Conclusion

The narratives of the Chinese women writers in Canada and America often depict the contradictory tendencies of essentialising as well as effecting border crossings. The writers tend to essentialise identities and reemphasise tropes like ‘China,’ ‘Chineseness,’ ‘Americanised,’ ‘Canadianised’ and ‘Chinatowns.’ Nonetheless, the transnationalism that can be offered by migration itself will be negated, if such tropes are treated as transcendental signifieds.

Ethnic writings, very often, in arguing for the rights of the groups they stand up for, tend to generalise and essentialise identities in their eagerness for political correctness. In making their claims heard, they may tend to antagonise the other communities that coexist in the nation, largely forgetting how this may forestall the attainment of ‘good life’ in the case of other ethnic groups, thus deliberately or inadvertently dismantling the high ideal of multiculturalism. Thus diaspora literatures are not as innocent as they may appear at first glance. Even within the same ethnic group, there occurs a tendency to essentialise the migrant generation and the later host land born generations as having different traits. However, the attributing of such static identities will only help in underlining the victim status of these groups and project a great cultural divide as existing between generations, which may be far from truth in many cases. Criticisms to the effect that such portrayals have made the authors attain a ‘voice’ for themselves cannot be negated, considering the literary reception of their works.
The works under consideration have been found to fall prey to such limiting essentialising tendencies. *The Woman Warrior* evinces a tendency to project the Chinese as different and distinct from other ethnic groups and cultures so as to make them appear favourable. Denigration of other cultures can be seen in *The Joy Luck Club* and *Bone*. *Disappearing Moon Café* and *The Excluded Wife* also hint at such a tendency though this is directed only against the whites. *The Concubine’s Children* projects an unwritten hierarchy as existing among ethnic groups.

Mother-daughter conflicts figure largely in Amy Tan’s *The Joy Luck Club*. *The Woman Warrior* also depicts the tendency to essentialise on the part of the writer as evidenced in her use of ‘We’ and ‘Chinese-Americans’ in the course of the narration. Though conflicts occur in *Bone*, the extent is shown to vary depending on the individuality of the characters. Sky Lee, Denise Chong and Yuen-fong Woon also show such generalising tendencies, though in Sky Lee’s works, this becomes less prominent with the passage of time.

However, correspondence with the writer Yuen-fong Woon (in the year 2007) shows that the portrayal of two generations as having different sensibilities is not intentional. Woon also exudes the realisation that the position of the Chinese as minorities is not static and that “Multiculturalism which claims to celebrate diversity has the result of magnifying differences, which can backfire at times of social stress” (e-mail). She also balances this view of hers with her knowledge that “On the positive side, however, it might provide legal ammunition for visible minorities to fight back” (e-mail). Woon’s e-mail also shows her awareness of the variety of responses “that cut across generation
lines” (e-mail). She is also found to come to the conclusion that the mainstream Canadians have “toned down” overt white racism, though a few incidents of racially motivated violence against Chinese Canadians persist.

If the generalising and essentialising tendencies in the work that may exacerbate the tension between the nations are left aside, portrayals that may lead to the fostering of individual actualisation through border crossings may also be found. All the works reveal such border crossings, which result from a broadening of sensibility caused by the process of migration.

All multiethnic literatures exemplify transmission and reception of ideas between national and minority literatures, causing a breakdown in the boundaries of nations and cultures, resulting in the “diffusion” of borders and literatures. This has been achieved in the works taken up for study by the alternation of the landscape between the home and the host topoi. In The Woman Warrior, a move to America takes place, but a move back to China does not occur. Bone depicts a move to America and a trip to Hong Kong and travel by some of the characters to or through Australia, Japan, Spain and so on. In The Joy Luck Club, travel from China to America and from America to China are mentioned. Unlike the Chinese American works which may mention only a single short trip each by certain of the characters back to China, in the Chinese Canadian works The Excluded Wife and The Concubine’s Children, there is a depiction of the move back and forth between the two physical terrains. Disappearing Moon Café just mentions a trip back to China.

In addition to such ethnoscapes, the flow of money-- financescapes, have found depiction in the works. Many of the characters are found to send money to
their relatives in China while in any of the host nations -- America or Canada. Nonetheless, there are characters who view this with suspicion and characters that do not send any. Money obtained in one nation is shown as being squandered in or enriching other nations.

Mental travails of the characters figure in the novels in the form of nostalgia towards the absent land. Food and other cultural symbols are made use of by the characters, as per the narration, to re-create the absent land. Some characters are found to cherish a longing to be in the absent topos. However, this kind of border crossing is viewed with suspicion as the love for the longed-for terrain in many characters is found to evaporate once the actual travel back takes place.

Border crossing also takes place in the case of identity. Identities are shown to be in the state of ‘becoming’ rather than ‘being’ thus exemplifying cultural crossings. Except for one or two characters that are unable to change much, all the characters project such fluid nature of identities. Cultural crossings are also exemplified in the works in the simultaneous worshipping of Christ and Chinese gods.

Further crossings are exemplified in the use of language, with the characters cuddling certain elements of Chinese and English leading to pidgin and creole languages. Code switching and code mixing is also seen in the talk of the characters as per situations.

The study is not without limitations. The lack of firsthand knowledge about China, America or Canada is a factor that forestalled the researcher from making definitive pronouncements about the comments made by Rey Chow,
Sau Ling Cynthia Wong and the like, regarding the picture of China presented in these works. Also as some writers were more prolific than others, the study had to be restricted to the debut full length works by the authors. An examination of later works of the writers may reveal different patterns, and can be taken up for further study. Since all the writers taken up are women writers, the possibility of comparing the diasporic experience as portrayed by women and men writers is absent.

It follows from the present study that in the case of migrants and the diasporans, border crossing takes place at different levels-- physical and psychological -- among which can be found territorial, economic and cultural border crossings which ultimately is supposed to make them glocal citizens, transcending categorisation into narrow diasporic formations, and making the best of both the lands by being comfortable in all the lands in which they may find themselves. However, there are individual differences and the attitude of the person who travels and the experiences that he has may enhance or forestall border crossings.