

Chapter 5

Border Crossing: Cultural and Territorial

Borders get legitimised only where there is a fear of the transnational. In the post modern world depicted by the writers, borders are porous. “Cross-border flows today are induced and channeled by the ease of travel and the reorganization of labor markets within the global economy” (Ong 170). These have enabled people to ‘route’ themselves to promising lands and to find a means to embrace elements from multiple cultural heritages, crossing over from one to the others. Physical crossing of territories by the characters and economic and cultural crossings that figure in the works are taken up here for study. These spell out new dimensions in boundary crossings and contribute to a great extent towards the process of glocalisation. Thus the chapter deals not only with ethnoscapes, but with other forms of transnationalisms like financescapes also.

In *The Joy Luck Club* which features geographical crossings, Jing-Mei Woo, the daughter of Suyuan Woo describes 1949 as the year “my mother and father left China with one stiff leather trunk filled with only fancy silk dresses” (JLC 20). It is also shown as the year in which Suyuan’s second husband also emigrated. With the cue taken from an army officer, Suyuan is found to make her crossing over from Kweilin to Chungking at first in a stolen wheelbarrow where she has put the small babies and whom she later on carries in a sling and loses on her way. The territorial crossing of Suyuan Woo to America is mentioned again in the last narrative of ‘American Translation’ by Jing-Mei:

She had come here in 1949, at the end of a long journey that started in Kweilin in 1944, she had gone north to Chungking,

where she met my father, and then they bent Southeast to Shanghai and fled farther South to Hong Kong, where the boat departed for San Francisco (JLC 199).

Suyuan Woo later travels to China to retrieve her daughters and stays in China from 1945 to 1947 with the hope of finding them. The crossing over of the Jongs is also mentioned in the course of the narrative, for the Jongs are said to have had “a recent China trip” (JLC 27). Cultural and geographical crossings find mention again with a talk about the Hsus’ trip to China three years back. The crossing over of Jing-Mei from America to Hong Kong also finds expression. Further territorial crossings are mentioned in An-mei’s narration with An-Mei’s mother’s coming to China to see her daughter. Waverly Jong tells of Lindo’s and her father’s trip to Beijing and Taiyuan and her intention to spend her honeymoon in China and Lindo’s wish to accompany them.

Travel from America to China of Jing mei Woo is depicted as necessitated by the urge to know the ending of the Kwentin story her mother has told her. Her travel to China is projected as a search for roots. Critics like Huntley have observed about this travel, “For Jing-mei, the journey is an epiphany and a discovery of self-Travel sponsored by the check gifted by the Joy Luck aunties” (48).

Travel of mothers from China to America in the 1940s is shown as necessitated by the intention of creating good lives for themselves in the new land, when Jing mei Woo says, “My mother believed you could be anything you wanted to be in America” (JLC 132).

Lindo Jong's migration is made possible by the wealth appropriated from her first husband's family; the marriage being a failure. Lindo is also shown as returning to China after decades of being in America where she doesn't flaunt fancy jewellery or wear loud colours, but still is considered a visitor.

Identity is a much discussed issue in any study on diaspora. Expressions like traditionalist, assimilationist, marginal, liminal persona and so on have been brought in by sociologists to effect tagging indicating identity as a state of 'being' and static. But in actual situations, the characters show a tendency to transcend such limiting categorical implications that society bestows on them. Stuart Hall opines in "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" that identity is a production "which is never complete, always in process and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (234). He further states that "This view problematises the very authority and authenticity to which the term 'cultural identity' lays claim" (234). This fluid nature of identities finds ample expression in the works by these writers.

Every individual shows a tendency to transcend the limits imposed by cultures to varying extents. As per Rudmin's definition, even the term acculturation should be invalidated, for, it is seen as associated with minorities (e-mail). Power structures in society are not static. Minority communities do not always remain so. Hence the ascribing of terms like 'Chinesey' (attributed to characters like Mah, Zeke, and so on) and 'Americanised' (ascribed to the daughters in *The Joy Luck Club* and so on) by the writers with reference to the characters should be seen rather as a projection of minority status on to the characters or their attempt at presenting the characters as limited beings,

incapable of transcending cultural boundaries. Further one doubts how far are the writers justified in defining essences like ‘Americanness’ and ‘Chineseness.’ Nonetheless, in certain sections of the works, consciously or unconsciously, a depiction of the transcending of narrow categorisations by the characters also figures. The endeavour here is to show how the characters negotiate identities that go beyond the narrow confines of restraining groupings.

Though the narration, as has been made evident in chapter three, at times evinces the writers’ tendency to present a homogenised identity typical of the generation to which the character belongs, with the migrant generation clinging on to ‘Chineseness’ and the host land born generation presented as ‘Americanised’ or ‘Canadianised,’ the fluid nature of identities also opens itself up at places. The picture of static identities, with migrant mothers usually branded as siding with China and being averse to other cultures and languages in the host land suffers a blow when Suyuan Woo is said to pick up the basics of English language and manages to communicate with people in the host land in pidgin.

Lindo Jong’s cuddling of the best of America and China to the best advantage is made evident when she says that she “wanted my children to have the best combination: American circumstances and Chinese character” (JLC 254). Being members speaking different dialects, Lindo and her future husband Tin Jong try to communicate with each other in America during the initial days by learning ‘english’. They are found to go “to English class together, speaking to each other in those new words and sometimes taking out a piece of paper to

write a Chinese character to show what we meant,” (JLC 263) allowing their identities to be remoulded by the requirements of the situation.

Waverly Jong’s explanation of her mother’s deviant nose as meaning “We’re for one side and also for the other,” (JLC 266) also shows how the characters try to transcend delimiting categorisations, thus showing a flexibility in offering themselves upto both lands.

An-mei’s belief in Jesus and the Chinese gods (coiling dragon) shows her acceptance of the religious practices of both China and America. Thus the simultaneous belief in deities revered by the Chinese and Jesus evidences her tendency to rise above narrow and fundamentalist mindsets.

In Jing-mei, one may find a tendency to benefit from her ethnicity even as she values ‘American culture,’ for, she doesn’t mind being addressed by her Chinese name as “it’s even becoming fashionable for American born Chinese to use their Chinese names” (JLC 37). Thus she evolves beyond the static characterisation of ‘Americanised,’ very often foisted onto her by critics. She also evinces to have a Chinese sensibility even when she is branded American, for she cannot shake off easily the love that ‘Chinese culture’ has instilled in her. She cares for her father and prepares Chinese dishes. Jing Mei says, “My father hasn’t eaten well since my mother died. So I am here, in the kitchen, to cook him dinner. I’m slicing to fu. I’ve decided to make him a spicy bean-curd dish. My mother used to tell me how hot things restore the spirit and health” (JLC 209). She also makes a trip to China to visit her half sisters, evidencing that she cannot shed off the ‘Chineseness’ that penetrates the skin and goes deep

into the heart. Though ‘Americanised’ as per her mother’s standards, she cannot deny her Chinese roots fully and while in China is found to observe:

. . . our train leaves the Hong Kong border and enters Shenzhen, China, I feel different. I can feel the skin on my forehead tingling, my blood rushing through a new course, my bones aching with a familiar old pain. And I think, my mother was right. I am becoming Chinese (JLC 267).

Jing-mei realises that being Chinese is not derogatory as she embarks on her trip to China. She exhibits a keen interest in China, though it is only when her visit to the land is imminent:

. . . we will be in Guangzhou, which my guidebook tells me is how one . . . refers to Canton these days. It seems all the cities I have heard of, except Shanghai, have changed their spellings. I think they are saying China has changed... Chungking is Chongqing. And Kweilin is Guilin. I have looked these names up, because after we see my father’s aunt in Guangzhou, we will catch a plane to Shanghai, where I will meet my two half-sisters for the first time (JLC 268).

The Chinese side of Jing-mei also surfaces after her mother’s death, for, “. . . now I ask the questions mostly because I want to know the answers. What was that pork stuff she used to make...? What were the names of the uncles who died in Shanghai? What had she dreamt all these years about her other daughters?” (JLC 278) evidencing her ability to go beyond a single culture. Towards the end of the novel, at the moment of reunion with her half sisters,

Jing-mei reclaims her ethnicity thus surpassing being just an 'American'. She observes: "And now I also see what part of me is Chinese. It is so obvious. It is my family. It is in our blood" (JLC 288). Thus Jing-mei can be seen as inhabiting various 'acculturation profiles' during various points of time, but never having a permanent footing on any of these. She evolves throughout the novel.

In a like manner, Waverly's 'Americanisation' does not prevent her fully from cuddling certain 'Chinese' elements at certain points in her life. Waverly tries to give a treat to her mother at her favourite Chinese restaurant. Waverly's attempt at explaining the reasons for her not getting along with her mother using Chinese logic also shows her knowledge of Chinese beliefs though only to some extent. She moves back and forth between 'Chineseness' and 'Americanness' and different hybrid variations of these in her relation with the other characters depending on the situation.

Born in America, though Waverly at times exhibits a resistance to the imbibing of 'Chinese' cultural values, during other instances, she tries to make the most of their ethnicity. She wishes to go to China for her second honeymoon. The evolving identity of Waverly is also brought out when she talks about the two names that she has:

My mother named me after the street that we lived on: Waverly Place Jong, my official name for important American documents. But my family called me Meimei, "Little Sister". I was the youngest, the only daughter. Each morning before school, my

mother would twist and yank on my thick black hair until she had formed two tightly wound pigtailed (JLC 91).

Thus the two names that she has, roots her in the traditions of both China and America and allows her to move between the twain according to circumstances.

The multiple identities possessed are hinted at when Rose remembers the time when her family had gone to the beach when she was a child: “a Chinese family trying to act like a typical American family at the beach” (JLC 122). Rose accepts the ‘Chinese’ practices and ‘American’ virtues alternately or simultaneously, for, at the beach, in spite of her initial reluctance to be in charge of her younger siblings as warranted by the Chinese tradition, Rose prevents a quarrel among the younger children.

Wu Tsing, who “liked foreign things because foreigners had made him rich,” (JLC 223) is shown as possessing a ‘foreign built’ house. Nonetheless he proves that cultural boundaries are not impervious, for he adorns his house in keeping with the Chinese culture, for, “the front of the house had a Chinese stone gate, rounded at the top, with black lacquer doors and a threshold you had to step over” (JLC 223). Thus the work adduces his tendency to embrace both the cultures.

A transcending of the limitations imposed by patriarchy also takes place at certain points in the works. The writer prepares Lindo Jong to adapt to the situation in America when she makes the girl who coaches Lindo Jong before migration say, “Boy or girl, it doesn’t matter in the United States” (JLC 258).

In the America of *The Joy Luck Club*, patriarchal norms are reversed for Waverly’s sake and her brothers Winston and Vincent are made to do the

chores, while Waverly is given time to practice chess. When the brother's protest, Lindo is found to say "Is new American rules . . . Meimei play, squeeze all her brains out for win chess. You play, worth squeeze towel" (JLC 97) (sic).

With the help of An-mei Hsu, her colleague in the cookie factory, Lindo finds a husband (Tin-Jong) for herself when the same would not have been possible in patriarchal China. As Lindo observes, "I had a choice. I could choose to marry your father, or I could choose not to marry him and go back to China" (JLC 263). An-mei also exudes the realisation of being in America, contrary to the generalised portrayal of the diasporans as unrealistic when she says, "We are not in China anymore. You don't have to marry the village boy" (JLC 263).

The book *The Woman Warrior* includes in its course of narration copious physical crossings of territories. The first section titled "No Name Woman" includes a mention about the sail of the men folk in the Kingston household to the Gold Mountain. In the second section "White Tigers," there is no physical crossing, but there are cultural crossings throughout. The third section "Shaman" also abounds in literal and mental crossings. The travel of Brave Orchid for Canton (to study medicine) from her native place as part of Brave Orchid's reminiscences and Brave Orchid's migration to New York in the winter of 1939 find mention. The fourth section of the memoir "At the Western Palace" offers a description of Moon Orchid's travel to America when Brave Orchid is about sixty years old. There is a hint that Moon Orchid's daughter, presently living in America, has been in China five years back, for Kingston tells us: "The niece said nothing, although she has seen her mother only five years ago" (WW 117). There is also a reiteration of Kingston's father's migration to America. The last

section 'A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe' also repeats the tale of Moon Orchid who has been with Brave Orchid and Kingston's brother to Los Angeles to see her husband who has got the other wife. Brave Orchid sets sail to America whereas Moon Orchid flies and the decision of Brave Orchid's migration rather than Kingston's father's return is caused by the Japanese attack of China in 1939 (WW 93).

There are other forms of transnationalism like "financescapes," the exchange of capital from one nation to another (Appadurai 31). Instances of this can also be found in the works. *The Woman Warrior* speaks of instances where Brave Orchid sends money to her relatives in China. Regarding her Chinese relatives, Brave Orchid tells Kingston of their constant demand for money and remarks, "We'd have to go hungry ourselves ... They don't understand that we have ourselves to feed too" (WW 206). Kingston, however, is doubtful whether the relatives are really in need and says:

I'd like to go to China and see those people and find out what's a cheat story and what's not. Did my grandmother really live to be ninety-nine? Or did they string us along all those years to get our money? . . . When we Overseas Chinese send money, do the relatives divide it equally among the commune? Or do they really pay 2 per cent tax and keep the rest? (WW 206).

Yet money is sent to China.

In *The Woman Warrior*, Kingston at times moves between cultures and so do Brave Orchid's other children. Kingston family's watching of an American movie and enjoying a carnival ride each New Year's Day and her

watching of movies at the Confucius church evidence this tendency. Kingston feels that she has to express her dual loyalty to the lands by combating the atrocities in both.

Moon Orchid's grandchildren adopt the stance of adjusting to both the cultures. In the memoir, Moon Orchid's daughter is found telling her mother about her children: "The children are very smart, Mother . . . The teachers say they are brilliant. They can speak Chinese and English. They'll be able to talk to you," (WW 128) which shows that Moon Orchid's children have got adjusted with the society so that both their mother and teachers are proud of them.

Brave Orchid herself thinks of Moon Orchid's husband to be a smart man, "Brave Orchid, who had been a surgeon too, thought that her brother-in-law must be a clever man. He was smart enough to learn ghost ways" (WW 149). So also, Moon Orchid's husband suits himself to the requirements of the American society. But even as he likes to have cultural amnesia for the Chinese culture and exhibits cultural cringe when he does not mention about the Chinese wife to the one in America, he cannot restrain himself from sending money to his wife in China and giving a treat to Brave Orchid and party when they visit him (WW 149).

Brave Orchid, while at Canton school itself is found to make strides at moving beyond a single culture, for she learns both Chinese and Western system of medicine and uses either or both as the situation warrants. The school also offers such training. Thus:

Chang Chung-ching, father of medicine, had told how the two great winds, *yang* and *yin*, blew through the human body. The

diligent students would do well to begin memorizing his book on cold and fevers. After they had mastered the ancient cures that worked, they would be taught the most up-to-date western discoveries (WW 63).

Brave Orchid, even as she benefits from Chinese values, has a sensibility that makes her go beyond certain Chinese superstitions. She used to say when the students “talked story,” “She needn’t have been afraid. Most ghosts are only nightmares. Somebody should have held her and wiggled her ears to wake her up” (WW 65). She takes only a knife and a text book and avoids charms and talismans when she goes to the ghost room at the Medical School in Canton where the students are afraid to spend a night. However, on leaving the Canton school of medicine, she is found to put on a silk robe and Western shoes with big heels. Even in her old age, she is found to make attempts at going beyond a single culture, for, she “took to wearing shawls and granny glasses, American fashions” (WW 100). Dilek Direnc, in pointing out the flexibility of Brave Orchid equates her with Fa Mu Lan, the eponymous woman warrior:

Like Fa Mu Lan, her mother has moved fluidly between domains and roles. After her husband leaves for America and her first two children dies (sic), neither a wife nor a mother at that moment, she goes to a medical college for women at Canton. Through hard work and intelligence, she does very well at school and gains herself a reputation for being "brilliant, a natural scholar" (75).

More importantly, being a "dragoness" (79) and "a strong woman" (83) (par 12).

Direnc's mention of how Brave Orchid efficiently manages to deal with both the cultures even after her trip to America shows her to have evolved her own strategies of finding a space for herself without compromising both the cultures:

After years of doctoring, when she goes to America to join her husband, she reverses this cycle and, as a wife, a mother of six, and a hard working laundress, she becomes "ordinary" again, a situation "not so dissimilar" (62) at all to Fa Mu Lan's experience of transformation from "the shiny general" to "bride" and "mother" after "[her] public duties are finished" (53) (par 12).

E.D. Huntley, in *Maxine Hong Kingston: A Critical Companion* also vouches that "Kingston's text is about border crossings" (82). The portrayal of Kingston too corroborates her tendency to accept 'Americanness' and 'Chineseness' according to the situations, showing her ability to adjust, which enables her to be part of the 'third time space.' Direnc observes that the memoir portrays how "she learns to reconcile two extreme cultures and succeeding generations and finds a bicultural voice to articulate her experience of moving between cultures resisting and embracing both alternately" (par 1).

In the memoir, Maxine Hong Kingston proves herself to be the true heir of her mother in this respect. She also dexterously denies and accepts the values of China and America to varying degrees, combating the atrocities in both to find her 'space.' In her overwhelming enthusiasm to come out of the tradition of

silence thrust on to the girls of Chinese ancestry by their parents, Kingston even feels proud in that she is different from the Chinese-American girl who would not speak even in Chinese school. The encounter with the girl can be seen as Kingston's attempt to free herself from the liminal space to be part of the third time space. There is a possibility that the girl is treated as the doppelganger of Kingston herself. Sidonie Smith observes, "Kingston remembers feeling some comfort in establishing her difference from the girl, taking pride in her dirty fingernails, calloused hands, yellow teeth, and her desire to wear black" (1073).

Chinese feminist theorists aver that women of Chinese ancestry are bound to conform to "*San Cong* or three obediences: to their fathers, husbands and sons and "*si de*" or the four womanly virtues: (1) virtue, (2) hand work, (3) speech and (4) comportment (Jolly – Wadhwa 49). Confucianism also states that the aim of female education is "perfect submission, not cultivation and development of the mind" (Ling 3). Though in *The Woman Warrior*, there are plentiful instances of conformity to patriarchal norms, Maxine Hong Kingston, in giving voice to the no name aunt, the existence of whom patriarchy attempts to expunge with the dictate "You must not tell anyone," (WW 3) moves beyond the confines offered by Chinese patriarchal values.

"The Chinese American immigrants' willingness to cross borders and to negotiate a ground on which they can create and embrace their true identity" which Wong speaks of can be seen in Fae Myenne Ng's *Bone* also (qtd. in Liland 54). Literal crossings from one geographical region to another can be found in *Bone*: there is Leon with his seafaring life constantly on the move, Nina who works as flight attendant and leads tours to China, Mah who travels

from San Francisco's Chinatown to Hong Kong and back, Leon who has migrated to America from China as a paper son, Nina who moves from San Francisco to New York, Lyman Fu who migrates to America and then to Australia, and Nina who comes back to San Francisco to attend Ona's funeral.

Various characters in *Bone* are induced to travel due to varying reasons. Leon Leong is delineated as a seaman. He is an eternal traveller who is happy in making voyages to various lands. Lei, the stepdaughter of Leon speaks about him, "Mah once explained that it was the movement of the ocean that drew him out, made him restless on land. Staying on land too long made Leon feel like he was turning to stone" (*Bone* 50). Leon, a performer of various odd jobs, in the course of his voyages had been to Japan in addition to being in China and America. This is evidenced when Lei speaks of the camera Leon had bought in Japan (*Bone* 86).

The lure of riches is the factor that prompts the migration of Leila's father Lyman Fu to the Gold Mountain. In Lei's words, "America, the big gold mountain, was where he wanted to settle" (*Bone* 187). However, Lyman Fu is always in search of greener pastures and when Gold Mountain had a disillusioning effect on him, and "things didn't work out as fast as he wanted in San Francisco," he moves on to Australia (*Bone* 187), the new gold mountain. He takes his wife Mah along when he goes to America, but leaves her behind on his trip to Australia. Mah's first marriage with Lyman Fu itself is kindled by her desire to emigrate. The push factor which catalyses Mah's desire to emigrate is war in her home topos. In the words of Lei, "Mah married my father to escape the war-torn villages" (*Bone* 34).

Mah makes a move back and forth between San Francisco and Hong Kong after Ona's death. Thus Mah's first trip back, for her, is a coping strategy. Hence travel to China is done with the implication of China as a healer of wounds. The move back to Hong Kong is made for solace and comfort, instead of offering "stories and banquets of good life" (*Bone* 24). Lei's travel to visit Nina in New York coincides with her marriage. As community relations specialist for her school, Lei has to do a lot of travel when she makes home visits. In doing this, she fits in with the traditional gender expectations demanded of a 'traditional Chinese woman' -- that of acting as a bridge between the teachers and the parents without hurting the parents' feelings. Her role can be said to be that of a caretaker. Lei mentions how she had travelled to New York to get away from the bickering of Mah and Leon.

Nina's travel is necessitated partly by the nature of her job and partly due to her intention to get into the good books of her parents. Nina, working as a flight attendant in Hong Kong, "took a job taking tours to China even though she'd never been to China" (*Bone* 26). Her visit to Hong Kong along with Mah, acts as a kind of reconciliation, for as Lei says:

Going to China had helped Nina make up with Mah and Leon. When Nina passed through SFO to pick up passengers on her first China trip, Mah and Leon had been too excited to hold on to the grudge. They wanted to go to the airport and see Nina as she changed planes. Mah and Leon and Nina had a reconciliation walking from Domestic to International (*Bone* 28).

Other travels are also mentioned -- Lei, the narrator says how “Nina had just returned from a tour along the Yangtze” the day Mason and she flew to Kennedy (*Bone* 28).

The depiction of travel is in such a way that a move towards China is presented as offering solace and bringing about reconciliations whereas a move away from China and parents shows a tendency to drift apart. These are shown as disruptive tendencies.

Leon is a person who spends his time mostly on ships. He always shows an ‘outward tendency’ -- a tendency to get away from San Francisco. After his travels, when he comes back, Mah always greets him with elaborate food. The novel makes a mention of how “Leon liked to remember the first time he sailed into San Francisco, how when his ship passed under the Golden Gate, the light disappeared for a long moment” (*Bone* 109).

Gender roles assumed by the family vary with Leon’s arrival and departure. When Leon is around, Mah allows greater freedom to the children whereas when he is away she is strict towards them. Leon’s absence necessitates Mah to take up the role of the head of the household as well. Leon, after the break up of Mah and Tommie Hom, signs onto a cargo ship set for Australia. This, however, is a redefinition of gender roles, for Mah, who in the absence of Leon, finds solace in Tommie Hom tries to win back Leon by this breakup, thinking “Leon might move back if she quit Tommie’s shop” (*Bone* 159). Nonetheless, the novel shows that this does not deter Leon’s decision of living away from Mah. Further, there is a deviation in gender roles found in the novel with Leon planning to look up Lyman Fu, his wife’s first husband.

Leon's travel just after Ona's death also shows Cape Horn as a healer. It is a means adopted by Leon to escape his feeling of guilt in not sending his paper father's bones back to China and about Ona's death. In Lei's words, "Then Ona jumped and it was too late. The bones were lost, like Ona was lost. That's why Leon shipped out on a cargo voyage. Cape Horn was ... far away ... Forty days to the bottom of the world" (*Bone* 50). Further, Leon is away when grandpa Leong dies. In Lei's words, "Leon was on a voyage and it was Mah who found Grandpa Leong dead. She never told what she saw, but when she was on the phone once, I overheard her say something about how it would have been better if he were lying down, in bed at least" (*Bone* 79).

There is a hint of Mason moving out from Chinatown when it is said that Aunt Lily has been good to Mason's family "when they were growing up in Chinatown" (*Bone* 38). The short trips indulged in by Mason, the car mechanic is a pointer to the way gender is negotiated in the text. His tendency to drive fast reveals his adventurous spirit, which is usually associated with manliness. From Lei's description, he also appears to be chivalric, with Lei feeling safe in Mason's presence. In Lei's words, "Mason likes to drive fast, not to speed but to sail. ... I've always felt safe with him behind the wheel. ... Being with Mason, being on the road, moving fast in a nice car, I relaxed" (*Bone* 42).

Other short trips discussed in the novel include the trip of Mason and Lei from San Francisco to New York to hand over the car to Dale. Lyman Fu, Mah's first husband, by his travels, offers himself as a foil to Leon and Mason, and projects himself as a callous person.

Gender roles are found to restrict travel as well. As observed by Lei, Leon shipped less and less after Nina was born and it was for him “a period of odd jobs and a lot of dream talking” (*Bone* 52). Thus the novel evidences alternation of gender roles as well.

Leon, the eternal traveller, also likes to impress people with his ability to take up and use words from other languages and also takes pride in the different places he had visited. In Lei’s words, “He tried to impress him (Luciano) with all the Spanish words he’d learned on the ships: muchacha, maricon, calle, meringue. He boasted about having been to South America himself, Rio de Janeiro and Santiago and Cape Horn, even to the Chinatown in Lima” (*Bone* 163).

The novel *Bone* also evidences the transcending of boundaries in the case of identity. Leon Leong, though greatly attached to China, as indicated by his act of saving money in a brown bag tucked into an old bag of Ona’s which he calls his ‘Going-Back-to-China fund,’ (*Bone* 6) his obsession with the thought of sending Grandpa Leong’s bones back to China, his solidarity with fellow Chinese diasporans and his signature being in Chinese, also makes conscious attempts at accepting ‘Americanness.’ The paper attesting that

The photograph attached hereto and made a part hereof is a recent photographic likeness of the aforementioned Lai-on Leong, Date of Birth: November 21, 1924, Port of Entry: San Francisco, is one and the same person as represented by the photograph attached to Certificate of Identity No.52728 showing his status as a citizen of the United States (*Bone* 61)

testifies Leon to be a citizen of the U.S, showing his willingness to cut across boundaries.

Leon is found to keep a pack of cigarettes at Grandpa Leong's grave, besides leaning a sack of oranges against the Leong stone, which doesn't form part of the Chinese ritual. The ritual performed by Ona and Leon at the New Year too confirms both to embrace both the Chinese and the American cultural traditions. Ng writes:

She and Leon had a ritual; they laid out a feast for the gods: wine and fruit, a chicken, a fish, some steamed wheat buns... lit the incense to call the gods down – The Eight Holy Immortals one year; the next, the Goddess of Mercy; another, it was the God of War paired with the God of Books. One year it was Jesus... Ona believed him a god, too. And when Mao's Red Guards destroyed Confucius's temple, Leon invited the Great Teacher to come live with us (*Bone* 107-8).

Though Mah is a character shown as remaining predominantly Chinese in the American soil, the picturisation of Mah as traditional becomes suspect when her relationship with Tommie Hom is hinted. Her flirtatious relationship with Tommie Hom in the absence of Leon shows her to have adapted to the freedom that the new space offers regarding matters of sexuality. Thus she too makes strides at transcending boundaries.

Leila also shows an acceptance-rejection pattern towards both the cultures, adapting herself to these selectively and alternately to establish her space. Often, she takes an impartial and balanced view of cultures. She thinks

that growing up in America and not knowing Chinese is not Dale's fault. Lei is a character that evolves. She is conscious of her position and with that awareness, makes practical decisions to make herself comfortable. She tries to tide over her problems by marrying Mason, the man of her choice.

Ona, whose search for the self comes to an abrupt end with her committing suicide also shows border crossing regarding matters of identity. She, at times doesn't feel at home in America. Lei observes, "The thing that stuck in my mind was what Ona told me about how she felt outside Chinatown. She never felt comfortable, even with the Chinese crowd that Osvaldo hung around with; she never felt like she fit in" (*Bone* 173). Though the space occupied by Ona may appear to be that of the 'trisanaku,' she shows greater nerve than a Chinese who has imbibed all the values of filial piety, to stand up to Leon to protect her love.

Nina is a character that has been ascribed the tag of 'Americanised.' But a closer look at the text would reveal border crossing tendencies in her as well. Though Nina is sad that Ona is dead, she tends to come to terms with the situation faster than anybody else and is seen flirting with Kevin, her mind already in New York. This sort of adaptability is what helps her in being at home in the American culture. Nina works in an airport and there are references in the work about her going to China. Though she is presented as the most 'Americanised' person in the novel, she has a whole map of China in her head and makes conscious attempts at maintaining a harmonious relationship with her parents, who to her are 'Chinesey,' by taking her mother on a trip to Hong Kong.

Mason too shows a proclivity to cross borders. Mason never gambles. The explanation that he gives Lei is that “It’s too Chinesey” (*Bone* 183). All these show that though the Chinese element is dominant in him, he is not averse to getting ‘American culture.’

In *Bone* by Fae Myenne Ng, though the narrator speaks of public opinion about her family in such terms as “A failed family. That Dulcie Fu. And you know which one: bald Leon. Nothing but daughters,” (*Bone* 3) the view of Leon Leong, which is also presented, shows how some of the characters are able to transcend such narrow mindsets in those who uphold and propagate patriarchal values. Leon’s response to this runs thus, “Leon told us not to care about what people said. ‘People talking. People jealous.’ He waved a hand in the air. ‘Five sons don’t make one good daughter’” (*Bone* 3).

The novel *Disappearing Moon Café* hints at Wong Gwei Chang’s mission in Canada in search of the bones of the Chinese who had died while building the railroads that constitute the Canadian Pacific Railway, even though it does not speak of the actual travel. The travels mentioned in *Disappearing Moon Café* are dealt with in Kae Ying Woo’s narration. Unlike in the other works taken up for study, *Disappearing Moon Café* does not offer the readers an account of copious literal travels. Kae mentions her visit to Chan Fong Bo, her grandmother’s sister who lived in O Saan, in Holy Saan district. Thus Sky Lee moves back and forth between Canada and China in order to give the novel its strength. Kae Ying also tells us about her grandmother’s journey back to China to see her sister, taking risks with Canadian immigration and the Chinese communists. Kae Ying Woo, while introducing her lesbian friend Hermia Chow

speaks of her trip to China, thereby indicating that the tie of the Wong family with China has not been severed and even the 'third generation' maintains some sort of a connection with China. Kae tells of her journey to Hong Kong via Peking to celebrate the Chinese New Year along with Hermia, thus making use of the opportunity to provide the reader with a brief description of China.

Sky Lee's *Disappearing Moon Café* also is indicative of border crossings regarding matters of identity in the diasporans. Wong Gwei Chang is representative of the Chinese who have gone to Canada as railroad workers, and whose efforts, as per the text, are forgotten easily by the whites. Though obsessed with China, he works hard to prove that his Gold Mountain dream is not merely a myth, thus showing his urge to find a space for himself in Canada. The 'Chineseness' in Gwei Chang manifests, for, the disdain that Gwei Chang feels for Gwok Tai and his men recedes the moment he sees the bones of the railroad workers. He considers all of the men who have died while building the railroad as uncles, ". . . he had met them all – uncles who had climbed mountain heights and fallen from them, uncles who had drowned in deep surging waters, uncles who had clawed to their deaths in the dirt of caved – in mines" (DMC 13). At the same time, he makes willful adjustments that would help him succeed in America.

Kelora Chen's father effects cultural miscegenation by an interracial marriage, thus showing a willingness to transcend cultural boundaries. In the novel, he is found to nurture a sympathetic attitude towards the overseas Chinese. The narration says:

He [Kelora Chen's father] found that old overseas chinese never wasted anything – not their time, not their leisure. They worked unceasingly, as if they would fall apart if they ever stopped. They also sat up all night, gossiping and swearing and laughing . . . He saw the loneliness in the brothers, toiling, poor – left behind to rot because the CPR had reneged on its contract to pay the chinese railway workers' passage home (DMC 11-12).

When the narrator introduces Choy Fuk, Wong Gwei Chang's son by Lee Mui Lan for the first time, he is shown as adapting to the situation in Canada soon. Brought to Canada at the age of sixteen, Choy Fuk was “amazingly quick to shed his bumpkin ways in favour of a more cocky western style, complete with sennit straw hats, narrow-shouldered jackets and starched high-collared shirts . . . more appropriate for his position as the heir of a well-to-do businessman” (DMC 33). Nonetheless, Sky Lee provides instances of Chinese elements also that are there in Choy Fuk in the course of the narration, thus showing him also as clasping different cultures.

The concept of identity formation and the diasporic experience which in the case of some people continuously evolve and at times reach the level of a balanced acceptance of both the Chinese and Canadian values is even more prominent in the case of certain women characters that Sky Lee delineates. It is Kae Ying Woo who narrates the tales of the women on her mother's side, beginning with Lee Mui Lan, her great grandmother. Mui Lan cherishes a longing for the homeland. Her remembrance about how she has longed for Gold Mountain while in China shows her willingness to take on Canadian culture at

least to some extent. Though Mui Lan says that Canada is a country which deprives people of their sense of right and wrong owing to her 'Chineseness,' it is clear that Mui Lan has reaped benefits from both the lands and is conscious of these and hence the identity of a single nation cannot be attributed to her. She embraces different acculturation profiles at different instants.

Fong Mei is also a character that successfully crosses over some of the restraining forces, with the realisation that life in Canada can be made better thus. Without foregoing all of her Chinese upbringing, she in due course of time adapts herself better to the situation, for

Realizing that her identity crisis comes from being barren for five years after her marriage, Fong Mei gets pregnant and gives birth to two daughters and a son in eight years by secretly having a sexual liaison with Ting An. Lee represents Fong Mei's change from having no identity to a powerful position in the family by using her reproductive capabilities as a means of survival and personal development (Chao 99).

Thus she not only transcends the limitations offered by reinforced patriarchy, but the false sense of morality of the society as well. In the imaginary conversation that Kae allots to each of her family members in the end, she makes Fong Mei question the male lineage that society (in the form of Mui Lan) has wanted her to uphold. Fong Mei claims:

What if I had refused to have children for men and their namesake? Then my daughters would have been free to have children for their own pleasure as well, and then how free we all

would have been! . . . I threw myself totally into the same malicious meddling that oppressed women excelled in. And for what? What is this Wong male lineage that had to be upheld at such a human toll? (DMC 189).

Sky Lee also deals with the question of voice. In the novel, by revealing even the family secrets and skeletons in the closet, Kae Ying Woo tries to forge a space for herself where she is comfortable. In this process, she also professes to reclaim the denied identities of her community members. Had she been ‘Chinese’ alone, disclosing about incest in the family will have resulted in the loss of face. By proclaiming her family tradition to the whole world, the narrator makes herself part ‘Canadian’; however she succeeds in reclaiming the identity of her Chinese female ancestors who, in their lifetime, have been silenced. Thus, as Lien Chao observes:

The revelation of the unrecorded illegitimate kinships, which actually keep the community together through shared motherhood, undermines the superiority of patriarchy and male lineage. Kae Ying Woo’s acceptance of her old nanny Seto Chi as her “other mother,” her “(trans)parent”. . . establishes female connection as a different social order from that of the traditional father-son lineage (DMC 101).

Kae, who writes the history of her family remarks that she and Hermia have agreed to mention only those incidents that are happy and wonders if this silence and invisibility is a “Chinese-in-Canada trait” (DMC 180). She tells us how she breaks the wall of silence and finds a voice for herself:

I have a misgiving that the telling of our history is forbidden. I have violated a secret code. There is power in silence, as this is the way we have always maintained strict control against the more disturbing aspects in our human nature. But what about speaking out for a change, despite its unpredictable impact! . . . the power of language is also in its simple honesty (DMC 180).

Thus, Kae moves back and forth between certain of the Chinese practices and Canadian ones, but in the process, she succeeds in her attempt to give a voice to the Chinese Canadian community itself, releasing the community from the clutches of marginality and providing for it a 'space' and 'voice' in Canada. Kae also makes a journey to Hong Kong via Peking, showing her willingness to cross borders.

Denise Chong's *The Concubine's Children* speaks of the moving back and forth of Chan Sam and May-Ying between China and Canada with Chan Sam on the look out for material prosperity. May-Ying's initial move to Canada is effected when Chan Sam, bored with his life as a married bachelor in Canada's Chinese bachelor society takes on May-ying for his concubine and brings her over to Canada on false papers. The work also details how their eldest children Ping and Nan are taken to China to be brought up there while the youngest Hing is made to stay with her parents in Canada. The visit of Denise Chong, the concubine's grand daughter to China is also mentioned.

The work renders possible a great deal of territorial crossings. Geographical crossings presented in the book span many generations. When the land that lures Denise Chong's great grandfather is America, Chan Sam, her

grandfather is attracted by Canada and reaches his Gold Mountain with money borrowed from his relative for traffic fee. The central characters Chan Sam, May-ying, their children and grand children travel between China and Canada. Chan Sam's visits to China are prompted by many pull factors: taking a replacement wife, Huangbo at the death of his wife, fear of his 'at-home' wife Huangbo committing suicide, fathering a son by Huangbo when his concubine May-ying fails to give him sons and trying to keep both sides of his family united. Denise Chong portrays the beguiling nature of the Chinese, when May-ying is made to travel to Canada as a CBC on false papers. May-ying's travels to Canada are prompted by the pull factors -- union with Chan Sam, giving birth to her long awaited 'son' who turns out to be the daughter Hing and so on.

Many push factors also operate in causing migrations, though on a small scale. The Japanese bombing of China prompts Huangbo, Ping, Nan (children by May-ying) and Yuen, the long cherished son to move to Macau, though after the fall of Canton, they travel back. The lure of the new land and the availability of false birth certificates for money also are some of the push factors that enable migration. As Chan Sam trades the birth certificates of Ping and Nan, two women who go on to pass for Ping and Nan manage to migrate to Canada even though they speak different dialects. Pleasure trips are also made, for Chan Sam, Winnie (Hing), John and their children are found to make a trip to the United States of America. The desire to see her sisters acts as the pull factor in the case of Hing's migration to China. Recovering details of the family history make Denise Chong, Winnie and Roger Smith to visit China. Lien Chao observes in *Beyond Silence: Chinese Canadian Literature in English* that "Chang's initial

journey to meet her relatives in China leads her to discover and recover both her family history and the collective history of the sojourner generation of earlier Chinese immigrants, regardless of their gender” (104). Chong, in the course of the two trips “not only meets her relatives in China, but also locates. . . a small package of letters written by her grandfather to his other family in China during the last few years of his life” (106-107).

Part of a land’s income comes as contribution of the diaspora. Members of a land’s diaspora may offer help to their homelands during moments of crisis. There are certain “economic migrants who maintain financial and emotive links by sending money to their families” (Braziel and Mannur 11). Chan Sam is one among these.

Denise Chong observes that the contributions from overseas Chinese provided one quarter of China’s military expenses in the first year of the war. Thus the writers portray how the income generated in a land is wasted away in another. The sentiments of the Chinese diaspora for the home land have many a time helped China during war time. Denise Chong even opines that Chiang Kai Shek’s war effort might have collapsed had it not been for the financial help from the diaspora. Even Hing, along with Chan Sam and May-ying, is found to collect money needed by China for war.

According to the works, there are migrants who do not care for their relatives also. The letters found in the heavy cloth pockets of a bag sent by relatives from China “hoping someone coming to buy a ticket might recognize the name of a man who had come to Canada and hadn’t been heard from again”

(CC 39) offer proof that some of the overseas Chinese do not care for their relatives any longer.

Going beyond the precincts of a single culture finds ample evidence in the works of Chinese Canadian writers as in those of Chinese American writers. In *The Concubine's Children* Chan Sam alternates between his love for both China and Canada. Chan Sam makes his own efforts at integration with the host society. Though he at times holds on to his identity as a Chinese, he is not prejudiced towards the hostland. Chan Sam makes wilful adjustments. When May-ying is pregnant with her third child, though Chan Sam believes that a son's filial duty is at home, to the first mother, he becomes practical and thinks of the possibilities that a Canadian birth certificate will provide his child. Chan Sam often moves back and forth between the two cultures and applies for naturalisation as a citizen in Canada even though he nurtures hopes of returning to China.

May-ying, in Canada, adapts to the situation better than Chan Sam and plays a better host at the mah-jongg table. The togetherness of the people in Chinatown puts her at ease.

Hing is a character that evolves, making use of all available cultural resources. Her uncanny ability to rise above the restraining factors offered by a fundamentalist view of a single culture is made evident in the memoir. The readers find Hing being taught both English and Chinese to aid her to live in the Canadian society. Hing is given both English and Chinese names as the teacher asks Hing to make her mother give her an English name. Hing adapts to all these by being keen in both her English and Chinese schools. In the words of Denise

Chong, “Striving for some measure of self-respect, Hing was keen about both her English and Chinese schools. In the classroom, she excelled. In the schoolyard, she was the challenger to beat at marbles, jacks and Double Dutch” (CC 109).

The identity of Ping and Nan, who migrated during childhood from Canada to China, also needs to be considered. Despite their birth in Canada, they follow Chinese practices, “continue to visit the tombs of May-ying and Chan Sam, observing the Chinese tradition of grave-sweeping and ancestor worship during the festival of *Ching Ming* every spring” (Chao 119). They play with toys made in Canada. In the words of Denise Chong:

Both sisters having already spent more of their lives in China than abroad and having been raised by their Chinese mother, had to be reminded of their foreign origins . . . Whenever they were out in their overseas dresses or playing with their overseas toys – the pram and now the wagon – mothers and children called out after them: “*Faan-gwei-neu; Fan-gwei-neu.*” The sisters rather enjoyed the taunt of “foreign girl,” taking it as a complement to the worldliness shared with their father (CC 77).

The very fact that Ping and Nan are not affected by the taunts shows that they move easily between cultures, overcoming the limiting views of those who are not tolerant of other cultures..

Denise Chong offers the readers her own portrait. “Chong’s bone-hunting journey leads her not only to discover her own identity as a concubine’s granddaughter, but also that of her grandmother, May-ying” (Chao 112).

Growing up in a non-Chinese neighbourhood at Prince Georgia Airport, however, she also finds identification as a Chinese when she eats the Chinese food cooked by her grandmother, but also tells how her mother had aided her in feeling as a Canadian. She explains that she “could not leave China without going to the village” of her grandfather’s birth (CC 238). Thus Denise Chong acknowledges:

To me, China was what was left behind when the boat carrying my grandmother, pregnant with my mother, docked in Vancouver. China was the soil underfoot in the photograph of the two sisters who, as I thought then, would never meet the third, my mother. China was where you’d find yourself if you dug a hole deep enough to come out the other side of the Earth (CC 220).

Denise Chong provides the readers with the Chinese titles they use within the family, thereby showing that some ‘Chinese’ elements remain in her.

May-ying in *The Concubine’s Children* has to support the primary wife at home with money she earns in Canada, evidencing the Chinese polygamous tradition pointed out by Yuen-Fong Woon in “Between South China and British Columbia: Life Trajectories of Chinese Women.” In Woon’s words, “In accordance with Chinese polygamous tradition, first wives usually stayed home in the village to manage family affairs while secondary wives (concubines) accompanied their husbands to Canada to satisfy their sexual needs and to produce additional male heirs” (86). However, May-ying, the “*kei-toi-nui*” (concubine) “is not a submissive concubine” (90). Yuen-Fong Woon vouches:

Despite her low status as a serving girl, her earning power and strong will eventually result in a role reversal in her relationship with Chan Sam, who is a casual labourer. She begins to behave like a typical male Chinese sojourner of her time: gambling, drinking, sleeping around, and openly keeping a lover. The case of May-ying shows that, in a New World situation, traditional values, customs, and family structures can break down (90).

Thus even while retaining the goodness of certain Chinese values, she shows the ability to cross the dictates of reinforced patriarchy, which is required for survival in Canada, thus making herself a glocal citizen.

In the novel *The Excluded Wife*, Yik-Man has migrated to Canada long before his marriage. Many families in China are shown to be lured by the material prospects of the Gold Mountain guests, to obtain which they go to Canada. The text shows the tendency of girls being married off to Gold Mountain guests with the prospect of economic security in mind. Thus in order to ensure financial security, some of the Chinese show a willingness to break boundaries by moving on to other terrains and embracing alternately the cultures of the home and host lands. Thus in *The Excluded Wife*, this view held by the Chinese finds mention:

If you have a daughter, don't marry her to a baker
Or she will not
get half a year's sleep out of three.

If you have a daughter, don't marry her to a farmer
Or her legs
will be covered in cow dung and her hair will be full of
dust.

If you have a daughter, you should marry her to a Gold Mountain guest.

Whenever his boat turns around, she will have dollars by the hundreds (EW 14).

Yik-Man also mentions his crossing over to Canada from China:

When Pa was young there were too many disturbances, so he went to Canada ... he and Paternal Uncle started a café' in Vancouver. When I was ten, Pa borrowed five hundred Canadian dollars to pay for my head tax and my passage to Vancouver (EW 33)

Sau-Ping's migration to Canada via Hong Kong is prompted by the atrocities that she experiences in China and the hopes of reunion with her husband. After having faced hardships at Hong Kong and contracting tuberculosis, the actual crossing over to Canada is described, with Sau-Ping passing the medical examination asked to be compulsorily taken by the Canadian Commissioner's Office. Yik-Kwong helps her in buying her ticket to Vancouver, and she boards the "great steady ship with hot clear smoke pouring out of a stack," which takes her to Canada (EW 182).

The crossing over of Kin-Pong, the adopted son of Yik-Man and Sau-Ping is effected, with Yik-Man sponsoring money for the same so that he will have one more hand in assisting him in the restaurant business. Kin-Pong is invited to Vancouver, as the Canadian government modifies its immigration regulations after 1950, allowing the Overseas Chinese to sponsor their children under twenty-one (instead of under eighteen) to Canada (EW 163). Further

geographical crossings take place with Kin-Pong going back to Hong Kong to court his chosen bride and his arrival back on 4th July.

Lai-Sheung's travel to Canada finds fruition with Lai-Sheung's marriage with a widower, Mr. Kwaan, thirty years her senior, as "she wanted to go to Canada to get rich so she could sponsor her mother there" (EW 220). Mei-Kuen, Lai-Sheung's mother, however, manages to come over to Vancouver with the help of Jack, her boy friend, which causes the reconciliation of the friends Sau-Ping and Mei-Kuen.

Yik-Man's daughter Fei-Yin is at first prevented entry to Canada as Yik-Man has sold Fei-Yin's birth certificate to the village bully Yik-Faat, who, with the help of this, enables his son Kin-Tsoi to enter Canada. Nonetheless, as Yik-Man requests his wife to send the money Fei-Yin needs to cross over to Canada while on his death bed, Fei-Yin and her family are able to enter Canada and meet Yik-Man before his death.

Pauline, Ping's Canada born daughter and Ping fly back to Hong Kong, in 1987 where they are warmly received by Tak-Kan, Ping's nephew. The counter immigration from Hong Kong to China is also mentioned and so is the journey back to Canada. Further geographical crossings of the Chinese diaspora are also hinted with the mention of Yik-Kwong and family, Yik-Faat and Kin-Tsoi coming over to China for sojourns.

Money from Vancouver sent despite apparent poverty helps Ping while in Hong Kong, in her speedy recovery, for as Fei-Yin puts it to Sau-Ping:

Father and Kin-Pong directly sent a cheque of eighteen hundred Canadian dollars to Uncle Yik-Nang's money – changer

shop to be converted into Hong Kong dollars. We used some of that to pay back the loan to Uncle Yik-Nang for our hawker's business. We also used it to cover your hospital expenses and food costs (EW 173-174).

Yik-Man also sends her money, on Kin Pong's request, to bring her to Vancouver (EW 174). Yik-Man, though willing, finds it difficult to help his relatives in China, for, ". . . it is so difficult to mail parcels to Mainland China from Vancouver. The Canadian post office does not have direct mailing services to China . . ." (EW 210). Further, according to him, "if we send packages to China, the Canadian government here may decide we are communists and deport us" (EW 210). However, in spite of these, he sends or takes money to his relatives in China whenever possible.

Sau-Ping in *The Excluded Wife* leaves money with Yik-Mo for the renovation of the *yeung-lau* which is offered to Yik-Mo on condition that "Next time . . . visiting members of the Vancouver branch of the family might be able to enjoy the village house instead of staying in a guest house" (EW 282). Ping is also found to dutifully visit Tin-shaang, her younger brother and offer him a television set during her sojourn at China.

The vandalism and the misuse of overseas money by 'the Chinese' is suggested when Ping is made to come back to visit her *yeung lau*, the palatial house, which now is in a battered condition. Siu Kong, the former *Sai-tsai* or slave, simply considers it a historical mistake, which makes Ping harp back upon the situation in Canada:

She understood that this “historical mistake” would have to be repaired with more money from the Overseas Chinese. How much money over the years had her male relatives poured into this village, money stirred up out of hot woks and stained sinks, money grown from thousands of dirty dishes, money sent from Canada, where the work never ceased and a Chinese waiter swallowed white men’s insults for lunch and dinner? Sweat and blood money (EW 275).

The identity of Sau-Ping, in *The Excluded Wife*, is similarly one that transcends boundaries. Sau-Ping, while in China, is found to comply with the traditional, community oriented life in her Chinese home with the sweet potato rice, cooked by the girls “offered first to Pa, then to Ma,” with Ma giving “hers to Little Brother Tin-Shaang in addition to the choicest bit of fried fish” (EW 9). However, this is not found to limit Sau Ping. The gender norms acquired in her childhood while at China come in handy for Ping in making the decision to migrate:

Sau-Ping considered more than once the question whether or not she should go to Vancouver to join Yik-Man and Kin-Pong and leave Fei-Yin in Hong Kong by herself. She remembered her mother telling about the “three obediences”. A woman should obey her father when she was young, obey her husband after her marriage, and obey her son when she grew old (EW 181).

One finds that Ping is not averse to border crossings at all, but has to think twice only because of consideration for her daughter. The ambition to

profit from the benefits that Canada can offer without compromising Chinese beliefs is shown by Yik-Man and Sau-Ping when they decide to give the Canadian born children both Chinese and English education:

If their children and grandchildren did well in school they could make a name for themselves in mainstream society and bring glory to the ancestors. . . But it was equally important that their children should maintain their Toi-shaanese dialect and not forget their cultural origins. Sau-Ping taught the young children Toi-shaanese songs. She told them stories and myths from their ancestral homeland. She insisted that they kowtow before the . . . altar every morning, practice good Chinese table manners, and address their seniors in the correct kinship terms (EW 228).

Thus Ping and Yik-Man try to provide the children with the best of both the worlds, showing their willingness to transcend cultural borders.

Pauline also alternates between the traits of both Chinese and Americans. Even when the gender norms get relaxed, Pauline, the Canadian born daughter opposes the practice of the sedentary Chinese to barter off their daughters to gold mountain guests who are very much older. But she does this not because of irreverence for Chinese practices, but because of the more liberal vision she has attained from the land of her birth. She is baffled when Yik-Mo requests Ping to help him find a Gold Mountain guest to marry his granddaughter Ah Ying who has just turned fifteen and adds that he will not mind even if “Ah Ying marries a foreign devil” (EW 281). He further requests: “If you find any widower in Vancouver looking for a young, second wife, you

can also show him Ah Ying's photo" and that "We don't care how old the man is" (EW 281). Pauline can view this only as "his offer to barter off his granddaughter" (EW 280). Nonetheless, she decides not to judge the people in China.

Pauline, the Canada born daughter cannot cut herself off from having thoughts about China. She wants to see the ancestral land to which she has never been before and offers to accompany Ping. Pauline tries to accept the 'reality' in China when at last she is in the land.

Kin Pong, in *The Excluded Wife*, is presented as 'the filial son,' helping out his parents in the restaurant business as the Chinese upbringing warrants. Kin-Pong also exhibits characteristic features attributed to the Chinese diaspora, donating five hundred Canadian dollars for the renovation of the Toi-Shaan Senior High School and in the act, retrieving their *yeung lau*, the palatial house. However, when it comes to his marriage, he embraces certain elements of the lifestyle in Canada, supporting his wife and treating her as his equal, by explaining out the reasons to Ping.

Mei-Kuen is presented as a person who remains Chinese while in China and Canadian while in Canada. Even when Sau-Ping proposes a trip to China, Mei-Kuen wants to remain in Vancouver. She shows good adaptation skills.

Though the denial to Fei-Yin in *The Excluded Wife* of the opportunity to go to Canada (with the birth certificate that is to eventually enable the child is purchased in a boy's name even before her birth) affirms patriarchal leanings, and her tragedy is underlined with Sau-Ha's remarks, "But daughters have never been consulted when their parents made plans for them," (EW 179) Fei-Yin,

without overt resistance is found to overcome her victim position by making herself comfortable in Sau Ha's household for a while until the means to go to Canada is attained.

Many of the people who have undergone territorial crossings, will at some point of time become comfortable in the new land and may take on certain elements of new cultures that they come into contact, though one cannot predict at what points this may happen. Migration very often results in the creation of 'glocal' citizens who are characterised by an admixture of local and global culture. Categorising the migrants as "Chinese" and "American"/ "Canadian" is thus a limiting stance and hence has to be viewed with caution. The writers trace the attempts of their characters come out of exclusionary formulations at various points in their works.

The writers also make crossings between essentialist and non essentialist positions. As they take up non essentialist positions, borders dissolve and so do hyphens, paving the way for acceptance from all sides. The writers tend to project themselves as Chinese-American or Chinese-Canadian writers. However the hyphen does not, in the case of these writers project marginality, because, as Lien Chao asserts, "the bridge" connecting 'Chinese Canadian' literature and 'mainstream Canadian' literature "is being built" as "serious critical attention is paid to its development"(Chao xiii). This is also attested by the cover page of the anthology *Inalienable Rice* (provided in Appendix – Annexure 3) wherein a pair of chopsticks and knife and fork balance against each other.

The merit of the writers lies in their inclusion of the penchant for transcending limiting boundaries by their characters even though at the surface level, essentialisations and generalisations that have attracted criticism from various corners figure. Contradictions, as some of the writers vouch, are inherent in Chinese thinking and in their works. Just as some of the migrant mothers in the novel refer to their children using terms like ugly when they actually mean the opposite, it may be that the selective essentialism indulged in by the writers is only a veil that masks their large heartedness. Even while exposing themselves to the possibility of scathing attacks, it may also be that the writers are being modest about the willingness of the characters to go beyond borders and their own flexibility in adapting to both the lands and also to the literary scenario.