
Group One THTR:2411:0A01

— Student names redacted —

The Internal World of *Yellow Face*: Events

Act One

Act One

- January 30, 2006
 - Email from Marcus Dahlman
 - Travels in China
 - Lesser known “Asian-American” celebrity
- 1990
 - Controversy of *Miss Saigon*
 - DHH protests the casting of Jonathan Pryce and yellow face makeup
 - Lots of publicity on DHH, his father, HYH, gets caught in the romanticism of the play
- 1993
 - DHH writes *Face Value*, a commentary on the *Miss Saigon* controversy
 - Casts Marcus Dahlman as a male lead in the play
 - DHH, Newman, and Stuart discuss whether they believe Marcus is truly Asian after his audition based on his physical features

Act One Continued

- January 1, 1993 at the Boston Globe: Rehearsal for *Face Value* begins
 - Jane and Marcus discuss his previous acting history, type casting
- February 15, 1993 at the Boston Globe: *Face Value* “flops”
 - DHH calls Rodney to discuss Marcus, confirms he is white
 - Craver tells DHH he can’t fire Marcus for being white
- Interview with the Asian American Resource Center
 - Marcus takes on the “stage name” Marcus Gee
 - Students celebrate and welcome Marcus
- Phone Calls
 - DHH makes the call to Stuart, ignores Marcus
 - March 15, 1993 for Associated Press
 - DHH Calls Margaret about his show
 - HYH calls HDH about Bill Clinton and the bank
- HDH Finds out Marcus played in “The King and I” as a Chinese actor

Type-Casting: a form of discrimination in which, due to stereotypes, actors are expected to play the same roles over and over. For Chinese Americans, these are often demonizing, hyper/desexualizing, or minor labor jobs (Anielak).

Act Two

Beginning of Act Two

- April 27, 1996
 - After a meeting with the press, DHH privately calls out Marcus for pretending to be Asian, but Marcus spins around the argument to say DHH isn't doing enough for Asian empowerment

Tone Shift

- Act 2 shifts away from faced-paced humor towards more serious events and themes
- Explores the consequences of racialized violence and discourse
- Significant moments -
 - 1999 - accusations of espionage against Wen Ho Lee
 - Juxtaposed with accusations of money laundering against DHH's father juxtaposed

“demonstrates how racism operates within a supposedly progressive, liberal environment, one in which face-to-face antagonism is replaced with subtler yet equally damaging, xenophobic master narratives in which minorities often are cast as aliens, spies, or foreigners with divided allegiances” (Park)

- Challenges the ‘performance’ of race in transnational contexts to the ‘performance’ of race on stage

Ending

- At the end of the play, it is revealed Marcus is not a real character
- Plays with the line between real/not real, blurs categories of identity

Final moment:

“DHH (To the audience): Hey, it could happen. For Marcus, the play ends. And I go back to work, searching for my own face.”

- Marcus is a tool through which the author explores ‘finding their face’ and understanding the masks they have been forced to wear

Citations

Anielak, Katherine (2019) "Anna May Wong: Chinese-American Actress," *Undergraduate Research Journal*: Vol. 23, Article 8.

eNotes Editorial. "Yellow Face." *Enotes.com*, Enotes.com, 1 June 2019, <https://www.enotes.com/topics/yellow-face>.

Park, Samuel. Review of *Yellow Face*. By David Henry Hwang. *The Johns Hopkins University Press*, 2008.
<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/240553>

"Yellow Face (Play) Plot & Characters." *StageAgent*, <https://stageagent.com/shows/play/1911/yellow-face>.

The Characters of *Yellow Face*

— Student names redacted —

DHH

- Protagonist of the play and a playwright
 - Wrote *M. Butterfly*
- Goal is to protest the Miss Saigon yellow face casting decision
 - Writes *Face Value* to criticize the decision
- Self-absorbed in his own career
 - Hides the fact that Marcus is White from the public to save his own reputation
- Ex to Leah Ann Cho
- Is “heavily criticized and even cited by the government for supposedly conspiring with others to illegally transfer funds” (*Yellow face*)
- Has the ability to break the fourth wall
 - Admits that Marcus is a part of himself (Marcus’ personality is part of DHH’s personality)

Marcus G. Dahlman (Marcus Gee)

- Introduced in the first pages of the play
- DHH casts Marcus in *Face Value* thinking that he is Asian but later discovers that Marcus is white
- In conflict with DHH for a majority of the play over the idea of race and whether or not Marcus should be passing himself off as Asian
- Revealed to be a fictional character towards the end of the play
- Hwang provides hints throughout the play that Marcus is not real
 - “When Hwang draws from his research, the announcer will be specific about the source, including the date of the publication...after Marcus Gee begins performing in *The King and I*, DHH reads newspaper reviews about the musical. Suddenly, all dates are nonexistent.” (Boles 225)

HYH

- Father of DHH
- Successful businessman who Owns Far East National Bank
- Starts “Chinese Republican Bankers for Clinton” group to raise money from Clinton’s Campaign
 - Ends up being under investigation for, “influencing the American democratic process on behalf of China” (*David Henry Hwang's Yellow Face* 2010)
- Believer of the “American Dream” and wants to be like Jimmy Stewart
 - Jimmy Stewart was a famous american actor considered to be the “quintessential everyman” (*Jimmy Stewart's biography* 2022)
- Gets an aggressive form of cancer that leads to his death
 - Denies gene therapy because he has given up on the “American Dream”

Leah Ann Cho

- Actor
- Partner of Marcus Gee
 - Ex-partner of DHH
- Doesn't believe DHH's claims about Marcus' race
 - Feels betrayed and disgusted by Marcus' lie later on
- Representation of the Asian Community
- Follows and supports Marcus
- Abandons Marcus after the truth comes out
 - Supporting the practice that they fought against
 - Putting White, Non-Asians to represent Asians on a larger scale.
 - "...uproar over a whitewashed entertainment empire, and the irrational fear of lost allegiance in the Asian community."

The Announcer / NWOAOC

- The Announcer
 - Introduces characters and quotes from the newspaper
 - Allows the audience to make sense of who is who
 - “THE ANNOUNCER : BD Wong, Tony Award– winning star of M. Butterfly. June 25, 1990.” (Hwang 9)
 - Pushes against but does not break the fourth wall
- Name Withheld on Advice of Counsel (NWOAOC)
 - Publishes articles in the New York Times that condemn Chinese Americans, such as HYH, for aiding China in stealing government secrets
 - Identity is never revealed
 - Play should
 - Meets with DHH
 - Argument over being “more American, or more Chinese”
 - Final words: “You see? I told the truth. I really have no agenda.” (Hwang 66)