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ABSTRACT

My thesis, entitled “Identity and Nationhood: The Effect of War on the East Asian Diaspora within Australian, New Zealand, and Canadian Literature” seeks to explore how war impacted the identity of Chinese and Japanese diasporic communities in the twentieth century. I will discuss six novels, alongside historical research, literary criticism, and theoretical modalities to analyse the extent to which war both solidified and fragmented identity for these diasporic groups. Both the Chinese and Japanese diaspora were pushed to the periphery of these nations, but war exacerbated those political and cultural forces of marginalisation even more profoundly.

The thesis will be separated into three core chapters – one for each nation of focus. For Australia, I will discuss *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* by Richard Flanagan and *The Divine Wind* by Garry Disher. For New Zealand, I will explore *Chappy* by Patricia Grace and *As The Earth Turns Silver* by Alison Wong. Finally, for Canada, I will examine *The Jade Peony* by Wayson Choy and *Obasan* by Joy Kogawa. Australia, New Zealand, and Canada are all also former British territories, so there is a commonality of still feeling a level of connection to British national identity, which will make for an interesting discussion regarding the lasting impact of imperialism.

This thesis will offer new insights into the complexity of wartime policies and national identity, the way in which literature portrays this complexity, and ultimately will foster an understanding of how war impacted the East Asian diaspora during the twentieth century.

LAY SUMMARY

My thesis examines how war shaped the lives and national identities of the East Asian diaspora during the twentieth century, through an exploration of Australian, New Zealand, and Canadian Literature. By discussing six novels alongside historical sources, literary critique, and theoretical frameworks, I explore how war had the capacity to deepen exclusion but also created new, stronger understandings of national identity. This research showcases how literature can help us to understand the lasting impact of war and imperialism upon diasporic communities.

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INTRODUCTION

In her book *The Woman Warrior*, Maxine Hong Kingston explores the feeling of being suspended between American society and a familial heritage of China, noticing that "The Chinese I know hide their names; sojourners take new names when their lives change and guard their real names with silence" (Kingston, 2015, p.6). Her writing explores the way in which our personal sense of self versus the way in which others perceive us can have a profound effect on our sense of belonging and thus impacts how we move through the world. Xiaolu Guo describes this dichotomy presented by Kingston as "rubbing her American linguistic skin against her Chinese tribe, but at the same time she wears another layer of skin, an inner Chinese one. Her two skins co-exist on her body, and compete for space, and this dual language fighting spirit permeates Kingston's work" (Guo, 2015, p.vii). The clash between familial heritage and location of where the character has been raised and calls home is evident throughout *The Woman Warrior* and speaks to Kingston's attempt to reconcile lineage with nationality.

Kingston's decision at the end of the novel to have her character resolve that "at college I'll have the people I like for friends. I don't care if they were our enemies in China four thousand years ago" (p.239) implies that there is now a closer connection to America than there is to ancestral heritage. She may be ethnically Chinese, but her nationality as an American feels more relevant to her day-to-day life. However, what Kingston leaves up to interpretation is how much this decision had been made due to a sense of self being projected onto her – be that from her white American peers, who see her as markedly different to them, or from her family, who she feels increasing frustration with still adhering to Chinese traditions and histories. By never clarifying the narrator's name, letting the reader decide whether this is a work of fiction or a thinly veiled autobiography from the author herself, Kingston creates an air of ambiguity

around this story. This in turn can be interpreted as an indication from Kingston of the opacity felt by those of minority ethnic heritage within the nation they have made their home. The constant struggle of ancestral heritage against associating closely with their newer nationality is something Kingston represents throughout the novel – and ultimately, in *The Woman Warrior*, she concludes that this oscillation cannot be fully reconciled, with the diasporic identity of Chinese ancestry being repressed to fully embrace her American nationality. Much as we may wish to believe otherwise, "drawing lines between different groups seems to come naturally to members of our species" (Mounk, 2023, p.13), and for the narrator of *The Woman Warrior* this decision serves to highlight this further; by attempting to minimise the line separating herself from embracing her American nationality, she is also shifting a line of division to now separate herself somewhat from her Chinese heritage.

Thomas Faist writes how "Diaspora approaches usually focus on the relationship between homelands [...] and dispersed people but also on destination countries" (Faist, 2010, p.20) a modality that is highly relevant to an analysis of the East Asian diaspora within Anglophone nations. Diasporic experience is a central theme in author and academic R. F. Kuang's novel *Babel*, which explores East Asian diasporic experience within Britain. The protagonist, Robin, is half Chinese and half British; he is profoundly aware of his Britishness whilst living in Canton but then is equally conscious of his Chinese heritage whilst in Oxford, feeling that he and his Indian classmate are "men at Oxford; they were not Oxford men" (Kuang, 2022, p.68). Robin is conscious that his Chinese ancestry makes him visibly other to his white classmates, and despite having British ancestry, his Chinese nationality is what is projected onto him by his white, British peers. His joint British heritage and Chinese heritage could imply that Robin feels a sense of belonging in both places, but Kuang portrays a bitter reality for many of a diasporic group; a feeling of not being adequately aligned with either place. Ultimately, both Kuang and Kingston's work supports the claim that "the diasporic novel

questions the hierarchy of center and periphery" (Lee, 2016, p.134), where fiction should be utilised as a lens through which to view the world and highlight to us the difficulties faced by those on the margins of society. For Robin in *Babel*, he has reached the academic heights of Oxford University, yet he cannot truly celebrate his being there – because he is pushed very much to the periphery of academic culture, due to his Chinese heritage.

The history of the East Asian diaspora within Anglophone nations begins in earnest with the Gold Rushes of the 19th century, where the discovery of gold fields in America, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand meant that "a community of professional miners fuelled and participated in a multitude of gold rushes" (Canavesio, 2019) and this in turn "transformed the Pacific from a peripheral trade zone to a nexus of world trade" (Sinn, 2013, p.1). In her novel *The Luminaries*, New Zealand author Eleanor Catton explores this shift, presenting us with characters of both European and East Asian heritage who come to the Gold Fields of New Zealand in the hope of building wealth. Catton makes clear the discrimination that was faced by primarily Chinese migrants during this period, showing discussions between white European characters where they make comments such as "There's a chink - just sitting here. Beside the outhouse.' 'A what?' 'A Chinaman'" (Catton, 2013, p.588). The use of the offensive terms "chink" and "Chinaman" said so casually in the conversation shows the extent of racism that was faced by Chinese migrants, who were viewed as inferior to migrants of white European heritage even though they were all seeking similar fortunes in New Zealand. This migration from East Asia to the Pacific extended to the Australian and North American Gold Fields (indeed, for the Chinese diaspora, the 1850s witnessed "large numbers of Chinese [migrating] to the Western Hemisphere" (Con, 1982, p.5)), and thus by the turn of the 20th century there were established communities of East Asian heritage within these Anglophone nations. Migrants from China were followed by other migrants from Asia, such as individuals from

Japan and India, who eventually become permanent residents in their respective nations, and this pattern was followed in all three nations of Australia, New Zealand, and Canada.

The three countries are interlinked beyond migration patterns from Asia – they additionally have a shared history of being former British colonies and therefore are defined as settler colonial nations. Patrick Wolfe argues that settler colonization is "a structure rather than an event" (Wolfe, 2006, p.390), where Indigenous peoples are displaced by settlers who permanently form a society there; as Wolfe continues to say, "assimilation programmes can reflect the ideological requirements of settler-colonial societies" (p.403). These settler colonial nations were formed with the intention of replicating British society elsewhere in the world, at the cost of pre-existing Indigenous society and cultures. However, whilst all three nations gained independence from Britain in the twentieth century, they remained connected to the UK due to the shared history and the British Monarch remaining each country's head of state. For Australia and New Zealand in particular, the horrors of Gallipoli during the First World War were a turning point where ANZAC soldiers shifted from seeing themselves as "loyal members of the British Empire" (Pugsley, 2022, p.58), to being clear that to be Australian or a New Zealander was definably different from being British. The First World War was a "war of empires" (Pugsley, 2022, p.58) and by the time the First World War ended, these empires were diminishing.

What this opens as a question, however, is the extent to which war impacts the concept of national identity. If white Australians, New Zealanders, and Canadians felt that their sense of nationhood was clearer due to the war, how did war affecting understandings of national identity amongst ethnic minorities? And, more complex still, what if the nation of their ancestry was at war with the nation they now resided in, ostensibly marking them as enemies, not allies? As Naomi Klein writes in her forensic analysis of the split between our private and online personas, "every self is made up of a multiplicity, or mosaic, of often contradictory voices,

hopes, and urges" (Klein, 2024, p.66). The mosaic Klein resonates with the question of internal and external identity; how do we define who we are, and to a certain extent, how much control do we even have over how we are perceived? Is a definition of national identity straightforward when we consider personal history, ethnicity, and the history of the nation itself? For the East Asian diaspora within these three nations these were not just questions – in the twentieth century, they were very real difficulties that were faced. Not only did war impact the internal sense of self and belonging, it also impacted the way in which a sense of self could be externally projected onto Asian communities by others (for example, Japanese Australians being viewed purely as Japanese by white Australian society, even if the Japanese Australians themselves felt a strong tie to Australian national identity).

R. F. Kuang attempts to grapple with these questions surrounding war through her *The Poppy War* trilogy, a loose fantastical retelling of the Sino-Japanese War of the twentieth century. When Nikan (the nation coded as China) finds itself at war with the Muganese Empire (the nation coded as Japan), the protagonist Rin, and her friends Kitay and Nezha, are directly affected by the conflict, with each of them having conflicting understandings of what constitutes Nikan nationality. Rin and Kitay come to embody Maoist communism (Kuang has stated that "Rin's life is meant to parallel the trajectory of Mao Zedong from obscurity in Hunan to a genocidal dictator leading millions (Kang, 2018), whilst Nezha embodies the nationalist group who went on to found Taiwan. Throughout the trilogy, Kuang provides a very clear portrayal of the way in which war can shape national identity, and conflict can shift and change one's perspective on internal and externally imposed identity with regards to nationhood. Whilst I am not examining Kuang in depth in this thesis, these books are highly relevant to mention given their interrogation of war and national identity for East Asian diasporic groups.

Within this thesis, I aim to analyse the impact of the modalities of war upon the subjectivities and identities of members of the East Asian diaspora within Australian, New

Zealand, and Canadian literature. Their shared histories, both as colonial nations, and with regards to their relationship with the East Asian diaspora, create a rich backdrop from which to analyse the way this is presented within literature. The previously mentioned element of settler colonialism is key to understanding these texts; as nations founded with the intention of being akin to Britain, where Indigenous people were forced to the very edges of the land they had been born on, the presence of the East Asian diaspora caused friction within Australian, New Zealand, and Canadian society. Whilst East Asians had migrated to the land in the same way that white Europeans had, they did not fit the "structure" (Wolfe, 2006, p.390) in mind for the society being built. As well as examining this literature through a historical lens, I also engage with a range of critical theory – specifically nation theory, diaspora theory, Indigenous theory, and trauma theory. This provides a range of critical models through which to further analyse the texts and the characters within them.

Nation theory (the critical examination of how nations, and therefore nationalism and national identity, are represented within literary texts) is of particular relevance, because not only are the East Asian diaspora in these works situated within assimilationist contexts in Australia, New Zealand, or Canada, but there are also continuing neocolonial relationships to Britain as the 'parent' nation of these settler colonies. As Ismail Talib notes, the colonial history of the English language inflects Anglophone postcolonial writing, given that "The word 'English' refers to both ethnicity and language" (Talib, 2002, p.2) and that "the spread of the English language had to do with the rise of British imperialism" (p.5). Speaking English can be interpreted as a manifestation of successful assimilation, but it also raises further questions of national identity – such as whether fluency in English implies any affiliation to Britain in settler-colonial context. Talib's work connecting linguistics with nation theory is prevalent throughout every chapter of this thesis, as language is shown to be a dominant element of characters feeling a connection to national identity.

Alongside nation theory, trauma theory is also utilised in analysis throughout this thesis, an interdisciplinary framework which explores how literature presents and processes deeply disruptive events and experiences that can overwhelm and individual's (or a culture's) psyche. Irene Visser argues how in the study of trauma theory, ""trauma" refers not so much to the traumatic event as to the traumatic aftermath, the post-traumatic stage" (Visser, 2011, p.272). A trauma theorist of prominence throughout this thesis is Cathy Caruth, whose work is "widely recognized as the touchstone of contemporary trauma theory" (Caruth, Brochard and Tam, 2019). Her work explores how trauma is not simply an experience; it is an internal wound which requires healing in a similar way to an external wound. Given the experiences of internment, displacement, and the brutal realities of war that characters throughout this thesis face, her work is also consistently raised to further analysis. However, I will also raise the perspectives of other trauma theorists (such as Visser), who have the perspective that Caruth's exploration of trauma theory is too Eurocentric, analysing the limitations (and potential expansions of study) within the existing framework of trauma theory. Considering the chosen texts in this thesis are not from the European literary canon, and the characters of primary focus within the textual analysis are of East Asian ethnicity, acknowledgement of those limitations is crucial when utilising trauma theory within literary analysis.

Finally, I will also be utilising Indigenous theory in my literary analysis, a critical approach which centres Indigenous perspectives and cultures to challenge Eurocentric ideology within literature. If we refer once again to how Australia, New Zealand, and Canada are all settler colonial nations, where their very formation was built on the eradication and marginalisation of Indigenous peoples, it is vital to include Indigenous theoretical frameworks in analysis of literature from these nations. Given the focus of this thesis is on the ways in which war impacts a sense of national identity, it would be amiss to not consider the complex relationship Indigenous peoples have with that national identity. Each chapter in this thesis

features a section analysing the relationship between the East Asian diaspora and the Indigenous community, examining how there were levels of understanding and solidarity between two groups who did not fit the white settler colonial ideals upon which Australia, New Zealand, and Canada were founded.

The thesis is structured into three core chapters, with each chapter representing one of the chosen countries of focus. Through the two novels chosen per country, there will be engagement with the First World War, the Second World War, and the aftermath of both wars, which provides a broad base for critical comparison. Whilst the historical setting of each book may differ somewhat, these narratives all explore Chinese and Japanese diaspora communities (and provide the opportunity for a brief discussion of the Korean diaspora too) and investigate how war impacts both internal and externalized identity between those groups. The order of the chapters replicates the migration pattern of the East Asian diaspora, following the Gold Rushes through the Pacific and up into North America.

The first chapter of the thesis is focused on Australian Literature, and includes a detailed discussion of *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* (2015) by Richard Flanagan and *The Divine Wind* (1998) by Gary Disher. Both novels are set during the Second World War, but the former focuses on the experience of incarcerated Australian soldiers in a Japanese Prisoner of War camp, whilst the latter takes place in a Northern Territory town near Darwin (which experienced bombing during the war). Whilst my analysis of both novels will primarily be focused on the Japanese diaspora, *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* does offer the unique opportunity to examine the relationship between Japanese and Korean characters. The impact of the Japanese Empire is felt in both Flanagan and Disher's work, but with Flanagan we are privy to an analysis of its impact on Asia more broadly. Japanese imperialism during the twentieth century involved brutal occupation which dramatically altered the fabric of the nations it occupied (Singapore National Museum, for example, has a history gallery close to

half the size of the museum which focuses on the Japanese occupation – such was the impact it had on the nation). For Koreans during the Second World War, they were both occupied by Japan and made to fight for Japan; thus, there is an evident imbalance in power between the Japanese and Korean characters in *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*. *The Divine Wind* also explores power imbalances but investigates how a Japanese Australian character's life begins to drastically change due to the outbreak of the Second World War. Nation theory and diaspora theory will be at the heart of my analysis, but trauma theory will also play a role in the examination of Korean and Japanese relations.

From Australia, I will pivot to New Zealand Literature, discussing *Chappy* (2015) by Patricia Grace and *As The Earth Turns Silver* (2009) by Alison Wong. Grace's novel is set during the Second World War, whilst Wong's is set during the First, so the chapter examines shifts in the way the East Asian diaspora both assimilate and are perceived within New Zealand society across the first half of the twentieth century. *Chappy* is more closely focused on the Japanese diaspora, but I will also discuss Indigenous theory to explore how Grace portrays the relationships between Japanese and Indigenous characters. *As The Earth Turns Silver* meanwhile is focused on the Chinese diaspora, but due to being set in an earlier period, it enables us to contrast the life Wong portrays for those of East Asian descent with the experiences Grace explores. Both diaspora and nation theory will inform my analysis of these modalities.

Finally, in the third chapter, I will move across the Pacific to Canada, where I will focus on *Obasan* (1994) by Joy Kogawa and *The Jade Peony* (1995) by Wayson Choy. Both novels feature Vancouver during the Second World War, though Choy is preoccupied with discussions around the Chinese Canadian community and Kogawa is focused on the Japanese Canadian community. Nation theory is of great importance when we analyse the way in which the Second World War strengthens certain characters' feeling of connection to Canada; but this chapter is

also where I will be drawing upon trauma theory. As mentioned earlier, Cathy Caruth's work as a trauma theorist is relevant throughout the thesis; but it is in this chapter where that relevance is most prevalent. The focus of *Obasan* surrounds the internal displacement that Japanese Canadians faced during the war, and it is a theme which Choy touches on too in *The Jade Peony*; the impact that had on the characters and their sense of national identity is profound, and thus trauma theory is key to understanding that further. For the protagonist of *Obasan*, Naomi, the trauma she experienced as a child being internally displaced has continued to impact her decisions as an adult; it is a pain she has never fully recovered from. Similarly to the Australia chapter, this chapter also provides the opportunity to analyse the interactions between two East Asian groups –the Chinese and Japanese diaspora in *The Jade Peony*.

Throughout these chapters, I will explore similar themes of conflict between nationhood and ancestry, the older generation's perception of identity, relationships between East Asian characters and Indigenous characters, and how these complex ontological layers of selfhood are either in conflict or in tandem with the white society adjacent to them. Throughout these discussions, I will continue to refer back to the core question underpinning this research, which is to ask how war impacts these modalities, and what this can tell us about the relationship between war, nationhood, and identity.

Alongside the critical theory mentioned above, I also refer to a wide breadth of historical research in the thesis to contextually frame my analysis of the primary texts. This research has been undertaken both from library resources and from historical research at museum exhibits. I have undertaken this exhibition research at the National Museum of Singapore, Melbourne Museum, and the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, all of which are referenced during this thesis. Additionally, I was able to interview New Zealand author Patricia Grace about *Chappy*, which is presented in the form of an Appendix to this thesis and discussed in the second chapter of the thesis. This extra research has added depth to

the discussions and analysis throughout my work and has assisted in further contextualizing the novels chosen for literary analysis.

AUSTRALIA

Introduction

The mistrust of the Asian community and an anxiety towards Asian expansion "is a central theme in [Australia's] national story" where "Successive generations have been told that their future would be increasingly Asian, with the clear implication that that would also mean 'less Australian'" (Walker and Sobocinska, 2012, p.4). Due to Australia's pursual of the White Australia Policy "between the 1880s and 1940s", Australia "became increasingly, but never entirely, monocultural. The overriding assumption was that the best society was one in which citizens were as much like each other as possible" (Jupp, 1997, p.133). Taking these two quotations together, the strong implication is that Australia (whose creation as an established nation was under British Colonial rule) was founded with the intention of being majority white and British. Anybody who did not fall under that bracket – especially if they were non-white – faced legal discrimination within Australia. Indeed, "For most of the last two hundred years, 'Asia' and 'Asianness' were feared by Australians" and "often constructed not only as 'other', but as opposite: as cruel, barbarous and treacherous, qualities that supported claims to the apparent superiority of Australian character and the values of British civilization" (Hudson and Stokes, 1997, p.145). The connection to Britain was still felt decisively in Australian society at the start of the twentieth century, and there was a strong feeling within Britain that Australia should be "a distant outpost of European civilisation" (Day, 2000, p.36); an ideology which sat somewhat at odds with the reality of its geographical location.

Above all, the mistrust of Asia within Australia was historically manifested against those of East Asian descent specifically, with Chinese migrants referred to as "the yellow torrent or tide, the yellow hordes and the yellow agony alongside the better known yellow peril"

(Walker and Sobocinska, 2012, p.9). These fears against Asian migrants "were by no means uncontested, but opposition to them became more muted as support for a white Australia consolidated" (Watters, 2012, p.46). The Chinese experienced particular discrimination both within Australian law and Australian society: "it was non-Europeans, principally Chinese, that Australia was determined to restrict from admission or to expunge from its midst should they already be there" (Day, 2000, p.36). In other words, it was increasingly hard for those of Chinese ethnicity to migrate to Australia, and those of Chinese ancestry who already lived in Australia were privy to legal discrimination and racism on a societal level. A two-tier immigration system was deeply ingrained, with preferential treatment decisively given to white settlers: "Colonial government determined who should come, for how long, to do what kinds of work, and whether they might remain. Unlike white free settlers, they would not become full citizens without a sustained struggle" (Denoon, Mein-Smith and Wyndham, 2000, p.87).

However, despite the laws in place to limit migration from Asia, "introduced to 'bleach' Australia white and to prevent the future entry of non-Europeans" (Day, 2000, p.35), non-European migration to Australia (predominantly from Asia) did still take place. In the Northern Territories in the early twentieth century, "in some settlements such as Palmerston (later Darwin), they comprised a majority of the population (p.36). This was in part because of Australia's attempts "not to offend the Japanese" since it somewhat "looked increasingly to Japan as a naval ally in the Pacific" (p.39), an alliance formed due to the existing Anglo-Japanese treaty against Russia. To preserve amicable relations with Japan in this alliance, Australia implemented fewer barriers to Japanese migration compared with their Chinese counterparts; however, there remained a deep wariness of Japan, and a fear that Australia's entering of the First World War could cause Japan to "take advantage of the war to further its ambitions in Asia and the Pacific (Meaney, 2000, p.75), despite the fact that Japan was allied with both Britain and Australia in the First World War. This fear was exacerbated further with

the dropping of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in 1921, which created a situation in Australia where “Insecurity bred a popular suspicion of Japan” (Nish, 2000, p.160). Henry P. Frei points out that “today [Australia and Japan] enjoy a mutual complementarity in trade that has benefitted both countries tremendously in the post-war period. This was not always so”, highlighting how “Before World War II political dissonance tended to overshadow their relations as Australians grew increasingly uncomfortable about Japanese expansion in Asia and in the Pacific toward the South [...] there was a strong and persistent response in Australia to Japan’s gradual and seemingly threatening southern advance” (Frei, 1991, p.ix), such as the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 during the Second Sino-Japanese War.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, Australia and Japan shifted from being uneasy allies (and in Australia’s case, deeply wary of Japan) to now being direct enemies in a war in the Pacific. Before the eruption of war, “though the numbers of Japanese in Australia were always small, they were a closely watched population” (Walker, 2012, p.87), but after the war began in earnest, those of Japanese heritage within Australia were seen as hostile members of the public. As the war continued, Australian policies saw all ethnically Japanese individuals rounded up into internment camps, justified by the Australian government to ensure any Japanese people residing in Australia could not work as spies for Japan. Those who were of Japanese ethnicity but had spent their whole life in Australia had that Australian nationality doubted and denied. In turn, this created a shift where those of Chinese ethnicity moved from being the most discriminated against East Asian diasporic group to now being seen more favourably than those of Japanese ethnicity. Whilst there was still mistrust of the Chinese, they were also Australia’s allies in the Second World War, so there was less antagonism towards those of Chinese descent, as the 1930s gave way to the 1940s.

When discussing the discrimination that the East Asian diaspora faced, and how this shifted and changed over time, it is also important to mention another minority ethnic group

within Australia – the Indigenous Australians. As we examine the barriers the East Asian diaspora faced with both entering Australia and leading an existence within the country, it must be acknowledged that for Indigenous Australians there was no other nation that could be deemed as home by the authorities, yet they still faced horrific discrimination and racism within Australian society. The pattern between early Indigenous and white settler meetings was "near-universal: Aboriginal co-operation, as well as resistance, followed by the usurpation of their resources" (Denoon, Mein-Smith and Wyndham, 2000, p.85), and forced displacement from the land they lived on. Incongruous with Australia's goal of becoming a European outpost, Indigenous Australians faced marginalisation within Australian society due to British colonialism – they were forced to become "interlopers in their native places" (Reynolds, 1975, p.86), "trapped inside white space and pushed to its margins" (Carter, 1987, p.342). The relationship between Indigenous Australians, white Australians, and the concept of Australian national identity within that relationship is something Richard Flanagan explores in *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* through the character of Darky Gardiner, so this will be explored alongside the presentation of the East Asian diaspora. Garry Disher also touches upon the presence of Indigenous Australians in *The Divine Wind*, though unlike Flanagan who presents Darky as one of the lead characters, Disher relegates Indigenous Australians somewhat to the margins of the text. However, their very presence (and indeed the function of these characters being constrained to the background of the text) is worth noting, so will also be examined in further detail. It is also worth pointing out that Flanagan himself heralds from Tasmania and grew up with there being an "implication" in the family "that our grandmother was of Aboriginal descent" (Flanagan, 2024, p.226). Disher, meanwhile, is a white Australian of British descent. Flanagan's decision to draw more focus to Indigenous Australian experience, whilst Disher utilises them more to enrich the background of the society he is writing, could be in part due to that difference in heritage. Those of East Asian descent

experienced marginalisation akin to the discrimination faced by Indigenous Australians, thus comparing how both groups belonged within Australian society is important to make note of.

With the texts chosen, we are presented with two novels which both tackle the way in which the Second World War splintered a sense of national identity and belonging for those of East Asian heritage; but the novels take very different routes in this exploration. In *The Divine Wind*, Disher introduces us to the character of Mitsy Sennosuke, an Australian girl of Japanese ethnicity, and the way in which the Second World War places her Australian national identity in direct conflict with her Japanese heritage. Diaspora theory and nation theory will play a large part in discussing Disher's representation of Mitsy, interrogating the complex relationship she feels between being both Australian and Japanese, and why her difficulty in marrying the two leads her to make certain decisions she makes throughout the novel.

Meanwhile, in *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, it can be argued that Flanagan takes a much more negative view towards characters of Japanese identity, telling the story of Australian prisoners of war sentenced to work on the Siam-Burma railway under Japanese rule during the Second World War. Whilst Disher explicitly causes us to empathise with Japanese Australians and reiterates throughout *The Divine Wind* how deeply unfair the treatment they experienced throughout the Second World War was, Flanagan at first seems to make little attempt to portray his East Asian characters in a positive light. However, upon deeper interrogation of the text, Flanagan's portrayal is not as surface level as it might initially seem. The Korean character in the novel, for example, is portrayed as monstrous throughout the majority of *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*; but later chapters show that he is a product of colonial oppression by the Japanese, and in his own way is suffering just as much as the Australian men who are incarcerated. Flanagan's father was imprisoned in a camp on the Siam-Burma railway just like the one in *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, yet in his memoir, Flanagan writes how as a child "I asked him, using the lingua franca of war comics, how many

Japs he had killed [...] Never, he said, with an anger the ferocity of which I can still feel these years later, never ask such a question again" (Flanagan, 2024, p.63-64). His characters in *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* represent a range of attitudes towards those of non-white ethnicity, and Flanagan does not shy away from both showing the evils of empire whilst questioning whether those who enacted those rules were at times also victims.

The contrast of these two texts is precisely the draw to comparing the two; both texts address central questions of how war can cause a fragmentation of national identity, and both texts also raise questions of how that schism can create inner turmoil. Whilst *The Divine Wind* is a young adult novel which is driven primarily by character relationships and interactions, shining a light on how the Second World War affected small town Australia, *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* is a work of historical fiction which tells a vast story of suffering and oppression whilst miles from home. Disher's novel, by being aimed at young adults, interrogates the prejudices we personally carry, and challenges readers over whether they too would fall foul of the same fears that Hart (the white Australian protagonist) considers under the weight of wartime propaganda. Flanagan's text is aimed at adults, with explicit scenes of torture and abuse set during the prisoner of war camp; it is intent on telling the horrors of war, which Flanagan's father described as being "the ultimate obscenity" (Flanagan, 2024, p.64). As stated previously, Flanagan's father was incarcerated during the Second World War, and Flanagan went on to spend "12 years writing this novel based on his father's stories" (Arimitsu, 2017, p.8). It is arguable, therefore, that many of the characters of East Asian heritage in the novel are based on the memories of a man who was actively imprisoned and tortured by them, hence on initial read through, *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* can seem to portray the Japanese and Korean characters as monstrous. The Korean character of the Goanna, for example, was based on a Korean prison guard who "had been the Ivan the Terrible of my father's camp, the man the Australians called the Lizard. He is the only man I have ever heard

my father – a gentle, peaceful man – speak of with violent intent" (Flanagan, 2024, p.206). Yet Flanagan's meeting of this man painted a different picture to the one his father spoke of, and thus could explain the more sympathetic angle we see of the Goanna later in the novel.

Additionally, the differing setting of the two novels makes for an interesting comparison; in both novels, characters of East Asian ethnicity are markedly affected in negative ways due to the Second World War, but the representation of this is very different owing to the fact the novels are set in different locations. With Flanagan, *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* is largely set in Asia itself, with most Australian characters being white (with the exception of Darky Gardiner, an Indigenous Australian from Tasmania); the East Asian characters grappling with the way war has impacted their sense of national identity are of Korean and Japanese nationality. War certainly does affect the Australian characters and their sense of national identity, but not due to feeling torn between Australian nationality and Japanese heritage. Meanwhile, with Disher, *The Divine Wind* takes place entirely within Australia, and the central theme for the characters of Japanese descent is the struggle between feeling both Australian and Japanese. This is obviously a very different context, and therefore different representation, of the complexity of national and diasporic identity to the context of *The Narrow Road to the Deep North.* A continual theme amongst both novels, however, is that war itself is an atrocious waste, and something humanity should feel deeply ashamed of.

This chapter will be organised into four core themes of discussion. I will firstly explore the representation of white Australian and Indigenous Australian national identity, and how war is shown to impact those characters' sense of self in both novels. This will be used as a starting point for comparing how war simultaneously fractures and solidifies national identity; it can both unite characters and emphasise the contrasts that exist between them. I will utilise both nation theory and Indigenous theory to further deepen the analysis of Flanagan and Disher's work, alongside employing historical sources to further contextualise the settings of each novel.

From there, I will shift to examining the representation of the Japanese within *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, and explore how Flanagan initially perpetuates a rather negative stereotype in his presentation of these characters; yet beneath that first impression, Flanagan also represents the Japanese characters as being deeply human, flawed people who are struggling with what is expected of them. In particular, I will explore Flanagan's portrayal of how the which war makes these characters question their ideas about what it means to be Japanese, and the extent to which this is connected with loyalty to the Empire and the Emperor.

Thirdly, I will discuss Disher's *The Divine Wind*, focusing on the presentation of Mitsy Sennosuke and how her Japanese heritage and Australian nationality are suddenly at odds with one another due to the outbreak of the Second World War. The way in which Hart (Disher's white Australian narrator) perceives Mitsy shifts and changes throughout the novel, almost in sync with Mitsy's own shifting with regards to her sense of self, and this parallel makes for an interesting analysis. Mitsy's internal sense of self is something which she struggles with throughout *The Divine Wind*, but the identity that is projected onto her by others also shifts due to the war, and these two things are inextricably connected.

Finally, I will conclude this chapter by discussing the presentation of Choi Sang-Min (referred to as the Goanna) within Flanagan's *The Divine Wind*. As a Korean character, his national identity is permanently in conflict due to Korea being an annexed part of the Japanese Empire during the Second World War. For Choi Sang-min, being Korean is of great importance, yet this national identity is something which is only acknowledged in the prisoner of war camp for the Japanese soldiers to be contemptuous of; otherwise, he is simply seen as part of the Japanese army, and his Korean nationality ignored. As a character, Choi Sang-min is shown to feel loyalty towards his duties within the Japanese army and hatred towards the Australians; but at the same time he also feels hatred towards Japan, both for their annexation of Korea and for the derision he experiences for being Korean. The presentation of Choi Sang-min as both a

brutally violent character, but also a young boy who simply wanted to earn money in order to save his family from starvation, is a perfect representation of the inner conflict Choi Sang-min experiences throughout the novel; he is simultaneously a proponent and a victim of Japanese imperialism.

White Australian and Indigenous Australian Nationality

As mentioned previously, within *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, Flanagan chooses to present most of his Australian characters in the prisoner of war camp as being white. Whilst this does not connect directly to the representation of the East Asian diaspora, Flanagan's representation of white Australian soldiers is an important place to begin with discussing the way in which a connection to nationhood can be impacted by war. The question of who these soldiers are more loyal to – Australia, Britain, or the former British Empire – is raised, and is arguably similar to the way Japanese characters in *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* are shown to feel a deep loyalty to both the Emperor and the Japanese Empire as a whole. However, for the white Australian characters in the novel, this blend of loyalty is somewhat different to the Japanese characters, as by the Second World War Australia was very much independent from Britain. The nations were close allies, and Australia's history was intertwined with Britain, but the United Kingdom and Australia were decisively separate countries. Despite this, the connection to Britain is present throughout *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, and in many ways is used to symbolise the contrast between the older generation and younger generation of white Australian soldiers.

At the start of the novel, Flanagan presents the protagonist, Dorrigo Evans, to be recounting people he had happened upon during a visit to Ormond College, where "he had met people from great families, proud of their achievements and genealogies that went back beyond

the founding of Australia to distinguished families in England. They could list generations of their families, their political offices and companies and dynastic marriages, their mansions and sheep stations" (Flanagan, 2015, p.12). There is an immediate sense of superiority amongst these people – that somehow being able to trace their heritage so directly back to Britain earns them a loftier position within Australian society. The mention of "sheep stations" reminds us that these people have been in Australia for generations, and most certainly see themselves as being Australian nationals; but being perceived as British Australians and connecting their heritage to Britain is of the utmost importance to them. This provides insight into Australian society at the time, and how whilst it felt distinctly separate to Britain as a nation, the influence of the former British Empire still loomed large over Australia at the time of the Second World War. As political theorist John Kane writes, "Assertions of national identity aim to anchor cultures or nations in time, orienting them towards a future and linking them to a real or imagined past" (Kane, 1997, p.117); for these people Dorrigo meets, the connection between Britain and Australia in the past is fundamental for continuing Australia's future. Flanagan frames these characters in a way which Kane describes as "Conceiving of themselves as members of a superior British 'race', white Australians held themselves naturally endowed with virtuous qualities – physical, mental and moral – absent from or less developed in other races" (p.122). In his exploration of nation theory, David Pearson points out that societies such as Australia "are quintessential mass settler nation-states, not only in terms of their origins [...] but also because of the enduring influence of their ethnic foundations, mythical or otherwise" (Pearson, 2001, p.7); in this instance, that mythical ethnic foundation is that of Britishness, which "reinforced the superiority claim of whiteness" (Kane, 1997, p.121). For Flanagan to open the novel with such a strong (and arguably scathing) portrayal of some circles of white Australian society emphasises the extent to which national identity was already a complex question for many Australians; Britain was integral to Australia's history and thus in these

superior areas of society, still feeling a connection to Britain was important. Far from this making them less Australian, for these people the "three parts" of "'whiteness', 'Britishness' and 'Australianness'" (Kane, 1997, p.121) were unquestionably interlinked within societal superiority.

This is also a theme we see present in Garry Disher's *The Divine Wind*, where the novel opens with Hart speaking about how his mother is English. Even prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, Hart recalls that his mother "wanted England" and "filled the house with Dickens, Austen, Keats, the Brontë sisters", evidently aiming to furnish her home with contents that would be found in a house in England. Whilst Hart and his father do read the books "to please her [...] my father and I preferred travellers' tales of remote Australia – books about ourselves, in other words – which left her cold" (Disher, 2019, p.3). This immediately creates a contrast between Hart and his mother; he is raised in a household filled with references to Britain, yet as a young person born and raised in Australia, he does not have much interest in engaging with British literature. By saying that his choice to do this leaves his mother "cold", we see the sense of superiority that came with engagement with Britain in action; and this is confirmed by Disher, who continues Hart's commentary with "She had no-one to talk to, no-one listened, and so, in her loneliness and frustration, she seemed to develop the snobberies of a colonial wife in the tropics" (p.5). Hart and his father may see books about Australia as "books about ourselves", but to Hart's mother this is not the case; and it results in her showing a condescending attitude towards her own son and husband due to the ingrained belief that maintaining a connection to Britain meant an elevated position within Australian society. After all, "At its most rudimentary, to assert an identity is to distinguish oneself or one's group in a certain way and to differentiate oneself or one's group from others" (Stokes, 1997, p.5); and for Hart's mother, her assertion comes at the cost of her relationship with her husband and children, as by viewing Australians who were connected to Britain as superior, she begins to

view her own family as inferior to her. She ultimately cannot reconcile her English heritage and her Australian nationality, and so she leaves "in March 1939" (Disher, 2019, p.33) to return to England. Just as it serves a narrative purpose for Dorrigo to encounter people at Ormond College early on in *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, so too is it important that Hart's mother abandons him so early in *The Divine Wind*; both examples show the depth of British connection in white Australia, and how it was prolific in shaping the society that the characters exist within.

Garry Disher also touches on the relationship between white Australians and Indigenous Australians but does not explore it in great depth – indeed, Alice Pung goes as far as to say that in *The Divine Wind*, "the one group that is treated as if they have no sense of self-agency is the indigenous Australians". Whilst she adds that his descriptions spare "no sensitivities in recounting the indignities of the past" (Pung, 2016), these indignities are given very little space within the novel. Disher's representation of Indigenous Australians is much more matter of fact, with Hart reflecting that "We were not alone in having servants. Most European households employed at least a gardener and a house-girl" and that his household employs "Saltwater Jack" who was "born on an island in the Torres Strait" (the very north of Australia) and Bernadette, who "cleaned for my mother" and had a "Malay mother and an Aboriginal father" (Disher, 2019, p.14). By showing how the Indigenous Australians were most commonly in the service of white Australians, Disher is reiterating how Indigenous Australians were systematically placed in inferior positions within Australian society in comparison with white Australians. Though Hart and his father are fond of Jack and Bernadette, it is notable that they do not defend them when Major Morrisey (a member of the Australian military) comes to visit and scathingly comments that "the Abos are going to be a liability if the Japs land. Some will choose to collaborate [...] Even if we *can* trust the blacks, how are we going to look after them?" (p.77). There is a deeply untrusting and simultaneously paternalistic attitude being

shown by Morrisey here – it is as though he views Indigenous Australians as another group of migrants he must be wary of, as opposed to viewing them as fellow Australians. This is further reiterated by him commenting that "if the Abos cause trouble we can shoot them, no questions asked" (p.78). Evidently, Morrisey does not view the Indigenous Australians as being equal to him within society, because he speaks about them in a deeply inhumane manner. It is heavily implied in this extract that the lack of connection Indigenous Australians have to Britain means they are perceived as being less likely to show alignment with the goals of the Australian government. Thus, not only is Morrisey demonstrating a sense of superiority, he is also displaying the extent to which Indigenous Australians were marginalised and dehumanised within Australian society; and that treatment was exacerbated by the Second World War.

Another point of note about Hart's original statement regarding Jack and Bernadette is that he specifies how Indigenous Australians working in servitude was typical of "Most European households" (p.14). When speaking of his mother, Hart makes it clear that he and his father feel quite differently to her with regards to the connection to Australian nationality versus British nationality. However, despite Hart's decisiveness that he is Australian, he does not falter (nor note the contradiction) in identifying their household as being European, as opposed to referring to it as white Australian. This is relevant to mention as it emphasises how deeply the connection to Europe (and more specifically, Britain) was within white Australian society. Hart has gone to lengths to explain how his mother is different to him because of her love of Britain, yet he then describes their household as being European without hesitation. By doing this, Disher is emphasising how ingrained these standards of white Australian society were; and thus, sets up the future narrative of the story, where Hart shifts from seeing Mitsy as a close friend to having feelings of mistrust towards her. Even though Hart does not fully recognise it at this point in the novel, he has subconsciously adopted the mentality that to be Australian means viewing himself as being connected to a continent on the other side of the planet.

This direct connection between whiteness, Britishness, and Australianness continues in *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* as we delve deeper into the novel, with Dorrigo recounting his time as a prisoner of war during the Second World War. Flanagan presents us with the character of Colonel Rexroth, who can be interpreted as a metaphor for upper Australian society due to his belief that to be Australian means idolising Britain. His process of creating morale amongst the imprisoned soldiers is through a belief that that "all their national British strengths would be enough, that their British *espirit de corps* would hold and their British spirit would not break and their British blood would bring them through it together [...] You see, Colonel Rexroth continued, it's what we carry within [...] British stoicism" (Flanagan, 2015, p.45). Despite the fact that these soldiers are Australian, and Colonel Rexroth himself is an Australian colonel, his method of morale building and reminding the incarcerated men of who they are is by talking at length about their connection to Britain.

Through Dorrigo's internal thoughts, Flanagan makes Rexroth's metaphorical presence clearer still, with Dorrigo commenting that Rexroth believes "the division of the British Empire into arbitrary nationalities was a fiction. From Oxford to Oodnadatta" (a town in South Australia) "they were one people" (p.46). Immediately after Dorrigo notes this, Rexroth continues that "as members of the British Empire, as Englishmen, we must observe the order and discipline that is the very lifeblood of the Empire. We will suffer as Englishmen, we will triumph as Englishmen" (p.46). He still sees Australians as being part of the British Empire, as opposed to former members of it, but takes this belief further still by deciding that they are all British – even more so than that, English. In Ismail Talib's discussions surrounding nation theory, she writes how "the breaking up of the British Empire left a linguistic residue which may eventually last longer than the Empire itself" (Talib, 2002, p.7), and that therefore "Language [...] plays an important part in the attempt to realise a national identity" (p.122). In other words, Talib's argument states that language is a key proponent of forming national

identity; but for countries which were formerly ruled by the British, this becomes somewhat more complex due to the continued use of English as the primary language. For Colonel Rexroth, this residue of English language means that he still sees Australia and Britain as inextricably linked. His very sense of Australian nationality is firmly rooted in feeling a continued connection and loyalty to Britain. This relates back to the previous comment that John Kane made; that "the doctrine of White Australia [...] comprised three parts – 'whiteness', 'Britishness' and "Australianness'" (Kane, 1997, p.121). Rexroth's speech highlights this belief, and connects with the opening of the novel, where Dorrigo meets white Australians who view themselves as superior due to being able to trace their heritage back to wealthy British families. It also can be used to further understand Hart's mother in *The Divine Wind*; she views Australia and Britain as so deeply interlinked that she eventually cannot bear to continue being parted from a life on British soil.

However, what makes this speech from Rexroth even more of note is the surrounding context in which Flanagan places it. Rexroth is asking Dorrigo to help plan a proper cemetery for the dead to be buried in, using British loyalty as a persuasive tool: Dorrigo, however, is uninterested, saying, "I'd rather get the Black Prince to steal some more tins of fish from the Japanese stores to keep the living from dying" (Flanagan, 2015, p.46-47). Firstly, this speaks of the generational contrast in attitude between Rexroth and Dorrigo. Where Rexroth's priority in the situation is to maintain the status quo to a certain extent, Dorrigo is unafraid to break the rules (such as stealing from the Japanese) to "keep the living from dying"; Rexroth wishes for the dead to be given proper burials, but Dorrigo's aim is to prevent the deaths from occurring in the first place. Flanagan very deliberately places a passage in opposition to Rexroth's attitudes, writing how "Starvation stalked the Australians [...] They tried to hold together with their Australian dryness and their Australian curses, their Australian memories and their Australian mateship" (p.50). For the younger soldiers, it is Australia they think of, not Britain.

Just as in *The Divine Wind* Hart and his father want to read books about Australia, filled with characters they recognise as being like themselves due to being Australian, so the younger soldiers in *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* maintain their morale by thinking of what it is that makes them Australian. Over time, the hardship they endure wears at this, where "*Australia* meant little against lice and hunger and beri-beri, against thieving and beatings and yet ever more slave labour. *Australia* was shrinking and shrivelling, a grain of rice was so much bigger now than a continent" (p.50). In many ways, for the younger white Australians, the conflict they are experiencing is not one of national identity; it is a conflict of the very point of existence, which has been thrust upon them due to their suffering in wartime. Having the ability to eat and not starve to death is something which has come to mean far more than any connection they have to Australianness. To extrapolate this further, the basic need to survive is of more importance to the young soldiers than to hold onto their sense of national identity. The interaction between Dorrigo and Rexroth further emphasises this; Rexroth tries to enforce his sense of national identity onto the men as motivation, whilst Dorrigo's priority is simply doing anything he can to keep his fellow soldiers alive.

It is relevant to bring up further historical context to this discussion too – in particular, the event of Gallipoli, which was "the Allied attempt to knock the Ottoman Empire out of contention" (Keith, 2022, p.16) during the First World War. Historian Christopher Pugsley writes how "Gallipoli is important because it was the first time New Zealand – and Australia – put a large body of their people into a foreign war zone. And it ended any notion that modern warfare was glorious and exciting and inevitably victorious" (Pugsley, as cited in Keith, 2022, p.18). The younger soldiers in *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* would have grown up in the aftermath of Gallipoli, where a "sense of kinship" was formed between Australia and New Zealand, and for the first time a wider spread feeling that the ANZAC soldiers were "not British" (Pugsley, 2022, p.104), in large part because "an incompetent British command was

regarded as having wasted Australian lives to no good purpose" (Steep and Hart, 1995, p.235). As Flanagan himself writes, white Australians were very obviously "not Aboriginal. [...] But nor were they any longer European" (Flanagan, 2024, p.226); they had become something else entirely, a sense of Australianness now existing as a concept. Rexroth is representative of a pre-Gallipoli mindset in this sense. He still sees the virtues of dying honourably, and of behaving in a British manner. However, Dorrigo is a product of post-Gallipoli and so does not share those values. He values survival and views himself as Australian far before he views himself as having a connection to Britain.

It is also necessary to examine the differing response Dorrigo and Rexroth have towards "the Black Prince" (p.46) Dorrigo speaks of – a nickname given to Darky Gardiner due to his "seemingly inexhaustible supply of foodstuff and cigarettes.- traded on the black market, foraged or stolen – small miracles that had led to his earning his other name of the Black Prince" (p.35). Darky Gardiner is the sole character amongst the young Australian soldiers who is not white – he is an Indigenous Australian, and one critic argues that Gardiner is presented "as Flanagan's hero, practicing communal values that protect human lives under extreme duress" (Strehle, 2020, p.81). He is a character who "was always looking for the good thing, no matter how small, and consequently he often found it" (Flanagan, 2015, p.178), and has a particularly close relationship with Dorrigo. One of the opening scenes of the novel features the men hiding from a shell attack, where "Darky Gardiner leapt out of his chair, grabbing Dorrigo Evans by the arm and pulling him to the ground" and continues "holding [Dorrigo]" (p.37) after the explosion has passed, ensuring he is protected. We are reminded, however, that the deep trust between Dorrigo and Darky is not extended to Darky in wider white Australian society; Flanagan writes how "Darky Gardiner's kitbag seemed only half the size of anyone else's" (p.35), the implication being that he is treated as inferior by the Australian generals because of his Indigenous ethnicity. Rexroth's attitude towards Darky reiterates this, responding to

Dorrigo's preference that Darky steal more food to strengthen those in the hospital tent with, "The Black Prince is a thief" and repeats that he prioritises building a cemetery over saving more men's lives by saying "This, however, will be a beautiful final resting place" (p.47). Rexroth does not see the benefits of Darky's actions – and not only this, but he believes they are unacceptable, labelling him a "thief". Dorrigo is blunt in his response to Rexroth's complaints, stating that "The Black Prince helps me save lives" (p.47). He views Darky as his equal, and somebody he not only trusts but has the shared goal of trying to save the lives of their fellow soldiers. Dorrigo never belittles Darky for being Indigenous; in fact, Darky is his closest friend in the prisoner of war camp. The opening of the novel begins with a prolepsis to the present day, where Dorrigo is distressed that "I can't remember his [Darky's] face" (p.15), emphasising that Darky is somebody who continues to have a strong impact on Dorrigo for the rest of his life.

Almost immediately after this conversation occurs between Dorrigo and Rexroth, Flanagan writes that "Colonel Rexroth died of dysentery" (p.48). It is as though Flanagan is pointedly expressing that Rexroth's mindset was not one that assisted the men whatsoever in this situation; but further, if we consider Rexroth to be symbolic of a certain Australian viewpoint, his death symbolises that viewpoint steadily dying out amongst Australians. The young soldiers he is surrounded by certainly do not share his enthusiasm for identifying with a sense of British nationality, and his death occurs long before many of theirs.

To return to Darky, however, as a character he is also symbolic; but his character arc is one of tragedy. There is an uncomfortable sense throughout the novel that something awful will eventually happen to Darky. In the opening chapters of the novel, Flanagan writes an older Dorrigo getting angry with a journalist who questions him about the war, lamenting that his loathing of the Japanese frames him as "a warmongering, nuke-loving, senile old fool" (Flanagan, 2015, p.20). Yet immediately after this interaction, Dorrigo realises that "something

about the journalist had reminded him of Darky Gardiner, though he couldn't say what it was [...] he admired his refusal to bend to the authority of Dorrigo's celebrity [...] A strange shame arose within him. Perhaps he had been foolish. And wrong. He was no longer sure of anything. Perhaps, since that day of Darky's beating, he had been sure of nothing" (p.20). It is particularly relevant that this thought directly follows a comment that "These days he [Dorrigo] relied on the increasingly fragile assumption that what he said was right, and what was right was what he said" (p.19); yet the memory of Darky makes Dorrigo question whether his opinion is indeed correct. Darky has a ghostly hold over Dorrigo, decades after their time in the prisoner of war camp has ended, and this extract tells us that a terrible event occurred involving Darky which has haunted Dorrigo ever since. If we refer back to Strehle's argument that Gardiner is presented as Flanagan's hero, and acknowledge how Dorrigo's moral compass seems to falter when he no longer has Darky beside him, Strehle's opinion bears yet more weight: "By reading Australian greatness, not in the exceptional national hero called "Big Fella" but in the humble and disregarded "Black Prince", Flanagan develops a contrapuntal reading of Australian history and identity" (Strehle, 2020, p.81). By the end of the novel, the character who stays continually good and without his morals thrown into question is Darky. Dorrigo, comparatively, becomes an increasingly more flawed character as the novel progresses.

Darky's demise is in large part due to the actions of Rooster MacNeice, who alongside a few other men skive off from completing work for the Japanese. When Darky realises they are skiving, he stresses that "But you blokes are in my gang today" (Flanagan, 2015, p.254) and points out that if they are skiving, "how's it fair on the other blokes?" (p.255), once again emphasising how Darky is the moral compass of the soldiers, and a thoroughly kind and empathetic man. His major concern is not how this will reflect upon him, but how the skiving will affect the work of the other men. Rooster MacNeice says in an assumptive manner that "You'll cover for us" (p.255) and after Darky tells them to follow him, only one of the men

adheres to the order. Rooster MacNeice tells the men who continue skiving that "Gardiner's too weak a sergeant to ever say anything [...] Not a leader like the old leaders" (p.256). This entire extract can be read through the lens of colonialism; one line of Indigenous theory argues that "How can any examination of Australian [...] society, on whatever social issues, be valid if it refuses to recognize the structural reality of that society? A blinkered analysis, one that ignores the colonizing foundations" (Walter, Kukutai, Henry and Gonzales, 2021, p.9). Flanagan therefore utilises Darky's Indigenous heritage to examine precisely that structural reality. Despite the fact that Darky is the one in charge today, it is Rooster giving Darky orders, saying "You'll cover for us". When Rooster refers to "the old leaders", Flanagan is making reference to an older leader we have already met in the book, Colonel Rexroth, who held to British ideals – but in this context, what is more crucial is that Rexroth was both of British heritage and white in ethnicity. For Rooster, Darky's Indigenous heritage makes him immediately inferior, and therefore he refuses to accept Darky as possessing any authority.

The decision by Rooster to skive leads to Darky "being beaten by the Goanna for a crime he had not committed" (p.238); similar to how Indigenous Australians were killed purely for existing on land that British settlers wanted. Flanagan's description of this beating is detailed and incredibly uncomfortable to read, which once again could be perceived as a literary device by Flanagan to remind readers of the uncomfortable reality of both war and of imperialism. When Darky is being beaten, his face is said to wear "a strange look of astonishment each time the guards hit him with their fists or bamboo poles" (p.284); such brutality is so at odds with the way Darky navigates his life that it is as though it surprises him to uncover such depths of human depravity. As the beating continues, Darky moans "Help! [...] Help me!" towards the men, but the Goanna persists at thrashing Darky "with a bamboo pole as thick as his arm, as if the prisoner were a particularly filthy carpet" (p.285) until "he no longer looked like a man, but something wrong and unnatural" (p.295). These quotations

(particularly the comparison of Darky to a carpet) emphasise the utter dehumanisation of Darky in this moment; he is not being treated as a man, just an object. It is notable that of all the characters this beating could happen to, Flanagan chooses that it be Darky, the singular Indigenous character. A point is being made about the way in which Indigenous Australians were singled out and dehumanised under British colonialism, and so in this moment, Darky symbolises the victims of imperialism. He has died at the hands of Japanese imperialists, just as his ancestors died at the hands of British imperialists.

It is notable that it is not during the beating that Darky dies, but that he instead dies upon crawling out of the hospital tent to relieve himself and promptly finds himself "swimming in shit [...] If he closed his eyes he was back there being beaten. If he opened his eyes he was drowning in shit" (p.296). He is found the following morning "floating head-down" where it is "presumed that, on squatting he had lost his balance and toppled in. With no strength to pull himself out, he had drowned" (p.297). Once again, Indigenous theory is prevalent as a lens through which to examine this section; far from showing a blinkered analysis of the experience of Australian nationals, Flanagan forces us to confront the horrors Indigenous Australians endured, by giving the most horrific death imaginable to the kindest character in the novel – who also happens to be Indigenous. It is unclear whether Darky chooses to let himself drown to avoid further torment, or whether it is an accident and he simply cannot pull himself back out; but regardless, Darky's death is directly connected to the actions of Rooster, a white Australian, and therefore can be viewed as a metaphor for the suffering of Indigenous Australians at the hand of white settlers.

Interestingly, in the TV adaptation of *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, the storyline of Darky dying in faeces is removed, with him instead being beaten to death. It could be argued that the TV adaptation offers a slightly sanitised version of events, as they also change his name from Darky to 'Frank' Gardiner; whilst he is played by Indigenous Australian actor Thomas

Weatherall, the weight of his character being Indigenous is less pronounced than in the novel. Having said that, whilst Frank is being beaten in the TV adaptation, he directly pleads "Help me" at Rooster's feet, and the camera focuses on Rooster looking overwhelmed with discomfort whilst trying to stay perfectly still. This is a visual reminder to the viewer that Rooster is responsible for the suffering Darky is enduring, and thus a reminder to the audience of the differing rules white Australians and Indigenous Australians lived by. They were all of Australian nationality, but colonial society catered to the actions of Rooster whilst marginalising and murdering individuals such as Darky.

Raising Indigenous presence within Australian fiction is evidently crucial to Flanagan, as he also wrote a novel called *Wanting*, which follows an Indigenous Australian girl named Mathinna and the struggles she faces once the frontier between civilisation and mindless barbarism begins to dissolve. This is important to note, as it emphasises that Darky being the character to endure this beating is not simply by chance – it is a pointed decision by Flanagan to highlight the impact of colonial rule upon Indigenous Australians. To grasp how Australian nationality was defined for white Australians, it is imperative to also appreciate how Indigenous Australians fitted into that ideal (or did not fit into it, as it may be). Where Indigenous Australians are now seen as a key part of the story of Australia (an exhibit on First Peoples at Melbourne Museum, for example, is the centre piece of the museum – not only focusing on the history of Indigenous Australians within the nation, but also making clear to the public how diverse the culture and languages are within the broader term of Indigeneity), the Australian society in which these novels are set had an attitude that was quite the opposite. Indigenous Australians were an uncomfortable reality for the Australian government to face, whose very existence contradicted the colonial view that Australia should be a monolithic white nation akin modelled on ones in Europe. Indeed, "The settlers coming on to the Aboriginal lands killed the Aborigines as if they were dogs or kangaroos. If they recognised the Aborigines as Australians,

as people with rights, this would have stood in the way of their plans to get rich quick by seizing vast areas for their sheep or cattle stations" (Roberts, 1978, p.19). Recognising Indigenous Australians as equal Australian nationals meant abandoning the concept of White Australia, and so Indigenous Australians were murdered and marginalised within society.

Understanding the intersection of white Australians with Indigenous Australians is highly relevant to then understanding the way in which other ethnic minorities are presented by both Flanagan and Disher. There is a set of norms perpetuated by figures who represent Australian authority, and those of non-European descent do not fit those norms. This is vital to understand if we are to examine how the East Asian diaspora then fits into these two writers' portrayal of the Second World War and the impact it has upon national identity; and so whilst this section has not spoken about the East Asian diaspora, it has opened up discussions around national identity which are key to the remainder of this chapter.

Japanese Nationality within Flanagan's *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*

As has already been stated several times, in *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* Flanagan initially can appear to be playing into negative stereotypes with his East Asian characters. Contextually, it must be borne in mind that Japan felt they had "endured much hostility from the Western world in the pre-Pacific war years" (Hall, 2002, p.52), and this sense of Western superiority being forced upon them as a nation directly impacted Japan's decision to build the Burma-Thailand railway which the men in *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* labour on. There was the belief that "This would not only have the obvious advantage of utilising the large numbers of POWs that had fallen into Japan's hands" but that "there would also be significant propaganda value to be gained from the project in addition to its strategic worth [...] by employing white labour to construct the railway, the sense of racial inferiority felt by many [...]

Asiatics would be banished" (Hall, 2002, p.52). This sense of enjoyment associated with the torment of Australian prisoners is certainly felt throughout *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, although there is a painful irony that it is most strongly emphasised with the beating of Darky Gardiner – who, as previously discussed, does not quite fall under the Western stereotype that the Japanese Empire had hatred for, yet suffers the crimes committed by his white Australian companions.

When we analyse the representation of the Japanese characters, and the way in which the Second World War is shown to affect their sense of national identity, we must also be conscious that Flanagan's decision to write *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* was heavily influenced by his father's experience as a prisoner of war during the Second World War, on the Burma-Thailand railway itself. Therefore, his recalling of the Japanese soldiers would be heavily influenced by his own terrible experiences as an incarcerated soldier. However, Flanagan's very decision to name the novel *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* should hint to us that there will be examination of Japanese characters beyond caricature; Flanagan himself states that the title comes from "one of the most famous works of Japanese Literature, written by the great Haiku poet Basho in the seventeenth century." He continues to explain that this was chosen because "my Father's experience and that of his mates was one of the low points of Japanese civilisation, and I wanted to use something of the forms, techniques, and ideas of these high points of Japanese culture to explore this very low point" (WheelerCentre, 2014). Far from viewing the Japanese in a negative light, Flanagan's decision to name the novel after a piece of Japanese Literature should hint to us that the Japanese characters we meet within *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* are likely to be more than how they might initially seem – and that just as the Australian soldiers are victims of Japanese incarceration, so too are the Japanese soldiers victims of a government which prioritises imperial goals over its own citizens. Indeed, Flanagan chooses to have the character of Nakamura murmur "a haiku poem

of Basho when the guards were kicking a sick prisoner, Darky Gardiner" (Arimitsu, 2017, p.11) and the usage of the poetry "seem to symbolize some kind of solace beyond words, logic, or rationality in the inhuman situation of the war" (p.12). The Second World War has a profound impact on how these characters view their own relationship with their nation, and Flanagan makes both this and the inner turmoil they face with enacting abuse against the incarcerated men profoundly clear.

Our initial introduction to the circumstances of the prisoner of war camp, however, frame it as a fanatic dream of the Japanese – from a stylistic perspective, it could be argued that Flanagan's decision to start the novel with more stereotypical portrayals of the Japanese makes it more profound when he begins to show them struggling with their connection to Japanese nationality. Flanagan states that the Japanese had "outlined a route for a great railways that was still only a series of limited plans, seemingly impossible orders and grand exhortations on the part of the Japanese High Command. It was a fabled railway that was the issue of desperation and fanaticism, made as much of myth and unreality as it was to be made of wood and iron and the thousands upon thousands of lives that were to be laid down over the next year to build it" (Flanagan, 2015, p.22). We are immediately inclined to be sympathetic towards the Australian characters, not the Japanese, particularly due to the use of words such as "desperation and fanaticism" used to describe the Japanese aims, and the "thousands upon thousands of lives" that will be ended for this goal to be achieved. Flanagan continues by stating that Japan is "overstretched, under-resourced [...] losing, and its need for this railway becomes pronounced" (p.23) to prove its own strength as a nation; but Flanagan is also keen to emphasise that despite this apparent downward trajectory for Japan, they feel far from beaten. He writes that "War, though, is its own logic. The Japanese Empire has belief that it will win – the indomitable Japanese spirit, the spirit that the West does not have" (p.23). The bitterness

felt towards the West is embodied by a determination from Japan to prove that they cannot just equal the strength that the West has, but they can overpower it.

In many ways, this last quote perfectly defines the parameters for the way in which Japanese characters are presented as struggling with their own sense of national identity within *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*. As Harding states, in the earlier stages of the Asia-Pacific war, the fight against the West by Japan "had, in its first few months, been a spectacular success" (Harding, 2018, p.213) for Japan. Anti-Western rhetoric was deeply driven into the Japanese psyche, with Harding writing how "From 1942, there was also an annual Imperial Edict Day, during which a stars-and-stripes flag was drawn on the pavement in Tokyo and people were encouraged to stand on it [...] to show their disdain and thus prove their loyalty" (p.213). Just as Australian national identity is presented through both Flanagan and Disher's novels as being connected with feeling an connection with Britain, Japanese nationality was tied to feeling a hatred for the West (specifically America in this example). Believing in anything other than Japan's ability to win the war simply was not tolerated, let alone exercised as an active thought process. However, Flanagan does present us with key moments within *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* where we witness Japanese characters struggling with their allegiance (and therefore their connection to their national identity) due to the horrific circumstances of the prisoner of war camp. Even though the outcome of those struggles is ultimately shown to be a reiterated belief in and loyalty to Japan, the very presence of these doubts prevents Flanagan from portraying the Japanese as flat caricatures and shows how the Second World War had a deep impact on their sense of national identity.

The most sympathetic character Flanagan presents us with in the novel is the character of Nakamura. Whilst he describes the Australian prisoners as surrounding "him like a troop of huge, hairy, threatening apes" (Flanagan, 2015, p.88), thus making it abundantly clear his feelings of superiority over them, he is still presented as having a level of respect for the

incarcerated soldiers at the same time. When Nakamura stumbles at one point in Dorrigo's presence, Dorrigo comments how "He fully expected Nakamura to explode, to hit him or threaten him, or at the very least to yell and scream at him" (p.74), pointing towards the negative stereotypes of the Japanese one might expect in a novel exploring this section of history. However, Flanagan subverts this expectation by making Nakamura surprise Dorrigo somewhat, as his response is to "only laugh" and then state (through being translated by Colonel Fukuhara) that the prisoners are "lucky. They redeem honour by dying for the Emperor" (p.74). When David Pearson speaks of nation theory, he refers to how in an imperialist state "the nation-state should form a unitary whole – one people in one polity in one territory" (Pearson, 2001, p.9-10). It should be noted that Pearson was more applying this concept of nation theory to nations formed via European colonisation, but the fact that it applies to Nakamura and his outlook on the Japanese Empire emphasises the extent to which the concept of imperialism follows the same pattern, regardless of nation (and why Darky Gardiner can be seen so symbolically as a victim of two empires). For Nakamura, these soldiers have now become workers under the Japanese Empire, and thus belong to Japan – therefore, the things that please him should also please the incarcerated Australians.

This excerpt is especially telling for analysing the representation of Japanese national identity (particularly when we add in Pearson's perspective of nation theory). For Nakamura, the height of honour is to be in servitude of the Emperor. His sense of Japanese nationality is connected to this, and thus he projects this feeling onto the Australians he has imprisoned – a projection only made possible because of the Second World War. This quote could also be contrasted with the earlier discussions of white Australian national identity, and the way in which Colonel Rexroth believes that it is the height of honour to be associated with the British. The war is shown to intensify these feelings of national identity and national pride for the

characters, as it is something which they can then use as an explanation for what they are fighting for and therefore a justification for their actions.

Flanagan also forces a Western reader to feel uncomfortable around the topic of Empire with Nakamura pointing out the contradiction in British and Australian ideology and their belief of moral superiority, asking Dorrigo, "Your British Empire [...] You think it did not need non-freedom, Colonel? It was built sleeper by sleeper of non-freedom, bridge by bridge of non-freedom" (Flanagan, 2015, p.75). Nakamura is essentially stating that there is hypocrisy in the way Australians view the actions of the Japanese as monstrous; he does not believe that his country is doing anything different to the atrocities that were committed under the British Empire, and therefore the Australians feeling any semblance of pride towards Britain whilst viewing Japan negatively is something he finds to be both contradictory and lacking in awareness. It is a reminder that whilst the Japanese Empire was viewed by the West as a nefarious expansion, the British Empire was a product of the West itself and committed a great many atrocities of its own. An interesting layer to this quotation, however, is the fact that Nakamura is saying this to Dorrigo, who does not in fact still see Australia as being simply an offshoot of Britain. He does not follow the same belief that Colonel Rexroth has shown and is quite clear that Australian national identity and British national identity are two different things. It is a reminder that even though this moment is essentially a mirror being turned to Western readers, Nakamura is still of the imperialist mentality whilst Dorrigo is not. Through this simple interaction, Flanagan is examining the complexity of an imperialist attitude meeting a postcolonial one, with Nakamura embodying ongoing imperialism and Dorrigo embodying postcolonialism. Dorrigo's existence as a white Australian is a product of British imperialism, but he himself did not play a part in that imperialism taking place (and indeed, his close relationship with Darky could be perceived as symbolic of reiterating that fact – where his ancestors oppressed Darky's ancestors, he feels protectiveness and genuine care for Darky);

meanwhile, Nakamura is actively partaking in ongoing imperialism, and sees this as central to his Japanese national identity.

Nakamura's sense of national identity is also shown to be firmly connected to having a desire to show superiority over the British and the Allies, connecting back to Harding's comment that Japanese citizens were encouraged "to show their disdain [for the West] and thus prove their loyalty" (Harding, 2018, p.213). Flanagan writes Nakamura thinking about the railway they are building, with him remembering how "Before the war, the English and the Americans had both investigated the idea of just such a railway and declared it impossible. The Japanese High Command had decreed that it be built in the shortest time possible" (Flanagan, 2015, p.92). The first section of this quotation once again holds a mirror up for the hypocrisy of Western disdain towards Japanese imperialism, as when the British Empire held control of this land they too considered building precisely what Japan were now creating; but in order to show superiority and dominance over the Western Allies, the Japanese were determined to not only build it, but build it as fast as possible. For Nakamura on a personal level, he is said to take "pleasure in his small but significant role in this historic mission" and that "his pride in joining his life with a national and imperial destiny, was immense" (Flanagan, p.92). Nakamura is portrayed at this point in the novel of being deeply proud of his country, and he has a great longing to prove himself worthy of serving Japan; but what makes this pride greater is that in building this railway, the Japanese were achieving something their enemies stated was impossible. Again, this connects back to the earlier quote of Nakamura pointing out to Dorrigo the atrocities that the British Empire has committed; Nakamura's sense of Japanese national identity, and pride in that, is directly tied to that of proving the British wrong and having a sense of superiority over their allies. Japanese national identity is strongly tied to sitting in direct contrast to the West and their achievements.

In working on the railway, “Nakamura worked with Japanese maps, Japanese plans, Japanese charts and Japanese technical drawings to impose Japanese order and Japanese meaning on the meaningless and aimless jungle, on the sick and dying POWs [...] The occasional Japanese officer might stay over for an evening of drink, gossip and news, and the men would fortify each other with tales of Japanese honour and the indomitable Japanese spirits and the imminent Japanese victory” (Flanagan, p.93). The structuring of this quote is almost in direct parallel with the previously discussed quote of Australian solidarity in the section of this chapter about White and Indigenous Australian national identity; “They tried to hold together with their Australian dryness and their Australian curses, their Australian memories and their Australian mateship” (p.50). Just as the Australians reiterate how things relate back to Australia repeatedly, so Nakamura here reiterates how everything he does is Japanese. By doing this, Nakamura is emphasising how the connection he feels to his Japanese nationality is present in every decision he makes. This attitude is in keeping with Benedict Anderson’s work on nation theory, where he proposes that the definition of a nation is “an imagined political community [...] *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson, 2016, p.14). When listing all the shared Japanese activities (just as the Australian soldiers listed shared Australian activities), Nakamura is creating a sense of nationhood in his mind; thus, reinforcing what he believes to be his own sense of Japanese national identity.

The sense of superiority being key to Nakamura’s sense of national identity continues when we see Nakamura suffering from tick bites in the camp, and he states how taking Philopon “to inspire fighting spirits” (Flanagan, 2015, p.92), helps him, continuing that “Philopon helps me through this fever [...] It’s very good. And it stops the damn ticks biting [...] Philopon is anything but an opiate, Nakamura said. Only inferior races like the Chinese, Europeans and

Indians are addicted to opiates" (p.94). He is proud that he has found a medication which helps him, but particularly that it is not associated with "inferior races", showing how important it is to Nakamura that all his actions reflect a sense of superiority over others. Of course, the issue with this statement is that Philopon was a medication which was methamphetamine in a crystalised form; otherwise known as crystal meth, a highly dangerous and addictive drug. Even Fukuhara, his superior officer, shows his disdain with Nakamura taking Philopon, saying that "the ticks didn't exist, that the sensation was a side effect of the Philopon" but Nakamura turns this down immediately, arguing "What the hell would he know? There was so much in this jungle that no one had ever seen or experienced before" (p.90). He feels sure that his taking of Philopon is the right thing to do, no matter what Fukuhara says, as it is a drug which the Chinese, Europeans and Indians do not take; and therefore, it is automatically a superior decision for him.

Flanagan's choice to have Nakamura firmly state his supremacy over these groups of people is another narrative parallel, drawing a connection back to the opening of the novel when Dorrigo meets people from Ormond College. As well as noting their feeling that connecting their ancestry back to Britain made them socially superior, Dorrigo also recounts how "He had never met people with such certainty before. Jews and Catholics were less, Irish ugly, Chinese and Aborigines not even human. They did not think such things. They knew them" (p.12). This superiority and righteousness on display amongst white Australians is a direct parallel to Nakamura's own sense of dominance; there is no doubt shown in this statements, because as far as the characters are concerned, these are things they "knew". It is yet another example of Flanagan holding up a narrative mirror between British imperialism and Japanese imperialism, highlighting the brutality of imperialism in all forms. Both these white Australians and Nakamura show an equal disdain for the Chinese, for example. White Australians and the Japanese may have an aversion to one another, but they also have more

commonality than either would ever care to admit. It is also relevant to acknowledge the fact that the white Australians Dorrigo meets declare that Indigenous Australians were "not even human". Given how Darky Gardiner's beating turns into a completely dehumanising ordeal from the Japanese, it is another pointed comparison between British Empire and Japanese Empire. These Australians of British descent do not view Indigenous Australians as being human, and the Japanese characters within the novel are explicitly shown to treat an Indigenous Australian in a wholly inhumane manner. By doing this, Flanagan is not excusing Nakamura's view whatsoever but simply articulating that he is not uniquely evil to hold this view – it is a viewpoint shared by the West, too.

However, Nakamura's sense of Japanese national identity being tied to a sense of supremacy over others is not individual to him; it is also shown to be shared by Colonel Kota. Mere chapters after Nakamura discusses Philopon, Kota states "We have over a quarter of a million coolies and sixty thousand prisoners working on this railway. I know the English and Australians are lazy. I know they complain they are too tired or too hungry to work" (p.113). Nakamura agrees with Colonel Kota here, also believing that non-Japanese prisoners are inferior to them by virtue of not being Japanese. This belief is reiterated by Colonel Kota saying "If a Japanese soldier neglects his work he expects to be beaten. What gives cowards the right not to be slapped? The Burmese and Chinese coolies that are sent here keep running away or dying" (p.113), and once again Nakamura is shown to agree with these words. This connects again with Benedict Anderson's analysis that nation theory is created by an imagined community between those of the same nationality – both Kota and Nakamura feel that agreeing with one another on the inferiority of those they have incarcerated further reinforces their connection to their Japanese nationality. It is also a small point, but important to note, how in this moment both Kota and Nakamura refer to the English and Australians as separate groups – whilst Nakamura refers to Dorrigo as being part of the British Empire, this acknowledgement

shows that there is in fact an understanding of the difference in national identity between the two.

More crucially, however, is the fact that these quotations show us how the Japanese viewpoint Flanagan is representing is not simply that of dominance; it is of disgust towards those who are weaker than them. Indeed, the fact that Colonel Kota is shown to state that he would be proud to be beaten were he to neglect his work, is him stating a marked difference between the Japanese and their prisoners. Nakamura himself believes that "If they had spirit [...] they would have chosen death rather than the shame of being a prisoner" (p.117). There is, of course, a great contradiction here – that by being incarcerated, the soldiers under Japanese rule have lost all ability to choose either option. But the Japanese soldiers are not shown to have this occur to them, instead showing revulsion at the weakness of the Australians, and a lack of care or understanding that their abusive treatment of the prisoners is adding to that physical weakness. All that the Australians speak of, in Kota and Nakamura's eyes, is a boasting of "their matériel power, their machines, their technology" (p.114), which is nothing compared with the self-belief that the Japanese have – such technology is irrelevant if spirit and pride in their country is not present. These differences have the intention of marking the Japanese as different to their prisoners with regards to national pride; the war has strengthened their idea of what being Japanese is, and to highlight how that differs from their prisoners is a key element of that Japanese national identity. Yet, by also creating parallels between the Japanese and the Australians, both in their attitudes towards people of other ethnicities and in their manner of reinforcing their own sense of national identity, Flanagan is weakening the individuality that Nakamura and Kota believe they feel. As readers, we can see how at times the Japanese and Australians are mirror images of one another, and thus the dominance Nakamura feels he is enforcing is appears as a façade.

Despite this solidification of Japanese authority and representing how that is inherently tied to national identity, it is not to say that Flanagan never shows Nakamura wavering in his faith towards Japan either. When Nakamura sits listening to Kota, he peruses that "his terraced face seemed to Nakamura to hold within it so much of the ancient wisdom of Japan, of all that Nakamura found good and best in his country, in his own life. Nakamura understood that the colonel, with his gentle voice, was telling him something more than this story; that he was saying that no matter what adversity, no matter what lack of tools and manpower Nakamura might have to put up with, he would endure, the railway would be built, the war would be won, and all this would be because of the Japanese spirit" (Flanagan, 2015, p.115). There is a sense of hope in this extract; that Nakamura is seeking reassurance and being reminded that his actions must be good because they are in servitude of Japan. Describing Kota as having a "terraced face" can be viewed in two ways. It refers to the deep grooves of Kota's face caused by wrinkles from age, but it also connects to the terraces rice grows in back in Japan. This description of Kota symbolises how he embodies Japan to Nakamura – he has the "ancient wisdom", and his very skin seems to resemble parts of home to Nakamura. It is fitting, therefore, that it is Kota who is giving comfort to Nakamura. If this intelligent older man feels their actions are just, then Nakamura can be content in their decisions.

However, this sense of calm is immediately followed by Nakamura's thoughts afterwards about Japanese spirit, where he ponders "But what that *spirit* was, what it precisely meant, Nakamura would have had difficulty saying" (p.115). The juxtaposition of these two statements by Flanagan is profound. It is as though this belief in Japan is something which Nakamura has simply taken for granted and never considered in depth; and as soon as he tries to consider it with more nuance, the concept of both his understanding of Japan and connection to his national identity becomes more questionable. It is another example of Flanagan enabling "readers to move beyond a reductive view of these characters as brutal oppressors, and

acknowledge them as individuals", fostering "some level of compassionate understanding for those whose actions may well be abhorrent to readers" (Shek-Noble, 2022, p.114-115). Nakamura feels that he has had no choice but to commit his actions whilst in charge of the prisoners of war; and occasionally, the guilt of his actions seeps through. When that happens, it causes him to question his very sense of Japanese nationality, as his connection to that is firmly tied to everything he does being justified in the name of Japan.

What begins as a conversation where Nakamura is seeking simple assurance from Kota fast becomes a scene where Flanagan creates a sense of empathy for these characters who have ultimately been forced into this position because of the Second World War. It becomes clear that Nakamura deeply scrutinises the conversations he has with Dorrigo as opposed to pushing them to the back of his mind. This tells us how even on a subconscious level, Nakamura has more respect for Dorrigo than it may initially seem – they may not be equals, but Nakamura is interested enough in what Dorrigo says to spend time truly listening to him. He recalls to Kota that Dorrigo "had wanted to know why Japan had started the war. And I explained the nobility of universal brotherhood that was our guiding idea" (Flanagan, 2015, p.115). This opening statement is of note as it shows that not only does Nakamura consider what Dorrigo says, but it appears that Dorrigo shows that respect back to him. It is another example of Flanagan representing how the Japanese and Australians are not as different as might be assumed and thus emphasising how utterly wasteful war is. By mentioning "the nobility of universal brotherhood", Flanagan is connecting back to Anderson's concept of nation theory once more – nationhood to Nakamura is tied to a shared sense of values, all of which in his eyes are noble because of their being Japanese. Nakamura admits to Kota that when explaining this to Dorrigo, "I don't think it came across. And so I said how, in short, it was now Asia for the Asians, with Japan the leader of the Asian bloc [...] It was very hard. He kept on about freedom" (p.115). By specifying that "It was very hard" for Nakamura to present this message, Flanagan is once

again reiterating how Nakamura is symbolic of ongoing imperialism and Dorrigo is symbolic of postcolonialism. Dorrigo's ancestors may have had similar attitudes to Nakamura, but Dorrigo does not, hence he keeps telling Nakamura about the importance of "freedom" which he experiences within a postcolonial society. (Of course, it must be noted that this argument of freedom only extends so far – to refer to Indigenous theory, Dorrigo himself has a degree of historical blinkers on when he states this. For Indigenous people, that same sense of freedom was not extended within the law, and Darky's demise symbolises this reality). However, it is also Flanagan highlighting that whilst the Japanese and Australians were more alike than either would like to admit, there were still marked differences – and this viewpoint represents that.

This is further reaffirmed through Flanagan's portrayal of Nakamura's thoughts after he expresses this difficulty to Kota, where "In truth Nakamura had had no idea what the Australian had been on about. The words, yes, but the ideas made no sense at all [...] Nakamura's own thoughts were a jungle unknown and perhaps unknowable to him" (p.116). The sense of insecurity and concern over his own actions returns in this moment, where Nakamura feels that his own brain is beginning to resemble the jungle that surrounds him. He does not understand Dorrigo's perspective, but there is also an indication that he is unsure of his own perspective – beyond following orders from the Japanese Empire, what are Nakamura's own opinions? He rapidly follows this doubt with "Besides, he didn't care about his own thoughts [...] Nakamura cared about the railway, honour, the Emperor, Japan, and he had a sense of himself as a good and honourable officer" (p.116). There is a notable level of dislike and refusal to further examine his own beliefs and thoughts. It is evident that within Nakamura's mind there are doubts about how his own values fit with the beliefs of the Japanese Empire, but he pushes them aside, preferring to tell himself that his own mind is a "jungle" and reiterating to himself all the things about Japan that he believes to be factual. Everything he

cares about connects to honouring the Japanese Empire, and thus the war is shown to solidify his sense of Japanese national identity.

Where Flanagan uses Nakamura to make the reader feel a certain level of sympathy, he uses Colonel Kota as a warning of how Nakamura could become if he continues with the mindset he is developing. Arguably, Kota is not merely a warning for Nakamura; he is an example of how nationalistic fanaticism can steadily erode a person's moral compass, and leave that individual able to justify any diabolical action purely out of loyalty to their country. Dorrigo himself "considers how Japanese historical records continue to sidestep the immense death toll that occurred as a result of the Thai-Burma Railway's construction while simultaneously honouring those who were responsible for such misery" (Shek-Noble, 2022, p.115), and a straightforward answer to this is because the deaths of the prisoners were not meticulously recorded. Flanagan's portrayal of Kota is in some senses an explanation for how this could be so; it is evident that as time has progressed, Kota has come to see anybody who is not of Japanese ethnicity as lesser. He tells Nakamura about the first time he beheaded a man with a sword and admits that at first "I couldn't believe that I was doing everything so calmly because inside I was horrified" (Flanagan, 2015, p.122), revealing the fact that Kota was not always so desensitised to the violence he now commits daily. But the fact he completed this task "so calmly" hints at the fact that the horror was lesser to Kota than his need to serve the Empire. Flanagan appears to confirm this interpretation through Kota continuing with "Only when the next cadet officer stepped forward did I see that my prisoner's neck was still pumping blood out [...] but only a little, so it must have been some time after I killed him that I noticed. I no longer felt anything for that man". Kota's sense of emotional detachment is further reiterated with him adding, "To be honest, I despised him for accepting his fate so meekly and wondered why he wouldn't fight" (p.123). It is also relevant to add that it is specified that this prisoner was Chinese, as it is Flanagan prompting the reader to be aware that Japan had "seized

Manchuria in 1931-21 [...] making unexpected Japanese inroads on the Chinese mainland" (Frei, 1991, p.124) and therefore reminds us of how vast the Japanese Empire was. It is also a reference to Nakamura's comment earlier in the novel about "inferior races like the Chinese" (Flanagan, 2015, p.94), showing that this derision of the Chinese appears to be a core element of Japanese national identity. Alongside Nakamura considering after Kota's story that "even in such terrible acts [...] there was no other way for the Emperor's wishes to be realised" (p.124), this passage reads tragically; Nakamura appears to have a stronger sense of morality than Kota, yet everything points towards him becoming increasingly like Kota.

Flanagan closes this interaction in a way which feels ominous to the reader; the difference between Kota and Nakamura is shown to be much smaller than before. Kota begins to say, "It's not just about the railway [...] though the railway must be built. Or even the war, though the war must be won" and Nakamura immediately finishes the sentence with "It's about the Europeans learning that they are not the superior race". Kota agrees with this but adds a key final statement: "And us learning that we are" (p.125). The railway itself is presented to embody Japan, and therefore the characters' sense of national identity is inherently tied to the completion of the railway. If we refer once again to Anderson's theory of imagined community and its relation to nation theory, it is evident that Kota and Nakamura have concluded that because both of them view the railway as being crucial to Japanese national identity, so all other Japanese people must perceive it in the same way; and thus, the completion of the railway is a necessity for the Empire, as "the Japanese spirit is now itself the railway, and the railway the Japanese spirit" (p.126). All the actions taken in the prisoner of war camp are justified in Nakamura's mind, as they are in service of the Japanese Empire. The moments where Nakamura acknowledges "the pain brought on him by such suffering [...] proved to him how deeply he was a good and gentle man" are framed in such a way to make the reader feel pity for Nakamura. He believes that any difficulty he feels from watching the Australians being

tortured is proof that he understands "his goodness as obedience, as reverence, as painful duty [...] For the beating served a greater good" (p.287). Everything must be done in service of the Japanese Empire, and his own discomfort only proves this to Nakamura more. The conclusion Flanagan brings the reader to is that the Second World War has brought inner turmoil to Nakamura, but overall, it has only strengthened his belief in his country and therefore his national identity by extension. War in this instance has not caused an internal crisis of national identity; it has solidified it.

The Divine Wind and the duality of national identity

Unlike in *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* where the Japanese characters' relationship with national identity mostly surrounds the question of how exactly Japanese national identity can be defined, in Garry Disher's *The Divine Wind*, we are presented with a character where the very question of her national identity is in flux. Through Mitsy Sennosuke, Disher explores the way in which the Second World War created a great struggle for Japanese Australians with regards to the two sides of national identity many felt. As has been explored previously, Flanagan goes to great lengths to portray the nuance behind the Japanese soldiers' actions and beliefs; but ultimately, they are painted in a quite dislikeable light. With Mitsy, however, Disher has created a character who we are actively meant to like; she "suffers but is never pitiable. She is defensive, never cruel" (Pung, 2016). By aiming his novel towards a young adult audience, Disher is telling a very concise story (the entire novel spans only 151 pages), and therefore wastes no time in portraying the wrongs of the past to the reader. It is abundantly clear, almost immediately, that he is interested in portraying the complexity of human nature – he does not fall into the trap of "the tyranny of good intentions", with his characters "learning to tolerate difference, of not betraying your friends, of remembering past good deeds" (Pung,

2016). The protagonist, Hart, is shown to struggle with his loyalty to Mitsy due to her Japanese ancestry, and we as readers are meant to both understand why he feels that way whilst also being deeply frustrated with him for doing so. Kim Wilson writes that Disher's decision to write "historical fiction for young adults [...] engages with the contest over how and what to remember of the past" and provides "an implicit commentary" (Wilson, 2011, p.113) on the way in which power is represented to the reader. The power in *The Divine Wind* is shown to not belong in the hands of the Japanese diaspora whatsoever. The events of the Second World War drastically affect this diasporic group, but they have no control over Australia's response, and whether it will alter the day-to-day life of those who are born and raised within Australia.

Throughout the novel, we witness Mitsy's struggle between her Japanese ancestry and Australian nationality, and how her connection to Japanese nationality has a decided shift as the novel progresses. At the start of the novel, she is very proud of and makes a point of emphasising her Japanese ancestry; however, by the end of the novel, that ancestry is presented as being a burden due to other characters projecting the sold identity of Japanese onto her, whilst not acknowledging that she is also Australian. This projection is presented through the protagonist, Hart, whose perception of Mitsy also shifts due to the Second World War. "For a brief, rapturous period, Hartley and Mitsy are lovers, but then he's torn between loyalties" (Rochman, 2002); the loyalties being Hart's allegiance towards Australia and his difficulty in understanding how Mitsy feels so torn between her Japanese ancestry and Australian nationality. However, Disher ensures that Hart is presented as self-aware enough to recognise this is not how he has historically felt towards Mitsy, and there is self-disgust and anger shown towards himself for feeling this way. In many ways, Hart is used as a comparison point for the character of Jamie Kilian, another white Australian who does not have the same self-awareness that Hart possesses. He shifts from being a friend of Mitsy's to being actively racist towards her as the novel progresses. *The Divine Wind* is not averse to presenting the difficulties that

Japanese Australians experienced in the Second World War, but it also does not fall into negative stereotypes to make that point. The bigotry that Mitsy experiences is called into question, but Disher also offers an explanation for this bigotry without fully excusing it. Alice Pung points out that "We forget that war was once how individual personality and collective character was formed" (Pung, 2016) – this is something we are privy to with Mitsy, and to an extent Hart, as war forces them to confront perceptions of themselves that they were able to ignore up until that point. It could be argued that the novel is a bildungsroman, covering formative years for both Hart and Mitsy, and ends in a way which hints at the adults they will be after the experiences they have had throughout the Second World War.

The concept of internment camps for those of Japanese ethnicity is one which unfortunately will be raised in each chapter of this thesis, highlighting an unhappy connection shared between Australia, New Zealand and Canada. After Japan "seized Manchuria in 1931-1932 [...] Old Australian fears rose again to the forefront" (Frei, 1991, p.124) with regards to a deep sense of mistrust in Japan. With the full outbreak of the Second World War, and Japan officially deemed an enemy of Australia's, that mistrust turned into hatred; and this was mirrored across Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. For those of Japanese ethnicity living in those nations, life became very difficult very fast; as Wilson writes when examining *The Divine Wind*, "the novel is set in the pearling town of Broome, Australia [...] [where] the predominantly white population of Broome becomes increasingly prejudiced in their treatment of the Japanese community. This eventually results in the internment of those classified as enemy aliens" (Wilson, 2011, p.118). It should be stressed that "the fear and anxiety of the Australian population was real", particularly after "the Japanese had conquered the supposed bastion of imperial defence, Singapore, in early 1942" (Beaumont, O'Brien and Mathew, 2008, p.1-2). At this point, Singapore was still under British colonial rule. Whilst Australia had become independent, there was still a faith in Britain to an extent (as has been previously discussed).

This conquering of Singapore, and thus conquering of Britain by extension, led to greater fears of what Japan could do; and thus "the war on the domestic front [within Australia] acquired a more extreme character", of which the clearest manifestation was "the demonising of 'the enemy within' [...] For many such people, the war brought a severe restriction of their civil liberties and the trauma of internment without trial" (p.2).

Being perceived as an enemy to people she has grown up around, and fearing the risk of internment, are both things that Disher puts at the heart of Mitsy's journey within *The Divine Wind*. By showing us Mitsy's growing discomfort, Disher leads us to the conclusion that "the internment of 'enemy aliens' during the Second World War not only damaged those interned, but was also, most probably, unnecessary to the war effort" (Wilson, 2011, p.118). Alongside the interning of Japanese Australians, it was not until a decade after the war ended that the Australian government "began to allow Japanese to enter Australia again" (Rix, 1999, p.9), having forcibly barred Japanese citizens from entering the country up until that point. Having any degree of Japanese ethnicity was treated with suspicion. For Australians of Japanese ethnicity, the impact of this mistrust on their own sense of national identity would have been profound. An interesting point to add is that, just as Flanagan named *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* after a work of Japanese Literature, so too *The Divine Wind* connects to Japanese culture. The term 'divine wind' is another term for the two typhoons that were believed to have saved Japan from Mongol invasions during the 13th century, and as a concept has broader symbolic meaning – such as that of protection. By referencing Japanese culture in this way, Disher is subtly implying that this is a piece of work that challenges how Japanese Australians were treated during the Second World War and prevents any interpretation that could argue this book is not critical towards the actions of the past. Mitsy's character journey is also in keeping with Benedict Anderson's concept of nation theory; just as the argument of imagined communities can be encompassing, so too can it define who belongs and who does not if they

do not fit within the parameters of that imaginary state. The shift in Australian attitudes towards the Japanese comes at the cost of characters like Mitsy having her Australian nationality dismissed. Her Japanese ancestry means that she does not fit into those shifting attitudes of what is defined to be Australian, and this is what Disher explores in this novel.

The opening paragraph of *The Divine Wind* sets the scene for the events to come, with Disher writing how "In the final weeks of 1941 [...] my father offered our home as sanctuary to a young Japanese woman named Mitsy Sennosuke". By opening the novel in this way, Disher makes it abundantly clear that this text will have specific focus on the impact of the war on Japanese Australians. By continuing with a clarification that "This was in Broome, in the north-west, at the time of the invasion of Malaya, when Japanese bombs were falling like silver rain and old certainties were crumbling, when some who had been our friends were now treated as aliens, transfigured by enmity and fear" (Disher, 2019, p.1), Disher is clarifying that not only is this novel set during the Second World War, but it is set during the point at which mistrust of those with Japanese heritage was reaching a peak; he "establishes the past as a point of opposition but then very quickly complicates the black and white memory of the past by providing reasons for internment and for public support of it" (Wilson, 2011, p.118). Malaya was being invaded by Japan, the Japanese were bombing not only southeast Asia but the northern shores of Australia, and the certainty that inhabitants of this town had that all their neighbours were trustworthy was starting to become less secure. By specifying that "some who had been our friends were now treated as aliens, transfigured by enmity and fear", Disher is showing that this enemy status was an identity which was projected onto characters like Mitsy, and fundamentally an external viewpoint over which she had no control. As well as setting the scene for Mitsy's journey within the novel, this opening makes clear how heavily Japanese Australians' lives were altered due to the war, and alludes that these two things will be the primary forces throughout the novel.

Mitsy identifying as both Japanese and Australian is clarified early in *The Divine Wind*, as is the presence of white Australian wariness of the Japanese. Evidently, she is introduced as being Japanese in the first sentence of the novel, but very quickly Hart clarifies that it is not as simple as that: "Mitsy represented a new generation. Born and educated in Broome, she slipped easily from speaking Japanese in John Chi Lane to speaking English with Alice and me. The three of us went everywhere together" (Disher, 2019, p.8). This quotation tells us how comfortable Mitsy is with both her Japanese heritage and Australian nationality; if we refer to Talib's definition of nation theory, where linguistics is key to contextualising nationhood, Mitsy being capable of slipping "easily" between Japanese and English is symbolic of the ease with which she feels navigating her dual connection to being both Japanese and Australian. Of note in this description is the phrase "new generation", which implies that individuals like Mitsy were not quite commonplace in Australia yet; East Asian migration had occurred for many decades, but Mitsy was amongst the first of that ethnicity to be born in Australia and thus feel a real sense of Australianness alongside her Japanese ethnic identity. In discussing diaspora theory, Thomas Faist points out that diaspora can be "summed up by three characteristics", the third of which "concerns the incorporation or integration of migrants and/or minorities into the countries of settlement. Older notions of diaspora implied that its members do not fully integrate socially" but "Newer notions of diaspora emphasise cultural hybridity" (Faist, 2010, p.12-13). This "cultural hybridity" Faist speaks of is very clear in Disher's portrayal of Mitsy – she is fully integrated into Australian society, but part of that integration is the simplicity with which she acknowledges she is both Australian and Japanese. She does not feel any pressure to choose or prioritise one over the other because, prior to the Second World War, there is no requirement for her to do so.

Just as Disher clarifies this as about Mitsy from the start of the novel, so too he alerts the reader that the environment she lives in is not as forgiving as Hart may believe it to be.

With Australia “worried about Japan’s intentions” (Denoon, Mein-Smith and Wyndham, 2000, p.318) before the Second World War had even begun, there was already anti-Japanese sentiment present. Hart recalls how “My mother didn’t approve” (Disher, 2019, p.8) of his and Alice’s friendship with Mitsy, believing that they were debasing themselves by spending time with somebody of Japanese ethnicity. This must be viewed through the lens of the discussion in the first section of this thesis chapter, where I examined how white Australian society tended to view their British (or more widely European) heritage with an air of superiority. Hart’s mother is defined as being British and has an attitude of contempt even towards white Australians if they do not feel a strong connection to Britain; Hart comments that even within her marriage, his mother had “wanted a gentleman, and got a man who gave off a seawrack sense of sweat and dirty, humble hands” (p.4). She is said to have “recoiled from the racial mix of Broome [...] I don’t recall that she ever wandered into Chinatown. And she certainly didn’t approve of our friendship with the Sennusoke family” (p.5), emphasising that Hart’s mother despised the multiculturalism of the town she lived in, and wanted to separate herself from it as much as possible, refusing to explore any parts of town which were not majority white Australian. To end this quotation by highlighting his mother’s disapproval of the Sennusokes, Hart is clarifying that even if a group of people were loved by her family, it did not make their ethnicity acceptable to his mother. This is important to understand within the context of the novel, as Disher is creating a picture to the reader of the kind of town Broome is during the Second World War. Even prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, with Japan seen as a potential threat but not an outright enemy of Australia’s, there is a firm sense of othering when discussing those who are not ethnically white. Therefore, this assists the reader in understanding how quickly life becomes difficult for Mitsy once the Second World War begins – she lives in a town which was already prone to discriminatory behaviour no matter how unjustifiable.

Disher specifies that with Mitsy, though, Hart's mother's dislike was not just a generalised dislike of multiculturalism; Hart states that "I suppose it was Mitsy's *Japaneseness* that my mother feared, but the Mitsy we knew was composed of twin natures: retiring and modest with her parents and other Japanese families, and raucous and tireless with everyone else" (p.8). This quotation shows that even though Hart has portrayed Mitsy thus far as having no difficulty with identifying as both Japanese and Australian, she is evidently already code switching depending on the company she is around – behaving in a way more culturally appropriate to her parents when she is with them and being "raucous and tireless" around Hart and Alice. For Hart, this is the main descriptor of Mitsy; it seems that she is comfortable behaving in public more similarly to her Australian counterparts, whilst her behaviour which could be described as more Japanese is kept as personal and private. In some ways this foreshadows the struggle she will face as the novel continues – the fear that Hart's mother has of the Japanese is progressively projected onto Mitsy, and she is associated simply as being Japanese despite all her exterior, Australian behaviours. It is evident almost immediately that for Hart's mother it is impossible to look beyond Mitsy's exterior of Japanese ethnicity, and sees that as representing the entirety of who Mitsy is; whereas for her children, Mitsy's Japanese ancestry is simply one of many aspects of Mitsy as a person. This is arguably foreshadowing of how the Broome community will come to see Mitsy, projecting their fears surrounding Japanese expansion onto her and her family, and ignoring the Australian behaviour she exhibits publicly in her daily life.

Disher's decision, therefore, to set *The Divine Wind* in Broome further solidifies the novel as one interested in interrogating the idea of ethnicity, multiculturalism, and how the Second World War had a direct impact on the lives of those with Japanese ethnicity who lived in Australia. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, the Northern Territories had far more Asian migrants and those of Asian descent than any other region of Australia at the time;

they “comprised a majority of the population” (Day, 2000, p.36), and thus the racial fears brought about during the Second World War were felt all the more profoundly in Northern Territory communities. Indeed, in the prologue of *The Divine Wind,* we are told that Hart’s father “was a pearling master. He ran six luggers, crewed by Malays, Manilamen, and Koepangers, with one Japanese diver on each lugger [...] We lived at the southern end of Broome, where many of the master pearlers lived” (Disher, 2019, p.1). Immediately, this emphasises how multicultural the town is. It also frames the national identity struggle Mitsy experiences as even more painful; she lives somewhere which has a vibrant community of migrants, and many settlers of Asian descent just like her, yet she comes to be deeply afraid for her safety and security as the novel progresses. Once again, Hart’s mother showing such intense dislike can be seen as symbolic for how white Australian society viewed these multicultural communities. They did not fit the monolithic aim that the colonial government wished to pursue and therefore were viewed as socially inferior to other parts of the country.

Disher’s decision to set the novel in Broome is also fundamental given the context of this being a novel about the Second World War. As the war progressed, Australia was “pushed [...] into Japanese gun sights”, and it was “northern Australian shores” that were within those sights. Alongside hosting multicultural communities, “Australia’s northern settlements were playing host to the forces of Japan’s enemy. Broome offered safety to the Dutch escaping them in the East Indies, and Darwin a base for American fighters on the counter-attack” (Frei, 1991, p.161). It could be argued that Broome and Darwin were the focal point of Australia’s fight against the Japanese, and therefore Disher setting *The Divine Wind* in Broome is symbolic to the central focus this novel has of the impact of war.

To return to the ethnic makeup of Broome, there are clear signs even in the first chapter of the novel that despite the general openness Broome appears to show, there is still a level of assimilation that the Asian migrants have had to adhere to in order to be accepted within

Broome society – and again, this is all before the outbreak of the Second World War. Disher writes that "In the Register of Aliens the Sennosukes were listed as Imazaki, Sadako and Mitsu, but those names were too foreign to our ears, and so Imazaki was soon corrupted to 'Zeke' and 'Mitsu' to Mitsy" (p.7). The use of the word "corrupted" here tells us that Hart is uncomfortable with the idea of forced assimilation; whilst he admits that their Japanese names sound "too foreign", and he himself refers to them as "Zeke" and "Mitsy" throughout the novel, he still evidently views it as a negative that they must rename themselves in order to fit in in Australia. If we refer once more to Faist's idea of diaspora theory, the Sennosukes renaming themselves is an embodiment of the more modern concept of diaspora – unlike prior generations, who were not fully assimilated into society, the Sennosukes see the benefit of assimilating to Australian society and thus change their names to more Anglicised names (which in itself is complex, due to Australia's use of English being because of prior British colonialism). However, this also highlights how assimilation was not just about fitting into a new country – it was arguably about erasing evidence of belonging to another nation previously. To be accepted within Australian society, Mitsy and Zeke must be stripped of their names, and even that is not enough for them to be accepted within Australian society as equal to characters like Hart.

It is also important to comment on the mention of "the Register of Aliens" which was how the Australian legal system referred to those who were not of white European descent. Even though Mitsy was born and raised in Australia, she is still considered an outsider – an "alien" – and, once more, it is vital to acknowledge that these quotations take place before the outbreak of the Second World War. Whilst Mitsy being both Australian and Japanese has not caused her any inner turmoil at this point, moments in the text like this are reminders from Disher that in reality, Australia already had a very negative view towards the East Asian community, and did not view them as being truly Australian. Mitsy being born in Australia

does not change the fact that her name “Mitsu” is not deemed as Australian enough, and so she is forced to change it.

This viewpoint is further solidified through the introduction of the father of a friend of Hart and Mitsy’s, Jamie Kilian, who is presented as a highly racist character and questions Hart’s father on his trusting of the Japanese luggers he works with. He is symbolic, therefore, of the racist attitudes prevalent within Australia towards the Japanese – but in a dissimilar way to Hart’s mother, whose struggle is connected to her sense of Britishness. Mr Kilian’s is represented as being very clear that he is Australian, showing no longing to move to Britain; but how Hart’s father behaves as an Australian is disgraceful to Mr Kilian, as Hart’s father does not show signs of harbouring views of white superiority, and is accepting of the Japanese diaspora. Mr Kilian says to Hart’s father, “The Japs have been spying on us for years. Gaining the measure of our emptiness and lack of preparation. The out-of-sight-out-of-mind way we approach things (Disher, 2019, p.28). Hart’s father ridicules Mr Kilian at this, laughing at the idea of his Japanese divers being spies. In contrast, he is symbolic of a more accepting attitude amongst white Australians, best embodied by him taking in the Sennosuke family to protect them once Japan become an enemy in the Second World War. Therefore, this scene can be read as depicting two conflicting viewpoints of white Australia; and it is notable that Mr Kilian is the one who has greater authority within Broome society, thus representing the racist attitude that prevailed within white Australian society.

Mr Kilian responds to Hart’s father laughing by fortifying his argument, saying “It makes sense. Japanese fleets and individuals have been allowed to come and go willy-nilly for forty or fifty years. They have eyes in their heads” (p.28), further reinforcing his belief that those of Japanese heritage are a threat to Australia – and arguably, it is Disher ridiculing this statement, as “eyes in their heads” is a misquoting of the popular saying ‘Eyes in the back of their heads’, implying the ability to spy. However, Mr Kilian’s misquote instead reads as him

simply stating something humans have and does not differentiate the Japanese from white Australians; yet to Mr Kilian it is a compelling argument that those of Japanese heritage are spying on white Australians, and repeating their findings back to the Japanese Empire. This is additionally a telling quotation of how Australians of Japanese heritage had their Australian nationality dismissed. Mr Kilian does not see those of Japanese heritage as Australian whatsoever, viewing everybody of Japanese ethnicity to be a homogenous bloc. The societal impacts of the Second World War are shown in *The Divine Wind* to be removing agency from Japanese Australians over themselves and over how they wish to be perceived. Any internal feelings they may have about nationality and heritage are not considered. An external perspective of national identity is simply projected onto them.

Hart, who is privy to this conversation between his father and Mr Kilian, peruses Mr Kilian's comments briefly, and states to himself that "Japan had invaded parts of China during the 1930s. There were people who feared that the Japanese had also set their sights on Australia. But I was bored with Kilian now" (p.28). Hart being capable of somewhat agreeing with Mr Kilian is foreshadowing by Disher of the growing cynicism that will be shown throughout the novel towards Japanese Australians, even by white Australians who believe themselves to be accepting. However, Hart being "bored with Kilian" also reiterates that deep down, Hart also feels that this perspective is not relevant to the world he lives in and the Japanese Australian people he knows. Regardless, this is a notable interaction – both for the juxtaposition of what is essentially two perspectives within white Australian society, and for the uncomfortable realisation that characters may not remain so open minded for the duration of the novel. The character this is truly foreshadowing towards is Jamie Kilian himself, whose journey throughout *The Divine Wind* is a sad trajectory of being an open, accepting character to following his father in racist values. The specific impact this has on Mitsy's storyline will be explored later in this section.

With regards to Mitsy individually, however, we see a notable change in her comfortable relationship between possessing both Japanese heritage and Australian nationality in the fourth chapter of *The Divine Wind*, after war has broken out in Europe. Hart states that "We all noticed a change in Mitsy and her father as the talk of Japan and Japanese aims intensified [...] in 1939 he was made secretary of the local Nihonjin-kai, a kind of Japanese social club and information centre aimed at bridging the gap between Japan and Australia" (p.34). With Australia and Japan headed towards being direct enemies in the Second World War, Mitsy and her father are shown to immediately feel the need to connect more with their Japanese ancestry; but it is also of note that their way of doing so is by trying to connect both their Japanese ethnicity and Australian nationality. The duality of being both Japanese and Australian is something which up until this point they have not had to question too deeply; yet evidently maintaining that duality is of crucial importance to both of them. With the threat that they will now have an identity projected onto them, the instinct of both Mitsy and Zeke is to find a way to continue marrying together their Australian nationality and Japanese cultural heritage.

However, as tensions continue to rise, we see Mitsy withdrawing more into herself, with Hart recalling "On other occasions we found Mitsy counting money for a defence contribution to Japan. She took it all very seriously. We teased her, but that only made her shut herself off from us, withdraw into the cultural traditions of a country she'd never seen. Once, when we went too far, she flashed, 'I wish I was in Japan instead of this uncultivated dump'" (p.35). Now that Australia is on the precipice of war with Japan, Mitsy is shown to feel closer to her Japanese ancestry. Despite being born and raised in Australia, and being fully integrated into the community of Broome, Mitsy finds herself longing for Japan and wishes to be more connected to her Japanese heritage than her Australian nationality – even going so far as to refer to Australia as "uncultivated", implying she feels Japan is a superior society to the nation

she lives in. Hart senses this shift in Mitsy very clearly and feels "helpless. I could read her heart. If Japan joined the war, we'd be on opposite sides" (p.37). Despite their shared Australian nationality, Hart is also fulfilling the role of a white Australian who is projecting an identity onto Mitsy; although, unlike Mr Kilian who is an inherently racist character, for Hart this projection is a direct response to Mitsy's behaviour. However, Disher creates a deep feeling of discomfort in this moment, and the beginning of a distance forming between Mitsy and her white Australian friends. The Second World War has barely begun, yet it is already shown to be having a notable impact on how Mitsy views herself and interacts with the community she lives in.

Mitsy's father dies midway through the novel, and Disher utilises this death to show how isolated Mitsy has begun to feel. When Hart asks how her mother is coping with the death, Mitsy replies that "I wish I spoke better Japanese [...] I can't tell her exactly what *I'm* feeling and she can't tell me exactly what *she's* feeling. We don't seem to connect very well" (p.48). In many ways, Zeke is a symbol to Mitsy of somebody who links together her Australian nationality with her Japanese ancestry – and with his death, Mitsy says "I feel lost" (p.50). Zeke's death is representative of Mitsy's former way of life also ending, with the realities of the Second World War meaning she cannot continue her life in Broome as she did before. She is almost painfully aware of her Australian nationality, due to her inability to communicate properly with her mother in Japanese; but this then makes Mitsy cling more tightly to her Japanese ancestry as a comfort, which in this period makes her life yet more dangerous.

Disher clearly illustrates to the reader how swiftly things change in Broome after "the news on 7 December that Japan had attacked the American fleet moored at Pearl Harbor" which in turn meant that "Australia was now at war with Japan" (p.104). Hart noting that "the Japanese were easily identifiable as aliens. Indeed, our next door neighbour, a Chinese taxi driver, was beaten up one day when he was mistaken for a Japanese by visiting sailors" (p.105)

tells us how sour the relationship between white Australians and the East Asian diaspora had become – yet it is also a revealing moment for Hart as a character, as it is a comment which directly contradicts itself. Hart says that those of Japanese ethnicity are easy to identify, but his defence of this statement is by speaking of his neighbour attacking a Chinese taxi driver. Without appearing to show any acknowledgement of it, Hart is showcasing how for many white Australians, the East Asian diaspora was perceived as a monolith. Differentiation between ethnic groups was frequently overlooked, just as Hart overlooks it in this example; he does not seem to recognise the contradictory nature of the statement he has just made.

This quotation also offers us a glimpse into anti-Chinese sentiment within Australia. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the Chinese diaspora experienced more discrimination than any other migrant group within Australia. Attempts to limit migration such as a "poll tax of £10 on every Chinese immigrant" were instated simply for the Chinese to enter the country, and if they managed to enter Australia, they were "denied other civil rights, including the ownership of real estate and the right to be naturalised" (Watters, 2012, p.35). With the outbreak of the Second World War, the Japanese were now discriminated against within Australian society even more than the Chinese, but that did not erase decades of "discrimination against the Chinese" which had become "much more accepted" (Watters, 2012, p.45) over time as opposed to less. The Chinese taxi driver evidently had no relationship to Japan, or with anybody Japanese, yet he became targeted simply for his East Asian ethnicity. Given the focus of this thesis is to examine the effect of war on several East Asian diaspora, it would be amiss not to raise this quotation as a vital example from Disher of how the Japanese diaspora were not the only East Asian ethnic group to be impacted by the Second World War. This anecdote from Hart also shows how difficult life become during the Second World War for the Chinese diaspora too. They were no longer the most distrusted migrant group within

Australia, but the risk of being mistaken for Japanese was now present, and so a new kind of abuse had the potential to affect their lives.

Hart specifying that it was "our next door neighbour" emphasises how the entire attitude within Broome was shifting due to the Second World War. The people committing these racist actions were not faceless members of the community who Hart and Mitsy have no relation to. This neighbour was somebody both Hart and Mitsy knew. Yet despite that connection to Mitsy, he was now targeting individuals of East Asian ethnicity, purely out of fear evoked because of the Second World War. This extract is followed by Hart recalling that "In Broome, a hundred Japanese were arrested and taken to the jail, which was designed to hold only fifty prisoners. Eventually tents were erected within the perimeter walls as more and more were arrested" (p.105). The crime committed was simply that of having Japanese ethnicity and therefore being suspected of being spies; in part because "the successful southern operation [of Japan] in the early months of that year could no longer be easily limited to Southeast Asia. The more Japan expanded, the more she needed to expand – for 'defensive purposes', according to the age-old law of conquering nations". The fear was of Japan believing that "Port Darwin and Broome had to be eliminated" (Frei, 1991, p.161), and therefore any Japanese Australians were considered a potential threat towards assisting that with happening. The attitude previously discussed of Mr Kilian is an example of this fear taking root within Australian society.

Disher highlights the arguable absurdity of this situation by making Hart comment that "The authorities themselves had difficulty in deciding upon degrees of 'Japaneseness', and who should be counted as a security risk and who was at risk from civilian reprisals. [...] Many had never been to Japan. Some spoke only English, others only Japanese. Some Japanese were not interned at all, others were later released, and a few were not interned until well into 1942" (Disher, 2019, p.113). There was no technical definition from the Australian authorities over what was considered Japanese enough to result in internment, the threat simply lingering over

all those who possessed any degree of Japanese ancestry. Thus, Disher depicts Mitsy and her mother as seeking refuge with Hart and his family, to hide from the authorities who might intern them. In her grief at losing agency over her life, Mitsy turns to Hart for emotional support, and the two begin a romantic relationship. Hart considers that "With the world outside going insane, did Mitsy and I represent something good and innocent?" (p.117). It could be argued that Hart and Mitsy's relationship is representative of an alternative, progressive Australia to the racially charged one they live in, where different ethnicities happily lived alongside one another.

However, Mitsy's relationship with Jamie Kilian is representative of the way the colonial Australian government viewed the nation – that of the 'White Australia' mentality previously discussed. Jamie signs up for the army early, and Hart notes that he has seen Jamie "in uniform, ready to go to war against the Japanese"; but also adds "I wondered if Mitsy would see him as the enemy" (p.89), noting the tension between the two characters over how easily Jamie regards the Japanese as his adversaries. Jamie's lack of consideration that this could damage his friendship with Mitsy leads her to admit to Hart "I don't trust him" (p.114), and thus she stops viewing him as a childhood friend, instead seeing him as an Australian with white supremacist views – and therefore an enemy to her, as his stance compromises her safety. It is evident that Jamie becomes radicalised against those of Japanese heritage very quickly, as when he is injured in a bombing in Broome, both Mitsy and Alice come to his aid; and his immediate response upon seeing Mitsy is "You must be joking". Hart furiously retorts "Don't be so stupid. She's a nurse. She's lived here all her life, you useless bastard" (p.142). This is another example of how Disher positions Hart and Jamie as symbolically contrasting to one another. Jamie is discarding Mitsy's professional abilities and genuine ability to help in the situation, purely because of her Japanese ethnicity. Hart meanwhile does not view Mitsy in that way; the Second World War and the racism that has erupted in Broome because of it has not

impacted him in the same way that it has impacted Jamie. Attention should be drawn to the fact that alongside insulting Jamie and listing Mitsy's professional experience, Hart feels it necessary to add "She's lived here all her life" (p.142). Of course, this statement is entirely true, but it is noteworthy that the only way Jamie can be persuaded to allow Mitsy's help is through Hart reminding him that she has always lived in Australia – which by extension is Hart also pointing out to Jamie that Mitsy has never lived in Japan. Only then will Jamie allow Mitsy's assistance.

Jamie's attitude towards Mitsy is shown to have a deep impact on her, as it is revealed that before Jamie is injured in the bombing of Broome, he was "taking Mitsy and Sadako away" to the internment camp. Hart is horrified at this, and Jamie very calmly tells Hart that "they wanted to go" (p.145). Whilst at first this can be interpreted as Jamie convincing himself of the virtues of his behaviour towards Mitsy, it soon becomes clear that Mitsy in fact approached Jamie to ask him to transport them there. She waits until after "the smoke had cleared and there were no more bodies to be pulled from the water" (p.150), evidently wanting to help as much as she can as a nurse, then turns to Hart to ask "will you take us to the jail? Please?". But it is ultimately Jamie, not Hart who fulfils this request, flying "them south the next day, where they were put on a train to Adelaide, and then taken to the internment camp for the Japanese at Tatura, in Victoria". Instead of feeling anger towards Jamie for his racist attitudes, Mitsy almost seems to show relief in them, as he is somebody who will not baulk at transporting her out of Broome and into an internment camp; which in the political climate, Mitsy has concluded is "the only safe place for Mitsy and her mother. She knew that" (p.150). Therefore, Jamie being uneasy at Mitsy treating his wounds and Mitsy turning to Jamie for assistance in being moved to the internment camp are two events which are inherently interlinked. It creates a strange level of understanding between the two. Mitsy is aware that Jamie does not see her as Australian, but because of their former friendship she also knows that Jamie will not be as cruel

to her as an unknown soldier might be. Therefore, the only person she can turn to in this situation is Jamie. He will not have the emotional difficulty in sending her to jail that Hart feels (indeed, Hart's inability to take Mitsy to the jail is telling – Hart has made it clear that he loves Mitsy, but he also cannot let go of her, even if that is what she chooses to do); but equally, Jamie will not harm Mitsy and her mother either.

This being the culmination of events at the end of *The Divine Wind* is an important decision by Disher. He does not offer insight into the experiences of Japanese Australians when inside the internment camps, preferring the novel to be a commentary on how difficult life became for the Japanese diaspora within Australia during the Second World War. Mitsy and her mother actively choosing to go to the internment camp, instead of remaining hidden at Hart's home, is a powerful message from Disher. They are simply tired of hiding and of feeling the need to justify their existence in the nation they call home. Mitsy, who we see respond to the outbreak of the Second World War by clinging onto her Japanese ancestry out of a desperation to continue feeling as connected to Japan as she does Australia, has an identity projected onto her which she did not request – the removal of being perceived as Australian. Even though "Mitsy's Japanese-ness does not define her, but nor does her Australian-ness" (Pung, 2016), in the eyes of the Australian government she is very much defined by her Japanese ancestry; and the novel ends with her being too exhausted to try and prove otherwise.

Disher closes the novel with yet another reminder of how hard the Second World War was for Japanese Australians, depicting Hart commenting that "The authorities have begun to release the internees" but rather depressingly adding that "Last week it was Joe Suzuki, and as he stepped on to the jetty carrying all of his possessions in a duffelbag, the locals shouted at him". The community he used to be a member of still carries anti-Japanese sentiment from the Second World War, and Joe is perceived by the community through that lens, shouting at him in a way that makes Hart fear "they will shout at Mitsy". Hart clarifies that he is still in love

with Mitsy, but admits that a future romantic relationship "won't be easy. We may not make it" (p.151). This is a sobering end by Disher, but it is in keeping with his tone throughout the novel of showcasing "the tension of dual cultural allegiance" (Wilson, 2011, p.119). Mitsy being both Japanese and Australian is shown to be a near impossible duality to balance in *The Divine Wind*, and she returns to a town which is significantly more comfortable in showcasing racist attitudes towards those of Japanese ancestry than it was before the Second World War. For Hart and Mitsy, as a white Australian and a Japanese Australian, a future together will be significantly harder to navigate than it was before the war; not only because of Broome's changing attitude, but because of the impact it has had on Mitsy too. The Second World War has had a lasting impact on her sense of nationality and identity, and it is unclear how permanent that impact for Mitsy will be. Hart evidently wants to build a life together with Mitsy but is not in denial over the difficulties that will include. By ending the novel in this way, Disher is reminding us of the long-lasting impact of anti-Japanese sentiment in Australia not just on those of Japanese ancestry; but to those around them, too.

Korean National Identity and Japanese Imperialism

It is fitting, after discussing the way in which Disher explores the far-reaching impact of the Japanese Empire waging war on the Pacific, to pivot to Flanagan's exploration of this; however, where Disher is interested in examination of the Japanese diaspora, Flanagan decides to illuminate another element of colonialism. Through the creation of the Korean character Choi Sang-min (referred to as the Goanna for the majority of *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*), Flanagan introduces a character to us who is in equal parts an abuser and a victim. The Australian soldiers in the novel suffer physically at his hand (most notably Darky Gardiner), and so he elicits distress and fury from us as readers. But equally, Choi Sang-min

is a victim of Japanese imperialism, and so also garners a certain level of sympathy from the reader alongside that revulsion and anger. His story is yet another tragic tale, comparable to Darky Gardiner's in many ways; a character forced to serve for a nation which has colonised his people. It adds further layers to the juxtaposition of Choi Sang-min as Darky's primary physical abuser, as Darky is not alone in being a physical embodiment of Japanese imperialism in that moment. Choi Sang-min is too. Interestingly, Flanagan represents Choi Sang-min as making "trades with Gardiner" over goods Darky fetches for Dorrigo, and "does not dislike him" (Strehle, 2020, p.98); there is almost a silent understanding between the two men of their lesser rank socially due to their ethnicity.

As a nation, Korea's history of colonisation goes back centuries. Indeed, "the Mongols came and went, as did the Chinese Qing dynasty and the Japanese several times" (Marshall, 2025, p.328). After regaining control of its own affairs on the Korean peninsula again, Korea responded to these invasions by "for a while" preferring to "not engaged with the outside world [...] in the hope that it would be left alone". However, this strategy did not turn out to be successful in the longer term. As the twentieth century began, the Japanese returned: "In August 1910, Japan annexed Korea" (Lissington, 1972, p.13) and "later set about destroying it culture. The Korean language was banned, as was the teaching of Korean history, and worship at Shinto shrines became compulsory" (Marshall, 2025, p.328). Korean culture was consumed by Japanese culture and rule, and thus Korean soldiers were forced to fight on the side of Japan in the Second World War. It was "a colonial 'possession'" to Japan, and "the loss of sovereignty [...] provided a rough indication of allegiance rather than a total guarantee" for Korean soldiers who were now fighting for an empire which was actively oppressing their country. When analysing the presence of Korean soldiers in the Second World War, it must be considered that "when Korean men donned the uniforms handed to them by their imperial masters, the opinions they had as to the Korean-Japanese relationship

were not erased in the process" (McKay, 2018, p.45). Flanagan recognises that "the stories of those Koreans who participated in the Japanese imperial project" (p.44) are vital when examining the prisoner of war camps, and thus he presents us with the character of Choi Sang-min.

In his analysis of *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, McKay writes how we should not view Choi Sang-min as a character study – but rather we should perceive Flanagan's presentation of him as "a psychological profile" which enables readers to "get as close as they can to an unsettling truth, namely that the Japanese took the dignity and freedom from Choi Sang-min and then gave them back to him, on condition that he then take them from others" (McKay, 2018, p.53). With this taken into consideration, an immediate place to begin the examination of Choi Sang-min is by discussing the relationship Flanagan portrays between his character and the character of Darky Gardiner – who, as has been previously stated, is an Indigenous Australian who is symbolic of the oppression of imperialism.

Flanagan's introduction to us of the Goanna is by describing him as having "a short muscular body and a mottled complexion", and the men debate amongst themselves whether he could be "the devil himself" (Flanagan, 2015, p.184). We have not yet seen his character do anything, but he is already being framed by Flanagan in a way which has connotations of monstrosity and de-humanisation. Swiftly after this introduction, however, Flanagan shows that the Goanna "thrashed Tiny with a long piece of heavy bamboo for a minute or two" and Tiny responds by beginning "to sob", a tumultuous moment in the narrative of the novel as it marks the start of Tiny's physical and mental deterioration towards his death. However, when focusing on the Goanna in this scene, what is of note is how Flanagan notes that he "was stunned" and that "With Darky, he looked on in amazement" (p.184). There is a very deliberate pairing being created between the two, and it could be argued that both Darky and the Goanna react in the same way because of their own experience of colonial oppression.

Throughout the novel, we see both Choi Sang-min and Darky suppress their personal feelings of pain and suffering, determined to prove their worth to their captors (who, ironically, it could be argued are the same people), and so it comes as a shock to both of them to see another man let his inner torment be on full display.

The two characters interact again soon after this, when the Goanna is completing an inspection of the hut the men sleep in. Darky folds his blanket in what he believes is "the regulation Imperial Japanese Army Fashion" putting it in "the place defined by the Imperial Japanese Army regulations". But when the Goanna comes to inspect the hut and sees Darky's blanket, he "took his rifle off his shoulder, and with a long, slow movement picked up Darky Gardiner's blanket with the tip of his rifle barrel and dropped it onto the muddy ground" (Flanagan, 2015, p.198) as though to torment Darky for as long as possible. He then screams loudly at Darky and "with all his strength slammed the rifle butt into the side of Darky Gardiner's head" who he proceeds to then "kick across the face" and continues still to get "a good kick in on his head" (p.199) after Darky has fallen to the ground. The incident leaves Darky feeling "confused" and "his mouth salty with blood, his body covered in the foul mud that lay beneath the sleeping platform" (p.199), reminding the reader of the disgusting conditions that the prisoners are in – and that the Goanna is forcing Darky to writhe in, injured. After a discussion with his fellow Australian prisoners, Darky realises that he did not fold the blanket in the correct way, facing "inwards" when it needed to be "outwards" (p.199), hence the Goanna punished him for his rule breaking. The Goanna seems to relish in the violence he can show towards Darky here, but Flanagan puts another interpretation across by having Jimmy (another Australian soldier) say to Darky, "The Goanna thought you was taking the piss" (p.200).

On the surface, this could be perceived as the Goanna being insulted at Darky not respecting the regulations of the Japanese Empire. However, when we take into consideration

the reading from McKay that Choi Sang-min has had his "dignity and freedom" (McKay, 2018, p.53) stripped from him, and the argument that Flanagan "represents Choi Sang-min as both villain and victim" (Strehle, 2020, p.98), this comment from Jimmy could be perceived as Choi Sang-min feeling personally wronged by Darky. As the only Korean soldier amongst the Japanese, he is very conscious of how he must prove his worth to a higher degree and therefore feels that inequality between himself and the Japanese soldiers very strongly. The reader knows that Darky, who as a character has "committed himself to his community in acts of hope, respect, responsibility, and unsentimental generosity" (Strehle, 2020, p.100) and manages to finds it in himself to describe Nakamura as "not such a bad bloke" (Flanagan, 2015, p.42), would not go out of his way to insult Choi Sang-min; but the Goanna himself does not realise that. His insecurity at his position within the prisoner of war camp is evident, and thus anything which could be perceived as a personal insult towards him is taken as one.

Choi Sang-min's insecurities are not unfounded. Flanagan depicts the Japanese officers as repeatedly treating him in an inferior manner by belittling him and behaving with disgust towards him. Colonel Kota finds the very presence of the Goanna to be "ever more irritating" where "Everything about the guard seemed untrustworthy and unreliable" (Flanagan, 2015, p.281) to him. This irritation continues, with Kota stating that "The Korean sergeant annoyed him immensely, seeking to please him with his affected smile, his ridiculous agreement with every comment Kota made, his boasting of the efficiency of their operation". Kota becomes convinced that "behind every compliment was contempt, behind every agreement mockery" (p.281) when the more realistic explanation for Choi Sang-min's actions is that he is very aware of how he is negatively perceived due to being Korean and wants to do all he can to gain approval from the Japanese officers. Thus, we are reminded of the imbalance of power between the two due to imperialism. This is reiterated soon after, when Kota feels deep shame for being unable to behead a prisoner and rage at it being

revealed that some men have been skiving from their duties; his response is to find “the Korean sergeant whose name he could never remember” and “slap him hard a few times” (p.282). Even though Kota is angry at himself, he blames the Goanna for this occurring and exorcises this rage onto him. The power imbalance that Choi Sang-min lives in constant fear of is made clear once more. The fact that Kota can “never remember” his name adds to the level of dehumanisation that Choi Sang-min is made to feel by serving in the war. He is simply another Korean soldier that Kota must tolerate.

Therefore, Choi Sang-min being the character who is made to do the horrific beating of Darky Gardiner is a scene which can be examined on two levels. It is a reminder that he is viewed as inferior to the Japanese officers and forced to do their bidding due to being Korean. However, the scene also reads as a victim of imperialism enforcing the will of imperialists onto a man who he likes; and the fact that Choi Sang-min likes Darky is relevant to add, as it further reinforces how little say Choi Sang-min has over the actions he is made to commit. Flanagan implies that Choi Sang-min does not understand the gravity of the beating, with him ruminating at the start of the beating that “after the beating, Gardiner would still need him and he Gardiner” (Flanagan, 2015, p.283) due to the relationship they have with one another trading smuggled goods. It is also telling that Choi Sang-min is “unconcerned by his slapping” but “less than thrilled with the order” (p.282) to retrieve Darky for public punishment. He did “good business” with Darky, and sees the charge as being “even more pointless than most” (p.282), but he follows the orders to retrieve Darky for punishment because “You could go to war with the world, but the world would always win. What could he do?” (p.283). This final quotation is especially telling, as it is insight from Flanagan to the mindset the Goanna has been forced to adopt. He is a product of colonialism, and his method of coping with the colonialism he has experienced from the Japanese Empire is to not fight against it. And so, he will do as he is told, fetching a prisoner he likes for a punishment he

does not approve of, because he has learned that survival within the Japanese Empire means not fighting back. Choi Sang-min is enacting pain and trauma on the Australian soldiers, but he is doing this from a place of great personal trauma himself. When discussing the need for expansion within the study of trauma theory, Irene Visser argues that "For a postcolonial trauma theory [...] the definition of trauma would need to be formulated more comprehensively to account more astutely for the aftermath of colonialism's systemic oppression" (Visser, 2011, p.276). As a Korean soldier in the Japanese army, Choi Sang-min is very much a product of "colonialism's systemic oppression". He is a young man, traumatised by what he has been forced to do due to Japanese colonialism; and he is forced to re-live that trauma every day through the actions he is ordered to complete. Leading trauma theorist Cathy Caruth "helped us to think about the relation between perpetrators and victims"; but "these categories alone are not sufficient" (Rothberg, 2014, p.xv) when one considers the complexity that characters such as Choi Sang-min present. He is simultaneously a perpetrator and a victim, due to the oppressive nature of colonialism.

It is notable that when Choi Sang-min is beating Darky, Flanagan writes "on the monster's face, a monster's mask" (p.285). On the one hand, this could be perceived as connecting to the Australian prisoners' original perception of the Goanna, where they compare him with the devil. His actions are monstrous, and his whole person embodies that. However, on the other hand, I would draw particular attention to the word "mask", which implies a sense of Choi Sang-min hiding away his true self. The Second World War, and the way in which he is expected to behave as a Korean soldier serving Japan, has forced him into shutting off his emotions, simply fulfilling the tasks he is expected to do even if he does not want to do them. When Dorrigo emerges and shouts for him to stop, "the Goanna ignored the Australians' commanding officer completely" (p.286), as it is not Dorrigo he serves – it is the Japanese soldiers. The Second World War has made Choi Sang-min very aware of his Korean ethnicity,

as it is utilised to remind him of his societal inferiority to the Japanese soldiers, who he must always obey.

As Nakamura watches Choi Sang-min's beating of Darky, it seems to reiterate a dislike he has towards Koreans: "Koreans. Useless Koreans. No wonder they didn't use them as front-line troops. You couldn't even trust them to guard Australian prisoners" (p.288). The fact that it was General Kota who did not initially notice men were skiving from their shifts is entirely overlooked. Nakamura has a dislike towards those of Korean ethnicity, a viewpoint borne out of imperialism, and thus it is inconceivable to him that this could be the fault of anybody except the Korean soldier. We see this repeated soon after when Nakamura falls in the mud, and his response to feeling "humiliated, enraged, muddy" is to "hit [Choi Sang-min] hard across his left kidney" and follow this with sweeping a pick handle "into the side of his head" and finally throw the pick handle directly "at his head" (p.290) after Choi Sang-min falls over. For Nakamura, Choi Sang-min is somebody he can physically abuse just as he can physically abuse the Australians. Even though Choi Sang-min has done nothing wrong in this moment, Nakamura projects his rage onto him. This connects to Flanagan's representation of the Goanna wearing a "mask"; Choi Sang-min's humanity has been buried, both by himself as a coping mechanism, and by the Japanese. His home nation has been destroyed by Japanese imperialism, and now his humanity is being destroyed too; from the dehumanisation he is made to feel himself, to the dehumanising actions he is forced to enact on the Australians.

It is telling that Nakamura mentions "No wonder they didn't use [Koreans] as front-line troops" with regards to the Second World War, once again reiterating the sense of superiority the Japanese have over the Koreans due to imperialism (and once again connecting to Visser and Rothberg's analysis of postcolonial trauma theory – Koreans suffered national trauma due to colonialism, yet also were forced to become perpetrators of

trauma to others). Koreans are under imperial rule, and forced to aid the Japanese in their war in the Pacific, but Nakamura mentioning this reinforces the idea that many in the Japanese military do not see the Koreans as being of any use at all. As the beating of Darky continues, "Nakamura noticed that the Korean sergeant seemed to be putting less force into his blows, a lack of purpose that annoyed Nakamura immensely", which is yet piece of commentary from Flanagan of the superiority that the Japanese felt over the Koreans. Flanagan finishing Nakamura's thoughts with "The Koreans were, well, Koreans, and he was simply not doing the job properly" asserts this dominance that Nakamura feels over Choi Sang-min simply because he is Japanese and the Goanna is Korean. Nakamura's belief that Choi Sang-min is not doing his job correctly is inherently tied to the man's ethnicity, and the disdain Nakamura has for Koreans. However, if we consider the tentative relationship that Flanagan has written between Darky and Choi Sang-min, there is another way to interpret this extract. For Choi Sang-min, this is a man who he feels a connection to more than any of the other prisoners, and whilst he knows he must follow orders, he does not want this to continue. He cannot object or stop until he is told to, but this action is one which causes him immense discomfort. It is a moment of imperial violence being enacted by a character who is also a victim of imperial violence.

Flanagan finally offers us Choi Sang-min's perspective towards the end of the novel – which is indeed the first time we find out his true name, as opposed to being referred to as the Goanna. It is after the Second World War has ended, and Choi Sang-min has been imprisoned in Singapore "as a member of the Japanese military" (p.318), which is of note to mention given he is Korean. Yet, in the eyes of the Allies, he has colluded with the Japanese and thus must be tried as one. The fact that he is Korean does not appear to be taken into consideration; his trial is held in English, and "An interpreter [...] whispered in Choi Sang-min's ear broken branches of Japanese sentences" (p.319). If we connect this back to Ismail

Talib's discussion around nation theory, and the crucialness of language in defining connection to nation, the fact that Choi Sang-min's language is removed from him emphasises how Japanese Imperialism has robbed him of his Korean national identity. As he sits in the court room, "he sensed in the Australians the same contempt for him that he had known in the Japanese. He understood that he was once more nothing, as he had been in Korea as a child, standing at the back of his class after being caught whispering in Korean instead of speaking in Japanese" (p.322). The Australians are treating him in the same way he has been treated by the Japanese, to the extent of not allowing him to be spoken to in his own language.

The erasure of Choi Sang-min's Korean nationality is repeated throughout this section. It is decided that he will be killed, and he is "transferred to Changi's P Hall in which all the condemned men lived together as equals, Japanese and Koreans" (p.343) and "for the four men who were to die, a Japanese meal and cigarettes were provided" (p.344). No difference is seen between the Japanese and Koreans, and the prison guards in Singapore are perpetuating the colonialism the Japan enacted on Korea by not acknowledging this difference. Choi Sang-min "longed for his mother's spicy kimchi and hated the bland Japanese food [...] He could not eat his last meal" (p.345); this is the last food that Choi Sang-min will eat, and there has evidently been a level of consideration taken by the Australian guards to respect culture with the food. However, the way in which this is perpetuated erases Choi Sang-min's identity as a Korean. As he smokes a cigarette, he recalls the execution of a Japanese officer who "had shouted, Long Live the Emperor!" as he did; yet "what good was such an attitude for him, a Korean?" (p.346). He cannot relate to that belief, as he is not Japanese. He is the product of a nation which has experienced colonisation.

Choi Sang-min's story is made clear to be one of tragedy by Flanagan. He became a soldier on the railway because "At the age of fifteen he heard the Japanese were hiring guards

to work in prisoner-of-war camps elsewhere in the empire. The pay was fifty yen a month" (p.347), yet this is money he has never been given. It is a painful moment to read, realising how young Choi Sang-min was, and the desperation he must have felt for it to be necessary for him to sign up at such a young age. The fifty yen is frequent in Choi Sang-min's thoughts; he thinks to himself how "he must surely still be owed his fifty yen monthly pay, none of which he had seen since before the war's end, two years earlier" (p.319). He thinks of his parents, and how he cannot offer to them any good reason for why he is dying "other than fifty yen a month" (p.346) and whilst imprisoned his mind moves "between panic at not being able to escape and anger at not getting his fifty yen" (p.347). The focus on the money implies that Choi Sang-min came from relative poverty, exacerbated by Japanese imperialism. This is further emphasised through Choi Sang-min remembering "his thirteen-year-old sister had signed up with the Japanese to [...] work as a comfort woman for similar pay [...] he had never heard from her again, and now that he knew what comfort women did, he tried not to think about her, and when he did, he hoped for her sake that she was dead" (p.347-8). For both Choi Sang-min and his sister, they have been forced to endure horrific experiences to earn money, and it can be argued this is a commentary from Flanagan on the suffering that imperialism creates. As readers, discovering the age of Choi Sang-min is a sobering moment, yet in this comment we learn his sister was even younger when she left to make the same money, highlighting how cruel imperialism was in robbing children of an innocent childhood. As Choi Sang-min is hung, his final thought is "Stop! He wanted to yell. What about my fifty –" (p.352). He never receives the money which he was promised, and it haunts him to his final moment. The injustice in this moment is felt strongly, both in the fact he has never been paid, and in the fact that he has had to die for crimes he was forced to commit due to being a penniless Korean who grew up under Japanese imperialism. He took

part in the Second World War due to his poverty status (exacerbated by imperialism) and has now been executed for being a part of the Japanese military.

This more sympathetic reading of Choi Sang-min from Flanagan is a reminder to us of the impact of imperialism and forces us to not stereotype our perception of the characters. It is also important to recognise that Choi Sang-min's character is likely based on the Korean Flanagan's father encountered as a prisoner of war. In researching *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, Flanagan met this man, Lee Hak-rae; yet instead of finding the monstrous man his father had described, Flanagan met a "dignified, gracious and generous old man" who "did his best to answer my questions politely and thoughtfully [...] He gave the impression of being sincere" (Flanagan, 2024, p.207). During his time interviewing Lee Hak-rae, an earthquake occurred, and Flanagan recalls that "I saw that he was very frightened. I saw too that wherever evil is, it wasn't in that room with me and that terrified old man" (p.209). The complexity of Lee Hak-rae's person, and how he seemed wholly different to how Flanagan's father perceived him, evidently inspired Flanagan's writing of Choi Sang-min – he has few redeeming features when perceived through the eyes of the Australian prisoners, yet as soon as he is alone in Singapore, we start to feel desperately sympathetic towards him.

A final point to note is how Flanagan states, upon meeting Lee Hak-rae, that "he had only reverted to his original Korean name in recent times"; Flanagan had previously heard of him by "his former Japanese name, Kakurai Hiromura, the name he had used during the war" (p.206). Flanagan mirrors this through Choi Sang-min having "many names – his Korean name, Choi Sang-min; the Japanese name he had been given and made to answer to in Pusan, Akira Sanya; his Australian name that the guards now called him, the Goanna – he realised he had no idea who he was" (Flanagan, 2015, p.348). As Ben Holgate writes, "The Korean's imposed names highlight his lack of a defined self identity" (Holgate, 2019, p.447); the Japanese Empire has removed it from him. In many ways, through his portrayal of Choi

Sang-min, Flanagan is drawing attention to the very real trauma which Koreans lived through during the Second World War. Choi Sang-min's name being forcibly changed is verifiably something which Korean soldiers were made to do, as proven through Flanagan's meeting with Lee Hak-rae. Their nationality as Koreans was stripped from these soldiers, both during the war and in the trials after. Flanagan's portrayal of Choi Sang-min is essentially an exploration of the impact of imperialism, exacerbated by war. Choi Sang-min's national identity is stripped from him by both the Japanese and the Australians, and it results in him having no sense of who he truly is before he is killed. It is notable to add that in the TV adaptation of *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, Choi Sang-min is never clarified as being Korean. There is no focus on his internal journey whilst imprisoned, simply a scene of his execution. In my opinion, this decision is an oversight; to not mention Choi Sang-min's Korean nationality, and the way in which his experience in the Second World War is directly tied to that nationality, is to not understand the importance of his role within Flanagan's story. Choi Sang-min's character reflecting the most likeable character, Darky Gardiner, is not coincidental. It is a reminder from Flanagan of the brutality of imperialism, and the innocent people whose identity and very existence are erased because of it.

Conclusion

Through the very different settings of *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* and *The Divine Wind*, Flanagan and Disher explore a wide range of East Asian diasporic experiences during the Second World War. Questioning a sense of nationality and belonging is a central theme of both novels, with the Second World War being shown to have disrupted a sense of connection to nationhood and national identity. Both novels also explore the ramifications of imperialism – with Disher examining the impact of British imperialism on attitudes within Australia, and

Flanagan also commenting on this but also focusing on the impact Japanese imperialism had throughout the Pacific. The result of this is two novels which illicit sympathy from the reader for characters of East Asian heritage for whom the Second World War has put in deeply difficult situations.

The Second World War is felt deeply in both texts, but it is utilised by both authors in contrasting ways. For Flanagan, the war is a lens through which to analyse national and diasporic identity, examining the impact of the war on the Australians, Japanese, and Koreans; and through that analysis, the running theme is a commentary on the destructive awfulness of war. It is a novel interested in analysing the sheer scale of war, and the number of people who are drawn into it. Disher, meanwhile, uses the Second World War in a much more localised way. The entire novel takes place in Broome, and whilst Hart is made aware of things occurring in the Pacific due to the war, we are never privy to them except through correspondence he receives. *The Divine Wind* is far more interested in exploring the impact that war has on small communities and everyday life for the individuals there; and Disher uses Mitsy and Hart as a focal point through which to do that.

The differing way with which the two novels explore the theme of imperialism is a telling aspect of this contrasting focus. For Disher, the impact of the British on Australian society is largely presented in a matter-of-fact way. Hart's mother is British, and Mr Kilian is shown to be highly racist and feels a loyalty to Britain – but apart from that, Disher does not explicitly reference the impact of empire on Australian society. An example of this in contrast to Flanagan is the way in which Indigenous Australians are mentioned. For Flanagan, Darky Gardiner is vital to the storyline, and symbolic of the oppressive nature of imperialism. For Disher, the Indigenous Australians simply form a wider picture of the multicultural element of Broome. The classism they experience due to being Indigenous is noted, but they do not carry the same symbolic weight that Darky Gardiner carries. However, it must be taken into

consideration the different audience Flanagan and Disher are appealing to with their novels. Disher's aim of reaching a young adult audience means he is not trying to tackle the topics with the same level of brutal reality that Flanagan portrays, and thus the horrors of imperialism are somewhat more hinted at as opposed to explicitly portrayed. Additionally, Flanagan's narrative explores two empires – the British empire and the Japanese empire. The lasting impact both empires have had upon characters is central to the story Flanagan is telling, and thus he must engage with the topic on a deeper level than Disher is required to.

In *The Divine Wind*, Disher's text focuses on the way in which war can create tension with national identity. He explores this through the character of Mitsy, forcing the reader to acknowledge a period of Australian history where being a Japanese Australian was incredibly difficult. Mitsy's story is the core narrative of *The Divine Wind*, following her from moving easily through Broome society as an Australian, to her ultimately choosing to be sent to an internment camp to protect her from abuse in a society which now only views her as Japanese. It is a journey which explores national identity, and the difference between internal identity and the external identity which is projected by others. For Mitsy, she begins the novel feeling she has control of her national identity; she wants to embrace her Japanese ethnicity, but does not seem at all concerned that this will come at the detriment of her Australian nationality. However, as the novel continues, that choice is removed from her. She is viewed solely as being Japanese, despite the fact she was born and raised in Australia, and the novel ending with her choosing to be sent away as opposed to hiding from the authorities could be perceived as a way of Mitsy reclaiming her agency again. It is a painful narrative from Disher which examines how those of Japanese ancestry were marginalised within Australian society during the Second World War and leaves the reader in no doubt that the war was responsible for exacerbating ethnic tension within Australia. For Mitsy, the impact of the Second World

War is absolute. Her story is one of freedom slowly being curtailed due to the actions of a nation she has never stepped foot in.

Flanagan, meanwhile, explores the effect of the Second World War on the East Asian diaspora in an entirely different way. His Japanese characters are not wrestling with feeling conflicting loyalties to a country, or with having an identity projected onto them which they do not agree with. Flanagan's exploration with Nakamura, for example, is much more an analysis of how war can encourage extreme nationalist ideology. Because Nakamura feels loyalty to Japan, everything he does is justified, no matter how brutal. His loyalty to Japan and sense of Japanese nationality are shown to be one and the same. Meanwhile, the lone Korean character is also not presented as struggling with an internal conflict of national identity; his issues are connected to Japanese imperialism erasing his national identity. The Second World War has forced him to fight for a nation which is responsible for his country's suffering, and he is treated with disdain by Japanese soldiers who view him as inferior due to being Korean. These two representations sit alongside one another, and not just because their storylines intertwine throughout *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*. Flanagan is examining the impact of empire both on the mindset of the coloniser, and the life of the colonised. His humanisation of the characters, even when they are doing objectively cruel things, puts the reader in a complex position; we do not support their actions, but we also understand why they feel they must behave in this manner.

By being set very far apart geographically, it can seem on the surface that these novels do not share many similarities. Yet in both *The Divine Wind* and *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, we feel a great deal of sympathy for the East Asian characters. Their struggles are different to one another, but they are all underpinned by one commonality, which is the effect the Second World War has upon their lives. Flanagan's father stating that "War [...] is the ultimate obscenity" (Flanagan, 2024, p.64) is a theme at the heart of *The Narrow Road to*

the Deep North, but I would argue that it is also a theme that Disher stays true to in *The Divine Wind*. The Second World War consolidates Flanagan's characters' sense of national identity, whilst upending Mitsy's sense of belonging in *The Divine Wind*, and thus it can be concluded that both writers present war as having a huge impact on national identity for East Asian diasporic characters. Through the characters and their respective torment, the central message in both novels is that wars cannot be anything other than life altering; because ultimately, the suffering created by warfare is a disgraceful stain on humanity.

NEW ZEALAND

Introduction

As acknowledged in the previous chapter, the relationship between the southern Pacific and the East Asian diaspora goes back hundreds of years; and the complex relationship felt between the Asian continent and Australia is similarly felt between the Asian continent and Australia's close Anglophone nation, New Zealand. Both nations established under British colonial rule, New Zealand followed Australia in desiring a majority white population due to "The aspiration [from] the Anglo-Celtic pioneers [...] to build a 'better Britain' in the South Pacific" (Ip, 2003, p.xi), where citizenship was "clearly modelled on conventions drawn from [its] British origins" (Pearson, 2009, p.3). It should not come as a surprise, therefore, that New Zealand's relationship with Asia has considerable similarities to Australia. However, whilst the two nations and their history with Asia are comparably alike, there are marked differences between the nations too. One such example is New Zealand's "state sanctioned biculturalism" (Johnson and Moloughney, 2006, p.6) between Indigenous New Zealanders (more commonly referred to as Māori) and white European settlers (referred to in te reo Māori as Pākehā). New Zealand's specific term for its Indigenous people, Māori, "entered general use in the 1860s, to distinguish ordinary people from the newcomers, at the very moment when the ordinary folk found themselves outnumbered by Europeans" (Mein Smith, 2012, p.18). This bicultural system, designed to provide more recognition to Māori within New Zealand society, meant that "Māori acquired a distinct legal and political status by virtue of being 'in place' at the point of colonial contact" (Pearson, 2009, p.5); however, a side effect of this was that an influx of migration, predominantly from Asia, "was seen by many as a threat to Indigenous rights" (Ip, 2009, p.152). The group of migrants most affected by this

was the East Asian diaspora – and within that group (similarly to Australia), "the Chinese suffered the additional burden of legislative discrimination" (Ip, 2009, p.1).

This awareness of Indigenous legal rights immediately shows a marked difference between Australia and New Zealand. Australia has never considered itself to be a bicultural nation, with the Indigenous Australian community historically discriminated against in equal parts to other ethnic minority groups (as explored in the previous chapter, where Richard Flanagan's portrayal of the Indigenous Australian Darky Gardiner provided a symbolic narrative of the treatment of Indigenous Australians). Bearing in mind, therefore, the impact of biculturalism on New Zealand's societal formation, it can be argued that "paying attention to the place of Asia in New Zealand casts new light on the idea of what the nation is, of what constitutes Kiwi identity and on the nature of Māori-Pakehā relations" (Johnson and Moloughney, 2006, p.9-10). In other words, understanding where the Asian diaspora are situated within New Zealand society is essential to understanding the nation itself, and indeed New Zealand nationality more generally. After all, "immigrants to New Zealand were never treated equally. The founders of the country had never intended it to be a haven for diverse migrants [...] the New Zealand dream was much more exclusive and restricted [...] to build up a replica of Britain in the South Pacific" (Ip, 2003, p.339). Given the goal of colonial New Zealand to replicate white British society, it should not come as a surprise that the history behind the relationship of New Zealand and Asia is rather complicated; despite Chinese migrants "coming to New Zealand soon after it became a British colony" (Ip, 2003, p.339), the colonial government still did not plan on the nation being one of diverse ethnicity.

The relationship between New Zealand and its East Asian community specifically is one fraught with historical complexity – and indeed, it is far from perfect even today. Events of recent years, most notably that of the Coronavirus pandemic of 2020, means that anti-Asian racism within New Zealand is once again on the rise. Mandy Te comments that

“Coronavirus brought out the same racism many young Asian people grew up with within New Zealand” (Te, 2020), implying that the nation seems to be moving backwards with regards to acceptance of those in New Zealand with Asian heritage. In my interview with New Zealand author Patricia Grace, she showed agreement with Te’s analysis, saying “I believe that anti-Asian racism has always been strongly present in this country. Perhaps it is less hidden, more overt than it used to be” (Appendix A). Even though “Contemporary New Zealand society is undeniably multicultural and [...] Asians, those descended from Asian settlers, as well as recent immigrants, comprise a major part of the nation’s ethnic diversity”, the Asian community within New Zealand has “evoked suspicion and continues to inspire fears” (Voci and Leckie, 2011, p.7). This mistrust of the Asian community within New Zealand goes back centuries; but when discussing this mistrust and discrimination, it is the East Asian diaspora above all who have been “subjected to isolation, discrimination, and even violent intolerance” (p.17).

This discrimination is a historic parallel to Australian society, as explored in the previous chapter. For both Pacific nations, it is the East Asian diaspora who have been specifically targeted throughout history; and amongst that diaspora, it was Chinese migrants whose targeting included legalised discrimination. In New Zealand’s case, there was legislation implemented in 1881 to physically deter Chinese migrants from entering New Zealand in the form of the “poll tax of 10 pounds which later was increased to £100 in 1896” (Ip and Lackie, 2011, p.161). Later, to further prevent Chinese migrants from settling permanently in New Zealand, they were “barred from citizenship (from 1908 to 1952) and even from long-term residency” (Ip, 2003, p.39). Anti-Chinese discrimination became deeply ingrained within New Zealand society, with “the very presence of the Chinese [...] considered a historical mistake that threatened the racial and cultural purity of New Zealand. British

culture was deemed unquestionably superior [...] and “Chineseness” was often defined in negative ways” (Ip, 2003, p.353).

However, with the increasingly imperialist activity of the Japanese during the early twentieth century, followed by the outbreak of World War II where New Zealand and Japan became enemy nations, this mistrust of East Asia within New Zealand was extended to include those of Japanese ethnicity too. Similarly to within Australia, the Japanese diaspora within New Zealand became negatively affected by this shift. Just as Japanese Australians were sent to internment camps, Japanese New Zealanders faced the same consequences; and New Zealand also had a Japanese prisoner of war camp established in Featherston, just north of the New Zealand capital of Wellington. Vincent O’Sullivan, who wrote the play *Shuriken* based on an “‘incident’ in Featherston during the Second World War” (O’Sullivan, 2004, p.6) where “Japanese prisoners were shot by their guards”, states that “There had never before been a prisoner-of-war camp for Japanese soldiers [...] There are few stories where there is such a dramatic meeting between East and West” (p.7). This anti-Japanese sentiment was entrenched within New Zealand society, and those of Japanese heritage became more despised than those of Chinese heritage. This is not to say that anti-Chinese sentiment vanished, however. It simply emphasises the extent to which anti-Japanese sentiment became established in New Zealand society during the early twentieth century.

The ease with which this discrimination towards the Japanese diaspora occurred is in keeping with a perspective from Johnson and Moloughney, who argue that “Asia is as much an imaginary, an ideological construct as a geographical and cultural space [...] its population is huge and its people extremely diverse. The terms ‘Asia’ and ‘Asian’ are often essentialised in generalisations” (Johnson and Moloughney, 2006, p.2). This statement is agreed upon by Ann Trotter, who states that “New Zealanders had nevertheless very clear ideas about ‘Asians’, or, as they were more frequently described, ‘Asiatics in general. The Japanese along

with the Chinese, who made up the largest pre-war 'Asiatic' community in New Zealand, were at the top of the list of the most undesired immigrants. Bitter anti-Asiatic feeling has in fact been characteristic of a lengthy period of New Zealand history" (Trotter, 1990, p.14). Despite Chinese and Japanese migrants being different ethnic groups and originating from separate nations, the way in which New Zealand perceived Asia was so loose that it enabled a collective anti-Asian umbrella to form, encapsulating both groups as a monolith. To return to Johnson and Moloughney's point regarding "'Asia' and 'Asian' [being] often essentialised in generalisations" (Johnson and Moloughney, 2006, p.2), this generalisation within New Zealand gave those of Japanese ethnicity a way to hide their heritage by pretending to be Chinese for safety (indeed, this is a core point within Patricia Grace's novel *Chappy*). There was a level of awareness regarding this within New Zealand, with "the New Zealand Listener, a journal with some standing among intellectuals, published under the heading 'How to Tell Friends from Enemies', some 'rule of thumb' to enable readers to distinguish Japanese from Chinese" (Trotter, 1990, p.15); yet the very existence of such an article proves how up until this point, the East Asian diaspora had been viewed as one collective.

The war "in the Pacific inevitably caused Japan's supposedly undesirable racial and national characteristics to be highlighted, and confirmed New Zealand's prejudices against the Japanese" (Trotter, 1990, p.15), confirming the perspective that "No nation in recent times had aroused such suspicion in New Zealand [as Japan]" (Lissington, 1972, p.74). The racism towards the Japanese was already present, due to the perception of the East Asian diaspora as a monolith; but the Second World War not only intensified that racism, it also provided white New Zealanders with supposed justification for their discriminatory attitudes and behaviour. Those of Japanese ethnicity were treated as hostile individuals who were potentially spies of Japan, even if they had spent their whole life in New Zealand. Those of Chinese ethnicity still bore the trauma of decades of racism, yet because "China had now become one of the Allies"

(Trotter, 1990, p.15) they were no longer seen as the core enemy within New Zealand society. What did these changes mean for national and diasporic identity within Chinese and Japanese communities within New Zealand? To what extent could any individuals of the East Asian diaspora be perceived as a New Zealander, or would they always be 'othered' in comparison with Pākehā settlers?

With *Chappy* by Patricia Grace and *As The Earth Turns Silver* by Alison Wong, we are presented with two novels which directly tackle the questions surrounding identity and belonging for those of East Asian heritage within New Zealand. In *Chappy*, Grace tells us the story of Chappy Star, a Japanese migrant to New Zealand in the early twentieth century, and explores how the impact of the Second World War directly affects his safety and the home he has built for himself within New Zealand. Meanwhile, in Wong's *As The Earth Turns Silver*, we follow the love story between Katherine McKechnie (a white New Zealander) and Chung Yung, a Chinese migrant, set against the backdrop of the First World War. This relationship across the racial divide causes outrage and tension, reiterating stereotypes within New Zealand society with regards to the East Asian diaspora.

Both novels are ultimately driven by character relationships and interactions, and in doing so the differences and inequality between ethnic groups are brought to the fore. This is a conscious decision made by the authors: Wong states that "Right from the beginning, I made the decision to tell the story from multiple Chinese and Pākehā viewpoints. I knew that in those days Chinese and Pākehā views and experiences would be very different, even at times contradictory, and to tell the story from only one side seemed unbalanced" (Wong, 2011, p.68). Similarly, when discussing her writing strategy, Grace says that "The main thing for me is characters. I don't really worry about anything else. I don't think about the storyline too much actually – just the characters and what might happen to them because of who they are and who they interact with" (Dudding, 2016). Both novels also fall within the historical

fiction genre, with New Zealand society portrayed accurately to how it would have been at the time. However, it is also relevant to acknowledge that Grace's work could also be described as domestic fiction, with the novel being driven by a family retelling their story to one another. *Chappy* is a story of family, and how family can be both brought together and torn apart due to war. *As The Earth Turns Silver*, meanwhile, is a love story and a tragedy, set against the turmoil of the First World War and Xinhai Revolution. It is important to note that Wong is of Chinese New Zealand descent, whilst Grace is of Māori ethnicity, "drawing imaginatively on the circumstances of her own iwi" (Reid, 2015) when writing *Chappy*. For both authors, representing the communities they are part of, and thus broadening the understanding of New Zealand as a multicultural nation, is a vital element of the novels examined.

Alongside the character driven focus of both narratives, the two novels are also charged by the background impact of war. In *Chappy*, this is the Second World War. In *As The Earth Turns Silver*, this is both the First World War and the 1911 Xinhai Revolution, which ended China's last imperial dynasty. The effect these wars had on the countries the characters both inhibit and feel connected to ultimately alters their feeling of national identity and place within New Zealand society. For the titular character in *Chappy*, his Japanese ethnicity is now the focal point of who he is, with a connection to Japan projected onto him by those around him. Any understanding that he regards New Zealand as home is removed within New Zealand society. Meanwhile, in *As The Earth Turns Silver*, Yung is made to feel isolated within New Zealand as he is not legally allowed to fight for New Zealand in the First World War; but neither can he return to China and partake in the revolutionary war occurring there. He is forced to sit on the fringes of society, with the wars reshaping the world around him, unable to have any input on that shift. Even though both Grace and Wong's primary focus is on character relationships, by setting the novels against the historical backdrops they

have chosen, we are forced to examine these relationships through the lens of the period they inhabit. War, and the ramifications war has, is felt through both texts; be it through the changes that occur within the country the characters reside, or how their national identity is strained due to war affecting a nation they no longer live in.

Within this discussion, it is important to recall the definition of diaspora, a word which "literally means a scattering of people" and is "often used to denote religious or national groups living outside an (imagined) homeland" (Skeldon, 2003, p.51). The concept of diaspora serves as a lens "through which to view the aftermath of international migration" (Faist, 2010, p.9); with this understanding that diaspora hail from a foreign nation to the one they now dwell in comes "the assumption that peoples are not assimilated [...] they retain their distinct identities ready for the day when they can return home" (Skeldon, 2003, p.52). Even if the members of these communities do not wish to return to the nation they are ancestrally connected to, this assumption is still prevalent, and it is a mentality both Grace and Wong present in their novels. In the context of nation when discussing New Zealand, it must be remembered that "the 'idea' of the nation is [...] quite recent in history" and dates from late eighteenth-century Europe; the sense of New Zealand national identity is borne from "the often artificial creations of colonialism" (Skeldon, 2003, p.53). Ultimately, the nation we refer to as New Zealand came to be known that way under British imperial rule (just as Australia did), and so when we examine the East Asian diaspora's place within that nation, it must be with awareness of that prior colonisation. The displacement and marginalisation of Māori within New Zealand society is directly paralleled to the discrimination that the East Asian diaspora were made to feel, as neither fitted within the ideals of white European society which colonial New Zealand aimed to emulate.

This chapter will be formed around similar areas of discussion to the previous chapter on Australia. Their geographical location and former connection to British Empire means that

whilst New Zealand and Australia are separate countries with their own individual histories, there is still significant overlap in how war impacted the society of both nations. Therefore, I will also be utilising diaspora theory, nation theory, and Indigenous theory to interrogate the texts, whilst engaging with historical research to further contextualise the novels. Together, the two novels create a wider picture for us to examine of the way in which New Zealand society was drastically affected by the Great Wars of the twentieth century. A broader time scale will be engaged with, and thus a deeper understanding created of the societal shifts within New Zealand, with particular focus on the East Asian diasporic experience in the country.

To begin, I will examine the presentation of white New Zealander national identity within both novels, and how war affects the characters' connection to New Zealand and the way in which they are perceived by others. The historical impact of Gallipoli, which was briefly mentioned in the Australia chapter, will be a key piece of context in this argument; a catalyst for New Zealanders feeling markedly different from the British, this piece of First World War history is crucial to New Zealand's sense of nationhood, and thus important to be discussed in relation to the texts. I will also utilise nation theory, particularly that of Ismail Talib and her work in linguistics, to further engage with how white New Zealander identity became defined. Regarding *As The Earth Turns Silver*, the focus will be on those of white British descent; therefore, I will explore how a loyalty to Britain formed part of their New Zealander identity, and the way in which this intersected with anti-Asian sentiment (specifically shown through the character of Robbie). In *Chappy*, meanwhile, I will explore this question differently; how war affected those in the novel who are white but of German descent, not British, and how this highlights the fractious relationship between identity and nationhood.

From here, I will shift to discuss the East Asian diaspora in earnest, with an examination of how China and Chinese national identity is represented in *As The Earth Turns Silver*. How does Yung feel towards his Chinese nationality in the novel, and how do we see it in conflict (or not, as the case may be) with New Zealand now being his home? How do the First World War and the Xinhai Revolution impact the way in which that nationality is felt and portrayed? Wong herself is "a fourth generation Chinese New Zealander and the first New Zealander of Chinese descent to have published a novel" (Fresno-Calleja, 2017, p.34); it is probable that Wong is exploring her own relationship with being both Chinese and a New Zealander and therefore must be considered when analysing the text. Diaspora theory will be utilised in this chapter, particularly with regards to how Yung feels being separated from China at a time of national revolution.

I will then pivot to examining Patricia Grace's *Chappy*, and the way in which the fluidity of identity is portrayed throughout the novel – specifically around that of the character Chappy Star, who is Japanese. Prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, Chappy's Japanese nationality is what keeps him safer within New Zealand, as he is treated far better than those of the Chinese diaspora; however, with Japan now a formal enemy of New Zealand in the Second World War, Chappy's Japanese nationality shifts from being a protection to putting him in explicit danger. Grace portrays Chappy at one point as pretending to be Chinese for his own safety, emphasising the extent to which Grace is using war as the lens through which we analyse Chappy's shifting identity as a Japanese individual within New Zealand.

Finally, I will explore the way in which Indigenous and East Asian relationships are represented within both *Chappy* and *As The Earth Turns Silver*. David Pearson notes that "At the turn of the nineteenth century, Chinese and Māori minorities experienced racism and racial discrimination, which notably affected their respective life chances" (Pearson, 2009,

p.39); the relationship between the two communities was formed out of both being "severely marginalised communities in neocolonial New Zealand" (Ip, 2009, p.1) who shared "significant basic cultural values" (p.7). Since both groups "were minorities dominated by the same monoculture, the two communities gravitated towards each other and became partners in adversity" (Ip, 2009, p.150). For Grace, this relationship is at the heart of the novel *Chappy* – whilst Chappy is of Japanese origin, not Chinese, we witness a similar pattern with him finding solace amongst the Māori community and the Indigenous Hawai'ian community. *Chappy* cannot be understood as a text without acknowledgement and examination of Māori and East Asian relationships and thus challenges the notion of national identity; Indigenous characters sit on the periphery of society, but the land they reside on belonged to their ancestors long before Europeans settled there. Grace's implementation of Indigenous language reiterates to us this marked difference from English speaking white Europeans and is a reminder that the very concept of national identity becomes more complex when discussing Indigenous characters as opposed to white settlers or migrants. Whilst Indigenous and East Asian relationships are more on the periphery of *As The Earth Turns Silver* (akin to *The Divine Wind* in the previous chapter, where Indigenous characters are more utilised to create a historically accurate depiction of the nation), the brief featuring of the dynamic still offers insight into the way in which Shun and Yung view themselves within New Zealand society. Indigenous theory will be employed in this section to further the analysis, and to ensure that the discussion around Indigenous representation is seen as a fundamental part of New Zealand society; not something we can simply choose to acknowledge if and when it suits us.

White New Zealander National Identity

Whilst the primary focus of this thesis is on the East Asian diaspora and the way they are represented within the context of war, that ethnicity cannot be analysed in isolation. As examined in the previous chapter, the culture a diaspora is situated within has vast ramifications for how individuals in that diaspora respond to events; such as, in the context of this thesis, the impact of war. The way in which Wong and Grace show national and ethnic identity to be altered and clarified by war is intrinsically tied to white New Zealander society at the time, and how that culture sat in contrast with the East Asian diasporic experience and identity. Therefore, to have a stronger understanding of how the East Asian diaspora is represented within these novels, it is crucial to first understand the historical context within which they sit – that of a country which had an "Anglo-European majority" (Ritchie, 2003, p.46) where Chinese sojourners were "the first non-European people to come to nineteenth-century New Zealand". Such was the anti-Chinese sentiment that even prior to the commencement of Chinese migration, "there were protests about potential Chinese immigration to New Zealand" (Ng, 2003, p.20). Fundamentally, this was rooted in how "the founders of the country had never intended it to be a haven for diverse migrants" because, as discussed prior, "the New Zealand dream was much more exclusive and restricted. Early New Zealand settlers wanted to build up a replica of Britain in the South Pacific" (Ip, 2003, p.339), similarly to colonial Australia as discussed in the previous chapter. This sense of Eurocentric superiority is referenced in both *Chappy* and *As The Earth Turns Silver*, but is particularly present within Wong's work. Similarly to as examined in the previous, in Wong's *As The Earth Turns Silver* we see how white New Zealand identity still feels somewhat tied to a loyalty to Britain. War is depicted as complicating that loyalty, as a sense of New Zealand nationality becomes formed beyond maintaining a connection to Britain.

As The Earth Turns Silver in particular "responds to identity dilemma affecting New Zealanders" (Fresno-Calleja, 2017, p.34) and this is portrayed through Wong's decision to

"tell the story from multiple Chinese and Pākehā viewpoints" (Wong, 2011, p.68). Indeed, it can be argued that the novel "is a culturally extensive novel, containing primarily the British and the Chinese culture in New Zealand" (Klahold, 2012, p.1). How white New Zealander national identity is defined is a key element to then dissecting how the East Asian diaspora integrated into New Zealand society, and how that assimilation (or lack thereof) is represented. Dominique Wilson claims that the novel is "a sensitive and skilful exploration of the cultural climate of Wellington at the turn of the twentieth century" where "Wong tackles racism, murder, hate and oppression" (Wilson, 2009), clearly showcasing how Chinese migrants in New Zealand "were subjected to racial prejudice and abuse" (Barr, 2010). Robbie's bigotry against the Chinese is repeatedly shown to come from a place of loyalty to his father (both in replicating his father's bigoted values, and out of anger at witnessing his mother fall in love with a Chinese man), but also loyalty to what he perceives as British values, reflecting the oppressive nature of New Zealand society towards anybody not of white European descent. However, this national identity is also represented as being exacerbated due to experiencing shellshock from the First World War. I will be utilising trauma theory to further explore this, as it is very evident that the war has deeply wounded Robbie internally. The bigotry he has been raised in is one of the few things he is able to fully remember, and so he holds onto it as an anchor for who he is.

The bigotry Robbie exhibits in *As The Earth Turns Silver* is not just repeatedly shown by Wong; his character is presented as being symbolic of the racist ideology prevalent throughout New Zealand society which viewed Māori as "second-class citizens" and "the Chinese as quintessential outsiders" (Pearson, 2009, p.40). He feels a duty to defend what he sees as true New Zealander nationality and is both disgusted and furious at his mother's relationship with Yung, leading to the ultimate act of violence where he "finally kills the Chinese in his shop" (Klahold, 2012, p.1). Robbie's character arc leading to this decision is

meant to disgust and shock the reader; but it is also a poignant depiction of New Zealand society from Wong, showcasing the violent attitudes towards the Chinese at the turn of the twentieth century. Indeed, Wong's writing "reconstructs the cultural climate there at the time" and shows the reader the "racial hierarchy [...] established, with the British considering themselves superior to the others" whilst also representing how "an active Anti-Chinese League had built up. Wong's novel now is both a love story and tragedy as well as representation of Chinese settlement in the country" (Klahold, 2012, p.1). It could be argued that with the story Wong is telling, any other outcome than Robbie violently ending Yung's life would not be accurate to the racist attitudes of New Zealand society. To truly reconstruct Wellington society and make clear how ingrained anti-Chinese racism was, Robbie cannot be perceived as accepting of his mother's relationship with Yung. For example, New Zealand author Katherine Mansfield "grew up in Wellington in the 1900s" and her work portrays "the Chinese in the most derogatory terms. Her impressions of the Chinese as disease-ridden, dirty, often insane and totally alien probably reflect accurately the feelings of mainstream Pakeha of her times" (Ip, 2003, p.40). This negative attitude towards Chinese migrants is what Wong is representing in *As The Earth Turns Silver*, predominantly through Robbie.

Robbie's racist attitudes are deeply tied to his sense of New Zealand national identity – which in turn has become intensified due to the First World War. When examining how these intersect in *As The Earth Turns Silver,* this "vicious murder" (Barr, 2010) which Robbie commits is heavily connected to his new role within society of being a soldier, preparing to fight for his country in the First World War. He believes that defending what he sees as New Zealand values is not just something he wishes to do, but something it is imperative he does because of the uniform he now wears. It is righteous, in his eyes; now that he is a soldier, it is his duty to permanently uphold New Zealand values, not just when he is on the battlefield. This is implied through the way Robbie gains the weapon with which he kills Yung:

“Afterwards Robbie wondered why John had given him the knife that night. He’d laid it down in front of him casually. An invitation. A dare” (Wong, 2009, p.258). It is almost as though John (Robbie’s father) is tormenting Robbie, questioning whether he has the tenacity to follow his beliefs through to acting – and now that he is a soldier, it is necessary for Robbie to have the strength to kill those opposed to him. He has already been at war as a soldier by this point in the novel, and so this action both tests his capability of killing, whilst (in his eyes) righting the wrongs committed against his family by Yung: “People said they were easy targets, Chinks, they never resisted” (p.258). Theoretically, this is straightforward to complete as Robbie’s actions are justified to himself in multiple ways. The previous quotation also emphasises how much of an influence Robbie’s father has on him; as Wilson states, Wong’s representation of racist New Zealand society is largely symbolised through the men surrounding the character of Katherine McKechnie. It is made clear to us that her husband is “a violent and prejudiced man who idealised murder [...] and passed on his bigotry to her son” (Wilson, 2009). Having been raised surrounded by such ideals, Robbie implementing these ideals into through committing murder is a tragic inevitability.

Of note about this passage, however, is that Robbie appears to exhibit a level of disassociation whilst committing the act of murder. When he first seeks out Yung, Wong frames him as being fully aware of what he is doing; yet when he carries out the murder itself, “He could see himself but couldn’t feel, every movement detached from his body. The way the knife fell into his hand, the way it plunged into the body, the way it thrust up” (Wong, 2009, p.258-259). It is as though the moment he shifts into behaving like a soldier and carrying out a killing, he mentally detaches somewhat. This is akin to the prisoners of war in Flanagan’s *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, and their disassociation whilst witnessing beatings as a way of coping with the trauma. Even though Robbie is the one committing the violent action, there is a part of him which experiencing trauma from what he

is witnessing – and it is important to view Robbie as both a committer of the crime and a witness simultaneously, because of his disassociation. The psychologist Pierre Janet "had a more dissociative thinking of trauma" (Brochard and Tam, 2019), where he "highlighted the abnormalities in the subjects' coordination and integration of their different psychological functions whose contents are operated in a more compartmentalized, disrupted, or disassociated way" (Scalabrini, 2020); in other words, he believed that in traumatic moments, people often respond by disassociating in order to protect themselves from fully comprehending what is in front of them. It is evident that Wong's presentation of Robbie in this moment connects to this argument of trauma theory, therefore hinting that the bigotry he has assimilated to is not only harming others, but it is also harming himself. The First World War has intensified his feelings of loyalty towards New Zealand and clarified the strength of his national identity; but it has also fundamentally changed Robbie as a person, shaping him into somebody who will commit violent acts in the name of his country. We see this through the way he describes the act of the murder itself, commenting that "He was surprised at its [the knife's] ease: a bayonet slipping into a padded sack" (Wong, 2009, p.259). This simple description is a reference from Wong to what Robbie has witnessed as a soldier in action, and how killing has become a concept so separated from humanity that he compares Yung to an inanimate object. This could be extrapolated further, to underline how until this moment he has dehumanised the Chinese migrants to such a degree that his immediate response is not one of acknowledging Yung as a person, but to see him as no different to an item he has used in his training. There is a strong sense of detachment throughout this, once again representing the connection to trauma theory discussed above, and Wong continues to underline that detachment: "Robbie looked at the knife, the stain of red on its pointed blade, the clean fit of the wooden handle, so that he knew of its presence only from a certain weight on his fingers. He watched a single drop of blood fall, heard the clatter of the knife on the white linoleum"

(Wong, 2009, p.259). He can describe everything in vivid detail, yet his brain is still not correlating that he is responsible for what he can see due to the crime he has just committed. His experiences at war have taught him to disassociate as a coping mechanism.

Wong follows this description by stating that "He could not move [...] He wanted to scream, could hear himself screaming, but could not open his mouth" (Wong, 2009, p.259). This once again emphasises how separated Robbie feels from his actions. Evidently, he is screaming, but he does not feel that he has any control over that. He feels unable to even "open his mouth" even though it is demonstrably open. Killing Yung has almost been an instinctive decision, borne out of his experiences in the First World War, where he has been taught to not see the humanity in others to be capable of killing them in warfare. That experience of war, together with the racist views of his father and the racist society in which Robbie has been raised, have created a situation where Robbie has murdered Yung and only after he has killed him does his brain start to process the situation in front of him. Indeed, once Robbie realises Yung is now dead, he begins to shift out of that disassociation, at first stumbling out of the building and then running "blindly, banged his knee hard into the wooden fence, climbed over, [...] and vomited against the fence line" (Wong, 2009, p.259). Trauma theorist Cathy Caruth argues that "the term *trauma* is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind" (Caruth, 1996, p.3); in this moment, it is evident that Robbie has become deeply damaged within his mind, both by the society around him, and by the decisions he has made due to it. In the previous chapter, I discussed Irene Visser's work in postcolonial trauma theory with regards to the Korean character of Choi Sang-min; and Wong's presentation of Robbie is somewhat of a parallel to this. Even though Robbie is arguably a beneficiary of the settler colonial society he lives in, this behaviour shows that he is simultaneously a traumatised victim and a perpetrator of harm due to that society and its racist norms. Yung has paid the ultimate price for this, but Wong makes it clear that Robbie is

also a victim in a different way. Feeling obliged to fight a war for a country he has never been to, and raised to believe in racist ideology, Robbie has been shaped in a way which has ultimately traumatised him – and led not just to Yung's demise, but to his own.

One could argue that Robbie's decision to commit suicide at the end of the novel is intrinsically tied to the war, and how much his experience as a soldier has affected him on a personal level; he has gone from being somebody who believes and says racist things, to being somebody kills somebody in cold blood. As he sits, shuddering after murdering Yung, Wong describes the weather to be "bullets of rain hitting the footpath, flying up at his feet, water pouring over his hat, trickling down his neck" (Wong, 2009, p.260). The use of the word "bullets" in particular carries weight in this extract, with the clear connotations attached to it of war; but this passage is also reminiscent of earlier descriptions of Robbie's experience in the trenches, where "The rain won't stop falling. With each shell the mud shakes like black blancmange [...] It's raining, it's always raining" (p.241-242). It is as though Robbie has been transported back to being in the trenches again, looking at a body whose death he is responsible for. These moments sit beside one another thematically, with rain connecting Robbie's present with his past. The rain in this moment becomes symbolic of the all-encompassing nature of the trauma Robbie feels; it is all around him and he cannot escape from it. The aftermath of Yung's murder is described in such a way that Wong is clearly making reference to these previous descriptions, emphasising to us how Robbie now carries the trauma of the First World War with him. By the time he returns home after Yung's murder, Robbie is evidently disassociating again – Wong writes how his sister Edie takes his hand and "He turned, but there was no flicker of recognition" (Wong, 2009, p.246). Who Robbie is and what he believes are in constant flux after returning from the war – what grounds him is remembering the racist values he has carried from his father. His killing of Yung, when this is

taken into consideration, can be seen as Robbie desperately trying to reclaim his own sense of self in the aftermath of war.

This breakdown of Robbie's sense of self is even more stark when we consider how he views himself and his New Zealand national identity when he enlists as a soldier but has not shipped out yet. Wong writes how the moment a telegram is read aloud saying "WAR HAS BROKEN OUT WITH GERMANY" that "Something wound tight in Rob's gut loosened and leapt from his mouth. He was shaking, his voice joining Billy's, the crowd's, in thunderous cheering" (p.190). Even though the war is in Europe, Robbie still feels unquestionably connected to it from the other side of the world – "Although the decision had been made in London, and although they had no say in it, New Zealanders, in the main, greeted the declaration of war with acclamation, seeing themselves as loyal members of the British Empire" (Pugsley, 2022, p.58). At this point, white New Zealander national identity is heavily defined through a connection to Britain; as has previously been mentioned, white New Zealander nationality was centred around the fact that New Zealand was intended to be akin to Britain but in the Pacific. Wong describing the cheering as "thunderous cheering" emphasises how deeply this connection was felt, with New Zealanders shown to be reacting as though they themselves are British in this moment. Indeed, Wong continues that "They cheered for the King, they cheered for the Governor, they sang *God Save the King*, thousands upon thousands of voices in unison" (Wong, 2009, p.196), reiterating the connection to Britain that the New Zealanders feel. Wong's use of the word "unison" in this extract demonstrates how unifying this feeling of connection to Britain was; it was a core element of white New Zealand national identity. It is necessary to add, however, that amongst references to the King, Wong refers to there being cheering "for the Governor", a figure specific to New Zealand; this small addition reminds the reader that for all the connections it has to Britain,

New Zealand is still its own nation, and even if it is not consciously being recognised by the crowd, the reference to "Governor" shows a growing awareness of this fact.

Robbie is referred to as a "British subject" (p.196) after he successfully enlists as a soldier, and this once again emphasises the close loyalty Robbie has to his British heritage – even though he has not ever been to Britain. In contrast to the white Australians spoken about in the previous chapter, Robbie's sense of New Zealand nationality and British national identity are not in conflict with one another; they seem to move in tandem. This is an important point to mention, as it highlights the far-reaching impact the First World War was yet to have on both New Zealand and Australia. For the white Australian characters in the previous chapter, their experience in the Second World War was in a world decades after Gallipoli. For Robbie, that is yet to come; the sense that being British and being a New Zealander are two separate things has not yet solidified in his mind. At Te Papa Museum in Wellington, New Zealand, there is a vast exhibit entitled 'Gallipoli: The Scale of our War', which was built with the intention of "bring[ing] people together around this major event in our history" (Johnston and Hakiwai, 2022, p.6) and creating an exhibition which would serve as a reminder that "At Gallipoli, those people create pillars from our past that deserve to be commemorated and remembered long into the future" (Taylor, 2022, p.13). There is a strong sense in contemporary New Zealand society that "The after-effects of the Gallipoli campaign continue to ripple through our society" (Taylor, 2022, p.13) which "had a focus and magnitude for Australia and New Zealand that went far beyond its military significance" (Keith, 2022, p.16). That magnitude was the sheer volume of Australians and New Zealanders who died at Gallipoli; it "cost New Zealand an estimated 7991 casualties, including the 2779 of the 16,000 – 17,000 New Zealanders who served on the peninsula who died" (Pugsley, 2022, p.104) and afterwards soldiers began to view themselves "for the first time as New Zealanders, not British, and were identified as such by those they served

alongside. The 'Home' they longed to return to became *this* land, not Britain" (p.104). The exhibit at Te Papa Museum has stood for over a decade now, making clear the prominence this military campaign still has within New Zealand history. As David Pearson writes, "To name oneself a New Zealander now, in contrast to past eras, is more likely to be a statement of not being British" (Pearson, 2001, p.16); Gallipoli is a key event within New Zealand history to create that definition.

To return to *As The Earth Turns Silver*, however, at the beginning of the novel Robbie has yet to experience such an event. His sense of New Zealand national identity is still tightly connected to Britain, and to a white, English-speaking society; when he is training before being shipped to Europe, he "punched the heavy bag as if his life depended on it, aiming for an imagined face on the leather. Sometimes it was the moustachioed face of the Kaiser; sometimes, when he thought of his mother, it was the squint-eyed face of the Chow" (Wong, 2009, p.191). These two images are important to understanding Robbie and the way he views his national identity; they represent the enemy he sees in Europe as the leader of Germany (symbolising his connection to Britain) and the enemy he feels exists within New Zealand (symbolising that there is the beginning of a separation between the two in his mind). Interestingly, despite Robbie seeing the Chinese as the enemy in New Zealand, "Chinese New Zealanders served in both the First and Second World Wars" and there was a "close comradeship that existed within the armed services"; however, even within that close comradeship, "they were never invited to mainstream functions and celebrations" (Ip, 2003, p.40). Robbie's narrative from Wong is representative of that inability within white New Zealander society to accept those of Chinese ethnicity, but taken to a further extreme, as he shows no comradeship towards Chinese New Zealanders. His national identity as a New Zealander is related to his loyalty to Europe (specifically Britain), but it is also defined as contrasting with the Chinese individuals he meets in Wellington. The way in which he views

New Zealand national identity as being white is exacerbated by the outbreak of war; and it could be argued that Robbie committing suicide is symbolic of that mindset within New Zealand fading away after the First World War. The racism in *As The Earth Turns Silver* was still present in white New Zealand society after the First World War, but the determination that New Zealand be a Britain of the Pacific lessened with the awareness that Britons and New Zealanders had different national identities; thus, the opportunity for a new kind of society to be built had also begun.

This makes for an interesting comparison when we turn to Patricia Grace's exploration of white New Zealander identity within *Chappy*. Her novel is set against the Second World War as opposed to the First, so Grace is exploring New Zealand society several decades later, and thus society has shifted somewhat. White New Zealand society is still portrayed as holding superiority over Māori and East Asian characters, but the deep connection felt to Britain is lesser within *Chappy*. When I asked Patricia Grace about her intention of showing cultural intolerance in *Chappy*, she told me that "I wanted to write as truthfully as possible. All of the instances of racial intolerance, in the book, have come from my own research – books, documents, letters. Or they were within my own experience during the war and post war era" (Appendix A). Whilst Grace primarily focuses on intolerance shown towards Māori and East Asian diaspora, she explores white New Zealand identity too; but through the character of Harry Krauss, who is of German descent.

Grace introduces us to Harry by writing, "After the beginning of World War Two there was a radio announcement that all enemy aliens were to report to their local police stations so that they could be put on a register. Though Harry Krauss heard the call, he didn't believe he fitted the description of either 'enemy' or 'alien'. He had become a British citizen many years earlier, and was married to a New Zealander [...] Why should he register? He was against Hitler, who was a maniac" (Grace, 2015, p.107). There is an immediate feeling of

injustice in this description – Harry may have originally migrated from Germany, but he no longer feels a connection to Germany whatsoever. It is relevant to point out that he had become a "British citizen" as opposed to a New Zealand one, reiterating to us that whilst the First World War had lessened the ties between New Zealand national identity and British national identity, the former British presence was still felt within New Zealand society. However, the fact that it is specified his wife is "a New Zealander" reminds us that being British and being a New Zealander were considered two separate things now (relating back to the prior discussion around Gallipoli). His nationality is British, and his home is New Zealand.

Yet, due to the way in which the Second World War is shown to fragment national identity within *Chappy*, "attitudes were changing in town. People he'd known for years were avoiding him, some long-standing baking orders were cancelled, daily custom declined and he awoke one morning to find a swastika painted on the garage wall" (p.107). This section from Grace shows us that simply being white within New Zealand did not provide protection; his German ancestry creates a situation where the national identity of being German is projected onto Harry. Interestingly, this could also highlight how even though New Zealand has shifted in the way it sees itself as connected to Britain, there is still the possibility that anybody who is not of white British descent is at risk of being ostracised within New Zealand society, once again relating to the importance of being primarily English speaking too. Whilst Robbie in *As The Earth Turns Silver* has had his connection to being a New Zealander somewhat damaged by the First World War and what he has experienced in warfare, Harry Krauss' national identity is fragmented in an entirely different way. It is not his experiences within the Second World War which make him question his belonging within New Zealand; it is external perceptions being projected onto him which weakens his place within New Zealand society.

Grace continues with Harry's narrative, telling the reader that "Harry took the train to Wellington, upset at having to come under enemy regulations. 'This is my country,' he kept trying to explain when interviewed. 'Today's Germany is not my Germany. The flag of Germany is not my flag. I would fight for my adopted country if I could.'" (Grace, 2015, p.108). Despite his viewing New Zealand as his home, Harry being perceived as German remains an identity which is projected onto him. The use of the word "adopted" is of note here, as it asserts that despite all Harry has done – marrying a New Zealander, gaining British citizenship, creating a bakery business in his local community, and settling into that community with his family – he can no longer refer to New Zealand simply as being his country. He feels the need to use the word adopted in a way we do not see white New Zealanders of British descent around him use. When discussing nation theory with regards to settler states, David Pearson writes that "Ideally, for settler elites, a developing sense of common nationhood should reinforce those institutional components of statehood [...] An 'ethnic core' is an important constituent for nation-building and survival" (Pearson, 2001, p.9-10). When we examine Harry's story within *Chappy*, this discussion of nation theory is somewhat crucial; Pearson's analysis highlights the connection between New Zealand and former British rule. The "common nationhood" he refers to, when we discuss New Zealand, is British ancestry, as is the "ethnic core". However much New Zealand is represented as having cast off the close tie to Britain that Wong explores in *As The Earth Turns Silver*, that historical link is still present; and when the nation is put under strain due to the Second World War, that remaining link is shown to be stronger than one might initially think. Harry is white, but his German ancestry means that he is not part of the "ethnic core" which Pearson describes; and thus he is seen as not being a true New Zealander. However much he asserts his loyalty to both New Zealand and Britain, Harry's ending is ultimately a tragic one: "A week later the detectives came for him with an internment order. He was taken by train under

escort and handed over to the military on arrival at the Wellington railway station, soon to end up as a prisoner on Somes Island in the middle of Wellington Harbour" (Grace, 2015, p.109).

This may take up a relatively small section of *Chappy*, but it is vital for understanding the way in which Grace shows how war affects national identity, and the way in which personal identity can differ from an externally projected identity. Nicholas Reid writes how *Chappy* may deal with "simple emotions and ambitions" but this "is not to say that this is a simple story or that its outlook is simple" (Reid, 2015); the presence of Harry in this novel reiterates how Grace is representing complex issues throughout the simplicity of the day-to-day life of individuals in *Chappy*. Whilst the First World War makes Robbie in *As The Earth Turns Silver* initially emboldened in his national identity, then later seem lost over what being a New Zealander means, for Harry in *Chappy* the Second World War immediately creates a situation where he lacks any control of his national identity. He has an identity projected onto him and is branded as a traitor to the country he calls home – simply because of where he was born. His own personal feelings of where he considers home to be are dismissed. War, therefore, is hugely important to how we view white New Zealander identity within both novels as it reiterates to us the racist society the characters are living in, and how British ancestry was still viewed as the ultimately superior national identity to possess. These nuances in turn aid our understanding of the complexity of East Asian identity within New Zealand: how the diaspora fitted into New Zealand society amongst a dominant white culture, and how war is shown to impact and fragment East Asian identity within both novels too.

China and Chinese National Identity within *As The Earth Turns Silver*

As highlighted in the exploration of white New Zealander national identity, it becomes evident that Wong's *As The Earth Turns Silver* depicts hostility towards Chinese migrants as a central aspect of white New Zealand identity. Just as the national identity of white New Zealanders is shown to be partially defined by contrasting against Chinese national identity, so we see the reverse is true of Chinese migrants in the novel. A key aspect of how Yung and Shun move through the world is how they are perceived by the white European culture around them, and how they feel their Chinese ancestry conflicts with that; as Manying Ip writes, "the Chinese learned to see themselves through European eyes and measure themselves by European standards" (Ip, 2003, p.354). Both the First World War and the Xinhai Revolution as background context to this story are shown to fuel the complex relationship these characters have between Chinese nationality and viewing New Zealand as home.

Wong tells us that Yung "didn't *really* look Chinese" (Wong, 2009, p.86) and Fresno-Calleja argues that Robbie's mother, Katherine, "tries to naturalise her feelings by persuading herself that Yung's physique is *almost* European, even though she simultaneously employs common assumptions about his physical and cultural differences" (Fresno-Calleja, 2017, p.40). These descriptions imply that Katherine believes her love for Yung may be perceived as more acceptable due to his features being akin to European standards. This in turn reiterates that "the Chinese were never considered remotely equal" (Ip, 2003, p.39) and that "Even those who had close contact with the Chinese considered them a second class-race full of vice" (p.40). Whilst Katherine does not view Yung as being "full of vice" (although her son Robbie clearly does), it is evident that she does view him as a second-class citizen. To justify her feelings, she tries to persuade herself that he could pass for looking European – the standard which was accepted within New Zealand society. A conversation tells us midway through the novel, "Did you know that if you marry an alien, you lose your British

citizenship?" (Wong, 2009, p.149); for Katherine, loving Yung is not simply a decision which will be frowned upon. It could result in her own legal status being stripped from her. Evidently, Katherine's internal justifications over how Yung could be perceived as European are of no use, given Yung is murdered by Robbie, but this extract provides crucial information about the society in which Yung is trying to build a home – and by extension, the experience that many Chinese migrants had within New Zealand society. Even the woman he loves only feels able to love him if she persuades herself that Yung looks more European than Chinese.

The opening of *As The Earth Turns Silver* immediately highlights to the reader how isolating it is for Chinese migrants within New Zealand. Shun speaks of the New Zealand culture around him, and says, "It is a lonely place where the Jesus-ghosts preach. They preach about love, about a god who died of love, yet in the street the people sneer and call out and spit, then on Sundays sing in the Jesus-house" (Wong, 2009, p.1). There is a strong sense of hypocrisy in this extract; white New Zealander culture is comparable to British culture, which was built on Christian teachings; yet the love and understanding this religious teaching preaches is not extended towards the Chinese. Outside of the "Jesus-house" they dehumanise the Chinese, shown by Wong's description of how "the people sneer and call out and spit" at the Chinese migrants. Their view of the Chinese was that "there was no intention whatsoever that the Chinese should be allowed to settle down to become a community in New Zealand. This is why the Chinese were only allowed to come as single men" (Ip, 2003, 39). Shun and Yung have both had to leave everything and everyone behind to build a life in New Zealand, understanding that to visit family in China would mean never again returning to New Zealand. They have experienced life as being "excluded from the blueprint of the young colony" (p.38), and the way they view white New Zealanders is deeply connected to that sense of exclusion. The use of the phrase "lonely place" to describe Wellington by Wong

emphasises how, as a Chinese migrant, Shun has been made to feel isolated within New Zealand society, setting the tone for how "Chinese and Pākehā views and experiences" within New Zealand in the early twentieth century "would be very different, even at times contradictory" (Wong, 2011, p.68). This can also be perceived as Wong showing that Shun feels white New Zealanders have created an isolated society for themselves too – desperate to replicate a nation on the other side of the world (Britain), New Zealand does not have a true grasp of its own national identity at this point.

When it comes to discussing Chinese national identity within New Zealand, it is necessary to briefly discuss how whilst writing *As The Earth Turns Silver*, Wong herself felt in conflict with her national and ethnic identity as a Chinese New Zealander, saying "I was more afraid of telling the Chinese story than the Pākehā one." She continued, "because my family has been in New Zealand so long, my Chinese cultural awareness and identity seemed, in comparison to the times I was writing about, much diluted" (Wong, 2011, p.68). This feeling that she has a level of disconnect from her Chinese heritage is something Wong has explored before, most notably in her poetry collection *Cup*. In the poem *The River Bears Our Name*, Wong writes from the perspective of somebody in Pauatahanui (a town northeast of Wellington) writing a letter to a family member in Shanghai. There is a sense of mourning in this poem at the separation between the two; how as the family member is stood "alone at the Huangpu River", the narrator watches "the sun ease[s] red over Pauatahanui" (Wong, 2006, p.30). However, this distance is shown to go beyond geography. The narrator comments that their family member is "more fluent in a foreigner's tongue", implying the two have differing first languages. It is implied that the narrator in New Zealand feels a painful awareness that the family member is living in a nation that the narrator is ancestrally connected to; yet it is foreign to them. If we refer once more to Ismail Talib's discussion of linguistics within nation theory, and how much language plays a role with connection to national identity, the fact that

the narrator cannot speak the language of China represents that disconnect. The narrator must stay watching the sun ease over Pauatahanui, as they are linguistically and culturally separated from China despite their ancestry. New Zealand is their home, and with that understanding comes a level of grief for the lack of connection to ancestral heritage. Wong stating that she felt her Chinese cultural awareness was "diluted" (Wong, 2011, p.68) further defends this reading; when writing *As The Earth Turns Silver* it is evident she struggled with how connected she felt to her Chinese ancestry.

This feeling of there being a degree of separation from her Chinese heritage caused Wong to "wrestled with the idea of Chineseness. What of my family background was Chinese? What were merely family characteristics and not specifically Chinese?" Ultimately, Wong concluded that "There is no Chinese voice, just as there is no one Pākehā, Māori, Pacific or other New Zealand voice" (Wong, 2011, p.69); her perception of what being a Chinese New Zealander is has just as much validity as any other Chinese New Zealanders'. I would argue, however, that at times her presentation of Chinese identity in *As The Earth Turns Silver* can be overly simplistic, and Wong seems to struggle with whether she is focusing more on the internal conflicts of her characters or the storyline itself. This culminates in the murder of Yung which arguably "fails to have any dramatic tension whatsoever" (Barr, 2010). However, it could be said that the simplicity of this presentation is representative of Wong's internal conflict between her personal sense of identity as a Chinese New Zealander; and simplifying the way in which she presents this through her characters enables her to tell the story in a way she sees fit. As diasporic theorist Skeldon writes, "the commonality of "Chineseness" as a racial category, promoted by both outsiders and insiders for very different reasons, can obscure real and significant differences within the Chinese communities" (Skeldon, 2003, p.62). One could take this a step further, and argue that the question of conflict within New Zealand national identity is also related to this point; we see

Robbie believe that there is only one way to be a New Zealander, and anybody who does not fit that description is seen as not being enough of a New Zealander by Robbie (culminating in the death of Yung, and the suicide of Robbie himself). When discussing the Chinese diaspora, however, Wong chooses to not engage with the differences in *As The Earth Turns Silver*, instead trying to show a more generalised (and at times, clichéd) experience for the Chinese diaspora at the turn of the twentieth century.

An example of this simplification is how Shun thinks of his younger brother Yung upon first arriving in New Zealand. Shun says that Yung "is eighteen now, and books have affected his brain. He dreams big, impossible dreams. He does not understand life, and he does not understand this land" (Wong, 2009, p.2). Whilst Shun is grateful for Yung arriving, and it means they will have more money as there will be two of them working, we are immediately shown how Shun believes that Yung has a naivety to him which needs to be removed; the dreams he has over how his life will be in New Zealand are "impossible" and not only does he not understand "life", but he "does not understand this land". This specification from Wong is that it is not simply naivety which will be a problem for Yung; it is that New Zealand fundamentally does not want men like him – Chinese migrants – to be here. Shun has learned this and so views full assimilation into New Zealand society as "impossible". Shun's further mention of "the poll tax" (Wong, 2009, p.2) (a measure brought in to specifically discriminate against Chinese migrants entering the country) shows how Shun has had to live almost half a life for many years – separated from his family and without the ability to bring them over to New Zealand due to the "numerous laws restricting Chinese immigration" (Ip, 2003, p.40). When Chinese migrants first arrived in New Zealand, they were seen as sojourners – and, as Skelton points out, "From the point of view of the destination society, the sojourner does not wish, or is not allowed, to assimilate into that society" (Skelton, 2003, p.52). Shun is glad to have Yung joining him, but he understands that

the two of them will never be seen as fully belonging in New Zealand. Wong chooses to portray a non-nuanced perspective from Shun at this point in the novel, utilising him to represent the oppressive nature of life for Chinese New Zealanders.

When the narrative shifts forward ten years, we see the Yung has accepted his role as on the fringes of society, no longer enraptured with the dreams Shun was concerned he may hold. His braid, which connects him to his Chinese culture, he decides to cut off early into the novel; Wong writes how afterwards Yung "held the braid heavy in his hand, feeling terrifyingly liberated, and yet as if he had amputated a limb" (Wong, 2009, p.15). This is a symbolic moment from Wong, of Yung essentially cutting off a tie he still feels to his Chinese nationality. He is afraid that if he went to a New Zealand salon as opposed to cutting the hair himself, the salon will refuse him – or worse, he will "sit back in the chair and feel the blade as it cut across his throat, and no one would notice if he didn't come out" (p.15). Yung feels torn between the need to conform, yet feeling pain at that conforming simultaneously, as shown in this extract, as it means sacrificing an element of his Chinese identification. However, the fear of being attacked due to being Chinese is greater than any distress at separating himself from symbols of his Chinese ancestry; and thus, he chooses to conform for his own safety. By opening the novel in this way, Wong is clarifying to the reader the difficulties (and dangers) faced by Chinese migrants to New Zealand in the early twentieth century, meaning we should not be surprised when the conflict of war arrives it makes the situation yet more complicated. It is also worth noting how by choosing to have the novel set during the events of the First World War, the Chinese community is still formed of bachelors; it was only after "the Second World War" that "their families were allowed to join them" (Ip, 2003, p.356). The setting of the novel in this period further shows the isolation that Shun and Yung experience within New Zealand, thus emphasising how they struggle with relinquishing their connection to China.

It can be argued that the way Wong portrays the theme of war in *As The Earth Turns Silver* is symbolic of the great divide between white New Zealanders and Chinese migrants. As examined in the previous section of this chapter, the outbreak of the First World War had a profound impact on white New Zealanders – for Robbie, at first it crystallised his loyalty to Britain, and then left him in a state of great confusion as he questioned what New Zealand national identity was without that British nationality. However, Wong notably does not show her Chinese characters as responding to the First World War. In many ways, that lack of reaction to the First World War highlights how separate their existence within New Zealand society was from white New Zealanders. For Yung, he is far more fixated on the Xinhai Revolution occurring in China and is shown to struggle with the fact he is so far from China whilst this is happening. After a decade in New Zealand, his dreams are not focused on being accepted within New Zealand society; they are "of a new and powerful China, free of corruption, free from Manchu and foreign domination" (Wong, 2009, p.15). Katherine being focused on the First World War and Yung being focused on the Xinhai Revolution begins to emphasise the cracks in the relationship – Yung wants "to tell her many things. But sometimes in English the words caught in his throat, thickened on his tongue" (p.159). The two characters have found solace with one another, yet their loyalty to different nations (exacerbated by war) means that that connection is weakening. It is emblematic from Wong to represent how "the exclusion of the Chinese from mainstream Pakeha circles was considered quite normal" (Ip, 2003, p.40); there is little chance of Yung and Katherine having the same outlook on world events, as even within New Zealand they inhabit entirely different spaces due to how the "Chinese were still considered undesirables" (Ip and Leckie, 2011, p.161).

Katherine attempts to talk to Yung about the First World War, discussing her distress at Robbie shipping out to Europe as a soldier. She says to Yung, "He's only eighteen" and

Yung is “silent” at first, then attempts to comfort her by saying “When I leave China, I am eighteen” (Wong, 2009, p.209). As it is the evening before Robbie leaves New Zealand, it is evident that Katherine has sought the company of Yung for comfort, and Yung’s attempt to reassure Katherine is by reminding her he was Robbie’s age when he left China. However, far from comforting Katherine, it only frustrates her more, as it reminds her that “he wasn’t the one left behind. *He* was the one who left [...] She suddenly felt angry. How dare he compare *this* with Robbie going to war?” (p.209). Yung does not fully grasp the impact that the First World War has upon white New Zealander society, because he is unable to participate in it. In his exploration of nation theory, David Pearson writes how “states that were once quintessential examples of attempts to form new nations based on a narrowly conceived ethnic core have moved in recent decades to dualistic and/or multiple imaginings of national membership” (Pearson, 2001, p.20-21); but by setting *As The Earth Turns Silver* in the early twentieth century, Wong is telling this story in a time long before New Zealand had “multiple imaginings of national membership”. Yung does not perceive himself as a New Zealander, or hold a great deal of loyalty towards New Zealand, because New Zealand itself treated the Chinese as “aliens” (Ip and Leckie, 2011, p.160) within society. The First World War, therefore, does not catalyse Yung into having complex emotions around his national identity in the same way it does for Robbie. It is instead utilised by Wong as a reminder to the reader of how marginalised within New Zealand society the Chinese migrants were, as he cannot relate to Katherine’s angst at Robbie going to war. It further cements the fact that Yung is a Chinese national and sees himself as such.

Prior to the outbreak of the First World War, Wong refers to Yung’s attention being focused on turmoil in China. As discussed in the extract where Yung cuts his braid, Wong portrays Yung as having dreams of what modern China could become; and as the Xinhai Revolution of 1911 begins, Yung begins to show a longing for China. This was an important

revolution within China, as it "caused the fall of the last imperial dynasty and the establishment of a republic", ending two millennia of imperial rule, but it also ushered in "a twenty-year-long civil war" that did not end until "the 1949 victory of the Chinese Communist Party" (De Giorgi, 2022, p.56). The revolution and its impact were "a decisive but also divisive factor in moulding the Chinese national identity and China's place in the world" (p.56). Yung receives letters from his friend Hung-seng in the lead up to the revolution, where the two of them "exchanged poetry, debated how best to modernise China" (Wong, 2009, p.160); it is as though Hung-seng is a link back to China for Yung. After receiving no letters from Hung-seng for a while, Yung is sent a letter from Hung-seng's brother, informing him that "Hung-seng had been one of over a hundred killed in a failed uprising. The government had left the bodies in the street. As warning" (p.160). Months after this incident "bombs exploded in Hankow. In Wuchang a soldier killed his commanding officer. The Revolution had begun" (p.161). Yung is shown to be following the Revolution in China far more closely than he is the First World War and begins to struggle with being separated from China. Due to the "1908 legislation stipulating that no Chinese could apply for naturalization, effectively condemning them to 'alien' status forever" (Ip and Leckie, 2011, p.161), if Yung were to leave the country he would be at risk of not being allowed back in. Thus, he is condemned to hear about the ongoing events of China from miles away, unable to return without risking the life he is tentatively trying to build in New Zealand.

It is important to note that the Xinhai Revolution (also referred to as the Chinese Republican Revolution) "was the first consciously 'revolutionary' event in modern Chinese history" which aimed to overthrow "the Qing dynasty founded by the Manchu in 1644" and establish "a republic, which was considered the only kind of polity able to give democracy to the Chinese people, granting them freedom, rights and equality. Its premise was the introduction of a whole new set of concepts and notions to the Chinese political vocabulary,

such as the ideas of nation, citizenship, people's sovereignty and people's rights" (De Giorgi, 2022, p.57-58). For Yung, this moment had the possibility of catalysing a huge shift for China's future; and with it, solidify the concept of Chinese national identity. It is therefore exceptionally painful to Yung to not be in China; he struggles with the thought that "Now, back home, there was so much to be done. Hung-seng had died for this, but what had *he* done except debate with his countrymen and raise money for Sun and the Revolution? Wasn't this the time to go home?" (Wong, 2009, p.161). For Yung "home" is still China, not New Zealand. He feels no connection and shows no concern over the First World War but is made painfully aware of his Chinese nationality when a civil war is raging across China and he is not part of it. As one theorist writes, "Diaspora consciousness, constituted both negatively and positively, is typically developed in relation to the consciousness of a prior home" (Ma, 2003, p.32): for Yung, the "prior home" is China. War, therefore, is shown by Wong to be very important to establishing Yung's sense of national identity; but once again, Yung's response to the Xinhai Revolution and lack of response to the First World War shows that his national identity is not in turmoil. He is simply shown to be increasingly aware of the strength of connection he feels towards his Chinese national identity, and being unable to return to China brings him great internal struggle.

Just as Katherine feels frustration that Yung cannot understand why the First World War is impacting her so deeply, Yung is shown by Wong to struggle with communicating the importance of the Xinhai Revolution to Katherine. The gap between their national identities becomes larger to him: "Yung looked at Katherine [...] and didn't know what to tell her. How could he speak of foreign domination – Manchu, British, French, German, Russian, Japanese – the struggle for liberty – with a foreigner?" (Wong, 2009, p.160-161). He tells her that his friend has died, but when she asks how, "He thought of words he'd looked up in his Chinese-English dictionary and on nights when he'd lain alone spoken into darkness, practising the

feel on his tongue, the sound of a foreign language. 'Liberty, equality, fraternity,' he said. And he knew she didn't understand" (p.161). When Michel Bruneau speaks of diaspora theory, he notes that one way in which to view diaspora is as a "population, integrated without being assimilated into the host countries, retains a rather strong identity awareness [...] relying on a collective narrative that links it to a territory" (Bruneau, 2010, p.36). When we analyse Yung and the way he feels towards New Zealand, his feelings are in line with Bruneau's analysis. He has integrated into New Zealand society to a certain degree (having a relationship with Katherine shows that he has socialised beyond just Chinese circles) but has not fully assimilated. The place he feels a strong connection to is still China, not New Zealand.

Whilst Yung shows no evidence of being confused about his own sense of national identity, his relationship with Katherine, however, is represented by Wong to cause strife for Yung. As "he held her in his arms, he did not know what to choose – the homeland he had waited for, worked for, prayed for; or this never-ending ache, this last sigh of breath at the end of the world" (Wong, 2009, p.162). From Yung's introduction at the beginning of the novel, we are aware that he has spent many years hoping for political change in China; yet now that change is happening, and he feels he should return home, the love he has for Katherine complicates that decision. Were he to return to China, he would be leaving her behind, permanently. He recognises that he cannot share his life fully with Katherine, and even when he imagines being able to, he realises she would not belong: "He'd wanted her to join in celebrations for the Republic. She would have been the only white face, a sea of Chinese faces speaking an indecipherable tongue" (Wong, 2009, p.223). Just as English is a "foreign language" (p.161) to Yung, so too would Cantonese be an "indecipherable tongue" to Katherine. The First World War and the Xinhai Revolution expose how the two characters may live within the same nation, but they inhabit completely different worlds within that nation. Whilst the representation of Yung by Wong does not explore a sense of split loyalty, it

does examine how painful being away from a nation during wartime can be; and how for Yung, it further proves his strong sense of Chinese nationality.

Of course, when discussing this, it would be amiss to not refer to the fact that Yung is ultimately killed by Robbie. Just as this is somewhat emblematic of Robbie's sense of national identity becoming utterly corrupted by the First World War, so too is it emblematic of Yung's inability to feel a true sense of loyalty towards New Zealand. Even with the First World War raging, Yung's thoughts are tied to a nation in the aftermath of a revolution many miles away, and he struggles to have sympathy for the white New Zealanders' fixation on a war in Europe. Just as Yung's relationship with Katherine is doomed due to the hostility Chinese migrants experienced in New Zealand, so too is Yung's very existence in New Zealand. The First World War and the Xinhai Revolution are used by Wong to represent how Yung cannot loosen his hold on his Chinese nationality, and as such will never be able to feel completely settled in New Zealand; thus, his death symbolises the impossibility of Yung ever truly belonging in New Zealand.

Chappy and the Fluidity of National Identity

Just as our opening image of Yung in *As The Earth Turns Silver* shows him cutting off his braid as a symbol of conforming somewhat to New Zealand society, so we see similar moments of adapting to New Zealand culture with Chappy Star in Grace's *Chappy*. As examined, Yung being pushed more to the periphery of New Zealand society means that he is less flexible with regards to relinquishing his Chinese nationality; however, Chappy as a character is far more integrated into New Zealand society (specifically that of a Māori community). The way Chappy views himself as connected to New Zealand shifts and changes throughout the novel, but unlike Yung who still views China as home, Chappy is

portrayed as decidedly viewing New Zealand as the nation he belongs in and considers to be his home. His wife, Oriwia, teaches him to speak both English and te reo Māori as "he asked about this and that, and wanted to know the word for one thing and another" (Grace, 2015, p.86-87), and comments how "Even after he became fluent in their language, the questions they put to him – Who is your mountain? Who is your river? Who are your ancestors [...] were never answered" (p.87). Chappy is not avoiding discussions around his Japanese heritage so much as not seeing it as relevant. He is shown to be very conscious of building a life in New Zealand, and that being his choice; thus he wants to know everything he can about the world Oriwia inhabits and is not interested in discussing his history in Japan.

The characters of focus across both *Chappy* and *As The Earth Turns Silver* are in keeping with David Pearson's discussions around nation theory, where he proposes the concept of home as "a sense of the society one has, at least geographically speaking, left behind. Subsequently, there is a dualistic, and not necessarily in tension, sense of 'Home past' and 'Home present', until, eventually, there is a rupture between these conceptions. 'Home' becomes firmly identified with where one is, rather than where one was" (Pearson, 2001, p.11). For Yung in *As The Earth Turns Silver*, home is still a society he has "left behind" which he cannot marry to the life he has been building in New Zealand. However, for Chappy in *Chappy*, home has become "firmly identified with where one is" – which for Chappy is his family in New Zealand. Deciding where home is consists of a "reshaping [...] of the links between new and mother countries" (p.11) to conclude where the individual's national identity now sits; both Wong and Grace show this through their characters and their decisions surrounding the concept of home.

Due to the "inequity of the poll tax" (Voci and Leckie, 2011, p.17), there was a systemic barrier for Chinese migrants to enter New Zealand in the 1860s, and this created a legalised level of racism against the Chinese diaspora by white New Zealanders. As was

explored in the previous section of this chapter, the impact this had upon the Chinese diaspora was to isolate them from partaking in general New Zealand society. *Chappy* is set two decades later than *As The Earth Turns Silver*, so when examining the text it does need to be considered how New Zealand society had progressed somewhat after the First World War; and additionally, Chappy is Japanese not Chinese, so has not experienced the same level of discrimination that Shun and Yung in *As The Earth Turns Silver* have (although due to still being a part of the broader East Asian diaspora, anti-Asian racism still deeply impacts Chappy's life within New Zealand). However, with the outbreak of the Second World War, a shift occurred with alliances; and with that change in alliances came a movement within the systemic racism of New Zealand, as the Japanese now became the most despised East Asian ethnic group within the country.

One of Grace's motivations in writing *Chappy* was asking "how does the whanau [te reo Māori word for family] deal with a Japanese man [...] thrust upon it during a war with Japan?" This question was inspired by "the story her husband told of a Japanese shopkeeper in Ruatoria, married to a Maori, known by the Grace family and accepted in the community, who had been interned and then deported when World War 2 came" (Jones, 2015). I asked Grace further questions about this inspiring the story of *Chappy*, to which she said "There were very few Japanese people living in Aotearoa at the time. I only knew of one – a girl I went to school with. The Japanese man was well integrated into the Māori community, and well liked and respected. I became curious as to how he came to be there. Knowing nothing of this man's story and what brought him here, I decided to devise my own characters and my own story" (Appendix A). *Chappy* is fundamentally a story of family and belonging, focused on the stories of ethnic minorities within New Zealand society; and the way in which war can deeply affect where is considered to be home. It is also specifically a story examining how

the concept of home is defined amongst Indigenous communities – and therefore by extension, how national identity is framed within those communities.

It can be argued that in *Chappy*, Grace shows a disconnect between Chappy and his Japanese heritage from the very beginning of the novel; and that lack of connection is correlated to war. From this perspective, Chappy's character arc of internal identity is constantly tied to and impacted by war. Chappy arrives in New Zealand in the aftermath of the beginnings of the Sino-Japanese war of 1937 (so two years prior to the outbreak of the Second World War). He tells Oriwia "I'm a man without a country, without a family [...] I'm from a disgraced family [...] My father didn't believe in Japan's expansion across China, but he had to keep his views secret" (Grace, 2015, p.93). Immediately, this frames Chappy as a character who's background is one of anti-war; it makes him sit in direct contrast with the Japanese characters discussed in the previous chapter from the Australian novel *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*. Where those characters felt their national identity intensified due to war, for Chappy it is the opposite. He recalls that "I was taken into the army anyway. We were kicked and thumped and brutalised to make us into killers. But I knew I couldn't be a killer. They tried to indoctrinate us into hatred. But I was unable to hate" (p.93). Chappy viewed the war Japan was waging in the Pacific as one where "Innocents were killed, injured, violated, orphaned, made homeless" and "rather than be part of this, he decided he would take his own life"; such is his outrage at what is expected of him as a member of the Japanese army that he would rather commit suicide than carry out these actions. However, he survived the suicide attempt and was sent to a Japanese hospital, escaping to return to his father's house "knowing that he could be caught and imprisoned or executed for running from army authority. He didn't care that he might be detained or killed as long as he wasn't sent back to war" (p.93).

Once again, this extract from Grace emphasises to us that Chappy is a figure who represents an anti-war attitude; and unlike the Japanese characters in *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, war makes him less attached to his Japanese nationality as opposed to more. When speaking to me, Grace stated that "I was determined not to go with stereotypes. Chappy, as a protagonist, is revealed (where that is possible) through the POV of the narrators, but even to them he remains a 'mystery man' in a cultural sense" (Appendix A). To survive, and not face the same fate of his family who "were now living in poverty" (Grace, 2015, p.93), Chappy is told by his grandmother that "his country did not exist and he was to go and make a new life" (p.94). Chappy's refusal to accept what is expected of him as a Japanese man leads to him shedding his connection to being Japanese; instead of the war deepening his sense of Japanese nationality, it is the war which catalyses Chappy to release the hold that nationality might have.

If we consider the theoretical frameworks surrounding diasporic groups, where "boundaries of identity and place have been obfuscated" (Johnson, 2011, p.139), the differences between East Asian diasporic groups themselves can become heavily blurred within New Zealand society. The societal habit of viewing the East Asian diaspora as a homogenous entity can occur, as opposed to being recognised as individual diasporic groups with separate national identities and ethnic backgrounds. The examination of this habit is a theme throughout *Chappy*; whilst we as readers know he is of Japanese background, the ingrained disdain towards the Chinese diaspora within white New Zealand society is shown to have broadened towards racism directed at the East Asian diaspora more generally – for example, Chappy is the target of "thrown stones" (Grace, 2015, p.123) from children. As Ip and Leckie write, "the assumption of a common Asian 'race' can be traced to the late nineteenth century when [they] were discursively lumped together as undesirable aliens or Asiatics" (Ip and Leckie, 2011, p.160). Fundamentally, this led to a homogenisation of how

differing East Asian communities within New Zealand were perceived; and this is a crucial piece of information to grasp, as it betters our understanding of how Chappy presents himself in a somewhat fluid manner throughout the novel. As explored above, Chappy's lack of feeling a deep connection to his Japanese nationality assists with that fluidity, but there are also cultural elements within New Zealand itself which add to this.

Grace is keen to explore this habit of the East Asian diaspora being viewed as a monolith; she says how "Japanese people were little known in Aotearoa, and it was not unusual (because of uncaring ignorance) for them to be mistaken for Chinese people. My research showed me several examples of this" (Appendix A). It is evident that in writing *Chappy*, Grace intended to draw attention to an ethnic group consistently overlooked within New Zealand society. Whilst she shows us the discrimination Chappy experiences due to his East Asian ethnicity, she also shows how the "uncaring ignorance" that projects a mistaken identity onto Chappy can be used to his advantage. Prior to the Second World War, there was a "frustration" amongst Chinese settlers of "their low status in European eyes compared with Japanese [settlers]". Whilst the East Asian diaspora and the individual communities that made up that diaspora faced discrimination, the Chinese received far more discrimination whilst the Japanese were still given a semblance of respect within New Zealand society. Similarly to in Australia, the Second World War changed this dynamic, with the Japanese diaspora now being perceived as the enemy.

Just like those of German origin (the lives of whom Grace explores through the previously discussed character Henry Krauss), Japanese migrants in New Zealand were at risk of being put in internment camps. Due to his Japanese heritage, Chappy fears for his family's safety, and concludes he must flee to protect them; but as he leaves, Paa shouts at him, "Don't worry [...] They all think you're a China Man" (Grace, 2015, p.118). This term, "China Man", which in other circumstances would be perceived as a racist slur, has an

entirely new meaning within this context. It is now a term which represents Chappy's safety. With New Zealand at war with Japan and allied alongside China, if Chappy is mistaken for being Chinese, it means he will not be attacked. The ignorance of white New Zealanders can be utilised by Chappy as protection; after all, "Of the Japanese most New Zealanders had no experience [...] the 1936 census – the last census before the war – recorded 72 full-blooded Japanese and 30 Japanese of mixed race in a population of 1.5 million" (Trotter, 1990, p.13). The viewing of the East Asian diaspora as a monolith was partially due to ignorance, and partially due to most New Zealanders simply not encountering anybody of East Asian descent who was not Chinese. Therefore, for Chappy, accepting being misidentified as Chinese is a decision which both keeps him safe and has a high chance of succeeding due to New Zealander ignorance.

It is important to clarify, however, that being mistaken for being Chinese does not come without cost for Chappy. Not only is he quite literally on the margins of New Zealand society, as he is on the run, but Grace is pointedly reminding us that the Japanese being the primary enemy to white New Zealanders did not mean that the Chinese were treated significantly better – the abuse Chappy receives from the children reiterates this. In many ways, the Chinese had become "invisible" (Grace, 2015, p.123) within New Zealand society – the prior examination of how Wong represents the Chinese diasporic experience in *As The Earth Turns Silver* highlights this. Even though, as previously mentioned, Chinese soldiers could serve alongside New Zealanders in both the First and Second World Wars, these soldiers were still firmly kept on the periphery of New Zealand society – for example, they "were never invited to mainstream functions and celebrations" (Ip, 2003, p.40). However, since "China had now become one of the Allies" (Trotter, 1990, p.15), claims such as "while the Chinese thought 'like other people', the Japanese did not" (p.15) became more common place; and thus Chappy's safety as a Japanese man, and requirement to masquerade as being

Chinese, becomes more necessary. Due to the Second World War, we witness Chappy shift from being somewhat on the confinements of New Zealand society to being the very definition of an outcast within New Zealand society. The connection he has to his Japanese ethnicity, and the ease with which he accepts the external projection of Chinese national identity, is a shift written to highlight the impact that the Second World War has had upon his internal sense of national identity. For Chappy, the most important part of his national identity is being perceived as a New Zealander. If being incorrectly perceived as a Chinese man enables him to avoid arrest in New Zealand, he will accept it. This also emphasises the lack of connection Chappy feel to being Japanese; his actions are motivated by trying to remain in New Zealand. Being mistaken for a man of Chinese ethnicity is not shown to perturb him, as he does not feel a deep connection to his Japanese nationality anyway.

Whilst on the run, Chappy encounters Chinese migrants close to Auckland, many miles north of his home in Porirua (close to Wellington). Grace writes that "What woke him later in the morning was the sound of voices, a word here and there, in a language he'd heard before [...] That language, of the China man" (Grace, 2015, p.121). After reading Paa's statement of "They all think you're a China Man" (p.118), an assumption could be made that Chappy will be safe amongst the Chinese diaspora. However, by writing "That language, of the China man", Grace is reminding the reader that whilst the East Asian diaspora may be seen visually as a monolith out of ignorance within New Zealand society, Chappy is not a part of this community. The ignorance of New Zealanders can be utilised by Chappy for his safety, but as Talib writes, "Language [...] plays an important part in the attempt to realise a national identity" (Talib, 2002, p.122); and this is a language which is not connected to Chappy's national identity. He is of Japanese ethnicity, not Chinese. This analysis from Talib also lends itself to an earlier point in the novel where Oriwia laughs "from time to time at how her language came out of him" (Grace, 2015, p.87); this language is both English and te

reo Māori, symbolising his assimilation into New Zealand society. He does not speak Japanese anymore; he speaks the languages of the country he considers his home.

Grace referring to Chappy's assimilation into New Zealand via language is also reiterated through him showing signs that he has begun to take on the opinions of New Zealand society somewhat (once again reiterating Pearson's perspective that national identity and home are deeply connected). The strong anti-Chinese sentiment deeply rooted within New Zealand society at the time due to the long-held perspective that the Chinese were "considered undesirable" (Voci and Leckie, 2011, p.161) is something Grace chooses to represent through Chappy himself, saying "he fears the Chinese workers at first" (Grace, 2015, p.122). Admittedly, this could be interpreted to mean Chappy is afraid that he will be discovered by the Chinese workers to be Japanese, due to not speaking their language; and because of the Second World War, the risk of that Japanese heritage being acknowledged is a life-threatening danger to Chappy. Grace potentially confirms this reading by adding "Whether he was believed to be an enemy of China or not, he was invisible to them" (p.122), reinforcing the idea that Chappy is fearful at all times of his Japanese ethnicity being noticed. However, the fact that Grace leaves it somewhat ambiguous, using terminology that at first would not be amiss were it a white New Zealander thinking it, is very telling. It is left for the reader to decide whether this moment is driven by Chappy's fears of discovery, or whether it is a prejudice which has been produced due to his assimilation to New Zealand society. Regardless, there is an uneasiness surrounding the presence of the Chinese in New Zealand, and that uneasiness is even felt by an individual who is perceived as part of the same wider East Asian diasporic group.

When it is discovered that Chappy is sleeping under a bridge, we are told that the local children "were told they weren't to go playing down by the bridge" – and so, naturally, this results in the children immediately going down to the bridge to "find out what the

problem might be" (p.123). This quotation is a moment of insight from Grace to the perspective of white New Zealander society, and the way in which the East Asian diaspora are viewed within it. By writing how the children had "chanted their Ching Chong Chinaman rhymes, thrown stones and run off without waiting to see if any of the stones hit their target" (p.123), we are shown that Chappy masquerading as being Chinese is a success; nobody is at all suspicious that he could be Japanese. This shows us the way that white New Zealanders indeed viewed the East Asian diaspora as a monolith, where Japanese people could "be mistaken for Chinese people" (Appendix A), and whilst it means that Chappy faces abuse, he is not at risk of being interned. Grace specifically using the word "problem" to describe Chappy being under the bridge heavily reiterates to us the specific discrimination which the Chinese experienced within New Zealand. Even though they were no longer the most despised group within New Zealand, due to the war, the anti-Chinese sentiments ran deep in New Zealand society – thus the children are so comfortable with throwing stones at Chappy. This experience is clearly portrayed as being unpleasant and distressing for Chappy. Unlike Paa's use of the phrase "China Man", in this context the phrase is meant to be racist and demeaning.

Within the context of the war, where Japan is now an enemy of New Zealand's, this scene is also a reminder that whilst Chappy being mistaken for Chinese protects him from arrest, it does not protect him from racist remarks and actions. When he eventually moves from his hiding place at the bridge it is because he feels he is "being noticed" too much; the stones being thrown at him signify his presence being known within the town he is on the outskirts of. The longer he remains in one place, and the more attention he gains, the higher the chance he risks of being more closely scrutinised and his Japanese heritage being uncovered. Through the character of Oriwia, Chappy's wife, Grace writes that "What Chappy didn't know at the time was that the words Paa had called to him on the night he left were

true – that people would think he was a China man. It was this mistaken idea that people had about his origins that was helping him to evade custody" (p.123). There is no doubt left in the narrative Grace is creating that New Zealand society's viewing of the East Asian diaspora as a monolith, as opposed to recognising separate ethnicities within that, is what protects Chappy. The Second World War has forced Chappy to leave his home, but it has also created a situation where he is steadily letting go of his internal connection to his Japanese ancestry. Being perceived as Chinese does not bother Chappy; it is a relief to him.

Eventually, however, this masquerade comes to an end. Chappy must go to hospital and whilst there "The hospital authorities decided to bring in an interpreter, so went to Mr Lee to ask for assistance. Mr Lee was a Chinese man, owner of several stores in town". Because Chappy is pretending to be Chinese, they bring in Mr Lee; but obviously, Chappy does not speak any Chinese languages. Chappy does not even understand why Mr Lee is there, recalling that "there was an exchange at his bedside, between a Chinese man with gold in his teeth who was dressed in a three-piece suit and clutched a bowler hat, and the hospital sister. At one stage the Chinese man had folded himself in half, laughing". The result of this meeting is that "Not long afterwards, Chappy found himself in the local lockup, before being taken under escort to Somes Island as a prisoner of war" (p.164). Grace achieves several things at once with this scene, the most obvious being that she is making a mockery of the white New Zealander habit of viewing the East Asian diaspora as a monolith. The very thing which Chappy has used to protect himself (the ignorance of white New Zealanders) now makes those same people look deeply naïve. Nobody asked Chappy questions – they assumed both that he was Chinese, and that he was unable to speak English. Once again, this is Grace highlighting the ignorance and naivety of white New Zealanders, and the weakness of viewing groups of people as a monolith. As Skeldon writes, "One of the consequences of according such importance to transnational linkages within the migrant groups in the concept

of diaspora [...] is that the diaspora community is seen as fairly homogenous" (Skeldon, 2003, p.53). The Japanese and Chinese diaspora were different groups, with individual languages and heritage; yet due to the homogenisation of the East Asian diaspora in white New Zealanders' eyes, a Chinese New Zealander is brought in as "an interpreter" for Chappy.

However, this extract also provides us with information over how the Second World War had shifted life for the Chinese diaspora in New Zealand. As Ann Trotter points out, "If the outbreak of war in the Pacific confirmed New Zealanders' prejudices against the Japanese, it also required them to develop more positive images of the Chinese" (Trotter, 1990, p.15) due to New Zealand and China now being allies. Considering the "frustration" Chinese migrants historically felt at their "low status in European eyes compared with Japanese" (Ng, 2003, p.24), it is telling that Grace clarifies that not only is Mr Lee of Chinese ethnicity, but that he "owns several stores in town" (Grace, 2015, p.164). This, paired with the detail that he is dressed in a "three-piece suit" and a "bowler hat" creates the impression that Mr Lee is a respected businessman within the community. Not only that, but evidently he is also trusted enough within that community that the white New Zealanders at the hospital have faith he will relay information between themselves and Chappy accurately. If we consider New Zealand's history regarding Chinese migrants, and how the Chinese settlers were previously referred to as "the scum of China" (Eldred-Grigg and Dazheng, 2014, p.45) and "were not considered assimilable and were never give a chance to even try to fit into the monocultural society around them" (Ip, 2003, p.39), this extract demonstrates a large shift within New Zealand society. Mr Lee is shown to be trusted by those around him and has also clearly assimilated to New Zealand society somewhat (as emphasised through the way he dresses, and his owning of several stores in the town). The Second World War resulting in more hatred being directed at Japanese settlers provided an opportunity for those of Chinese descent to better their position within New Zealand society – thus, the war had a very direct

impact on the lives of Chinese migrants within New Zealand. Even though those of Chinese ethnicity "were barred from citizenship [until] 1952" (Ip, 2003, p.39), the fact this was less than a decade after the end of the Second World War further emphasises the direct impact the war had upon Chinese settlers and their ability to build a home within New Zealand.

The fact that soon after this incident Chappy is "taken under escort to Somes Island as a prisoner of war" (Grace, 2015, p.164) is also telling with regards to the improving situation for those of Chinese descent within New Zealand. Instead of Mr Lee regarding himself and Chappy as both belonging to the East Asian diaspora, Mr Lee immediately recognises the difference between them; and uses this moment to further prove his loyalty to New Zealand. It is never explained to Chappy what is said in this "exchange at his bedside", but given it results in his imprisonment it is fair to assume that Mr Lee immediately recognises Chappy as being Japanese and reveals this to the hospital staff. It does not appear that Mr Lee has moral difficulty in revealing this, with Grace writing how "At one stage the Chinese man had folded himself in half, laughing" (p.164), once again emphasising how Mr Lee's position within New Zealand society has improved to a point where he does not feel it necessary to protect Chappy due to both of them being minorities with similar histories of discrimination within New Zealand.

However, it is also relevant to acknowledge that Japan had been at war with China for two years before the Second World War began; and "the events in China tended to reinforce the negative stereotypes many New Zealanders held of the Japanese" (Trotter, 1990, p.15, with a belief by 1940 that "Japan was exhausted as a result of the war in China" (p.9). For Mr Lee, it is possible that he still feels a connection to his Chinese ancestry (and because of being unable to be a New Zealand national, would still be a Chinese national at the time), and therefore the ease with which he turns Chappy into the authorities is not just a loyalty to New Zealand – it is a loyalty to China too. By placing Chappy and Mr Lee in contrast with one

another here, Grace is creating an interesting narrative for the reader to acknowledge. Both Chappy and Mr Lee have built a life for themselves in New Zealand and appear to view this country as their home. But the Second World War has had an opposite impact on their lives there. For Mr Lee, having Chinese nationality and building a home in New Zealand has finally stopped being such a contradiction. Meanwhile, for Chappy, having Japanese nationality means he can no longer consider New Zealand as his home. This is not to say that Mr Lee's life is free of racism; the anti-Chinese racism we see Chappy experience from the children at the bridge reminds us that those of Chinese ethnicity still had a difficult life within New Zealand. However, the way Mr Lee is portrayed, and the fact that Chappy pretending to be Chinese is something which protects him, shows how the Second World War has begun a path to an easier life for those of Chinese ethnicity.

Chappy's lack of emotional attachment to his Japanese nationality continues until the Second World War is over. However, after he is sent back to Japan, a sense of loyalty to his ancestry appears to return. Aki finds him in Tokyo, and tries to persuade him to find a way to return to New Zealand, but Chappy insists that "Japan is not loved [...] In Tokyo I have work. I must help rebuild Tokyo" (p.140). This is important to discuss, as it shows the extent to which Chappy's detachment from his Japanese ancestry was due to the war. He came to New Zealand due to rejecting the aims of the Japanese Empire, and the Japanese expansion across the Pacific only contributed to lessening his connection to being Japanese. However, now the war is over, and Japan is being rebuilt in a new image, Chappy's loyalty to Japan is shown to be returning somewhat. The word "must" when discussing the rebuilding of Tokyo is crucial when analysing this extract from Grace; Chappy does not feel there is a choice in this. Despite the distance he feels from the national identification, he is Japanese, and the imperial rule which made him so detached from his Japanese nationality has now ended. Therefore, he sees this is a vital act he must do. It could be argued that Chappy is not only helping to

rebuild Tokyo by remaining - he is also rebuilding his own relationship with his Japanese nationality. Chappy remains "principled in his non-violent fight against hatred, despite being subjected to some of the deepest sorrows in modern history, through the horrors of war and racial prejudice" (Sanders, 2016, p.414); after separating himself from Japan for many years due to the hatred he felt it spread, Chappy's principles as a character make him feel it is necessary that he partakes in the opportunity to rebuild Japan into a better nation. By taking us on this journey as a character (where he eventually does return to New Zealand), Grace is using Chappy to symbolise the fluid nature of national identity, and our sense of attachment or detachment to it. The Second World War is the reason Chappy came to view New Zealand as his home; but it is also the reason why Chappy had to take on the disguise of being Chinese and could no longer remain in New Zealand. It is not until the war is long over that Chappy is able to return to his family in New Zealand, emphasising from Grace the way in which war continues to impact lives long after the final guns are fired.

The East Asian Diaspora and Indigenous Communities

Thus far, this chapter has analysed the shifting nature of East Asian diasporic identity within New Zealand mostly by comparing the characters against white New Zealanders – or Pākehā. As mentioned in the Introduction to this chapter, New Zealand is unique amongst the nations discussed in this thesis, as its Indigenous community eventually gained equal legal protection under the terms of biculturalism; however, this is not to say that the Māori population did not experience horrific discrimination and marginalisation within New Zealand's history, creating a situation where they "were economically and socially disadvantaged". Indeed, due to both the Māori and East Asian diaspora being "severely marginalized in neocolonial New Zealand [...] the socioeconomic status of these two groups was largely on par" (Ip, 2009, p.1-2), and

thus there was a degree of kinship which developed between the two groups. This created its own tensions as well as benefits, but as Ip points out, “Studies of New Zealand’s race relations have been largely focused on the Pākehā-Māori relationship” whilst the dynamic between the East Asian diaspora and Māori community has remained “largely ignored” (p.4).

Whilst Wong’s writing is not focused on interrogating this dynamic heavily, or on centring it in the narrative the same way that Grace does in *Chappy*, we do witness an exchange between Yung and a Māori man at the start of *As The Earth Turns Silver* which emphasises to us a natural sense of kinship between the two characters (and by extension, a hint of kinship between the two ethnic groups). Yung acknowledges prior to this interaction that “Almost a decade, and he’d barely spoken to a Māori” (Wong, 2009, p.9); yet, despite this, he comments that he sometimes “saw Māori fishermen or hawkers of sweet potato and watercress. They dressed in old ghost clothes and heavy boots, or wrapped an army blanket fastened with rope or a belt around the waist, sometimes even a blanket around their shoulders.” Evidently, Yung feels comfortable enough around Māori men to take note of their appearance in detail, even if he never speaks to them. Wong’s use of the phrase “ghost clothes” hints towards the shared way in which both the Chinese diaspora and Māori community are almost unseen within New Zealander society. Neither group are in keeping with white colonial New Zealand’s vision of the nation resembling Britain, and so are made to feel invisible within society, viewed as inferior to white European settlers. This shared invisibility creates a level of respect between the two groups, with Yung noting that “But whatever their standing they never called out names or pulled his braid. They smiled, cigarette in hand, as if to a brother” (p.9). The key word to note here is “brother”, emphasising from Wong the natural kinship that belonged between Māori and Chinese migrants.

When Yung finally does interact with a Māori man who comes into the shop, he feels the need to say "Good luck" (p.10) to the man in his goal of reclaiming Māori land which had been stolen due to British imperialism. This both reiterates that kinship between the two, whilst also reminding us of the "unique position" Māori had within New Zealand society due to the fact that they lived in the nation "at the time of colonisation", despite "the many forms of relative powerlessness they share[d] with immigrant minorities" (Pearson, 2009, p.33). Māori persons "were formally recognised as British co-subjects" (p.36) whilst the Chinese could not gain citizenship; however, this did not off them "much protection against settler aspirations" (p.36), and it is this which Yung is empathising with the Māori man over. As the man leaves, Yung notes that "They almost bowed to each other before the man walked out into the southerly. What *gweilo* had ever treated him as respectfully? How many had even looked in his eyes?" (p.36). This feeling of warmth and kinship is particularly prominent when it is considered that Yung has lived in New Zealand for a decade. In those ten years, this is the most memorable moment of respect that Yung has experienced – and it is with a Māori man. This feels yet more stark when we consider how Yung's story ends through being brutally murdered by Robbie, a white New Zealander. Respect and belonging is something Yung consistently struggles to feel amongst white New Zealand society, but it is something he immediately feels with this Māori man.

Fresno-Calleja comments that "Despite the exchange between both characters being limited, Yung openly acknowledges Māori peoples' indigenous status and their fight to recover their land. Though irrelevant to the main narrative, Wong does make a point to stress similar histories of exclusion as a potentially rich source of intercultural communication and solidarity" (Fresno-Calleja, 2017, p.42). Ultimately, this scene reminds us of how differently Yung is treated by a Māori man to how he is treated by wider white New Zealand society. When his Chinese nationality is contrasted against white New Zealander nationality, there is a

sense of inferiority imposed upon Yung; however, when juxtaposed against a Māori individual, we see solidarity instead. Both groups have a level of empathy for one another, as both have experienced discrimination by colonial New Zealand society. This framing is important, as it reminds us that the Māori man has been ostracised on the very land he has been born on. He is considered less within New Zealand society, even though his language, culture and ancestors are from this land. By raising the point of attempting to reclaim land, Wong is giving a nod towards the crimes committed by settler colonialism; and reminding us of the unequal society created by it. Both Yung and the Māori man are consigned to the fringes of society due to not being of white European descent.

For Grace, however, Indigenous characters are at the heart of *Chappy*, and thus Chappy's journey as a character of the Japanese diaspora is rooted in his relationships with those people. Grace's approach to representing Indigenous characters as a core part of a story set in New Zealand attempts to fill a "blind spot to colonization and colonialism" which is "especially evident in Anglo-colonized settler states." As one set of Indigenous sociologists argue, how can we "explain how societies work, but fail to examine colonization as the genesis and ongoing foundation of the structure and function of its society?" (Walter, Kukutai, Henry and Gonzales, 2021, p.1). The continuous presence of te reo Māori, for example, is a practice Grace has applied throughout her work, most famously in her novel *Potiki* (which explores Māori resistance to urban development upon an Indigenous community). When I asked Grace about this utilisation of te reo Māori, she commented that "Not having a glossary to accompany 'Potiki' upset some readers at the time, but I was determined that the Māori language should not be treated as a foreign language in its own country – its *only* country. I have not used a glossary since" (Appendix A). If we refer once more to Ismail Talib's argument of language being a core element of national identity, Grace's determination that te re Māori is not deemed a foreign language in her work carries

yet more weight. It is Grace being fully aware of the impact of colonisation on the "ongoing foundation of the structure and function" (Walter, Kukutai, Henry and Gonzales, 2021, p.1) of New Zealand society, and refusing to write entirely in English because of this. After all, te reo Māori not being deemed the primary language of New Zealand is entirely due to settler colonialism; Grace continuing to use it is an attempt to reclaim the stolen land and history committed against Indigenous New Zealanders. It is notable to add that contemporary Māori writers have followed Grace's lead in this decision – Becky Manawatu, author of award winning novel *Auē*, frequently utilises te reo Māori in both *Auē* and its sequel *Kataraina* and does not provide translations of these phrases into English. By choosing to have Chappy learn both English and te reo Māori in *Chappy*, Grace is reiterating to the reader how both languages are the language of New Zealand and therefore refusing to add to the "blind spot" of "colonization and colonialism" (Walter, Kukutai, Henry and Gonzales, 2021, p.1). New Zealand may be viewed as an Anglophone nation, but Te Reo Māori is also its language.

Through having a Japanese protagonist build a home in New Zealand via settling into a Māori community, Grace is therefore examining East Asian diasporic and Indigenous relationships as a core element of *Chappy*. Not only does Chappy find a home and family amongst the Māori community, it is Native Hawai'ians whom Chappy seeks refuge with after the Second World War (accompanied by the character of Aki also making a home for himself alongside Chappy in Hawai'i). Chappy's interactions with these differing groups of Indigenous people highlights how in writing *Chappy*, Grace was "concerned to show how Māori related to the wider world on their own terms, and not necessarily through Pākehā intermediaries" (Reid, 2015). Chappy being drawn to Indigenous communities was a specific choice by Grace, who says "I do feel that the writing implies the characters have a shared experience due to being ethnic minorities, but I also think that they may all have similar cultural and family values" (Appendix A). This is seconded by Manying Ip, who writes that

the groups "share significant basic cultural values. Among these are reverence for the old, shared responsibilities among extended families" (Ip, 2009, p.7). This connects to the way in which Wong represents (even in a limited manner) the dynamic between the Māori community and the Chinese community; both Grace and Wong create a strong sense of kinship and similarity between the two groups.

By representing Chappy finding a home both amongst the Māori community and amongst Native Hawai'ians, Grace is highlighting the similarities between two separate Indigenous groups – both are part of "the Polynesian Triangle, an area of ten million square miles in the middle of the Pacific Ocean defined by the three points of Hawai'i, New Zealand, and Easter Island. All the islands inside this triangle were originally settled by a clearly identifiably group of voyagers: a people with a single language and set of customs, a particular body of myths [...] establishing what was, until the modern era, the largest single culture area in the world" (Thompson, 2019, p.9). In the recent TV series *Chief of War*, which seeks to tell the story of the unification of Hawai'i pre-colonisation, the cast featured "a wide range of Indigenous actors from across the Pacific" (Keyes, 2025) with Māori actor Cliff Curtis commenting that "Hawai'i's never been shown this way [...] We've been brought in as Māori to support that, to help bring our ancestral bloodlines together through *Chief of War*" (Curtis, as referenced in Keyes, 2025). Whilst the Māori community and Native Hawai'ian community are distinct from one another, they have a shared ancestry and overlapping culture which Thompson speaks of, and Keyes refers to.

By showing that both Chappy and Aki feel that the Native Hawai'ian community is akin to their Māori community in New Zealand, Grace is reiterating to the reader the cultural similarities between the two Indigenous groups. It is once again an example of Grace filling the blind spot spoken of in Indigenous theory; colonisation separated these groups of people into countries defined by national borders, relegating them to being viewed as inferior within

these new societies. As Thompson writes, “For more than a thousand years, Polynesians occupied these islands, and until the arrival of explorers like Captain Cook, they were the only people ever to have lived there [...] there exists a great web of interconnectedness that continues to this day” (Thompson, 2019, p.9). Grace attempts to reconnect these cultures through the overlapping of Chappy and Aki’s lives with the Native Hawai’ians in *Chappy*. Indeed, Aki comments that “The old stories of Hawai’i were similar to that of my own country” (Grace, 2015, p.201), once again showing a deep cultural connection between Native Hawai’ians and Māori.

To return to discussing the East Asian diaspora in relation to the Indigenous representation, through the inclusion of Native Hawai’ian characters Grace is also linking together another way in which the Second World War has impacted Chappy’s life and the place he can call home. Unable to return to New Zealand as a Japanese national, it is decided that Chappy would gain American “citizenship in Hawai’i where he had work and could save money he would need. He would change his name and re-register as Chappy Star, then enter New Zealand as the spouse of Oriwia Star. It would take years” (p.157). Whilst he was able to pass as Chinese for a significant portion of time in New Zealand, Chappy’s paperwork declaring him to be a Japanese national is something no degree of New Zealanders viewing the East Asian diaspora as a monolith can overcome. The fact that he must go to such lengths to return to New Zealand highlights how deeply Chappy considers New Zealand to be his home. He has fulfilled the duty he felt he must complete in Tokyo and has found a community he feels safe in in Hawai’i; but these decisions are ultimately taken so that he can eventually return to New Zealand. For Chappy, national identity is less important than the simple understanding of where he considers to be home; American citizenship is what will enable him to return to New Zealand, so therefore it is something he seeks. In many ways, this further underscores the point made in the previous section of this chapter; Chappy’s

identity, and the place he lives, is consistently fluid throughout the novel. The contextual factor behind all these decisions is the Second World War: his choice to leave Japan due to its imperialist attitude, his choice to leave his family to protect them within New Zealand, and his choice to stay in Hawai'i so that he can eventually return to New Zealand.

Alongside utilising her Indigenous characters to bring a focus on the impact colonisation has had on the foundations of New Zealand society, Grace also demonstrates the fear of the Second World War through the Māori community - particularly that of Chappy being taken away for being Japanese. The impact that the arrest of Harry Krauss has on Chappy and Oriwia is heavy. When Chappy flees from his family, Oriwia thinks to herself "He's gone, he's gone without even a goodbye [...] He's afraid he'll be put away like Harry Krauss. He thinks they'll take our daughters" (Grace, 2015, p.120). Oriwia refers to her and Chappy's children as "My little Japanese daughters" (p.106), implying that their children have more visibly Japanese features than Māori ones, and Oriwia wonders to herself "if anything would have turned out differently if my daughters had taken after me" (p.107). The insinuation here is that Chappy's primary motivation in fleeing is to protect his family, not himself. Chappy evidently believes that if he stayed in the community, his daughters' resemblance to him would become more noticeable; and thus, him remaining with his family is not just putting himself in danger. It also puts his daughters in danger, and Oriwia acknowledging that his fear is their daughters will be taken further demonstrates this.

At first, Oriwia believes that Chappy fleeing is unnecessary, and that he would be safe in their small town. However, she begins to doubt this after Harry Krauss is arrested, concluding that Chappy did the right thing both for himself and their daughters. Because Harry was a trusted member of the town, it does not occur to Oriwia that he would be deemed a threat due to his German ancestry; yet the abuse he receives, and his eventual arrest challenges that perspective. Had Chappy stayed in their small town, everybody would have

been aware he was Japanese, not Chinese, and thus he would have been unable to utilise the naivety of white New Zealanders to protect himself. For Oriwia, this set of events begins her recognition of how the Second World War will have a profound impact on New Zealand society. By having this recognition occur through the eyes of a Māori woman, due to a relationship she has with a Japanese man, Grace is once again reiterating the natural gravitation these diasporic groups had towards one another; the way that they became "partners in adversity" (Ip, 2009, p.150). Additionally, Grace is demonstrating the direct impact the Second World War had on the lives of New Zealanders who were not of white European descent; and in this instance, the way that the Second World War forced a separation of that partnership which was created within certain communities.

It is not just through Oriwia who Grace symbolises this shift. Aki, Oriwia's brother, admits that he thought Chappy's fears were unfounded at first, saying that after the Second World War was over, he had "dismissed all Chappy's fears about his safety and the safety of his wife and children. They were silly thoughts, especially now that the war was more than a decade behind us" (Grace, 2015, p.111). However, this statement is followed by Aki acknowledging that "We were not aware of what we were to find out later regarding camp conditions, ovens and experimentations in other parts of the world. We did not know that, in our own country, more than forty Japanese war prisoners in Featherston had been fired upon and killed" (p.112) (the Featherson clash being the incident explored in the play *Shuriken*, as mentioned in the Introduction to this chapter). With hindsight, the characters can acknowledge that Chappy fleeing both saved his life and protected his daughters; but it is possible to view this initial hesitance as a natural outcome of the East Asian community and Māori community becoming aligned and "characterised largely by peaceful and cordial coexistence" (Ip, 2009, 1). The shared experiences the groups have within New Zealand society is of great comfort to the characters, but in this instance it could be argued that it

means both Aki and Oriwia overlook the level of threat that Chappy faces in New Zealand due to being of Japanese ethnicity. Ultimately, in *Chappy*, Grace is interrogating "cultural differences" (Oettli, 2015) between differing ethnic groups, and showing us how the Second World War directly affects Chappy's national identity and sense of belonging. By broadening that cultural interrogation to go beyond that of East Asian and white New Zealander dynamics and instead choosing to explore in depth the relationship between the East Asian diaspora and Indigenous New Zealanders, Grace is interrogating the question of New Zealand national identity itself. Indigenous national identity may differ from white national identity within New Zealand, but this decision by Grace exposes that despite the differences there is a commonality – that commonality being a confidence in New Zealand national identity, even if the concept itself is only loosely defined.

To make a final point regarding how Grace presents the Indigenous community in connection to the East Asian diaspora, it is relevant to once more refer to Ismail Talib's analysis of linguistics and nation theory being deeply intertwined. Whilst Chappy is in Hawai'i, "Oriwia wrote to Chappy frequently" and Aki "would read the letters for him, translating from English into Māori", emphasising to the reader how deeply embedded into the Māori community Chappy has become – "Though Chappy could speak English by then, he couldn't read or write it". He understands both Māori and English, symbolising his assimilation into New Zealand society. However, the fact that the language he is more familiar with is Te Reo Māori reiterates that it is the Māori community, not white New Zealand society, that is his true home within the nation. Aki continues that "If I wasn't home, Ishy would translate the letters into Japanese" which shows how Chappy does still have a connection to his Japanese nationality; yet it is of note that the letters being translated into Māori is his preference, once again highlighting to the reader how the nation Chappy has chosen as his home is New Zealand.

Whilst this extract is primarily one which informs the reader of the comradery between a Māori character and two Japanese characters, it is also a revealing extract from Grace when addressing the impact of colonialism on New Zealand society. Aki comments that "Although Oriwia could easily translate spoken Māori into English and write it down, she was unable to write the letters in her first language. She hadn't been schooled in it. We had never seen the written form of our language" (Grace, 2015, p.174). This is written almost like a passing comment from Grace, which arguably deepens its importance. For Aki, the fact that he has been separated from fully understanding his native language (which, as Talib argues, is the primary connection between a person and their sense of nationality) emphasises the negative impact colonialism has had upon his life as a Māori man. By pointing this out, Grace's determination to continue using Te Reo Māori in her writing seems almost an act of rebellion. It is a language which British colonialism attempted to remove from existence, yet its continued use decades later is a symbol of survival, both of Māori people and their culture. It once again connects to Indigenous Theory as outlined earlier; the tale of *Chappy* is one which is built on the acknowledgement of the colonial impact upon New Zealand society. For Chappy as a character, his suffering due to the Second World War is juxtaposed against a community who have continuously suffered due to colonialism. It is a reminder from Grace of the way in which wars, and power, ultimately go beyond nations marked on a map, and have a direct impact on the lives of individuals within those nations.

Conclusion

Through the differing time periods of *As The Earth Turns Silver* and *Chappy*, both Wong and Grace examine a plethora of East Asian diasporic experience in the early to mid-twentieth century. Through *As The Earth Turns Silver*'s focus on the Chinese diaspora, and *Chappy*'s

attention to the Japanese diaspora, the two novels not only span a wide time period but also a broad range of East Asian diasporic experiences. The question of belonging is central in both novels, with national identity being deemed less important than clarifying the question of where home is; and the context of the First World War, Xinhai Revolution, and Second World War are shown to accentuate that need of reckoning with where home is for the characters. Both novels also acknowledge the impact of British imperialism upon New Zealand society – Wong through the white New Zealanders' and their continued loyalty to Britain, Grace through the in-depth examination of Māori community that Chappy becomes a part of.

Both World Wars and the Xinhai Revolution are felt deeply throughout the texts, with the characters' lives and internal identity shown to be affected by these events. Similarly, both texts ultimately centre around the question of where home is, and the World Wars and Revolution are shown to strengthen the characters' resolve over where they characterise that home to be. However, Yung in *As The Earth Turns Silver* comes to a very different conclusion to Chappy in *Chappy*. Where Yung increasingly feels that he does not belong in New Zealand, and wishes that he could return to China, Chappy meanwhile is depicted as trying to do everything he can to continue building a life with his family in New Zealand. By placing the novels in a side-by-side comparison, we can analyse how the two texts tell a story of shifting attitudes within New Zealand society – with Chinese characters, for example, moving from being outcasts in *As The Earth Turns Silver* to increasingly being more accepted within New Zealand society in *Chappy*.

This shifting attitude within New Zealand society is at first depicted in both novels through Grace and Wong's representation of white New Zealander society. For Robbie in *As The Earth Turns Silver*, serving in the First World War begins to fracture the way he views British nationality and New Zealand nationality as being inherently intertwined. Meanwhile, for Harry Krauss in *Chappy*, the shifting attitudes within the country mean that he goes from

being very comfortably placed within New Zealand society to facing arrest for being of German descent. Both men's storylines end in tragic ways, symbolising from both Wong and Grace that the First and Second World War brought about an end to the way New Zealand society had functioned prior to the world wars. Robbie's death is somewhat representative of the end of British imperial influence upon New Zealand, whilst Harry's arrest signals that simply being white and European is not enough of a protection anymore, particularly when war and conflicting national loyalties become present. By using white characters to depict this change, who represent the colonial government view, Wong and Grace are showing the reader how drastically the nation changed due to the First and Second World War, and how that would evidently create impact for those of East Asian descent.

Wong's decision to juxtapose Yung's storyline against both the First World War and the Xinhai Revolution highlights the complexity of the diasporic experience; the people around him in New Zealand are focused on the First World War whilst he feels pulled to return to China due to the Xinhai Revolution. For Yung, the context of war does not complicate his sense of national identity. It emboldens it further. Yung's storyline ending in his vicious murder is representative of his inability to accept that New Zealand is his home now, not China. Because of this, he cannot build a future for himself in New Zealand, and therefore he is killed – both to represent the end of his future in New Zealand, and as a device to symbolise Robbie's descent into violence catalysed by the First World War. In *As The Earth Turns Silver*, Wong is clear to show how ostracised the Chinese diaspora were within New Zealand society; and in turn, provide somewhat of an explanation for the characters appearing unmoved by how the First World War would impact New Zealand. Yung does not feel as though he is a part of New Zealand society, so it does not make sense to him to care more about New Zealand than about China, and the ongoing ramifications of the Xinhai Revolution.

In contrast, for the titular character of Grace's *Chappy*, the question of where his national allegiance lies is never truly up for debate – from the moment he arrives in New Zealand, Chappy views it as the country that is his home. Where Yung in *As The Earth Turns Silver* has a very solid sense of national identity, Chappy's is presented to us as being far more fluid. His Japanese nationality and how that is perceived within New Zealand is explored by Grace, but it is also made clear that Chappy has no great attachment to being Japanese. This creates an interesting dynamic within the novel, as at no point does Chappy struggle with feeling a split allegiance to both Japan and New Zealand; unlike in the Australian novel *The Divine Wind*, Grace's exploration of Chappy's experiences during the Second World War are through the lens of him evidently believing his home is New Zealand, but the identity externally projected onto him (which he does not identify with) prevents him from returning for many years. He is a Japanese national who builds a home in New Zealand, is forced to leave New Zealand due to the Second World War and eventually must gain American citizenship to return to New Zealand. Ultimately this means that Chappy ends the novel as a Japanese citizen and an American citizen; yet for Chappy, the most important thing is that he this enables him to be a resident of New Zealand. This fluidity allows Chappy to take on the façade of being Chinese – which then in turn provides Grace with the opportunity to explore how the shifting nature of New Zealand society due to the Second World War impacted the lives of Chinese migrants.

Finally, the inclusion of Indigenous characters by both Wong and Grace creates another dynamic in the novels – that of a kinship between the East Asian diaspora and Indigenous characters. It is a reminder that the Eurocentric New Zealand ideals which have left those of East Asian descent on the fringes of society has been built on colonisation, and thus Māori characters experience a similar degree of isolation to the East Asian diaspora. Whilst Wong's representation of Māori characters are brief, she still shows the strong sense of

solidarity between the Chinese and Māori, with a Māori character showing Yung more respect than he has ever experienced from white New Zealanders. Meanwhile, for Grace, the Indigenous characters are central to the story she is telling. Chappy has not only made his home in New Zealand; he has made a home amongst a Māori community. By writing Chappy as settling amongst Native Hawai'ians for multiple years, Grace is once again showing the reader how comfortable Chappy is amongst Indigenous cultures. However, she is also reminding us that Native Hawai'ian culture and Māori culture are very similar; and the only reason they have different nationalities now is due to colonialism. Therefore, it is arguable that *Chappy* is not only interested in analysing the impact of the Second World War – as a text it is also showing the long-lasting effects of colonialism on Indigenous society. The suffering and isolation Chappy has experienced due to the Second World War is placed in comparison with a community whose history is one of colonisation, thus further reiterating this sense of solidarity between the East Asian diaspora and Indigenous characters.

The differing time periods of these novels can lead to the assumption that they are not very alike. However, in both *As The Earth Turns Silver* and *Chappy*, we witness one key similarity – the theme of a society steadily shifting in its values and its treatment towards minority groups. By covering several decades, these two novels create a clearer image of how the experience of being a member of the East Asian diaspora within New Zealand changed from the early to the mid-twentieth century. War is shown to have a huge impact on the lives of both Wong and Grace's characters; but unlike in the previous chapter, where war was shown to create a fracturing in national identity, these two novels do not depict that. There is much more of a sense of consolidation of national identity for the East Asian characters in *As The Earth Turns Silver* and *Chappy* – or in the character Chappy's case, an ease at having a fluid sense of national identity. Instead of war creating an internal crisis for the characters over where home is, Wong and Grace show how war can be a clarifying moment for that

sense of belonging. Underpinning all of this, however, is the sense that New Zealand society is shifting due to war. Whilst the characters may not internally feel that disturbed by these changes, their lives are externally much changed due to the evolving nature of New Zealand societal attitudes (both positive and negative) towards the East Asian diaspora.

CANADA

Introduction

As we have established in the previous chapters on Australia and New Zealand, the mistrust of East Asian migrants within British colonial nations has a long history; and unfortunately, Canada is no exception to that. Once again, similarly to Australia and New Zealand, this mistrust began with Chinese migrants headed to North America (referred to as Gold Mountain) as part of the Gold Rush, which within Canada specifically involved Vancouver and the surrounding areas in British Columbia between 1896 and 1899. Of the thousands of Chinese who arrived in British Columbia, "the vast majority travelled up the Fraser River into the gold fields" (Con, 1982, p.16), where they then continued onto employment with railroad building.

There was a specific "anti-Chinese feeling in Victoria" which resulted in assurances of "white labour preference" (p.20) to appease white British Columbians who felt hostile towards Chinese migrants. However, to an extent this statement was an empty one, as the Chinese certainly were deployed in work within British Columbia. It is important to note that employers viewed them as more disposable than white workers. Con writes how "Accidents were frequent, with many more Chinese than whites as victims, a fact that manifests the racist approach of the railway company" (Con, 1982, p.23). Con continues on, saying that "The company even issues accident figures that excluded the Chinese. On one occasion, for instance, the Yale *Sentinel* reported that there had been no accidents for almost three months, during which time Henry Cambie [a railroad constructor] recorded four accidental deaths of Chinese on his stretch of construction in a single month." There were many deaths "from sheer exhaustion at the hard work and long walks between camp and work site." (Con, 1982,

p.23). All of this is to say that the Chinese were employed, consistently, but they were essentially deployed in work that was more dangerous and had far less favourable conditions than the conditions white employees faced. It was reported that “living conditions, too, caused much suffering and some deaths along the railway. So many died at Yale during the first year that the townspeople feared a smallpox epidemic, although the real villain was scurvy.” Fundamentally, “Conditions in Victoria’s Chinatown were crowded and unsavory” (Con, 1982, p.49), and reflected the way in which Chinese migrants marginalised within Canadian society.

None of this should come as a surprise, then, that Patricia E. Roy writes how “The welcome for Asians had never been warm. In the wake of the gold rush which began in 1858, Chinese men had joined thousands of others from all parts of the world, especially California, to form the first large modern wave of immigration” (Roy, 1991, p.3). This immediately created a tension with “white British Columbians, who simultaneously viewed the Chinese as an inferior people and as serious competitors in the labour market.” The white British Columbians “accused the Chinese of being sojourners who, by working as cheap labour, living frugally, and sending their earnings home to China, did not contribute to the local economy.” Due to a “series of legislative controls, the Chinese in Canada, and particularly in British Columbia, were reduced to second class citizens” (Li, 1988, p.36). Indeed, Li argues that “Aside from the indigenous people, no other racial or ethnic group had experienced such harsh treatment in Canada as the Chinese” and that “unlike the European immigrants, who were generally accepted into Canadian society either as homesteaders on the prairies or as workers in the urban labour force, the Chinese were never considered a permanent feature of Canada. They were simply recruited as cheap labour to answer the shortage of white workers” (p.1). Even in industries “such as line-assembly manufacturing” where Chinese and

white workers performed the same jobs, the Chinese migrants "received unequal pay" (p.44), being paid significantly less than their white counterparts.

Whilst all those of the East Asian diaspora were viewed as a monolith by British Columbians, (once again in a similar fashion to Australia and New Zealand), there was a slight discrepancy in the treatment of those of the Chinese diaspora versus those of the Japanese diaspora within Canada. Whilst the Japanese undeniably faced racism and discrimination, "when some British Columbians proposed applying existing anti-Chinese legislation to the Japanese, others noted great commercial prospects in Japan and observed that because of extraordinary enterprise […] the Japanese were not like the Chinese" (Roy, 1991, p.3). Contrastingly, some argue that this "extraordinary enterprise" showed a direct threat to white British Columbian business, and it therefore made "Japanese immigrants highly unpopular in British Columbia" (p.3). The Japanese consulate within Vancouver "took pains to argue that the Japanese were a superior people to the Chinese and that their number in British Columbia was small" (p.4), and to an extent this did influence government policy: as Roy notes, "During 1896 and 1897 an Anti-Mongolian Association called for restrictions on Chinese and Japanese immigration. Because there was less hostility to the Japanese than to the more numerous Chinese, and some recognized that Japanese traders could benefit British Columbia, the Association circled separate anti-Chinese and anti-Japanese petitions" (p.3). Whilst anti-Asian racism was widespread, this type of rhetoric suggested that the Japanese migrants were slightly more welcome in Canada than the Chinese.

However, as we have seen discussed in the chapters on Australia and New Zealand, the outbreak of the Second World War disrupted this balance. Suddenly, Canada and China were on the same side of the war, whilst the Japanese were actively the enemy; and so suddenly the areas of Vancouver inhabited by Japanese migrants were seen as enemy territory whilst the areas of Vancouver inhabited by Chinese migrants were no longer seen as

unfavourably. For those of Chinese and Japanese descent within Canada, as we have seen in discussions in Australia and New Zealand, this created somewhat of an identity crisis. Were those of Japanese descent loyal to Canada or to Japan, despite the fact that Canada was openly treating them with hostility now that war had broken out? Were those of Chinese descent now feeling more Canadian now that Canada seemed to be more accepting of them? Did the fact that Japan and China themselves were at war impact relationships between those of Japanese and Chinese descent, who had previously been viewed as a general East Asian entity? Similarly to the previous chapters in this thesis, I will be answering these questions by looking at nation and diaspora theory, historical sources, and how the intersection of differing identities created either more or less of a sense of belonging within Canada.

Within *The Jade Peony* by Wayson Choy and *Obasan* by Joy Kogawa, we are presented with two novels which both explore that question of Canadian identity juxtaposed against Chinese and Japanese identity, and how these identities were already shifting and changing but were exacerbated even more so with the outbreak of the Second World War. Both novels are character driven, with family dynamics at the core of their plotlines, but fundamentally they are telling very different stories in relation to East Asian belonging within Canada. Choy is more concerned with representing a family of the Chinese diaspora, and the way in which the children in that family's sense of being Canadian or being Chinese intersect with one another. Meanwhile, Kogawa writes of a Japanese Canadian family, and how the horrors of Japanese Canadian imprisonment and displacement during the Second World War has long lasting effects on the character Naomi. An interesting thing to note is that Choy does touch upon Japanese Canadian identity within *The Jade Peony*, and Kogawa does touch upon Chinese Canadian identity within *Obasan*, which tells us how these different communities had significant overlap and cannot be viewed entirely in isolation. The way in which Chinese

Canadians and Japanese Canadians were impacted by the Second World War are experiences which are inextricably tied together.

Both Choy and Kogawa were born and raised in Canada, but Choy was "born in Vancouver and spent his childhood in the city's large Chinatown area" (Jung, 2020, p.120) as the child of first-generation Chinese migrants, whilst Kogawa was born to Japanese migrants. This is an interesting and important thing to note, as to an extent it could be argued that *The Jade Peony* and *Obasan* are written from a deeply personal and partially autobiographical positionality for the authors; Kogawa, for example, was sent to an internment camp for Japanese Canadians during the Second World War. But what is particularly interesting is Jung's observation that "Choy's generation of Canadian-born Chinese resisted choosing one side of their double identities, but sought out negotiable possibilities for the hybrid integration of two distinctive positions. Therefore, these Chinese Canadians fully embrace contrasting double identities. They are neither Chinese nor Canadian but are simultaneously both Chinese and Canadian" (p.121). This argument would apply to Kogawa too – legitimising a comparison of the two novels in analysis of the connection between war and national identity. Within *Obasan*, it feels as if the younger characters are being reminded that whilst they are indeed Canadian, there is a Japanese part to their history and identity which they cannot deny; whilst in *The Jade Peony*, almost the opposite modality pertains, with the younger characters repeatedly told by their elder family members that they are Chinese whilst they themselves feel a growing sense of Canadian national identity. This comparison shows how fluid and changing national identity is, and how the Second World War intensified that fluidity.

This chapter will be broken down into four key sections, which will further explore this sense of national and ethnic identity within the novels. To begin with, I will discuss the concept of Chinese Canadian national identity within *The Jade Peony*, where I will open with

an exploration of the character of Sekky – who's nickname (as opposed to his full name of Sek-Lung) is immediately an interesting point of analysis, as it is shortened that way to sound more Canadian. How does Sekky only attending Canadian school as opposed to Chinese and Canadian school impact his sense of national identity, and who is it he finds himself looking up to within Canadian society? This discussion of conflicting national identity will then progress into analysing in earnest how Choy portrays war as exacerbating Chinese Canadian national identity. I will explore how Kiam wants to fight for Canada, and how the events of Pearl Harbor make the older members of the family begin to show allegiance to Canada as opposed to China alone. I will also examine the character of Frank Yuen, who is ostracised even within Chinatown, and is viewed with derision by many within the Chinese Canadian community. His loyalty to the Allies is shown to be more important than how he feels towards being either Chinese or Canadian, emphasising the impact of war on his personal connection to national identity. I will bring in conversations from historical sources to further build evidence and discussion of the way in which the Chinese Canadian diasporic identity began to shift and change with the outbreak of the Second World War, whilst also utilising Ismail Talib's work on the connection between linguistics and national identity.

I will then move onto discussing Kogawa's *Obasan* in earnest, focusing on Japanese Canadian national identity and the impact of Japanese internment camps and internal displacement on the diasporic community during the Second World War. This is a central theme of the novel, forming the bulk of flashbacks, which highlight how harrowing a time this was for the Japanese Canadian diaspora – encapsulated by how "throughout the novel as a whole, the desire to belong and make a home, to recover the scattered elements of the family, is constantly invoked and just as constantly deferred" (McDermott, 2011, p.153). When discussing the long-term impact this is shown to have on Naomi, I will also utilise trauma theory to analyse how Kogawa portrays Naomi's suffering from lifelong trauma due

to her displacement as a child. I will use Cathy Caruth's work as a starting point for this analysis, then moving onto fellow trauma theorists such as Irene Visser and Robert Eaglestone to interrogate how trauma manifests outside of the Eurocentric norms (of which Naomi very clearly falls outside of). I will then discuss Meiying and Sekky's relationship with Kazuo in *The Jade Peony*, and the way in which he hides his Japanese identity to protect himself. This is a major overlap between the two novels and shows two important parts of the Japanese diasporic community's experiences within Canada; that of being forcibly removed from society, and that of trying to continue with day-to-day life but with a lower social status due to war, and how ultimately that impacts national identity. Naturally, this analysis and discussion will also be underpinned by historical sources which explore the treatment and experiences of the Japanese Canadian diaspora during the Second World War.

This will lead into discussing the relationship between Indigenous individuals and the East Asian diaspora in both novels, and how that adds yet another layer to the intersectionality of a sense of nation. Liang in *The Jade Peony* makes reference to Indigenous stories, whilst Naomi in *Obasan* has direct interactions with the Indigenous character Rough Lock. Whilst these interactions are not as extensive as in Patricia Grace's *Chappy* in the previous chapter, their presence is still important with regards to analysing how nationhood and nationality are presented – they are somewhat at the edges of Canadian society, due to not being white Canadian, yet they are Indigenous to the land. Their sense of nationhood is not split between different countries; they have been forced to the edge of the place they call home due to British imperialism. Does interaction with Indigenous culture influence or emphasise the East Asian characters in these novels with regards to their sense of nationhood? Indigenous theory will be utilised in this section in order for a fuller analysis.

Finally, I will discuss the older generation within these novels, and how that intersects with national identity in different ways. In *The Jade Peony* for example, Poh-Poh gets very

angry at her grandchildren for identifying as Canadian; it is hugely important for her that they remain connected to China, and feel that they are still Chinese. Her 'people' are at war in China, and that connection must be maintained. Meanwhile, in contrast with this, Aunt Emily in *Obasan* gets very angry at being called Japanese. It is incredibly important to her that it is recognised that she and her family are Canadian, due to the trauma the family went through with internal displacement; whilst in contrast, Naomi finds Emily's intensity about being Canadian infuriating, as she has tried to bury the conflict and trauma she has felt from being Japanese Canadian. War has made these older characters hold more tightly onto their identities in many ways, but it is shown in different ways, and for different reasons. These differences make for a fascinating comparison of the two novels, whilst further exploring the question of identity and how war exacerbates said identity; and the way in which war and identity are, ultimately, inherently linked within both novels.

Chinese Canadian National Identity

Similarly to with Australia and New Zealand, the history of the Chinese in Canada goes back many decades. "Emigration from China to Canada began in 1858" but "Long before that time there had been large-scale migration to other parts of the world" with "fairly stable Chinese settlements in Southeast Asia by the 1850s"; soon after this, "large numbers of Chinese started to migrate to the Western Hemisphere" (Con, 1982, p.5). I have spoken multiple times in this thesis about "the famous gold rushes of the second half of the 19th century", which occurred in "British Columbia […] Australia and New Zealand" (Canavesio and Pardieu, 2019) and how that affected migration. Wayson Choy references the Gold Rush at the very start of *The Jade Peony*, writing, "Go to Gold Mountain," they told one another, promising to send wages home, to return rich or die." (Choy, 1995, p.17).

Many Chinese migrants who remained in Canada moved from working in the gold fields to building the railroad further north, facing unsafe conditions: “Today the Chinese in Canada have a saying that a Chinese worker died for every foot of railroad through the canyons” (Con, 1982, p.24). Whilst this statement is exaggerated in sentiment, there are estimates that “at least 600 Chinese died during railroad construction, more than four for every mile”. Working conditions were evidently very unsafe, with Chinese migrants pushed into completing work which was deemed as below acceptable for white Canadians; “the Chinese were never considered a permanent feature of Canada. They were simply recruited as cheap labour to answer the shortage of white workers” (Li, 1988, p.1). Choy makes his feelings on this clear, stating that “When the call for railroad workers came from labour contract brokers in Canada in the 1880s, every man who was able and capable left his farm and village to be indentured for dangerous work in the mountain ranges of the Rockies”. The specific use of the word “dangerous” (Choy, 1995, p.17) in this statement, so early on in the novel, emphasises the extent to which Chinese migrants were exploited by Canadian society; despite being enticed with “rumours of gold in the rivers that poured down those mountain cliffs, gold that could make a man and his family wealthy overnight” (p.18), what Chinese migrants were met with was meagre pay for incredibly difficult work.

Although initially “Relations between Chinese and white in British Columbia and Vancouver Island were cordial during the 1860s and most of the 1870s”, this does not mean that “the Chinese did not experience prejudice and discrimination, for sporadic incidents of violence were recorded right from the start” (Con, 1982, p.42). There was a distinct feeling that the Chinese were inferior to white Canadians (as evidenced in the paragraph above with regards to the work they were expected to complete, with prejudice “manifested in incidents of discrimination, persecution, and even violence when Chinese and white came into conflict” (p.43). Li writes how “It was no accident that the Dominion government of Canada

passed the first anti-Chinese bill in 1885, the same year the transcontinental Canadian Pacific Railway was completed" (Li, 1988, p.1-2). The sentiment was essentially that now the work was completed, there was no further use for Chinese migrants within Canada. Chinese labour may well have been "indispensable to the economic development of British Columbia" but ultimately that was reliant upon "the supply of white workers [falling] short of the increasing demands" (p.24). When British Columbia began to experience "economic hardship", white Canadian "Agitation against the Chinese began to grow" (p.23).

Ultimately, "white British Columbians, who simultaneously viewed the Chinese as an inferior people and as serious competitors in the labour market, became increasingly intolerant. They accused the Chinese of being sojourners who, by working as cheap labour, living frugally, and sending their earnings home to China, did not contribute to the local economy" (Roy, 1991, p.3). This feeling was encouraged by the government; Li argues that "The case of the Chinese in Canada is another example of how state policies marginalized a minority group and legalized its unequal treatment. Between 1875 and 1924, numerous bills were passed at both provincial and federal levels to restrict the rights of Chinese Canadians. These statutes severely affected their opportunities in the labour market […] and influenced the way other Canadians viewed and treated the Chinese." (Li, 1999, p.15). In part, this was due to how "Historically, Canada has followed a policy of recruiting immigrants from the United Kingdom, Northern Europe, and the United States, while restricting those from Asia and other Third World Countries" (p.16). Pringsheim writes how "It is fairly clear from the tone of a variety of comments on the "Oriental problem" that there was a strong element of racial bigotry contributing to the political agitation" (Pringsheim, 1983, p.8).

It is against this backdrop that Wayson Choy's *The Jade Peony* is set, with the additional factor of Second World War politics bleeding through and adding yet more complexity, presenting us with "three generations of related characters living in Vancouver's

Chinatown" (Lorre, 2000, p.71). He makes clear reference to the difficulties met by Chinese Canadians in the opening chapter of the novel, stating how "Thousands came in the decades before 1923, when on July 1st the Dominion of Canada passed the Chinese Exclusion Act and shut down all ordinary bachelor-man traffic between Canada and China, shut off any women from arriving, and divided families. Poverty-stricken bachelor-men were left alone in Gold Mountain, with only a few dollars left to send back to China every month" (Choy, 1995, p.17). What makes this more complex as context is the fact that the Chinese were allied with Canada in the Second World War; just as with Australia and New Zealand, Canada passed discriminatory laws against the Chinese. Yet there was now this uneasy understanding that the Chinese were not the biggest enemy for Canadians anymore, creating a tension of historical discrimination against present societal reality. As stated in the introduction of this chapter, Choy himself is Canadian born; and whilst "the Chinese language […] remains a key connection to his childhood memories […] Choy notes that he loves the English language" (Jung, 2020, p.121). It is very important to appreciate how "Choy never completely belonged to one side" (p.121), with his Canadian national identity being just as important to him as his Chinese ethnicity.

Throughout *The Jade Peony*, "Political questions of exclusion, inequality, and immigration are ever-present and serve as reminders of the history of Chinese communities in Canada" (Ty, 2004, p.118) and the three children, whilst being raised in the same family, "react differently to their ethnic heritage and are assimilated into the surrounding Canadian and American cultures to varying degrees". It can be argued that these three children "explore the possibility of harmonious cohabitation" (Vautier, 1999, p.28) between "the Canadian and Chinese way in the process of their construction of hybrid subjectivity" (Jung, 2020, p.121). Indeed, Jung argues that "Choy creates a new space for reclaiming the presence of the marginalized subjects whose existence could have been ignored", and whose narration as

Chinese Canadians "evoke[s] the vulnerable position of immigrant Chinese" (p.123). In many ways, Jook-Liang, Jung-Sum, and Sek-Lung (and the eldest brother, Kiam, even though he does not have a section of the novel dedicated to his perspective) are representative of Choy's own experience; as characters, they have "lived through the hard times of the 1930s and 40s amid the historical events of the Great Depression and the Second Sino-Japanese War, in addition to the racist discrimination of the Chinese Exclusions Act" (p.123).

The way in which each of the characters relates to their hybrid national identity is telling over how strongly aware they are of the position they occupy within Canadian society. For Liang, her question of national identity is connected to the expectations of being a girl in China versus the expectations of being a girl in North America. For Sek-Lung, his identity comes into question more by having a different education to his older siblings, and then by spending time with Meiying, whose knowledge of the war raises some questions for Sek-Lung regarding national identity (which will be explored in further detail in the Japanese Canadian National Identity section of this chapter). For Jung-Sum and Kiam, they are much older, and they are boys; their very existence as young adults is being shaped by being Chinese Canadians during wartime and of feeling the need to sign up and fight for the Canadian Army (yet not being able to due to their Chinese heritage). These are all interesting levels of identity for Choy to be exploring, which in turn highlights how age plays into the characters' sense of self. All of them are impacted by the war, simply by being Chinese Canadian and living in Vancouver whilst the Second World War rages on, but their awareness of its impact upon them is very different from character to character.

Despite being so young, Sek-Lung seems to clearly comprehend the difficulties his siblings have with conflicting senses of national affiliation, and that bleeds into his understanding of himself. When his parents hold tightly to Chinese traditions and expectations after Poh-Poh dies, Sek-Lung comments that "My two older teenage brothers

and my sister, Liang, were embarrassed by my parents' behaviour. What would white people in Vancouver think of us? We were Canadians now, *Chinese-Canadians*, a hyphenated reality that our parents could never accept" (Choy, 1995, p.143). Whilst his siblings are simply embarrassed by the rituals put in place (with Jung angrily saying, "All our friends are laughing at us!") (p.145), Sek-Lung is confused by his parents to yet another degree – he doesn't have difficulty with understanding that he feels Canadian, and his confusion forms over why his parents are so determined to adhere to Chinese traditions. What is telling is his statement that being Chinese Canadian is "a hyphenated reality that our parents could never accept" (p.143); all the implications are that they do not see their children as Canadian. In their families' eyes, they are Chinese children who happen to live in Canada – when Sek-Lung asks his mother "Am I Chinese or Canadian?" (p.133), Poh-Poh responds by "collapsing in her rocking chair […] "*Chinese*."" (p.133). This belief directly contradicts the feeling the four children have, that being Canadian is important to who they are too. For the adults in the family, it is horrifying that the children might not only view themselves as being Canadian, but that they are coming to prioritise that national identity over being Chinese.

However, Poh-Poh's outrage that Sek-Lung should even contemplate being seen as Canadian seems intensely contradictory once it is revealed that Sek-Lung is only sent to an English school, unlike his elder siblings who attend both a Chinese school and an English school. This is a point of contention between himself and Liang, who complains that "it was unfair that she had all her Chinese School homework, too, because I had only to do English homework" (p.155). The family may be forthright over the fact that they believe all their children are Chinese, but their actions in not putting Sek-Lung through the same education as his siblings indicates that they are beginning to accept that their children feel more kinship with being Canadian than Chinese. Liang's irritation that Sek-Lung only goes to English school being over homework further emphasises this; the idea that she is gaining cultural

enrichment that her brother does not have access to has not occurred to her. She is simply upset that Sek-Lung has less work to do than she does.

In many ways, this is embodied most clearly by how "Miss MacKinney, my Grade One teacher at Strathcona School […] had not called me Sek-Lung, but "Sekky", because, she smiles, it was "more Canadian"" (p.130). According to Sek-Lung, to Miss MacKinney, "I wasn't any different from the Japanese, Ukrainian, Russian, Jewish and Italian boys and girls in her class" (p.154). However, whilst on the one hand this could be read as acceptance of the Chinese community, on the other hand it can be read as a blindness to the very real struggles that the Chinese diaspora faced within Canada, and that Miss MacKinney's decision to make Sek-Lung sound "more Canadian" ignores key elements of who he is. Once again, despite his young age, Sek-Lung seems to have a firm understanding of this, and how Canada at large does not accept him as Canadian; he laments that "even if I was born in Vancouver, even if I should salute the Union Jack a hundred million times, even if I had the cleanest hands in all the Dominion of Canada and prayed forever, I would still be *Chinese*" (p.135). There is a degree of despondence to this statement, which highlights the extent to which Sek-Lung feels strongly about his ties to Canada. He continues that "nothing was simple: I was the Canadian-born child of unwanted immigrants who were not allowed to become citizens. The words RESIDENT ALIEN were stamped on my birth certificate, as if I were a loitering stranger" (p.135-136). Even though he is younger than Liang, the fact that he is so deeply embedded within Canadian society makes him profoundly aware that regardless of what Miss MacKinney says, he will always be seen as not truly belonging there.

However, to refer back to the earlier point about how Sek-Lung's family are determined their children are Chinese, yet appear to immerse their youngest son in Canadian culture, it is relevant to point out that his family also refer to him as Sekky; for instance, when Liang is complaining about his confusion over speaking both English and Chinese, she

says “Sekky’s driving himself crazy” (p.134). Poh-Poh and his parents may dislike his association with being Canadian, yet they themselves use the name which was given to him in order to sound more Canadian. It is yet another example of how Sek-Lung’s sense of nationality and belonging can be incredibly confusing for him.

Just as Liang uses a blend of English and Chinese (dubbed as Chinglish) to express herself, Sek-Lung’s sense of self is also expressed through language, which relates to Benedict Anderson’s theory of nationhood, and how language can conceive “a deep, horizontal comradeship” (Anderson, 2006, p.13) between citizens. Ismail Talib’s theory of language and national identity being intertwined is also relevant to mention here; as has been discussed in the previous chapters, Talib is of the belief that language is key to the realisation of national identity. Sek-Lung can speak both Chinese and English, but he has an evident preference for speaking English: “English words seemed more forthright to me, blunt, like road signs. Chinese words were awkward and messy, like quicksand.” (p.134). He goes as far as to say “I preferred English” but then immediately follows this statement with “but there were no English words to match the Chinese complexities” (p.134). This statement could be perceived as Sek-Lung once again trying to bring together being a part of the Chinese diaspora whilst also being raised in Canada. He sees how Chinese is better for conveying more complex thoughts and ideas, but likes the fact that English is clear, and easier for him to understand. It is almost as if he feels guilt for admitting he prefers English to Chinese; as though he is betraying his connection to the Chinese diaspora, and therefore betraying his family in the process.

During the First World War, the Chinese community within Canada found themselves “supporting both China’s modernization and Canada’s war effort.” On the one hand, they still had the right to “elect a representative to the Chinese parliament, provide relief and defence funds for China, and purchas Chinese government bonds”. On the other hand, they were

residents of Canada, and therefore there were instances of the Chinese buying "Canadian government bonds" and participating in "Victory Loan Drive parades" (Con, 1982, p.118). Whilst the Chinese were not drafted for military service, some "volunteered for infantry service as enlisted men", which in turn led to an agitation over how second-class the Chinese were denigrated within Canada, with specific focus over their lack of voting rights. Within British Columbia, "the residence of the largest number of naturalized and Canadian-born Chinese", there was a level of sympathy amongst white Canadians, where a group of around two hundred individuals "petitioned for the provincial franchise on behalf of the Chinese. They argued that they were Canadian born, that their parents had been naturalized, that they were educated in British Columbia, and that some of them had served in the war" (p.119). However, this petition was not successful, and Chinese residents of Canada remained disenfranchised.

What this did demonstrate, however, was that the First World War did bring "whites and Chinese together in some ways", but it was somewhat more tenuous in others. There was "co-operation in some ways […] efforts to bridge the gap accompanied by Chinese cultural nationalism and white rejection of the Chinese" (p.120), and being allies in the First World War certainly aided that; but this was unfortunately short lived, as following the First World War, "Chinese were excluded by law from entering the country; during the same period the Chinese already in Canada were denied many citizenship rights." The years "between 1923 and 1947" can be referred to as "the period of exclusion for the Chinese" (Li, 1988, p.43). Whatever tenuous positive relationships were forming between the Chinese and white Canadians, this "unequal treatment" had a large influence on "the way other Canadians viewed and treated the Chinese" (Li, 1999, p.15).

This of course became more complicated with the outbreak of the Second World War – despite having a history of being treated as "racially undesirable but useful to the economy"

(Li, 1988, p.37), the Chinese were once again allied with Canada, and this time said alliance included being enemies of the Japanese. Even though Canadians were not entirely welcoming of the Chinese, in the lead up to the Second World War Canada and Japan had "political disagreements and suspicions generated by the Japanese takeover of Manchuria in 1931 and its subsequent series of political, military, and economic encroachments on the Chinese mainland" (Pringsheim, 1983, p.38). This strong sentiment was felt in white Canadians' viewpoint towards Chinese and Japanese settlers living in Canada; the Chinese, whilst still discriminated against, were no longer seen as the biggest problem for Canadians. In turn, this created a complex scenario for Chinese Canadians to navigate. They were still far from accepted within Canadian society, but they were also not as ostracised as before. The intersection between their Canadian upbringing and Chinese heritage became more blurred, as both nations were fighting on the same side of the war.

It is evident throughout *The Jade Peony* that Choy is intent on focusing on the intersection between being Canadian and being Chinese for the children, and how this affects who they are and how they move through their lives. However, the addition of the war adds yet another dimension to this intersection, particularly for the boys. Kiam, Jung, and Sekky all have this intersection explored in different ways (with Sekky, for example, stating that "I wanted the actual fighting to start happening in Canada […] Every day I looked into the sky and wished for the fall of bombs" (Choy, 1995, p.197), displaying how strongly he feels connected to how the war is impacting Canada. However, there is also the addition of Frank Yuen, who adds yet further depth to the complexity of being Chinese Canadian and desperately wanting to fight for the allies.

It is of note that Choy chooses to discuss the complexity of wishing to fight for Canada as a Chinese migrant through characters who do not have a narratorial role. Primarily, Choy represents this through Frank Yuen, and through the eldest brother, Kiam. In many ways,

Choy's decision to have Kiam represent the complexity of transnational diasporic identity, yet not accord Kiam a narratorial role, represents the extent to which Kiam is distanced from the core family unit. He is less swayed by expectations put on him by his parents and grandmother, and of all the children seems the least conflicted by being both Chinese and Canadian. Of course, it is important to consider that it may simply feel this way due to us not seeing directly into his thoughts; but the narrative does imply that far from the Second World War making Kiam feel torn between being Chinese and Canadian, it in fact makes him feel more capable of declaring his loyalty to Canada. Similarly, with Frank Yuen we are presented with a character who is arguably defined by his determination to fight in the war, and as a young man with somewhat violent tendencies; but he does not appear to be hugely conflicted with being both Chinese and Canadian. It does need to be appreciated that we see Frank through the eyes of Jung, who both idolises and desires him, but it is still relevant to analyse Frank as a character Choy has created who is first and foremost driven by the need to become a soldier. What is interesting is that with both Frank and Kiam, there is an element of leaving behind their Chinese heritage by embracing the need to join the war effort. They do not deny their heritage, but see it as either increasingly irrelevant, or as somewhat of a burden to their aims.

The first time we are introduced to Kiam in the narrative, it is through Liang discussing a war game. She says how "Third Uncle Lew had given Kiam the ENEMIES OF FREE CHINA game for his tenth birthday […] The Warlord was one of three Enemy-of-China "heads". The other two were a Communist and a Japanese soldier named Tojo" (p.19). Even though Liang would have been five years old at the time, she is aware that "It was a propaganda toy to encourage overseas Chinese fundraising for Free China" (p.20). Quite obviously, this game has been purchased because of the family being Chinese, and the elder members of the family want their children to understand the loyalties they should have as

children of Chinese heritage. But this is also a very important way in which Choy chooses to introduce us to Kiam. Once again, Kiam's lack of narratorial perspective means we can only analyse his siblings' view of him, and it is of note to mention that the first time Liang references Kiam it is within the context of a war game. From the opening chapter, Kiam's story in *The Jade Peony* is framed as one which is inextricably tied to war. It framed his life as a young boy, with the games he played, and now it is framing his life as an older teenager, in a very literal context. It also embeds Kiam's dislike and mistrust of Japan into his character from an incredibly young age. It could be argued that Kiam's lack of struggle with whether he feels more Chinese or more Canadian is partially explained by how both nations are enemies with Japan. Kiam, for as long as he can remember, has known that he is to dislike and mistrust Japan. Whether it is the influence of his Chinese family, or the influence of the Canadian society he lives in, the mutual dislike of the Japanese bleeds through. Rather than becoming overwhelmed by the differences between these identities, Kiam has found common ground between the two, and remains focused on those similarities rather than seeking differences. This decision assists Kiam in not feeling the conflict between being Chinese and Canadian that his siblings are shown to feel. He has found a way for the two national identities to sit in harmony, through the mutual antagonist (in his eyes) of Japan.

It is evident that Kiam takes his position as the eldest sibling very seriously. Jung reflects on Kiam's protectiveness, stating "Brother Kiam became my guardian on the playground and warned everyone not to get smart around me" (p.91). It is not clear whether this is at Chinese School or English School, but the main point is clear; that Kiam will protect his younger siblings from any harm and is not afraid to do so. The fact it is not clarified which school Kiam defends Jung at also highlights how Kiam is not so easily defined as either Chinese or Canadian, nor does he switch his behaviour much depending on which place he is in. Where his siblings seem much more conscious of identifying as Chinese or

Canadian, Kiam simply moves through life in the way comfortably interweaving those two national identities together.

The confidence with which Kiam conducts himself is further displayed when the family is discussing the Second World War and he says, “When I fight for Canada – when I join up, I mean […] I’m going to call myself *Ken*.” (p.124). As Shelly Chan points out, “In settler societies such as Canada” there was a distinct feeling that “ethnic Chinese are sojourners and can never become committed citizens” (Chan, 2015); and whilst “Roughly 1.1m men and women [had] served in uniform for Canada” (Lemelin, 2020), the Canadian forces blocked the ability of Chinese migrants to fight in the war, with “no Chinese drafted for military service (Con, 1982, p.119). Therefore, Choy choosing to include this sentiment from Kiam is crucial. Kiam is stating this, not simply saying it. By using “When”, Choy is showing us emphatically that, despite decades of exclusion, Chinese Canadians were just as much a part of Canada as Canadians of European descent, and their national identity as Canadians should not have been up for question. However, by following this up with Kiam stating “I’m going to call myself *Ken*”, Choy is making another subtler point, which is that the Chinese community also understand that in order to be accepted as Canadian, they were required to shed elements of their Chinese identity; in this instance, identity related to the use of language, which relates back to Benedict Anderson and Ismail Talib’s beliefs that language is a core tenet of nation theory. Kiam feels Canadian, and to be accepted as Canadian, he feels he must align himself more clearly with western values, which in this case is his name. Once again, Kiam’s prior decision that a dislike of Japan is central to his perspective is relevant here. Whether he is aligned with Canada or China more is not of great difficulty to him; his strong attachment is a dislike of Japan, and therefore if he must shed obvious elements of Chinese national identity to be able to fight Japan, this not a complex decision for him to make.

Meanwhile Liang responds to Kiam's decision regarding changing his name with, "Jenny Chong will like that […] Jenny says we should all have real English names. When we're outside of Chinatown, we should try not to be so different" (p.124). Jenny is Kiam's girlfriend, demonstrating that Kiam has surrounded himself with people who view the world as he does – that they are Canadian and therefore should be more assimilated into Canadian culture. Both Kiam and his girlfriend do not seem to be in conflict over trying to externally appear as being more Canadian. The word "should" emphasises that this is their choice. They are not being forced to make this decision, but it is evidently motivated by a belief in the necessity of further assimilation to Canadian culture. However, by adding that this is to "try not to be so different", Choy is reminding us that the Chinese Canadian community is still seen as not truly fitting in with Canadian society, and it brings a sadder tone to the statement. Kiam's decision to go by the name Ken is an example of his sense of self intersecting with the identity which is externalised onto him by the white Canadian community. However deeply connected Kiam feels to Canada, he recognises that he will still be perceived as somewhat of an outsider by white Canadian society. To reflect his own personal feelings of where he belongs, he feels he needs to change his name, shedding more of what could be perceived as being Chinese. The decision to change his name symbolises an intersection of self-perception and societal perception; his desire to be recognised as Canadian requires him to distance himself somewhat from external markers of his Chinese heritage.

When discussing this, it is also relevant to refer to Hye Ran Jung commenting that the young characters "oscillate between the Chinese and the English Canadian culture", where the "dominant western culture […] has already infiltrated" (Jung, p.122, 2020). For Choy's generation of Chinese Canadians, they "lived through the hard times of the 1930s and 40s amid the historical events of the Great Depression and the Second Sino-Japanese War" (p.123), and ultimately the characters he writes "construct their hybrid ethnic subjectivity as

an individual agency" (p.124). How they feel in relation to their connection of being Canadian or being Chinese differs from child to child, and the context around them helps to shape that. Whilst "the Chinese were not considered "Canadian" by any level of government, no matter how long their residency", in *The Jade Peony* "the generation of children that Choy depicts was Canadian by birth and experience, contradicting the official distinction imposed by law and geography" (Hartley, 2003). As the novel continues, we witness the children's father slowly coming to recognise this too; in the final chapter of the novel Kiam declares, "Father […] I want to join the Canadian Army!" and Choy writes "Yes, yes," Father said, forgetting the countless times he had told Kiam not to think of such a foolish thing" (Choy, 1995, p.228).

Whilst this interaction is tied to Kiam's father discovering that America is joining the war, and will be allied with China, it is important to note that Kiam still speaks of fighting specifically for Canada. For their father, this change in circumstances affects China, whilst for Kiam it affects Canada; but finally, they can meet somewhat in the middle and recognise that whether the loyalty be felt to Canada or to China, it is all on the same side of the war. In that regard, America joining the war could be perceived as a bridge for the Chinese community in Choy's novel. Another North American nation is to be allied with China, and that in turn creates a stronger sense of belonging for the family. The ease with which Kiam's father agrees that Kiam should wish to fight contrasts with earlier in the novel, where Choy states that "he worried about Kiam wanting to fight for Canada when Canada did not want the Chinese" (p.192). He has also reminded Kiam before that "You're not a citizen of Canada [...] You were registered as a *resident alien*. [...] When the Dominion says we are Canadian, then we will all join up!" (p.196). He has been very clear in the past to Kiam that however Canadian he may feel, he is not legally Canadian, as shown by the emphasis on "*resident alien*" comment. However, America's decision to fight alongside the Chinese appears to allay

some of their father's fears. It provides hope that these statements he has made to Kiam in the past need no longer apply.

Like Kiam, the character of Frank Yuen fully intends to fight in the war. However, unlike Kiam, his intention to fight is less tightly tied to feeling Canadian. For Frank, it is framed as highlighting his connection to being Chinese, and both the relevance to him as a character and the limitations it brings him within Canadian society. Just as America joining the war makes Kiam's father less sceptical about the idea of Kiam fighting (or at the very least, momentarily overlooking the barriers Kiam would face in attempting to enlist), America joining the war provides Frank with a way of joining the military.

When we are initially introduced to Frank, Choy makes it clear he is on the very fringes of even the Chinese community within Vancouver. He "had grown up in the work camps, been taught much by his father, who slaved beside him, and his fellow labourers" (Choy, 1995, p.111) and causes the elders of Chinatown to be "offended by Frank Yuen's openly "hoodlum" gambling ways" (p.112). Indeed, Jung remembers how "Father was relieved when Kiam's girlfriend, Jenny Chong, also insisted that he spend less time with Frank and more time with her" (p.112), evidently understanding that their father believes Frank to be a bad influence on his sons. By choosing to have Frank grow up in the labour camps amongst "natives, Hindus, and runaway city men of all sorts, depression-broke and desperate" and then as an adult continuing to have Frank earn his money through manual labour at the "lumber mills" (p.111), Choy is using Frank as an analogy for how many members of the Chinese community were viewed by white Canadians. It is relevant that Choy explicitly points out Frank has spent time with "natives" because "Aside from the indigenous people, no other racial or ethnic group had experienced such harsh treatment in Canada as the Chinese" (Li, 1988, p.1). This further highlights the extent to which Frank is

marginalised within society. He is not only Chinese but has been actively raised amongst people who are viewed even more negatively than those of his ethnicity.

Not only is Frank symbolic for how the Chinese community was perceived, he is also presented as somewhat of a stereotype of this perception; Chinese migrants were "attractive to many employers because of their large supply and cheaper cost" (Li, 1988, p.24), but ultimately were "commonly equated with no more than a piece of machinery or a horse, something with a use-value, to be maintained when other labour power was not available" (p.25). It is crucial, therefore, that Choy chooses to present Frank as still being a manual labourer; it once again emphasises Frank's role in the novel as being a stereotype of the way in which the Chinese community was viewed at the time. The fact that Chinese migrants were already marginalised within Canadian society, yet many characters in the novel are appalled by Frank as an individual underlines just how isolated Frank is both amongst the Chinese community, and within Canada itself. Choy writes how when Jung "started boasting about Frank Yuen, Poh-Poh refused to listen to anything about him. She was like most of Chinatown; they already knew too much about Frank Yuen" (Choy, 1995, p.111). It is as though Frank is an embarrassment or source of shame for the inhabitants of Chinatown, and they would prefer to ignore his existence. For Poh-Poh to have such a strong reaction emphasises this particularly firmly. She continuously ignores Canadian culture, preferring her grandchildren stay loyal to the Chinese way of life, and as such displays continuous preference for those of Chinese ethnicity over all others; yet she is shown to have a viscerally negative response to Frank's presence. Once again, Frank being so ostracised even within his own community is Choy using him as a narrative tool for the discrimination that the Chinese community faced.

Frank is also presented to us immediately in terms of violence – so it is fitting, therefore, that Choy chooses to use Frank as a means to explore the way in which Chinese

Canadians elected to fight as soldiers in the Second World War. We are told that Frank in his daily life moves through Chinatown while "his fists danced, clenched like two grenades waiting to explode" (p.111), lexis which generations martial connotations. By describing Frank's hands as "fists", Choy is hinting at his violent tendencies, but by continuing to state that they are like "two grenades", Choy is analogising Frank as a weapon. If we refer to the previous point about how Frank is a manual labourer, and specifically how Chinese migrants were seen as "no more than a piece of machinery" (Li, 1988, p.25), this description becomes yet more pertinent. Frank and Kiam's main topics of conversation centre around "the war back in China" (Choy, 1995, p.110) which leads Jung to imagine "that Frank, with his short hair and high forehead, his wiry body, would be a superior soldier, as tough as any U.S. Marine, tougher than John Wayne himself" (p.110).

It is of note that Frank and Kiam discuss the war as related to "China", not Canada (even though Kiam dreams of fighting for Canada, not China), and that Jung associates Frank specifically with being a "U.S. Marine" as opposed to a soldier more generally. These quotations are about the locality they are associated with and emphasise how Frank evidently does not feel a significant tie to Canada. Even when we learn that Frank, Kiam, and other teenagers sometimes discuss the war in broader terms, Choy states that "They hung out in a Chinatown alleyway […] always smoking and arguing about the war in China or England" (p.109). Once again, Canada is not mentioned in these discussions. Of course, Canada was heavily connected to Britain due to the shared monarchy, but it is still important to note that for Frank, Canada does not factor in his thinking. By stating that they spend time in a "Chinatown alleyway", Choy is emphasising yet again how Frank is on the edges of the society he lives in. They do not have discussions with Frank in open spaces or houses within Chinatown; the discussions are relegated to liminal and obscure spaces such as alleyways. Even within their part of Vancouver, Frank still exists largely out of sight. Meanwhile, by

describing Frank as being like a "U.S. Marine", the toughest of U.S. soldiers, Jung's narration resonates with the violent descriptions we have heard of Frank featured earlier in the narrative; and by connecting him to America, Jung is implying how significant America joining the war was for North Americans more generally. Additionally, by associating Frank with a nation he is not part of, Choy is both once again implying how Frank sits on the periphery of Canadian society, whilst also making clear that from Jung's perspective it does not matter how difficult it is for Canadians to fight as soldiers in the war. Frank already *is* a soldier in Jung's mind.

This description from Jung foreshadows the next chapter in the novel, where "A year after I first met him, Frank said he was going to Seattle to sign up with the U.S. Marines. They were welcoming English-speaking Chinese" (p.119). On one level, this could be perceived as Jung understanding Frank incredibly well – Frank is a key figure in his narrative, and he knew Frank well enough to understand what he would end up doing before even Frank himself had decided it. However, on another level this is a contextual point being made by Choy – specifically the fact that the American army was "welcoming English-speaking Chinese". Ultimately, "at the heart of Choy's concerns in his novel is the survival of the minor and cross-cultural subjects excluded from the nation's boundary as citizens" (Jung, 2020, p.124); Frank as a character is excluded not just from being a Canadian citizen, but from fully integrating into society even within Chinatown.

By ending Frank's story by having him leave Chinatown in search of a new location where he will be accepted, Choy is exploring another way in which Chinese migrants were stereotyped within Canada – that of being a sojourner, where "the immigrant came on his own and worked until he had saved enough for a trip back to China" (Con, 1982, p.5). However, in Frank's case, moving to Seattle is not a trip back anywhere. It is a new journey in and of itself, to find somewhere which will accept him more than Canada will – and that is

a decision which Frank has been forced to make due to the outbreak of war. The Second World War ultimately brings into sharp relief the impact of being excluded from true integration within Canadian society for those of Chinese heritage. We must remember once again that "Choy's generation of Canadian-born Chinese resisted choosing one side of their double identities but sought out negotiable possibilities for the hybrid integration of two distinctive positions" (Jung, 2020, p.121); I referred to this quote in the introduction of this chapter, and it is relevant once more when discussing Frank's position. With regards to Frank as a character, however, this quotation has somewhat of a poignant edge to it. Frank has eventually concluded that his Chinese and Canadian sides are not reconcilable, and the only way for him to have a "hybrid integration" of the two is by leaving the country. He is ostracised by both Canadian society in a legal sense (through "discriminatory legislation" (Con, 1982, p.42)) and in Chinatown society for being too violent and badly spoken, and so he feels that he must leave both behind.

The way in which Choy portrays Frank also exemplifies the relevance of nation theory with regards to linguistic choices. These linguistic choices in turn convey Frank's sense of belonging within Chinatown – or lack thereof, as may be the case. Along with being described in violent terms, as a man who "spat with deadly accuracy […] and took on all comers in bars and street fights" (Choy, 1995, p.111), Frank is also described as having the ability to "curse in a variety of languages and dialects". He speaks in "a mixed-up kind of English and Chinese, so there were misunderstandings" (p.112), a linguistic modality key to note here. Liang is shown earlier in the novel to use a blend of English and Chinese, or "Chinglish" (p.63), which represents her blending together the two cultures of her national identity. However, in Liang's case, she speaks this language with her friend Wong Suk. For Liang, using "Chinglish" is not an isolating experience – it is a liberating one, where she does not have to adhere to simply one culture anymore. It allows her to seamlessly attune her

Chinese heritage to her Canadian surroundings, and she shares this with a friend. Meanwhile, in Frank's case, Choy's word choice implies an opposite position. Choy states how the English and Chinese are "mixed-up" which implies they are sequenced in a way which makes sense to nobody except for Frank – an interpretation which is further solidified by the observation that Frank's blending of English and Chinese causes "misunderstandings". Frank may well be able to speak in a "variety of languages and dialects" but by pointing out that he frequently "cursed" in these languages, Choy is making clear that Frank uses language as a means of expressing frustration, and his behaviour is censured by those around him. Instead of his ability to speak in more than one language being seen as positive, it is framed to us by Choy as something which only further isolates Frank.

To return to the point regarding how Frank's story ending with him leaving Chinatown portrays the sojourner stereotype externalised onto the Chinese community, Choy is also making a very candid point regarding how war had the ability to cause displacement. Whilst Frank is used as a narrative device to explore the way in which the Chinese were perceived by white Canadian society, this hinges specifically upon the impact of the Second World War. Through Frank, Choy explores both the isolation of the Chinese community, and the way in which war unsettles individuals; both internally, with the clashing of national identity, and externally, with the impact of displacement. As a character, Frank's ending can be perceived in two contrasting ways. On the one hand, him finding acceptance to fight in America implies that despite everything, he eventually finds a place where he belongs; after all, his narrative makes it clear that whilst his identity as being Chinese and Canadian is never resolved, Frank being framed in violent, martial terminology is a constant. On the other hand, the fact that Frank cannot find acceptance as a Chinese Canadian both in Chinatown and in Canadian society is framed as a deeply upsetting outcome. For some Chinese migrants, the

sense of belonging that other characters such as Kiam experience was simply not possible, and a life of further displacement awaited.

It is on the topic of displacement that the next point of analysis rests. That is the plight of Japanese Canadians, who were adversely affected by the outbreak of the Second World War, but in a different way to the Chinese Canadians already discussed.

Japanese Canadian National Identity

As was stated in the introduction to this chapter, initially the Japanese migrants to Canada were viewed through the lens of there being "great commercial prospects in Japan" and therefore "because of extraordinary enterprise […] the Japanese were not like the Chinese" (Roy, 1991, p.3), and consequently the same level of anti-Chinese legislation should not be applied to them. Additionally, there was strong awareness that "Japan had entered the First World War on the side of Great Britain" where the "Imperial Japanese Navy escorted hundreds of Allied ships in the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean, while injured soldiers on the Western front occasionally found themselves being tended to by nurses from the Japanese Red Cross" (Harding, 2019, p.127). Japan had proven itself to be a firm and resolute ally to Britain – and therefore, by extension through the alliance system, it had been an ally to Canada too. Despite this, within Canada there was still "indiscriminate categorization of the Japanese with the Chinese, grouping both under the general term 'Asian' or such less polite terms as 'Mongolian'" which ultimately meant that "Japanese newcomers experienced the prejudices and disabilities the Chinese had long endured" (p.4). As Peter Li points out, "The process of defining ethnic and racial groups is much more apparent when such definitions are legally sanctioned" (Li, 1999, p.9); whilst in the early twentieth century the Japanese certainly felt racial discrimination, they were still seen as more favourable than the Chinese.

But ultimately, this discrimination (to whichever extent) was mitigated by a relatively level of acceptance by the white Canadian community, and it must be noted that "inherent ranking of racial and ethnic groups along a scale of superiority and inferiority is the essence of racism" (Li, 1999, p.4).

Similarly to many Chinese migrants, the vast majority of Japanese migrants to Canada "came mostly from farming or fishing backgrounds in Japan and had left their native shores hoping to make money they could send back to Japan or to save to build better lives for themselves in Canada" (Pringsheim, 1983, p.9). Whilst they, like Chinese migrants, frequently worked in the labour market, Japanese migrants would also often engage in "underbidding Chinese laborers to get their jobs or shifting from job to job as the opportunities came" (p.10). This is an important point to note, as it hints at there being a slight tension between the Japanese and Chinese communities from the beginning within Canada. Whilst they categorised by white Canadians "under the general term 'Asian'" (Roy, 1991, p.3), the two communities never viewed themselves as being fully symbiotic.

For white Canadians however, this understanding that the Japanese and Chinese migrants could not be simply put viewed as a monolith began to change "after the beginning of the Sino-Japanese War in July 1937". It was after this war broke out that "British Columbia newspapers regularly carried news of that war and considerable sympathy developed for the Chinese" (Roy, 1991, p.13). There was a feeling that the Chinese were being treated appallingly by the Japanese in this war; "The sadistic behaviour of the Japanese troops, in Nanking in particular, created a worldwide uproar of anti-Japanese resentment, which was also reflected in Canada" (Pringsheim, 1983, p.46) due to the sheer numbers killed in Nanking; "many tens of thousands were murdered – estimates would later rise to 200,000, even 300,000 and beyond – and large numbers of them went unburied, both outside and inside the city" (Harding, 2019, p.193). Thus from the Sino-Japanese war onwards there

began to be a steady change in white Canadian views of the Chinese and Japanese diasporas as separate groups. This shift in white Canadian perception of East Asian communities within Canada is strikingly similar to shifts which occurred within New Zealand at the time, as discussed in the previous chapter. Whilst each Anglophone country had their own individual national preoccupations and identities, there was nonetheless a pattern to the way they treated migrants of East Asian descent. With the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, there also became concerns that the Japanese Empire would spread yet further, and within Canada that fear was that "Japanese interests were acquiring strategic sites, timber and material resources" (p.13) within British Columbia. Whilst there were already calls "for a complete ban on Japanese immigration" (p.13) by the 1930s, the outbreak of the Second World War was a major turning point which "completely halted immigration" (p.15) for the Japanese to Canada.

However, the halting of immigration was not the only change that Japanese Canadians were forced to face. Just as we discussed in the New Zealand chapter, where the character of Chappy was trying to avoid being placed into an internment camp, the existence of internment camps became a reality for Japanese Canadians. What was unique for those of Japanese descent in British Columbia, however, was the fact that it was not only internment camps they faced – but internal displacement. In February 1942, "the federal government ordered all Japanese Canadians evacuated from the Pacific Coast. The British Columbia Security Commission was created to carry out the task of moving 21,079 Japanese Canadians" (Tsurumi, 1991, p.19) out of British Columbia and further into the Canadian interior. This included "not only the first generation with Canadian citizenship but also the second generation, to inland camps, one hundred miles away from the Pacific coast." Further, "the federal government decided to liquidate all the properties left behind by the evacuees." (p.19). Whilst "the government claimed that freedom of choice either to stay in Canada or

leave [to Japan] was given to the individuals" and "no Japanese Canadians, including Japanese nationals, were to be deported against their will" (p.20), this was a meagre concession considering all the other rights and freedoms which had been stripped away from Japanese Canadians during the Second World War. They were free to stay in Canada but they would still face racial and legal discrimination, and had very little control over the geographical location of where they would live.

Joy Kogawa's novel *Obasan* is entirely centred around this internal displacement and stripping of material possessions experienced by Japanese Canadians during this period. Naomi, the protagonist of the novel "was born here [in Canada]" (Kogawa, 1994, p.8) and her mother is "a Nisei […] Pronounced 'knee-say'. It means 'second generation'" (p.8-9), whilst her "grandparents, born in Japan, were Issei, or first generation, whilst the children of the Nisei were called Sansei, or third generation" (p.9). This is clarified by Kogawa in the second chapter of the novel, making it clear that Naomi is several generations removed from those who migrated from Japan to Canada; all she has known is life in Canada. Yet despite that, the story which Kogawa goes on to tell shows us how Naomi experienced displacement and legal discrimination as a young Canadian girl of Japanese descent during the Second World War. It is emphasised to us that Naomi cannot speak Japanese fluently, even as an adult; she refers to discovering a folder with "two envelopes about as narrow and long as bank checks, and inside each envelope are blue-lined rice-paper sheets with Japanese writing which I cannot read" (p.55). Her first language is English, with her knowledge of the Japanese language not extending beyond a few familiar phrases. This is an example of the connection between language and nation theory by Kogawa, utilising linguistics to emphasise a sense of belonging. Naomi cannot understand Japanese, yet is fluent in English, which emphasises her linguistic and national affiliation to Canada. However, Kogawa emphasises

that that no matter how Canadian Naomi feels, nor the fact that she was born in Canada, prevents the discriminatory legislation from applying to her.

Kogawa's decision to set the novel in both the Second World War and in the decades subsequent to it allows her to explore the long reaching effects of this discrimination on the Japanese diaspora within Canada. Not only are we privy to seeing the discrimination during war time, but we also witness the way in which anti-Japanese sentiment and policy continued long after the end of the war, as Kogawa reveals that historical decisions made do not simply sit in the past; indeed, as the character of Aunt Emily states, "The past is the future" (p.51). To truly grasp the extent to which Japanese Canadians' lives were altered by the Second World War, Kogawa decides it is important that we explore its legacies beyond the moment the fighting officially ended. An interesting point to note, however, is that Kogawa does not give us much insight into what life was like before the Second World War. We are given glimpses of it through letters Aunt Emily writes, and in a few references Naomi makes to her earlier childhood; but even then, the references to the pre-war period are mostly made within the context of recognising how different things are now, and how fast that change has come about.

This decision by Kogawa contrasts with Choy's decisions in *The Jade Peony*, which makes explicit discrimination and hardships faced by the Chinese community, and the way in which the Second World War affected their sense of belonging and national identity within Canada. For Kogawa, the focus of *Obasan* is not so much about offering insights into the Japanese diasporic experience within Canada; it is a pointed revelation of the struggles faced by the Japanese diaspora due to the Second World War. Where *The Jade Peony* is a novel set during the Second World War, *Obasan* is a novel which explores the context of the war much more explicitly.

This is not to say that Choy ignores the plight of Japanese Canadians in *The Jade Peony*, however. Due to his narrative being focalised through Chinese Canadian children, Choy gives us the unique opportunity of seeing how the Chinese and Japanese Canadians interacted with one another during the Second World War. This resonates with the Australia chapter of this thesis, where Flanagan's narrative provided a reflection on the relationship between the Japanese and Koreans during the Second World War; pointedly interrogating the tendency within Anglophone nations to relegate all East Asians to the same ethnic category by addressing the way in which these different groups interacted with one another. Choy's portrayal of the Japanese diaspora is a key element of Sekky's narration in *The Jade Peony*, and it provides insight into the struggles of the Japanese Canadians in the 1940s whilst also exploring the attitudes towards them within the Chinese diaspora. By only introducing Japanese Canadian characters towards the end of the novel, Choy frames their existence within Canada entirely through the lens of the war. Both the characters' experiences, as well as Sekky's shifting (and at times confused) attitude towards them, cannot be separated from the contextual background of the Second World War.

From the opening of *Obasan*, Kogawa makes it clear that the isolation Naomi was made to feel as a child has had a far-reaching impact on her life as an adult. The initial chapters have a sense of melancholic loneliness and sadness, with Naomi living in solitude in Alberta. She sits out on the prairie in the opening chapter, observing that "Above and around us, unimaginably vast and unbroken by silhouette of tree or house or any hint of human handiwork, is the prairie sky. […] We sit forever, it seems, in an infinite night while all around us the tall prairie grasses move and grow, bending imperceptibly to the moon's faint light" (p.4). Rich with references to the natural world, this quotation frames Naomi as a character who lives on the very fringes of society, only interacting with other people out of necessity not desire. The use of the phrase "unimaginably vast" in this context emphasises

just how isolated Naomi has become as an adult. It is as though she has become lost in this landscape, and by extension lost within Canada more broadly. As the novel progresses, we discover that ever since the internal displacement she suffered during the Second World War, Naomi has struggled with the sense of where she belongs, refusing to think in much depth about her Japanese heritage or interacting more with her family than is necessary. Indeed, she states that "Some memories, too, might better be forgotten. […] If it is not seen, it does not horrify. What is past recall is past pain" (p.54). Trauma theorist Robert Eaglestone states that "trauma has an impact on our experience of time, our temporality, and its structure as 'afterwardsness' [...] the questions posted by trauma (and investigated by trauma theory) are existential questions which are to do with the time of a whole life" (Eaglestone, 2014, p.12). This is very important to raise, as it is key to understanding Naomi as a character; ultimately a deeply traumatised young woman, who still carries the pain of her childhood. Irene Visser continues that trauma "refers not so much to the traumatic event as to the traumatic aftermath, the post-traumatic stage" (Visser, 2011, p.272); we are introduced to Naomi at a time where the trauma has already occurred, and she is living a very basic existence of solitude. It is a hint from Kogawa of the suffering *Obasan* will reveal that Japanese Canadians experienced due to the Second World War.

The beginning of the novel places Naomi in a location where she is physically isolated, and mentally unwilling to acknowledge anything beyond what is currently right in front of her. As the novel progresses, and Naomi is forced to face her past, we begin to understand the trauma that she experienced as a child; and by extension, the trauma which Japanese Canadians experienced during the Second World War. When she begins to reflect on the policies of displacement, she observes that "The tension everywhere was not clear to me then and is not much clearer today. Time has solved few mysteries. Wars and rumors of wars, racial hatreds and fears are still with us" (p.93), accentuating this decision Naomi has made to

isolate herself both physically and mentally. That fear of racial discrimination which she experienced so intensely during the Second World War has never fully left her, and she seems both melancholic and exhausted at the beginning of the novel. Unlike her Aunt Emily (whom we will discuss in further detail in the final section of this chapter), Naomi is uninterested in talking about the past or the degree to which as as a Canadian of Japanese heritage she fits into Canadian society. Her confusion as a child has transitioned into fatigue and unease as an adult, and her solution to feeling that way is to repress all her emotions regarding the past. By using multiple register shifts to switch between "the present day and the past" through "a mixture of childhood memories, wartime journals, newspaper clippings, government documents, and family letters [...] Kogawa is able to explore the relationship between public history and private memory but also to suggest that any investigation of the past will necessary involve grappling with fragments – of texts, of memories, and of voices – which cannot be fully known or fully reconciled" (McDermott, 2011, p.142). Arguably, "issues of trauma theory are characterised by a 'knot' tying together representation, the past, the self, the political and suffering" (Buelens, Durrant, and Eaglestone, 2014, p.4); Naomi has both mentally and physically tied the past and present together, but she refuses to address this interconnected web. There is too much pain and distress at unpacking the trauma she has experienced.

For Naomi, returning to where she lived as a child who was internally displaced involves delving into a seam of memories and thoughts she has deliberately repressed. The memories come across as being "fragmented" (McDermott, 2011, p.141), as though the repression of them has been so strong that Naomi physically cannot recall them in their entirety anymore. Therefore, *Obasan* as a novel is as much an exploration of a painful period of history for Japanese Canadians as it is an exploration of accepting and understanding trauma. The repression Naomi displays are in accordance with Cathy Caruth's theories

surrounding trauma. She writes how "the term *trauma* is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind [...] it is not, like the wound of the body, a simple and healable event" (Caruth, 1996, p.3-4). Caruth continues "The story of trauma, then, as the narrative of a belated experience, far from telling of an escape from reality [...] rather attests to its endless impact on a life" (p.7). The very nature of *Obasan* is in line with this analysis from Caruth; for Naomi, the impact of internal displacement has continued through to adulthood and thus has altered her life permanently. Even though many years have passed, the wound inflicted through the dehumanisation she experienced as a child is shown to have not fully healed. However, it must also be acknowledged that Caruth's work is focused "on the level of the individual psyche" which can "leave unquestioned the conditions that enabled the traumatic abuse, such as racism, economic domination, or political oppression" (Craps, 2014, p.50); it is true that Naomi's life has been altered permanently due to the trauma she has experienced, but it is outside forces that have made this so. Without taking this into consideration, discussions around trauma theory "risks assisting in the perpetuation of the very beliefs, practices, and structures that maintain existing injustices and inequalities" (Craps, 2013, p.2). In Naomi's case, this internal wound she has suffered is entirely due to racist structures. It is difficult for her to acknowledge the deep pain she has experienced, as to do so also means acknowledging the structural inequality and injustice the country she was born and raised in forced upon her.

As stated earlier in this section, Kogawa makes a very deliberate decision to make only brief references to the period prior to the Second World War. Naomi rarely refers to her early childhood, but significantly the very few memories she shares have positive association; for example, she recalls how "Each night from the very beginning, before I could talk, there were the same stories, the voices of my mother or my father or Obasan or Grandma Kato, soft through the filter of my sleepiness, carrying me away to a shadowy ancestry" (p.66). Of

particular note in this quotation is the reference to a "shadowy ancestry". Even as a small child, Naomi feels a disconnection from her Japanese ancestry, as shown by the use of the word "shadowy", which carries connotations of confusion and a lack of clarity. Yet what comes across as being a comfort to Naomi in this moment is her family heritage; this feeling that anything outside of her familial boundaries is unsafe is something which proliferates throughout the novel. She speaks of how before the war, "Inside the house in Vancouver there was confidence and laughter, music and mealtimes, games and storytelling. But outside, even in the backyard, there was an infinitely unpredictable, unknown, and often dangerous world" (p.69). Again, here her family is represented as providing a secure space for Naomi. When she is without it, her confidence wanes, and she questions her place within Canadian society.

These quotations, while expressing this association of family with security, still carry a melancholic undertone which pervades the early chapters. They emphasise how Naomi feels distant both from her Japanese ancestry and Canadian society from a young age, and perhaps hint at why she chose as an adult to withdraw from the world as much as possible. They also relate to the quotation discussed earlier about how "Wars and rumors of wars, racial hatreds and fears are still with us" (p.93); that fear of experiencing racism, and of not feeling a true sense of belonging, was deep-rooted in Naomi as a young child and her experiences during the Second World War have intensified those fears to the point of approaching existential crisis. By making Naomi a character who already feels ontologically unsure prior to the events of the Second World War, Kogawa can fully express the distress caused to Japanese Canadians by the policies of displacement. The impact of these policies are felt very intensely due to Naomi's confusion and fear. Additionally, given that Naomi is a child during the Second World War, we witness these policies through the lens of innocence. Similarly to Choy with *The Jade Peony*, Kogawa's use of a child protagonist means certain

contextual knowledge is withheld. This in turn makes the changes which occur in her life even more horrifying, as Naomi does not fully understand what is happening.

An example of this is when Kogawa makes analeptic references in the narrative; one of the first vignettes which hint at the changes in Naomi's life is the mention of a place called Sick Bay, where her grandfather is located. But Naomi is not given much more information than that, wondering "Where […] is that? And why is it a cause of distress?" (p.89). When she overhears Aunt Emily saying "They must have rounded up everyone on Saltspring Island and shipped the whole lot of them to the Pool […] Where will it end?" (p.89), Naomi's response is to comment that "All this talk is puzzling and frightening" (p.90) before going into her room and "thinking of Peter Rabbit hopping through the lettuce patch" (p.91) after staring at the white tufts of stuffing sticking out of her mattress. Ultimately, Naomi's innocence begins to be shattered upon the discovery that "Sick Bay, I learned eventually, was not a beach at all. And the place they called the Pool was not a pool of water, but a prison at the exhibition grounds called Hastings Park in Vancouver" (p.92); it is incomprehensible to her that these euphemistic labels in fact stand for oppression, where people "were herded into the grounds and kept there like animals until they were shipped off to roadwork camps and concentration camps in the interior of the province" (p.92-93), yet that is the reality that Naomi now must face. The comment about Peter Rabbit prior to this, in reference to Beatrix Potter's stories for children, emphasises to us just how young Naomi is, and how little she understands of what is going on. Her reference point to things being disordered within her room is a character from a children's book; she cannot and does not comprehend the vast scale of the war outside of her home. In many ways, these quotations emphasise that *Obasan* fits into the literary genre of a bildungsroman. We witness the journey of a character go from childhood innocence to adulthood, where she has experienced and internalised trauma and displacement – and ultimately, that innocence has been stripped from her.

It is notable, additionally, that Peter Rabbit is a character from a classic British story. Naomi's first point of reference is not a Japanese story, but one which is written in English. Therefore, this quotation reveals much both about Naomi's mental state, and about her subconscious sense of belonging. Even prior to her ethnicity being one of legal consequence, Naomi shows more of an inclination towards engaging with her Canadian sense of self, through references such as this. Kogawa frequently refers to Britain and British culture, representing Naomi and her brother Stephen's connection to Canada and pointing towards Canada's shared monarchy and history with Britain; when war broke out "there was no doubt in anyone's mind which side Canada would take […] Canada would surely rally to the side of Great Britain" (Pringsheim, 1983, p.50). Naomi and Stephen's references to these ties emphasises the extent to which they identify as Canadian. They have never set foot in either Britain or Japan, yet despite having Japanese heritage, it is Britain to which they make more references. This highlights the historical-cultural links between Canadian culture and British culture, and how firmly Naomi and Stephen identify as Canadian, as they have no hesitation in expressing affiliation to British culture yet do not appear to have that same affinity for Japanese culture and language at all.

Another example of this is when it is declared that the Allies have won the war, and Stephen comes "running back from town shouting that the war was over and we had won. "We won, we won, we won!" he cried, running through the yard with both hands raised and his fingers in the V-for-Victory sign" (Kogawa, 1994, p.199). The use of "we" is of particular importance here, as at this stage in the novel the family have been internally displaced from Vancouver and forced into a rural town due to their Japanese ethnicity; yet despite this, Stephen does not appear to feel any conflicted emotions regarding his Japanese heritage. He feels that he has every right to be overjoyed at the victory of the Allies, as he is Canadian, and therefore it is a victory for the nation to which he belongs. After this show of excitement,

Stephen “climbed the woodshed and hopped to the roof of the house, carrying a hammer and nails and a flagpole with a well-worn union Jack” (p.199), evidently determined to fly the British flag high where everybody can see it. The locals know that it is a Japanese Canadian family who live in the house, and that may partially factor into Stephen’s decision here – to show very explicitly that this family feels allegiance to Canada, not Japan. However, it is once again of note that it is a British flag he raises, not a Canadian one. Stephen understands the history of Canada and its ties to Britain, and seems to believe that emphasising his respect for Britain is key to being accepted as Canadian (as well as the fact that he very genuinely does identify as Canadian, and thus feels this connection to Britain by extension). This moment could also be an acknowledgement by Kogawa of the way in which after the war, many Japanese Canadians “put portraits of George VI and Queen Elizabeth in place of those of the Emperor and the Empress, and eventually abandoned the rising-sun flag” (Tsurumi, 1991, p.21); to feel part of Canada, it seemed an embracing of symbols associated with Britain was a necessity too. Indeed, Naomi recalls this identification with British iconography by her parents, with the family owning “King George/Queen Elizabeth mugs Mother bought to commemorate the royal visit” (Kogawa, 1994, p.157). Meanwhile, for Stephen the Second World War has strengthened his identification with Canadian national identity, as evidenced in his act of proudly waving the British flag.

What is particularly interesting about this section is that as Stephen is running around shouting with joy, the “bantam rooster that roams freely in the yard squawked and flew away to a branch in the apple tree” (p.199). Bantam roosters originate in East and South East Asia; including, notably, Japan. This moment could be viewed as symbolic of Canada and the Allies beating Japan and chasing it away to the peripheries, with Stephen representing the Allies and the rooster representing Japan. Additionally, if we continue with this interpretation, it symbolises how Stephen does not feel in conflict about his Japanese heritage versus his

Canadian sense of belonging; he quite literally chases away the bantam rooster without even noticing he is doing it. There is no struggle, or deliberate intention to make the bantam rooster leave the yard. It simply does it of its own accord, as a natural response to its surroundings. It is a very logical extrapolation to perceive this as representative of Stephen's lack of connection to his Japanese heritage; the bantam rooster is still there, just as their Japanese heritage will always be present, but it has moved more to the sidelines now. We know from the opening chapters of the novel that Naomi refrains from even discussing her Japanese heritage as an adult, and so it could be argued that this moment is a key quotation from the novel to emphasise how the trauma of the Second World War leads to both Naomi and Stephen feeling disconnected from their Japanese heritage. However, it is also important to note that this incident only actively involves Stephen, whilst Naomi passively watches. This can be perceived as representing how Stephen makes an active decision to connect with his Canadian nationality, shown at other points in the novel such as his engagement with "the regular appearance of the *Vancouver Daily Province* with war stories that Stephen reads" (p.190); meanwhile Naomi is more withdrawn, not wishing to be noticed by others or to engage in discussions of nationality and ethnicity.

Naomi describes the journey out of Vancouver to the small town of Slocan thus: "We are leaving the B.C. coast [...] Behind us lies a salty sea within which swim our drowning specks of memory – our small waterlogged eulogies" (p.131); she also observes that "We are the silences that speak from stone. We are the despised rendered voiceless, stripped of car, radio, camera, and every means of communication" (p.132). This references the fact that with regards to the belongings of the Japanese Canadians who were removed from their homes, "Fishing boats, automobiles, houses and land were auctioned and sold by the custodian at low prices, without the consent of the owners" (Tsurumi, 1991, p.19). It is also relevant to note that Naomi comments how "The American Japanese were interned as we were in Canada,

and sent off to concentration camps, but their property wasn't liquidated as ours was" (p.40), which is Kogawa emphatically stating that the difficulties Naomi and the Nakane family face are specific to Canada. By comparing their experiences with the experiences of the Japanese diaspora in another Anglophone nation, Kogawa is drawing attention to a heightened level of racism and discrimination within Canada. This can be linked to Choy and his presentation of Frank Yuen in *The Jade Peony*, who must go to the United States in order to fight in the Second World War; both novels show us unique barriers characters face which are directly due to their ethnicity.

Naomi continues to reflect that "We are the Issei and the Nisei and the Sansei, the Japanese Canadians. We disappear into the future undemanding as dew" (Kogawa, 1994, p.132); from her perspective there was little resistance on this being done to them, if at all. They have been in Canadian society for so long that there are names for the different generations, yet all of this is deemed irrelevant in the context of the Second World War. Their belongings were taken from them, and they lost the right to speak in their own defence. They were pushed to the periphery of Canadian society, relocated to towns where few other people lived, so their claim to Canadian identity was attenuated – Naomi and her family know that white Canadians see them as outsiders, and they are being put on the fringes of society. They simply "disappear" into the Canadian wilderness, with barely a word uttered in defence. This immediately sets the scene for a turbulent and difficult few years ahead for Naomi and Stephen: adjusting to a new school, new town, and a country which now sees them as the enemy as opposed to as fellow Canadians.

The relationship between the Japanese Canadians and white Canadians within *Obasan* is a very important context to analyse, as it reiterates to us the level of discrimination the Japanese diaspora experienced, and how the Second World War heightened that discrimination. There had been "Rumours of Japanese spies in the province" which had

"circulated intermittently since at least 1907" (Roy, 1991, p.13), and the outbreak of war further fuelled those rumours. Mistrust of the Japanese was rife, and even after the family's forced displacement from Vancouver to Slocan they still face abuse and uncertainty. Japanese Canadian children are segregated from white Canadian children, as Naomi reveals that "all the teachers and children in our school are Japanese. The white children in Slocan go to a different school" (Kogawa, 1994, p.165). Even though they are separated, it is implied that the classes taught to the children are the same, as we learn that "Some of the children attend Japanese-language classes" in Slocan, but "Obasan and Uncle whisper[ing] that it is unwise to have us go. The RCMP[1] [...] are always looking for signs of disloyalty to Canada" (p.163). To take Japanese classes is optional for Stephen and Naomi, and their uncle and aunt decide against them taking these lessons, as they fear that it could create a risk that the children be accused of betraying Canada. This relates back to the prior point about white Canadians believing in the existence of Japanese spies; for the Nakane family, it is too dangerous to risk implying anything other than steadfast loyalty to Canada. However, the fact that the children are separated also shows the contradictory situation that Japanese Canadian diaspora were put in during the war; they felt they had to prove their loyalty to Canada, not Japan, but at the same time were firmly isolated from any company except that of fellow Japanese Canadians. In this way, the war was hugely impactful upon Japanese Canadians, as it quite forcibly marginalised them within both Canada as a nation and Canadian society more generally.

Naomi's experience in Slocan starts to deteriorate almost as soon as school starts. Even though she is physically separated from the white children during school hours, their paths still cross in the town itself; and it is when this starts to happen that Kogawa depicts racial abuse directed towards Stephen and Naomi. The two of them are walking to school through the woods, and Naomi sees "two big boys, Percy Bower and another boy, running

[1] The Royal Canadian Mounted Police – the national Police service in Canada

down the road. Stephen sees them too and freezes briefly. [...] They catch up to us and begin dancing in front of Stephen, jabbing him on the shoulder. “Fight, Jap. Fight!”” (p.182). The proximity of this scene next to Stephen and Naomi arriving at school and being made to sing “*O Canada, our home and native land*” (p.186) shows how complicated their life has become as Japanese Canadians due to the war. On the one hand, they are being referred to as “Japs” by white Canadian children – a term deliberately used in an insulting, derogatory manner which defines them as being other to Canadians. On the other hand, mere moments later they arrive at school and are expected to sing *“O Canada*”, because as Canadians they are expected to demonstrate patriotism during a time of war.

Kogawa hints at this confusion earlier on in the novel, when Stephen reveals that a girl at school in Vancouver has told him “All the Jap kids at school are going to be sent away and they’re bad and you’re a Jap” (p.83-84). Yet when Stephen turns to their father for clarification over whether they are “Jap kids”, their father firmly says “No [...] We’re Canadian”, which prompts Stephen to tell Naomi “It is a riddle [...] We are both the enemy and not the enemy” (p.84). In some ways, this emotion could be traced back to the earlier white Canadian attitudes towards Japanese immigration, where (for example) “When it was attempted to increase the head tax on the Chinese to $200 in 1891, an amendment was proposed to include Japanese immigrants in this legislation. The motion failed” (Pringsheim, 1983, p.8). Whilst the Japanese diaspora had still experienced racial discrimination prior to the Second World War, and British Columbia was seen as many to have “been “invaded” by so many Japanese immigrants” (p.12), they still did not experience legal discrimination to the same extent that the Chinese diaspora did. Therefore, for Naomi and Stephen’s family, the idea that they could be considered anything other than Canadian is baffling. Both they and their parents were born and raised in Canada, and even though they have Japanese ancestry, in their family’s minds, what comes first is the fact that they are Canadian. In many ways, this

makes the discrimination they then face through forced displacement even worse; they are utterly unprepared for the speed at which they will be relegated to the very margins of Canadian society. This once again connects to Craps' work in trauma theory; for Naomi, a complex part of the trauma she experiences is due to facing systemic racism from a place she had previously always felt safe in. As Craps argues, "the central tenet of Western trauma counselling – the traumatic experiences must be retold and mastered – undermines local coping strategies" (Craps, 2013, p.23); Naomi cannot easily talk about the suffering she has experienced, as she was utterly unprepared for it, and it would mean acknowledging the wrongdoing of her own nation against her. This is a very complicated task for her to undertake, and one which is at odds with how her and her family have behaved; which is ultimately to keep their heads down.

Kogawa's representation of Naomi's experience differs from representation of Asian diaspora individuals in the other novels I have discussed in this thesis, because unlike other characters, Naomi does not really experience an internal struggle over whether she feels more Japanese or more Canadian. In many ways, whether she feels Japanese or Canadian is irrelevant to her, as she refuses to analyse deeply how she feels. After they are displaced once more from Slocan (despite the war being over by this point), Naomi essentially withdraws completely from social interaction. Naomi reveals that she "never got used to it and I cannot, I cannot bear the memory [...] There is a word for it. Hardship. The hardship is so pervasive, so inescapable, so thorough it's a noose around my chest and I cannot move anymore" (p.232). In this way, Naomi becomes a semi-autobiographical figure for Kogawa, as the house "described in great detail in Kogawa's first novel *Obasan*" (Young, 2011) is based upon Kogawa's family home which they were forced to leave in September 1944. Just as Naomi never returns to her Vancouver home, Kogawa's family was also "never to return" (Young, 2011) to their home. Naomi's experience is not so much one of feeling a conflict of

national identity; it is a story of feeling like any sense of human respect has been stripped away, let alone that of national identity. Naomi is not struggling between conflicting identities. She is struggling to regain any semblance of self at all, after so many years of dehumanising experience.

This feeling of dehumanisation is further reiterated once Naomi is displaced once more from Slocan to even further inland in Alberta. Despite the war being over by this point in the novel, the internal displacements for Japanese Canadians were still in place, thus the Nakane family are moved once more. Unlike in Slocan, where they had a Japanese community around them, this new home places them in total isolation from everybody, and they are to work as free labour on a beet farm. Their new house is compared to a "chicken coop "house"" (Kogawa, 1994, p.233) by Naomi, as she reveals their dwelling is an "uninsulated unbelievable thin-as-a-cotton-dress hovel never before inhabited in winter by human beings. In summer it's a heat trap, an incubator, a dry sauna from which there is no relief. In winter the icicles drip down the inside of the windows and the ice is thicker than bricks at the ledge" (p.233). The dwelling is clearly not fit for human habitation. Naomi describes her family as being "as tiny as insects crawling along the grill and there is no protection anywhere" (p.234); her words emphasise how dehumanised the Nakanes have been made to feel, and Naomi's reference to there being "no protection" reinforces the isolation she is experiencing.

Being a Canadian of Japanese heritage comes with almost a level of shame attached to it for Naomi due to her living conditions; ultimately, "*Obasan* suggests the certain identities can become enduringly shameful, associated with social ostracism and rejection. In this case, shame is no longer a means of social reintegration but of social exclusion" (McDermott, 2011, p.160). As a teenager and then an adult, Naomi experiences social exclusion to an extreme degree; firstly through forced displacement, and secondly through her withdrawal

from social interaction due to her trauma. Once again, it is relevant to refer to Cathy Caruth's theories surrounding trauma being a wound to the mind. In Naomi's case, it is a trauma she is shown to have never fully recovered from, choosing to suppress her emotions. Therefore, the impact of the Second World War on her identity as a Japanese Canadian is profound; she feels a mixture of shame, exhaustion, and unwillingness to discuss the nuances of her national identity. The events of the war have ultimately produced a woman who wishes to never be perceived by the world again, let alone deeply analyse where she belongs within it. Ultimately, "Trauma theory is perhaps, at root, an attempt to trace the inexhaustible shapes both of human suffering and of our responses to that suffering" (Buelens, Durrant, and Eaglestone, 2014, p.7), and Kogawa's representation of Naomi is an exploration of this. She and her family are shown to suffer in a multitude of ways, and respond to that suffering in differing ways too. None of these responses are shown as right or wrong; they are presented by Kogawa as a way to represent how long lasting and varied the impact of trauma can be.

Meanwhile, in Choy's *The Jade Peony*, we are introduced to the Japanese Canadian character of Kazuo who spends time with both Sekky and Meiying (a Chinese Canadian girl who looks after Sekky and is later revealed to be Kazuo's secret girlfriend). Due to *The Jade Peony* being set earlier during the Second World War than *Obasan*, we witness Kazuo in a very different context from Naomi's story in *Obasan*. Kazuo is still living in Vancouver, and there is no mention of the Japanese Canadians being internally displaced yet. Despite this, Choy still makes clear the discrimination that Kazuo is increasingly starting to experience as a Japanese Canadian, and the struggle Kazuo faces with acknowledging his Japanese heritage whilst having only known life in Canada, as a Canadian. This experience is conveyed to us through the filter of Sekky's narrative perspective, which means that Choy is able to filter this plotline through the innocence of a young child. Further, Sekky's shifting perception and attitude towards Kazuo tells us a great deal about the way the Chinese Canadian community

in general viewed the Japanese Canadian community during the Second World War. By presenting Sekky and Meiying as having a very genuine connection with a Japanese Canadian boy, and revealing how Sekky comes to question the discrimination he has witnessed against Japanese Canadians, Choy contests monolithic understanding of the East Asian diaspora. Chinese Canadians and Japanese Canadians had very different experiences during the Second World War – both in relation to white Canadians, and to each other – and *The Jade Peony* represents the complexity of that inter-Asian dynamic during wartime.

When analysing Sekky's response to those of Japanese ethnicity around him, it is important to refer back to my argument from the first section of this chapter, regarding Sekky's internal crisis regarding national identity and his strong identification with being Canadian. Therefore, he has few qualms in repeating white Canadian propaganda positing the Japanese as an enemy. Additionally, he is indoctrinated by older members of his family, who still identify strongly with their Chinese heritage. In discussions regarding the war, they feel a connection to "the war in China" (Choy, 1995, p.162) which was primarily being fought against the Japanese. As the war continues, "Father became louder and angrier with each report from China" as "Territories, counties and provinces fell to the Japanese" (p.195). Sekky recalls how "The BBC announced the arrival of Commonwealth soldiers in Hong Kong. Soon Canadian troops would be there, too" (p.195). This section of the novel reveals two things – firstly, the influence Sekky is receiving from his father, who offers a Chinese perspective on the war. Secondly, by mentioning the BBC and Canadian troops, Sekky reveals he is influenced by white Canadian perspectives on the war. But to Sekky, there is not a great deal separating these perspectives, as they ultimately share the same viewpoint – that Japan is a threat and an enemy. From all directions in Sekky's life, he is being taught to mistrust and dislike the Japanese, including those of Japanese heritage.

After Sekky meets Kazuo, he is "thrilled to have met the enemy" (p.214), observing that "Everyone knew the unspoken law: *Never betray your own kind*. Meiying was Chinese, like me; we were our own kind" (p.214). Through Sekky, Choy is emphatically breaking down the perception of the East Asian diaspora being a monolithic entity; for the Chinese and Japanese during the Second World War, their differences from one another were paramount. This causes Sekky to be confused at Meiying's behaviour, saying "She must have known Kazuo for a long time. She was a *traitor*. Her boyfriend was a Jap, a monster, one of the enemy waiting in the dark to destroy us all" (p.214). It is particularly jarring to hear a child state this about a fellow child, with Choy utilising the innocence of Sekky to remind us how indoctrinated discrimination had an impact on the behaviour of children as well as adults. Kazuo is evidently somebody who means a lot to Meiying, yet Sekky's immediate response is utter horror at this connection, and he is intent on perceiving Kazuo as "the enemy" despite Kazuo doing nothing to harm Sekky personally.

However, Sekky's negative feelings towards Kazu are mitigated by some positive associations. He describes Kazuo as having "a high forehead, deep black eyes like coal, thin lips; his hair was shiny with hair cream. He looked like a Chinese movie soldier, a Good Guy, in one of those films we saw at the China War Effort Fund Driver" (p.211). Sekky's visual perception of Kazuo is overwhelmingly positive, yet he also notes "But he was *Japanese*" (p.211). Sekky's determination to follow this expression of kinship with Kazuo, with a reiteration of Kazuo's otherness as an "enemy" is Sekky repeating the propaganda that has been taught to him. He has met somebody who seems to challenge that propaganda, and he is shaken by that – so feels the need to remind himself of what he has been told by people in both the Canadian and Chinese communities in his life.

As much as Choy is emphasising to us that the Chinese and Japanese diaspora were two distinct groups, by showing Sekky recognising visual similarities between himself and

Kazuo, Choy is acknowledging that the two diasporic groups were still frequently regarded as the same by white Canadians. Sekky may partake in the abuse of Japanese classmates at school, but "sometimes a guy from another class mistook me for a Jap" (p.196). He and Meiying are on a walk after school one day, and they are approached by a man who asks, "You Japs?" (p.219), and they are already prepared for such a situation, showing "him the tin buttons pinned on our lapels that had the Chinese flag proudly stamped on them. Kiam had got them for us from Chinese School. I also had one that said: I AM CHINESE" (p.219). Being of Chinese heritage has gone from being a target source of xenophobia within Canadian society to being something which keeps them safe from abuse, as the Japanese are regarded as a greater target of xenophobia now. When Meiying and Sekky spend time with Kazuo, "Sometimes [Kazuo] pinned on the I AM CHINESE button that Meiying got for him" (p.223); they may know the difference between being Chinese and Japanese, but white Canadians do not. This overview of the East Asian diaspora as a monolith ultimately helps to protect Kazuo when he is with Meiying and Sekky. In many ways, Kazuo being shown as hiding in plain sight by pretending to be Chinese is reminiscent of discussions around Patricia Grace's novel *Chappy*, as discussed in the New Zealand chapter of this thesis. Both Kazuo and Grace's titular character Chappy hide their Japanese ethnicity by pretending to be Chinese, and ultimately this protects them from greater harm. This similarity in the novels points towards a shared history regarding the East Asian diaspora between New Zealand and Canada – specifically that of the two nations often seeing the Chinese and Japanese as one homogenous bloc as opposed to separate ethnicities.

In our introduction to Kazuo, we immediately get a sense of how difficult life has become for him as a Japanese Canadian, as he tells Meiying "There's more talk about us being the enemy. Being traitors. The *Sun* printed letters about putting us away" (p.211). This would have been before the internment camps and internal displacement we see in *Obasan*

were established, but Kazuo's mention of the existence of this discourse prior to 1941 shows that Canadian calls for the removal and isolation of the Japanese diaspora were occurring long before the displacement came in by force. Sekky's response to this is to think about how "Father had joined a rally in Chinatown that piled up all our Japan-made goods" (p.213), which once again seems to be a memory he recalls to justify why he must dislike those of Japanese heritage. As time progresses, Sekky is shown to be struggling with what he has been told about Japanese Canadians versus his growing friendship with Kazuo. He is gifted "some Japanese candy that tasted of seaweed" (p.223) by Kazuo, and his initial instinct is that it "had poison in it" but both Meiying and Kazuo "ate it to show me it was safe" (p.223). Kazuo is never shown to force Sekky into discussing things which make him uncomfortable or trying to justify his humanity to Sekky as a Japanese Canadian; he is simply kind, repeatedly, and over time we see this begin to erode Sekky's prejudices towards those of Japanese ethnicity.

Significantly, Sekky begins to refer to Kazuo as "Kaz" after they have met multiple times, and notes how Kazuo "was as tall as Kiam" (p.223). The shortening of Kazuo's name to "Kaz" shows an air of comfortable familiarity by Sekky, even subconsciously; similarly, his comparison of Kazuo to his oldest brother, whom he loves and looks up to is a positive association. But when the two of them start to box, and Sekky "threw Kaz a fake left and got to hit him hard on the jaw. Of course, we were just supposed to be shadow boxing [...] I kept punching at him" (p.223), what was supposed to be a friendly bit of fun is revealed to have the potential to turn violent quite quickly. We already know that Sekky has no qualms in being physically violent towards his Japanese classmates; however, the boxing encounter follows no such trajectory, as Kazuo laughs and lifts Sekky "up into the air and threw me up, up, up: he caught me by my feet and began to swing me around and around [...] It was dizzying and thrilling [...] We ended up laughing and rolling around on the ground. It was fun

that day" (p.223). The way in which Choy transforms a potentially violent scene into one which is filled with fun and laughter adds nuance to Choy's exploration of the often antagonistic relationship between Chinese and Japanese diasporic communities during the Second World War. Neither Kazuo nor Sekky have set foot in the countries of their heritage; they are born and raised in Canada, and have far more in common than Sekky initially assumes. Choy's inclusion of this friendship emphasises how isolating a time it was for the Japanese Canadian community – in so many ways, the Chinese and Japanese diaspora had shared experiences being marginalised within Canada. Yet due to the war, they found themselves on opposite sides of a divide. By adding Kazuo as a character, Choy is forcing the audience to question how easily we decide who an enemy is and who is not. Sekky may well be against the Japanese, but he evidently does not view Kazuo personally as an enemy whatsoever.

These interactions do cause a shift in Sekky's character, however, as he eventually asks his father "Are all Japs our enemy, even the ones in Canada?". His father responds by glaring at Sekky's mother, then saying "All Japs are potential enemies". Father's glare is explained by Sekky's mother attempting to say "some Japanese persons were born here and -" but "Father sharply snapped his fingers" (p.224) and prevents her from continuing. This discussion emphasises that not all those of the Chinese diaspora felt that the Japanese Canadians should be treated as enemies, nor isolated from society; but just as Father curtails Sekky's mother's expression of empathy, so any Chinese Canadian stating this at the time was ignored. Significantly, following this conversation, Kiam says, "The ones who are born here are only *half* enemies" to which Liang laughs and says "That's stupid"; but Sekky loudly exclaims, "It's *not*!" (p.225). By spending so much time with Kazuo, and discovering that he likes him, this discussion is fundamentally fuelled by Sekky trying to find any justification he can for enjoying his friendship with Kazuo. After his exclamation, his mother "looked at me,

startled, then smiled broadly, as if she understood something beyond me" (p.225). This quotation exemplifies the benefit of Choy focalising the narrative through childlike perspectives, so as to keep a level of innocence to the narration. As readers, we can note that this is Sekky acknowledging that Kazuo should not be viewed in the same way as the Japanese Empire is viewed, due to his being born and raised in Canada.

By creating this narrative journey for Sekky, Choy is exploring the dynamic of minority characters both finding comfort amongst one another whilst also exploring "a period of Chinese-Canadian history that has too often been hushed by Chinese-Canadians" (Lorre, 2000, p.80) in his opinion. Sekky's realisation of "the impact on himself of Chinese propaganda against the Japanese" makes him recognise "that Chinese-Canadians were perpetuating old hatreds in their country of adoption, passing them on to the next generation, when they should have empathized with the anti-Asian feeling directed at the Japanese". This realisation comes in the form of Sekky mentally reconciling the differences between the Chinese Canadian community and the Japanese Canadian community. Through focusing on this dynamic, Choy is highlighting a discrimination which "is usually remembered as another case of white racism against Asians, in the context of inter-Asian relationships" (Lorre, 2000, p.80), with the additional element of childish naivety – Sekky is fast to take in the anti-Japanese propaganda, and thus Choy is reminding us how quickly the next generation can continue the discriminatory behaviour of the generation prior.

Despite the structural discrimination he faces, Kazuo views Meiying and Sekky as allies, finding solace in their company as they can protect him in ways that his Japanese Canadian friends cannot. Meanwhile, Sekky comes to realise that disliking Kazuo purely for his ethnicity is a result of propaganda, and on a personal level he has no reason to hate anybody of Japanese ethnicity. As the chapters continue, it is evident that "an alliance with a friend can prevail over hatred for the enemy" (Lorre, 2000, p.79) and increasingly Sekky

does not wish to stop spending time with Kazuo. However, just as Kogawa does not shy away from the horrors of being Japanese Canadian during the Second World War, Choy does not either. This hopeful story of Japanese and Chinese diasporic connection ends in the tragedy of the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, and Kazuo and his family fleeing Vancouver because of it. At the same time, Meiying's secret relationship with Kazuo is uncovered and she is viciously attacked by classmates; Sekky comments when she collects him from school that "Her face looked bruised, and there was a small cut over her left eye" (p.228). Meiying withdraws from Chinatown after this, unable to cope with being labelled a traitor, and is found dead at home a few months later – references to knitting needles and a pool of blood beside her body implies that she has attempted to perform an at home abortion and has died in the process.

This has an intense impact on Sekky, who is deeply shaken by these events, and he thinks fondly of "the slim boy holding Meiying's hand, laughing at my Spitfire" (p.228). It is notable that Sekky does not refer to Kazuo as being a Jap, or as Japanese – in this memory, he is simply a boy whose company Sekky enjoyed. It contrasts strongly with the events that have occurred and can be perceived as a coming-of-age moment for Sekky, where innocence has truly been lost. It is also a very specific narrative choice made by Choy. He has provided us with a hope that the Chinese Canadian and Japanese Canadian diaspora could befriend one another and presented us with arguments for why the hatred was deeply destructive; but he has also reminded us of the horrors that the Japanese diaspora experienced. By having Meiying try to abort a pregnancy caused by Kazuo, Choy is symbolising how the Japanese diaspora were entirely removed from all society within Vancouver, and there was no scenario where it was viewed acceptable for them to still belong. However, through having Meiying die through the attempted abortion, Choy is also symbolising how this isolation of the

Japanese diaspora during the Second World War not only harmed Japanese Canadians – it harmed Canadian society as a whole.

East Asian Diaspora and Indigenous Relationships

Discussing the relationships between Chinese and Japanese Canadians formed during the Second World War leads onto another type of relationship which both Kogawa and Choy discuss – and that is the relationship between the East Asian diaspora and Indigenous Canadians. This is more strongly evident in *Obasan* than it is in *The Jade Peony*, but the brief references made to Indigenous culture by Choy are still worth discussing. Indigenous Canadian cultures also experienced racism and isolation within white Canadian society, even though "all of North America had been divided into well-defined and defended tribal territories before Euro-American contact" (Ray, 2010, p.40). They may have been the first people to live on what came to be known as Canadian soil, but they were subsequently displaced and oppressed by the white settler society. Just as discrimination of the Chinese and then Japanese diaspora was legally enacted through policies, so too were "indigenous societies" within Canada "largely dismantled, over time, by the effects of policy and practice" (Chartrand, 2010, p.128).

The connection between these two groups was predominantly explored in the New Zealand chapter of this thesis, where Chappy finds solace amongst the Māori community and Native Hawai'ian community in Patricia Grace's novel *Chappy*. This is a recurring theme when discussing the East Asian diaspora in comparison to Indigenous cultures – the idea of there being solidarity amongst two groups who are both ethnic minorities within their country. In Indigenous social theory, Tahu Kukutai notes that, "Indigenous lifeworlds are structured by a legacy of dispossession and ongoing colonialism". He argues that "sociology

and imperialism are inextricably intertwined", and that "claims of universalism are processes of exclusion and the marginalization of Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing" (Kukutai, Chapter 3, 2022). These arguments are relevant to *Obasan* with regards to the way in which we see Indigenous Canadian characters marginalised and subjected to prejudice comparable to Naomi's experience as a Japanese Canadian. Whilst her discrimination is informed by both long-standing and more recent Second World War policies, the Indigenous characters we meet in *Obasan* has been excluded from mainstream Canadian society as a result of British imperialism and its legacies. Where Japanese characters in *Obasan* believe that identifying with British culture is a route to being accepted amongst white Canadians, for the Indigenous characters British culture is directly responsible for their marginalisation and dispossession.

Choy makes more oblique references to Indigenous culture which reminds the Chinese Canadian characters that, just like them, Indigenous Canadians are posited as culturally other to white Canadians, but still have a claim to Canadian national identity. Meanwhile, for Kogawa, Indigenous Canadians are visible throughout the novel, and the relationship between Japanese Canadians and Indigenous Canadians is framed positively, suggesting that these two minority groups can find solace with one another in a nation which pushes them to the fringes of society. The two groups encounter one another directly due to the displacement of Naomi's family during the war, so the relationship formed in *Obasan* is both a poignant exchange between two minority groups, and equally yet another lens through which to understand the impact of the Second World War on the Japanese diaspora's sense of national identity. The timeline of *Obasan* bears witness to the argument that "BC history as a whole is so far removed from the war that it appears only as a distant rumble of guns over the horizon"; however, when the ramifications of the war were finally felt, the "Second World War was in fact a significant event in British Columbians' history. This total war made its

effects felt across the province's complex geography in multifaceted ways and affected most of the population to some degree" (Sheffield, 2022). Within *Obasan*, the impact of these modalities on the Nakane family encompass displacement, racism, and interactions with individuals they otherwise would not have encountered. These encoutners include frequent skirmishes with white children in Slocan, but also with the Indigenous character named Rough Lock. Their shared experience of identifying as Canadian yet experiencing marginalisation within Canadian society creates an immediate bond between Naomi and Rough Lock.

Even before providing vignettes involving Naomi meeting Rough Lock, Kogawa ensures that Indigenous Canadian presence is evident within *Obasan* in ways that create positive links with the Japanese diaspora. In the opening chapter of the novel, Naomi makes a comparison between her uncle and Indigenous Canadians when they sit on the Prairie together, observing that "Uncle could be Chief Sitting Bull squatting here" (Kogawa, 1994, p.2). As though to erase any doubt that Naomi is insinuating her uncle could pass for being seen as Indigenous rather than of Japanese ethnicity, Naomi further observes that "All he needs is a feather headdress, and he would be perfect for a picture postcard – 'Indian Chief from Canadian Prairie' – souvenir of Alberta" (p.2-3). Marie Lo, in her analysis of this scene, argues that "The allusion to Chief Sitting Bull not only invokes again the plight of the Japanese Canadians as comparable to that of aboriginals" (Lo, 2007, p.322), but it also points out how Naomi and her family have developed a close connection to this place. Lo continues to argue that "Naomi's reference to the postcard" (which she describes as a "souvenir of Alberta, made in Japan" (Kogawa, 1994, p.3)) is a "reminder that 'roots' and 'origins' are not always synonymous. Though originally from Japan, his roots are in his adopted country. [...] Naomi seems to point to the inadequacy of relying on 'origins' as a gauge of loyalty. It is

where one puts one's 'roots' and not one's 'origins' that must be taken into consideration" (Lo, 2007, p.322).

Regardless, Naomi continues this comparison in a more nuanced way by discussing the children in her classroom, commenting that "Some of the Native children I've had in my classes over the years could almost pass for Japanese, and vice versa. There's something in the animal-like shyness I recognize in the dark eyes. A quickness to look away" (p.3). There is a sense of shared kinship in this description – it does not have the same mocking tone that the previous passage about her uncle has. Marie Lo argues that "The parallels between the Japanese Canadian and First Nations populations are peppered throughout the novel, such that what initially appears to be a comparison between the two eventually blurs the boundaries between what is 'Japanese' and what is 'Native'" (Lo, 2007, p.320).

Naomi's feeling that her Japanese and Native students could pass for each other's ethnicities is less based on racial markers, and more in behaviours she feels they share. That "shyness" and "quickness to look away" is a survival mechanism that Naomi has developed through her years of displacement and ostracisation, and she therefore recognises it in children who are of a similar age to her age when displacement policies were in force. This association is something that evidently runs deep in Naomi's mind, however, as when she begins lessons with a new class of students "there are two Native girls, sisters, twelve and thirteen years old [...] There's also a beautiful half-Japanese, half-European child named Tami" (p.7). Quite evidently, there are many other children in Naomi's class – yet the only ones she feels are of note to mention are children of Japanese or Indigenous heritage. By specifically noting the presence of the Indigenous children, Naomi's behaviour bears witness to the Indigenous social theory as described by Tahu Kukutai – she recognises their marginalisation and remembers her own marginalisation within Canadian society. Therefore, this can be perceived as a kinship Naomi feels between the two groups, viewing both as

having similar but slightly different struggles due to not fitting into the white Eurocentric society of Canada. It can argued this kinship is based on her own experiences as a child and is an association she almost subconsciously makes.

Encountering Rough Lock being is ultimately the most transformative moment for Naomi with regards to Indigenous and Japanese Diasporic relationships; and despite it occurring later in the novel, within the temporal parameters of Naomi's life experience, her interactions with Rough Lock occur long before she becomes a teacher. Therefore, it can be extrapolated that the relationship she develops with him causes a fundamental shift in her perspective with regards to the similarities between Indigenous Canadians and Japanese Canadians – "his stories connect Japanese Canadians and their Native predecessors by narrating the experiences of these two groups as part of a larger continuum" (Lo, 2007, p.321-322). They are both groups who have been marginalised within Canadian society, and they share a common understanding because of that. Within the temporal parameters of the novel's plot, it can be argued that the Second World War is a huge factor in this shift, as without that occurring contextually, Naomi and her family would still be in Vancouver, would not be experiencing the same level of legal discrimination, and would not have met Rough Lock.

It is notable that Rough Lock's position in Slocan is even more peripheral than Naomi's. Whilst she may feel that she has been pushed to the borders of Canadian society by living in Slocan, Rough Lock quite literally lives on the edge of Slocan society by residing next to the lake, which is only accessible via a walk through the woods. Kogawa implies that Rough Lock is so far removed from Canadian society that he has become almost one with nature, with Naomi noting how "As he talks, the grass moves back and forth like a flag" (169). Despite his separation from most people, Rough Lock does not believe that they are all so different after all. He tells Naomi and Kenji that he has "Never met a kid didn't like

stories. Red skin, yellow skin, white skin, any skin" (p.172). In some ways, this contrasts with an element of Indigenous social theory which Kukutai holds to, stating that "Despite relentless processes of racialization, Indigenous Peoples in colonial settler states hold tight to their status as sovereign peoples, refusing to become just another racial or ethnic group in a melting pot" (Kukutai, Chapter 15, 2022); Rough Lock's implication in this statement is that he believes they are and should be one melting pot, instead of being troubled by the putative differences between ethnic groups. When applying that element of Indigenous social theory to this quotation, it is a reminder that whilst Kogawa was trying to represent a more realistic version of Canada by including Indigenous references and characters, she is not Indigenous herself – and therefore her perception of Indigenous relationships with Japanese Canadians will be influenced far more by her personal experiences as a Japanese Canadian woman.

Regardless, even though Rough Lock's point seems to be that they are all not so different, "He puts his brown leathery arm beside Kenji's pale one" and says, "Don't make sense, do it, all this fuss about skin?" (p.172). This interaction ostensibly implies that Naomi is still mindful of the differences between Indigenous Canadians and Japanese Canadians, by describing Rough Lock and Kenji's arms in such different ways – where Kenji's is pale, Rough Lock's is brown and has connotations of being weathered and tough. However, Rough Lock's observation that it doesn't make any sense for there to be "all this fuss about skin", introduces Naomi to a new way of thinking – that they are not all so different after all. Given her own isolation and displacement due to the Second World War, and the treatment she experiences from the white children in Slocan, it is not surprising that she does not feel a similarity to them at all. However, given Rough Lock's kindness, and refusal to view Naomi and Kenji's Japanese Canadian status negatively, we see the beginning of a new phase in which Naomi builds trust with Indigenous Canadians.

This is reinforced when Rough Lock rescues Naomi later in the chapter, after she jumps into the lake and then cannot surface on her own. As Naomi "fights the panic [...] against the enclosing weight" (p.176) it appears that she is close to drowning; and so from this point onwards she associates Rough Lock not only with kindness, but also with saving her very life. He is the first person she sees when she awakens on the lakeshore, with "Rough Lock Bill kneeling beside me". His face is "close to mine" (p.177) as Naomi tries to keep her eyes open, and when she next awakens, she is in the hospital, with a memory of "Rough Lock carrying me here" (p.178). This incident implies strong level of trust has been established between Naomi and Rough Lock. She has only met him a few times, yet whilst the white children she has encountered in Slocan have caused her suffering, Rough Lock is somebody she associates with kindness and acceptance. It could be argued that he is a very symbolic character for Naomi given he oversees her coming back from the edge of death. Slocan in many ways symbolises death to Naomi; she has been forced to come here due to being of Japanese heritage, and her ties to Japan and Canada have become weaker due to this displacement. She is profoundly aware of her Japanese ethnicity, rendering her other to the white children of Slocan, and hates being reminded of this. Yet when she comes close to literal death in the novel, she is rescued by an Indigenous man. His kindness saves her life and reminds her that she is not as isolated as she had thought. This relationship evinces the potential for ethnic minorities to find solace in one another, and from that point on Naomi feels strong affiliations with Indigenous Canadians vis-à-vis Japanese Canadians.

Lo argues that in Kogawa's novel, "The parallels and invocations of Natives to articulate the experiences of Japanese Canadians reveal the complicated racial formations in Canada" (Lo, 2007, p.324); by drawing parallels between Japanese Canadians and Indigenous Canadians, Kogawa is pointing out "the Canadian government's institutionalized racism and [situating] the dispersal and displacement of the Japanese Canadians in the larger history of

Canadian colonization" (p.323). The two groups are deeply connected because of their ostracisation within Canadian society; but it is not sheer chance that has caused this. It is an established feature of Canadian culture due to the nation being an ex-British colony, where it "followed a policy of recruiting immigrants from the United Kingdom, Northern Europe, and the United States, while restricting those from Asia and other Third World countries" (Li, 1999, p.16). Anybody who did not belong to the first three constituencies would face discrimination and levels of isolation; even though in Rough Lock's case, his ancestors were from the very land he is now being ostracised within. Therefore, Stephen's consistent flying of the union Jack (as mentioned in the previous section of this chapter) is not only a moment of Stephen attempting to prove how deeply he identifies with being Canadian; it is also in some ways a poignant moment of forced assimilation. Canada is a nation built on colonisation, and for Stephen to feel he truly belongs, he must not just fly the Canadian flag – he also feels compelled to demonstrate his allegiance to the nation responsible for the colonisation of Canadian land. The first group of people to suffer from British colonisation of Canada were the Indigenous Canadians; the displacement Naomi and Stephen experience is another legacy of the colonisation of Canada by Britain.

The references to Indigenous Canadian culture in *The Jade Peony* are fewer than in *Obasan*, but these brief moments are still worth discussing. Unlike Kogawa, whose references to Indigenous Canadians are clearly included to create a comparison of levels of oppression experienced by East Asian and Indigenous communities within Canada, Choy uses Indigenous Canadian references to demonstrate the East Asian characters' understanding of the ethnic and cultural diversity within Canada. Both representations convey the level of connection the characters feel to their Canadian nationality, but in very different ways.

In the third chapter of *The Jade Peony*, Choy focalises through Liang's perspective, as she is out with her older friend Wong Suk. The chapter is focused on Liang and Wong Suk

seeing a film at the cinema, where they stay later “to catch the newsreel” and Liang states that “China was at war, fighting the Japanese invaders” (Choy, 1995, p.45). This moment is an example of a blending of white Canadian culture and Chinese culture for Liang; “The Lux” (p.45) is a place where Chinese Canadians and white Canadians all meet and watch films together, where “Grown-up white people clapped every time they saw President Roosevelt, Chinatown people booed every time they saw the Japanese, and children cheered every time Mighty Mouse showed up” (p.46). Everybody there is identifying with different elements of the films, but they are still experiencing it together. This shows how The Lux is representative of an ethnically diverse Canada, and it is an important moment for Liang in recognising that reconciling her Chinese heritage with the environment in which she is living is feasible.

Choy choosing to begin this chapter by showing us the possibility of Canada being ethnically diverse is significant to note given his references to Indigenous Canadian culture later on within the same chapter. Similarly to how Rough Lock tells Naomi stories in *Obasan*, Wong Suk tells Liang stories in *The Jade Peony*; and Liang’s favourite narratives are the ones where Wong Suk speaks “of being friends with some Siwash natives on the rocky shores of the B.C coast” (p.58). This is prefaced by Liang mentioning how Wong Suk often shared anecdotes about his time in the rail camps, where he “survived climbing up sheer mountain cliffs, how one limb after another got broken; and he told us about fights he had with white demons in lumber mills, late at night” (p.58). This is a critical juxtaposition, where Wong Suk speaks of being “friends” with Indigenous Canadians, and describes the white Canadians he encountered as “white demons”. Similarly to in *Obasan*, and in other examples given previously, this is an expression of solidarity between the Indigenous community and the East Asian diaspora. Both Wong Suk and the Indigenous Canadians he encountered were relegated to the margins of white Canadian society, and just as Naomi in *Obasan* finds solace in Rough Lock, so Wong Suk appears to have found kinship with the Indigenous friends he made

whilst working on the railroads (where there is little known about life for the Chinese migrants, speculatively because "the misery of their conditions precluded the workers from speaking much about them after they returned" (Con, 1982, p.22)). What does seem to be agreed upon is that those conditions were dire for the East Asian workers, so the solidarity Wong Suk is hinting at would have been very understandable – particularly if amongst this misery, white Canadians behaved so cruelly towards those of non-European descent that Wong Suk describes them as demonic.

Wong Suk's tales of these friends does not end there though; he goes on to tell Liang that "There were Indian ghosts, as incredible as Chinese ghosts; forest ghosts and animal and bird spirits" (Choy, 1995, p.58), demonstrating a sense of kinship between Indigenous culture and his Chinese culture, shared via storytelling traditions. Liang reveals that "Wong Suk had even witnessed sacred Indian pow-wows and smoked special tobacco called sweet grass and traded gold nuggets and gold dust for bear paws, antlers, herbs and wood fungus" (p.58). This extract tells us that Wong Suk had been accepted into the lives of the Siwash natives he worked alongside and was evidently highly trusted – specifically shown through his witnessing of "sacred Indian pow-wows". Something that is additionally notable is the trading of gold for items sourced more directly from the natural world. It is symbolic of the Chinese diaspora initially coming to North America to find "Gold Mountain" (p.17) and then making a home on Canadian soil, amongst the nature listed by Choy. It is also symbolic because the trading of items between Wong Suk and his Siwash friends represents a blending of the two cultures; and therefore, once again, we witness a sense of East Asian and Indigenous solidarity. Another point of relevance is the specificness with which Wong Suk refers to them as "Siwash" as opposed to using a broader term (such as simply Indigenous or Native). Just as those of East Asian heritage in Canada were often stereotyped as one

homogenous group, the same could be said for Indigenous Canadians – but the tribes themselves had individual cultures and histories, and Wong Suk recognises this.

Whilst these stories in themselves do not relate to the Second World War directly, their placement in the narrative at a moment when Liang is observing the more diverse aspect of areas of Vancouver is significant. The Second World War was forging a Canada where the Chinese diaspora were no longer the most despised group within Canadian society, with that indignity now being visited upon the Japanese diaspora. As we see in the scene where Liang and Wong Suk spend time in a cinema amongst white Canadians, their acceptance within Canada as Chinese Canadians was still not secure, but it was evidently evolving. It is relevant, therefore, to be reminded of another group within Canadian society who were still facing legal exclusion and had experienced colonial dispossession. Life may have been improving for Liang as a child of Chinese heritage since the Second World War began, but these tales offer nuanced insights into her family's experience. The Chinese Canadians had historically faced hardship, and Wong Suk's tales of his Siwash friends is a reminder of another group – who had significant cultural overlap with his culture – that still faced hardship within Canada.

The Older Generation

Within both *Obasan* and *The Jade Peony*, Kogawa and Choy focus on the differing experiences family members have with regards to the connection between their ethnicity and Canadian nationality. Christine Lorre argues how in *The Jade Peony*, "The children's world is shaped by the adult world, and absorbs all its prejudices and thirst for retaliation" (Lorre, 2000, p.78). Even though the children carry the narratorial role of the novel, their views are heavily shaped by the elder members of their family – and in many ways, the novel is about

them understanding those views whilst still shaping their own opinions of their connection to Canadian nationality. Kogawa meanwhile presents us with the character of Aunt Emily, who in the present day has dedicated her entire life into fighting for recognition of the racial injustices faced by Japanese Canadians. Where Choy represents the older generation as being determined that their children will stay connected to their Chinese heritage, Kogawa presents to us an older character who believes that it is vital she and her family should be perceived as Canadian before being perceived as Japanese.

The Second World War is a catalyst for these characters feeling a closer connection to their national identity; but this is reflected differently across both novels. A similarity between the novels, however, is that the prime mover behind these mentalities is a matriarchal figure within the family. For Kogawa, she uses the older character of Aunt Emily. For Choy, he uses the older character of the grandmother, referred to as Poh-Poh. In many ways, the novels address the question of generational trauma, and how that intersects with national identity. Poh-Poh's trauma is borne being separated from her homeland, and the oppression she experienced as a child in China due to being a girl – which in turn, she inflicts on Liang. Aunt Emily's trauma arises from being a woman of Japanese descent who was born and raised in Canada yet was forced to leave her home in Vancouver and was sent to Toronto during the Second World War. These are very different traumas, but both women have a level of expectation that the children of the next generation must feel that trauma too – and thus their thoughts reflecting East Asian heritage and Canadian nationality are thrust upon the children narrating the novels.

With regards to trauma, and how that affects national identity, "*Obasan* makes use of a fragmented narrative form in order to convey a traumatic history" (McDermott, 2011, p.142). Naomi's personal narrative explores fragmented memories of a period she has actively tried to suppress, intertwined with the novel shifting "between the present day and

the past" through "a mixture of childhood memories". Kogawa also creates this history through "wartime journals, newspaper clippings, government documents, and family letters" (McDermott, 2011, p.142). This documentation is created by Aunt Emily, who signals to us a possible perspective of older Japanese Canadians. Due to the historical accuracy of these sources, there is a clinical precision which differs from Naomi's childhood memories. Naomi is strongly aware of how things made her feel, but does not have a firm grasp of the politics which created such unrest in her life. Aunt Emily, meanwhile, remembers the details with painful accuracy, and still feels the injustice in the present. Far from feeling disconnected from her Canadian nationality, the experience has made Emily more certain of it. Where Naomi has suppressed the complicated feelings of belonging that the Second World War made her feel, Emily has used the experience of displacement as motivation to prevent such an injustice occurring again. In relation to Cathy Caruth's arguments pertaining to trauma theory, both characters show signs of carrying the trauma they experienced as an internal wound – but where Naomi internalises her pain and tried to avoid confronting it, Emily processes her pain through external actions and anger.

Our introduction to Emily in *Obasan* presents rage as a central element of her characterisation; whilst for Naomi, there is an exhausted undertone to both seeing and listening to her aunt. The first sentence which makes mention of Aunt Emily is Naomi stating how "Dear Aunt Em is crusading still". There is an undertone of humour to this – through the use of the word "Dear" and the shortened version of Emily's name, Naomi is showing affection towards her aunt whilst still being quietly amused by the commitment she shows to her work, which she campaigns for with an almost religious zeal (emphasised through Naomi comparing Emily's work to "crusading"). Naomi continues to say that Aunt Emily's work is research "that shines in the lives of the Nisei, in their desperation to prove themselves Canadian, in their tough and gentle spirit" (Kogawa, 1994, p.38). Where Naomi has built a

life where she does not need to confront her Canadian nationality or Japanese heritage, Aunt Emily has done the opposite – and by Naomi saying how her work consists of a "desperation to prove themselves Canadian" we can gain insight from how disconnected Naomi feels from her Canadian nationality in this stage of adulthood. It is also telling that she uses the word "prove"; however much she has withdrawn from examining her feelings, the treatment she experienced during the Second World War has evidently left a lasting impact on the extent to which Naomi feels free to consider herself as Canadian. Meanwhile, Aunt Emily has an utmost surety that she is Canadian; on the conference papers she brings to the house, "Wherever the words "Japanese race" appeared, Aunt Emily had crossed them out and written "Canadian citizen"" (p.40). Once again, there is a feeling of rage to Aunt Emily at this point in the novel. It is outrageous to her that she should be considered anything other than Canadian, and her Canadian nationality is shown to be more important to her than her Japanese heritage.

For Emily, "the injustice done to us in the past was still a live issue" (p.41); she visits the family "on her way home to Toronto from a conference in California called "The Asian Experience in North America"" (p.38). Like Naomi, she has settled and created a life in the part of Canada she was internally displaced; but unlike Naomi, she has not retreated from society as a way of coping with the trauma from the displacement. She was significantly older during the period of displacement, and views discussing the injustice that Japanese Canadians faced during that period as a method of "gluing our tongues back on [...] We have to deal with all this while we remember it. If we don't we'll pass our anger down in our genes" (p.43). Emily is presented as an angry character, but she is also shown to be highly conscious of this anger. She feels the experiences of Japanese Canadians must be spoken about for the anger to be exorcised out, otherwise every generation of Japanese Canadians following those who lived through displacement will still feel that pain of isolation. The

mention of “gluing our tongues back on” could also be perceived as Kogawa placing Emily in stark contrast to Naomi’s other aunt, Obasan, whose “language of her grief is silence. She has learned it well, its idioms, its nuances. Over the years, silence within her small body has grown large and powerful” (p.17). Obasan barely speaks anymore – the trauma and suffering has rendered her to near silence, a more extreme version of Naomi’s choice to isolate herself at the periphery of society. Both aunts are conscious of their trauma, but Obasan has chosen to let it remain inside her, whilst Emily has decided to speak about it loudly and frequently.

Whilst Naomi feels that “the past is so long. Shouldn’t we turn the page and move on?”, Emily believes that “The past is the future” (p.51). To make sense of where they belong within Canadian society, Emily believes that Japanese Canadians must interrogate their history within Canada. Naomi is continuously shown to not wish to analyse this, whilst Aunt Emily has spent “All her life [...] toil[ing] to tell of the lives of the Nisei in Canada [...] to make knowable, the treacherous yellow peril that lived in the minds of the racially prejudiced” (p.49). She does not want to hide from the discrimination she has experienced. She wants to challenge it. This difference in processing trauma is presented as both a difference in character between Naomi and Emily, but also a generational difference, due to the ages they were when experiencing displacement. Interestingly, Emily’s perspective of the past is akin to the work of more recent trauma theorists, who argue that “One of the futures of trauma theory, then, is perhaps to look closely and more carefully not simply at the trauma, but at the structure of experience within with trauma is made manifest” (Eaglestone, 2014, p.17); previous work conducted “centrally through the work of Cathy Caruth” (p.12) does not take into account the societal structures that created this trauma. Kogawa’s representation of Emily as a character is in line with this newer way of thinking, laying bare how prior “texts on trauma theory marginalise the traumatic experience of non-western cultures” (Buelens,

Durrant, and Eaglestone, 2014, p.5) and do not consider enough how trauma is not simply an internal pain. It can be societally waged, in the way that it is waged upon Emily and Naomi.

As stated previously, Emily does not appear to struggle with her attachment to Canadian nationality. However, despite the book she has been writing clearly referencing her Japanese heritage, ("THE STORY OF THE NISEI IN CANADA: A STRUGGLE FOR LIBERTY" (p.46)), it feel as though she dislikes the association others may have of her being Japanese. For example, she says angrily to Naomi, "Why in a time of war with Germany and Japan would our government seize the property and homes of Canadian-born Canadians" (p.45). She does not clarify that the "Canadian-born Canadians" she speaks of were of Japanese or German heritage, because to Emily that reduces the fact that Canadian-born individuals were forcibly removed from their homes and treated as though they were other – despite being born in Canada. When Naomi examines Emily's book, she discovers "a statement underlined and circled in red: *I am Canadian*. The circle was drawn so hard the paper was torn" (p.47). Emily's connection to being Canadian is one which once again has an undertone of anger to it - distress that she feels so undeniably Canadian yet has had to continuously repeat this statement because of her Japanese ethnicity. The fact that she underlines and circles this "so hard the paper was torn" further reasserts how passionately Emily feels about her Canadian nationality. She writes that "For better or worse, *I am Canadian*" (p.48), reiterating this firm connection. Despite the suffering she has experienced due to policies of displacement during the Second World War, the identification she has with Canadian nationality is absolute.

However, the slight irony in these assertions is that she seems to be suppressing her Japanese heritage in order to assert her Canadian national identity. In order to fight for her rights as a Canadian, and to tell the story of the experience of Japanese Canadians, she has inadvertently attempted to erase the side of her which is Japanese; and by doing so, the

implication is that for despite her work, Emily has grown into a woman who has difficulty with holding the duality of her national identity with her ethnic identity. Her work may be about raising the voices of Japanese Canadians, but her actions and behaviours imply that she wants her Japanese ethnicity to be largely ignored, and instead focus on the fact that her nationality is Canadian. When Emily angrily tells Naomi "You are your history. If you cut any of it off you're an amputee [...] Denial is gangrene" (p.60) it can be interpreted that Emily is frustrated that her niece does not want to examine her sense of belonging within Canada; but it could also be viewed as Emily partially speaking to herself. She is angry at her experiences, but she is also angry at how she still feels the pain from her memories, and talking about those experiences hasn't brought her peace. In this way, it shows how Emily and Naomi are not so different as it may seem – both are suppressing their feelings of national identity and heritage to a certain extent, but because of the palpable anger Emily still holds, she is seemingly unaware of this suppression. This is an example of the variety of ways that the Second World War impacted nationhood and identity for Japanese Canadians; even those like Aunt Emily, who express a strong sense of national identity, are shown to have deep trauma and confusion on this topic due to the displacement and isolation experienced. Due to how Japanese Canadians were treated during the Second World War, Emily is shown to not only live with anger at her experiences but possesses a great fear that it could occur again.

When examining the diary entries and letters Aunt Emily writes to Naomi's mother during the war, we begin to understand more about how she presents her national identity in the present day. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Emily reflects that "Some Issei are feeling betrayed and ashamed" (p.96) and in a later entry adds that "All of us Nisei are intent on keeping faith and standing by" (p.97). These quotations stand out because of Emily using the words "Issei" and "Nisei". Though they are descriptive words for first generation and

second generation Japanese Canadians, so serve a purpose in a literal way, Emily's decision to use Japanese terminology is in contrast with her later insistence that all Japanese Canadians must simply be referred to as Canadian. This is another example of nation theory and linguistics being interconnected; for Emily, speaking in any language other than English could be interpreted as a lack of loyalty towards Canada, and thus she desists from doing so. Her vehement trust in Canada, such as stating "Thank god we live in a democracy" (p.97) is shown to fracture as time passes, with her stating that "Rumors are that we're going to be kept as prisoners and war hostages – but that's so ridiculous since we're Canadian" (p.112). She becomes more shaken as time progresses: "It's people like us [...] who have had faith in Canada, who have been more politically minded than the others – who are the most hurt. At one time, remember how I almost worshipped the Mounties?" (p.118). Emily recognises that her solid faith in Canadian values is breaking, and wonders "if the whites think we are a special kind of low animal able to live on next to nothing" (p.123). Given her adoration of Canada as a nation, and Canadian institutions such as the Mounties, this is particularly galling for her to accept.

Yet throughout this, there is still a repeated cry of "we're Canadians" (p.123). However much everything feels "like a bad dream" (p.104), and she is forced to face the discriminative nature of Canadian society, Emily is unshakeable in her personal feeling that her Canadian nationality is a core part of who she is. After seeing how a white Norwegian man is treated by a reporter compared with her, she comments that "white Canadians feel more loyalty towards white foreigners than they do towards us Canadians" (p.112); yet the key part of this quotation is the fact that Emily says "us Canadians" as opposed to something akin to 'us Japanese Canadians'. There is a repeated refusal to accept the discrimination which she is now facing – and if white Canadian society claims that she is not Canadian, then Emily's response is to reassert her Canadian identity to an even stronger degree. From this

perspective, it is not surprising that Kogawa makes Emily's career be centred around justice for Japanese Canadians; but it is notable that Kogawa hints that Emily's determination to be accepted as Canadian comes at the cost of her minimising her Japanese heritage.

It is not just Aunt Emily who is represented as holding this perspective. Stephen tells Naomi that a girl from school said "All the Jap kids at school are going to be sent away and they're bad and you're a Jap" (p.83-84). This evidently creates a deep insecurity for Stephen, as he says immediately to Naomi that the same thing is going to happen to her. Naomi asks their father whether they are Japs who will be sent away, and their father says "No [...] We're Canadian" (p.84). He does not elaborate further, simply stating this as a fact. It is akin to when Emily writes in her journal about the growing discrimination, that she "hopes fervently it will not affect the lives of the little ones like Stephen and Nomi. After all, they are so thoroughly Canadian" (p.100). The older family members in Stephen and Naomi's lives are certain of the children's Canadian nationality, and that they should view themselves as such. However, because of the discrimination that Japanese Canadians faced, this results in confusion for Stephen and Naomi, with Stephen deciding that their circumstances are like "a riddle [...] We are both the enemy and not the enemy" (p.84). Because of being so young when the legal discrimination is enacted, Stephen and Naomi's sense of national identity has not had as many years to develop and become as refined as the older members of their family.

To refer to previous analysis regarding Obasan and her silence in comparison with Emily's dedication to being vocal about the treatment of Japanese Canadians, Corinne Bigot points out that "Much of the tension in the novel arises from [...] polarities: the desire to escape from a burdensome Japanese identity, which seems to characterize the Sansei or third generation, the urge to remember and to testify to the ills of the past, which for the Nisei (second generation) includes the need to reclaim their identity as Canadians, and the desire to forget, which is the choice of the Issei, the first generation" (Bigot, 2013). Obasan, Emily,

and Naomi's differing methods of coping with discrimination and displacement is a notable decision by Kogawa, and highlights to us the range of dynamics within a family – how a family can go through the same experience, yet their feelings towards it and decisions create by it will differ from person to person and generation to generation. Obasan does not wish to speak of it, internalising the experience. Naomi tries to shed any sense of national identity; her Japanese ethnicity is burdensome, but her experience of displacement has left her with complex feelings towards her Canadian nationality that she would rather not explore. Emily has a total surety of her Canadian nationality, and is determined to spend the rest of her life asserting this – even if it means at times she shows a lack of understanding to how she often speaks over Naomi instead of listening to her perspective.

This concept of younger family members having a differing perspective on national identity than older family members is one Choy also interrogates in *The Jade Peony*. However, Choy shows this perspective being the opposite way round to Kogawa in *Obasan*; the children are shown to feel increasingly more aligned with their Canadian nationality whilst their father and grandmother feel it is very important that the children remember that they are Chinese, and this is shown to be of the utmost importance in their eyes (particularly that of their grandmother, Poh-Poh). When examining this contrast, it is necessary to mention that the children are "the generation that actually lived through the dark ages of anti-Chinese racism. They see themselves as Canadians, having earned that right through the railway, the Depression, and World War Two" (Hancock, 1990, p.344). Their parents and grandmother have of course lived through discrimination which has shaped their national identity; however, the children have both lived through marginalisation whilst also beginning to see Canadian society become more accepting towards them. Therefore, for the children, they feel a kinship with Canada and their Canadian nationality that their parents and grandmother were prevented from experiencing, due to political legislation. The Second World War is a

significant catalyst in this shift, and its generational ramifications are shown by Choy throughout *The Jade Peony*.

It is evident that Choy utilises the character of Poh-Poh represent generational trauma. Despite being a woman herself, she shows great dislike towards the fact that Liang is a girl, telling her "A girl child is *mo yung* – useless" (Choy, 1995, p.32) and that "if you want a place in this world [...] do not be born a girl child" (p.31). She projects the suffering she experienced as a girl in China onto Liang, due to how she had been deemed "too ugly" after being born, and her father had wished "for a son, spat at his wife, and left them forever". Poh-Poh's life in China was one of misery, where even "the village match-maker had destined Grandmother to be sold to a well-off family to be a house servant" (p.40); but instead of being determined that her granddaughter should not experience the suffering she experienced, Poh-Poh instead is certain that Liang will face the same treatment due to being a girl and must mentally prepare for it. This creates a deep resentment between the two of them, with Liang declaring "I hated the Old One: Grandmother never let me get on with my movie-star daydreams" (p.37) because Poh-Poh refuses to accept that Liang is growing up in a different culture to the one she grew up in. She is scathing towards Liang, telling her "In China, Jook-Liang, you no play-act anything [...] In China, they tie up your feet [...] No can dan-see!" (p.40). Even though they are not in China, for Poh-Poh that national identity must be carried forwards, and therefore she must quash the interests Liang has that are distinctly western. If she could not dance as a child, then Liang must not either.

In many ways, this generational trauma could be compared with that of Aunt Emily in *Obasan*, who projects her own feelings of national identity onto Naomi instead of accepting that her niece may have different thoughts and emotions over national identity. For Emily, as discussed, her feelings are that she and Naomi are Canadian and must be vocal about being recognised that way. For Poh-Poh, it is the other way round; it is imperative to her that her

grandchildren identify as Chinese, not Canadian. With both characters, there is a sense that they did not have control of their lives as younger women, and so they are projecting that lack of control onto the next generation of their family.

It can be argued that Poh-Poh's lack of control over her life as a young girl is directly correlated to her pushing her perspective so strongly now; Choy tells us how "Poh-Poh, being one of the few elder women left in Vancouver, took pleasure in her status and simply became the arbitrator of the old ways" (p.14). Unlike in China as a child, where she suffered through being "a house servant" and was painfully "whipped with a knotted belt" (p.35), in Vancouver she is viewed with respect and as a head of the Chinese community. In order for her to maintain this status, Poh-Poh feels she must be an example for the rest of the community, by upholding familial heritage and values from China - which unfortunately means making Liang feel that she is "barely tolerated" by her grandmother due to being a "useless girl-child" (p.39). There is of course an irony here; Poh-Poh believes that the key to maintaining her influence is by maintaining the traditions and beliefs she was raised with in China. However, she has only gained the influence that she so enjoys because she now lives in Canada, not China. This is a contradiction which Poh-Poh seems to ignore, but it is one which Choy makes very evident to us. Poh-Poh's utilisation of Canadian society for her own privilege, but her refusal to acknowledge anything in her life as being Canadian, is shown to be in direct conflict with the mentality of her grandchildren; and that generational divide is one which Choy explores frequently throughout the novel.

Where the Second World War is shown to be a catalyst for the children beginning to interrogate their feelings towards being both Chinese and Canadian, for Poh-Poh everything is considered through the lens of being Chinese. Liang attempts to challenge her grandmother's sexist attitudes through discussing the war, repeating how "Father says after the war is over, things will change for everybody, even girls" (p.36). Poh-Poh responds by

mocking Liang, and asking "War over? [...] Always war in China. First, bandit wars in South China. Communist – *Gung Chang* – wars everywhere, and all those sun-cursed Japanese dogs yapping into North China" (p.36-37). Despite the fact her granddaughter has never set foot in China, Poh-Poh wants to impress upon Liang the constant struggles that China as a nation has faced; and additionally, to prioritise discussing China's battles above all else. Within a Canadian context, Liang referring to "war" would be assumed to mean the Second World War (and that is indeed the war that Liang and her father are speaking of), but Poh-Poh immediately shuts that mentality down, redirecting the focus towards Chinese history. This can be connected to the New Zealand chapter of the thesis, where Yung remains focused on the battles in China even though the nation he now lives in is focused on the First World War. By saying there is "always war in China", Poh-Poh is painting a picture to her granddaughter of a nation and life of hardship – which in many ways connects to Poh-Poh's determination that Liang should feel the pain she went through as a girl in China, as opposed to the more comfortable childhood Liang is experiencing in Vancouver. The mention of "Japanese dogs", however, shows that Poh-Poh's worldview is ultimately a very small one. She understands that Japan are at war with China, and are the enemy, but refuses to acknowledge or discuss how that fits into a more global conflict. For Poh-Poh, everything must always relate back to China.

It is worth noting that this extract begins with Liang saying how it was "Father" who raised how things could be different when "war is over". This is a subtle nod to the intergenerational relationships within the family, and how the mentality of viewing themselves purely as Chinese is weakening with each generation. When compared with how Poh-Poh reacts to war, where she immediately focuses on the history of China, Liang's father speaking of the Second World War in a global context represents a large shift between generations. This is also an example of the war affecting beliefs and national identities held

by characters. Whilst Liang's father does identify as a Chinese national, and is "worried about China, about the civil war there between the Communists and the Nationalists" (p.191), so evidently still cares very about the future of China, the very fact that he can perceive the broader picture of the Second World War marks him in contrast with his mother.

Alongside being representative of a shift in attitudes, the children's father also symbolises a bridge between his mother and his children. He is shifting from being singularly focused on China, but unlike his children does not question whether this means he now identifies as being a Canadian national – he knows that he does not. Sekky notes that "Though he knew better, Father saw each of his three sons as Confucian scholars, as if his B.C.-Chinatown boys could reflect the Old China he himself remembered as a child" (p.186). There is a dreamlike quality to this comment, particularly due to Sekky beginning this with "Though he knew better"; their father evidently wants his children to feel that close connection to China, but he knows that times are changing. Even Sekky being comfortable referring to himself and his brothers as "B.C.-Chinatown boys" reiterates this; the fact that they are from Vancouver is central to their sense of national identity. However, with regards to Poh-Poh's feelings, her son's identification as being Chinese is never questioned within the text. To have Poh-Poh openly argue against her son's perception of war shows the extent to which she feels that Chinese nationality is the most important thing within her family's lives. It also represents the shifting of her being the figurehead of the family to her son taking on that role. For as long as Poh-Poh has lived in Canada, she has been the revered elder family member, and, as discussed earlier, she enjoys the superiority that gives her both within her family and within wider Chinatown. In her eyes, if her son is to eventually take over that mantle, it is important that he maintain the opinions she has, hence she dismisses Liang's repetition of his comment. Unlike her son, who is aware that how he thinks of his sons is not

how they actually identify, Poh-Poh is still determined that Liang will be shaped in her image.

However, after Poh-Poh contradicts Liang's father with discussions of the war, Liang feels the need to state "There's no war in Canada [...] This is Canada." (p.37). This response from Liang is twofold. Firstly, it represents Liang's shifting attitude towards the hierarchy in the family. She knows that Poh-Poh is the head of the family, but she also is aware that the centre of power is shifting towards her father; and whilst she may not feel confident to argue when Poh-Poh directly contradicts her perspective, she does feel the confidence to argue if it contradicts her father. Secondly, this represents how the Second World War is directly impacting Liang's sense of national identity. She does not feel a strong connection to the wars Poh-Poh speaks of, as she does not live in China; but because she lives in Canada, she is aware that there is a war occurring which affects Canada yet has not hit Canadian shores. There is almost a level of safety in this, hence she so firmly says "There's no war in Canada". Liang does not wish to feel afraid of something which she herself is not experiencing.

Poh-Poh's response to Liang challenging her comments is very representative of the inter-generational dynamic, with her giving Liang "a condescending look" before saying "*You* not Canada, Liang [...] *you* China. Always war in China." (p.37). Choy states that Poh-Poh says this "majestically" which connects to the hierarchical attitude within the family – Poh-Poh's role is almost like that of a Queen whose word must be taken without question. She is not prepared for that to change, hence she continues to assert her view despite the changing circumstances. Even though Liang is contesting her grandmother's comments by stating a rather inarguable fact ("This is Canada"), Poh-Poh takes her granddaughter to be implying that she feels a closer connection with Canada than she does China. It is important to recognise how Poh-Poh finishes this statement by saying "Always war in China" as this thematically ties back to how the discussion started – with Liang raising a comment her

father made. Poh-Poh also recognises the impact war has on national identity, and when she discusses the hardships the Chinese have faced, it is evident that the wars have made her feel a stronger connection to her Chinese nationality. However, it also relates to how Liang was repeating her father's comments on how the war would one day be "over" and this would make her life change as a girl. Considering Poh-Poh constantly reinforces to Liang the difficulties she is going to face due to being born a girl, by stating that there is "Always" war in China, she is also telling Liang that nothing will ever alter the fact that (in her opinion) it is useless to be born a girl. By reiterating to Liang that "*you* not Canada [...] *you* China" she is telling Liang that no matter how Liang feels, her ancestry is Chinese, and therefore Liang must let go of her connection to Canada and accept the hardship that comes with being a Chinese girl. Through Sekky's perspective, we discover that after this incident Liang resists her grandmother increasingly more: "Liang always said, "We're in Canada, not Old China." "We in Chinatown," Grandmama said. "Things different here" (p.191). This shows how Liang grows in confidence with clarifying her feelings, but it also shows how even when Poh-Poh stops arguing that they are in China, she still wants Liang to acknowledge the separation they have from the rest of Canadian society due to being Chinese.

The irony of this behaviour from Poh-Poh is that were she to pay closer attention to her granddaughter, she would discover that of all her grandchildren, Liang is the one who has most successfully fused together her Chinese ethnicity with her Canadian nationality. As mentioned in the section regarding Indigenous Relationships, Liang has a close relationship with the older Chinese man Wong Suk, who she describes as "my one and only true friend since I was five" (p.38). He connects Liang to the older generation that Poh-Poh is part of, teaching her about her Chinese ancestry, whilst also encouraging her to embrace the parts of western culture that she likes. This assists her with both finding her place within Canadian society whilst still retaining a connection to her Chinese heritage. Even when she daydreams

about being the same age as Shirley Temple, and how "If we'd had a chance to meet, it was a fact she would have been my best friend", she is quick to add "Besides Wong Suk, I mean" (p.46-47); arguably, Shirley Temple and Wong Suk represent western culture and Chinese culture within this context, and Liang's commitment to having both in her life. Poh-Poh's enforcement of "the old ways" (p.14) prevents her from seeing her granddaughter for who she truly is, and by viewing Chinese nationality in such a purist, non-negotiable way she risks the family eventually leaving their ancestral heritage behind entirely. The Second World War is changing the lives of the rest of the family, but for Poh-Poh it is simply another thing that is drawing her family away from remaining China-centric.

It is fitting, therefore, that the children's father is only shown to stop resisting his children's increasingly Canadian perspectives after Poh-Poh has died. The children's mother and father try to honour Poh-Poh's death in the traditional Chinese ways, and Sekky notes that "My two older teenager brothers and my sister, Liang, were embarrassed by my parents' behaviour. What would white people in Vancouver think of us?" (p.143). Now that Poh-Poh has died, it is as though a façade has also lifted. The children are free to openly show how much they desire to belong within white Canadian society, as opposed to prioritising Chinese nationality above all. Similarly, their father accepts that his children feel that they are both Chinese *and* Canadian, with his main argument against Kiam joining the military being "You're not a citizen of Canada" but that "When the Dominion says we are Canadian, then we will all join up" (p.196). Even though Poh-Poh was adamant that her grandchildren must not see themselves as Canadian, her son recognises that for them to still feel a connection to their Chinese ancestry, he must not deny the connection they feel to their Canadian nationality. Poh-Poh represents an ideology which opposes that, and therefore her death is not only the death of the matriarch of the family; it also represents a death of the ideology she represents throughout *The Jade Peony*.

Conclusion

Throughout both *The Jade Peony* and *Obasan*, Choy and Kogawa shed light onto the East Asian diasporic experience during the Second World War. At the centre of both novels is a depiction of inter-generational relationships and trauma, with the younger generation consistently represented as having a different perspective on the combination of their East Asian ancestry and Canadian nationality. Whilst there are certainly obstacles in place due to Canadian legal policy, both Choy and Kogawa also make it clear that many instances of inner turmoil for the characters come from a place of complex familial dynamics.

The Second World War and its ramifications on the characters is a continuous presence throughout both novels; but it is firmly framed as a catalyst for the development that occurs within the characters. Within *Obasan*, Kogawa is telling a story of the experience of Japanese Canadian displacement. She depicts the history of Japanese moving down the Canadian social hierarchy due to Japan being an enemy of Canada during the Second World War, and acknowledges the traumatic and long lasting impact this had on the Japanese Canadian community. Meanwhile, in *The Jade Peony*, Choy depicts how during the Second World War the circumstances for Chinese Canadians were becoming more favourable – but also makes it clear that this is in part due to the Japanese Canadians now being viewed more negatively than them. This places the two novels in sharp contrast with one another; whilst *Obasan* indicates how the war catalysed worse circumstances for Japanese Canadians, *The Jade Peony* explores how the war catalysed better circumstances for Chinese Canadians. With this taken into consideration, it makes sense that a core struggle within *The Jade Peony* is the older generation of the family accepting that the children feel a sense of ownership of their Canadian nationality, whilst in *Obasan* Aunt Emily is shown to struggle with how

Naomi does not wish to discuss her Canadian nationality or Japanese ethnicity, preferring not to be perceived by Canadian society.

The representation in both novels of relationships between the East Asian diaspora and Indigenous Canadians is another telling aspect of this sharp contrast, whilst also a key decision by both authors to remind the audience that the concept of 'white Canada' is built on the colonisation of Indigenous Canadians. The East Asian diaspora consistently experienced oppression throughout Canadian history, but the Indigenous Canadians were a group oppressed from the beginning of the formation of modern-day Canada. Therefore, the two novels and their different approaches to depicting Indigenous culture and relationships also tells us a lot about the experiences of those specific minority ethnic groups. In *The Jade Peony*, Choy presents the children as assimilating more into wider Canadian society, and thus mentions of Indigenous people are to the children what they are to white Canadians too; stories. In Choy's novel, the mention of Indigenous culture is less to make the reader consider the parallels of oppression, and more to paint a broader picture of the Canadian society that the children are slowly finding their place in. Meanwhile, in *Obasan,* Kogawa presents an in-depth relationship between Naomi and Rough Lock. He saves Naomi's life and is shown to have a direct impact on the children; and not only that, but they feel safe and comfortable around him. There is a solidarity shown between the Indigenous Canadian community and the Japanese Canadian community through these interactions, reflecting their similar experiences as ethnic groups facing oppression within Canada. Were it not for the Second World War, Naomi and Rough Lock would never have met, and thus once again the war is used by Kogawa as a catalyst for her considering the layers to her Canadian nationality.

All these experiences culminate when we discuss the older generation within the families of both novels, and how they reflect the trauma and experiences of diasporic groups. In *The Jade Peony*, we clearly see how Poh-Poh is aware her grandchildren are increasingly

connecting with their Canadian nationality, and so feels the need to counter that by stressing the importance of their Chinese ancestry. Meanwhile, in *Obasan*, Emily feels anger at having her Canadian nationality ignored during the Second World War, so has dedicated the rest of her life to seeking justice for being seen as only Japanese as opposed to Japanese Canadian – and like Poh-Poh, she tries to enforce this perspective onto the younger generation, who is Naomi. With both characters, war has played a large role with regards to how they perceive their nationality; Poh-Poh has lived through China constantly being at war and so views her very existence of being Chinese as tied to being a survivor. She is proud of her ancestry, despite the suffering that being a girl in the Chinese culture has brought her, and she does not want that history to be lost as her grandchildren assimilate further into Canadian society. Emily, on the other hand, carries rage at her connection to Canadian nationality being dismissed when she was a young woman, simply due to Japan being war with Canada during the Second World War. Both Choy and Kogawa make it clear that war has played a large role in the outlook these older women have towards themselves, and to their connection with national identity.

The contrasting experiences within *Obasan* and *The Jade Peony* in many ways directly challenges the mentality of the East Asian diaspora being viewed as a monolith. The experiences of the Chinese Canadian community in *The Jade Peony* is notably different to the experiences of the Japanese Canadians even within the same novel, let alone that of the Japanese Canadians in *Obasan* which takes place during a later portion of the Second World War. Whilst Choy depicts characters such as Kazuo as capable of utilising white Canadian naivety by pretending to be Chinese, the fact that pretending to be Chinese protects him emphasises that there were notably different experiences during the Second World War – and therefore the assumption that the East Asian diaspora can be viewed as one homogenous group does not make sense. The ways in which Choy and Kogawa depict war as intersecting

with the characters and their feelings towards their Canadian nationality is central to both novels; the Second World War created marked shifts within Canadian society. By choosing to make the novels so prominently inter-generational, Choy and Kogawa use differing ages of the characters to emphasise the changes that were occurring with regards to attitudes towards national identity. Being true to Japanese or Chinese ancestry, and being true to Canadian nationality, is shown to mean different things to different characters; and in turn this highlights the complex questions that the Second World War catalysed amongst East Asian diasporic communities.

CONCLUSION

In his text *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Paul Fussell analyses how literature captures the First World War and debates the long-lasting cultural impact that war has had upon contemporary culture. He argues that "the dynamics and iconography of the Great War have proved crucial political, rhetorical, and artistic determinants on subsequent life. At the same time the war was relying on inherited myth, it was generating new myth, and that myth is part of the fiber of our own lives" (Fussell, 2013, p.17). From this perspective, fiction which features war as a core element of its narrative is continuing to build the "myth" surrounding war that is ingrained into our culture. Not only that, but the "myth" borne out of war from Fussell's perspective is a key element of the creation of contemporary culture itself; the two move in tandem with one another. Due to the fact that this thesis focuses on texts from settler-colony nations, thus their perspective on the wars of the twentieth century are within the postcolonial mode, it is relevant to add that "in the literary history of the postcolonial novel the emphasis has always been to combine the explication of historical and political contexts with explorations of the rhetorical dimensions of the novels in question" (Quayson, 2016, p.3). War is an inherently political event, and in all six of the novels explored, war is shown to have great impact upon the characters and their sense of self. National identity is a thread in the "fiber of our own lives" (Fussell, 2013, p.17) that Fussell speaks of, and it is one which is can both be strengthened and fractured by war.

Throughout this thesis, I have examined the intersection between war, nationhood, and identity, as represented in novels from Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. By focusing on the East Asian diasporic experience within these nations, I have explored the specific challenges faced from settling in Anglophone nations which are shown to still have varying degrees of connection to Britain. Indeed, "the British empire's influence upon the quarter of

the planet it occupied, and its gravitational influence upon the world outside it, has been profound. British imperialism is baked into our world" (Sanghera, 2024, p.7). Over the course of three centuries, British empire "shaped the world" (Sanghera, 2021, p.30) with nations and swathes of land across the planet claimed under British rule – including the three nations focused on in this thesis. For the East Asian diaspora, there was not only an assimilation to be made to a new nation. There was also an adjustment to the fact that adapting to Australian, New Zealand, and Canadian culture meant adopting a degree of British culture – shown through instances such as Stephen's decision to fly "a well-worn union Jack" (Kogawa, 1994, p.199) in *Obasan* after the Allies are confirmed to have won the Second World War. This presence of British history inherently made the layers of national identity more complex, as there was ancestral national identity, the national identity of the country migrated to, and the influence of Britain due to imperialism. The addition of war to this enhances a feeling of national identity; and throughout my examination of the texts, that heightened connection to national identity creates a sense of belonging for characters whilst also increasing complex emotions regarding how they are perceived within the nation they now live in. Many times, the identity externalised onto the characters is at odds with their personal sense of national identity.

Repeatedly during this thesis, I have emphasised how linguistics is shown to play a role in characters understanding their national identity, whilst also pointing out that the Anglophone nature of Australia, New Zealand, and Canada is due to British colonial rule. As mentioned in the Introduction of this thesis, the work of Ismail Talib has been central to my analysis of how national identity can be presented, particularly when one considers her argument that "literatures in English cannot sever themselves from their connection with British imperialism" (Talib, 2002, p.122). English being the official language of the three nations discussed in this thesis is directly due to settler colonialism, marginalising anybody

whose primary language is not English (including those of Indigenous ethnicity): thus, characters of East Asian heritage using English to symbolise their allegiance to Australia, New Zealand, or Canada is not only a sign of assimilation to the nation they live in, but also a symbol of the history of these nations in relation to British imperialism. All three chapters of this thesis grapple with that connection to varying extents, with the Australia and New Zealand chapters indicating a generational divide between perceiving Australian and New Zealand nationality as different from British nationality, and the Canada chapter indicating an ongoing loyalty to the British Monarch and continued use of symbols such as the union Jack. It is also worth mentioning, whilst acknowledging the influence of imperialism, how Flanagan portrays his Korean character as being fluent in Japanese. Whilst Talib's argument of linguistics and imperialism is related to the English language, this portrayal in *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* demonstrates how Talib's perspective can be utilised across empire more broadly. Japan's imperial rule over Korea is reiterated through Choi Sang-min's ability to communicate in Japanese.

Within the novels selected for analysis, all six authors examine how these layers of national identity affected the East Asian diaspora through their exploration of characters against the context of war. Questions of national identity, and with that the interrogation of where 'home' is, are modalities throughout all six novels discussed in this thesis: as is the sense that war has either disrupted or further reinforced these explorations and sense of belonging for the characters examined. The result of these explorations of the East Asian diasporic experience during the early-to-mid-twentieth century is six novels which illicit sympathy from the reader for the hardships the characters face, against the backdrop of the atrocities of war. Due to the nature of Australia, New Zealand, and Canada being settler colonies, the East Asian diaspora is shown to sit in a unique position within their societies; not only is there a majority white population formed of European settlers, there is also an

Indigenous community in each nation. Whilst there is shown to be overlap between the East Asian diaspora and the Indigenous communities (as both groups experienced legal discrimination within the settler societies) there are also marked differences between the groups due to the Indigenous community not being migrants to the land.

Whilst Kogawa's *Obasan*, Grace's *Chappy*, and Flanagan's *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* engage with the presence of Indigenous characters to a far greater degree, all six texts examined in this thesis show at the very least an awareness of the malignment of Indigenous people within the settler nations. The work of Indigenous theorists such as Tahu Kukutai have been utilised throughout this exploration, arguing that when discussing settler nations, Indigenous presence is often relegated to the edge of analysis. With the recognition of how central Indigenous people are to Australia, New Zealand and Canada's national story comes a deeper exploration of how both the East Asian diaspora and those of Indigenous heritage experienced systemic discrimination within these Anglophone nations; and out of that discrimination, a degree of kinship between the two groups was formed. However, just as there is overlap shown between the themes of the six novels (such as Indigenous relationships), it is also evident that each chapter of this thesis has a differing core conclusion, due to the central themes of the novels.

In the Australia chapter, Flanagan's *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* and Disher's *The Divine Wind* ultimately conclude that war is atrociously wasteful. *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* ends with Dorrigo's death, which Flanagan describes as "a man who no longer lived had finally fallen asleep" (Flanagan, 2015, p.435); ever since his experiences of the Second World War, Dorrigo has felt detached from his life, forever looking at the past instead. For the East Asian diaspora in *The Narrow Road to the Deep North,* the story is also one to be pitied. The Japanese characters spend the novel justifying their monstrous actions only to discover that their loyalty to the Japanese Empire and their Japanese nationality

means nothing when the war ends. They are forced into hiding, as warrants are put out for their arrest due to their actions on the railway. The death of the Korean character, Choi Sang-min, is framed by Flanagan as something we should feel distressed over; a young boy forced into the war due to Japanese imperialism, whose story ends with his hanging. War is shown by Flanagan to have ended life (both literally and metaphorically) for the characters in the prisoner of war camp, and there is no sense that a greater purpose was served – merely that it was appalling that the Second World War led them to fulfil the roles we see throughout the novel. In *The Divine Wind*, meanwhile, Disher makes it clear that Mitsy's deteriorating friendship with Jamie and complex relationship with Hart is a terrible by-product of the Second World War. Ruptures in relationships were caused which, were the war to have not occurred, would have remained unfractured. Mitsy's career as a nurse further emphasises how she was qualified to save lives; an ability desperately needed during wartime, yet because of her heritage these skills are laid to waste. As a girl who has spent her entire life living in Australia, and trained in a profession Australia needed the use of during wartime, Disher frames Mitsy's eventual internment as a shameful event; she may be of Japanese heritage, but she was raised in Australia. The dismissal of this by Australia authorities reiterates the theme felt throughout the Australia chapter of this thesis that war is inherently an atrocious waste.

The New Zealand chapter of this thesis has a central message of portraying how war can cause large shifts within society. Due to *As The Earth Turns Silver* by Alison Wong and *Chappy* by Patricia Grace covering both the First World War and the Second World War in their contextual settings, an image is created of how different New Zealand seems pre-First World War to post-Second World War. In *As The Earth Turns Silver*, there is still a strong feeling of connection to Britain in white New Zealander society. For the Chinese characters in the novel, there is no question of national identity; they identify with their Chinese nationality and feel more connected to the disruption in China than the war in Europe.

Meanwhile, in *Chappy*, the titular character Chappy is shown to have become integrated to a certain degree into New Zealand society. He views the nation as his home, and thus the politics of the Second World War forcing him to flee due to his Japanese heritage is framed as an appalling turn of events. The comparison of these two novels shows us how New Zealand culture has changed over time, and the extent to which the East Asian diaspora are presented as being integrated into New Zealand society in both novels emphasises that shift. The very fact that the Second World War forces Chappy to leave his home and family behind underlines this; he has had the ability to build a home with Oriwia in a way that Yung and Katherine cannot in *As The Earth Turns Silver*. Of course, it is relevant to acknowledge that Oriwia is an Indigenous character and Katherine is white, thus recognising the extent to which Indigenous and East Asian characters stood in solidarity with one another, but nonetheless, Chappy is portrayed as viewing New Zealand as his home in a way that Yung never does. Yung's lack of response to the First World War, in comparison with Chappy being aware of what he is set to lose due to the Second World War, emphasises the extent to which New Zealand society has changed. The East Asian diaspora are still marginalised, but to a lesser extent in *Chappy* than *As The Earth Turns Silver*.

Finally, the Canadian chapter of this thesis concludes that a core element of both Choy's *The Jade Peony* and Kogawa's *Obasan* surrounds the impact of trauma. The narrative of *Obasan* is focused around that of internal displacement for Japanese Canadians, and how this traumatic experience had a far-reaching effect on Naomi's life into adulthood. Canada's negative attitude towards anybody of Japanese ethnicity during the Second World War, and the legal discrimination enacted due to this, is shown to make Naomi feel a total disconnection from her national and ethnic identity. Whether she feels a closer connection to being Japanese or being Canadian is something she is uninterested in exploring; the trauma has made her almost numb. Cathy Caruth's work on trauma theory is vital to understanding

this trauma, as Naomi shows that psychological pain can take just as long – if not longer – to heal than physical pain. However, the work of more contemporary trauma theorists is also crucial to understanding the suffering Naomi experiences, underlining how her pain is directly connected to structural inequality and racism enacted during the Second World War. Choy's interaction with trauma is more subtle, but still a key element of *The Jade Peony*. Poh-Poh's childhood in China was one of great suffering, and her method of coping with that trauma is to take up a matriarchal role within the family, dictating the attitudes the children are meant to have towards their nationality. She is adamant that her grandchildren must identify as Chinese, not Canadian, and is shown to be angry when the children focus on the impact the Second World War could have on Europe and Canada, as opposed to discussing the impact of war on China. It is only when Poh-Poh dies that the children finally feel free to exert their sense of Canadian nationality, which is shown by Choy to have been strengthened due to the war. Choy also portrays trauma through the character of Meiying, who's death from an attempted abortion towards the end of the novel is directly connected to the exclusion Japanese Canadians faced. Her relationship with Kazuo, and pregnancy by him, is something that would not be tolerated within Canadian society (both that in white Canadian circles and in Chinatown); thus, her death can be viewed as symbolic of the wider damage that such exclusionary politics had on Canada as a whole. In many ways this brings us full circle back to the Australian chapter, which concludes that war is an atrocious waste. Meiying's death is an inevitability due to the trauma Japanese Canadians experience during the Second World War, and it is a horrific waste that a teenage girl dies because of it. Overall, both novels represent a sense of suffering that civilians are forced to endure during wartime and clarify that traumatic experiences continue to have impact long after the event.

When discussing the relationship between war and national identity, the current state of the world makes this exploration seem yet more pressing. At the time of writing this thesis,

the Russo-Ukraine war has been ongoing for over three years, the latest conflict within the Israel-Palestine war has been ongoing for almost three years, and US President Donald Trump has made multiple comments regarding the possibility of the US annexing Canada and Greenland. Therefore, analysing the way in which war can impact a sense of national identity is not simply a theoretical question; it is one of deep relevance to today's world. Throughout this thesis, I have raised Ismail Talib's study of nation theory intersecting with linguistics, and with the Russia-Ukraine war, we have an example from the current day of linguistics being used to justify war. Centuries of prior Russian occupation has created swathes of the country where the primary language spoken is Russian, not Ukrainian. Authors we place in the Russian literary canon, such as Mikhael Bulgakov (author of texts such as *The Master and Margerita*), originate from what international law classifies as Ukraine, not Russia. The repeated occupation and subjugation of Ukraine has created a narrative the current Russian government manipulate into justifying why Russia and Ukraine are not so different and should be part of the same nation. It is an ideology that is apparent within Russian literature; Dostoyevsky's work is celebrated globally, but his writing makes clear his support of Russian imperialism, he was pleased that "among these peoples of several million men the belief in the invincibility of the White Tsar and his sword is strengthening and has spread" (Dostoyevsky, 1972, p.1456). Meanwhile, in his novel *War and Peace*, fellow Russian author Tolstoy consistently disregards the national identity and perspectives of Polish people, and "modifies the actual history of Vilnius meeting Tsar Alexander I to further elevate the Russian army" (Sokolenko, 2023). We can extrapolate from these writers and their work how Russian imperialist ideology has been embedded into the Russian national identity, and how to this day "the imperialist mindset is alive and well in Russian culture" (Sokolenko, 2023). This ideology has roots from many centuries ago yet is still having a direct impact on the world today.

However, the continuing will of the Ukrainian people to resist Russian occupation reiterates how just as war can fragment national identity, it can strengthen national identity too. The connections between war, nationhood, and national identity are applicable to the present day, and acknowledgement of this emphasises how crucial the research conducted in this thesis is. For example, in both 2024 and 2025 US President Donald Trump made comments about Canada becoming the 51st US state, leading former Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to state that "he believes President Donald Trump might be serious about annexing his country" (Yousif, 07/02/2025). This antagonism from the US has led Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney to reiterate Canada's ties to Britian, stating that Canada is "the most European of non-European nations" (Carney, as cited in Goury-Laffont, 2025), whilst British Prime Minister Keir Starmer welcomed Carney to the UK in 2025 by stating how Britain and Canada are "Two sovereign allies, so much in common – a shared history, shared values, shared King" (Starmer, as cited in Gillies, 2025). Canada's sovereignty as an independent nation has been shown disrespect by the US, and the nation's response has been to reiterate its historical ties with Britain (and Europe more widely). Many decades have passed, yet the connection between Canada and Europe is being repeated to this day. It is fitting, therefore, that war being shown to strengthen Anglophone national identity for the East Asian diaspora is most prevalently shown in the Canada chapter of this thesis; particularly through how characters in *Obasan* are shown to refer to British symbolism to encapsulate Canadian national identity. Although Canada and the US are not at war, the threatening rhetoric from the US has notably strengthened the external projection of Canadian national identity and clarified how Canadians are resolute that their national identity is separate to American national identity. The increasingly violent nature of the world at present also makes it worthwhile to note that the TV adaptation of *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* was released in 2025, with director Justin Kurzel feeling that it was important to

explore “the complexities of the country’s national identity” (Giblin, 2025). Evidently, the period we are currently living through elicits reflections on the Great Wars of the twentieth century, and to be reminded of the lessons humanity was taught from those wars.

Whilst the six novels selected have differing focal points, collectively they provide us with a strong insight into the experiences of the East Asian diaspora in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada during the twentieth century. The question of national identity is central to all six novels, represented as a fluid concept which is highly individual depending on the character and their personal relationship between their ancestry and the nation they now live in. Amongst the differences in geographical and historical influences, one thing is made abundantly clear by all six of the authors in their texts. The relationship between national identity and war is firmly interlinked. For the East Asian diaspora in these novels, war (be it the First World War, the Second World War, or the Xinhai Revolution) is shown to be fundamental in clarifying the nation they feel the strongest allegiance to. As mentioned in passing when discussing the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, the presence of war can both strengthen and fragment a sense of national identity. Fragmentation of national identity is shown to occur in *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* for the Japanese and Korean characters, just as it is for Mitsy in *The Divine Wind* and Naomi in *Obasan*. However, a strengthening of national identity is also shown – with Yung in *As The Earth Turns Silver* feeling more decisively about his Chinese nationality, Chappy in *Chappy* doing all he can to return to New Zealand, and Sekky, Liang and Kiam becoming comfortable in the fact that they are Canadians with Chinese ethnicity in *The Jade Peony*. Without the presence of war, these clarifications would not occur for the characters. Thus, we can conclude that not only did war impact the relationship between nationhood and identity for the East Asian diaspora, it must also be clarified that war was a fundamental aspect of illuminating that connection.

APPENDIX A

Q&A with author Patricia Grace

I sent Patricia Grace some questions regarding her novel *Chappy* which she was kind enough to respond to. These are the questions I asked along with the answers she provided.

I read that the novel 'Chappy' was inspired by a Japanese shopkeeper and his Māori wife from Ruatoria. Was this area of history (East Asian diaspora within New Zealand) one you were familiar with before writing 'Chappy'? What was it in particular about this couple which drew you towards writing a novel inspired by them?

I was told about the Japanese shopkeeper and his wife by my husband who lived in Tuparoa, on the coast from Ruatoria. Ruatoria was his hometown. There were very few Japanese people living in Aotearoa at the time. I only knew of one – a girl I went to school with. The Japanese man was well integrated into the Māori community, and well liked and respected. I became curious as to how he came to be there. Knowing nothing of this man's story and what brought him here, I decided to devise my own characters and my own story.

Daniel has a very mixed background of Māori, Japanese, and Danish ethnicity, and has been raised in Switzerland. Did you feel that 'Chappy' was a novel where you were focused on discussing identity and nationhood?

I was not so much focused on identity and nationhood as I was on finding a character with a vested interest, who knew nothing about his grandfather except what had been told to him by his mother. Identity and nationhood would fall out of that.

Throughout the novel, we see examples of cultural intolerance shown. Was this you simply trying to write an honest portrayal of how events would have occurred at the time, or were you trying to make a point to the reader about cultural intolerance more generally? Is this

something you are concerned about within New Zealand?

I wanted to write as truthfully as possible. All of the instances of racial intolerance, in the book, have come from my own research – books, documents, letters. Or they were within my own experience during the war and post war era. I was not trying to make a point to readers, only to tell a story.

Somewhat famously, you pointedly did not attach a glossary of the Māori in your novel 'Potiki', and have done the same with 'Chappy'. As a reader, I love that you do this, as it utterly normalises the use of te reo Māori. Is that still your intention when writing Māori terms and words – so that it is not portrayed as 'foreign' or 'other'?

Not having a glossary to accompany 'Potiki' upset some readers at the time, but I was determined that the Māori language should not be treated as a foreign language in its own country – its *only* country. I have not used a glossary since.

Chappy finds a sense of home and belonging amongst Indigenous characters throughout the book. Do you feel that there was an implication in your writing that these characters had a shared experience and understanding due to all being ethnic minorities – even if they were from differing ethnic groups?

Yes, I do feel that the writing implies that the characters have a shared experience due to being ethnic minorities, but I also think that they may all have similar cultural and family values.

Sadly, anti-Asian racism has been on the rise in New Zealand in recent years; was the writing of 'Chappy' in part a response to this, or was the timing coincidental? (I feel the need to say that regardless of whether it was intentional or not, the novel's very existence is highly important given modern context).

If it is correct that anti-Asian racism is on the rise in Aotearoa I think the timing is coincidental, because I believe that anti-Asian racism has always been strongly present in this country. Perhaps it is less hidden, more overt than it used to be.

In 'Chappy', Chappy's identity shifts and changes – at first, being mistaken as Chinese is an insult, but after the Second World War breaks out, being mistaken as Chinese is something which keeps him safe. Is the fluidity of identity something that interests you as a writer?

Japanese people were little known in Aotearoa, and it was not unusual (because of uncaring ignorance) for them to be mistaken for Chinese people. My research showed me several examples of this.

Storytelling is a theme throughout the novel. Daniel is told the story of Chappy by Aki, which is then translated (and added to) by Oriwia. You have spoken before about how storytelling within fiction enables characters to bring new angles to the story – was this something you very intentionally did with Aki and Oriwia, and how they both told and added to Chappy's story? Was it important to you that the story reflected how close relationships form and are inhabited in different ways, shown through Aki and Oriwia's close relationships with Chappy?

Getting to understand Chappy culturally was a great challenge for me. In fact, I could not do it and didn't try. I was determined not to go with stereotypes. Chappy, as a protagonist is revelaed (where that is possible) through the POV of the narrators, but even to them he remains a 'mystery man' in a cultural sense.

Finally, I wanted to reflect upon how your work has given me insight as a British reader to Māori life and culture, and I am very grateful to you for that. Do you ever consider the impact your work has with regards to elevating Māori voices and stories, or do you still feel

keenly that you do not want to be thinking about who your audience is, preferring to simply write the stories you want to tell?

I very much want to tell my stories in the best way I can, without thinking of audience, which could restrict me as a writer. I am, however, most gratified and delighted when I read, or hear, comments such as you have made.

Thank you for your questions and for your interest in my work. I wish you the very best for your PhD studies.

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