

Cultural Identity at the Liminal Spaces: A Study of Wakako Yamauchi's *And The Soul Shall Dance*

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ABSTRACT

In the contemporary world, one of the major forces of identity transformation is cross-border movements or transnational movements. One's identity is no longer perceived as an innate construct based on ethnicity or nationality but rather as something unstable, which changes in accordance with the diverse cultural contexts and societal operations. Accordingly, we have today the concept of culture transcending the barriers of nation, and the concept of identity escaping strictures imposed by any nationality. Such transformation in the notion of culture and identity have transpired due to an ever-present phenomenon of migrating communities or diasporic communities. Wakako Yamauchi in her play, *And the Soul Shall Dance*, discusses this issue of the formation of cultural identity in the immigrant community of Japanese-Americans in the early 20th century. Falling between cultural integration, cultural assimilation and a longing for one's own homeland, the identity of Japanese-Americans is constructed at the "in-between" spaces of two cultures. The play essentially brings forth the struggles formulated by the people belonging to two cultural backgrounds, Japanese and American, and trying to resolve their lives at the borderlands of culturality.

Keywords: Japanese-American, *And the Soul Shall Dance*, Wakako Yamauchi, Issei and Nisei, 'fourfold theory' of acculturation, cultural in-betweenness, cultural assimilation, cultural integration

INTRODUCTION

Cultural identity and its positioning at the in-between spaces of multiple cultures have emerged as frequent subjects in cultural studies. In the contemporary world, concepts of identity, culture, history, race and nation have all undergone significant

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transformations within the paradigm of transnational diaspora. The Enlightenment assumptions that essentialised the above concepts have been replaced in the post-structuralist notions in which the individual's identity becomes negotiable. This identity transformation seen as part of a wider process of change displaces the concepts about the central structures and processes of modern societies, undermining the frameworks which gave individuals stability in the social world. Such transformations have been ever-present phenomena of migrating communities or diasporic communities. The question that arises here is how individuals with diverse cultural backgrounds at both the centre and periphery confront and negotiate for a viable solution for the cultural conundrum that a migrant faces. Hence, new cultural productions and cross-cultural engagements are expected to originate in the new negotiating spaces and overlapping territories. In *Culture and Imperialism* (1994) Edward Said suggests that overlapping territories and intertwined histories are characteristic patterns of diaspora and dispersions (p.72). In this work, he challenges the traditional binary colonial conceptualisations of cultures that held the stage for decades, and therefore he offers new paradigms of cross-culturalism and the hybridity of cultures. The binaries of dominant societies and dominated societies are seen not to occupy distinctly separate terrains; rather, their encounter is attained from overlapping territories. Therefore, the focus of attention is not within the national spaces or the distinct cultural locations but

rather "a meeting point," the "in-between spaces" where both cultures and identities are engaged and negotiated. The interface where the two groups meet, the "in-between spaces", is where and when new signs of identity and culture are produced. In his *Location of Culture* (1994), Homi Bhabha states:

These "in-between" spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. It is the emergence of the interstices - the overlap and displacement of domains of difference .

When different cultures come into contact with each other, for example, through immigration, the immigrant culture might go through any one of several processes of acculturation as it adapts to the new society. Among these processes are integration, assimilation, etc. In his 2003 "Critical History of the Acculturation Psychology of Assimilation, Separation, Integration, and Marginalization", Rudmin discusses the 'fourfold theory' of acculturation and points out the variety of models of minority and dominant cultures. The interaction of a minority culture and a dominant culture can be expected to create different types of acculturation. When the dominant culture is favored it leads to assimilation. But when

both cultures collaborate in some form of biculturalism, it leads to integration (Rudmin, 2003).

For the immigrants, cultural integration or cultural assimilation is not an easy task, and constant interaction between two different cultural practices leads to a dilemma. The nostalgia for their homeland compels them to make certain amount of adjustments in the new locations. And so identity formation for them becomes even more problematic and challenging. They can neither fully participate in a foreign culture as easily as they do with their own community nor can they withstand from accepting its culture to a certain level. That is to say, they cannot genuinely plant their feet simultaneously in both the cultural spaces. Ultimately they find themselves in a cultural limbo – at the liminal space of two cultures and it becomes a strategy for self-preservation. They are likely to feel “caught between two worlds”. Therefore, a less strong bond with the home country and the natural recognition of the culture of ‘new’ cultural space around them result in another condition of cultural existence called cultural hybridity. It is neither cultural integration nor cultural assimilation, but somewhere between the two. This “in-betweenness” is a constant feeling of dislocation and identity confusion.

Liminal Spaces of the Formation of Cultural Identity in And The Soul Shall Dance

Constituted between the legacies of Japanese cultural heritage and a life in America, the immigrant Japanese constantly negotiate

and redefine their “neither here, nor there” identities. Bromley (2000) notes, “Migration has been seen as the quintessential experience of the twentieth century, from south to north and from east to west. The outcome of this movement of peoples, this displacement and deterritorialisation, has been the formation of diasporic communities and the development of diasporic identities”. Wakako Yamauchi’s play *And the Soul Shall Dance* (1977) explicates this tension in migrant Japanese communities in America. The play brings forth the struggles formulated by people belonging to two cultural backgrounds trying to reconcile lives lived at the borderlands of cultures – one at the Japanese and the other at the American. Also, the cultural ‘pull’ and ‘push’ factors are delineated through the unfolding of the lives of people belonging to two generations. While Issei and Nisei generational cultures live together under the same roof and within a small locale, the tension escalates around their authentic cultural identity.

There are some underlying reasons why people choose to settle in other countries. These can be labeled as ‘push factors’ and ‘pull factors’. The former occurs when people start migrating to another region due to catastrophes in their homeland. These negative ‘push factors’ usually consist of poverty, religious persecution and political oppression. In the latter category, people are attracted to the better possibilities available in the country targeted for migration. These pull factors can be for education, job opportunities or attraction to a better lifestyle (Ingram, 2005). The economic and social conditions of the post-World War II

period in America were not favorable for Asian immigrants. They suffered economic and social disparities from the dominant Americans. Wakako Yamauchi's play *And the Soul Shall Dance* brings to the audience a time when Californian law forbade Japanese immigrants from owning land. Farmers who had come to America were obliged to sign a two-year rent on the property they cultivated. Many families found themselves moving from farm to farm to obtain some living subsistence. They faced different kinds of discrimination in addition to language and cultural barriers (Holoen, 1990). The play, *And the Soul Shall Dance*, encompasses a world of agony confronted by two Japanese families in a small farm in the Imperial Valley of Southern California during the first half of the 20th Century. The desire for a prosperous life in an alien land compels them to push on in spite of the dire adversities. However, their attempts to lead a life in America are stymied by problems of constructing a viable cultural identity.

Wakako Yamauchi is one of the most prominent 20th century Asian American women writers. Though she originally was a short-story writer, she is known now as a playwright. She chose play writing as a form of creative expression because "she enjoys watching the audience respond to art" (Houston, 1993) and because plays "offer the opportunity to connect with human beings in the theater" (Houston, 1993). Many writers consider her a "cultural treasure" for her ability to inspire her readers through her distinct portrayals of Japanese American acculturation. Her writings shed

light on Japanese American history, in particular, immigration in the early 20th century and World War II imprisonment (Berg, 2009).

Yamauchi, a Nisei (second generation Japanese American), was born on October 24, 1924 in California to two Issei (first generation Japanese immigrants). Like all Japanese farmers, her parents and three siblings (including her) experienced discrimination. They were required to move from one place to another in California's Imperial Valley according to the existing Alien Land Law, which prevented the Japanese from owning land. At the age of 17 and in her senior year of high school, they were forced to leave the place and settle in internment camps established at the outbreak of World War II. She stayed a year and a half in the camps before being permitted to leave for Chicago, where she worked in a candy factory and attended all the play performances she could. When the camps were officially demolished, she took painting classes at the Otis Art Center.

Wakako Yamauchi has an inborn talent for writing. It was not something that she discovered through formal training. It developed from the stories her mother told her about Japanese heritage and their cultural identity as immigrants. She was also inspired by the many stories and poems she read in her youth and also by her own experiences in internment camps. Her play *And the Soul Shall Dance* was originally published as a short story and later adapted into the now-popular play (Berg, 2009). Her primary thematic concerns are about

ordinary people and events and so *And the Soul Shall Dance* portrays the life of Japanese Americans before World War II: their struggle to fix themselves in one of the cultural spaces available to them and their inability to fully achieve this aim.

The Japanese Americans were defined according to immigration patterns: first-generation Issei immigrants who arrived on American shores between 1885 and 1924; second-generation Nisei, the offspring of Issei; and third-generation Sansei, the children of Nisei. Fourth and fifth generations succeeded the third generation Sansei, many of them racially and ethnically mixed as Japanese Americans continued to marry outside their ethnic group (Wendy, 2002; Montero, 1980).

In the play *And the Soul Shall Dance*, the Muratas and Okas are two Japanese immigrant families striving to settle in America during the post-World War I Depression period and finding themselves caught between two cultures. Murata's family consists of Mr Murata, Mrs Hana (both Issei) and their daughter Masako (Nisei) whereas Oka's family consists of Mr Oka, Mrs Emiko (both Issei) and, later, Mr Oka's daughter, Kiyoko, who arrives from Japan (daughter of Oka's first wife, who is dead). Both the families are attracted to America because of the poor living conditions in their homeland. The play takes place in Southern California in 1935, in small farms in the Imperial Valley. Portraying the life of both families during the Depression, it shows a clear view of

Asian and American cultural standards and practices. It is an obvious comparison between Asian and American cultural norms and expectations. The characters in this play represent two distinct generations, the Issei and the Nisei. The chronological division of the family members into Issei and Nisei seems to be quite relevant because of the difference in their attitudes towards their own culture on one side and the alien culture on the other side. The title *And The Soul Shall Dance* is adapted from a song, which helps Emiko to temporarily escape her dull and uncomfortable life in the foreign land. Singing and dancing to this music gives her a feeling of comfort that carries her inner self back to her native land, Japan.

The two families are chosen to represent almost all Japanese-American families as they struggle to exist within the cultural borders of American society while trying to maintain their original Japanese cultural heritage. Through the lives of both families, Yamauchi tries to portray the entire history of the life of Japanese immigrant farmers in America. They migrated to America as their temporary residence with a hope of returning to their homeland after having acquired prosperity. But their dreams remain unfulfilled because of many unfavourable conditions in the alien land. In the first scene of the play, Oka's speech to Murata and Hana explains the main reason behind his coming to America:

OKA: . . . *the best thing is to get away. We thought if I came to America and made some money .*

. . . send her [his first wife] money until we had enough, and I'd go back and we'd leave the family . . . you know, move to another province . . . start a small business, maybe in the city. (p.161)

Then Oka adds that the Japanese in America lead a very difficult life as they have to move from one place into another without any right to obtain property:

OKA: *Next year our lease will be up and we got to move. In America, Japanese cannot own land. We lease and move every two to three years. Next year we going go someplace where there's young fellows. There's none good for you here. You going to make a good wife. (p.200)*

As mentioned previously, the play covers the post-depression period when immigration was a dire necessity for the Asians to achieve material prosperity. But they could not have material prosperity and cultural fusion at the same time. They want to maintain their cultural heritage rather than sacrifice it for material benefits. They face the inevitable dilemma. Almost all the immigrants confront a situation of sacrificing their cultural heritage for something which they really had not intended to do. They want material benefits but at the same time not at the cost of their cultural heritage. What Yamauchi has portrayed in the characters of the Muratas and Emiko is their longing for their homeland. This conflict is embodied

in an even deeper sense through the actions of Emiko who cannot embrace the lifestyle in America as vividly manifested in her speech: "Dreams are unbearable...I'll be going back one day... My home. Japan. My real home. I'm going back one day" (pp.170-171). Considering their economic situations in Japan, they all have to stay in America for a better life. Murata with his wife Hana seem to lead an exemplary life. They are cautious not to bring up their only daughter Masako in the western style. The girl proves to share the same feelings as she refuses to have, for example, a boyfriend in the way her American peers do. This shows her sticking to her beliefs and cultural identity:

EMIKO: *... Masachan, do you have a boyfriend?*

MASAKO: *I don't like boys. They don't like me.*

EMIKO: *Oh, that will change. You will change. I was like that too.*

MASAKO: *Besides, there's none around here . . . Japanese boys. There are some at school, but they don't like girls. (p.187)*

Thus, maintaining one's own cultural identity, even while living in a country that has a totally different cultural outlook, is one of the main concerns of the play. Loss of culture can occur when people are no longer rooted in their birthplace – for example, when, as a result of migration, immigration, or forced exile, they find

themselves struggling between national identities, languages or cultures (Kowaleski-Wallace, 2006). The elder members of both families in the play seem to suffer from the memories of nostalgic moments from their homeland.

But, we see that unlike the Muratas and Emiko, Oka has forgotten or erased everything related to his past or homeland. He works hard just to make sure his daughter assimilates into the dominant white American culture. Meanwhile, his mind is occupied by the idea of assimilation in the alien society; the process refers to adapting completely to the dominant culture without maintaining the original one. Wakako presents Oka as a figure who struggles to find a comfortable position within American rather than Japanese culture. Slowly his dream of returning to Japan fades and the most important aim for him is to assimilate and to work hard in order that his daughter becomes assimilated too. Oka describes the discrimination that they, as Japanese-Americans, must face to his daughter bitterly, and tells her of the need to assimilate, to leave 'Japan' behind. Because their 'Japanese-ness' marks them out for racial discrimination, Oka feels, naively, that assimilation into the dominant culture will get rid of that Japanese-ness, thus also removing any possibility of discrimination.

'Assimilation' for the second generation, represented by Kiyoko and Masako seems to be much easier than for the older generation. Japanese cultural heritage and cultural leanings of the younger generation (Nisei) are not deeply rooted when compared

with the older generation (Issei), as the younger generation are born or brought up in an alien land where the dominant culture can overwhelm their native culture, such that it is not a central part of their lives. In this play, Masako and Kiyoko (Nisei) adapt to the alien culture with consummate ease compared to their parents. With her father's encouragement, Kiyoko, the rustic village girl from Japan, adapts to the alien environment. Also with Masako's assistance, Kiyoko seems to overcome the linguistic barriers within only a few months of her initiation in the English school. The second scene in Act Two discloses an aspect of the issue of immigration when linguistic barriers prevent Kiyoko from doing well in studies and she is ridiculed because of her Asian accent. She manages to overcome this barrier by learning the language of the dominant society. Initially, Kiyoko finds herself between two cultural elements. The acquisition of a new language becomes a decisive factor in moving her more towards one particular culture, within the in-between space of two cultures.

Hana encourages Kiyoko to stay in touch with their cultural background although it is so hard for them. Hana realises that integrating into the dominant society is a difficult matter, but they have no other choice if they wish to survive in this society. Hana has realized that Oka's desire to assimilate completely into the dominant culture might also influence his daughter, so she advises Kiyoko to work at maintaining her Japanese cultural identity. But Hana focuses on the future of the

younger generation's cultural identity. She realises that the Nisei should be directed by the older generation (Issei).

Yamauchi presents Hana as the advocate for the younger generation to maintain their cultural heritage, while she herself is trapped between two cultures. She is presented as a woman who is aware of the merits and demerits of being in such an alien society, declaring that "the place is so lonely and alien" (p.192). Moreover, we see her, from time to time, playing the role of an integrationist, helping the others find a balance between their longing for their home and the benefits of being integrated into the dominant society. In fact, she lives on the borderlines between the cultures, dealing constantly with contradictions and ironies. McLeod (2007) argues, "Borders are important thresholds, full of contradictions and ambivalence. They both separate and join different places. They are intermediate locations where one contemplates moving beyond a barrier". Hana tells Kiyoko that being in a society which puts individuals in this 'intermediate' position needs courage and patience:

HANA: *That isn't easy either. Believe me. Sometimes . . . sometimes the longing for home . . . the longing fills me with despair. Will I never return again? Will I never see my mother, my father, my sisters again? But what can one do? There are responsibilities here . . . children . . . [pause] And another day passes . . . another month . . . another year.* (p.193)

In contrast Emiko, who belongs to the Issei generation, is neither integrated nor assimilated into American society. Her arrival in America and her marriage with Oka are against her free will and hence she has her own reasons not to like America. She has forsaken everything in Japan – her home and her happiness. Her American life does not please her in any way because she was quite happy in Japan and she will never find peace in America. She has segregated herself from anything related to American culture. She is alive only because she fosters a dream that one day she can return to Japan. As coming back home is the dream of any migrant, most often, the possibility of a return keeps the immigrant attached to their dying roots. Oscillating between her sense of longing for a home and a sense of non-belongingness suffered in America, Emiko is in a perpetual state of exile and disconnectedness. Her difficulty is to weave an identity that is constituted on the notion of a stable 'home'. She finds herself hinged between two locations, one America and the other her own homeland in Japan. In a soliloquy, Emiko cherishes her dream of her past life in Japan and in reminiscent mood she mutters that if she gives in, her dreams will die, and she will die too:

EMIKO: *I must keep the dream alive. The dream is all I live for. I am only in exile now. If I give in, all I've lived before will mean nothing . . . will be for nothing. Nothing. If I let you make me believe this is all there is to my life, the dream would die. I would die.* (p.180)

Emiko's dreams of her romantic past are considered to be the source of her sustained energy. In spite of her despair she keeps herself awake by revisiting her cultural past through enacting and embodying certain cultural symbols. She likes to wear silken kimonos and is fond of dancing, things that bring her back to her romantic past. Emiko has no desire to settle to life on American soil. She has dreams and her dreams are outdated yet her dreams give her meaning in life. She still dreams of going back to Japan, but inevitably finds herself in America in an inescapable situation. However, Emiko cannot endure being far away from her home. She longs for her home all the time. She is never happy living in a foreign land. Her failure to forget and forsake her experience in her homeland forbids her from making a compromise with American culture. She is destined to lead a life of agony.

Metaphorically the playwright uses a couple of images that stand for the heritage of Japanese culture. The song, "And the Soul shall Dance", kimonos, dances and the tea parties all become a symbol of their deepest love for their country. Speaking of Emiko, for example, a critic notes that "Without her sophisticated culture of kimonos, tea ceremonies and song and dance, her life is barren – metaphorically represented here by the Californian desert she lives in" (Aranda, 2000). For the Japanese Americans, music was an important means for creating hope, cohesion, resistance and a sense of identity. While struggling for a place in American society, the Japanese-Americans sought

through music some energy to retain ties with Japan, foster ethnic traditions and teach their American-born children those cultural traditions. Hana displays high regard for this music, as an element of their cultural identity which they also need to maintain. Accordingly, such music is embraced also by Masako. Hana knows that giving attention to their music is to enlighten the others about the value of their cultural identity. For an immigrant, listening to the music of the country of birth helps create a feeling of being at home. This is highlighted by Murata who accentuates the importance of being in touch with one's cultural background. Through his love of Japanese music, he refers to the power of such cultural connection. In a conversation about music, Murata tells Oka and Emiko that listening to Japanese music is a way through which he can be close to his cultural background: "They [Japanese records] take me back home. The only way I can get there. In my mind" (p.167). In addition to that his wife Hana seems happy and announces proudly that their daughter loves Japanese music. Hana says "our Masaka loves to play records. I like records too, and Papa [Murata]" (p.167). Masako's love of this music reflects the influence of her parents in encouraging her to maintain her Japanese cultural identity. The song offers fleeting comfort for the unhappy wife, Emiko. Unable to adjust, she dances as if transported from the alien desert back to her beloved Japan. Cultural symbols remind one of one's cultural past, giving pleasure while at the same time causing pain because of what

has been lost in the process of migration. It is this dilemma, the in-betweenness, that creates new cultural identity for those who find themselves trapped between life in America and love for the Japanese cultural past.

This tension is further explicated through Emiko's attempts to sell the much cherished cultural symbol, her kimonos. Emiko, a dancer by profession, had been a performer at tea parties, wearing silken kimonos, and still carries the dream of her unforgotten past. She has been secretly keeping the silken kimonos as a valuable memento with the hope that she may go back to her dancing profession in her homeland. But she wants to sell the cherished mementos in her final attempt to earn the money to travel back to Japan. It is ironic that she has to part with the cultural symbol that has kept her invigorated in order to go back to a point of deep immersion in her cultural environment. Emiko approaches the Muratas with the intention of selling the kimonos. She arrives at Muratas' house and asks:

EMIKO: . . . *I have kimonos I wore in Japan for dancing. Maybe she can . . . if you like, I mean. They'll be nice on her. [Emiko shakes out a robe. HANA and MASAKA are impressed . . . They touch the material]. Maybe Masa-chan would like them. I mean for her school programs . . . Japanese school.*

HANA: *But these gowns, Emiko-san – they're worth hundreds.*

EMIKO: *I know, but I'm not asking for that. Whatever you can give. Only as much as you can give.*
(p.205)

Thus, through Emiko, Yamauchi shows the inevitability and struggle of being in the in-between space of multiple cultures while in diaspora.

For the Muratas (Issei), assimilating to a new culture at the expense of their oriental cultural heritage is unfeasible and unacceptable. They are not uprooted completely from their native land, at least not in spiritual terms. They are proud of their heritage and try to maintain their cultural identity. Even so, they talk indignantly about the difficulties of being integrated in the dominant society: "the first immigrant generations remain essentially tied to their native cultures, adapting only with difficulty to the new one, a condition which further aggravates cultural differences" (Aranda, 2000). Hana pronounces the idea of alienation when she tells her daughter, Masako that "White people among White people . . . that's different from Japanese among white people" (p.182). The feeling of loneliness and alienation is augmented when they face unfavorable life situations in America.

We see through a variety of different perspectives that to simply cast tradition and family values aside is not an easy thing to accomplish. In some cases, the circumstance of being isolated from one's culture is not a choice taken voluntarily. It is not easy

to abandon one's cultural heritage easily. One of the questions raised in the play is, 'Who has the ability to carry on the past and who has adequately prepared the next generation to protect their cultural identity?' Wakako Yamauchi's play finds that it is not always people's choice to leave behind their culture. While we see some of the young generation trying hard to assimilate, we find that some of the older generation work hard to integrate by maintaining their own cultural identity while also adapting to the dominant culture. On the other hand there are those of the older generation who are determined to assimilate completely, while others refuse to let go of their original culture. Furthermore, some members of the younger generation are able to successfully integrate both cultures. So it is a question of assimilating into a new cultural identity while integrating the new one with the previous one, thereby positioning oneself around the concepts of fluid cultural identity constructions. Such problems in reconciling with one's cultural identity can be traced easily in both Hana and Emiko on one side and the young generation, particularly Kiyoko, on the other. To maintain their cultural heritage, they should make aim for balance between both cultures; in other words they should find themselves plying between two cultures. Though living away from their native place, Hana does not totally neglect her Japanese culture or totally embrace the new culture of America. What she uses is a survival strategy that befits the nature of a transnational migrant who makes compromises and reconciliations for

a life in an alien land. Cultural integration could well be seen as a means to reconcile the two conflicting ideals of cultural past and living abroad in a totally different cultural environment. For example, as a way to achieve integration, Hana brings up her daughter Masako the way that Japanese children are brought up as far as their attitude and appearance are concerned:

HANA: *She'll like you. Japanese girls are very polite, you know.*

MASAKO: *We have to be or our mamas get mad at us. (p.181)*

Hana, in her effort to maintain their culture, extends her role to Kiyoko too. She reminds Kiyoko of filial duty which is seen as an Asian value, as children have to serve their parents:

KIYOKO: *I left Japan for a better life.*

HANA: *It isn't easy for you. But you must remember your filial duty.*

KIYOKO: *It's so hard. (p.193)*

Though Hana faces an unknown future in an alien land, she still relies heavily on traditional morals and cultural bonds. She encourages her daughter to maintain a good attitude, as she reminds her of the idea that man in general should be strong to go on regardless of hardship. Hana describes Emiko's situation:

HANA: *She can't adjust to this life. She can't get over the good times*

she had in Japan. Well, it's not easy. But one has to know when to bend . . . like the bamboo. When the winds blow, bamboo bends. You bend or crack. Remember that, Masako. (p.175)

On the other hand, Murata and Hana's strong cultural bonds help them to have a clear idea about their aims in American society. This helps them to adapt to American culture and integrate their culture with the dominant one to achieve a comfortable life. To them, integration is a means for basic survival and they are able to achieve it and be emotionally balanced. Murata and Hana still cherish the hope of a way out of their economic hardships and dream of a settled life back home in Japan. However, the Muratas have been occupied by the idea of going back one day to Japan. They feel that their life will be better in Japan if they get enough money in America. This dream reflects their inner conflict and the suffering they experience living in the American society. They feel that they are luckier than Oka, who struggles to get assimilated despite the negative cultural impact of assimilation. Accordingly, the Muratas, unlike Oka, are against the idea of achieving assimilation in the American society. The Muratas are sure that one day they will go back to Japan; indeed, that is their dream:

HANA*[quietly]: . . . where will it end? Will we always be like this – always at the mercy of the weather . . . prices . . . always at the mercy of the Gods?*

MURATA: *Things will change. Wait and see. We'll be back in Japan by . . . in two years. Guarantee. May be sooner. . .*

HANA *[sighing]: Kiyoko-san . . . poor Kiyoko-san. And Emiko-san . . .*

MURATA: *Ah, Mama. We're lucky. We're lucky, Mama.* (p.198)

For Hana the matter is not the same. She feels sorry as the past seems to be so far away now. She dreams also of going back one day to Japan, but she thinks that being in Japan again will be difficult. Hana expresses her disappointment and sorrow for losing part of her cultural identity. She is reminded of this fact when her daughter tries to hang a glass wind chime on the wall – a gift that given to Masako by Kiyoko as a symbol of Japan. Hana explains that hearing such sounds from the past too often adds pain to her soul for they remind her too strongly of her life in Japan. Here, Hana expresses her disappointment as her dream of going back home and immersing herself in her own culture is no longer achievable. And yet there is something positive in Masako's response, which indicates that Japanese culture has taken root within her, and speaks to her on some instinctive level:

HANA *[nodding, sighing and listening]: It brings back so much. That's the reason I never hung one before. I guess it doesn't matter much anymore . . . I didn't want to hear that sound too often . . .*

get used to it. Sometimes you hear something too often, after a while you don't hear it anymore. I didn't want that to happen. The same thing happens to feelings too, I guess. After a while, you don't feel anymore. You're too young to understand that yet.

MASAKO: *I love it. I don't know anything about Japan, but it makes me feel something too. (p.203)*

The inadvisability of abandoning the cultural heritage of the Japanese and immersing into the American culture is one of the crucial points in the play. These migrants feel distanced and alienated from mainstream American life, and long for the comfort of their own homelands and cultures. There are many occasions in the play in which the characters express a longing to go back to Japan to lead a peaceful and complacent life. Occasionally, Hana and Murata express their ardent wish to return to Japan. However, for many, the dire economic situation in Japan meant that they were unable to return to their homelands. Though Hana's heart is in Japan, she accepts the fact that she, with her family, needs to stay in the foreign land for economic reasons. Thus, integration is the only means to protect her cultural identity. To achieve integration, she is aware that some cultural aspects of the dominant society should be adopted, like learning the language of the dominant society, especially for the young generation represented here by Masako and Kiyoko, and also adjusting to

the way of the dominant life, as in the case of both Hana and Emiko:

HANA: *She can't adjust to this life. She can't get over the good times she had in Japan. Well, it's not easy. But one has to know when to bend . . . like the bamboo. When the winds blow, bamboo bends. You bend or crack. Remember that, Masako. (p.175)*

Both Murata and Hana adapt to the American culture and they integrate their culture with the dominant one. Integration for them is a means of basic survival and they are able to achieve it without sacrificing their cultural heritage, without being assimilated.

CONCLUSION

Wakako's play expounds the idea that cultural identity for the migrant rests on fluid terrain and it is impossible to achieve a full and exclusive cultural participation. For migrations, both forced and voluntary, inevitably leave a rupture in the cultural identity of one's homeland. But a linkage to the cultural past of the homeland is attained through the memories or the articles they carry with them during the stay in the foreign land. It acts as a reminder and remainder of the homeland. The Japanese migrants live on the borderlines, in in-between spaces where neither their Japanese identity is denied nor their Americanness is fully actualised. Bhabha (1994) defines these borders as "beyond." "The 'beyond'

is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past [...] we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion (*Location of Culture*). For Bhabha, the border is a space where notions of past and present, inside and outside, cease to exist as binary oppositions; rather, they combine and participate.

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