei-Chen as an F.O.B. or 'Fresh off the Boat' immigrant, Jin is reiterating the racist attitude he faced with Greg. During Wei-Chen's confrontation with Jin, the two are angled to face each other. The first frame focuses on the eyes of each boy, with the shape of the eyes being exactly alike, highlighting their physical similarities, despite Jin's attempts to categorize Wei-Chen as a F.O.B. As the boys communicate, the images position the reader in each following frame from either Wei-Chen or Jin's perspective. When viewing the scene from Wei-Chen's perspective, Jin is angled to be lower than Wei-Chen as a visible sign of Jin's betrayal, while from Jin's perspective, Wei-Chen is perceived at a lower angle due to Jin's belief that a F.O.B. is of lower social status to a first-generation immigrant child. As a result of this betrayal, Jin is granted his wish of becoming whoever he wishes to be from the acupuncturist's wife because he has forfeited his soul by betraying his best friend Wei-Chen and becomes Danny. The Monkey King and Jin's actions cause both of them to be

alienated from their true selves. Their own stereotyping and self-denial cause them to be trapped in foreign bodies.

Immigrant Journey to Hybridity: Facing Stereotypes and Symbols

Yang uses a variety of Chinese stereotypes to emphasize the Monkey King and Jin's dissatisfaction with their Monkey and "Chinese" identity respectively which casts them as an outsider from their imagined community. For the Monkey King, it is the monkey body shape and lack of shoes, and for Jin, it includes a turtle (G.L. Yang, 2006, p.93), the F.O.B. label (G. L. Yang, 2006, p.89), Chinese-accented English (G. L. Yang, 2006, p.96), and cousin Chin-Kee.

The Monkey King believes that his kung-fu strength will allow him to reclaim a sense of legitimacy in the heavens. After decreeing that all monkeys must wear shoes, creating a comic frame of monkeys with shoes hanging off trees holding the branches with their arms, the Monkey King decides that his meditations allow him to declare that he is not a monkey (G. L. Yang, 2006, p.62) but instead the "Great Sage, Equal of Heaven". To prove his point, he attacks the Dragon King, Lau-Tzu, Patron of Immortality, Yama, Caretaker of the Underworld, and the Jade Emperor, Ruler of the Celestials. Rather than accept him, the different gods appeal to the emissaries of Tze-Yo-Tzuh to discipline him. Tze-Yo-Tzuh tries to reason with the Monkey King that he is who he is made to be, and is perfect in his original form, but the Monkey King rejects Tze-Yo-Tzuh's wisdom and is imprisoned for 500 years until he realizes the futility of trying to completely change who he is. In their confrontation, Yang emphasizes the insignificance of the Monkey King in comparison to Tze-Yo-Tzuh through the use of the hand images. As one of the vital differences between man and ape is the rotating thumb

of the hand, Yang consistently visualizes the Monkey King's hands to be clenched together in the fist shape while Tze-Yo-Tzuh's hands are open and open to grasp a hold of the Monkey King. In his attempts to escape Tze-Yo-Tzuh, the Monkey King runs to the five golden pillars in heaven to carve his name for recognition. However, the five golden pillars are actually the fingers of Tze-Yo-Tzuh, representing how "He Who Is" will always surround him. Even though the Monkey King's attempt to run away from Tze-Yo-Tzuh breaks the square lines of the frame, until he reaches heaven which is not bound by any frames but is left floating in white space, the Monkey King eventually is bound by the conventions of the comic frame again.

The turtle hidden in the shell is a reflection of the Chinese idiom of being a "scared turtle", meaning one is spineless or hides from the demands of life inside a shell. This symbol arises when Jin is afraid to volunteer to take care of the animals in his Biology class with his dream girl. Yang includes the stereotype of the Asian American male as either effeminate or sinister as a villain in Hollywood movies (Cheung, p.10, 1997) by showing how Jin as a person may not be effeminate, but is dwarfed by dominant Western cultural norms. Another stereotype that Yang resists is the Asian American "panethnicity" (Cheung, 1997, p.4) where foreign-born ethnic Asian immigrants or second-generation immigrants are categorized together despite their cultural differences and may be uniformly categorized under the F.O.B. (Fresh Off the Boat) label. The difference in cultural attitudes is evident in the difference in attitude towards dating between the USA and Taiwan. When Wei-Chen states that dating is forbidden until age 18 in Taiwan, Jin reminds him that he is no longer in Taiwan and thus the rules are different. The cross-over in values between cultures is demonstrated when Wei-Chen

immediately decides to choose to be “American” and have a girlfriend. However, their outsider status is enforced when the American bullies mock their English abilities replacing “think” with “Chink” and “goose bumps” with “gook bumps”. These insults render them voiceless and embarrassed, even though they have demonstrated English proficiency in previous frames. The difference in body language is evident when their previously relaxed yet self-assured stance leaning against the bench with their arms crossed are quickly forced to sit with their legs pressed together and their hands in their laps like model students after being insulted. Very quickly in 4 frames, Yang portrays the paralyzing effect of racism on the three Asian-American characters.

The stereotypical old 1940’s Hollywood image of the Chinese male is personified in Yang’s comedic character Chin-Kee, the “cousin” of Jin/Danny. Chin-Kee arrives to visit Danny sporting the traditional Mao-era attire, the “queue” (Manchurian style of the ponytail for Chinese males), the cap, the heavily accented “Chinglish”, and the inability to pronounce the “r” and “l” sounds of English. In addition, the pagoda shaped Chinese take-out boxes, a stereotype of Chinese restaurants in the USA, are used by Yang in lieu of typical Western luggage. Chin-Kee represents everything about the Chinese identity that Danny strives to forget-the academic talent, the spittle when talking, the buck teeth, the loud voice, and the Karaoke-style singing, all demonstrated at Danny’s school, leaving Danny mortified. Yang subtly demonstrates how these stereotypes are ascribed or forced identities by dominant Western cultures through the hyperbolic representation of Chin-Kee. The older stereotypes of Chinese-American are also interwoven with the modern stereotypes with Chin-Kee performing William Cheung’s rendition of “She Bangs” for the popular TV show “American Idol”. Instead of being portrayed as a suave

pop star, William Cheung's notoriety was based on his reinforcement of the geeky asexual Asian male. The mockery of these Hollywood stereotypes is demonstrated with the running laughing line at the bottom of each frame. Yang includes many stereotypes of Chinese people in the sitcom portion of *American Born Chinese* such as the slanted eye racist gesture behind Danny's back (G. L. Yang, 2006, p.121) and the association of SARS with Chinese people (G. L. Yang, 2006, p.202) to highlight the absurdity of the racial stereotypes used to broadly label all ethnic Chinese people.

The stereotypes used present an attitude of ambivalence towards this caricature of Chin-Kee: on one hand, Yang's portrayal, where he is mocking Chin-Kee with the running laughing line at the bottom of the page is used to re-appropriate these stereotypes for comedic effect by an Asian-American. On the other hand, Yang wants the character Danny to accept these stereotypes and forge his own hybrid identity as an Asian-American. Chin-Kee is revealed to be the Monkey King in disguise, who is there to help Danny accept his hybrid identity as a Chinese-American male. The Monkey King's hyperbolic expression of Chinese stereotypes pushes Jin in his Danny disguise to question whether or not he can truly run away or hide from a part of his identity—his Chinese ethnicity.

Immigrant Journey to Hybridity: Acceptance and Re-Claiming of Self

When Monk Lai-Tsao meets the Monkey King, he tells him that “returning to your true form is not an exercise of kung-fu, but a release of it” because “the form you have taken is not truly your own. Return to your true form and you shall be freed” (G. L. Yang, 2006, p.145), reminding the Monkey King that he imprisoned himself in his altered human-like form as well. In the end, the Monkey King reverts to his true monkey animal

form, with the monk reminding him he does not need shoes. The closing frame of the Monkey King's story line sees the footprints of the monk and the monkey in the sand as they journey to the West. This image reaffirms the ability of man and monkey to co-exist in their natural state side by side (G. L. Yang, 2006, p.160) and also builds a connection to Mary Stevenson Zangare's Christian poem "Footprints in the Sand" which visualizes Jesus walking in the sand beside believers in the journeys of life. Thus, Yang connects Buddhist imagery and Christian imagery into one creating a hybrid frame. The Monkey King's decision to abandon shoes also shows how he is more helpful to monk Lai-Tsao in his original monkey god form than in his human-like god form as the "Great Sage-Equal to Heaven".

Jin realizes that his quest to be Danny has alienated him from his best friend Wei-Chen and has pushed Wei-Chen to turn his back on his father, the Monkey King. Originally Wei-Chen was given the Monkey Toy Robot to remind him of who he is (Yang, 217), but Jin's betrayal turns Wei-Chen away from his job as a monkey emissary. Jin enters a bubble tea restaurant and tries to reconnect with Wei-Chen and the Chinese part of his identity. Similar to the young Jin who initially rejects Wei-Chen, because he did not want to be associated with a Chinese boy, Wei-Chen initially rejects Jin because he does not want to be associated with an American Born Chinese who does not know who he is. Only through time does Wei-Chen accept Jin as Jin tries to participate in "Asian" activities. Eventually, Jin and Wei-Chen bond over their daily bubble tea meetings, and recognize their hybrid status-Jin as a Chinese and American male and Wei-Chen as a human and monkey as they communicate in Mandarin and English.

Immigrant Journey to Hybridity: Visual Representations in Physical Structure and Layout

The image of the Asian male is stereotypically personified as safe and asexual. In Yang's *American Born Chinese*, Chin-Kee, the caricature Asian Male, is depicted with round features, signifying a more accommodating and safe nature. In contrast, Danny, as Jin's Caucasian person, has a square and more masculine shape. Jin, in his original form, has softly rounded features, signifying his hybrid status, between the dominant Western Anglo male, and the passive Asian male. Yang distorts the construction of the bodies of the Monkey King and Jin to show the internal journey of constructing their identity. The Monkey King changes from his animal form to a human-like form with monkey features while Jin transforms into the curly-haired blonde Danny.

The change in character portrayal when Chin-Kee reverts to his original self as the Monkey King and Danny changes to being Jin again, demonstrates a change in the typical positioning of characters to the left being stable and safe, or in danger when on the right of a page. Rather, the Monkey King and Jin are back to positions of stability as their original selves, instead of in a state of limbo trying to be a different person. When Wei-Chen begins to trust Jin and his offer of friendship again, the close up shot of the bubble tea drinks highlights the symbol of their new bond. Yang uses the "form cut" to highlight the power of Tze-Yo-Tzuh as the "Great One" whose power encompasses all on Earth and the frames of *American Born Chinese*. The pillars the Monkey King runs from and defaces are actually Tze-Yo-Tzuh's fingers. The idea of building a common narrative between the three plot lines is seen when the Monkey King, Jin, and Wei-Chen are all linked together in the end in different stages of defining their hybrid identities. The use

of “dynamic framing” and repetitive patterns give a sense of emotional intensity at the end when Jin realizes how he wants to define himself as a person outside of superficial physical attributes. The change in only their eyes for a series of four frames highlights their internal turmoil until Jin finally agrees to seek out Wei-Chen to mend their friendship. Jin realizes that no matter how much he acts as Danny, he is always forced to switch schools because he can never feel comfortable being “Danny”. Chin-Kee’s visit serves to remind Danny that he is still connected to his Chinese heritage, and that his attempts to escape it cause him to act irrationally as seen in his argument with his dream girl Melanie and his fight with Chin-Kee a.k.a. the Monkey King.

The change in colour between the three plot lines demonstrates a reflection of each character’s journey to acceptance. The Monkey King, a deity in Chinese culture is depicted with tones of red and orange while Jin is portrayed with blue. The colour red in Asian cultures is usually a symbol of wealth and prosperity while red and orange are considered “warm” colours in Western cultures. The red colour can be reflective of the Monkey King’s status as a god. Jin, on the other hand, is associated with blue which is a “cold” colour in the Western world. Danny and Chin-Kee’s story is a mixture of green and blue until the end with Wei-Chen and Jin’s reunion, where it ends with colours of red and orange again. The transition between warm and cold colours can symbolize the change in their identity quest as they move from denial to acceptance. The use of blue in Jin/Danny’s storyline, a “cold” colour, can demonstrate how isolated he is from his ethnic identity, and as the colour for water, symbolizes how he is trying to not drown in his identity navigation. The ending of red and gold symbolizes the warmth of embracing his

ethnic identity, but the mixing of blue, green and purple, demonstrates the intermingling of his different identities.

Yang's three seemingly separate vignettes of the Monkey King, Jin, and Chin-Kee appear to reflect the different aspects of a whole that in the end join together to help Jin face his problem of identity.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

I have been informed by five areas of scholarship to frame my study – the power of picture books for young readers, Asian-American literary theory, perspectives on multicultural literature, the move from multicultural literary theory to postcolonial theory, and in particular, Bhabha’s theory of cultural hybridity. I have also used aspects of Nodelman’s (1988) theory of narrative art to analyze how the hybrid identity of Asian-hybrid immigrants is formed through the immigrant experience as depicted in the three literary works. I have drawn on these theoretical and methodological frameworks to examine the representations of the immigrant journey through the continuum of assimilation, community, and hybridity of the Asian cultural hybrid identity within contemporary children’s works. Belle Yang’s *Hannah is My Name*, Shaun Tan’s *The Arrival* and Gene Luen Yang’s *American Born Chinese* all visualize the immigrant journey and how it affects the formation of the Asian cultural hybrid identity. Through the visual representations of the different stages, the three works represent the historical changes in attitudes towards the immigrant and immigrant offspring. I examined how the images and symbols enhance the narrative of the immigrant journey and the portrayals of immigrant identity beyond what could be accomplished with just a textual narrative. Also, an understanding of the visual narrative of the three works helps to solidify classroom practice to implement the use of the three texts effectively.

Representation of the Immigrant Identity-Seeking Assimilation

Belle Yang’s 2007 picture book *Hannah Is My Name*, based on her own personal experience, reflects the first stages in the history of the immigrant journey where her protagonist, Hannah, seeks legitimization and acceptance through assimilation into the

dominant Western culture. While the older attitudes of immigration viewed this as a positive event, with thoughts of assimilation and new beginnings, modern views of immigration view this as a tragedy. Rather than viewing the Asian-American immigrant as someone who lacks a history prior to entry into a Western country, new views of the immigrant focus on the immigrant past and journey in constructing the new social identity (Lim, 1997, p.296). While her parents actively encourage assimilation, Hannah is reluctant to assimilate as quickly as seen with her confusion about her name and the anxiety she has over her parents' lack of a job and the threat of deportation. Hannah, the protagonist, eventually embraces the desire to create a new identity through assimilation through whole-heartedly embracing the symbols and traditions of the American culture. However, this task of assimilation means the suppression of her own ethnic history and background which causes her some confusion and anxiety. Through Belle Yang's picture book, the immigrant journey is represented as being filled with uncertainty, such as when Hannah loses her friend through deportation when her parents are fired or forced to work in the shadows as illegal immigrant workers, but this uncertainty is reconciled when the family receives their green cards. Belle Yang's personal experience of immigrating to the USA during the height of the Civil Rights movement, the Tiananmen Square Massacre, and the rise of Communism, contributes to her idealized portrayal of immigration and the need for assimilation for a better life. The idealized image of the hard-working immigrant attaining the "American Dream" continues the image of the model Asian minority immigrant and presents an unrealistic portrayal of the hardships in the immigrant journey. While this need for assimilation was evident during the 1960's,

modern views of immigration no longer advocate for assimilation, but rather acceptance of diversity.

Representation of the Immigrant Identity-Journey to Community

In Shaun Tan's *The Arrival*, the immigrant protagonist's journey towards claiming a space and voice in his adopted country demonstrates another aspect of the immigrant identity between assimilation and hybridity. Rather than taking the postcolonial perspective of resisting dominant culture, the immigrant protagonist tries to carve a space within and attempt to find acceptance, belonging and legitimacy in dominant society. Despite his displacement, the immigrant protagonist demonstrates it is possible to reclaim a voice and a space. The immigrant protagonist is also able to establish himself without engaging in any illegal activities such as working without a green card, which represents an idealized image of the model immigrant to achieve the "American Dream" myth (Boatright, 2010, p.417). *The Arrival* is the second stage of the immigrant journey as immigrants try to maintain their culture while living within a new home, but have yet to resist the West-East power relationship.

Representation of the Immigrant Identity-Hybridity

In Gene Luen Yang's *American Born Chinese*, G. L. Yang demonstrates how Jin is the hybrid Chinese-American as he is physically labelled to be an outsider as a Chinese male, but in the confines of Asian restaurants such as bubble tea houses, Jin is reduced to being labelled an American male with his inability to read the menu in Chinese, seen in the waitress' intolerance as Jin orders an item on the menu at the bubble tea parlour which in Chinese states "Cash Only" (G. L. Yang, 2006, p.226). The closing frame of Jin and Wei-Chen as the Back Dorm Boys, in the centre of a white background creates the

final image of the hybrid identity. The Back Dorm Boys, famous for their *youtube* videos enacting various Western pop songs by artists such as the Backstreet Boys, is a merger between East and West. Through mending his friendship with Wei-Chen, Jin demonstrates that he is accepting of his hybrid status-that as an American-Born Chinese male. By having Jin and Wei-Chen rekindle their friendship, Yang shows how there is more than one interpretation of a hybrid identity for American Born Chinese, and that they can all co-exist.

Yang uses stereotypes of different Chinese identities-the American-Born Chinese and the “Honger” Chinese or Taiwanese Chinese, who all share similar physical characteristics, but different social traditions and habits to forge new definitions of the American-Born Chinese. Jin is the American-Born Chinese person who embraces Western culture, does not have the Chinese language fluency, and who engages in aspects of Chinese culture from an outsider point of view. Wei-Chen is the stereotypical Taiwanese or “Honger” Chinese person with the enhanced sports car, the gold chains, the sunglasses, and the outlandish hair style. Yang combines all the different symbols and stereotypes of ethnic Chinese people to present alternative representations of ethnic Chinese people and to mock the stereotypes associated with certain groups within the same ethnic group to demonstrate the fluidity of identity.

The three books examined present varying degrees of anxiety, displacement, and resistance. Belle Yang’s *Hannah is My Name* presents the idealized image of immigration with slight anxiety over assimilation through Hannah’s tension with her name. Shaun Tan’s *The Arrival* presents the displacement of the immigrant protagonist and his attempts to create a new community. However, both these two picture books

present the image of the model minority immigrant who through hard work is able to achieve the dream of a new and better life. Gene Luen Yang's graphic novel *American Born Chinese* is the most resistant portrayal of the immigrant identity as it examines the complexity of balancing between absolute assimilation and acculturation for immigrants and second-generation immigrant children who inhabit the hybrid space between Asian and American culture.

Implications for the Classroom

The change in the comic/graphic novel industry from sales of comics to school libraries and libraries to increase from \$1million in 2001 to \$30 million in 2007 (Hudson, 2008) is a result of the mainstream acceptance of comics to be a representative of the different literacies people have. Various studies (Boatright, 2010; Crawford, 2004; Lavin, 1998; Norton, 2003; Schwartz, 2002; G. L.Yang, 2008) have demonstrated the impact of using comic books in the classroom to engage reluctant readers, struggling readers, ESL readers, and young readers. As McTaggart (2003) argues, "before we can make kids read what we want them to, we must first make them want to read. If hooking kids on books requires us to do it their way, via comics and graphic novels, so be it" (p.46). As many children are visual learners, the engagement they have with images through a relationship with picture books starts very young. With the use of comics/graphic novels, teachers could build on their engagement with picture books and extend that interest into comics or graphic novels. As many graphic novels are being produced by publishers to teach curricular content in English, Social Studies, and Science, graphic novels have become a legitimate form of text for learning.

As part of any balanced literacy program, comics and graphic novels should be chosen as a supplement. To include graphic novels in the classroom, McTaggart (2003) suggests hosting a wide selection of comics, using one comic per month for the classroom, using comics to show students that they have a choice, and to not show disdain for comics. While some may mention that picture books and novels are levelled by reading ability, Hudson (2008) argues that comics should and could be adapted to fit the vocabulary level and reading difficulty for different ages of students. It is also recommended that teachers accept that comics require a large visual vocabulary to extract meaning from the images of a comic/graphic novel and that these textual clues and reading strategies could be taught as well. As with choosing any piece of literature, the basic requirements of strong plot lines, story structure, character development, and dialogue are all vital and are more evident in more contemporary publications of graphic novels.

The power of picture books to pass on social traditions and the relationships between text and reader has been analyzed and studied from traditional picture books to postmodern picture books (Nodelman, 1988; Sipe 1998). The use of multicultural children's books is even more important in the effect it has on student understanding of culture and racism. As Hazel Rochman (1993) in her book *Against Borders* as cited in Higgins (2002), explains,

A good book can help to break down [barriers]. Books can make a difference in dispelling prejudice and building community: not with role models and literal recipes, not with noble messages about the human family, but with enthralling stories that make us imagine the lives of others. A good story lets you know

people as individuals in all their particularity and conflict; and once you see someone as a person - flawed, complex, striving - then you've reached beyond stereotype. Stories, writing them, telling them, sharing them, transforming them, enrich us and connect us and help us know each other. (p.19)

Multicultural books are necessary to help students build an understanding of diversity and the different identities within a culture. Multicultural books can be used to explore bias and Higgins (2002) argues that through books that emphasize the similar experiences across cultures and how minority characters in books are relatable, students can gain an appreciation and acceptance of diverse culture beyond an exoticization of their difference in relation to Caucasian dominant culture and identity. Higgins lists different criteria for evaluating multicultural books to be used in the classroom, such as having authors/illustrators with “insider” voices, having illustrations that accurately depict the culture and lifestyle, avoiding derogatory terms and reflecting the genuine realities of the everyday life routines of the culture. Four of Higgins’ evaluative criterion focuses on the portrayals of the identity of the minority character: (1) The characters are strong and independent and do not need extraordinary qualities to gain acceptance from dominant society; (2) Minority characters are leaders and can solve their own problems; (3) Visual depictions of characters show the difference in physical attributes of minority people; and (4) Do not perpetuate the myth of the “model” or “super” minority group.

As a teacher of upper intermediate grades in Vancouver, British Columbia, I use multicultural books to raise social issues of discrimination or to teach the reasons for immigrating; therefore, the selection of picture books or graphic novels used requires careful deliberation. One of the guiding principles are to check for any portrayals or

stereotypes of a culture that I would find uncomfortable to “teach” to my students, especially if the potentially sensitive issue does not have an educationally reason to be included aside from perpetuating stereotypes. For example, the multicultural books that use the food or festivals of a culture to highlight how different the minority character is and how the Caucasian protagonist learns to enjoy the odd food or festivities is an image of exoticizing a culture that I would seek to avoid. Also, these types of multicultural books highlight diversity instead of raising awareness of social issues of racism and discrimination. Instead, as a teacher, I would choose multicultural books that focus on inclusion of different cultures, recognizing their similarities and differences, and helping students from all cultures draw connections.

When reflecting on the use of Belle Yang’s *Hannah is My Name*, I would mainly use it with younger students between Kindergarten to Grade 3 due to the more simplistic and romanticized images. Some of the issues that may arise from the picture book are the depiction of Taiwan as a rural country, the notion of the model minority myth of hard-working working-class citizens, and the changing of the name so easily. As a primary picture book, it would be useful to describe how the child protagonist finds a sense of belonging through the green card arriving. This opens discussion into how assimilation used to be the “norm” that immigrants desired, and how currently it is encouraged for everyone to be proud of their own culture. As well, I would be careful to recognize that it is not always a “happy ending” with every immigrant journey, or that by sheer hard work, the “American Dream” will come so quickly. From a Canadian context, Yang’s picture book can be used to point out how the multicultural ideal espoused in Canada supports the notion of celebrating diversity, rather than removing it.

Shaun Tan's wordless picture book *The Arrival* could be used with students in Grades 4-7. The different images could be used to elicit oral and writing responses about impressions and connections. Also, the other immigrant stories interspersed in the story of the unnamed immigrant can also be used to examine the different reasons for immigrating. However, the lack of words in *The Arrival* also allows for different impressions to be made in the classroom. The immigrant journey could be interpreted as an immigrant from a European background, or the immigrant journey could be from India. Recently, one of my students decided to analyze *The Arrival* for her book talk in the study of graphic novels, and she asked to use Shaun Tan's book which she felt fit the criteria of a graphic novel. As an East Indian second-generation immigrant child, she interpreted the immigrant journey not from an Asian or European perspective, but from her own personal family's history of immigration from India to England to Canada. In her analysis, she took the more universal symbols of displacement and the immigrant journey and applied it to her own family history. Another student who had previously "read" *The Arrival* analyzed it from the perspective of her family's immigration from Germany to Canada. These differing readings and positioning of the child-reader also opens up discussion in the classroom of the versatility of images to convey meaning and how to validate different immigrant histories. Aside from the "readings" from students, *The Arrival* also opens up discussion into the actual art mediums used by Tan and the effect of colour, tones, and perspective to control reader positioning. This could lead to visualization exercises where students could draw their own images of immigration and immigrant identity and the role it can play in their society. In the classroom, Tan's images could also be used to focus on details in images, and help students to recognize

how the perspective of images changes the intent of the author/illustrator in positioning the reader. The primary message of Tan's unnamed immigrant protagonist's journey is the search for a new home and finding acceptance, which will resonate with many students in the "tween" phase, as they themselves are trying to define themselves. Of course, Tan's *The Arrival* is not limited to just the 9-12 age group as it also resonates with adult readers.

Gene Luen Yang's *American Born Chinese* could be used for grades 8-12 (and older). First, as a coloured graphic novel, it will help engage struggling readers and reluctant readers. Second, it draws on many pop culture references and the resistance in the narrative would appeal to teenaged students as they themselves try to resist ascribed identities and re-form themselves in their high school lives. The nuances and stereotypes Yang plays with would open discussion into racism and discrimination while serving as a good stepping stone to showcase parody and hyperbolic expressions for comedic effect. As well, Gene Luen Yang's depiction of adolescence and the immigrant could propel discussion into the depictions in the media such as TV or magazines of visible minorities and how it is similar or different to portrayals of non-visible minorities.

One of the most important uses of any of the three works used in the classroom is to open the awareness of students to the depiction of the immigrant identity. Each of the voices of the authors/illustrators defines the immigrant identity differently, and due to their different histories and motivations forms a different positioning of the reader. To compare different representations of the immigrant or Asian-hybrid identity in various picture books would be beneficial to students. Each of the works could be used in conjunction with other multicultural books published either for the same age group or

published in earlier years to compare and contrast the different perspectives of minority authors. By opening dialogue with students, particularly those aged nine and above, a postcolonial educational space could be created where students can combine their skills as critical readers and reflectors to decide if they accept, connect or resist the images and portrayals of immigrants and hybrids in the works I analyzed and in other multicultural books.

Implications for Future Research

When choosing my sample of works to analyze, I initially intended to use books from Canadian-Chinese authors/illustrators. However, due to the limited amount of contemporary literature that focuses on topics of immigrant journey and identity by Chinese-Canadian authors/illustrators, I chose works published by Asian-American/Australian authors/illustrators. As Asian-Canadian studies has been documented to be relatively late in comparison to the field of Asian-American studies (Lee, 2007), conducting this literary analysis of the visual representations of Asian immigrant hybrid identity in literature from Chinese-Canadian author/illustrators would help enrich discussion into the immigrant identity and have greater generalizability to the Canadian educational context.

In this literary study, I have analyzed the visual representations of the immigrant journey and immigrant identity. For further research, it is recommended that a study into the readings of these children's works by child readers be conducted. As Rosenblatt's transactional theory outlines, literature lives in the mind of the reader during and after the act of reading (Probst, 1992). The number of studies on minority children's responses to literature is small and studies are needed to help guide curriculum development (Liaw,

1995). Therefore, to increase the understanding of the educational implications of multicultural books, further studies examining the positive or resistant readings of minority child readers to Asian-hybrid literature needs to be examined.

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