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Diasporic Recuperation of Ethnological Selfhood Betwixt Mother and Daughter in Amy Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter*

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Abstract

The Multiethnic adherence of the newcomers towards their ancestral and adopted ethnologies brings distress to their existence in the alienland. They agonize greatly to disentangle themselves from their individuality which is socially and authentically build. Consequently they supervene ancestral customs of their parental lineage in the newly acquired land, meanwhile they also embrace the rituals of the adopted nation. They dwell in the in-between space, concurrently straddling amidst two divergent ethnologies. The encounters of the first and second generation of settlers varies in this luminal space. This research paper scrutinizes the ethnological affiliations of the daughter with her Chinese mother and her ancestral lineage, who is the America. At the same time, the mother who is the first generation of immigrant suffers being in the luminal space. She being unable to refrain herself from her own parental customs also exhibits a readiness to follow the culture of the newly acquired land for her daughter's sake, which makes her cultural existence to be traumatized.

Keywords: *In-between space, ethnological straddle, recuperation, affiliations.*

1. Introduction

The diversified affiliations of the dispersed mass causes dilemma to their very ethnological recognition. There arises a divergence betwixt one's own natal ethnicity and that of the adopted nation where the newcomers suffer to uphold their ethnological specifications. Consequently they endeavour to preserve and practice their own customs in a completely anew land, whereas they also exhibit their inclination towards their affinity over the alien society. As a result of which they either voluntarily or involuntarily enter into the path of assimilation. Subsequently, they straddle betwixt two diversified ethnologies, unable to relinquish any. Thus they hold two distinct ethnological stretch together which bring crisis to their nativeness.

Amy Tan herself being the second generation of immigrant from a Chinese lineage has enunciated the quandaries and predicaments of the Chinese settlers in America regarding their ethnicity. Tan's lyrical narrative *The Bonesetter's Daughter* is scrutinized in this article with regard to the ethnological identity of Ruth, who is the second generation of immigrant.

Ruth is the daughter of a Chinese immigrant LuLing. The perusal on the narrative reveals how the second generation of immigrant endeavours to cope the accountability of observing her/his ancestral culture and tradition in the foreign land, owing to her/his mother's insistence. The perpetual crisis and accord betwixt the mother and the daughter regarding their cultural affiliations towards their mother culture and alien culture is impersonated through three generation of person as, the grandmother named as Precious Auntie, the mother LuLing and the daughter Ruth. LuLing and Ruth's quarrel and rationalization regarding their ethnicity is recurrently centred around the ordeals of precious Auntie in China. LuLing efforts are always focussed on imparting and making her daughter Ruth appreciate and embrace her ancestral past.

LuLing Liu Young, the mother is the first generation of settler in America. Her Husband Edwin Young is an American. Consequently, Ruth suffers culturally amidst her partially Chinese and partially American identity. LuLing tracing her root in China is very stringent towards accepting the alien customs and traditions. She is the incessant reminder of Chinese values and heritage to Ruth. Ruth in contrast, strives to adhere to her ancestral lineage, being an American by birth. She longs to be an American and has always wished to be identified as an American since her adolescence. This has been true when LuLing gave Ruth some written papers which she claimed to be her true account. When Ruth has had struggle in deciphering her mother's utterances which were in Chinese, she has been always worried and afraid on brooding over her mother's response on exhibiting it thus,

She knew from experience what happened whenever she asked her mother to render Chinese characters into English. First LuLing scolded her for not studying Chinese hard enough when she was little. And then, to untangle each character, her mother took side routes to her past, going to excruciating detail over the infinite meanings of Chinese words: ... (TBD 13)

Ruth has developed a sense of dislike for her ancestral language which she has perceived to be very intensive. Eventhough Ruth's traits are exacted by her mother, since her childhood which carries a scintilla of a Chinese, she always do things in an American way. Ruth has cultivated the habit of employing her fingers to be a tool to recollect things, from her mother, but she would do it in an American way: "Ruth kept her own fingers open and splayed, American Style" (TBD 18).

Ruths finds her mother's ordeals in America are owing to her lower English speaking standard. She would be abashed whenever her mother summons her for her assistance. She at times becomes disconcerted whenever she is called "Lootie! Lootie!" (TBD 42). She also gets disturbed thus, "Why had her mother chosen a name with sounds she couldn't pronounce" (TBD 42). Unlike a typical second generation of immigrant in America, Ruth has seldom reciprocated her affection to her mother with hugs, even if she has attempted so, her mother has hardly appreciated it. Ruths perceives it to be her mother's lineage which is preventing her to adapt one such Americanness.

LuLing as the first generation of immigrant has never failed to insist the importance of Chinese culture to Ruth. She takes great effort even to teach a single stroke of Chinese letters to Ruth. She says: "Writing Chinese characters, ... 'is entirely different from writing English words. You think differently. You feel differently'" (TBD 49-50). While searching for her mother's wallet, Ruth has witnessed several periodicals which she claims: "... Magazines her mother would never read in a million years" (TBD 54). She has felt her mother's antiquated Chinese deportment in America makes the twain suffer and become conscious to be an outsider. Instead, LuLing believed that she could make Ruth discern various things through Chinese. Ruth inturn has greatly endured mortification due to LuLing's English utterances.

Ruths perception on her mother has been enhanced when LuLing gets affected by dementia. When Gao Ling, Ruth's aunt claims LuLing's sickness is due to her aloofness, Ruth has acknowledged her malaise over her mother's Chinese deportment. Being a sixteen year old girl, LuLing accused Ruth for smoking, but Ruth has been very much Americanized as she always wished to do so. She

remembers how she has declared then thus, “I’m an American, ... ‘I have a right to privacy, to pursue my own happiness, not yours!’” (TSD 134). LuLing herself has disclosed how she has perceived America to be thus, “I sailed for America, a land without curses or ghosts” (TBD 284).

On her attempt to trace her lineage Ruth has succeeded in finding her grandmother’s name to be Gu Liu Xin. On discovering it she has felt thus,

She had existed. She Still existed. Precious Auntie belonged to a family. LuLing belonged to that same family, and Ruth belonged to them both. The family name had been there all long, like a bone stuck in the crevices of a gorge. (TBD 336)

2. Conclusion

Ruth has rediscovered herself on discovering her past and being rooted to her Chinese lineage, she moves more closer in accepting her cultural root to be in China. She has no regrets to be a Chinese descendant. Unlike a complaining young girl, she then embraces her Chinese ancestry very gladly. She took up sand writing, which has troubled her a lot in her childhood to be a happy venture then being accompanied and guided by her ancestral grandmother Precious Auntie. With the memories of herself and being, lightened by the remembrance of her grandmother she starts writing the same things which she has written before, but with a new perspective of being conscious and being recuperated to her ancestry.

Thus both LuLing and Ruth has succeeded as a mother and daughter, where LuLing being a happy mother who has uplifted her daughter’s cognizance towards their culture and Ruth having recuperated and rooted to her own cultural lineage as a immigrant in the alien space. Ruth’s enlightenment about her mother’s past has brought rapprochement amidst the incompatible Chinese immigrant mother and her American born daughter.

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