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## Reinventing the Self: Cultural Negotiation of LuLing in Amy Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter*

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### ABSTRACT

*In Amy Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, Chinese American mother LuLing involves in the self-exploration vacillating between her home and host cultures. The Chinese immigrant LuLing cannot remain totally independent of her indigenous culture of her native country China. Consequently, she demonstrates residual of Chinese culture in her diasporic life. Moreover, she forces her American born daughter to follow the same which sometimes renders conflict in mother-daughter relation. However, she cannot resist the influences of the culture of host country in the United States. She follows certain practices of American cultures. At the same time, she manifests an ambivalent attitude to both cultures. In such cultural interaction, her subjectivity encompasses multiplicities and pluralities by deconstructing the binary of the home and host culture. In this article, the formation of her subjectivity is analyzed through the critical postulations of 'being' and 'becoming' of Stuart Hall and 'third space' of Homi Bhabha. Hall's representation in Bhabha's third space can be interpreted and analyzed in the light of Arjun Appadurai's modernity of cultural globalization. Precisely, the cultural interaction in the third space of the diaspora renders fluid and unstable subjectivity of LuLing which simultaneously belongs to past, present and future.*

**KEYWORDS:** Becoming, being, cultural identity, cultural negotiation, self-exploration, third space

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### INTRODUCTION

The Chinese American character LuLing, in Amy Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, negotiates between her past and present undermining stability and consistency in the process of self exploration in the diaspora. LuLing persistently struggles to settle in the new setting while conserving her original indigenous culture in the US. Despite unavoidable hardships, she persists to perpetuate her original culture deeply rooted in her subconscious in diaspora. However, she manifests different degrees of flexibility and adaptability to the American culture. Without totally forsaking one culture while following the other, she tends to live with the shared cultural spaces, partly western and partly eastern. At the same time, she remains ambivalent to both of them. Her ambivalent attitude and cultural vacillations between past and present, and her native Chinese and host American culture problematize her cultural identity. Precisely, this article examines her problematic cultural identity and process of self reinvention through the critical

postulations of Stuart Hall's cultural identity, Homi Bhabha's third space and Arjun Appadurai's cultural globalization.

Hall conceptualizes cultural identity in his notion of being and becoming. Being refers to shared history and common cultural ancestry which emphasizes the similarities, the oneness and the underlying essence among a group of people. He explains, "our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people', with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history" (223). The oneness is understood as fixed reference and meaning which reflects the general shared cultural codes and common historical experiences. However, he emphasizes the dynamic process of cultural identity in his conceptualization of becoming.

Hall's postulation of "cultural identity" equally emphasizes the similarities and the differences amongst an imagined cultural group. He explicates:

Cultural identity... is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. (225)

Hall explicates that identity is contingent and not ahistorical or immutable. Identity is an ongoing process of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. Depending on the pre-given and pre-determined aspects only partially define identity. It transcends time and place. Although it is historical, it changes in and through power relations that are spatial and cultural. It equally belongs to both the past and the future. In the same way, Bhabha postulates the third space of cultural encounter in which immigrants' cultural identity evolves negotiating with their past and present in the diaspora.

Deconstructing the bipolar notion of home and host country, the conceptualization of the third space assumes that the subjectivity of immigrants evolves out of the interaction in the third space. Bhabha postulates the third space as cultural encounters in contradictory and ambivalent spaces. In the cultural encounter, cultural identities are negotiated and contested undermining stability, consistency and originality. In fact, the third space "constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (Bhabha 37). As a result, cultural meanings and signs are reviewed, revised and reread with new perspectives and prospects. Such hybrid and interactive third space substantiates Appadurai's conceptualization of globalization with cross flow of people, information and culture mediated through technology.

Appadurai, in *Modernity at Large*, explicates globalization as a process of making a global culture shaped by mass migration and electronic mediation. Appadurai exposes how people from the third world move to the first world in their pursuit of resources and opportunities. However, people in the West, while living in Europe and North America, contribute to the evolution of a new culture, partly sharing the original ethnic culture of their native culture and fast changing modern culture of the host country. In this line, Appadurai's critiques the construction of the diasporic third space:

As with mediation, so with motion. The story of mass migrations (voluntary and forced) is hardly a new feature of human history. But when it is juxtaposed with the rapid flow of mass –mediated images,

scripts, and sensations, we have a new order of instability in the production of modern subjectivities. As Turkish guest workers in Germany with Turkish films in their German flats, as Koreans in Philadelphia watch the 1988 Olympics in Seoul through satellite feeds from Korea, and as Pakistani cabdrivers in Chicago listen to cassettes of sermons recorded in mosques in Pakistan or Iran, we see moving images meets deterritorialized viewers. These create diasporic public spheres, phenomena that confound theories that depend on the continued salience of the nation –state as the key arbiter of important social changes. (4)

Such a blend of the native world and the host society produces the third cultural space in Bhabha's term. People of the original native society invent a shared culture of the home and host cultures in their popular consumption, such as food and dress, and language and market products. In such global context, immigrant character LuLing in *Bonesetter's Daughter* negotiates her cultural identity vacillating between her native culture and host land culture in the diaspora.

### NEGOTIATION WITH AMERICAN CULTURE

LuLing manifests ambivalent attitude to American culture. She simultaneously manifests her fascination and repulsion to American culture. Initially, she develops her inclination toward American culture in her fascination of the American missionaries to the orphanage. In the orphanage, the indoctrination of Christianity reduces the influence of Chinese traditional belief, prompting her to grasp the new religious and cultural practices. In addition, some of the push factors, including the war-ridden China, its patriarchy, poverty and scarcity bring her closer to the American culture. In the US, she also attempts adopting Western values and practices. Despite her attraction to America, she is shocked with some practices and attitude of Americans. In her orphanage, the occupation of better position by American ladies than Chinese surprises her. Similarly, the description of hardship in America in GaoLing's letters upsets her. In this sense, she possesses mixed feeling about lifestyle and culture of her host country America.

American people's contribution to China and the Chinese communities drive LuLing to the American culture. Two American missionaries Miss Ruth Grutoff and Miss Towler run an orphanage for Chinese girls in an old monastery near LuLing village. LuLing herself is sent to this rural area after her mother's death. The orphanage has been assisted by many people from America. Miss Grutoff informs them of missionaries by reading letters with; "pledges of money" (Tan 102) by people from; "San Francisco in California, Milwaukee in Wisconsin, Elyria in Ohio" (102). LuLing wonders; "why would a stranger love another stranger?" (103) while own people discard them. LuLing gets impressed by such act of benevolence of American people to the orphanage of Chinese people.

In the orphanage, LuLing's attraction of America intermingles with introduction of Christianity. the American missionaries introduce Christian beliefs and practices to the Chinese kids. In this process, they also celebrate female selfhood which impresses LuLing very much. They sing the song about female. Miss Towler sings:

We can study, we can learn,  
We can marry whom we choose.  
We can work, we can earn,  
And bad fate is all we lose. (198)

The glorification of female selfhood, independence, talent and capacity contradicts with old Chinese patriarchal notion. In her new religion, females are no longer considered as weak, dependent and submissive creature. Being independent, they are able to

accomplish multiple tasks. Such celebration of female's worth; talent and freedom lead to self exploration to LuLing.

LuLing experiences transition in her life during her stay in the orphanage. She is brought up in a typical Chinese family imbibing old Chinese patriarchal values and practices. At orphanage, she is exposed with American religions, values and practices. Christian prayers, deities, and practices are part of her life. Besides indoctrination of Christianity, they are encouraged to learn, do, decide and trust on themselves. As a result, she realizes positive changes inside her also. She confesses her transition; "by then, I too had changed, from a tutor to the teacher, from lonely girl to one who was in love with Teacher's Pan's son" (208). This new sense of responsibility, maturity and self-respect render fascination to American religion and culture.

LuLing's attraction results in fantasized image of America. She envisions America as a place free from ghost and suffering. She reveals that; "in my heart, America was the Christian heaven... but there was a hope that I could find happiness that had stayed hidden from me. I could leave the old curse, my bad background" (241). The analogy of "Christian heaven" refers to the place of plentitude, happiness and spirituality. It contrasts sharply from her present existence in China, which is full of sufferings and troubles. In fact, she believes that entry into American geo-cultural space liberates her from all the problems of her life.

LuLing cherishes a glamorous image of American life once she settles down there. She envisages that "GaoLing would be rich, ... And I would be a famous painter" (243). Then, they would invite their relatives in America. LuLing visualizes:

Sister Yu and Teacher Pan with his new wife would sail to America for a holiday. GaoLing and I would come to the harbor in San Francisco and wait for them in our new automobile, a shiny black one with many comfortable seats and an American driver. Before we drove them to our mansion on top of a hill, we would stop at a ballroom. And to celebrate our reunion, we all agreed, we would dance and dance and dance. (243)

She believes that immigration to America brings progress, prosperity and unlimited potentialities in her life. Then, she would share this happy moment inviting her friends and relatives from China. She gets excited to the prospects of visiting America.

LuLing's enthusiasm for better life in American is sustained in initial years as she gets married a medical student Edwin Young. As an American citizen, Edwin cares her and gives her more priority as an individual. Such behavior of her husband, which contrasts sharply from the behaviors of her previous Chinese husband, delights her. The initial happiness does not last long. Edwin is killed in a hit and run car accident one night. At that time LuLing's daughter Ruth is only two years old. This fatal accident initiates LuLing's struggle of raising a daughter by a single Chinese immigrant mother without much family fortunes. Despite this, the attraction toward American life style retains in LuLing.

LuLing also internalizes the Western notion of individualism and independent life. She prefers to lead life in a nuclear family independently. She does not like frequently visiting her relatives and friends. After the death of her husband, she takes full responsibility of raising Ruth alone without taking support from her relatives. Nor does she often like to go along with Ruth after she starts living with her American boyfriend Art. Rather, she prefers to lead an independent life of her own. It is only in her old age and her disease dementia that force her to take support of her daughter. Thus, she tries to maintain her American life managing her problems by herself. Besides such incessant fascination to America and Western culture, she harbors resentment with them.

Young LuLing internalizes the racial discrimination and hierarchy among Chinese and American people since her young age. She is shocked with the internal arrangement for Chinese and Americans in her orphanage. She describes that “the two old English ladies lived on top, and I lived in a room on the basement floor of the cottage” (250). This arrangement imposes the racial hierarchy. The American ladies occupy higher position than those of their Chinese counterparts. However, such a sheer discrimination between the American and ethnic Chinese disenchants her. Moreover, getting into American geo-cultural space breaks the Chinese people’s fantasy of the American life that they dream of ever. This is substantiated in the experience of GaoLing who has gone to American before LuLing and has promised to sponsor visa for LuLing. She describes; “my other news is not so good, either. I learned I cannot sponsor you, not yet. The truth is, I almost was not able to stay myself. Why we thought it would be so easy, I don’t know. I see now we were foolish. We should have asked many more questions” (345). This indicates that Chinese people harbor false notion about America. For them, both sponsoring other people’s visa and leading comfortable life are quite difficult. As an immigrant, they have to face various difficulties.

The Chinese immigrants have to face numerous problems in the United States. Their dream of progress and prosperity cannot be materialized easily. GaoLing succinctly describes her American life:

Life here is not so easy. And making money is not what we imagined. All those stories of instant riches, don’t believe them. As for dancing that is only in the movies. Most of the day, I clean houses. I am paid twenty-five cents. That may sound like a lot, but it costs that much to eat dinner. So it is hard to save money. (246)

As a Chinese immigrant GaoLing encounters with the contrast of the rosy picture which she has envisioned before her first visit to the United States She is destined to do manual works and struggle to meet her basic needs. Her grim tale of America influences LuLing’s attitude, too. She simultaneously displays her attraction to and distraction from America.

In recapitulation, LuLing evidently displays her fascination to get into American geo-cultural space. Basically, her stay in the American people-sponsored orphanage during her childhood motivates her to America. The selfless social services of missionaries and their indoctrination of Christianity motivate her toward American culture and religion. In addition, her quest for freedom from the social and economic condition of war-ridden China which has devastated her life increases her proclivity toward America. Conversely, she gets disappointed by the hardship and suffering of Chinese immigrants in America. Precisely, she exposes simultaneous attraction toward and distraction from American culture. In the same way, she remains ambivalent toward her Chinese upbringing and culture.

### **NEGOTIATION WITH CHINESE CULTURE**

LuLing’s subjectivity and personal relationship are shaped by the haunting memory of the past. For her, “history was... a reservoir which she could draw from and share. It didn’t matter that she blurred some of the finer points. The past, even revised, was meaningful”(196). Obviously, her life experience of China such as the economic crisis of her family, her childhood with her mother Precious Aunt, the death of Precious Aunt, her life in Orphanage, her first husband, the China-Japan war and her attempt of visiting America constantly haunts her in her stay in America. In fact, LuLing’s past remains quite active in shaping her life of diaspora. However, she forgets many aspects

of her native land and culture in spite of her strong adherence to it. This renders ambivalence in her attitude to her native culture also.

LuLing's vivid and nostalgic description of Chinese geographical landscape in her memoir reflects her deep and emotional attachment with her native land. She has very minutely depicted the way to mountain temple.

Our family sometimes went to the Mouth of the Mountain for temple fairs and operas. If we travelled by road, it was only about ten kilometres from Immortal Heart. If we walked through the End of the World, it was half that distance but a more dangerous way to go, especially in the summertime. That was when the big rains came. The dry ravine filled, and before you could run to the cliffs, climb up, and cry out, 'Goddess of Mercy,' the gullies ran by like thieves, grabbing you and whatever else was not deeply rooted in the soil. (139)

Such vividness in description reflects how passionately she has been involved with her surrounding before her migration. In this regard, Katie Walsh argues; "Amy Tan's 'mother' characters frequently claim an essential Chinese identity, authenticated by their storytelling of pre-migration experiences"(618). LuLing perennially manifests an attachment with her Chinese origin in her life in diaspora.

The memory of homeland China forms LuLing's sense of identity. Contrasting her marginal status in American society, she prefers to have "home and identity centered elsewhere—in China" (Yuan 295). China, as a repository of cultural history, provides emotional and psychological support in diasporic existence. For this, LuLing often exploits the "China narratives in terms of their conscious needs and unconscious desires, asserting them in the context of American culture for self-empowerment" (295). It enables LuLing in asserting her power and control in the disputes with her American born daughter Ruth. Ruth also looks at her mother with respect and appreciation once she has access to the China narratives of her mother. LuLing's sense of self and cultural identity gets influenced with her story of China.

LuLing's attachment with her land of origin reflects in her recurrent use of the metaphor of bone. The bone is the part of her family ancestry and occupation. Her grandfather was a bonesetter who used to treat broken bones using traditional domestic medicines and skills. This skill has been transferred from generation to generation as Tan explains:

For nine hundred years, Precious Auntie's family had been bonesetters. That was the tradition ... That was their inheritance. They also passed along the secret location for finding the best dragon bones, a place called the Monkey's Jaw. An ancestor from the time of the Sung Dynasty had found the cave in the deepest ravines of the dry riverbed. Each generation dug deeper and deeper, with one soft crack in the cave leading to another further in. And the secret of the exact location was also a family heirloom, passed from generation to generation, father to son, and in Precious Auntie's time, father to daughter to me. (141)

LuLing establishes her place in her family ancestry as "notions of ancestry and inheritance are ... explicit in Luling's Storytelling" (Walsh 619). She feels as a part of entire history of her family and attempts to explore it.

The excavation of bones also goes beyond literal search for curative bones. It is symbolically the quest for history and origin. The archaeological search of the bones of 'Peking Man' is "the symbolic of the strength and longevity of China's history and culture" (Walsh 619). It is part of their being and an attempt to view themselves as part and continuation of history. For this, LuLing's first husband Kai Jing and his team of

scientists have explored a lot for the pieces of the bones of Peking Man. This is the matter of Chinese history, culture and glory for them. Thus bones, which have been used for physical cure by ancestors, function as an emotional cure to LuLing as it connects the generations reviving the past.

In order to be part of her ancestry, LuLing identifies herself with her mother Precious Aunties. LuLing understood her dumb mother's gestures, body language, facial expression and emotional responses more than others. Moreover, opening the package wrapped in blue clothes which her mother has given her, she finds an oracle bone symbolizing her ancestors and a photo of her mother as a young girl in the orphanage. Looking at mother's photo, LuLing realizes, "her face, her hope, her knowledge, her sadness- they were mine" (Tan 204). She accepts her mother's reality as her own. This identification with her mother gives her a sense of belonging to the past. In addition, she also shares certain characteristics of her mother.

LuLing is influenced by her mother's unconquerable nature. Despite undergoing tragic experience in her life, Precious Auntie is a strong woman. She has lost her father and husband on the day of her marriage. Then, she has attempted to commit suicide. But she restored her courage to continue her life for the sake of her daughter. As LuLing recalls; "I was the reason she stayed, her only reason to live" (152). Like her mother, LuLing faces several tragedies with determination. This determination enables her to continue her life after the suicide of her mother and execution of her first husband by Japanese army. Moreover, she undertakes various difficult jobs to buy a ticket to America. In fact, her determination, strength and resilience are part of her family heritages. In the same way, she attempts to impart such family ancestry to her daughter.

LuLing as a first generation immigrant mother functions as a cultural transmitter of Chinese culture to her American born daughter. Imposing Chinese values, LuLing safeguards Ruth from Americanization in her Childhood. She restricts Ruth to eat American food like chocolate milk, doughnuts, beef, and hamburger. She complains on Ruth's looks and behaviors. She does not want to watch American show on TV. She expects good academic performance of Ruth at school. She imparts the notion of ghost and spirit in Ruth's mind. She wants total submission of her daughter without any question. The restriction of American food, language and demand of total submission create "a sense of alienation in Ruth" (Pu 12). This leads to conflict in mother daughter relationship.

Mother's imposition of traditional native culture to her daughter sparks conflict in the mother-daughter relationship. As a typical Chinese mother LuLing is strict and authoritative as "in a traditional Chinese mother-daughter relationship, the mother has the total control of her daughter, and a good daughter is supposed to be unconditionally obedient to the will of her mother" (12). LuLing wants a submissive daughter with total loyalty. In addition, she expects her daughter "to internalize their past and make strong bonds to Chinese culture" (Yuskel 69). But Ruth is grown up in the American culture which emphasizes on individuality and freedom. So she rebels against Chinese tradition imposed by her mother. The mother is appalled at her daughter's insolence. She fears that her daughter's pursuit of the American dream will prevent her from understanding their Chinese heritage.

The anxiety of mother about her daughter's westernization is reflected in the use of metaphor "bone". This metaphor has cultural implication in the Chinese culture. The word "bone" in Chinese literally means character. When Gaoling explains to Ruth about her mother's Chinese family name "Gu", she exposes that "the way bone is written can also stand for 'character'. That's why we use that expression 'it's in your bone. It means, 'That's your character'" (Tan 301). So, the title bonesetter has double meaning. It refers

setting both the bone and character in right track. The episode of Ruth's falling at junior school symbolically reflects this. Despite her mother's warning, Ruth climbs on the slide and breaks her bone by falling off the slide. LuLing's caution metaphorically implies that Ruth's effort to be assimilated into American culture may cause Ruth to break her Chinese identity or her bone. Once Ruth breaks her bone, LuLing feels that her daughter's bone or identity needs to be fixed, and that it is her duty to fix it.

In order to safeguard her daughter from Americanization, LuLing becomes overprotective and observant to all activities of her daughter. This makes Ruth's young age "full of passion, rage, and sudden impulses" (121). Irritated by overprotective nature of her mother, Ruth decides "to be exactly the opposite of her mother" (121). She wants to be truthful to herself and begins to write feeling in a diary which she keeps secretly. Typical Chinese American mother LuLing feels that "a daughter should have no secret from a mother" (157). So she secretly looks into the diary of her daughter. At last Ruth makes an assault in her diary, "STOP!!! PRIVATE!!! IF YOU ARE READING THIS YOU ARE GUILTY OF TRESPASSING!!! Yes! I DO MEAN *YOU!*" (123). Ruth is so upset by such surveillance of her mother that she even writes in her diary that "you talk about killing yourself, so why don't you ever do it? I wish you would. Just do it, do it, do it! Go ahead, kill yourself!"(124). In fact, LuLing's such surveillance to Ruth is the adherence of her native Chinese culture which collides with the Western values.

As a typical Chinese mother, LuLing wants to be an important figure in her daughter's life. Ruth fails to give such a prominent role to her mother when she has to make an important decision in her life as she grows up. Evidently, Ruth's decision of living with Art saddens and shocks her mother because it violates Chinese customs of marriage and diminishes role of mother. Similarly, LuLing's dissatisfaction surfaces when Ruth cannot manage time to visit her because of her busy schedule of works and household chores of Art house. LuLing sarcastically remarks that; "So busy, so success" (44). She further remarks, "Not free . . . because every minute must charge money. What I should pay you; five dollar, ten dollar, then you come see me" (44). Her sarcasm implies that she is not as important as Ruth work and she is valueless for Ruth. This realization hurts Chinese mother. She wants; "to be essential, as a mother should be" (344). Such a desire is also evident in her attempt of imparting certain traditional Chinese skills to her daughter.

Even living in America, LuLing has emotional attachment with Chinese calligraphy which she wants to teach to her American born daughter. When Ruth is eight years old, LuLing tries to teach Chinese calligraphy to her.

"Watch," she said, and selected a brush from the dozens hanging with their tips down. Ruth's sleepy eyes tried to follow her mother's hand as she swabbed the brush with ink, then held it nearly perpendicular to the page, her wrist and elbow in midair. Finally she began, flicking her wrist slightly so that her hand waved and dipped like a moth over the gleam of white paper. Soon the spidery images formed: "Half Off!" "Amazing Discounts!" "Going Out of Business!" ( 49)

For LuLing, writing Chinese letters is totally different from English. Chinese letters and strokes are often associated with emotion and passion. Tan explains; "LuLing was different when she was writing and painting. She was calm, organized, and decisive" (49). LuLing explores her being which she wants to channelize to her daughter through writing Chinese letters.

LuLing concedes the failure in her role as a mediator of cultural inheritances to her daughter when Ruth fails to learn Chinese calligraphy. She persistently attempts to teach Ruth the writing skill. She draws a horizontal stroke and asks Ruth if she can see



what the picture is. Ruth fails to identify that. LuLing repeatedly makes identical stroke and asks Ruth to identify. "This line is like a beam of light. Look, can you see it or not?" To Ruth, the line looked like a sparerib picked clean of meat" (50). In fact, Ruth cannot comprehend her mother's writing techniques. Ruth's failure disappoints her immensely as this calligraphy is the part of Chinese culture and heritages.

Although teaching Ruth to write Chinese characters is difficult and disappointing, the moments underscore the significance of writing as a medium "for the translation of cultural identity between generations" (Walsh 616). Tan depicts LuLing's attempt:

Later LuLing had Ruth try her hand at the same character, the whole time stuffing Chinese logic into her resistant brain. 'Hold your wrist this way, firm but still loose, like a young willow branch – ai-ya, not collapsed like a beggar lying on the road ... Draw the stroke with grace, like a bird landing on a branch, not an executioner chopping off a devil's head. The way you drew it – well, look, the whole thing is falling down. Do it like this ... light first, then temple. See? Together, it means "news from the gods." See how this knowledge always comes from above? See how Chinese words make sense?' (Tan 50)

During writing session, LuLing familiarizes Ruth with Chinese thought, expression, myths and legends. Such attempts show her trust on writing in preserving her past for future generation.

For safeguarding and channelizing their past imbedded with the Chinese culture, both LuLing and her mother Precious Auntie resort to writing. Both of them write their life story which they hand over to their daughters later on. These writings "forge a powerful link between the past and the present" (Dunick 14). In addition, they reveal everything about them in their writing. About their writing, Tan elucidates:

They write about what happened, why it happened, how they can make other things happen. They write stories of things that are but should not have been. They write about what could have been, what still might be. They write of a past that can be changed. ... They can choose not to hide it, to take what's broken, to feel the pain and know that it will heal. (305)

For LuLing, "writing has a cultural and an ancestral importance" (Dunick 14). She was acquainted with her family ancestry by the writing of her mother. Similarly, she ventilates her ancestral stories along with her past life to her daughter through writing a memoir. Since her memory is failing, writing serves her practical need, too. She says "these are the things I must not forget" (Tan 133). This indicates her keen desire to preserve her past and handing it over to her daughter.

LuLing's strong desire of preserving her past leads her writing a memoir in Chinese. Her passionate attachment with Chinese culture reflects in her selection of language. Later on, she hands over this to her daughter, so that she will be familiarized with her mother's past. Ruth fails to read it as it is written in Chinese so employs a translator to translate it into English. The memoir consists of LuLing's life in China from her girlhood till her departure to America. Part second of the novel is the memoir of LuLing. Each part of the section is named as heart, change, ghost, destiny, effortless, character, fragrance and has the Chinese character to represent them. The use of Chinese words which reflects, "the impossibility of a full translation" (Walsh 616) and recording permanently her past life of China replicate her being which she wants her daughter to witness. Despite such attachment with her ancestry, she remains ambivalent to her homeland.

LuLing's sense of belonging even to her native culture remains problematic. She sometimes feels loss of her connection to her inheritance. This is evident in her manner of hiding things. She hides many things such as the bone that her mother gave her, the Jacket that her friend gave her and the dress that her husband gave her. She states that "I hid those things for so long I almost forgot I had them... Almost all that mattered in my life has disappeared, and the worst is losing Precious Auntie's name" (Tan10). She cannot remember her family name. This traumatizes her very much. In fact, hiding is "a passive action which results in losing the link or connection between the past and the present" (Yuksel 68). So, she seems to have lost connection with her past.

LuLing hides many facts of her life in order to cope up with American circumstances. She lies about her first marriage and date of birth while immigrating to America. To her doctor in the US, she hides her real date of birth. Ruth realizes that her mother has been living a life full of lies. Despite, these external needs of lying, she keenly desires to channelize her honest past to her daughter. For this, she preserves her past life writing her memoir honestly. She writes honestly about her first marriage, her real relationship with aunt GaoLing and her childhood before her disease renders oblivion in her. She straddles between the necessity of lying her past and desire of preserving it.

Briefly, LuLing strongly adheres her native Chinese culture even living in the US. In her nostalgia, she documents details of her native land in her memoir. Her memoir illustrates multiple aspects of her past life: social, cultural and geographic. Besides, the memory of her Chinese mother Precious Auntie shapes her personality and personal relationship in the US. She inherits the passion for Chinese calligraphy, strong determination, and introvert nature from her mother. Likewise, her conflicts with her American born daughter arise from differential values of American and Chinese culture. Daughter's adoption of the Western lifestyle upsets LuLing who imposes Chinese values on her. However, she forgets many important parts of her past and lies some aspects of her past life in order to cope up with the modern American society. Thus, living in the American geo-cultural space, LuLing displays dual attitude about her native Chinese culture. Such ambivalent attitudes to her homeland and host land render hybridity in her.

### **HYBRIDITY AND CULTURAL GLOBALIZATION**

LuLing displays her ambivalence to her both native Chinese and host American culture. Sometimes she even mixes both practices of American and Chinese cultures. Even in her orphanage life, she displays equal respects on both Chinese and Buddhist gods. Similarly, she follows certain ethics of her old religion: Buddhism, even after being indoctrinated Christianity. In the same way, she takes clues from her dead mother's ghost to invest in the stock market in America. Moreover, she accepts multiplicities and pluralities of the truth in her memoirs. By hybridizing the Chinese and American cultural practices, she displays fluidities and inconsistencies in her cultural identity.

LuLing mixes the traditional Chinese notion with present realities of her American life. Evidently, assisted by Ruth's mediation, she searches clues to invest in share market from the ghost of Precious Auntie. Ruth recalls that "the many times her mother had asked Precious Auntie for stock tips via the sand tray" (Tan 287). Ruth gets amazed by knowing that her mother has invested in American companies like Intel and IBM. About her investment on share, GaoLing explicates Ruth that, "better than S and P, better than Uncle Edmund- she's like a Wall Street genius!... I think she has been saving it all for you. (287). Obviously LuLing mixes the Chinese notion of ghost with share

market of American Capitalism. Moreover, the typical Chinese mother's concern about future economic security of children is maintained through American share market.

LuLing also manifests such cultural in-betweenness in her manner in orphanage life. She is encouraged to adopt Christianity by forsaking Buddhism in the Christian missionary –managed orphanage. However, under the Buddhist influence of compassion to all creatures, she sympathizes to a deserted baby, who is fathered by her own grandfather. Miss Grutoff, a missionary of the orphanage, is not sympathetic to the boy. Similarly, she also questions the people's judgment based on status. When Sister Yu suggests that Kai Jing's lameness is greater loss than other because he is handsome, LuLing interrogates, "How could Sister Yu, of all people, think such a thing? If a rich man loses his house, is that worse than if a poor man loses his?" (201). Her, "questioning reveals her compassion for the marginalized like the poor, the ugly, and the deserted, who are othered by social norms" (Pu 40). Thus, being persistently indoctrinated to Christianity, she adopts her new religion without forsaking the basic tenets of the old.

LuLing's openness to the multiplicities enables her to manage difficult choices in her religious beliefs. When Miss Grutoff decides to repaint the Chinese gods into Christian, many girls get terrified for the blasphemy. But, LuLing is not afraid. For her, the role of gods is to protect, not to harm people in distress and explains that "I believed that if I was respectful to both the Chinese gods and the Christian one, neither would harm me. I reasoned that Chinese people were polite and also practical about life. The Chinese gods understood that we were living in a Western household run by Americans" (Tan 207). Pragmatically, she comforts herself by rendering respect to both gods, so that she will be blessed and protected by the both. Such conviction; "transcends the cultural binary thinking" (Pu 41) and explores the new possibilities.

LuLing also acknowledges the multiplicities of truth. Being aware about this, she begins her narration:

These are the things I know are true: My name is LuLing Liu Young. The names of my husbands were Pan Kai Jing and Edwin Young, both of them dead and our secrets gone with them. My daughter is Ruth Luyi Young. She was born in a Water Dragon Year and I in a Fire Dragon Year. So we are the same but for opposite reasons. (Tan 5).

These facts are within purview of her knowledge. This is her belief. In other words, these are her personal truths. Likewise, her daughter may have her own truth as she is opposite to her mother. In this sense, LuLing; "points out to the possibility of multiple existence of truth, when she compares herself and her daughter as two similar and yet opposite versions of an individual" (Lotfi 158). Thus she encompasses multiplicities accepting pluralities of truth.

LuLing's acknowledgment of multiplicities renders negotiation of multiple realities. The negotiation reflects in act of translation in the novel. Translation acts as intercultural and intergenerational mediation. It is not simply linguistic variation. LuLing has difficulty in communicating with Americans, so Ruth has to mediate her. Visiting with doctor and responding telephone calls, Ruth has to mediate LuLing. In other words, LuLing negotiates with America through her daughter. This negotiation helps manage her life in America. Similarly, Ruth hires a translator Mr. Tang to translate her mother's memoir written in Chinese. Both mother and daughter negotiate to know the other through translation. The knowledge of other culture simultaneously redefines perception about themselves and other.

LuLing concedes her unstable and shifting identities in the act of negotiation. Her recollection of China as a written form of memoir shows her changing identity. It shows LuLing as a daughter in China and as a mother in America. Within these distinct

geo-cultural spaces, LuLing's subjectivity undergoes a series of changes from a disobedient and obstinate child at her home in China to responsible and flexible lady in the orphanage to protective and over sensitive mother in the US. This shifting subjectivity underscores her evolving and unstable identity which always remains in the process of formation.

Simultaneous straddling in two cultural spaces, LuLing, follows two sets of cultural practices at once. As a result, she sometimes mixes Chinese and American cultural practices hybridizing her cultural identities. She exhibits such practices in her stay in the orphanage in China. The orphanage is a typical example of hybridity as it is run by Christian missionaries in old monastery with several portraits of Chinese deities on the wall. LuLing also follows hybrid cultural practices in her diasporic life in America. The hybrid cultural practices expose inherent multiplicities and pluralities of her cultural identity by underscoring her changing subjectivities.

## CONCLUSION

In *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, the first generation immigrant remains ambivalent and oscillates between two cultures: her homeland Chinese and host land American cultures. Tan's LuLing is not totally free from her shared and common culture, ancestry and history: 'being' in Hall's concept. So, she tries to perpetuate Chinese cultural values and practices and impose the same even to her American born daughter. Often this renders conflict in the mother and daughter relationship. At the same time, LuLing is managing her life constantly negotiating with mainstream the Western culture in the diaspora. This negotiation, which Hall terms 'becoming', is also shaping her cultural identity. In fact, both the 'being' and 'becoming' conjointly recreate her cultural identity in the new world far away from their native land.

LuLing, in reinventing her self, involves in constant process of negotiation and interaction of her being and becoming rendering hybridity in her life as Appadurai envisions in cultural globalization mediated through technology. Eventually, her cultural identity is unstable, agonized and in constant flux vacillating on the both sides of the divide. This undermines the claims of unified and stable self. Besides, her subjectivity bears traces of the culture of origin and host country. Locating the traces of origin in retrospection is not sufficient in conceptualizing her subjectivity. These traces are rehistoricied and reappropriated in new context. In fact, she equally belongs to the past, present and the future. Moreover, she is in constant processes of formation and reformation. So her evolving self is in the third space: doubling and assembling space of being and becoming in at least two places at once. Consequently, she reinvents her self, which inherently remains fluid and ever changing, in the constant process of negotiation and transformation.

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