

**FEMALE QUEST FOR IDENTITY BETWEEN CULTURES IN  
AMY TAN'S THE KITCHEN GOD'S WIFE AND THE  
BONESETTER'S DAUGHTER**

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Department of English Language and Literature**

**Burcu DÜZ**

**Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Meryem AYAN**

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Jüri Başkanı

Doç. Dr. Mehmet Ali ÇELİKEL



Jüri-Danışman

Yrd. Doç. Dr. Meryem AYAN



Jüri

Yrd. Doç. Dr. Recep Şahin ARSLAN


Pamukkale Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Yönetim Kurulu'nun 23/01/2014 tarih ve ..03/13... sayılı kararıyla onaylanmıştır.



Prof. Dr. Turhan KAÇAR

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Signature: 

Name, Last Name: Burcu DÜZ

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## ABSTRACT

### **FEMALE QUEST FOR IDENTITY BETWEEN CULTURES IN AMY TAN'S THE KITCHEN GOD'S WIFE AND THE BONESETTER'S DAUGHTER**

DÜZ, Burcu

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**This study is an analysis of female identity formation between cultures in *The Kitchen God's Wife* and *The Bonesetter's Daughter* by Amy Tan. The aim of this dissertation is to analyze identity under the light of Cultural Studies. Identity including self and social identities is socially and culturally constructed formation which is changeable and positional. In that sense, identity is always affected by society, culture and gender. Cultural and gendered identities create stereotypes and binary oppositions whereas in contemporary multicultural societies differences turn into hybrid and bicultural identities.**

**Chapter One presents a detailed explanation of identity and its relation to culture and gender. Then in Chapter Two which portrays a historical background between theoretical and analytical chapters, Chinese American identity formation is analyzed from China to the United States of America. Finally, Chapter Three deals with female identity between Chinese and American cultures in Amy Tan's two novels *The Kitchen God's Wife* and *The Bonesetter's Daughter*.**

**In these novels, Amy Tan tries to explore female identity formation between traditional Eastern and individual Western cultures. In the novels, Chinese-born mothers escaping from patriarchal China try to preserve their Chinese culture in the United States of America while American-born Chinese daughters attempt to develop an American identity rejecting Chinese background. Tan's female characters who are left in-between two cultures struggle to form an identity of their own and during their identity quest they learn to embrace their hybrid, bicultural Chinese American identity.**

**Key Words:** Identity, Gender, Culture, Amy Tan, The Kitchen God's Wife and The Bonesetter's Daughter

## ÖZET

### **AMY TAN'İN THE KITCHEN GOD'S WIFE VE THE BONESETTER'S DAUGHTER ADLI ROMANLARINDA KADININ KÜLTÜRLER ARASINDAKİ KİMLİK ARAYIŞI**

DÜZ, Burcu  
Yüksek Lisans Tezi, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı ABD  
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Bu çalışma, Amy Tan'ın *The Kitchen God's Wife* ve *The Bonesetter's Daughter* adlı eserlerinde kadının kültürler arasındaki kimlik oluşumunun bir analizidir. Bu tezin amacı kimliği Kültür Araştırmaları ışığı altında incelemektir. Kimlik – kişisel ve sosyal kimlikler dâhil – toplumsal ve kültürel olarak bir araya getirilmiş değişken ve konumsal oluşumlardır. Bu açıdan kimlik her zaman toplumun, kültürün ve toplumsal cinsiyetin etkisi altındadır. Kültürel kimlik ve toplumsal cinsiyet kimlikleri stereotipler ve zıtlıklar oluşturur iken çağdaş çok kültürlü toplumlarda farklılıklar melez ve iki kültürlü kimliklere dönüşmektedir.

Birinci bölüm kimliğin ayrıntılı bir açıklamasını ve onun kültür ve toplumsal cinsiyetle ilişkisini sunmaktadır. Daha sonra teori ve uygulama bölümleri arasında tarihsel bir geçmiş sunan ikinci bölümde Çin'den Amerika Birleşik Devletlerine Çinli Amerikan kimliğinin oluşumu incelenmektedir. Son olarak üçüncü bölüm Amy Tan'ın *The Kitchen God's Wife* ve *The Bonesetter's Daughter* adlı romanlarında Çin ve Amerikan kültürleri arasındaki kadın kimliğini ele almaktadır.

Bu romanlarda, Amy Tan geleneksel Doğu ve bireysel Batı kültürlerinin arasındaki kadının kimlik oluşumunu incelemektedir. Romanlarda erkek egemen Çin'den kaçan Çin doğumlu anneler Amerika Birleşik Devletlerinde Çin kültürünü muhafaza etmeye çalışırken, Amerika doğumlu Çinli kızları ise Çinli geçmişlerini reddederek bir Amerikan kimliği oluşturmaya çalışırlar. Tan'ın iki kültür arasında kalan kadın karakterleri kendi kimliklerini oluşturmak için mücadele ederler ve kimlik arayışları esnasında melez iki kültürlü Çinli-Amerikan kimliklerini kabullenmeyi öğrenirler.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kimlik, Toplumsal Cinsiyet, Kültür, Amy Tan, The Kitchen God's Wife ve The Bonesetter's Daughter

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## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to analyze the identity quest under the influence of culture from the perspective of Cultural Studies in Amy Tan's novels *The Kitchen God's Wife* and *The Bonesetter's Daughter*. In that sense, especially the female identity is affected by the patriarchal society that is constructed through cultural and gendered identities. The cultural identities are not only imposed by one's own culture but also by the new culture that one tries to adapt to. Thus, the cultural identities in multicultural societies acquired by the individuals become a part of the acculturation process that reshapes the formation of female identity – previously defined as the other related to male identity – in the globalized world with postmodern thought of the era. During late-modernity, all minorities or dependant sides of the binary oppositions such as female identities, ethnic identities became visible in the society as Simon During remarks “cultural studies became the voice of the other” (1993:14). Moreover, the change of the labor requirements caused mobility both in social and cultural societies. Thus, in multicultural society, identities are constructed in a different way from the past because it is not possible to talk about authentic and essential identities any more. In other words, identity is always in a process and ready to be altered and affected by the changing societies which are hybrid, bicultural and multicultural. Therefore, the new identity formation is a multifaceted subject affected by various cultural issues and changing diversities.

Chinese American identity is one of the hybrid identities which are neither American nor Chinese. This bicultural identity is composed as a result of Chinese immigration to the United States after the Gold Rush era. While the first generation rejecting American culture kept their Chinese identity by living in Chinatowns, the second generation was educated in the American culture outside of the Chinatowns; therefore, they could not be Chinese as in the past. Thus, those generations went through an identity crisis for a long time because of the discrepancy between their traditional Chinese background imposed by parents and the American culture subjected by their education and daily life. However, in postmodern scenario the discrepancy



between different identities are embraced because identity is an ongoing process depending on time, place and culture.

Amy Tan is one of the prominent Chinese American writers who portray this discrepancy between cultures and its effects on individuals. In Tan's two novels *The Kitchen God's Wife* and *The Bonesetter's Daughter* female characters and their gendered and cultural identities are highlighted in relation to not only Chinese but also the American society. In other words, Amy Tan shows how identity formation is connected and shaped with culture which includes language, religion, food and lifestyle.

The first chapter as a theoretical part introduces the concept of identity and its features under the light of Stuart Hall and other scholars' theories. Then it is underlined that identity is a socially constructed anti-essential formation including self-identity or social identity prone to be changed, reshaped and recreated by the society where it exists. Then, gendered and cultural identities are defined. In this respect, postmodern subject is explained in terms of identity formation which is hybrid, bicultural and contradictive as a result of globalization and immigrations.

Then, the second chapter portrays historical background of Chinese American identity. In that sense, this chapter is about how Chinese people immigrated to the United States of America under the effect of Chinese feudal society, patriarchal oppression on women and political instability. Moreover, as a minority in the new world, the perception of American society about Chinese people is discussed with stereotypes. Lastly, the Chinese American literature and Amy Tan's representation of the Chinese American society are mentioned briefly.

Finally, the third chapter as the analytical part of this dissertation is about Amy Tan's two novels *The Kitchen God's Wife* and *The Bonesetter's Daughter* examining the female quest between cultures. This chapter is divided into two parts for each novel after general introduction about Chinese women's quest in the old and the new world and a short summary of the previous chapters. In both chapters Tan introduces four generations living in different periods and different places. In *The Kitchen God's Wife* Tan uses talk story method to link the stories of Pearl with the story of her grandmother, her mother Winnie and her children. On the other hand, in *The Bonesetter's Daughter*

written form of the information is highlighted with the stories of Ruth, her grandmother Gu Liu Xin, her mother LuLing and her step daughters. Using these techniques different identity formations between being Chinese and being American are discussed. Each character has different formations depending on time and place during their identity quests that are affected by cultural and gendered society.

In conclusion, throughout this dissertation, not only cultural identity with language, religion, food and life-style; but also gendered identity with stereotypes, patriarchy, women's education and gender based structure are argued in the process of characters' hybridization and acculturation in the novels. In Amy Tan's novels *The Kitchen God's Wife* and *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, the female quest in reference to Chinese and American culture will be analyzed focusing on the cultural and gender issues during an acculturation process.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INFLUENCE OF CULTURE AND GENDER ON IDENTITY FORMATION

The aim of this thesis is to analyze identity as an anti-essential formation in relation to socially constructed culture and gender under the light of Cultural Studies in Amy Tan's novels, *The Kitchen God's Wife* and *The Bonesetter's Daughter*. In this chapter, identity is divided into self and social identity. By considering both types of identities that are shaped by society which the globalized world and immigrations change, hybrid and bicultural identities are studied as opposed to stereotypes and binaries in relation to culture and gender. According to Barker:

Fuelled by political struggles as well as by philosophical and linguistic concerns, 'identity' emerged as the central theme of cultural studies during the 1990s. The politics of feminism, of ethnicity and of sexual orientation, amongst others, have been high-profile concerns intimately connected to the politics of identity. In turn, these struggles for and around identity necessarily raised the question: what is identity? (2000: 219)

As Barker suggests the definition of identity has been affected by the contemporary world and its politics such as feminism, ethnicity or sexual orientation because identity is not a separate entity that does not have any relation to the world. On the contrary identity is closely connected to the culture which includes anything that belongs to life such as tradition, language, food, religion, lifestyle etc. That is why the rapid change of the contemporary world makes identity always in question. For Kirk and Okazawa-Rey (1998), identity formation "is an ongoing process" as a result of multiple factors:

Identity formation is the result of a complex interplay among a range of factors: individual decisions and choices, particular life events, community recognition and expectations, societal categorization, socialization, and key national or international events (91).

It is impossible to talk about the identity formation from one perspective. This is a process that includes different factors which are not only individual but also social. Cranny-Francis states that "[i]n the postmodern scenario, identity is not an essentialist

attribute of an individual but a strategy which individual (complex, multiple) subjects can use to create new and varied alliances” (2003: 35). This shows that although individuals are the subjects of identities, the individuals and their interactions with the other factors play an important role in its formation. Woodward underlines this fact with these sentences:

[A]lthough as individuals we have to take up identities actively, those identities are necessarily the product of the society in which we live and our relationship with others. Identity provides a link between individuals and the world in which they live. Identity combines how I see myself and how others see me. Identity involves the internal and the subjective, and the external. It is a socially recognized position, recognized by others, not just by me (2000: 7).

It is understood that identity is a double edged concept both from the individual and society’s perspective on one’s self or how the others see the self. That is why it is impossible not to talk about the interaction with the others or other factors to identify someone. Barker (2000) explains this with *self-identity* and *social identity*. For Barker, *self-identity* is “the conceptions we hold about ourselves and our emotional identification with those self-descriptions” when *social identity* is described as “the expectations and opinions that others have of us” (220). Anthony Giddens argues self-identity in *Modernity and Self-Identity* (1991):

Self identity, in other words, is not something that is just given, as a result of the continuous of the individual’s action-system, but something that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual (52).

Although *self-identity* seems to be only related to the individual himself or herself, like *social identity* it is impossible to construct a self-identity without any interaction with the society. “In many societies throughout the world, the self is conceptualized within the context of the collective or the community, not as a separate entity” (Robinson-Wood, 2000: 7). According to Giddens “[i]dentity here still presumes continuity across time and space; but self-identity is such continuity as interpreted reflexively by the agent” (1991: 53). Although self-identity is created and understood by the individual, it is impossible to forge a self-identity without any interaction with the society, culture, time and space which create a social identity. As it will be argued in Amy Tan’s characters’ biographical stories during the creation of self-identity, “the ‘content’ of self-identity – the traits from which biographies are constructed – varies

socially and culturally” (Giddens, 1991: 55). Therefore, it is understood that there is always a relation between self and social identity.

Considering both self and social one “[i]dentity is marked by similarity, that is of people like us, and by difference, of those who are not” (Woodward, 2000: 7). Thus, it can be said that there are two ways to identify an individual in relation to others: one is finding sameness the other one is pointing difference between them. In that sense, these two types of identification takes us to the two models of identity:

There are, broadly speaking, two models of identity. The ‘traditional’ view is that all the dynamics (such as class, gender, ‘race’) operate simultaneously to produce a coherent, unified, fixed identity. The more recent view is that identity is fabricated, constructed, in process, and that we have to consider both psychological and sociological factors (Sarup, 1996: 14).

Here two different views of identity are highlighted as *traditional* and *the more recent modern view*. The traditional identity is unified and fixed which is called *essential*. The essentialism comes from the idea that “identity exists as a universal and timeless core of the self that we all possess” (Barker, 2000: 221). This idea ignores the multiplicity of one’s identity and considers the identity as formation which is definite, restricted and unchangeable. The other view is *anti-essential identity* which is “specific to particular times and places” (Barker, 2000, 221). In that sense, Hall underlines the constructed identity:

In common sense language, identification is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with neutral closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation. In contrast with the ‘naturalism’ of this definition, the discursive approach sees identification as a construction, a process never completed – always ‘in process’. It is not determined in the sense that it can always be ‘won’ or ‘lost’, sustained or abandoned (1996: 2).

According to Hall, identity is “not essentialist, but a strategic and positional one” (1996: 3) because identity is always in a process, “identity is to do not with being but with becoming” (Sarup, 1996: 6). As opposed to essential identities which is shown as natural:

[I]dentities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting

and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation (Hall, 1996: 4).

Anti-essentialist model shows that the unified and the fixed identities are impossible in this contemporary era because in the postmodern world, identities are fragmented and disintegrated. Barker states that “The decentred or postmodern self involves the subject in shifting, fragmented and multiple identities” (2000: 225). In contemporary societies people can have contradictory and anti-essential identities at the same time because it is impossible to talk about authenticity and unity in postmodern era. If anti-essential identity considers identity as a constructed production of society, how can cultures affect the identities? If anti-essential identities are closely connected to the self and society, what can the role of culture be between them? Various questions have been raised about identity construction, but no certain answers were able to be stated because identity is affected from different categories such as *cultural* and *gendered identities*. As a part of the social identity process, Stuart Hall (1992) divides the identity into the three different conceptions in his article *The Question of Cultural Identity* as Enlightenment subject, Sociological subject, and Post-modern Subject (275). Hall explains the first concept as:

The Enlightenment subject was based on a conception of the human person as a fully centered, unified, individual, endowed with the capacities of reason, consciousness and action, whose ‘centre’ consisted of an inner core which first emerged when the subject was born, and unfolded with it, while remaining essentially same – continuous or ‘identical’ with itself – throughout the individual’s existence (275).

In this type, subject is fixed and centered as in the traditional approach. Although this movement changed the century that was raised, subject was considered as a man because it did not include the differences in the society. It is such a fixed concept that the change is not considered by ignoring any interaction between self and society.

The second one is the sociological subject that was observed in the modern world. Although in the sociological concept subject is aware of being between the self and society, there is still an essence in the core of the individual. In other words, the self keeps being centered in spite of mutual relationship between self and the other.

Identity, in this sociological conception of the issue, bridges the gap between the 'inside' and 'outside' – between the personal and the public worlds. The fact that we project 'ourselves' into these cultural identities, at the same time internalizing their meaning and values, making them 'part of us', helps to align our subjective feelings with the objective places we occupy in the social and cultural world. Identity thus stitches (or, to use a current medical metaphor, 'sutures') the subject into the structures. It stabilizes both subjects and the cultural worlds they inhabit, making reciprocally more unified and predictable (Hall, 1992: 276).

However, as the third concept of identity the Post-modern subject portrays different identity formation than the previous one in late-modernity under the influence of globalization and immigrations. "The subject, previously experienced as having a unified and stable identity, is becoming fragmented; composed, not of a single, but of several, sometimes contradictory or unresolved, identities" (Hall, 1992: 276-277). The process of identification is different from the other terms of the approach to the cultural identities. While the previous sociological subject is in search of unification between self and social identities considering them essential forms, the identification of the postmodern subject positioning self into cultural identities is "more open-ended, variable and problematic" (Hall, 1992: 277) because of de-centered, fragmented, dislocated identities. This postmodern subject is not only alienated but also dislocated. In other words, there is no consistent identity formation because it is such a complicated process that it changes according to time, place and culture that can be developed without any symmetry creating contradictory identities.

The fully unified, completed, secure and coherent identity is a fantasy. Instead, as the systems of meaning and cultural representation multiply, we are confronted by a bewildering, fleeting multiplicity of possible identities, any one of which we could identify with – at least temporarily (Hall, 1992: 277).

Apart from Enlightenment, Sociological and Postmodern subject Hall clarifies the definition of cultural identity and its functions in the society by dividing it into two in his work *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* Hall (1990):

The first position defines 'cultural identity' in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self', hiding inside the many other, more superficial and artificially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. Within the terms of this definition, our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes with provide us, as 'one people', with stable, unchanging and continuous and vicissitudes of our actual history. This 'oneness', underlying all the other, more superficial differences, is the truth, the essence (223).

Here Hall defines essential identities in a form of *oneness*. “It is thought to be formed out of a common history, ancestry and set of symbolic resources” (Barker, 2000: 231). This identity comes from sameness instead of difference. That is why it is inclined to create “the other” by the help of binary oppositions. Therefore, sameness can exclude the difference, which causes collective identity but at the same time polarization in the society as “us/them” concept. On the contrary, Hall considers anti-essential identities as *difference*. This second model of cultural identity includes not only similarities but also differences.

There is, however, a second, related but different view of cultural identity. This second position recognizes that, as well as the many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significance *difference* which constitute ‘what we really are’: or rather – since history has intervened – ‘what we have become’. We cannot speak for very long, with any exactness, about ‘one experience, one identity’, without acknowledging its other side [...] (Hall, 1990: 225)

For Hall identities cannot be stable for a long time because they are ready to change and experience something new. Hall explains how the cultural identities are continually exposed to be changed:

Cultural identity, in this second sense, 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 essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere ‘recovery’ of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past (1990: 225).

In this process identities cannot be defined only as a shared history and a culture including ethnicity, race and gender. Especially in the multicultural societies it is impossible to talk about a shared heritage or history. People have been experiencing different cultures in different societies as a result of wars and migrations. Moreover, in a globalized world it is not easy to escape from acculturation. “Acculturation appears to be a process of socialization into accepting and adapting to the cultural values of the larger society” (Robinson-Wood, 2000: 8). Acculturation does not always mean to internalize the other culture forgetting the previous one. Consciously or unconsciously acculturation creates multicultural identities. However, this acculturation process can be



different from each other. Sometimes people can adopt the new culture and do not want to have their original identities, which can be called “assimilation” (Robinson-Wood, 2000: 9). In this situation those people can see the new culture superior to their culture. On the other hand, people can just reject to get involved in any interaction with the other cultures, which can be called “traditionality” (Robinson-Wood, 2000: 9). However, similar to Hall’s anti-essentialist description of identity, people can be “integrated” (Robinson-Wood, 2000: 9) into the other culture preserving their cultural identity. “Integration describes an interest in maintaining one’s original culture while simultaneously seeking interactions with the other culture” (Robinson-Wood, 2000: 9).

In that sense, hybrid and bicultural identities come out, but in these identities, having multiple selves is something positive to enrich one’s identity with different conditions. According to Sarup, “Identity can be displaced; it can be hybrid or multiple. It can be constituted through community; family region, the nation-state. One crosses frontiers and boundaries” (1996: 1). From this point of view, as described by Pieterse (1995) “*Cultural hybridization* distinguishes cultural response, which range from assimilation, through forms of separation, to hybrids that stabilize and blur cultural boundaries” (qtd. in Barker, 2000: 264). These blurring cultural boundaries cause the emergence of cultural hybridity which is discussed by Homi Bhabba in postcolonial criticism that forms one perspective of Cultural Studies.

In my own work I have developed the concept of the hybridity to describe the construction of cultural authority within conditions of political antagonism or inequity. Strategies of hybridization reveal an estranging movement in the ‘authoritative’, even authoritarian inscription of the cultural sign. At the point at which the precept attempts to objectify itself as a generalized knowledge or a normalizing, hegemonic practice, the hybrid strategy or discourse opens up a space of negotiation where power is unequal but its articulation may be equivocal. Such negotiation is neither assimilation nor collaboration. It makes possible the emergence of an ‘interstitial’ agency that refuses the binary representation of social antagonism. Hybrid agencies find their voice in a dialectic that does not seek cultural supremacy or sovereignty. They deploy the partial culture from which they emerge to construct visions of community and versions of historic memory, that give narrative form to the minority positions they occupy; the outside of the inside: the part in a whole (Bhabba, 1993: 58).

Hybridization process includes everybody regardless of being minority or majority which participates in the whole with their difference. For minorities, as Homi Bhabba mentions cultural hybridities “emerge in moments of historical transformation”

(1994: 2). For example, globalization after post-war period and its consequences such as immigrations to the place where labor force was needed has transformed the world. According to Simon During, “globalizations meant that the role that subcultures and the working class played in earlier cultural studies began to be replaced and transformed by communities outside the West or migrant (or “diasporic”) communities within the West [...]” (1993: 15).

Moreover, Hall (1992) also underlines that “[m]odern nations are all cultural hybrids” (297) because industrialism, globalization and wars dislocate people from their countries as immigrants. It also reminds diaspora identities like hybrid ones. While hybridity can be used for both sides as minority or majority, diaspora identities include minorities. However, in time both types of identities contribute to diminish the hegemonic relationship between minorities and majorities under the effect of postmodern conditions. As Paul Gilroy mentions:

Diasporas are the result of the ‘scattering’ peoples, whether as the result of war, oppression, poverty, enslavement or the search for better economic and social opportunities, with inevitable opening of their culture to new influences and pressures (1997:304).

For Barker “A diaspora can be understood as a dispersed network of ethnically and culturally related peoples” (2000: 262). Those people as minority live in another country knowing that they cannot go back to their homelands. Like hybrid identities, as Brah (1996) says “diasporic identities are at once local and global” (qtd. in Barker, 2000: 262). Moreover, Brah adds that “diaspora space as a conceptual category is ‘inhabited’ not only by those who have migrated and their descendants, but also by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous (qtd. in Barker, 2000, 262). For example, like African Diaspora and Jewish Diaspora, Chinese Diaspora is one of the most populated ones in the world especially in the United States. They have come to the United States with different reasons and forged Diaspora identities in Chinatowns and also in a mutual way hybrid identities outside of Chinatowns.

In spite of those multicultural concepts, society tends to categorize people representing stereotypical images. “Stereotyping involves making a simple generalization about a group and claiming that all members of the group conform to it” (Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 1998: 96). Although these stereotypes do not represent

individuals of the group, people keep labeling subordinate groups. For example; in terms of ethnic identity Asian people are generally considered that all of them are good at math or Asian women are exotic or passive in a sexual way. Those stereotypical images are not true or reasonable. Moreover, sometimes they are contradictive to each other. “Stereotypes conceal the operation of power within society by characterizing inequalities as natural differences of ability and inclination” (Cranny-Francis & Waring, 2003: 142).

Like culture, as a part of it gender is also constructed by the society itself. Those produced rules of gender restrict individuals who are forced to think those roles are natural and fixed. Therefore, femininity and masculinity turn to be binary oppositions of which each person should fit instinctively.

Within these *naturalistic* approaches sex is conceptualized in terms of *binaries*: male/female; man/woman; masculine/feminine. In this binary thinking male and female are understood as ‘opposites’, who, despite their differences, complement one another. This pairing of ‘opposite sexes’ is seen as natural. Gender here is understood to be a biological ‘fact’ that is pre-given and located in the body (Richardson, 1993: 4).

“Western philosophy holds that the construction of masculinity and femininity as mutually exclusive or dichotomous” (Robinson-Wood, 2000: 160). Dichotomous and binary mean the same thing which is a division of opposite entities. “In the seventeenth century, Descartes based his philosophy of knowledge on the idea of a fundamental difference between mind and body, a distinction that has become known as ‘Cartesian dualism’” (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004: 24). Although this thesis provided a basis for creation of Western philosophy, those binaries such as “reason/emotion, true/false, normal/deviant, culture/nature or science/nature, public/private, hard/soft, knowledge/experience, self/other, objectivity/subjectivity, and male/female” (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004: 24) causes polarization between these sides if they are considered opposite instead of relational. For instance, each side as man/woman is confined to certain roles as dichotomous beings, which causes inequality between them.

Gender inequality—the devaluation of “women” and the social domination of “men”—has social functions and the social history. It is not the result of sex, procreation, physiology, anatomy, hormones, or genetic predispositions. It is produced and maintained by identifiable social processes and built into the general structure and individual identities deliberately and purposefully. The social order as we know it in Western societies is organized around racial, ethnic, class, and gender inequality. I

contend, therefore, that the continuing purpose of gender as a modern social institution is to construct women as a group to be the subordinates of men as a group (Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 1998: 67).

This inequality comes from patriarchal rules of societies. Patriarchy is one of the most important factors that compose gendered identities. Moreover, patriarchy has such deep roots in the societies that its effects can be considered natural in the culture. However, “[p]atriarchy is a social system in which structural differences in privilege, power and authority are invested in masculinity and the cultural, economic and/or social positions of men” (Cranny-Francis & Waring, 2003: 15).

Patriarchal culture includes ideas about the nature of things, including women, men, and humanity, with manhood and masculinity most closely associated with being human and womanhood and femininity relegated to the marginal position of “other.” It’s about how social life is and how it’s supposed to be, about what’s expected of people and about how they feel. It’s about standards of feminine beauty and masculine toughness, images of feminine vulnerability and masculine protectiveness, of older men coupled with younger women, of elderly women alone. It’s about defining women and men as opposites, about the “naturalness” of male aggression, competition, and dominance and of female caring, cooperation, and subordination. It’s about the primary importance of a husband’s career and the secondary status of a wife’s, about child care as a priority in women’s lives and its secondary importance in men’s. It’s about the social acceptability of anger, rage, and toughness in men but in women, and of caring, tenderness and vulnerability in women but not in men (Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 1998: 73).

Because of dichotomous features, hierarchy comes out as an inequality of power in the patriarchal society. This division causes dominant and subordinate groups that are connected to each other in a contradictory way. However, “[a] number of theorists have sought to develop new, non-dichotomous ways of thinking” (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004: 25). Instead of being *dependant*, “thinking *relationally*” (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004: 25) is emphasized, which brings about relational identities including “complexity, plurality and heterogeneity (or ‘difference’), rather than simple, mutually exhaustive dualisms (Pilcher & Whelehan, 25).

According to Richardson “[i]n the 1960s and 1970s a new way of thinking about gender began to emerge that critiqued earlier ‘essentialist’ frameworks, signaling shift away from biologically based accounts of gender to social analysis” (1993: 5). Simone de Beauvoir has an important role to change this essentialist approach towards gender. De Beauvoir says:

One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produce this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine (1953: 273).

Then, it is understood that those binaries are just constructed by society and not natural or essential, which shows the importance of culture on individuals' lives. "We cannot, de Beauvoir argues, understand womanhood or manhood as fixed by nature, rather this is something that is acquired through the social process of *becoming gendered*" (Richardson, 1993: 6). According to Lorber:

For human beings there is no essential femaleness or maleness, femininity or masculinity, womanhood or manhood, but once gender is ascribed, the social order constructs and holds individuals to strongly gendered norms and expectations. Individuals may vary on many of the components of gender and may shift genders temporarily or permanently, but they must fit into the limited number of gender statuses their society recognizes. In the process, they re-create their society's version of women and men [...](1994: 58).

According to Renzetti & Curran (1992), "gender has socially constructed categories in terms of roles and behaviors based on a biological given of sex" (qtd. in Robinson-Wood, 2000: 11). However, Butler is opposed to the idea that gender is cultural but sex is biologic. Butler thinks that like gender sex is also produced by society. "This distinction between sex and gender has been challenged by arguments that sex is just as much a social construction as gender" (Richardson, 1993: 6). According to Butler:

It would make no sense, then, to define gender as the cultural interpretation of sex, if sex itself is a gendered category. Gender ought not to be conceived merely as the cultural inscription of meaning on a pre-given sex (a juridical conception); gender must also designate the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established. As a result, gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which "sexed nature" or "a natural sex" is produced and established as "prediscursive", prior to culture, a politically neutral surface *on which* culture acts (1990: 11).

It is concluded that sex and gender as constructed forms are under the effect of culture, but this does not mean that cultural norms are stable. The patriarchal discourse uses culture as fixed rules as they did the same thing to the relationship between sex and biology. Both come from cultural situations which are changeable from culture to culture. Butler underlines this fact that:

When the relevant “culture” that “constructs” gender is understood in terms of such a law or set of laws, then it seems that gender is as determined and fixed as it was under the biology-is-destiny formulation. In such a case, not biology, but culture, becomes destiny. (1990: 12).

Judith Butler emphasizes that gendered identities are to be represented as a natural consequence of culture although gender is culturally constructed entity. In that sense, what Butler wants to say that even these identities must be evaluated according to different cultures that they are associated with.

If one “is” a woman, that is surely not all one is; the term fails to be exhaustive, not because a pre-gendered “person” transcends the specific paraphernalia of its gender, but because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate out “gender” from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained (Butler, 1990: 6).

Like a confession, in the past West and Zimmerman remark in their article *Doing Gender* in lectures differentiated sex and gender with certain descriptions. Sex “was what was ascribed by biology: anatomy, hormones, and physiology” while gender “was an achieved status: that which constructed through psychological, cultural, and social means” (1987: 125). Then, they realized that those terms are very complex and ambiguous in society. Moreover, more or less everybody is in the process of “doing gender”:

When we view gender as an accomplishment, an achieved property of situated conduct, our attention shifts from matters internal to the individual and focuses on interactional and, ultimately, institutional arenas. In one sense, of course, it is individuals who “do” gender. But it is a situated doing, carried out in the virtual or real presence of others who are presumed to be oriented to its production. Rather than as a property of individuals, we conceive of gender as an emergent feature of social situations: both as an outcome of and a rationale for various social arrangements and as a means of legitimating one of the most fundamental divisions of society (West & Zimmerman, 1987: 126).

“Doing gender” can be seen in three different phases: individual, interactional, and institutional (West & Zimmerman, 1987: 126). During this process sex and gender cannot be separated from each other. “It is gender that provides the categories of meaning for us to interpret how a body appears to us as ‘sexed’. In other words, gender creates sex” (Richardson, 1993: 7). For West and Zimmerman “Gender is a powerful

ideological device, which produces, reproduces, and legitimates the choice and limits that are predicated on sex category” (1987: 147).

Under the effect of cultural and gendered identities which are constructed by the society, it is impossible for individuals to create a self without those effects. Although autonomy of subjects still partially exists, whatever they do they will be influenced by the ideology. “For Althusser the individual can never be outside ideology, since it is through interaction with ideology that individual subject comes into being” (Cranny-Francis & Waring, 2003: 48). Like Althusser’s thoughts about ideology, post-structuralists also support the idea that there is no self that is not affected by the constructed discourses in the society.

Post-structuralist thought is seen to emerge primarily from the work of Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan and Michel Foucault. It offers an antidote to liberal humanist ways of seeing the world, particularly in their theories of the ‘self’, which move from the liberal conception of a unified and rational self, to fragmentary and contradictory and constructed from the discourses around it. Given that post-structuralists reject the concept of the subject as a fixed entity, they deny any notion of essence at the heart of the self, but argue that we only come to know ourselves through the medium of language, and individual words themselves only gain meaning as part of a system (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004: 112).

In sum, we cannot talk about the society which does not have any interaction with other cultures and we cannot talk about identity that does not have any interaction with gender, sex and culture. Thus, identity through interactions with other cultures and societies becomes gendered, hybridized, acculturated and bicultural such as Chinese American culture or other hyphenated identities that are formed through different intercoursures and interactional histories related to different stories.

## CHAPTER TWO

### INTERACTIONAL HISTORY: FROM CHINA TO AMERICA

The United States of America is one of the countries that have the highest immigrant population in the world. Since almost 1776, people from all over the world have immigrated to this country. Therefore, those immigrants always interact with each other biologically and culturally, but as they created a national American identity, they tried to preserve their ethnic identity as well. This caused the emergence of bicultural double identities, but other than White society basically four ethnic roots are accepted to create American hyphenated identities such as Native American, African American, Latino American and Asian American. Chinese American identity as one of those hybrid identities is composed under the name of Asian American identities that also include other Asian ethnicities: Indian Americans, Japanese Americans, and Vietnamese Americans etc. All of the hyphenated identities have a story that represents their interactional history narrated by different historians and novelists. Chinese American history is based on the immigration story from China to America which narrates the new identity formation in a new multicultural society in the United States and Amy Tan is one of the Chinese American female novelists who plots her novels on the stories of Chinese immigrants to America, their bicultural struggle, their identity crisis and interactional history from China to America.

China is one of the oldest civilizations of the world; that is why China has a long established culture that is rich in terms of ethnicity. However, this ethnic diversity cannot eliminate Chinese stereotypes in the West cultures although all Chinese people do not have the same identity. In the beginning China was the clan society ruled by Dynasties. “Historians consider the Qin and Han dynasties as the first Chinese empire” (Yang & Deming, 2005: 36) accepting the previous era as the Pre-Qin Dynasty period. During more than 2000 years almost everything was the same in terms of policy, Yang & Deming (2005) say that:

Many Chinese people feel that all of Chinese history is a series of dynastic circles, because almost every dynasty repeats a similar story: a heroic founding, an arduous



establishment, a prosperous period, a long decline, revolt and rebellion, collapse, and replacement by a new dynasty (39).

From Han to the Qing dynasty, the same dynastic rules applied to the society; however, in 1912 with the foundation of Republic of China, the regime was changed in the country, which affected everything in the society. This was not just a regime change but also cultural transformation of China. The first thing that the new power did was to change the culture because they thought that “traditional Chinese culture” was the main reason of the decline of Chinese power in that century. According to Yang & Deming (2005):

Beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century, China suffered a series of failures and setbacks during conflicts with other foreign powers. As a result, China was forced to open itself to the world and became a semicolonial country. Even after the fall of the Manchu dynasty and the establishment of the Republic of China, China was still often oppressed and bullied by other foreign forces (43).

In late nineteenth and the early twentieth century the new regime started to criticize the old one in order to create “a new national, scientific, and democratic culture to educate Chinese people and, furthermore, to reconstruct a unified, independent, strong, and modernized China” (Yang & Deming, 2005: 43). Instead of traditional Chinese culture such as Confucian values, “they built this new culture mainly by exploring the values of native folk culture and learning from Western and Japanese culture and scientific technology” (Yang & Deming, 2005: 43). They claimed they were against the oppression and hierarchy coming with traditional culture such as feudalism, imperialism and Confucianism; they started to create another regime under the aim of “exploring the values of folk culture” (Yang & Deming, 2005: 43), which is called as “the May Fourth Movement” (1919) (Yang & Deming, 2005: 43). Moreover, in this era Chinese culture became to get familiar with Western and Japanese cultures. “After World War II, China was devastated by the Japanese assault and tried desperately to recover both culturally and economically” (Darraj, 2007: 54). Defeating National People’s Party or Kuomintang, the Communist party took control of the country as the new government. Since 1949, the People’s Republic of China has ruled the country. During this period, the Communists like Nationalist Kuomintang soldiers tried to change cultural policy of China; that is why, the Cultural Revolution in 1966 came out as another movement to transform the society. In this new movement, the Communist

with their leader Mao Zedong wanted to remove four things in the society “old thoughts, old culture, old customs, and old habits” (Yang & Deming, 2005: 46) to develop socialism. And finally Mao achieved his goal by destroying old culture with his dictatorship. It was the end of the Cultural Revolution when he died. However, his regime created some problems while claiming to solve them. “The biggest problem was that an entire generation of young people were without an education and without means to function in a new China, in which education and political process were emphasized” (Darraj, 2007: 54).

On the other hand, Chinese people interacted with the other cultures around the world in different ways such as wars, immigrations and trade. However, especially after the collapse of the last Dynasty and the foundation of Republic, the country was forced to get involved in an interaction even though the society still kept being traditional to some extent. The United States and China’s relation in terms of immigration dates back to the late-eighteenth century, but “large numbers did not immigrate until the mid-nineteenth century when the gold discovery in California attracted thousands from all over the world, including many from China. The state’s Chinese population increased dramatically” (Lai, 2004: 19). According to Darraj (2007), “Historians divide the immigration of Chinese citizens to the United States into three periods: 1849-1882, 1882-1965, and 1965 to the present” (12). During the first wave, immigrants came to California to take the advantage of “the gold mountain” that is how those early immigrants called the United States. They came to the United States to earn enough money and go back to China; however, most of them chose to stay in the United States because they were fed up with Chinese oppressive dynasty regime and the feudal life conditions but that does not mean that they did not suffer from the working life in New World. Darraj (2007) remarks that:

Most of the immigrants during this period were simple peasants and farmers with a strong work ethic. They worked long hours on the railroads, in mines, on farms, in manufacturing plants, and in lumber camps and slowly built new lives for themselves. These men usually arrived alone, and they sent for wives by ordering “picture brides”—in other words, they agreed to marry based on a young woman’s picture; the woman then traveled to the United States to meet her husband and start her new life (13-14).

First woman arrived to America with marriage after the early male immigrants settled down, started working and had the suitable conditions for their families. Some of

them got married to “the picture brides” while some brought their families to the United States. Therefore, Chinese people started to live with their families in the United States, which caused the demand of citizenship and civil rights of those immigrants. Nevertheless, Americans who were not Chinese claimed that they could not find jobs as a result of those Chinese immigrants. That is why; the government restricted the Chinese immigration with the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. The second period of Chinese immigration started. During this period, Chinese immigration to the United States was prohibited if you did not have any qualified profession. However, World War II led to change in the relations between countries of the world. Japan had the key position between China and the United States because Japan was fighting against both of them at that time. Japan was the major figure of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) and Pearl Harbor (1942). Those two events against Japan changed the relationship between China and the United States. The United States wanted China on its side against Japan; that is why, in 1943 they changed the act to allow Chinese immigration to a certain extent. Different ethnic backgrounds started to be welcomed by the government in 1960s. Moreover, in 1965 the third period began with the Immigration and Nationality Act that allowed immigration properly. Chinese immigration ended with the citizenship as a result of the efforts made.

Thousands of people entered the country to be reunited with their families, and many more entered to seek educational and work opportunities. Still others came to the United States to flee persecution or violence. Although in the past, many Chinese had settled in California, immigrants in recent years have established themselves across the United States, mostly in the large cities such as New York, Chicago, and Boston. Immigrants speak Mandarin, Taiwanese, or Cantonese, depending on the region of China from which they hail. As for religion, the vast majority are either Buddhist or Taoist, although some are also Christians (Darraj, 2007: 15-16).

Chinese people just escaped their homeland because in this period Cultural Revolution was applied to the society which suffered from Mao’s dictatorship. On the other hand, a new cultural formation which included different ethnicities from China and other countries from all over the world developed in the United States. Those people brought their own cultures including languages, religions, foods and their life-style to the new world. While they were trying to adopt themselves to the American Culture, they kept their unique cultures at the same time. Therefore, multicultural society and bicultural individuals came out after that immigration process.

Some were assimilated with the American culture but most of them have continued with their traditional lifestyle in their Chinese neighborhood. They settled down in some places called Chinatowns as Diasporas. In these places, as a minority those people acquired Diaspora identities. In that sense, some of them tried to get used to American individualist life-style keeping their family ties with their cultural background which gave value to the family most. They kept believing in Taoism, Buddhism or Confucianism and also Christianity. They talked Chinese and English. Moreover, they loved eating Chinese cuisine, but that did not stop them from eating Burgers and drinking Coke. Those factors such as language, religion, food and life-style made Chinese people have Chinese American bicultural hybrid identities.

On the one hand Chinese American culture developed as another item of “the salad bowl” to enrich ethnic diversity of the United States; on the other hand, because of the isolated Chinese people in Chinatowns and false representations of the popular cultures such as Hollywood movies, the stereotypes of Chinese people appeared. According to Darraj (2007):

Two images of Chinese in America dominated: the humble, hardworking immigrant who agrees with everything said to him because he does not speak English and the upper-class Chinese nobleman who possesses great wealth and ancient wisdom. Charlie Chan and Fu Manchu were only some of the stock characters prevalent in American popular culture (14-15).

Those Diaspora or bicultural identities combined with Chinese Culture and American Culture sometimes did not destroy the stereotypical image of Chinese people which were sometimes even paradoxical. For Adams in *Asian American Literature* (2008):

Throughout this history, nativist, racist and Orientalist ideologies have powerfully determined the way in which Asian Americans are viewed in American culture, for the most part, as biologically and culturally Other or, more precisely, the threatening ‘yellow peril’ and the controllable ‘model minority’ (8).

During the beginning of second period, Chinese Immigration was stopped because the United States claimed that they would affect their wages or occupy their land, which was considered as “Yellow Peril” (Adams, 2008: 8) which means the fear of Chinese immigrants in a racist way. On the other hand, they were always considered

as a model minority that the United States can control easily compare to other ethnicities.

Furthermore, stereotypes can get varied in a different way between sexes and genders. For example; Adams (2008) states that “[w]hile Asian American men were desexualized in the figures of Fu Manchu and Charlie Chan, Asian American women were hypersexualized and exoticized in American culture as the Dragon Lady and China Doll” (14). Therefore, it can be said that stereotypical identity formation is very complex.

These complexities and contradictions of the identity formation and its perception by the American culture have been represented by the Chinese American writers. However, they have tried to change those stock characters of Asian image in Western literature. Besides the first immigrants’ letters in other languages, “[i]n spite of the obstacles that barred the way to an Asian literary tradition in the United States, a few pieces of writing — chiefly memoirs — by Asians did appear as early as the end of the nineteenth century” (Huntley, 1998: 23). The early works till the late-modernity were written “to describe and explain to Western readers the more attractive elements of life in China: dress, food, festivals, sports, rituals and ceremonies, leisure activities, and daily life” (Huntley, 1998: 23). However, they did not mention the lives of workers in railroads or mines in the United States.

In time, the features of writers changed in the parallel with the lives of immigrants’ lives. “The new Asian American writers of the 1970s were neither completely Asian nor definitely Western, but considered themselves to be member of a district new culture and set of cultures” (Huntley, 1998: 26). In this era, especially the rising of the number of women writers such as Maxine Hong Kingston contributed to American literature with not only women’s voice but also the new culture they are a part of.

Amy Tan is one of those writers who introduce the American society with the Chinese American hybrid identities. She is the writer of not only novels but also short stories and children’s books. In her autobiographic book *The Opposite of Fate*, Tan explains herself:

If I had to give myself any sort of label, I would have to say I am an American writer. I am Chinese by racial heritage. I am Chinese-American by family and social upbringing. But I believe that what I write is American fiction by virtue of the fact I live in this country and my emotional sensibilities, assumptions, and obsessions are largely American. My characters may be largely Chinese-American, but I think Chinese-Americans are part of America (Tan, 2003: 310).

Like the first literary examples of ethnic writers Amy Tan utilizes her own experiences to create her characters. She takes some stories from her family's stories. That is why, as Snodgrass mentions "[i]t is no accident that Tan's works are filled with engaging images of strong girls and women" (2004: 3). Those are generally in between characters who are in search of identities. Identity crisis is one of the main subjects of her novels. Dong remarks which themes Tan writes about:

Through its striking storytelling and unique characters, Amy Tan's fiction deals with such important themes as the complexity of human relationships, especially the connection and conflict between and daughters and the bond between sisters; bicultural heritage, immigrants' experience, and interracial/interethnic relationships; ethnic exoticism and stereotypes, cultural authenticity, and assimilation; fate and faith; as well as friendship and female lineage (Dong, 2009: vii-viii).

Dong emphasizes Tan in her fiction "seldom utilizes a linear narrative. Instead, she tells her stories in an intricate in which the past and present are intertwined" (2009: 12). Characters can be in China suffering from feudal society while they try to survive in American society. In that sense, shifting time and place also makes the novels postmodern. Moreover, she makes use of talk stories as traditional Chinese genre to gather West and East in a structural way as well.

From traditional China to multicultural America, Amy Tan portrays endless quest of immigrants' lives. The ongoing process of identity formation is highlighted in her works as in her life experience.

I've been trying to understand why these factions exist in the first place. I suspect that they have their origins in bitterness, anger, frustration in being excluded. I've experienced those same feelings in my life, growing up Chinese-American in a white community. As a teenager, I suspected the real reason I was never asked to dance had to do with my being Chinese rather than, say, my nerdiness. As a cynical college student, I realized my forefathers never ate turkey, never dropped down chimneys dressed in red costumes. In my twenties, I joined various Pacific Asian groups and became an activist for multicultural training programs for special educators (Tan, 2003: 317).

Her stories are generally about mother-daughter relationship as an embodiment of the clash between American and Chinese cultures. In other words, “[s]he writes about the diaspora culture as well as the many facets of biculturalism: cultural dislocation; the problems and the challenges of integrating two cultures [...]” (Huntley, 1998: 33). Tan develops contradictory multiple style to describe the emergence of the new Chinese American culture out of American, Chinese or Chinatown cultures. In that sense, she utilizes language, religion, lifestyle and food while describing different identities affected by societies such as self identities, cultural identities and gendered identities.

In conclusion, “Tan is an American novelist, and that the immigrant culture about which she writes is an important pattern in the great tapestry in the United States” (Huntley, 1998: 40) where various immigrants from different ethnic roots have come and struggled to form an identity of their own. As they tried to become Americans, they could not get rid of their ancestral past that prevented them from becoming totally Americans. Thus, they neither managed to be Chinese nor become Americans, but were lured into biculturalism where they became Chinese American and Amy Tan became one of the Chinese American writers who narrated the interactional history of the ancestral Chinese past with the present Chinese American identity.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **FEMALE QUEST FOR IDENTITY BETWEEN CULTURES IN AMY TAN'S TWO NOVELS**

Identity has always been a problematic concept in multicultural societies because of growing in a foreign culture and belonging to a different culture that lure individuals to an identity crisis and identity quest. Especially females who were pacified, defined in relation to man and accepted as in a secondary position, with the development in the postmodern era started to raise their voice and take an action in questioning their identities in the society. Thus, the identity quest that has been a very important theme since the beginning of the world has become double time important for the females. In the past the identity quest was searching for the truth and male oriented but with the postmodern era the identity quest became a more complex and even contradictive genderized process compared to the past historical and literary works because it became an issue not only seeking for the truth for both male and female but reshaping and constructing their identities between cultures.

During the post-war period, because of labor requirements, globalization came out as a result of immigrations. That social mobility caused different identity formations such as hybrid or bicultural identities in a multicultural society. It is seen that identity is an incomplete process which is renewed and recreated depending on time and place where the identity is constructed. In that sense, it became impossible to talk about authentic identities which are influenced by traditions. Instead of that, the lines between stereotypes and binaries started to decrease. Although women were considered as the inferior side in dichotomist oppositions, as a minor group women's identity formation has become visible even in feudal patriarchal societies. However, because their sex was considered as second or invisible before, for women the new identity formation process of the postmodern subject has been very contradictive and sometimes more challenging compared to men as gendered and cultural identities.

After the wars with other countries and inconsistency of governmental policy, the traditional feudal Chinese society changed. The immigrants who immigrated to the



United States went through a transformation. According to Judy Yung this process is “double-edged sword” for Chinese women.

Immigration to the United States proved to be a double edged sword for Chinese women in the early twentieth century. Saddled by cultural restrictions, racial and gender discriminations, labor exploitation, many suffered undue hardships and led strenuous lives in San Francisco. Yet sociohistorical conditions in their homeland and community at the time also afforded them opportunities to unbind their feet and their lives, to reshape gender roles and change their circumstances for the better (2000: 257).

Although they struggled with the new life conditions as a minority group, they became a part of a society in which they could be equal to men. As for the second generation, they were becoming more American than Chinese, which caused a new identity formation which is Chinese-American. In that sense, it is observed the quest for identity is not fixed for each it shows that the formation is changeable and conditional.

Amy Tan tries to deal with this diversity of women experiences in her works *The Kitchen God's Wife* and *The Bonesetter's Daughter* using the quest theme. As it is stated in *Literature and Ourselves* “The theme of the quest, which ultimately reveals humanity in a search for meaning, for a truth beyond the purely physical [...]” (1997: 1129). However, in postmodern literature the quest is dealt with in a very different atmosphere than in the past classic literature. Although the first chapter of *The Bonesetter's Daughter* begins with the “truth” chapter, the search for truth is replaced with the quest which is a more individual one in contemporary society as the quest for self or identity. However, because identities are products of the society as gendered or cultural formation, this transformation is endless for individuals whose identities between cultures are formed with the intersecting role of language, food, religion and life-style.

### 3.1. The Kitchen God's Wife

*The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991) is one of Amy Tan's most well-known books which deal with the formation of Chinese American identity. The novel portrays Chinese immigrants' lives as a minority in the United States. Amy Tan uses female characters and their relations to the different cultures and shows how to recreate their identities which are not only self but also cultural, and gendered identities that are socially and culturally formed identities. In this chapter, *The Kitchen God's Wife's* female characters including majors and minors are studied in terms of female quest for identity before and after immigration.

The novel includes stories of an immigrant mother Winnie and American born Chinese daughter Pearl. There is no fixed story in the novel but there are different point of views belonging to the mother and daughter. It can be considered as a postmodern novel because of not only its structure but also the narrative technique as Lan Dong (2009) says "The novel has a structure of a story within a story; that is, Winnie's story is framed within Pearl's narrative" (31). As a narrative technique "talk story" is used. Although the novel starts with Pearl's voice, then it continues with Winnie's talk story. Finally Pearl ends the novel with her point of view. Talk story technique is very useful for the plot and the theme of the novel. It creates a sincere atmosphere and helps both sides to understand each other better. It also shows that the reality is very subjective and the past is composed of stories from the postmodern point of view. This technique is also influenced by traditional Chinese storytelling. In that sense, the gap between mother and daughter is linked by the talk story as a bridge to create multi-voiced story because during the novel when Winnie talks about her life in China, Pearl reacts, which makes the novel multi voiced narration referencing the multicultural society and bicultural identities.

Four generations: grandmother, mother, daughter and granddaughter identity quest stories are narrated throughout the book from different perspectives, places, times, and cultures. Therefore, in the novel the narrated identities show that as Hall states identity formation "is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'" (1990: 225) and also "strategic and positional" (1996:3). In that sense, different cultural atmosphere in relation to time and place can be traced throughout the generations in which cultural

selves are presented. Although their cultural selves try to position identities in a different way, basically their social identities put them in certain situations. In this thesis gendered and cultural female identities in China such as Winnie's mother and concubines are observed. The second female identity formation is explained with Winnie and Hulan who immigrated to the United States escaping patriarchal China. The third one is the first American born generation after the second wave immigration who develops Chinese-American hybrid identities. The last generation is the American grandchildren who are raised in an American way.

Pearl as a daughter of a Chinese mother and a Chinese American father is married to an American with two daughters. That is why, since her childhood she has gone through an identity crisis. Although she was born in America and exposed to American culture at school and outside of the Chinatown, she was brought up with Chinese traditions at home. However, she could eat McDonalds burgers and play with Barbie Dolls without Ken under the control of Winnie. Moreover, she suffers from an illness of multiple sclerosis for a long time, which she hides from her mother. Because of these reasons, there is a communication gap between her and her mother, so time passes by, she feels alienation to her Chinese heritage and her mother at the same time, which makes them strangers to each other. The first sentence of the novel depicts this fact "Whenever my mother talks to me, she begins the conversation as if we were already in the middle of an argument" (3). Moreover, she is alienated to herself too because of her illness and her in-betweenness and says "I wanted what had become impossible: I wanted to forget" (23) since she thinks "We did not dwell on the past, whether it had been a virus or genetics that had caused this to happen" (25). What she wants to forget is not only her illness and its reasons and her Chinese heritage and the reasons for the gap between her and her Chinese identity or her mother as well. However, she remarks "apparently there's a lot I don't know about my mother and Auntie Helen" (53).

American culture has such a big influence on Pearl that she is partially assimilated with this dominant culture or she does not accept her bicultural identity yet. Her husband is one of the reasons of that estrangement. Phil as an American is the only "white" person in that Chinese family. That is why when the family gets together, not only Phil but also Pearl feels uncomfortable because of the clash of these two distant

cultures. Because Chinese society is family based, the family always gathers for engagements, weddings or funerals and other important days for Chinese society. However, as a member of individual based society Phil does not want to be in a family organization. For example; he gives the same reaction when he is informed that they have to go to Pearl's cousin's engagement ceremony.

“Sometimes I regret that ever married into a Chinese family,” Phil said when he heard we had to go to San Francisco, a hundred miles round trip from our house in San Jose, made worse by weekend football traffic. Although he's become genuinely fond of my mother over the fifteen years we've been married, he's still exasperated by her demands. And a weekend with the extended family is definitely not his preferred way to spend his day off from the hospital (7).

Although he gets along well with Winnie, he is still an outsider in this family. Not only Phil but also Pearl feel as an outsider. She says:

Whereas nowadays –today, for instance—I'm not really sure why I still give in to my family obligations. While I would never admit this to Phil, I've come to resent the duty. I'm not looking forward to seeing the Kwongs, especially Mary. And whenever I'm with my mother, I feel as though I have to spend the whole time avoiding land mines (9).

She cannot develop bicultural identity by appreciating American Culture and respecting her cultural roots, she thinks Chinese traditions such as her cousin's engagement and Auntie Du's funeral are some duties she has to do. That is why she feels in between two cultures.

The novel starts with Pearl's identity crisis. She illustrates her estrangement pointing out the Chinatown where she used to live. She thinks nothing looks the same in the town because everything around her “immediately becomes muted in tone” (12) and “It is no longer the glaring afternoon sun and noisy Chinatown sidewalks filled with people doing their Saturday grocery shopping” (12). Not only people but also the stores are not the same as before. As she is walking she notices the shopfront of a fortune-teller which is a part of Chinese culture. However, she continues with the words:

And farther down the street is the shopfront of a fortune-teller. A handwritten sign taped to the window claims to have “the best lucky numbers, the best fortune advice,” but the sign taped to the door says: “Out of Business.” (12).

Although the street portrays a typical Chinatown with barbershop, fortuneteller, flower shop, and “the Shop of the Gods” selling Gods, Goddesses and some stuff for the Buddhist funerals, for Pearl everything looks different and “Out of business”(12). Indeed, she is different more than anything in the Chinatown. During the same scene she sees a little girl who symbolizes her past and her Chinese identity does not wave back to her. Then Pearl utters “She looks at me as if I don’t belong here, which is how I feel” (13). Therefore, it can be deduced that her Chinese identity does not mean anything to her anymore because she does not think she is a part of that culture, which shows Pearl’s assimilation and alienation in a culture that is her ancestral but is foreign to her. The Diaspora where she grew up turns somewhere she does not belong to. Moreover, when she and her husband stay in her old room “still crammed with its old-fashioned furniture” (10), she feels the same alienation and she saw her “old Chinese slippers under the bed” (11) that she cannot fit into with her American values if they are considered as Chinese ones.

Pearl thinks about her past and questions herself about the reasons that separate her and her mother that symbolizes her Chinese identity:

Mostly I see my mother sitting one table away, and I feel as lonely as I imagine her to be. I think of the enormous distance that separates us and makes us unable to share the most important matters of our life. How did this happen?

And suddenly everything—the flower arrangements on the plastic-topped tables, my mother’s memories of my childhood, the whole family—everything feels like a sham, and also sad and true. All these meaningless gestures, old misunderstandings, and painful secrets, why do we keep them up? I feel as if I were suffocating and want to run away (33).

She can define neither her self-identity nor her ethnic identity. She is trying to put herself somewhere without any connection to the other identities. Moreover, she is aware of her mother’s loneliness like her.

After Winnie’s story, Pearl can see the reality of her identity because Winnie is the key character in the novel. Winnie is a Chinese immigrant living in Chinatown, but her identity like Pearl’s has always been in process during her life. Her identity formation starts in China continues in America. Like a bridge she is the one who brings the Chinese identity to the United States of America. However, before the immigration

she had to fight against the essential formation of the binaries in the society in terms of gender and cultural issues. Therefore, each female has her own quest for identity between cultures, which is still in process.

Winnie is a character who grew up in a Chinese family with Confucian rules in which family is the most important thing in the society. For Pearl “He made everyone look down on someone else, women were the lowest!” (123). While she is telling Pearl her story, it can be seen that her life is shaped with patriarchy. Her father was a wealthy man living with his wives and Winnie’s mother as one of those wives. Although she was educated, she had to marry him. That is why Winnie’s childhood was under the effect of this feudal family. She was taught how to do gender to her own identity. It is not only patriarchy that imposes her gender and cultural issues but also her own self that forces her to be gendered.

Tan portrays “two different interpretations of women’s role in early twentieth-century China: the traditional woman and the new woman” (Huang, 2005: 140). Although her mother was an intellectual woman or the new woman compared to the other concubines as an example of traditional woman, Winnie says “My mother was telling me to be very quiet, not laugh or ask questions” (105). She learnt how to be passive and voiceless while her mother was not a traditional one. However, she could not have any chance other than being a second wife taking the second concubine’s place as a “double second” (108). Because she was not one of those ignorant concubines, it was not easy to accept being “double second”, she remembers that name “always made her spend many hours in front of her mirror, accusing the double second that stared back at her” (108-109). Here, she was trying to accept the identity that she had to have without her choice. This identity was not only cultural but also gendered. Moreover, in the house besides the concubines there was another woman who was her grandmother, but she was more than that because “She was the big boss of all the ladies of the house” (116). The hierarchy in the house was controlled by the grandmother, her son was the head of the business outside. Her mother could not stand that life and ran away with her Communist lover, at least this is what she heard from the other people. However, she says after that event, “For many years, my mother was the source of funny and bad stories, terrible secrets and romantic tales” (118). Even the other women in the society

did not defend her or understand her real reason to escape. She was the rebellious who opposed to gendered identities in Chinese culture. Winnie describes her mother:

My mother was not like the Chinese girls Americans always imagine, the kind who walk around with tiny bound feet, choosing their words as delicately as they choose their steps. My mother was a modern girl. Many girls in Shanghai were. They were not peasants, nothing of the kind. When my mother was eight years old, her feet were already unbound, and some people say that's why she ran wild (119).

Here Winnie underlines the stereotypical Chinese women image in Western people's minds showing her mother as an example. Under the effect of Western culture, in that time some cities of China were Westernized. There were educated, modern women rather than the stereotypical China doll image that has small feet, submissive character and voiceless life. However, her mother was the opposite of that image although she had to get married to her father as a concubine. And Winnie questions the beautiful and fragile image of women in the stories and asks "Why did stories always describe women that way, making us believe we had to be that way too?" (120). In this question she discusses the essentialism of femininity which is shown as if it is natural and all women have to have these features. In that sense she continues with these words to describe the traditional image of women referencing the concubines in the house.

Old Aunt, on the other hand, did not go to that school, no school whatsoever. She was raised in a feudal family, the traditional way: The girl's eyes should never be used for reading, only for sewing. The girl's ears should never be used for listening to ideas, only to orders. The girl's lips should be small, rarely used, except to express appreciation or ask approval. Of course, all this feudal thinking only made Old Aunt more opinionated on all kinds of matter (121-122).

Amy Tan shows here how the society can construct people unconsciously as if it was something natural. That is why Old Aunt accepted the traditional gender roles in the Chinese culture. She thinks "Her education was the cause" (122).

"They put Western thoughts into a Chinese mind, causing everything to ferment. It is the same way eating foreign food---upset stomach, upset mind. The foreign teachers want to overturn all order in the world. Confucius is bad, Jesus is good! Girls can be teachers, girls do not have to marry. For what purpose do they teach this? Upside-down thinking!—that's what got her into trouble." And then Old Aunt would warn me, "Weiwei-ah, do not follow your teacher too closely. Look what happened to your mother" (122).

On the other hand, there were different opinions about her mother's escape as though she got an illness. Her uncle supports "all the will and stubbornness that should have been given to a boy went into her" (122). Or he assumes the worst thing is "her parents let her stay at home and grow stronger and stronger. They were thinking they could wait and pick a husband for their only daughter when she was maybe twenty-two" (122). Gender roles are so strong in the society that they just make the woman the victim of it. The marriage is the best way to make it passive and gendered. The only thing that a woman can do is to pray for luck to change her fate or to have a rich husband. If she is lucky, she has many sons and a good mother-in-law and no concubine. Otherwise Winnie was threatened with the idea that she would be a beggar like her mother. As Cynthia F. Wong (2008) suggests "Winnie's account is set against the contextual forces of history and culture as well, demonstrating how she is a socially constituted subject under the oppressive regime of Chinese patriarchy" (63).

As for a man, "Getting married in those days was like buying real estate" (164). Wen Fu as one of them is Winnie's first husband who made life unbearable for her. He is the secret of her life because he was the one who is the father of Pearl. He is an example of a husband in a patriarchal family. After her mother's death, she was sent to live with her uncle and his wives in another town. She felt the first immigrant feeling there in China living a place where she did not belong. Her marriage was done without her choice. Wen Fu just wanted to marry her because she was from a rich family. Her father gave her a money dowry not to be burden on her husband's family because she was so worthless that father had to give some more money with his daughter. Her father thought that her true position would be seen with this marriage because if a woman was not married, she would be nothing or her husband's position would decide her position too as a result of being a member of a subordinate group.

During her marriage, Wen Fu who was Kuomintang pilot tortured Winnie not only psychologically but also physically as another patriarchal figure after her father. She was looked down on in a sexual way by him. She was inexperienced in the beginning and she kept the advices of her mother-in-law in her mind: "That kind of sacrifice for a husband never hurts" (207). And she says "I was not angry. I did not know I was supposed to be angry. This was China. A woman had no right to be angry" (210). While she was experiencing womanhood in a bad way, they were living with the



other soldiers and their wives and also American advisors in a place for the army where Helen and Winnie met. Then, as a result of War and sorrows of the marriage, she started to question if she loved Wen Fu or not. Now, her character was being shaped in a different way and the cruelty of Wen Fu. She was awakened with the idea of that she could have chosen her own husband. She lost her babies because of Wen Fu's violence after unwanted pregnancies. He brought mistresses to their house. Not only American soldiers but also Chinese soldiers exploited and abused Chinese women during the war. She was getting so experienced and strong that she tried to save Wen Fu's mistress's life because she was mature enough to understand they both are the victims of the society. Throughout the novel The Kitchen God image is used to underline the power of patriarchy. Zhang was a man who cheated his wife, but he was rewarded by the Jade Emperor to become the Kitchen God. Although he was a cheater, he became a god and his wife was forgotten like Wen Fu and Winnie's story.

Winnie's revision of the myth of the Kitchen God produces the truth of the masculine use of women as instruments of self-assertion. She makes it clear that it is through the use of women that Zhang became a kitchen god, and it is by abusing women that Wen Fu perceives himself as a "real man" (Xu, 1995: 91).

Although their characters are different, Helen and Winnie fought against the patriarchy together during Second World War, they escaped Japanese invasion together from one town to another because they shared the same fate more or less being wives of soldiers. Moreover, they both were named their American names at the same time by Winnie's second husband Jimmy. Jimmy was a Chinese American in that time. He had "Western" manners with "Chinese" looking when they met at the American dance party for Chinese and American pilots. He was working for the American volunteers and Chinese Air Force as a translator. His Western manners affected Winnie. He as an Americanized Chinese started to name the women in the party with American names. In that part Hulan turned into Helen and Weili turned into Winnie. And in that time they got their American identities that were already influenced by the Western culture. Later when Winnie got married and went to the United States "Tan gives pictorial accounts of women fleeing similar oppressive marriages of the past and embracing the Western concept of romantic love and mate choice" (Snodgrass, 2004: 127).

Before the immigration, Winnie's quest in China was full of sorrow but she learnt a lot during her quest. She explains her transformation in China showing the difference between the beginning and the end. Winnie talks about how Helen and herself were at the beginning of their quest, "She was foolish and I was innocent" (202). And continues with how she was in between cultures:

I have told you about the early days of my marriage so you can understand why I became weak and strong at the same time. Maybe, according to your American mind, you cannot be both, that would be a contradiction. But according to my life, I had to be both, that was the only way I could live (399).

Even her days in China she did not have stable character. Her sentences appreciate having contradictive feelings and identities. Then during the war, she kept having two different emotions at the same time and different identities. She was always in between. Moreover, at the end those feudal minded women found themselves in a communist organization for liberation of women that Winnie's cousin Peanut was a member of. However, the quest was not easy for her. She describes her situation:

It was like this: For the rest of the war, I lived a life of hope. But without hope, I no longer despaired. I no longer fought against my marriage. Yet did not accept it either. That was my life, everything always in between—without hope, yet without despair; without resistance, but without acceptance. So you see, weak and strong.

I am not asking you to admire me. This was not harmony with nature, no such thing. I am saying this only so you will know how it is to become like a chicken in a cage, mindless, never dreaming of freedom, but never worrying when your neck might be chopped off (399).

Throughout Winnie's story, it can be seen that she was in between not only in China but also in the United States because of the clashes of ideologies and dichotomist understanding of West and East. However, she was able to create a self-identity with her different contradictive identities to relate each other. She can be weak and strong but all identities were related to each other instead of being opposite, paradoxical identities unlike the Western understanding of binaries because "Historically, American identity has always been defined in relation to the other: other places, other cultures, and other times" (Yuan, 1999: 151). She is comparing those two cultures to make the situation understandable for Pearl. According to Mary Ellen Snodgrass (2004), "American settings and the criticisms of first-generation Asian-American provide additional

methods for the author to compare Western and Asian ideals” (47). As Winnie is talking about female stereotypes, Amy Tan tries to point out the bad side of all generalizations or categorizations because she is not happy with the Chinese image in the Western people’s minds as an exotic country. Winnie says:

This is the kind of China you Americans always see in the movies—the poor countryside, people wearing big hats to protect themselves from the sun. no, I never wore a hat like that! I was from Shanghai. That’s like thinking someone from San Francisco wears a cowboy hat and rides a horse. Ridiculous! (283)

After the immigration she found herself within another quest which can be seen as a transformation. Although Winnie was influenced by Western culture in China, the acculturation process was a bit different in the United States. Chinese people had to struggle to keep their Chinese identity while they got into the process of acculturation. However, they managed to create their own community in the United States. More or less they were happier in the United States compared to China regarding the life conditions in the United States.

Wars and government shifts of China were disaster for all Chinese people especially female members of the society. People had to change their minds according to the government to save their lives. Winnie says “why we changed our minds so often about the Japanese, the Kuomintang, and the Communists” (81) because they had to change their minds according to the one in power. However, they could not abandon their Chinese values. Between those cultures their lives were changing. That is why they believed that America would offer them a new life without patriarchy. Winnie remarks that:

When I came to this country, I told myself: I can think a new way. Now I can forget my tragedies, put all my secrets behind the door that will never be opened, never seen by American eyes. I was thinking my past was closed forever and all I had to remember was to call Formosa “China,” to shrink all of China into one little island I had never seen before.

I was thinking, nobody can chase me here. I could hide mistakes, my regret, all my sorrows. I could change my fate (81).

She thought she could change her life completely leaving the Chinese identity behind but although she abandoned the Chinese patriarchy, her Chinese identity has

always been with her. Here self identity and the power of the subject are emphasized, but cultural identity constructed by the society does not leave her alone for the rest of her life.

Oh, I was not the only one who put away old things to suit new circumstances. People from our church, that schoolmate with the pock-mark face, Lin and his wife, even Helen—they all left something behind. Old debts and had beginnings. Elderly mothers and sick fathers arranged first views and too many children, superstitions and Chinese calendar destinies (81).

Not only Winnie but also all the people living in Chinatown suffered from the same imposed life in China. They were all fed up with the gendered identities which made them involved in the arranged marriages with lots of children. Therefore, they just want to recreate their own life in America forgetting the past. “In the new country she refuses to continue the tradition that demands in women silent desires and self-effacement” (Xu, 1995: 91). However, almost 40 years later Helen understands that they should tell their true stories that were changed to forget the past and she says “We should sweep all the lies out of our life” (90). That means the stories about their past life not only helps Pearl to see her bicultural life but also helps Winnie to see her Chinese identity that is still with her at present although all the bad experiences are in the past. The past identity is woven with religious issues, language usage, and cultural rituals as food, names, and clothes.

As a part of cultural identity religion is also strategic and anti-essential in Chinese society in America. Because the acculturation process of Chinese culture under the influence of the West started in China, they were forced or they felt they had to change their beliefs and be converted into the Christianity from Buddhism, Taoism or Confucianism. In America, the church and its help to immigrant families made them closer to Christianity although they still kept their old beliefs. That is why at Auntie Du’s funeral it is seen that they developed a mix religious identity, although she was a member of the First Chinese Baptist Church, she believed in “just all the superstitious rituals concerning attracting good luck and avoiding bad” (13). However, her funeral is done according to Buddhism. In Pearl’s memory Auntie Du’s home was visualized as:

On those occasions when I did go up to her apartment, I used to play with her altar, a miniature red temple containing a framed picture of a Chinese god. In front of that was an imitation-brass urn filled with burnt incense sticks, and on the side were offerings of

oranges, Lucky Strike cigarettes, and an airline mini-bottle of Johnnie Walker Red whiskey. It was like a Chinese version of a Christmas crèche (13-14).

Christian and Chinese religious items are together in her house. Although she goes to the Church as Winnie does, her funeral is performed according to Buddhist traditions. In that sense, Pearl remembers how she grew up between two different religious systems. Her mother believed in all superstitions and ghosts while her father as a pastor taught her the Holy Ghost. Pearl talks about her mother and father “she was always trying to surpass certain beliefs that did not coincide with my father’s Christian ones, but sometimes they popped out anyway” (44). Therefore, even in terms of religion there is multiplicity in her family, which makes her feel in-between. However, she does not believe any of them. That is why she felt guilty when her father baptized her because she utters “I did not believe I was saved forever [...]” (47). Even when she went to the Zen Center, she felt the same. At Auntie Du’s funeral,

We are circling the coffin ’round and ’round, I don’t know how many times. I feel silly, taking part in a ritual that makes no sense to me. It reminds me of that time I went with some friends to the Zen center. I was the only Asian-looking person there. And I was also the only one who kept turning around, wondering impatiently when the monk would come and the sermon would begin, not realizing until I’d been there for twenty minutes that all the others weren’t quietly waiting, they were mediating (47).

She was expected to be interested in the sermon because of Zen’s relation to the Buddhist belief system, but she felt the same otherness in the center. She does not feel that she belongs to one of those religions. Moreover, the Zen center shows that acculturation process is mutual. Although the West tries to convert Asian people into Christianity, the East also affects the West with their religions such as Buddhism or Taoism.

In Chinese cultural identity, apart from religious issues, language is also crucial during the identity formation. Language is a very complex issue for them because they have to know English to express themselves in the United States but at the same time they are too strict to speak in Chinese in Chinatowns. However, because Chinese has so many dialects they have to speak English to understand each other. In the novel Winnie underlines that Jimmy speaks in English to be understandable by all the Chinese people. This is a way of acculturation in terms of religion and language together. Chinese American generations can speak English very well because of their American education,

but some of them do not understand Chinese, which creates another problem between them and their parents because of their language barrier. However, language can be an armor to protect themselves from the American society for Chinese people as Winnie says “Don’t understand. Don’t speak English.” (17) after she welcomes American customers.

In the novel, preserving the Chinese identity and culture, the Chinese feast has a very important role not only in China but also in the United States. Those family gatherings make them remember family ties and their ethnic identities. However, they have some American members of this activity sometimes because of marriage and other reasons. Although American born Chinese generation is willing to be with “the outsiders”, Chinese born parents still have prejudices about this because of the past experiences. Pearl utters:

Phil is the only non-Chinese tonight, although that wasn’t the case at past family events. Bao-Bao’s two former wives were what Auntie Helen called “Americans,” as if she were referring to a racial group. She must be thrilled that Bao-bao’s bride-to-be is a girl named Mimi Wong, who is not only Chinese but from a well-to-do family that owns three travel agencies (30).

And Pearl continues ““She looks Japanese,” my mother has said when we first arrived and had been introduced to Mimi. I don’t know why she said that” (30). Auntie Helen and Winnie have prejudices towards American and Japanese people because two countries were the enemies of China and they suffered a lot because of them. That is why; they keep being traditional and look down on other cultures seeing theirs are superior. However, she cannot resist wearing “machine washable” polyester instead of Chinese silk dress.

During their feasts they have different food together although Chinese cuisine is the dominant one on the table. They eat jellyfish with chopsticks but to make the American grandchildren eat Chinese food they have to liken the food to American fast-food. Helen says after Cleo starts crying when she is eating jellyfish, “Look, here’s some fragrant beef, ah? Yum-yummy, tastes like McDonald hamburgers. Take it, you like” (32-33). Using different cuisines, Amy Tan uses food as a medium to help the cultural identity formation. For example, “Winnie Louie expresses maternal love for Pearl by offering noodle soup and tea during the lengthy narration of Winne’s wartime

experiences” (Snodgrass, 2004: 66). It can be seen that food makes the characters get involved in the cultural transformation and helps them to preserve their past cultural activities.

The fourth generation of the book is the American grandchildren who are not aware of their Chinese heritage. They are Americans in attitude but still Chinese in appearance. Chinese Culture is nothing more than a part of American culture. As it is seen in Auntie Du’s funeral Tessa is “walking down the aisle in the manner of a coquettish bride. And Cleo-she’s preening and blowing kisses like a movie star” (40-41). They are just acculturated and gendered Americans who are the products of American culture. However, because America’s individual lifestyle, they can ask questions although that is weird in Chinese culture. However, Winnie advises Pearl “You should teach her manners, not to ask too much, same way I taught you” (95).

Throughout the novel, Pearl is going through a transformation that shapes her identity which is accepted as Pearl’s quest. At the end of the novel, “Personal identity, like both personal and political truth, is many layered and elusive, something accepted rather than discovered” (Caser, 1994: 46). Therefore, what she accepts at the end is her Chinese American identity which is hybrid and bicultural.

Like Pearl, “Tan illustrates that Winnie’s internal journey to liberation must come from self rather than belongings” (Snodgrass, 2004: 89). Therefore, this quest comes from the self to find the true identity formation or to accept who they are. According to Judith Caesar (1994):

Tan also contradicts this idea of a rational Western truth through the pattern of double and shifting identities of her characters and by her clear indications that the commonly accepted criteria for determining identity are sometimes irrelevant. Tan shows a world of multiple and contradictory truths, truth as a series of Chinese boxes, not a unitary truth to be “discovered” in the Western Sense (44).

There is no single truth in the world like no single identity. Identity formation positions according to where and when the subject is in terms of culture. For M. Marie Booth Foster, identity turns into voice, female characters quest for voice is a kind of finding her “self” and her own identity without any patriarchal narrative:

In achieving balance, voice is important: in order to achieve voice, hyphenated women must engage in self-exploration and appreciation of their culture (s), and they must know their histories. The quest for voice becomes an archetypal journey for all of the women. The mothers come to the United States and have to adapt to a new culture, to redefine voice and self. The daughters' journeys become rites of passage; before they can find voice and define self they must acknowledge the history and myth of their mothers—"her-stories" of life in China, passage to the United States, and assimilation (1996: 96).

In that sense, redefining "voice and self", "China becomes a semiotic site where culture and identity are fought over, negotiated, displaced, and transformed" (Yuan, 1999: 142) like the United States. Moreover, "Instead of being a static ontological presence of a unitary category, China becomes a hermeneutic space for articulating identity and difference, a process that governs the cultural and historical reconstitution of the subjects" (Yuan, 1999: 142).

In conclusion, at the end of the novel as an embodiment of the reconciliation with their social identities and recreating their own voice, Winnie bought a nameless Goddess statue with a factory-made mistake. She names her as Lady Sorrowfree "happiness winning over bitterness, no regrets in this world" (532). As Guiyou Huang (2005) states "'Sorrowfree' focuses on the construction of a female, not male, identity" (145). Moreover, because it is different from other Gods and Goddesses, she is able to create a unique identity out of difference even though it is related to a traditional one. The traditional self that seems to oppose with the essential self at the end of the novel through the mothers' past true story and Pearl's hidden secrets find a safe ground where the identity is constructed in between cultures. Briefly, the hidden stories of the female characters mother-daughter open up a space where all is shared and identity is constructed through female voice shaping the bicultural identity that is in process.



### 3.2. The Bonesetter's Daughter

*The Bonesetter's Daughter* (2001) is the novel which deals with Chinese and Chinese American identities under the light of culture and gender. In that sense, the self identity between cultural and gendered identity is constructed through intertwining of Chinese culture, Chinese immigrant's struggles and the emergence of the new Chinese American identity based on fragmented female stories.

The structure of the novel is intertwined with different women stories, which is like stories within a story. It is divided into three parts between the introduction part at the beginning and the epilogue at the end of the book. Those parts belong to different characters and their stories. The structure of the book is fragmented, which makes this book a postmodern one and also this fragmentation is in parallel with the identity crisis of the characters. According to Lan Dong:

The story-within-a-story narrative not only helps build up each character and developed the plot, but also reflects such important historical events from the 1920s to the 1940s as the archeological discovery of Peking Man, the Japanese invasion, and the civil war between Kuomintang and the Communists in China (2009: 51).

The main event which is Ruth's life is told from the third person point of view. The second story includes Ruth's mother LuLing's life as a form of memories in China and also her mother's letter to her. In that sense, this novel of Tan is a bit different from the other books because in *The Bonesetter's Daughter* Amy Tan utilizes the written form of female narration although in *The Kitchen God's Wife* talk story narrative technique is used. "The written nature of these autobiographies illuminates each woman's sense of identity, while it also emphasizes the stability and power of written narratives over the oral" (Dunick, 2006: 178). Moreover, in the novel with the written form of women's lives the education of women is highlighted. It also underlines the Chinese culture and identity formation using ink and paper in relation to memories throughout the book.

This novel's intense focus on the literary quality of women's writing may allow us to recognize that literacy in the form of writing and written text presents an important and often more effective means of transmitting cultural memories and cultural identity across generational lines than talk-story. Furthermore, *The Bonesetter's Daughter* is not a completely new development in or deviation from Tan's previous themes, but

represent a more fully developed reworking of issues about identity and language than we can find in many of her works (Dunick, 2009: 170)

*The Bonesetter's Daughter* like *The Kitchen God's Wife* is partially about four generations and their identity formations. First generation is composed of Chinese women raised in feudal Chinese society, but these women are basically traditional such as concubines or women in the Chang and Liu families but some of them are considered as liberal such as Precious Auntie. She suffers from her cultural and gendered identities defined by patriarchal society forging her self-identity. The second generation who is the daughter of the first generation immigrated to the United States with the Chinese culture and memories about China. LuLing and GaoLing are the representatives of this generation. Those as the main characters “usually function as cultural translators who provide a bridge to a China that is situated in the past and is remote from America” (Dong, 2009: 69) and also this generation is acculturated under the effect of Western culture in China before immigration. The next generation is Chinese immigrant mother's Americanized daughters who feel distance to their heritage. Ruth is the example of this generation who suffers from in-betweenness without realizing her hybrid identity. The last generation is not clear in this novel because they are not the real daughters of an Americanized mother. They are Ruth's boyfriend's daughters. However, it can be seen that there is almost no difference between them and Pearl's daughter because they are just Americans.

In the novel all characters are in search of identity, but during their quest their self identity cannot be separated from the social one. As Giddens mentions self identity comes from biography of individuals, but “[t]he individual's biography.... must continually integrate events which occur in the external world, and sort them into the ongoing ‘story’ about the self” (1991: 54). Therefore, it is impossible to create a self identity without the effects of cultural and gendered rules that are constructed by society because individuals always interact with the external world. In that sense, the novel starts with LuLing's autobiography in which she identifies herself as a Chinese immigrant in the United States of America. The novel starts with the statement of LuLing's self identification by implying her social identity as well:

My name is LuLing Liu Young. The names of my husbands were Pan Kai Jing and Edwin Young, both of them dead and 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 (1).

Here, she identifies herself with her name and her husbands and after that her daughter. She cannot forget the past defined by her husbands because according to Confucian belief system in Chinese culture husband defines wife's fate. That is why her cultural gendered identity affects the formation of her self-identity. And she continues with the reason why she starts writing and she has been suffering for a long time:

I know all this, yet there is one name I cannot remember. It is there in the oldest layer of my memory, and I cannot dig it out. A hundred times I have gone over that morning when Precious Auntie wrote it down. I was only six then, but very smart. I could count. I could read. I had a memory for everything, and here is my memory of that winter morning (1).

She is trying to fill the gap of her identity which is a part of her Precious Auntie's name. Her real mother was introduced to her as her aunt. That is why because of the misidentification of herself and her mother, she suffers from her past. "The author describes her as a headstrong fifteen-year-old who spurns her nursemaid and chooses not to read the mute woman's autobiography, which substitutes her failed voice" (Snodgrass, 2004: 184). She states "And I did not know who she really was until I read what she wrote" (183). When she learnt the truth, it was too late. She committed suicide to stop her daughter's marriage. This was the only way for a mother who was turned into a voiceless woman by the society to protect her daughter from an arranged marriage that would pacify her daughter.

Writing the story of her life is considered as a part of the quest for identity to keep her memory alive as she remarks "These are the things I must not forget" (159). Memory is very important in her identity process because it means a lot for the formation of her cultural and self identity. Moreover, here she tries to use this recalling process as a medium to get her self-identity back and at the same time to help her daughter who tries to develop bicultural identity. LuLing and Precious Auntie's stories are mingled with each other. LuLing's life is influenced by her Precious Auntie. That is why she starts her story from the beginning as Precious Auntie who is unable to speak in voice but expresses herself through signs indicates: "*A person should consider how things begin. A particular beginning results in a particular end*" (159).

Precious Auntie is the first generation of the novel as an example of a person who grew up in a feudal Chinese society. Because her mouth was burnt, she could not talk. That is why as the victim of the Patriarchal society, she was voiceless and nameless. LuLing expresses “I did not wonder why Precious Auntie had no name. To others she was Nursemaid. To me, she was Precious Auntie” (182-183). LuLing identifies her Precious Auntie who is her real mother:

She had no voice, just gasps and wheezes, the snorts of a ragged wind. She sold things with grimaces and groans, dancing eyebrows and darting eyes. She wrote about the world on my carry around chalkboard. She also made pictures with her blackened hands. Hand-talk, face-talk, and chalk-talk were the languages I grew up with, soundless and strong (2).

She could not talk, so the only way to communicate with other people is with the help of LuLing who translates her sign language into voiced language. LuLing says “No one else understood Precious Auntie’s kind of talk, so I had to say aloud what she meant. Not everything, though, not our secret stories” (3). The stories are about her father who is “the Famous Bonesetter from the Mouth of the Mountain” (3), the divine dragon bones and also how her burned face made her nursemaid. After her husband Liu Hu Sen was killed, she came to the Liu family because of her pregnancy and became LuLing’s Nursemaid as a widow and had to pretend to be her own daughter’s nursemaid. She taught LuLing how to write in traditional Chinese way which is calligraphy as she was educated by her father. Because of that, she was different from traditional women in that period who were passive and submissive.

Tan creates an anomaly in Precious Auntie, whose confessions of a privileged childhood stress the opportunities not usually offered to daughters and the paradox of an education that limits her choice. After her mother and older brothers die of an intestinal disease when Precious Auntie is four, she learns reading and writing, riddles, and haiku. Her doting father gives her license to wander the outdoors. Set the collapse of the Ching dynasty (1644-1912), the text describes the price females paid for a liberal education and personal freedom in pre-Communist China. Unlike other girls, Precious Auntie walks on unbound feet, which scandalize local scolds. As she progress in the knowledge of human anatomy and healing, her anatomy increases as her marriageability declines (Snodgrass, 2004:133).

In her era, Precious Auntie was a girl who was brought up in a different way without gender roles. In the clan as a tradition from father to son her family was bonesetters for a long time, but her father taught her how to be bonesetter and in an

untraditional way the occupation passed from father to daughter. LuLing writes what Precious Auntie told her about her privilege coming from an education that made her powerful.

*Because of grief, Precious Auntie said with her hands, he spoiled me, let me do whatever a son might do. I learned to read and write, to ask questions, to play riddles, to write eight-legged poems, to walk alone and admire nature. The old biddies used to warn him that it was dangerous that I was so boldly happy, instead of shy and cowering around strangers. And why didn't he bind my feet, they asked. My father was used to seeing pain of the worst kinds. But with me, he was helpless. He couldn't bear to see me cry (171).*

That is why auntie was very open-minded because she was educated like a son. She taught her everything that she would need in life, not to be passive and submissive with bound feet. Because of that, LuLing was able to get a good education from Precious Auntie. LuLing remarks “In this way, Precious Auntie taught me to be naughty, just like her. She taught me to be curious, just like her. She taught me to be spoiled.” (173).

Although Precious Auntie is considered as an educated woman compared to traditional ones, she still respects the ancestors because she is a member of clan society. She teaches her how to respect the God and Goddesses. When they go to the ancestral hall, LuLing utters “At the threshold, Precious Auntie gave me a warning look. *Act humble. Take off your shoes*” (4). Although what Precious Auntie comes from the respect, LuLing is unconsciously taught how to be obedient and submissive to keep the hierarchy in the society. There was a strong hierarchy in the house where she grew up. The division of labor is arranged according to gender based structure. While men went to Peking to sell ink, women made ink at home.

In our family, the women made the ink. We stayed at home. We all worked—me, GaoLing, my aunts and girl cousins, everybody. Even the babies and Great- Granny had a job of picking out stones from the dried millet we boiled for breakfast. We gathered each day in the ink-making studio (162).

The women were at home making ink while Precious Auntie could write and read, which made her rebellious to the system. Precious Auntie with her real name Gu Liu Xin was against the patriarchy in the feudal Chinese society based on Confucian values. That is why she could say these words to the Changs who wanted to marry her

“Who insulted whom? You asked me to be your concubine, a servant to your wife. I’m not interested in being a slave in a feudal marriage.” (178). The Changs was another clan family making coffins. These two families are the embodiment of feudal family system in China that Precious Auntie opposed, but after that this family tried to make LuLing their bride to reach the important bones. This event ended with the suicide of Precious Auntie to protect her daughter. “Tan uses Precious Auntie as a spokeswoman against spousal abuse” (Snodgrass, 2004: 133). Although Precious Auntie could see the deceptiveness of this arranged marriage, LuLing’s mind was constructed by the society so much that she could not see the truth. She expressed her feeling “I would change from a girl to a wife, a daughter to a daughter-in-law. And no matter how happy I was sure to be, I would still be sad to say good-bye to my old self” (217-218). She thought that the change of self-identity would come with the marriage, but that was the shift of patriarchal gendered roles.

Until the failure of the marriage, her identity was culturally constructed by the feudal society in spite of her education. After that during the quest for identity she started experiencing life in a different way. She escaped from the Chinese cultural norms, but she got involved in the Western culture. Nonetheless, the acculturation of LuLing started when she visited the city during the decision of marriage. She saw a different world from the village she grew up. While Precious Auntie helped her to develop self identity, she was under the effect of cultural and gendered identities which are the product of Chinese culture. However, in the city she was in another process. The first time she was introduced to the Western culture. “Girls with short modern hairstyles and Western clothes” (208). She believed that her life would change with the marriage. “Birds immediately began to sing. I felt that had entered a world a thousand years old and that I had always been there, but only just now had opened my eyes to see it” (209). Her identity was in process but that was an illusion for her.

As we walked back to my father’s shop, I was a different girl. My head was sandstorm, ideas and hopes whirling about freely. I was wondering all the while what those people at the pavilion would remember the next day and the day after that. Because I knew I would never forget a moment of that day, the day I was to begin my new life (209).

She thought she had changed. The city was colorful and deceptive. It was not a real awakening, but a big step to get out of the village. However, the real awakening

coming with the suicide of Precious Auntie was the orphanage experience, which is the turning point of her life. “Perhaps it was my life force growing stronger. All I knew was, I had become a different girl from the one who had arrived at the orphanage” (249). Moreover, in that orphanage everybody appreciated her talent of calligraphy. Her professor and the father of her first husband said “LuLing, if you had been born a boy back then, you could have been a scholar” (242). Therefore, in following years, she became a teacher in the orphanage where she was previously a student.

Her acculturation continued with the orphanage shaping her identity between cultures. The education of the Christian Orphanage made the girls in the orphanage knowledgeable but at the same time religious. They turned into Christians and believed that West and Christianity were the rescuer of their life in the parallel of politic events between America, Japan and China. Because of the Japanese invasion, Chinese people accepted the United States of America as their rescuer. Before Christmas they changed the Buddhist or Taoist Gods and Goddesses in the monastery into Christian ones.

In this way, Buddha became Jesus, the Goddess of Mercy was Mary of Manger, the Three Pure Ones, boss gods of Taoists, turned into the Three Wise Men, and the Eighteen Lohan of Buddha were converted to the Twelve Apostles with six sons. Any small figures in hell were promoted to angels (250).

Chinese Culture and religion are Westernized and Christianized. LuLing as one of those Westernized Chinese people, she started to think that there were no bad luck or bad curses and she could change her fate, which is the idea of belonging to Western individualistic culture.

After she lost everything during the invasion including her husband and her cousin Gaoling went to the United States, she waited for the immigration day to the United States in Hong Kong. While her self-identity was developing with different experiences such as learning English, because of the governmental instability her social identity was defined in different ways. Sister Yu from Orphanage wrote about the civil war and warned her:

Every day it was becoming more crowded there as people came in from China. “The civil war is growing worse,” Sister Yu had written me, “with battles as fierce as those during the war with Japan. Even if you had enough money to return to Peking right now, you should not. The Nationalist would say you a Communist because Kai Jing is

now called one of their martyrs, and the Communists would say you are a Nationalist because you lived in an American orphanage. And whichever is worse change with each town you pass through (303-304).

The immigration to The United States was another quest for identity to LuLing. She talks about the feeling when she was on the way, she says “I sailed for America, a land without curses or ghosts. By the time I landed, I was five years younger. Yet I felt so old” (307). America was the beginning of a new life for her and a new part of the quest of her life. China and the traditional lifestyle was something she wanted to leave behind her, but ironically she could not run away from curses and ghosts or her traditional Chinese identity. Moreover, those helped her preserve her ethnic identity in the United States and survive. As an immigrant she had difficulties to adopt herself to American culture. Although she developed a bicultural identity in China, in the United States she turned into a traditionalist and rejected to be assimilated in that culture. Because of that, the gap between her and her daughter came out. It is observed that LuLing’s traditional attitude comes from her tragic relationship with her mother because she feels that something is incomplete in her identity or her past. Therefore, not to forget the past and to remember her mother’s real name she starts writing her autobiography. It helps not only finding the true identity of Precious Auntie and herself and also her daughter Ruth realizes that she has a part of Chinese heritage because her daughter Ruth has another identity crisis which comes from being unaware of her bicultural identity. As Mary Ellen Snodgrass says “Tan bases the novel on the difficult lives of immigrants coping with first-generation American children” (2004: 42). In that sense, it is deduced that LuLing’s autobiography is a key part of the novel to partially solve the identity crisis of the characters. Following part explains how she gave her story to Ruth and how Ruth ignored those papers for years.

They were pages written in Chinese, her mother’s writing. Luling had given them to her five or six years before. “just some old things about my life,” she had said, with the kind of awkward nonchalance that meant the pages were important. “my story, begin little-girl time. I write for myself, but maybe you read, then you see how I grow up, come to this country.” Ruth had heard bits of her mother’s life over the years, but she was touched by her shyness in asking Ruth to read what she had obviously labored over. The pages contained precise vertical rows, without crossouts, leaving Ruth to surmise that her mother had copied over her earlier attempts (12).

Ruth who is the American born daughter of a Chinese mother loses her voice in a certain period of the year. Here the voice is used symbolically as a metaphor for



identity like the loss of Precious Aunties' voice and the loss of LuLing's memory. Each of them goes through different kinds of an identity crisis. Contrary to her mother and her grandmother Ruth is in search of her identity in a multicultural modern society. Throughout her childhood she is in between rejecting the Chinese side. That is why she always argues with her mother as if she blamed her mother for having Chinese roots which is not in accordance with the American lifestyle. According to Mary Ellen Snodgrass, "Ruth Luyi Young suffers embarrassment by her mother's failure to assimilate to American language and customs" (2004: 186). She has an ideal figure of a mother in her mind who is LuLing's cousin Auntie Gaoling because she adopts herself to the American lifestyle better than LuLing with her perfect English. However, LuLing was getting more traditional day by day to survive in another culture and protect her daughter while Ruth is trying to get assimilated into American Culture.

Language is one of the reasons that lead to the discrepancy between generations in Ruth's childhood. Ruth is educated in an American style with perfect English and she can understand Chinese a little bit because LuLing taught her calligraphy in a Chinese way. Moreover, although LuLing gets by with the money she earns from writing the price signs in English Chinese as a calligraphy artist, Ruth thinks that learning calligraphy is a kind of punishment because she cannot realize she has a bicultural identity formation. However, language is one of the factors that help the formation of cultural identity according to the culture it belongs to. Therefore, for LuLing language or calligraphy in Chinese style is kind of a way to keep her cultural identity because she was taught how to write and think by her mother.

"Writing Chinese characters," her mother told her, "is entirely different from writing English words. You think differently. You feel differently." And it is true: LuLing was different when she was writing and painting. She was calm, organized, and decisive (54).

Despite LuLing's efforts, Ruth does not want to learn to write Chinese characters. She rejects thinking in Chinese because she is proud of her American identity. LuLing talks about Chinese alphabet "Each character is a thought, a feeling, meanings, history, all mixed into one" (55). Here, she tries to show her daughter the uniqueness of Chinese identity, but those words mean nothing to Ruth. However, throughout her life "By using Chinese words, LuLing could put all kinds of wisdom in

Ruth's mind. She could warn her way from danger, disease, and death" (70). She tries to protect her daughter on her own not only verbally but also physically because of her husband's death.

Ruth stood at the top of the slide, frozen with shame. Her mother was busybody watcher of kindergartners, whereas Ruth was in the first grade! Some of the other first-graders were laughing down below. "Is that your mother?" they shouted. "What's that gobbled-gook-gook she's saying?"

"She's not my mother?" Ruth shouted back. "I don't know who she is!" Her mother's eyes locked on hers. Although she was clear across the playground, she heard everything, saw everything. She had magic eyes on the back of her head (71).

Her friends are making fun of her mother's language. Ruth rebels against her mother and her Chinese culture not to get excluded from the American society. Like her American friends, as the fourth generation of the novel Art's teenager American daughters, Fia and Dory cannot stand LuLing's talking in Chinese. Fia says "And I wish you two would stop talking like spies in Chinese" (70) because she thinks "It's like really rude." However, they call LuLing "Waipo" (70) which means grandmother in Chinese, but they do this because they thought it is a nickname.

Because of experiences especially in her childhood, Ruth develops an in-between identity that she suffers from till the time she reconciles with her mother's Chinese heritage by the help of the translation of her autobiography. On the other hand, she is a medium between her mother and the American society because for LuLing language has three meaning. First one is an important barrier to get involved into the American life. The second one is something that she is proud of because she learnt English by herself when she lived in China. And the last thing that Ruth suffers from is her mother's poor English. Although in China she was acculturated by the Western Culture to start a new life in America, in America she starts to keep her traditional mind to develop an identity. However, the situation seems different to Ruth "But this was the worst part: Being the only child of a widow, Ruth had always been forced to serve as LuLing's mouthpiece" (46). That is why "In an odd way, she now thought, her mother was the one who had taught her to become a book doctor" (47). That means that she does not have her own voice or new Chinese American identity without having any certain identities like stereotypes or correcting others' sentences.

In the past Ruth's rebellious attitude against her ethnic identity and sympathy for American culture comes from Western stereotyping of Chinese people. American society creates certain Asian people image by generalizing the East and produces stereotypical identities. That is why Ruth cannot see the difference of Chinese people because her mind is constructed by the American society so that she thinks that Chinese identity is something she has to reject because of its inferiority. Stereotyping is one of the problems they suffer from during the years in Chinatown or anywhere Chinese people are accepted as minority. In the hospital scene, like segregated tables during the feast Tan tries to show the polarization between the minorities and the majority in the society. "In the hospital waiting room, Ruth saw that all the patient, except one pale balding man, were Asian. She read the blackboard listing of the doctor's names: Fong, Wong, Wang, Tang, Chin, Pon, Kwak, Koo. The receptionist looked like Chinese; so did the nurses" (61). In the hospital because of creating "oneness" in the Diaspora all people are Asian but the "balding man" who looks like the other in Asian community as Asian person does in the White society. This scene takes Ruth to her childhood and her own otherness:

In the sixties, mused Ruth, people railed against race differentiated serviced as ghettoization. Now they demanded them as culturally sensitive. Then again, San Francisco was about a third Asian, so Chinese-targeted medicine could also be a marketing strategy. The balding man was glancing about, as if seeking an escape route. Did he have a last name like Young that had been mistakenly identified as Chinese-speaking by a race-blind computer? Did he also get calls from Chinese-speaking telemarketers trying to sign him up for long-distance calling plans for Hong Kong and Taiwan? Ruth knew what it meant to feel like an outsider, because she had often been one as a child. Moving to a new home eight times made her aware of how she didn't fit in (61).

During her childhood Ruth and LuLing could not fit anywhere but in Chinatown in San Francisco. Both suffer from the immigration in different ways. The cultural discrepancy between Chinese and American people because of dichotomist attitude of the society forced them to live in a Diaspora being the other in the outside of this world.

Ruth always questions her life and her identity in different ways especially when she was young. Like her language or ethnicity, she questions her religion because she grows up between cultures without being aware of her self-identity.

She remembered the unhappy girl who lived in her body, who was full of passion, rage, and sudden impulses. She used to wonder: Should she believe in God or be a nihilist? Be Buddhist or a beatnik? And whichever it should be, what was the lesson in her mother's being miserable all the time? Were there really ghosts? If not, did that mean her mother was really crazy? Was there really such a thing as luck? If not, why did Ruth's cousins live in Saratoga? At times, she became resolute in wanting to be exactly the opposite of her mother (143).

Like Pearl with personal box, Ruth tries to create her personal space with diaries when she is sixteen years old. Although she wants to be away from her mother like her ethnic identity and writes "STOP!!! PRIVATE!!! IF YOU ARE READING THIS YOU ARE GUILTY OF TRESPASSING!!! YES! I DO MEAN *YOU!*" (145), she cannot stop her mother from reading her diary. Compared to feudal family based Chinese society, Ruth wants her life to be more liberal and individual. And she defines herself as an American. "I'm an American," Ruth shouted. "I have a right to privacy, to pursue my own happiness, not yours!" (145). Even when she gets older like 40s, she does not want to be like her mother even though they look like each other. She is taught how to keep her memory with the counting method by her mother but she adopts the American style instead of Chinese one which her mother uses.

LuLing was the one who had taught her to count fingers as a memory device. With this method, Luling never forgot a thing, especially lies, betrayals, and all the bad deeds Ruth had done since she was born. Ruth could still picture her mother counting in the Chinese style, pointing first to her baby finger and bending each finger down toward her palm, a motion that Ruth took to mean that all other possibilities and escape routes were closed. Ruth kept her own fingers open and splayed, American style (19).

Even though she is a modern American woman, she cannot escape from the gender roles that the society constructs. She has to divide her life and her character to do everything about her job, their house, her mother and also Art and his daughters.

Once she had hung up, Ruth reminded herself of the tasks she needed to do today. Ten things, and she tapped first her thumb. One, take the girls to skating school. Two, pick up Art's suit at the dry cleaner's. Three, buy groceries for dinner. Four, pick up the girls from the rink and drop them off at their friend's house on Jackson Street. Five and Six, phone calls to that arrogant client, Ted, then Agapi Agnos, whom she actually liked. Seven, finish the outline for a chapter of Agapi Agnos's book. Eight, call her agent, Gideon, whom Wendy disliked. And Nine—what the hell was Nine? She knew what Ten was, the last task of the day. She had to call Miriam, Art's ex-wife, to ask if she would let them have the girls at the weekend of the Full Moon Festival dinner, the annual reunion of the Youngs, which was hosting this year (18).

For modern women compared to the traditional one, everything is changing related to time and space. Women's situation and stories are the same in essence but expressed in different perspectives because of the social and the cultural influences. Thus, they are left in between their daily life having fragmented identities. Ruth has a strong gendered identity taking all the responsibility of her house and the children and also she has an in-between cultural identity which is divided into two as American and Chinese. Everything related to Chinese Culture is considered as a duty to her. Moreover, she questions her relationship with Art.

Like her private life, she is also in-between in her business life. Although she wants to write her own book, she is working for the other writers as "a ghostwriter" (29).

Years before, she had dreamed of writing stories as a way to escape. She could revise her life and become someone else. She could be somewhere else. In her imagination she could change everything, herself, her mother, her past. But the idea of revising her life also frightened her, as if by imagination alone she were condemning what she did not like about herself or others. Writing what you wished was the most dangerous form of wishful thinking (29).

She is not content with her own life; that is why she wants to change everything in her life such as her mother, herself and her past because of the identity crisis she is going through. Although her mother dares to write her own past, she is not brave enough to write about herself revising the past. She does not want to accept her hybrid, bicultural identity. However, she has deep roots that link her to the Chinese Culture. Like religion and language, food also makes her bicultural and makes her understand hybrid identity although those factors are the reasons of her in-betweenness. Therefore, "[i]n *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (2001), the author maintains her depiction of ethnic customs and beliefs through scenarios centering on food" (Snodgrass, 2004: 67). She likes eating not only American food such as beef or hamburger also Chinese cuisine.

Every year, before their family reunion dinner in September, her mother started two new fermenting jars of spicy turnips, one of which she gave to Ruth [.....] Art thought the taste was okay in small doses. But the girls said they smelled like "something farted in the fridge." At times Ruth secretly ate the spicy turnips in the morning, her way of seizing the day. Even her mother considered that strange (36).

She grew up with the Chinese food of LuLing because “LuLing did not cook or eat beef of any kind. It disgusted her, reminded her of scarred flesh” (75). Although Ruth has an American lifestyle outside including American cuisine, she eats Chinese food at home and also at their feasts. That is why she likes eating turnips while Art and his daughters as American people do not like them as much as Ruth. Although she rejects her Chinese background, she cannot escape it.

Tan uses feast scenes intentionally to create multicultural atmosphere even in a Chinese setting making the non-Chinese ones the minority. In that sense, the Full Moon Festival night feast scene is very important in terms of different reasons. First of all this reunion is the first one that is organized by Ruth, so it is very crucial for Ruth to get closer to her Chinese roots. Secondly, because it is “Chinese thanksgiving” (86), it is a way for Chinese people not to be assimilated into the Western traditions while integrating into the American culture. Lastly, the feast scene creates another space and time for all generations and outsiders to get together. For example, as Ukrainian immigrants Art and his family including his ex-wife and her family are invited to the dinner. However, they cannot stop themselves to create “the non-Chinese section” (90), so Ruth’s friend’s Wendy says “Hey, are we in the white ghetto o what?” (90). Although Ruth thinks they will eat Chinese food such as “sweetly glazed phoenix-tail fish, vegetarian chicken made out of wrinkly tissues of tofu, and jellyfish, her mother’s favorite, seasoned with sesame oil and sprinkled with diced and green onions” (91), they do not look like they like what the waiters serve. “More dishes arrived, each one stranger than the last, to judge by the expression on the non-Chinese faces” (91). However, Ruth summarized how the Chinese section feels with her speech:

“As the years go on, I see how much family means. It reminds us of what’s important. That connection to the past. The same jokes about being Young yet getting old. The traditions. The fact that we can’t get rid of each other no matter how much we try. We’re stuck through the ages, with the bonds cemented by sticky rice and tapioca pudding. Thank you all for being who you are.” She left out individual tributes since she had nothing to say about Miriam and her party (93).

Although the family members are a part of an American culture, they cannot get rid of each other. As getting older, family and Chinese society are becoming more important in their life, which is what Ruth starts to feel. Afterwards she decides to translate her mother’s writings, her life is changed because “Ruth eventually comes to

recognize the importance of original authorship through the discovery of her mother's autobiography (Dunick, 2006: 177). Moreover, there are some similarities between stories of generations in terms of the results of understanding the importance of biographies "[j]ust as Precious Auntie saved LuLing through writing her autobiography, LuLing's writing replicates that rescue through her autobiography's effect on Ruth" (Dunick, 2006: 177).

Through the translation of Mr. Tang, Ruth accesses a second recovered narrative, the story of LuLing's first marriage, widowhood, escape from a besieged orphanage, and emigration to California to marry pre-med student Edwin Young. The lengthy second widowhood turns into a miserable battleground with Ruth, a disobedient child who resents her Chinese mother's otherness and longs for independence (Snodgrass, 2004: 42).

LuLing's illness, dementia, becomes obvious, she starts to get worried about her mother and their relationship. That brings her to look back at her past and understand her roots and develop bicultural identity instead of in-between assimilated identity.

What was wrong with her mother? Could depression cause confusion like this? The next week, when they had the follow-up visit with Dr. Huey, she would discuss it with him. If he ordered her mother to take antidepressants, maybe she would obey. Ruth knew she should visit her mother more often. LuLing often complained of loneliness, and she was obviously trying to fill a void by going to see GaoLing at odd hours (93).

When she understands her mother's psychology, she can see the loneliness from which she suffers. There is nobody to understand her. Chinese society is the only group that can understand her, but they are Americanized, assimilated or they can develop hybrid identities while LuLing keeps being traditional and rejecting the American way of life. Moreover, because of the suicide of her Precious Auntie, she cannot reconcile with her Chinese past, either. That is why she overprotects herself and her traditional lifestyle or the way of thinking to forge an identity.

When Ruth decided to get the pages written by her mother translated, she felt better. Until that time her mother is the only person who she does not have time for; that is why when she rediscovers her mother's autobiography and the Chinese bible with Precious Auntie's picture, she decides to change her life.

For once, she would ask. She would listen. She would sit down and not be in a hurry or have anything else to do. She would even more in with her mother, spend more time getting to know her. At would not be too happy about that. He might take her moving out as a sign of problems. But someone had to take care of her mother. And she wanted to. She wanted to be here, as her mother told her about her life, taking her through all the detours of the past, explaining the multiple meanings of Chinese words, how to translate her heart. Her hands would be full, and finally, she and her mother could both stop counting (155).

For Snodgrass, “In achieving autonomy as writer, dutiful daughter, and wife to Art Kamen, Ruth achieves the personal growth that Tan ascribes to a matrilineal legacy from strong women” (2004: 186). At the end of the novel after Ruth’s reading what LuLing wrote for her, she realizes her bicultural identity which is in process throughout her life.

At night, as Ruth lay in her old bed, she felt she had come back to her adolescence in the guise of an adult. She was the same person and yet she was not. Or perhaps she was two versions of herself, Ruth<sub>1969</sub> and Ruth<sub>1999</sub>, one more innocent and the other more perceptive, one needier, the other more self sufficient, both of them fearful. She was her mother’s child, and mother to the child her mother had become. So many combinations, like Chinese names and characters, the same elements, seemingly simple, reconfigured in different ways. This was the bed from her childhood, and still within were those youthful moments before dreams, when she ached and wondered alone: What’s going to happen? (315).

Now she is aware of her identity that includes different Ruths belonging to different years and cultures. These identities are not opposite, but they are relational to each other and develop within each other. Like her self-identity, her social identities are relational as an embodiment of hybrid identity which is Chinese American. This identity does not belong anywhere. It is something new neither pure American nor Chinese.

Moreover, Ruth helps her mother find her grandmother’s real name to identify her with her own name. When she finds her real name, she feels “She had existed. She still existed. Precious Auntie belonged to a family. LuLing belonged to that same family, and Ruth belonged to them both” (364-365). Precious Auntie has a name which is away from the family she belonged. She is not the Bonesetter’s daughter or Precious Auntie, she is Gu Liu Xin. That means she has self-identity although her social identity is constructed by the society.



When she accepts her hybridity and her Chinese past throughout her quest for her identity, she starts not to lose her voice again because metaphorically her voice is her neglected ethnic identity. After the reconciliation, she has a voice to talk which includes different sides of her and also she thinks “She can write. Before, she never had a reason to write for herself, only for others. Now she has that reason” (366). She is not a ghost writer anymore. She finds her identity and her voice that is why she feels ready to write her own story.

As Ruth now stares at the photo, she thinks about her mother as a little girl, about her grandmother as a young woman. These are the women who shaped her life, who are in her bones. They caused her to question whether the order and disorder of her life were due to fate or luck, self-determination or the actions of others. They taught her to worry. But she has also learned that these warnings were passed down, not simply to scare her to avoid their footsteps, to hope for something better. They wanted her to get rid of the curses (367).

To read her heritage her past makes her understand she has roots from China but a life in the United States. She realizes that she does not have to belong to one of them. She starts to feel she has a new Chinese American identity which relates her to different identities. At the end of the book the real name and life story of her grandmother are revealed. Because for LuLing “the worst is losing precious Auntie’s name” (6), revelation means that her real mother is identified with her own name other than the family name which is a part of patriarchy.

By the end of the text, Ruth will continue the tradition started by Precious Auntie and begin to write her own stories. These Chinese women use written autobiographies to reveal and establish lasting conceptions of their individual identities. The text reveals Precious Auntie’s identity to the reader through the autobiography that LuLing writes for Ruth, even though LuLing never actually reveals this secret to her daughter. Thus, Tan’s palimpsest-like layering of written autobiographies in *The Bonesetter’s Daughter* highlights the specific connection between authorship and articulation of the self and the importance of written text over oral narrative (Dunick, 2006: 177-8).

In conclusion, according to Dunick “Tan’s Chinese mothers not only verbally convey their stories but also use writing to assert their identity” (2007: 180). The text shows that the identity quest for each character varies in a different way. Although their life-stories are mingled with each other, because the identity itself is positional and conditional they develop different self-identities which are still in process and also affected by their cultural and gendered identities. Gu Liu Xin is forced to become

nameless and voiceless by the Chinese feudal society while LuLing has an identity like a bridge between two different countries. Finally, Ruth is able to see her bicultural Chinese American identity by relating the fragmented identities in-between cultures.

## CONCLUSION

This dissertation has attempted to analyze *The Kitchen God's Wife* and *The Bonesetter's Daughter* by Amy Tan to show how society constructs identities in relation to culture and gender from the point of Cultural Studies. It has been observed that identity is not fixed but a changeable concept according to time, place and culture. In this thesis, Chinese American identity has been examined as a new identity formation from the perspective of female characters. Both novels have used some similar or different techniques to indicate gendered and cultural identities.

First of all, in terms of narration in the novels different styles have been observed. *The Kitchen God's Wife* uses oral narration with talk stories while *The Bonesetter's Daughter* utilizes written narration with biographies. However, both techniques have contributed to the female quest in different ways to emphasize the importance of women narration which is influenced by culture that reforms identity and reshapes attitudes during the identity formation process.

In both novels four female generations going through distinctive experiences are in search of identity between different cultures. Educated Chinese mothers in China compared to traditional Chinese women are trapped by Chinese feudal society. Although they partially manage to create self-identity away from Confucian society, they cannot escape from their cultural gendered identities as women members of the society. Thus, Winnie's mother has to leave her daughter in order not to be a concubine anymore while LuLing's mother has to commit suicide to prevent her daughter from an arranged marriage. On the other hand, Chinese daughters in China experience Chinese patriarchy, wars and also acculturation period by Western culture in China. Winnie and LuLing both think that immigration is the only way to live a better life. Although they have cultural and gendered lives in China, in the United States they can start to express themselves as women. However, in their new lives, they have to develop a new identity between two different cultures as ethnic minorities of the United States. As Chinese mothers in the United States try to be traditional to preserve their Chinese roots even though they have their self and social identities acculturated by Western culture in China, their Chinese American daughters get assimilated by American lifestyle by

rejecting the Chinese background. After Ruth and Pearl go through identity crisis for a long time, they realize that their mothers' stories have helped them to create a bridge between their Chinese culture and American culture. Their new bicultural hybrid identities leave them in between cultures and it enables them to occupy a space and define a self. They have been experiencing bicultural hybrid identities through the stories. Although as a new formation Chinese American identity includes their Chinese and American sides, they understand that they are neither American nor Chinese. As the fourth generation Ruth's step daughters and Pearl's daughters are American children acculturated by the American society. Therefore, it has been deduced that the female quest for identity is different from one generation to another according to the society and culture where the characters live or grow up. On the other hand, throughout the novels cultural and gendered identities have been studied by exemplifying language, religion, food, lifestyle, stereotypes, women's education in patriarchy and gender based structure of the society during the hybridization and acculturation process of the characters.

Finally, *The Kitchen God's Wife* and *The Bonesetter's Daughter* portray women characters that struggle throughout their identity quest; however, to some extent they manage to develop their own identities by rejecting being someone's wife or daughter. During their quest they try to fight against their cultural and gendered identities that are given by the society, but it has been observed that even self-identity is influenced by the society and culture.

To conclude, identity is unstable, anti-essential and positional entity which is constantly under the effect of society, culture and gender. Especially in contemporary world postmodern identity is composed of contradictive and hybrid identities as a result of social mobility. Chinese American identity is one of the bicultural identities that help eliminate stereotypes and binary oppositions by creating hyphenated hybrid identities in between cultures within multicultural and multi-structural societies.

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**C.V.**

Name and Surname : Burcu DÜZ  
Mother's Name : Cemile  
Father's Name : Mustafa  
Birth of Place and d Date : Ankara / 06.06.1989

B.A. : Selcuk University  
Faculty of Letters  
Department of English Language and Literature

Graduation Date : 2011

M.A. : Pamukkale University  
Social Sciences Institution  
Western Languages and Literature  
Department of English Language and Literature