Lapis Lazuli: An International Literary Journal *(ISSN 2249-4529)*
Vol. 15, No. 1, SPRING, 2025.

Published:22/06/2025

Dissonant echoes: Kitamura's personal awakening amidst Political Shadows in Philip Kan Gotanda's *Day Standing on Its Head*

Auritra Munshi

Assistant Professor,Department of English, Raiganj University, Uttar Dinajpur, India
E-mail address: auritram@gmail.com

Abstract

The present paper aims to explore Philip Kan Gotanda's hero Kitamura's, in *Day Standing on Its Head* (1994), inclination to evoke the Asian American movement of the 1960s by composing a paper on it, which problematizes his identity. He straddles between ethnic and mainstream cultures. His self has been splintered into two halves—Id and Ego. Kitamura's ego is constructed by the core American culture, where he holds social prestige as a law professor, and he seeks to retain it by adhering to the symbolic order. On the other hand, the lack he faces is the absence of the student movement in which he was a participant. This leads him to return to his unconscious state or Id, where he wants to be part of it and also tries to repress it while negotiating with mainstream American culture. However, an allegation by Sam from his own Asian American community, regarding Kitamura's adoption of a middle-class American persona, makes him enervated, distanced from his life, and yields a paranoid state. The present paper adhering to psychoanalytic theory aims to highlight the internal struggle Kitamura, the protagonist of the play, confronts on a daily basis, demonstrates how the public sphere encroaches upon his private space, and thus debilitates his personality. Nevertheless, the play ends with a regaining of his ability, entailing a bit of optimism.

Keywords:
Asian American movement; model minority; psychoanalysis; alienation; dis/ability

Asian American literature has been present since the 1830s, following the advent of the first immigrants of Asian descents to the United States of America. Before this time, their work had received minimal scholarly or critical attention. The history of Asian immigration to America extends over 200 years, yet terms like "Asian American" and "Asian American theatre" only emerged in the late 1960s. Former President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt, on 12 October 1915, while addressing the Knights of Columbus, said, “When I refer to hyphenated Americans, I do not refer to naturalized Americans…a hyphenated American is not an American at all. The only man who is a good American is the man who is an American and nothing else” (“Theodore Roosevelt: Quotes, Sayings, and Aphorisms”). Hence, driven by the American Dream, multiple ethnic communities that came to the United States to establish their existence have had to confront difficulties due to their hyphenated identities. The demand from the United States, to put it in the words of Walt Whitman, that America is “a nation of nations,” appears to be very conditional, and their attitude sounds domineering. While Black Americans have endured decades of inhumane treatment as a visible minority, newly arrived migrants from different countries, who are often educated and hardworking, are labeled as the “model minority.” Their struggle to be recognized as Americans while maintaining their ethno-cultural heritage complicates their identity formation. However, this collision stems not only from their host country but also from their own communities. Thus, the Asian American movement of the late 1960s was a movement to reinstate one’s own ethno-cultural heritage within the diverse American culture.The term "Asian American" was introduced by the renowned Japanese American historian Yuji Ichioka during a 1968 meeting in Berkeley, as he sought to replace the term "oriental" due to its negative connotations and stereotypes. Esther Lee further clarifies that “this racial category encompasses Americans with family origins in Asia and the Pacific Islands, hence the use of "Asian Pacific Americans" to describe these individuals” (7). Asian Americans represent a significant

ethnic group with a bold existence in various socio-politico-cultural spheres in the U.S. Sau Wong believes, since its establishment in the late 1960s as part of the ethnic studies movement, Asian American literary studies have increasingly gained institutional recognition across the country. Despite this, Asian American authors have often been overlooked compared to other racially diverse writers, as mainstream American audiences tend to view minority individuals as representatives of their ethnic communities. They use literature to express their identities and cultures. Asian Americans have sought recognition within the American literary scene, arguing that "Asian American literature should be seen as an integral part of American literature, rather than being relegated to a marginalized or isolated status" (Danico & Ng, 2004, p. 66).

Asian stories have had a notable impact on American theater, particularly through the work of Philip Kan Gotanda. His contributions have provided Asian American theater performers with many significant opportunities. Gotanda is a prominent figure in the history of Asian American theater, recognized as a Sansei Japanese American playwright, producer, director, and actor. His plays often delve into themes of internalized racism within American-born Japanese communities, exploring the intersections of gender, ethnicity, culture, and generational conflicts. Gotanda's work challenges stereotypes and addresses issues of racism and cross-cultural identity, advancing the goals of anti-racist theater by depicting the real-life struggles and successes of the Asian American community. His plays celebrate Asian culture while also emphasizing the challenges and unity within the Asian American experience. According to Esther K. Lee (2002), Gotanda's audience grew as he embraced a naturalistic and narrative style in his writing. Although early ethnic theater often adhered to social realism, Gotanda intentionally moved away from this trend with experimental works. In the early 1980s, he collaborated with Eric Hayashi, David Henry Hwang, Lydia Tanji, and Michael Sasaki in San Francisco to create the mythological dream drama *The Dream of Kitamura*.

In "From Ethnic to Mainstream Theatre," Ann Marie Dunbar contends that Philip Kan Gotanda's approach to the Asian American or model minority issue

"witnesses his movement away from the limitations of a hyphenated identity, from works that can be read primarily as Asian American to those with more universal themes not restricted by an ethnic tag" (Dunbar 15). Gotanda's attitude is, in fact, less a refutation of ethnicity and more an engagement with mainstream American society. As an Asian American playwright, Gotanda demonstrates in *Day Standing on Its Head* (1994) the in-betweenness of Asian American identity, making it equally engaging to non-Asians in the U.S. The play skillfully navigates being both particular and general. Moreover, Philip Kan Gotanda attempts to prove his stature as an universal playwright by stretching him out from the cocoon of Asian American or such hyphenated identity; he wants to go beyond such limitations, and thus seeks to capture broader audience. Ultimately, Gotanda's work exemplifies how ethnic narratives can intersect with universal themes, enriching the theatrical landscape. By situating his characters' experiences within a framework that speaks to broader societal issues, he not only affirms the richness of Asian American identity but also invites audiences from all backgrounds to explore and reflect on their own shared experiences. In doing so, Gotanda contributes to a more inclusive understanding of American theatre, one that recognizes the importance of both particularity and universality in storytelling.

The Asian American civil rights movement, emerging later than those of other ethnic groups in the U.S., represents a significant chapter in the broader narrative of social justice. This movement, characterized primarily as a middle-class reform initiative, sought to address racial inequality, advocate for social justice, and promote political empowerment within a culturally diverse America. Its timing is notable, as it crystallized during a period when many other ethnic communities were actively organizing for their rights, positioning Asian Americans within a larger framework of civil rights activism.

Central to this movement was the formation of an inter-Asian coalition, which included a wide array of identities—Filipino Americans, Korean Americans, Japanese Americans, and others. This coalition not only emphasized the shared struggles of these communities but also sought to foster a sense of unity among Asian Americans

and between them and other racial and ethnic groups in the United States. This solidarity was essential in combating the often monolithic representation of Asian Americans in public discourse, highlighting the diversity and complexity within the community.

The emergence of this movement can be traced to two critical historical factors: the rise of a college-age Asian American population and the sociopolitical climate surrounding the Vietnam War. Many of these young activists were motivated by their educational experiences, which exposed them to critical theories of race and identity. The Vietnam War, in particular, catalyzed a sense of urgency and activism, as many Asian Americans grappled with the implications of U.S. foreign policy in Asia and its impact on their communities domestically. The war served as a poignant backdrop for discussions about identity, belonging, and the need for political engagement.In this context, the protagonist Kitamura in Philip Kan Gotanda's *Day Standing on Its Head* embodies the complexities of this Asian American identity. Kitamura's character can be seen as a reflection of the intersection between personal and political struggles, navigating the challenges of cultural duality and societal expectations. As an Asian American in a predominantly white society, Kitamura's experiences may illustrate the tensions between individual identity and collective activism.This political dimension is crucial for understanding Kitamura's identity. His journey reflects not only personal challenges but also the broader socio-political landscape that Asian Americans were navigating at the time. By engaging with themes of belonging, alienation, and empowerment, Gotanda situates Kitamura's character within the larger framework of the Asian American movement. This allows for a deeper exploration of how collective action can inform personal identity, highlighting the protagonist's struggles as emblematic of a community striving for recognition and equality. The Asian American civil rights movement, with its roots in a specific historical context and driven largely by a new generation of politically conscious college students, serves as a vital backdrop for understanding Kitamura's character in *Day Standing on Its Head*. The interplay of personal and collective identities not only enriches the narrative but also underscores the significance of political activism in shaping the Asian American experience.

Indeed, William Wei brings us back to the model minority concept as he states:

> ...the model minority concept leads us to the history of the 1924 Immigration Act, which excluded Asian laborers from the United States. Even though many Asian Americans have had forebears in this country for several generations, they are still perceived as foreigners, both physically and culturally, whose issues and concerns are therefore considered irrelevant to the rest of society. On the contrary, they are also perceived as the country's 'model minority,' the one group that has successfully integrated into American society despite seemingly insurmountable racial barriers. (4)

The relative obscurity of the Asian American Movement can be attributed to the complex dynamics of race relations in the United States, which have historically been framed primarily as a black-and-white issue. While the nation is home to four significant racial minorities with their own histories of oppression, African Americans have garnered the most attention. This is largely due to their well-documented history of exploitation through slavery, their substantial representation in the population, and their longstanding, visible fight for equality. The perceived threat posed by their numbers to the dominant society—rooted in fears of slave insurrections dating back to pre-Civil War America—has resulted in African American issues being prioritized over those of other groups. In contrast, Asian Americans have often been overlooked, largely because of their smaller population size and a less widely recognized history of labor exploitation and resistance to oppression.

Day Standing on Its Head effectively projects the Asian American Movement and shows how its relevance profoundly impacts a law professor, disrupting racial stereotyping and highlighting the model minority concept. Gotanda's hero, Kitamura, a third-generation Japanese American law professor, seeks to be part of his ethnic culture or the model minority but also desires to assimilate into mainstream American culture, reflecting Emerson's notion that "Society is a masked ball where everyone hides his real character and reveals it in hiding" (Emerson 119). Kitamura's greater

engagement with American culture and his suppression of his ethnic identity place him in a trap that raises numerous questions.

In fact, it has a significant impact on his psychosomatic state. At the beginning of the play, Kitamura says, "I awoke from a deep sleep… I had the strangest feeling that my arm was disappearing" (DSH 7). Kitamura's condition parallels Gregor Samsa in Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, where Gregor, upon awakening, finds himself transformed into a 'monstrous verminous bug.' This transformation signifies that although he retains human consciousness, his body has changed. This psychosomatic issue can be examined through Cartesian philosophy, specifically the concepts of 'res cogitans' (I think, therefore I am) and 'res extensa' (extended thing). Gregor becomes a Cartesian subject as 'res cogitans,' meaning he thinks. Similarly, Kitamura, who feels the disappearance of his arm, is experiencing 'res cogitans' or thinking. According to Descartes, the essence of a human subject is its soul, and the rational cogitans is not liable to die with the body. The thinking thing or 'res cogitans' does not extend, and the extended thing or 'res extensa' does not think. By excluding the body (in Kitamura's case, the arm) from the construction of subjectivity, Descartes views subjectivity simply as 'I' or 'soul' (res cogitans, i.e., I think, therefore I am), indicating the Cartesian mind/body conflict. Thus, Kitamura's loss of his arm can be placed in the Cartesian framework of 'res extensa'—without his arm, he can still think and retain his existence because he has cogito or consciousness. However, psychologically, he finds his cogito in trouble as he struggles with writer's block. His inertia stems from the socio-political background, acting like a panopticon gaze that makes him introvert, leaving a debilitating impact on his psychosomatic state. As a member of the model minority, he must negotiate between the Id (the unconscious desire to be part of the Asian American movement) and the Ego (the demands of mainstream American society), caught in the ambivalence of his identity. *Day Standing on Its Head* unveils such psychosomatic problem of the middle aged Japanease American law Professor, Kitamura. His radical past is in collision with his present privileged 'model minority' status which he feels awakard. The ghost of his past memory makes him unstable and weak, impacting his personal life.

Early in the play, Harry discusses campus unrest across the country, focusing specifically on the Asian American Student Movement of the late sixties and early seventies. He has recently submitted an article to a prestigious law journal that highlights the pivotal strikes of the movement in which he actively participated. “In the early 70s, I was part of one of the seminal strikes of the Asian American movement. I had not thought about it in a long time, but for some reason, I decided to write about it” (51). Within the Asian American community, two rival factions were vying for influence: the Pro-Maoist Yellow Guard, of which Harry was a founding member, and the Asian American For Action (AAFA), which he viewed as a tool of the administration. Although Harry feels a degree of embarrassment about his current role as a law professor, he is confronted by a student's question regarding the relevance of his "old war stories" in the context of the nineties.: “Isn’t your idea of the Third World student movement a bit of a dinosaur, given the trend toward anti-Asian violence in African American and Latino communities?” (8).

Philip Kan Gotanda employs in his play *Day Standing on Its Head* the early Asian American movement as a critical backdrop to explore broader themes of activism and inter-ethnic relations. By situating his narrative within this historical context, Gotanda highlights the complexities of coalition-building within the Asian American community while also reflecting on the challenges faced in broader social movements.The play illustrates the importance of inter-ethnic coalitions, portraying the diverse experiences of various Asian American groups—such as Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and Filipino Americans—while simultaneously addressing the class struggles that underlie racial tensions. This is particularly significant in light of historical events like the Vincent Chin case, where a Chinese American man was tragically murdered by auto workers who, fueled by racial animosity, mistook him for Japanese. This incident not only highlights the dangers of racial stereotyping but also underscores the vulnerability of Asian Americans within the larger framework of American race relations.Similarly, the Latasha Harlins case serves as another poignant example of racial tensions, where a Korean American shop owner shot a young African American

girl over an alleged shoplifting incident. This incident exacerbated existing frictions between African American residents and Korean American merchants in South Central Los Angeles, reflecting the complexities of economic competition and racial identity. Gotanda's exploration of these cases illustrates how class struggles can be articulated through a racial lens, revealing the intersections of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status that complicate community dynamics.

The play also delves into the inherent challenges faced by social movements, such as factionalism and the difficulties in maintaining effective inter-racial coalitions. This is particularly relevant when examining events like the 1992 Los Angeles uprising, often considered the first multi-ethnic riot in America. The uprising was fueled by a combination of factors, including police brutality and economic disenfranchisement, but it also highlighted the fractures within and between communities as different racial groups grappled with their identities and grievances.

Gotanda's depiction of these complexities serves to critique the simplistic narratives often associated with activism, emphasizing that social movements are not monolithic. Instead, they are shaped by competing interests, historical grievances, and the need for solidarity amidst diversity. By engaging with these themes, Gotanda invites audiences to reflect on the nuances of identity and activism, encouraging a more profound understanding of how various ethnic communities must navigate their relationships with one another in the pursuit of justice and equality. In-fact, *Day Standing on Its Head* functions as a lens through which to examine not only the Asian American experience but also the broader struggles of marginalized communities within the American sociopolitical landscape. By addressing historical events and their implications for contemporary activism, Gotanda prompts a critical conversation about the role of race, class, and coalition-building in the ongoing quest for social justice.

While Sam defines the model minority to attack Kitamura, this leaves a significant psychological impact on him:

> "They (the authorities) like people like you. You are just like your parents, my parents. We always do what we're told… They love saying to our black and brown brothers and sisters, 'Hey, the Orientals made it on their own, why can't you people?' And secretly, our chests swell up… So they accept us for now, but at what price? To live like a cowardly mouse… One day we'll get too good at what we do. We'll make a little too much money, figure out the game a little too well, and then we'll see middle-class America's real face. They all hate us; they'll hunt us down, kill us in the streets…" (DSH 22-23).

Sam, as a representative of the model minority or ethnic tag, continually attacks Kitamura, who is viewed by his ethnic peers as a native elite negotiating with mainstream American culture. Kitamura wears, as Sam puts it, a "frozen mask of middle-class propriety while inside you want to rage, scream at the injustices all around" (DSH 22). The repeated verbal attacks by Sam make Kitamura more insular, and the prick of conscience stirs his inner self. However, he must maintain his facade because, outside of himself, he is a law professor. Nina's words in one of his dream sequences also attest to his situation: "locked up deep down inside" (19).

From a psychological perspective, Kitamura is caught between the Id and the Ego. Within his unconscious self, he dreams of his association with the Asian American movement, but on the other hand, he retains his Ego as a law professor. According to Žižek, the Master is actually naked in reality but still wears a mask to suppress the real, thus deceiving others. Kitamura is similarly engaging in this Žižekian dynamic: he is a 'big Other,' and his continuous suppression and Sam's arguments are causing his intrapsychological problems.

Kitamura becomes increasingly confused as he attends his father's funeral. There, he witnesses his mother's relatives exhibiting subdued, unemotional behavior—essentially a model minority stance—and his father's relatives displaying raw, unrestrained grief and despair. Harry is torn between two responses: "I found myself feeling a strange mixture of emotions. I was at once shocked, painfully uncomfortable

at [his father's brother's] overt calling attention to ourselves, the event. At the very same moment, I wanted to join him, to wail… unabashedly" (16). This cross-cultural assimilation problematizes his identity. In fact, Harry's self-imposed masking of feelings, common among middle-class Japanese Americans, acquires a new dimension here—showcasing the playwright's deft handling of the protagonist's identity crisis.

In Lacanian psychosis, a person's entry into the symbolic stage (representing culture or society) and the confrontation with the 'lack' of any incident to which they had immense accord may drive them psychologically to seek solace in the imaginary stage. However, Lacan argues that returning to the imaginary is merely a form of fetishism to relish memory, not a way to achieve reality. Kitamura's actions reflect this, making him insular and acerbic in his marital life and alienated from life. His wife Lillian accuses him of being cold and having 'no feeling' (12). This perceived coldness leads Lillian to engage in an extramarital affair, which Kitamura feels responsible for in his reveries. He struggles to take control of his life and cannot assume responsibility for another life, even if it were his own child. It might appear that Kitamura is emasculated due to his effeminate activities, which could be a thought-provoking ground for feminist critique. However, his sexual repression finds an outlet through his sexual fantasies. An "enigmatic, erotically tantalizing woman with the most beautiful nape" (11) appears in his dreams, symbolizing for Harry Kitamura a fuller life. Harry hesitates to touch the nape, even though his arm reaches out for it (14). The woman, who turns out to be Nina, accuses him of coldness and indifference just as Lillian once did. In a poem Harry wrote about Nina, he expresses a desire to die in her 'mysterious fire' (29). However, he can never truly know her as he is unwilling to pay the "terrible, wondrous, excruciating price" (37) for it. Harry is not capable of making the "leap into the void with no designer clothes, no point of noise, no makeup, no credit cards, no excuses, no lies, no history, no mythology, no trickery or deceit…" (38). Kitamura's ongoing repression creates anxiety, which in turn enervates and alienates him. Repression, as Freud believes, leads to anxiety. However, if we consider Kitamura's conscience through a Deleuzean lens, we can see that the ego inherently fears libidinal impulses, and it is this fear that drives repression within the psyche. In this framework,

the ego becomes the primary agent of repression; its attitude toward anxiety is what initiates the process. Anxiety does not stem from repressed libido. If the source of anxiety is the repressing agency rather than the repressed desire, then repression gains a degree of autonomy within the psychic realm. This indicates that repression is primarily about intrapsychic conflict rather than a struggle between desire and social authority. This marks a conservative shift in Freud's theory, which Wilhelm Reich was the first to critique. Reich argued that Freud shifted away from a theory of sexuality to align with repressive social forces. In contrast, Deleuze and Guattari offer more radical insights than Reich, who viewed desire as fundamentally psychosexual rather than intrinsically social or political. Schizoanalysis posits that desire is both psychosexual and social, simultaneously shaping the forces of repression while also being the target of those forces. In essence, there is no fundamental difference between desire and social forces—only a difference in their regimes. Reich remains within a Freudo-Marxist liberal framework, where the political goal is to identify a social structure that can adequately express a given set of assumed psychosexual contents. Aidan Tynan in this connection opines,

> Deleuze and Guattari, on the other hand, argue that the antagonism between desire as a pure principle and social forms that express it is irresolvable, making desire a revolutionary force. The conservatism of Freud's theoretical revision is not that he abandons the psychic realm of sexuality to align with the social realm of repression, but that he reframes the antagonism between desire and the social as a struggle within the person. (138)

Kitamura's experience undoubtedly reflects this, impairing him in every sphere of his life. He desires to be part of the Asian American Movement, embodying his ethnic culture or model minority identity. Yet, as a law professor, he must remain subservient to American society. This conflict between desire and societal expectations debilitates his personality.

Harry becomes insular, delving deeply into his own self and distancing himself from society. We see his friend Joe forces him into a phantasmagorical scene where he must go skydiving. The parachute will only open if Harry provides the correct answer. When asked to show his face, he does not know how to do so and falls straight to the ground. Harry is so tightly wound that Joe's plot fails: "You didn't break apart… I figured at least the force of the crash would shatter you, make you see beyond yourself" (DSH 27). In fact, Harry becomes so distanced from himself that the opening or not opening of the chute is irrelevant to him. Harry's self-evasion also explains the disappearance of his arm and his sinking into a chair. His writer's block, now symptomatic of his general difficulty in 'getting started' (9), signifies a lack of self-knowledge and initiative. However, Harry wakes up before the play ends. The characters appearing in his dreams and hallucinations continuously pressure him and mar his complacency. Harry repeats some of Sam's words at the end, suggesting his acceptance of the charges and a degree of self-realization: "I told the school officials what we were planning to do… They like people like me… quiet, hardworking… not dangerous… not sexual…" (DSH 39). Harry also experiences a sense of fullness as he bites the back of Nina's neck and feels his "muscle back" (41). A Japanese Peggy Lee impersonator with whom Harry dances as the light slowly fades is revealed to be Lillian beneath the blonde wig. Harry's "hand moves to stroke the nape of her neck" (42), suggesting the collapse of two identities (Lillian and Nina) in the secret recesses of desire. Gotanda's innovative handling of masks, as being inseparable from one's person, the doubling of roles, and the fusion of identities, combined with the ambiguity of the era, adds depth. The dream sequences, populated by surreal figures from both past and present, and the hallucinations spilling into waking life, perfectly build up the atmosphere of a German expressionistic film. This makes it difficult to label the play merely as an Asian American work. Gotanda's dramatic material hardly blurs the concrete Asian American issues addressed in the play, which achieves a fine balance between abstract style and concrete socio-cultural concerns.

To conclude, it may be claimed the entirety of *Day Standing on Its Head* revolves around the intricate journey of Harry Kitamura, whose deep-seated

introspection unveils the struggles of identity and self-worth against the backdrop of historical and political turmoil. Gotanda intricately portrays Harry as an introvert character grappling with the lingering shadows of past activism, particularly the questions posed by his students regarding the relevance of the 1960s student movement in their contemporary context. This dissonance propels Harry into a state of self-scrutiny, revealing his psychological turmoil and leading to a profound sense of disconnection from both himself and society.Harry's oscillating position between repression and expression creates a palpable anxiety that culminates in his poignant admission to Nina: "What's happening to me? I am lost,...I am nothing...I no longer exist..." (37). This moment encapsulates the core of his struggle—the haunting specter of a once-vibrant identity now rendered numb by a complex interplay of societal expectations and personal failures. The cyclical nature of his psychological state—marked by the recurrence of political issues from the past—illustrates the heavy burden of historical trauma that can impede one's ability to engage meaningfully with the present. Yet, amidst this existential crisis, Gotanda weaves a narrative of redemption and awakening. As Harry transitions from a state of paralysis to one of awareness, he ultimately regains his sense of self, illustrated through his evocative realization: "I awoke from a deep sleep. I had the strangest feeling. That I had been asleep for a very long time. [Looks around, inhales deeply.] Fresh air has a flavor, did you know that? Peaches? And Night...[Thinking] Night is...[surprised at his own thought.]...day standing on its head...[quietly laughs at the thought.] I awoke with a sense of fullness. Yes, fullness. And the one thing I knew was that I would dance. Yes, dance. Dance any chance I could get" (41). This transformation signifies not merely a reclaiming of identity but also an affirmation of life itself—an embrace of joy, creativity, and the vibrant richness of existence that transcends cultural and societal constraints.In analysing Harry's journey through the lens of the term dis/able, we can appreciate the duality of his condition—encompassing both ability and disability. Initially trapped in paranoia and the unconscious realm shaped by the political upheavals of his past, Harry embodies the struggles faced by many in the Asian American community who are often rendered invisible or marginalized. However,

through his gradual awakening, Gotanda emphasizes the importance of self-assertion and the reclamation of one's narrative, encouraging Asian Americans to transcend their psychological limitations. *Day Standing on Its Head* serves as a powerful commentary on the evolving realities of Asian American life, laden with its frustrations, contradictions, and splendors. Gotanda's work highlights a critical truth: that Asian Americans must actively engage with and embrace their cultural heritage, values, and traditions, not only for their own sense of identity but also to pass these legacies on to future generations. This call to self-esteem and self-confidence is vital, urging individuals to assert their place within the broader tapestry of American society. Through the lens of Harry Kitamura's journey, Gotanda challenges us to confront our own identities and the societal constructs that shape them, ultimately inspiring a collective movement toward authenticity, understanding, and unity among diverse communities. In this way, the play not only illuminates the struggles of one individual but also serves as a beacon for collective empowerment and resilience within the Asian American narrative.

Works Cited

Amend, A. "Overview." *Multicultural Voices: Asian-American Writers*, Chelsea House, 2010, pp. 7-12.

Cheung, King-Kok, editor. "Introduction." *Words Matter: Conversations with Asian American Writers*, University of Hawai'i Press, 2000, pp. 1-18.

Dunbar, Ann-Marie. "From Ethnic to Mainstream Theatre: Negotiating 'Asian American' in the Plays of Philip Kan Gotanda." *American Drama*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2005, pp. 15-31.

Gotanda, Philip Kan. "Day Standing on Its Head." *Asian American Drama: Nine Plays from the Multiethnic Landscape*, edited by Brian Nelson, Applause Theatre Book Publishers, 1997, pp. 7-41.

Lee, E. K. *A History of Asian American Theatre*. Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Lee, J. *Race and Ethnicity on the Contemporary Stage*. Temple University Press, 1997.

Nelson, Brian, editor. *Asian American Drama: Nine Plays from the Multiethnic Landscape*. Applause Theatre Book Publishers, 1997.

"Theodore Roosevelt: Quotes, Sayings, and Aphorisms." *Theodore Roosevelt Association*, www.theodore-roosevelt.com/trquotes.html. Accessed 2 Oct. 2024.

Tynan, Aidan. *Deleuze's Literary Clinic: Criticism and the Politics of Symptoms*. Edinburgh University Press, 2012, pp. 1-35.

Wei, William. *The Asian American Movement*. Temple University Press, 1993.

Wilson, Emory Douglas. *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson: The Conduct of Life*. The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2003, pp. 1-119.

Wong, S. C. *Reading Asian American Literature: From Necessity to Extravagance*. Princeton University Press, 1993.

Author's bio-note

Dr. Auritra Munshi is Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Raiganj University, West Bengal. His research interests span Diaspora and Migration Studies and Subaltern Studies. He is the co-editor of *Border and Bordering: Politics, Poetics, Precariousness* (ibidem/Columbia University Press, 2021). His book chapter, "Marriage and Man-Woman Relationship in Coolie Diaspora," appeared in *Kala Pani Crossings, Gender and Diaspora: Indian Perspectives* (Routledge, 2024), edited by Judith Misrahi-Barak et al.Dr. Munshi's recent monograph, *Jhumpa Lahiri's Works in Transition: Towards a New Space*, was published by ibidem/Columbia University Press in 2024. He also translated *Kazi Abdul Wadud: An Autobiography*, published by ILSR, Kolkata (2025). He is currently working on a book project on Baul traditions, under contract with Palgrave Macmillan.