

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم



HOSSAM MAGHRABY



شبكة المعلومات الجامعية التوثيق الالكتروني والميكروفيلم



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جامعة عين شمس

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لم ترد بالأصل



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Hybridization of Identity
after Pearl Harbour
in
Selected Japanese-North American Fiction

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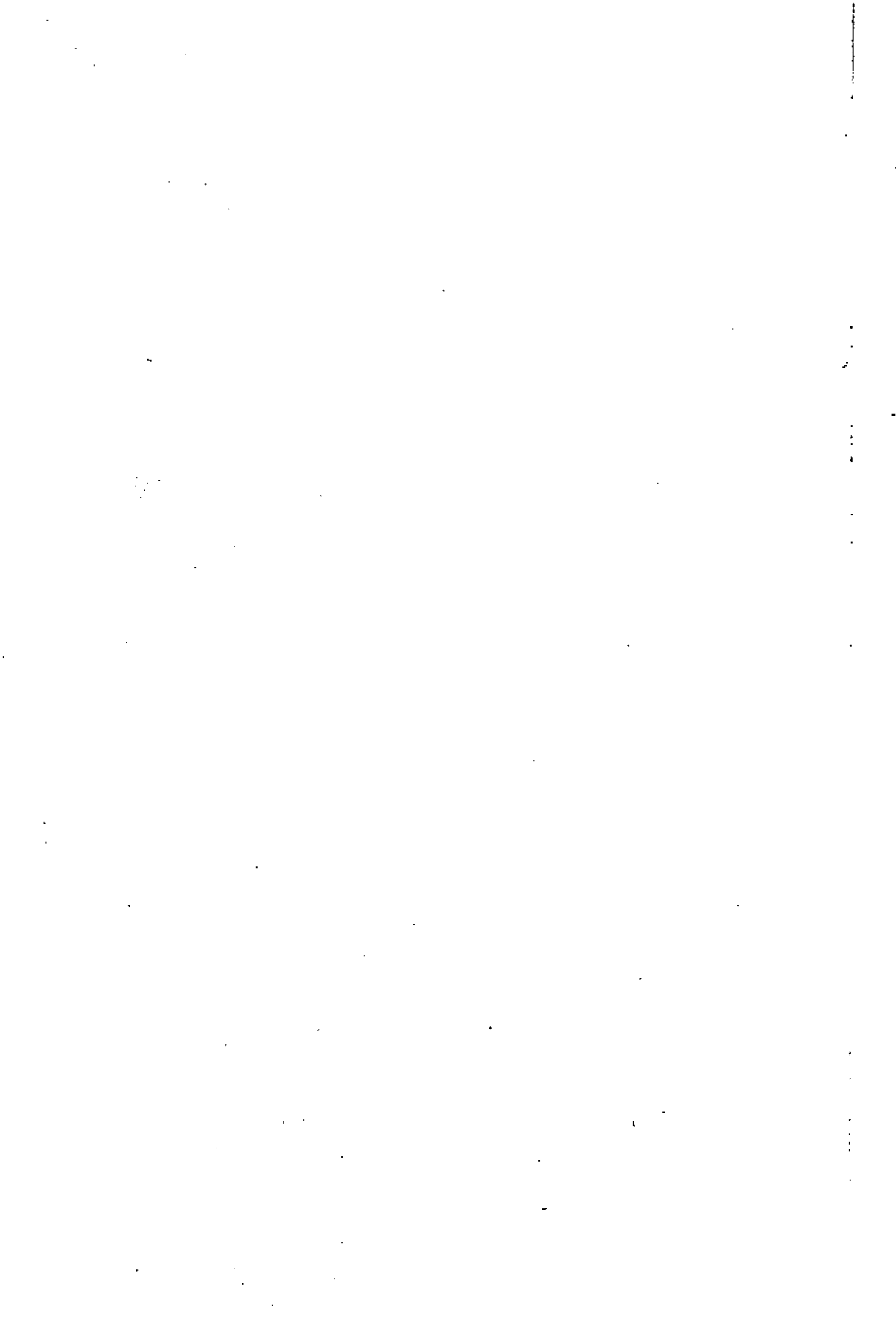
الاسم


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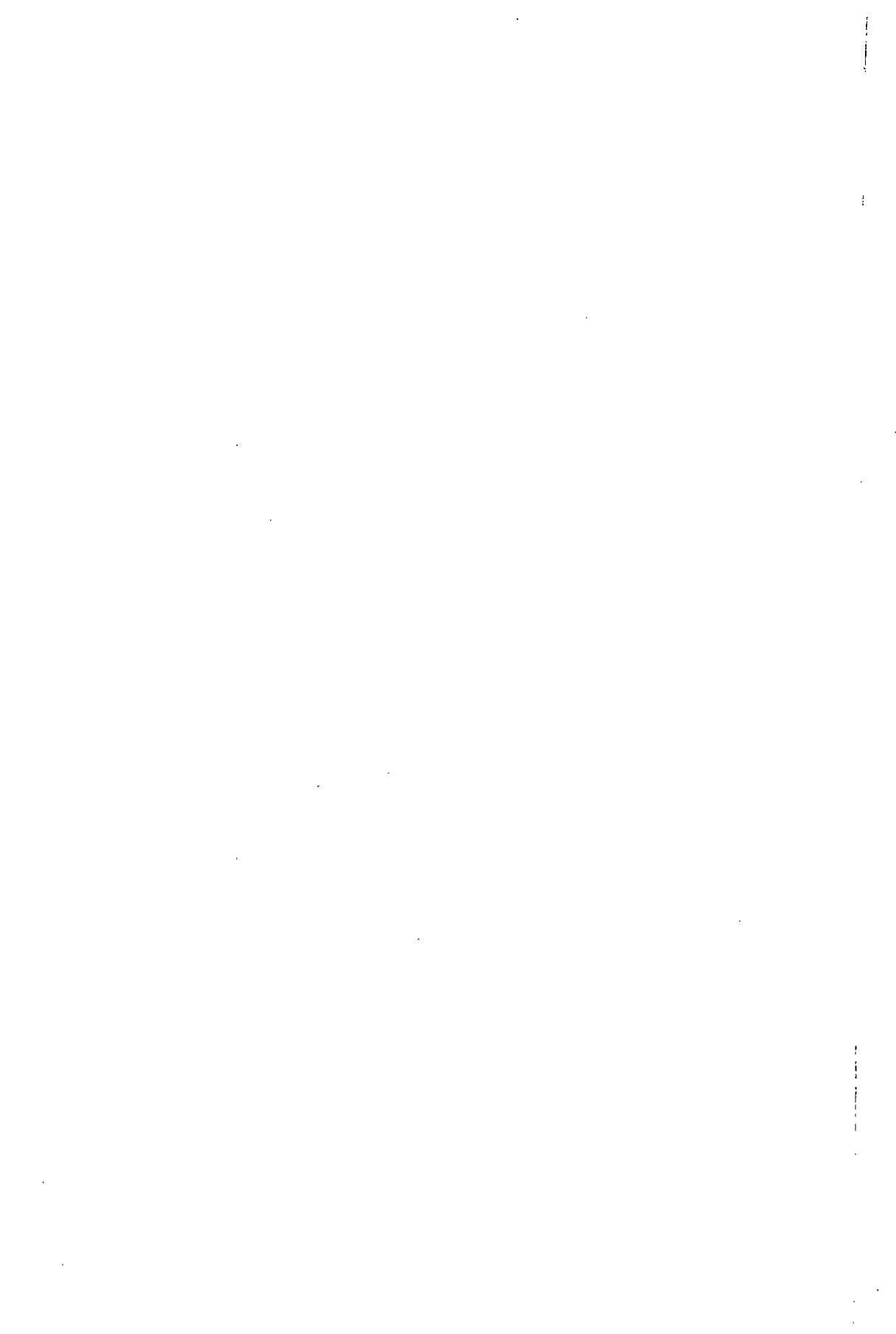
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Introduction

In his essay, "An American Identity on Trial", Makoto Ishii evokes a debatable question, "Is there a need for an Asian American identity?" (16) This question of identity is not a recent one; nor is it a response to the Civil Rights Movement that emerged in the early 1960's. It is a problem that has faced Asian Americans since the very first Asian decided to immigrate to the United States. The term "Asian American" implies homogeneity of people and of purpose; in fact, it connotes highly disparate people of different races and with diverse languages, religions, and cultural bases. However, inside the borders of the United States, all Asian communities share common experiences of immigration, discrimination, acculturation conflict, generational strains and above all racial prejudice:

In the American racial order, Asian Americans have been generally ignored by policy makers and institutional leaders. They have been convenient scapegoats in times of economic recession and social crisis (Hawley, 206).

Asians have immigrated from the Oriental to the Occidental hemisphere geographically, and have experienced the process of acculturation in a foreign land. They ventured to the United States and Canada for the same reasons as the first settlers from Europe did, in quest for a better life.

The Chinese were the first to land in America. They were first attracted by the California Gold Rush of the 1840's. Disappointed in their dreams, they were forced to seek work laying railroad tracks. Gradually, they turned to farming as hired hands, or by reclaiming unwanted land. Their cheap labour, joined later by that of Japanese, Filipino, and Mexican immigrants, was largely responsible for converting swamps into rich agricultural area.

The first flow of Japanese immigrants to Hawaii and the West Coast of the United States increased in the four decades from 1885 to 1924. During that period, the vast majority of

Japanese immigrants to Hawaii were contract laborers recruited by the plantations to fill unskilled jobs. The early immigration of Japanese to California began in the 1900's. Meanwhile, Chinese labour was banned from immigration by the Chinese Exclusion Act 1882, and white workers changed to nonfarming jobs. Thus, the rapidly developed agriculture in California demanded a large number of immigrant farmhands. The shortage of farm labour in California, concurred with the difficult economic situation in Japan, drove many Japanese farm workers into the search for a better life in America. Most thought that with a few years of hard work, they would be able to amass the fortunes that allow a return to their villages and live in perpetual comfort.

The presence of the Japanese led to the Alien Land Act of 1913 that prohibited **"persons ineligible for citizenship"** (Weglyn, 42) from owning land or leasing it for more than three years. Because laws defining citizenship existed only for whites, blacks, and Native Americans, the Alien Land Act was intended to prevent Japanese from purchasing land and thereby to discourage them from settling permanently. Many, however, bought land in the name of American born children who were automatically citizens. Being highly skilled in techniques of intensive farming practiced in Japan, Japanese immigrant farmers achieved a rapid success that alarmed their white neighbours. This led to the Immigration Act of 1924: **"Only the Japanese who had homes in America and their wives, parents and children will be entered"** (Daniel, 16).

The anti-Japanese laws permanently influenced the form Japanese American business enterprise was to adopt. In California, the land laws drove the Japanese into cities. In the cities, however, government and union restrictions prevented large numbers from entering available jobs, leaving self-employment. By then, the Japanese initiated hotel keeping, grocery stores, and other medium-sized business.

The decades following the end of immigration in 1924 were not easy for the Japanese Americans. The Issei (pronounced "EE-say"), meaning the first generation, and their children the Nisei (pronounced "NEE-say"), meaning the second generation,