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Creating Similar Hearts from *Slant-Eyed* Tales: A Few *Slant-Eyed* Words on Asian American Children’s Literature *

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Abstract. The books written for children have always been a controversial issue in literary studies. They are criticized by both critics and parents as well as teachers and curriculum designers in terms of their content and/or illustrations. A children’s book is chosen by a parent or a teacher according to her/his ideological points of view and socio-cultural background. If a book is written by an author from a minority group or it includes characters having different ethnic backgrounds, these points of view keep these parents and teachers at arm’s length. Also, children’s books are used to shape younger generations in favor of national politics and enculturation processes. That’s why there are too many stereotypes in these books: white male heroes, “ugly” monsters, poor, naïve and illiterate “others”. Specifically, in Asian American children’s literature, authors usually marginalize Asian American characters and describe them as “dead ringers”. However, after the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, more authors have started to describe Asian Americans from a universal perspective. By rejecting common stereotypes, they try to give some messages universal values such as friendship, cooperation, love of nature and living together as it is discussed in this article within the framework of descriptive analysis.

Keywords: Asian-American, children’s literature, minorities.

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Çekik Gözlü Masallardan Benzer Kalpler Yaratmak: Asyalı Amerikalı Çocuk Edebiyatı Üzerine Birkaç Çekik Gözlü Söz*

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Öz. Çocuklar için yazılan kitaplar her zaman edebi çalışmaların en tartışmalı alanlarından birisi olmuştur. Hem eleştirmen ve aileler tarafından hem de öğretmenler ve program hazırlayanlar tarafından içerikleri ve/veya resimleri bağlamında tenkit edilirler. Bir çocuk kitabı aile üyesi ya da öğretmenin ideolojik bakış açısı ve sosyo-kültürel özelliklerine göre seçilir. Eğer kitap azınlık grubundan bir yazar tarafından kaleme alınmış ya da karakterleri farklı etnik deneyimlere sahipse aileler ve öğretmenler seçimlerinde bakış açılarının ayrıca tesiri altına girerler. Buna ek olarak, çocuk kitapları genç kuşakları ulusal politikalar ve kültürlenme süreçlerinin lehine şekillendirmede önemlidir. Bu nedendir ki bu kitaplarda çok fazla basmakalıp görüşler kullanılır: beyaz erkek kahramanlar, “çirkin” canavarlar, yoksul, naif ve cahil “ötekiler”. Bilhassa, Asyalı Amerikalı çocuk edebiyatında, yazarlar genellikle Asyalı Amerikalıları tektipleştirerek ederek bu karakterleri birbirlerinin “tıpatıp aynısı” olarak çizerler. Bununla birlikte özellikle, 1960’lardaki Yurttaşlık Hakları Hareketi sırasında daha fazla sayıda Asyalı Amerikalıları evrensel bir perspektiften betimlemeye başlamışlardır. Özetle, bu makalede, betimleyici analiz yoluyla, yazıldıkları dönemlere damgalarını vuran iki Asyalı Amerikalı yazarın en bilinen eserlerinin basmakalıpları reddederek, arkadaşlık, dayanışma, doğa sevgisi ve birlikte yaşama gibi evrensel değerleri nasıl öne çıkardıkları ortaya konmaya çalışılacaktır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Asyalı Amerikalı, çocuk edebiyatı, azınlıklar.

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1. Introduction

When I was a child, children chanted, “Are you Chinese? Are you Japanese? Or are you just a mixed-up kid?” (using finger/eye gestures slanting up, down, and up-down obliquely). When I was a child, the teacher read, “Once upon a time there were five Chinese brothers and they all looked exactly alike” (Bishop and Wiese, 1938). Cautiously the pairs of eyes stole a quick glance back. I, the child, looked down to the floor. The teacher turned the book our way: bilious yellow skin, slanted slit eyes. Not only were the brothers look-alikes, but so were all the other characters! Quickly again all eyes flashed back at me. When I was a child, I sank into my seat. I, the teacher, talk with my students on their choice of books. Bruce brings *The Five Chinese Brothers*. “Tell me about the story, Bruce.” “Well, it’s about these five Chinese brothers. You know, kinda like you_” “What do you mean, 'kinda like me?’” “Well, your family is kinda Chinese or Japanese or something.” Bruce pauses and stares at me and then again at his book. He quickly adds, “But maybe you’re different. Aren’t your eyes supposed to slant up or down?” I, the teacher, sit up. We have work to do. (Aoki, 1981, p. 382-383)

Asian American children’s literature covers picture books, long stories, and novels of multicultural kids, and it consists of the books written by the Asian American authors depicting the themes and characters of this ethnic group. In the early 20th century, there were frequently stereotypical characters and plots in this kind of works written by mostly WASP (white, Anglo-Saxon, protestant) authors. Nevertheless, Asian American children’s stories started to represent the complicated experiences of this ethnic group and eliminate Asian American stereotypes especially after 1980s. Educators are an important part of this representation by using Asian American children’s “life histories” in their curriculum (Yau and Jiménez, 2003, p.197). In the 20th century when children’s literature was an important branch of literature, there was a noticeable increase in the printing of children’s books by Asians and Asian Americans, especially after the 1980s (Reimar, 1992, p. 15). The contribution of Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s to this increase was mostly oriented towards the development of multicultural children’s literature; however, the works that had reflected Asian American themes, characters, and culture for decades were generally written by the authors who were a stranger to this culture. Mostly, both the stories and the pictures in books are negative representations, and they do not reflect Asian American identity and experience properly. Children’s stories usually depict Asian Americans physically the same or very similar. Besides, the stories cast Asian Americans over-polite and obedient (Aoki, 1981, p. 383). Also, the characters’ interest in martial arts is represented exaggeratedly. For example, *Five Chinese Brothers* written by Claire Bishop and illustrated by Kurt Wiese in 1938, is one of the best of its kind, and tells the story of these brothers’ commitment to one another after one of them is condemned to death. Although it is still a popular story today, the experts in multicultural children’s literature point out some parts in the story. To illustrate, the brothers are physically the same in the illustrations, and this gives the reader kids the message that people belonging to different ethnic groups are the same. In terms of educational psychology

and child development, children's books provide children with a location where they get an idea about the world around (Watson, 1928; Slavin (2006); which can prejudice the kids reading *Five Chinese Brothers* against physical appearance of the Chinese.

It is still a controversial issue to represent Asian Americans in modern children's literature, and there is not enough variety of correct/quality books on this. Many teachers in the USA use the book *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson* by Bette Bao Lord published in 1984 in their classes. Even though the book has received positive criticism literarily, Asian American non-governmental organizations come up against the representation of especially the main character Shirley Temple Wong as in love with being obsessively and overanxiously assimilated into American culture by forgetting her own Chinese culture. The fact that this situation is specifically highlighted, although it is not completely wrong, and Chinese American experience is oversimplified causes Asian American or the other reader kids to develop a biased point of view towards ethnic groups. Herein, the article called "Beyond Chopsticks and Dragons: Selecting Asian-American Literature for Children" (1992) written by Valerie Ooka Pang, et al., raises concerns over the misrepresentation of Chinese American immigrants who are observed to try to balance between the two cultures and tend to melt both cultures in their own identity in the abovementioned book. Despite these, there is a relative progress in the number of more honest and correct representations. While many authors who are not Asian American continue to reflect Asian Americans in their works, there has been a gradual increase in the number of children's stories by Asian American authors to reflect their own group's cultural experience. In these books, culturally pluralist themes are discussed in general and democratic way (Ching, 2005, p. 130), and Asian Americans are represented positively. The events told are historically correct, and the illustrations are authentic. Not all the characters are reflected to share the same background, to come from the same house, and to go through the same experiences. In addition, according to the teachers in children's literature, it is important in terms of American identity that the books about Asian Americans take place in America (Yau and Jiménez, 2003, p. 204). According to the researches, many American students still recognize Asian Americans as strangers; and therefore, it is highlighted that American educators' focusing on the long history of Asian Americans in the United States could be useful for all the students (Hanson and Gilbert, 2012; Ng, Lee and Pak, 2007; Ching, 2005; Yau and Jiménez, 2003). That's why a lot of school curricula today include books which represent ethnic diversity such as *It's not like it's a secret* by Misa Sugiura (2017), *Shaking Things Up: 14 Young Women Who Changed the World* written by Susan Hood and illustrated by Selina Alko, Sophie Blackall, Lisa Brown, Hadley Hooper, Emily Winfield Martin, Oge Mora, Julie Morstad, Sara Palacios, LeUyen Pham, Erin K. Robinson, Isabel Roxas, Shadra Strickland, and Melisa Sweet (2018), *A Different Pond* written by Bao Phi and illustrated by Thi Bui (2017), *Fred Korematsu Speaks Up* by Laura Atkins and Stan Yogi (2017), and *Front Desk* by Kelly Yang (2018). Also, Katharine Capshaw Smith states in her article called "Introduction: The Landscape of Ethnic American Children's Literature" that children's

literature is an important tool to redefine the relationship between the readers and ethnic and national identities (2002, p. 3-8).

Smith emphasizes that selecting from ethnic children's literature has a significant place in terms of fictionalizing ethnic identity ideologically and politically. At this point, orienting children who are "innocent" about historical consciousness as readers reveals the power of book selection in creating social perception. Thus, it is obvious that adult and children's literature have thematic similarities about identity, assimilation, nationalism and cultural pluralism, and what kind of books children are read/suggested by the families/teachers is at the key point of creating kids' future ideological ideas. Maybe the reason why oral literature and storytelling have the same universal importance lies here: creating traditions via language (2002, p. 3-8). Therefore, unlike the marginalizing and standardizing stories depicting Asian Americans stereotypically, the stories to be examined in this article *Umbrella* by Taro Yoshima and *Dragonwings* by Laurence Yep are among the most important stories in children's literature contributing to kids' education by telling the richness of being bi-cultural, building a bridge between cultures when covering universal themes and emphasizing human rights.

As a result, the fundamental concern of this article is to examine how Asian American children's books contribute to the transformation of children's literature in a universal and diverse way by leaving prejudice, stereotypes, and alienation behind them. To succeed it, descriptive method is to be used for it focuses on the literary context analysis. The data consist of children's story and novel and are retrieved from internet research. There are a good many sources in ethnic American literature, yet in terms of Asian-American literature, specifically Yoshima and Yep are the two prominent literary figures that were very influential in their era. They have influenced not only the future children's book writers in the States but contributed to American curricula to be reevaluated and revised much more than their contemporaries have done. That's why the most published and well-known books written by them were chosen to be examined. Although there is a vast quantity of research on Asian American children's literature as of 21st century (Hanson and Gilbert, 2012; Ng, Lee and Pak, 2007;; Ching, 2005; Yau and Jiménez, 2003; Pang, et al., 1992, Reimar, 1992; Aoki, 1981) there is not a published literature on it in Turkey; hence, it is expected to introduce some pieces of Asian American children's literature to audience in Turkey to inspire them to do comparative research by deciphering transcultural and universal themes in children's literature.

2. Taro Yashima and *Umbrella*

To start with, Taro Yashima is an author in children's literature who writes about Asian Americans in a realistic and credible way. Although his book *Umbrella* was published in 1958, it has a style that is taken as an example by children's literature authors of today. The story that appeals to kids is about a girl named Momo, which means peach in Japanese. Momo waits in hope for the rain to take the red umbrella and wear the red boots given by her parents on her birthday. The whole story is set upon Momo's waiting in order to use her presents. This

excitement and experience is a common experience that can be shared by all the kids, not only Japanese American one; and therefore, a universal theme is covered in the story. Within this context, all the readers can put themselves in Momo's place, even though they are not Asian American, in the story with a culturally pluralist theme. The readers never encounter marginalizing elements throughout the story. On the contrary, the rain is turned into a mutual adventure around renewal and gaining new experiences. As the illustrations in the story are examined, it is noticed that the family is in harmony with the American way of life, and also not rejecting Japanese culture. The readers never confront model minority discourse in an illustration or sentence. The mother's words are not different from non-Japanese Americans: "You know you can enjoy the sunshine / better without the umbrella. / Let's keep it for a rainy day . . ." (Yashima, 1958, p. 13) or " . . . The wind might blow your umbrella away. / Let's keep it for a rainy day." (14). There was quite a conservative and prejudiced point of view in children's literature in the period of time when Yashima wrote the story (1950s), which stood out as an exception that would affect the next generations. As Elaine M. Aiko states in her article called "Are You Chinese? Are You Japanese? Or Are You Just a Mixed-up Kid? Using Asian American Children's Literature", although the Asian Americans who settled in America reached the tenth generation, 66 books (this number is very interesting when you think that 3000 children's books are sold in America every year) published between 1945-1975 (the number of children's books reached its peak in the 1970s), at least one of the main characters of which was Asian American, were analyzed as part of Asian American Children's Books Project within Interracial Council of Children's Books founded in 1976 by Asian American book critics. According to the report published, it was revealed that Asian Americans were represented as racist, sexist and elitist in these books, apart from few exception (Aiko, 1981, p. 28). As exemplified in the quotation in the introduction by Bruce, these misrepresentations contribute to the emergence of prejudice against ethnic groups and the marginalization of these groups by kids. Since children are egocentric in the early development process, they give meaning to concepts by associating them to themselves. If the examples they are unfamiliar with are not presented positively, they tend to marginalize the things they find difficult to make sense of (Pang, et al., 1992, p.220). For this reason, how the stories are fictionalized is important in literature. The readers are in a secondary touch with their surroundings, and they perceive this touch through symbols by reading or listening. This secondary touch affects individuals' perception of their direct relationship with their surroundings, which is called primary touch. Both touches are important to impact the experiences and attitudes of individuals. That is why choosing works that can help sympathize with "the other" groups is necessary. At this point, Momo and her dream of using the umbrella exemplify sympathy very well. Taro Yoshima creates a dream where little readers jump into the story immediately and identify themselves with Momo instead of giving a lesson didactically. Hence, the little readers can understand the others who are unlike them. Here, universalizing the themes is significant: "Does she remember or not, / it was not only the first day in her life / that she used her

umbrella, / it was also the first day in her life / that she walked alone, / without holding either / her mother's or her father's hand" (Yashima, 1958, p. 23). This is an important step in childhood which can be experienced by all the kids, and it cannot be explained through ethnic groups or "racial" features. As a consequence, Yashima is seen to have taken into consideration most of the rules determined by Asian American Children's Books Project Committee while writing/choosing a children's book¹: *Umbrella* depicts the realities and ways of life properly, there are illustrations and plot free of stereotypical judgments, he does not depict Momo's family in an idealized universe where they are isolated and far from historical reality: the sentences Momo's parents form can be formed by ordinary parents, characters are not represented in a "model minority" or "super minority" pattern, the changing status of women is also represented: the mother is very modern, and she has equal authority with the father. Furthermore, there are illustrations that reflect the physical variety of Asian Americans. The mother, the father, and Momo are not exactly alike.

3. Laurence Yep and *Dragonwings*

Secondly, Laurence Yep, the most productive Chinese American children's books writer and the winner of Laura Ingalls Wilder Award because of his contribution to children's literature, won the Newbery Award which is given to children's literature writers every year in the USA with his books *Dragonwings* and *Dragon's Gate*. *Dragonwings*, which was published in 1975, tells the fiction story of Fung Joe Guey who is the first Chinese American aviator. Yep, who expresses the challenging life of Chinese Americans living in San Francisco during 1900s, and the prejudice they encounter in a realistic way, exemplifies how the individuals starting a new life blend their culture with the new one. A teenager Moon Shadow leaves his mother behind in China and comes to his father Windrider living in Golden Mountain. They start the business of making airplanes together, which is his father's dream. The difficulties Chinese Americans face are stressed within this plot conspicuously. Like in *Umbrella* by Taro Yashima, Laurence Yen has created a plot which can be read by both parents and elementary school teachers in his work within the context of the book selection criteria mentioned in the article called Beyond Chopsticks and Dragons: Selecting Asian-American Literature for Children written by Valerie Ooka Pang, Carolyn Colvin, MyLuong Tran and Robertta H. Barba. Describing the characters in a positive way, the story's taking place within the borders of the USA, using authentic illustrations, a strong fiction and characterization, and historical accuracy are the dominant

¹ Rules are as follows: "(1) A children's book about Asian Americans should reflect the realities and way of life of an Asian American people. (2) A children's book about Asian American should transcend stereotypes. (3) A children's book about Asian Americans should seek to rectify historical distortions and omissions. (4) A children's book about Asian Americans should avoid the "model" minority and "super" minority syndromes. (5) A children's book about Asian Americans should reflect an awareness of the changing status of women in society. (6) A children's book about Asian Americans should contain art and photos which accurately reflect the racial diversity of Asian Americans. (Bulletin, 1976, p. 4)

elements in the story around a culturally pluralistic theme (everybody's dream of making and getting on a plane in that period). At this point, Yep draws a sensitive, positive and verisimilar portrait. Using these criteria is important as part of progressive education and social reconstructionism, as well. According to John Dewey (1916), George Counts (1932) and Theodore Brameld (1971), in pragmatism, learning happens when individuals transfer what they have learned to other situations. The things that can be transferred into life, used in life make sense, and it is important for individuals to think critically about the difficulties they encounter and to come up with a sensible solution. On the story basis, the relationship between the father and son gains meaning when it grows with the right decisions at the right time. In other words, it can be thought that as the father improves himself about making aircraft and reflect what he has learned on his life on a small scale, he can affect the others (especially his son) on a large scale. Within this context, education is considered important or correct *if it makes a difference in everyday life*. Therefore, children need to be able to adopt various perspectives on social conflicts in order to develop their critical thinking skills. This can help them understand human rights and ethnic minority rights. A kid who reads *Dragonwings* can gain sympathy through the representations of cultural diversity and build up immunity to the awareness of social inequalities. For instance, cultural diversity in the book helps end the problem of assimilation. Since the characters of father and son depicted in the story are universal like Momo and her mother, readers of different cultural background can easily identify themselves with them. As in *Umbrella*, these characters are depicted within the borders of the USA because it is significant to underline that these people who have been living in the USA as the tenth-generation are not strangers or "new immigrants" but the citizens of the USA like the others. Even though their physical characteristics are different, they are the individuals with the same constitutional rights as the other citizens. It can be inferred from these representations that Asian Americans are not people walking around in traditional clothes, they are not shy or obedient but proud and self-expressive individuals like the others. As mentioned in the book, they are against marginalization. According to the company owner a stranger should be quiet, cunning, and most importantly invisible (Yep, 2001, p. 51). Windrider stands against these three labels and raises his son based on this. At this point, Yep draws a historically realistic picture, not an idealized painting. It is underlined that biculturalism is not alienation but richness, both cultures might have pros and cons, the most important things are experience and friendship. Hence, developing wrong attitudes and prejudice can be prevented: "'Trust to your hands and do not think about what you are doing.' The Dragon King added, 'And do not fear. No harm will come to you if you fail. I called you here as my old friend'" (Yep, 2001, p. 43). In conclusion, for children, the existence of common traits between kids from different ethnic groups and kids in the dominant culture facilitates building bridges between individuals through acceptance of diversity. Here, this work reflects the Asian American society correctly by being a cultural mirror. To sum up, children can develop the concepts of hope, equality, justice and courage accompanied by universal themes.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Consequently, Asian American children's literature contributes a great deal to the development of children's storytelling. The writers struggle against the marginalization and alienation of Asian Americans via the stereotypical representation and use of a prejudiced style. The writers like Taro Yashima and Laurence Yep reverse the negative dominant discourse on ethnic groups in the society by making a contribution through their works to raising prejudice-kids who have just started to know their surroundings, and they build bridges between cultures through their stories. These are the works that help Elaine M. Aoki quoted in the introduction to cover the distance she plans as a teacher. Both writers and educators should work on reflecting what the real is. As Aoki writes

[w]e can begin to develop and use criteria for evaluating existing books and using those books in proper perspective. Educators, authors, illustrators, and publishers should also use those criteria in developing and using new books. An initial set of guidelines has been developed by the Asian American Children's Book Project Committee (1976, no. 2 & 3, p. 4). Although it speaks only of Asian Americans, its principles apply to literature about the members of any racial or cultural group who have migrated to another region. The basic guidelines state that a children's book about Asian Americans (1) should reflect the realities and way of life of that group, (2) should transcend stereotypes, (3) should seek to rectify historical distortions and omissions, (4) should avoid making that group appear to be a "model" minority or "super" minority, (5) should reflect an awareness of the changing status of women in society, and (6) should contain art and photos which accurately reflect the racial diversity of Asian Americans.

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In evaluating and using books, we must consider too that each book is an experience or viewpoint of a person. It is realistic from the author's perspective and it is his/her right to share that view. It is the responsibility of publishers and educators to present a multitude of viewpoints of Asian American experiences to be shared by Asian American and non Asian American children alike. (1981, p. 385-385)

To sum up, with the help of criteria mentioned above, these tales created by the *slant-eyed* people may take the words beyond the physical discrimination, which is constantly highlighted by the dominant system, with the language they use, universal themes they cover and illustrations they include. Their purpose is to knead hearts that beat similarly to each other.

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Geniş Özet

Asyalı Amerikalı çocuk edebiyatı, çok kültürlü çocukların resimli kitapları, uzun hikâyeleri ve romanlarını kapsar ve Asyalı Amerikalı temalar ve karakterler ekseninde bu etnik gruba dâhil olan yazarlar tarafından kaleme alınan kitaplardan oluşur. Yirminci yüzyılın erken dönemlerinde daha çok WASP yazarlar tarafından kaleme alınan bu tür eserlerde sıklıkla basmakalıp karakterler ve olay örgüleri kurulurken özellikle 1980'lerden sonra Asyalı Amerikalı çocuk hikâyeleri bu etnik grubun karmaşık tecrübelerini resmetmeye ve Asyalı Amerikalı basmakalıplarını bertaraf etmeye başlamıştır. Çocuk edebiyatının, yazının önemli bir kolu olduğu yirminci yüzyılda Asyalı ve Asyalı Amerikalıların dâhil olduğu çocuk kitaplarının yayınlarında gözle görülür bir artış olmuştur. Bu artışta 1960'lardaki Sivil Haklar Hareketi'nin katkısı, daha büyük oranda çok kültürlü bir çocuk edebiyatının gelişmesi yönündedir; ancak on yıllarca Asyalı Amerikalı temaları, karakterleri ve kültürünü yansıtan eserler genelde kültüre yabancı yazarlar tarafından kaleme alınmışlardır. Çoğu zaman hem hikâyeler hem de kitapların içerisindeki resimler olumsuz temsillerdir ve Asyalı Amerikalı kimliğini ve deneyimini dürüst ve doğru bir şekilde yansıtmazlar. Çocukların hikâyeleri genellikle Asyalı Amerikalıları dış görünüş olarak aynı ya da çok benzer bir şekilde resmederler. Ayrıca hikâyelerde Asyalı Amerikalılara aşırı kibar ve itaatkâr roller verilir. Bunun dışında karakterlerin dövüş sanatlarına olan ilgisi de abartılı bir şekilde temsil edilir. Örneğin, 1938'de Claire Bishop tarafından yazılıp Kurt Wiese tarafından çizilen ve türün klasiklerinden sayılan *Beş Çinli Birader*'de (*Five Chinese Brothers*) içlerinden bir tanesinin idama mahkûm edilmesinden sonra kardeşlerin birbirlerine olan bağlılıkları anlatılır. Günümüzde hala oldukça popüler bir hikâye olmasına rağmen çok kültürlü çocuk edebiyatı uzmanları metnin içerisindeki bazı noktalara işaret eder. Örneğin, resimlerde tüm kardeşler fiziksel olarak birbirlerinin aynıdır; bu durum okuyucu çocuklara, farklı etnik grup üyelerinin birbirinin aynısı olduğu mesajını verir. Eğitim psikolojisi ve çocuk gelişimi alanında yapılan araştırmalara göre çocuk kitapları, çocuklara çevrelerindeki dünyaya dair fikir edindikleri önemli bir mekân sağlar ve bu nedenle *Beş Çinli Birader*'i okuyan çocuklara Çinlilerin dış görünüşüyle ilgili kimi önyargılara sahip olabileceği gibi olumsuz mesajlar aşılayabilir.

Asyalı Amerikalıların çağdaş çocuk edebiyatında daha doğru bir şekilde temsili hala tartışmalı bir konudur ve doğru/nitelikli bir çeşitlilikte kitap yayını bol değildir. ABD'deki okullarda pek çok öğretmen Bette Bao Lord'un 1984 yılında yayınladığı *Domuz Yılı ve Jackie Robinson* (*In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson*) kitabını sınıflarında kullanırlar. Kitap edebi olarak olumlu eleştiriler almasına rağmen Asyalı

Amerikalı sivil toplum örgütleri özellikle ana karakter Shirley Temple Wong'un oldukça takıntılı ve aşırı endişeli bir şekilde ve Amerikan kültürüne Çinli öz kültürünü unutmak isteyecek kadar asimile olma sevdalısı olarak temsil edilmesine karşı çıkarlar. Bu durumun bir noktada yanlış olmamasına rağmen özellikle altının çizilerek anlatılması ve Çinli Amerikalı deneyiminin basite indirgenmesi, ister Asyalı Amerikalı ister diğer okuyucu çocuklarda olsun etnik gruplara karşı yanlış bir bakışın gelişmesine yol açar. Bu noktada Valerie Ooka Pang, Carolyn Colvin, MyLuong Tran ve Robertta H. Barba'nın kaleme aldıkları "Beyond Chopsticks and Dragons: Selecting Asian-American Literature for Children" adlı makalede, adı geçen bu eleştirilenler kitabın, genelde iki kültür arasında denge kurmaya çalışan ve her iki kültürü de kimliğinde eritme eğiliminde olduğu gözlenen günümüz Çinli Amerikalı göçmenleri doğru bir şekilde yansıtmadığını dile getirirler. Tüm bunlara rağmen daha dürüst ve doğru temsillerin sayılarında da görece bir ilerleme mevcuttur. Asyalı Amerikalı olmayan pek çok yazar Asyalı Amerikalıları eserlerinde yansıtmaya devam ederken, giderek artan bir şekilde Asyalı Amerikalı yazarlar da kendi gruplarının kültürel deneyimlerini temsil eden çocuk hikâyeleri kaleme almaya başlamışlardır. Bu kitaplarda genellikle kültürel olarak çoğulcu temalar işlenir ve Asyalı Amerikalılar olumlu bir şekilde tasvir edilir. Anlatılan olaylar tarihsel olarak doğru, çizilen resimler ise otantiktir. Karakterlerin hepsi sanki aynı geçmişe sahip, aynı evlerden gelmiş ve aynı deneyimleri yaşamış gibi yansıtılmazlar. Bunun dışında çocuk edebiyatı eğitmenlerine göre Asyalı Amerikalılarla ilgili kitapların Amerikan kimliği bağlamında Amerika'da geçmesi de önemlidir. Yapılan araştırmalara göre pek çok Amerikalı öğrenci Asyalı Amerikalıları hala yabancı olarak görmektedir ve bu yüzden Amerikalı eğitmenler tarafından Birleşik Devletler'deki Asyalı Amerikalıların uzun tarihine odaklanılmasının tüm öğrenciler için yararlı olacağı vurgulanır. Bunun dışında Katharine Capshaw Smith, "Introduction: The Landscape of Ethnic American Children's Literature" adlı makalesinde, okuyucuların etnik ve ulusal kimliklerle ilişkisini yeniden tanımlamak için çocuk edebiyatının önemli bir araç olduğunu belirtir. Etnik çocuk edebiyatı örneklerinin seçiminin ideolojik ve politik paradigmada ve etnik kimliğin kurgulanması açısından okulda, evde ya da kütüphanede kurumsallaşmasında önemli bir yeri olduğunu vurgular. Bu noktada tarihsel bilinç konusunda "masum" olan çocuk okuyucuların nasıl yönlendirileceği kitap seçimlerinin toplumsal algı yaratmadaki gücünü ortaya koyar. Buradan hareketle yetişkin ve çocuk edebiyatının kimlik, asimilasyon, milliyetçilik ve kültürel çoğulculuk konularında ortak tematik benzerlikleri olduğu açıktır ve aileler/öğretmenler tarafından ne tür kitapların okutulduğu/tavsiye edildiği çocuk

okuyucuların gelecekteki ideolojik fikirlerini oluşturmada kilit noktadadır. Sözlü edebiyatın ve hikâye anlatıcılığının tüm dünyada evrensel bağlamda öneminin aynı olmasının sırrı belki de bunda yatar: geleneğin dille oluşturulması (3-8). Buradan hareketle bu incelemede örnekleneceği üzere Taro Yashima'nın *Şemsiye* ve Laurence Yep'in *Ejderha Kanatları* adlı hikâyeleri Asyalı Amerikalıları basmakalıplarla gösteren çocuk edebiyatı örneklerinin aksine ötekileştirme ve model azınlık tek tipleştirmelerinden uzakta, iki kültürlü olmanın zenginliğini anlatarak, evrensel temaları işleyip kültürler arası köprü kurarak ve insan haklarının altını çizerek çocuk okuyucuların eğitime katkı sağlayan eserler olarak çocuk edebiyatının önemli öyküleri arasındadır.

Alkan, E. (2020). Creating similar hearts from slant-eyed tales: A few slant-eyed words on Asian American children's literature. *Çocuk, Edebiyat ve Dil Eğitimi Dergisi*, 3 (1), 26-38.