



Diasporic Authenticity Assertions: Analysis of Amy Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter*

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Abstract

This essay is an attempt to examine the active interaction of history and memory, in formulation of a diasporic authentic picture of past, in Amy Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (2001). Amongst discursive disciplines, memory and history perform vitally, in picturing past; both attempt to reproduce events, by emblematic narrative acts. However, their erratic quality endorses the existence of counter- stories that endangers displaying a homogeneous past. Among miscellaneous categories of memories, autobiographical memory asserts to obtain an authentic presentation, but as any other forms of accounts, it exhibits an imprecise fictional image. This psychological alleviation ensures the future mental integrity of trauma victims. In memory narratives, the contingent temperament of power network and continual formulation of resisting frameworks might be explored. Tan's diasporic assertion of authenticity, as a migrant writer, amalgamated with employment of fantasy is to obtain a shared diasporic identity, among her characters, although personal accounts of characters undergo an extensive amount of contingency. The newly forged identity is collective in nature and defies the geographical and temporal borders and grants a humane picture rather than a diasporic one; an identity that is established to venerate the cardinal role of personal memory, in endowing legitimate truth.

Keywords: Amy Tan- Authenticity Assertion- Memory- History- Diasporic Narrative

1. Introduction

Tentatively, the act of reproducing fragmentary memories is via narration. By narrating, an individual is generates signification of past events. Similarly, history, in a larger scale, is the field of contemplation about past.. The immense theoretical disparity of history and memory's dichotomy has eliminated, since memory is entitled as a public topic, recently. The historians inquire about past incidents to shape a seemingly coherent narrative; this individual appropriation is constituted based on the present socio- cultural demands. History and memory, equally, are fluctuating disciplines are easily manipulated by fictionalization. Recalling memories and documenting history, are entangled with fantasy. Subsequently, the genuine manifestations of these discourses are traced in literary texts, as well as socio-cultural consensus, media and political activities.

Exhibition of past is accompanied with articulation of fact and fantasy; thus, truth is scarified in favor of parading a plausible and assiduous portrayal of events and it becomes, yet, another fiction to recite and signify. In the case of memory narratives, this procedure embroiders and evaluation of the validity of individual recollections becomes more ambiguous. Recently, there is a resilient social affinity to favor memory studies over historical surveys. The shift of preferences, since history is not considered the absolute source of authenticity. Modern era, glorifies the retrieval of discursive disciplines' legitimacy, regarding authenticity. Memory narratives, in public and individual levels, have avowed sincerity. Verification of the discerning nature of history has threatened its majestic posture, among objective disciplines; consequently, memory's position is reinvigorated, in bestowing a subjective admittance to past. In diasporic literary texts, there is a stronger tendency to declare authenticity, since it would lead to construction of a communal identity, among the migrant communities. There have been numerous amounts of studies on the nature of authenticity and truth, in migrant writers' accounts of past. For instance, the texts of Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan are scrutinized for their authenticity claims. Nevertheless, since these strong assertions are mixed with fantasy, it has been criticized for being fake and fictional. The migrant writers have overcome this accusation, by inserting the personal reminiscences of past, in the novels, to ensure its validity.

This study scrutinizes the diasporic assertion of past via memory and history, in Amy Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter*. History and memory present past, controversially. Ostensibly, individual state of memory opposes objective allegations of history; therefore, this troubles the true prominence of both fields. With the emergent interests in public dimensions of memory, the autobiographical accounts, such as Amy Tan's novel, have obtained repute, in attempting to appear authentic. The struggle between the supreme official history and undocumented personal reminiscences may well be observed by the existence of multiple versions of stories in the of text of Amy Tan who parades different dimensions of events by her characters; although, at the end of her novel, a collective sense of identity is constructed among her characters. Tan's novel is set in a pre-communist China, in order to render the predestined socio-cultural discrepancies, in a diasporic context. Situating her narrative in China might be regarded as a wistful desire to reunite with her true

national identity; however, a trace of a collective discernment is depicted, in this newly fashioned diasporic identity. As a result, the main aim of diasporic narratives is to glorify the authentic, yet subjective, past that has been reproduced by memory accounts.

2. Facsimileing Past

Memory is positioned in the edge of subjective and objective spheres of contemporary studies; its subjectivity is a protecting shelter against the dominant representational approaches. Truth and authenticity are prevailing notions in discursive disciplines, such as history and memory. The concept of authenticity is eclipsed, as history and memory assert retrieving past fictionally, equally. Both of these discourses have evaded their correlation with legitimacy; this imperils the assessment of recollected narratives' veracity.

Susannah Radstone (2003) elaborates on prominent tendencies toward the issue of memory, in *Regimes of Memory*. It is suggested that the ascendancy of subjective memory over public history is rooted in postmodern interests in relativity of truth, "memory's locatedness and its particularity are in line with postmodernist critiques of grand narratives and History" (p. 10). Hence, memory is categorized as knowledge, connected with power networks; it is exposed to contingent elucidations, over time. Memory's subjectivity and its allegations to compete with objective history generates creates a struggling issue; intersection of these disciplines constructs an interlaced bundle of fictional accounts of past.

Olike and Robbins (1998) explicate memory and its indisputable interaction with history; they states that not only individual memories, but heterogeneous national identities are shaped by preserving certified past. Each distinctive memory has its own history, maintained by certain amount of persistence over time (pp. 133-4). Erratic temperament of memory enables it to generate counter- narratives, in opposition with monolithic, official and authoritarian discourse of history. Memory and history are interrelated, profoundly, and none is privileged. The collective memory formulates the identity of its members. Memory and history are potentially represented in narrative form; just like personal memory narratives, history is confirmation of collective memories, yet in a susceptible mode.

History is categorized a sub-branch of memory by Aleida Assmann (2008) who suggests that, "the concepts of art, religion and history are active areas of cultural memory which shape the identity of a society. History is a form of cultural memory which helps nations to produce a narrative versions of their past which are taught, embraced, and referred to as their collective autobiography" (p. 101). In this sense, communal cultural memories fashion history in a diverse and contingent manner, despite its holistic temperament. Past is safeguarded through individual memories, to be appropriated in another time, in the form of continuous narratives. This demoralizes history's declaration on its objective excellence; therefore, memory is honored as the validate source of knowledge.

Accordingly, despite the arrogant allegations of history in parading an objective past, memory generates an equally ingenuous and yet subjective past. Both discourses are fashioned by narratives; this emasculates their faithful depiction of past. Nevertheless, the discipline of memory has found its righteous position in formulating the legitimate account of truth, despite its subjective temperament. The next section of this research studies the issue of authenticity in recalling past, by history and memory.

3. Truth and Validity

Postmodern era demoralizes the supreme nature of truth and its eternity, as a relative concept, truth, resides in the subjective elucidations that are in direct relevance with the present. Thus, past and its veracity are open to multiple perceptions. Since memory studies have emerged from the personal spheres has altered into to a public issue, the concurrence upon the relativity of truth and its subjective status is the only solution for solving the dilemma of authenticity in narration.

Foucault (1971), in "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", scrutinizes the strategies of totalitarian systems of knowledge to avert the fragmentation, in narrating history. Accordingly, there is a constant exertion to articulate signification, in traditional history to illustrate a rational, continuous past; and this makes the state of truth a controversial one, "the purpose of history, guided by genealogy, is not to discover the roots of our identity, but to commit itself to its dissipation. It does not seek to define our unique threshold of emergence, the homeland to which metaphysicians promise a return; it seeks to make visible all of those discontinuities that cross us" (p. 95). It implies that history is unable to transmit a coherent past, but it uncovers irregular predisposed data, despite its boasting of objectivity. Obviously, Foucault is receptive to the disparate role of memory. He suggests that history is incapable to attain ultimate truth, without having memory as its counterpart. Memory grants a completely different ground of insight. He elaborates on different historical senses that dissents Platonic conception of history. They donate a unique mode of past. One of the historical ideas incriminates memory, in attaining a totally distinct pattern of orthodox truth, instead of history, "the third is sacrificial, directed against truth, and opposes history as knowledge. They imply a use of history that severs its connection to memory, its metaphysical and anthropological model, and constructs a counter memory-a transformation of history into a totally different form of time" (p. 93). Foucault, subsequently, expounds the obstinate delegation of historians, in creating coherence in their documents; they aim to eradicate any trace of discontinuity. However, he eulogizes Nietzsche, in depicting an insightful past, "historians take unusual pains to erase the elements in their work which reveal their grounding in a particular time and place, their preferences in a controversy-the unavoidable obstacles of their passion. Nietzsche's version of historical sense is explicit in its perspective and acknowledges its system of injustice" (p. 90). Scrutinizing the genealogy of events, would indicate the efforts of historians, in creation of a coherent authentic image, to be a futile task. Foucault's conjectures is based on Nietzsche's radical theories on truth. Truth, for

Nietzsche (2004), is an account to generate a relentless ground of belief, in society. Accordingly, truth is not absolute, "Truth is therefore not something there, that might be found or rediscovered –but something that must be created and that gives a name to a process, or rather to a will that has itself no end –introducing truth, as a process in infinitum, an active determining-not a becoming conscious of something that is in itself firm and determined" (p. 270). Here, the fashioned eminence of truth is emphasized. Each community implicates its conventional means of signification, in order to inject its desired type of truth to its members; thus, a homogeneous spectrum of subjects would be generated. Certainly, the codes of significations are regulated by distinct socio-cultural paradigms. Even, the definition of 'truth' that is supposed to be an essential abstract notion is fashioned, by socio-cultural patterns; these models are governed by powerful ascendant ideologies. In the case of diasporic subjects, insinuation of the authentic meaning of events is more intricate, because there are multiple numbers of struggling power networks, chiefly, stimulated by the cultural principles of host country, as well as the customs of diasporic context.

As any other human act, exhibiting truth is an egocentric performance that eliminates any indication of non- conformity. Mary Warnock (1994) quotes Don Cupitt, in *What is a Story* who accentuates the constructive eminence of truth in modern era, in the form of self-rewarding narratives, "truth is no longer something out there; it is a way with the words. The preacher, the artist or interpreter is now making truth in the telling of the tale.... The interpreter is no longer just a servant of the truth, but has become someone whose job is the endless production of the truth. Truth is like music or love; it has to flow continually. Out of us, like living water" (as cited in Don Cupitt, 1991 p. 94). Story is now considered a timeless instrument to allocate the assumed truth, in a relative approach. Usually, the desired stratagem to present truth is a subjective one. This transforms, even, the most factual documentations into a fiction.

The status of truth is a controversial one, since many historical and personal documentations of past are narratives, in autobiographical writings; however Mark Freeman (1993) states that even the fictional narration of past is an integral recognition of the concept of truth and the concept of self in the form of confession. (p. 32). This explicitly glorifies the partial perception of truth, in different time spans. The writer is concerned about the possibility of mixing fact and fiction, in documenting autobiographical memories, but he also implies that the diversity of perception will lead to a more comprehensive version of it. In migration literature, in which many versions of truth have been subverted by authoritative powers, memory narratives play an imperative role in representing past; they are the manifestations of dissident voices of migrant communities. These memories, frequently, dispute the official national history. Often, migratory narratives are accused of picturing a distorted image of past, by dominant groups.

Memory, as a discursive discourse, allocates the prospects of existence of multiple elucidations, exclusion and selection over time with history, as both go through interpretation, for personal and social tendencies. The discursiveness of mentioned disciplines will imperil the faithful parading of them. One of the problematic fields of dealing with the query of validity is the concept of memory and its correlation with history. Memory is the basic raw material of autobiography, according to Warnock,

Memory claims are claims of knowledge, and like other such claims, they are not self-guaranteeing, even if often we are inclined to accept them. When we do accept them, it is not only because they seem true but because they have an intrinsic plausibility, given other things we know. (p. 134)

The allegation of remembering an eligible past implies that the individual has experienced a certain incident, in a certain geographical and temporal dimension. This, alone, creates a version of truth that is not challengeable by others and at the same time, contestable.

In inscription of autobiographies, fictionally or in reality, there is an assertion to recall an undeniable continuous past. The aim is to declare that 'I am the one who has experienced these events and these are not going to be lost'. This insinuates that to articulate a consistent sense of subjective integrity, certified memories are preserved and recalled, "our sense of continuity with the past, and with the future, carries with it an obscure sense of timelessness, past, present and future amalgamated into one... we feel ourselves to be a part of something that *has* survived and *will* survive, and which we value as we value our lives" (p. 128). The desire to be eternal is ushered with each and every act of recalling autobiographical memory. To eternalize a sense of self, memories are presented, to survive the individual from banishment in time, especially in diasporic context, in which not only the future of a single person but the whole nation is at risk.

Memory, in an autobiography, is an essential element, since recalling is a fluid act and subject to the agent's present condition. Considering the fact that memories are constructed based on the snapshots of past, there is not a certain ground of trust on their authenticity. There is an inevitable sense of absence in registering events, by historians and autobiographers. Both must rely on their imagination, but the problem is that memories have changed, as well as the moment of incident. Demands of society and their new 'self' compels a special magnitude of restraint that creates quite an impeccable version of truth; not to forget the natural egocentric feelings of individuals that direct recalling to a special way. The new adaptation of truth, fashioned by recalling agents, may be different or even in contradiction with reality.

Susannah Radstone (2004) believes that there is a strong impulse to recall repressed memories, which are recovered as fantasy; this makes evaluation of the validity memories an obscure task. The only resolution is to consider mingling of fact and fantasy, a predestined act. The act of remembering is a natural way to craft a qualified past and construction of a sense of self and identity; it ensures an undoubted picture of truth. However, some think that because memory is not a

camera recorder to pick up exact past, without prejudice, it is somehow subject to distortion. This defies the nature of embodied truth, in memories. As all recalled memories are reconstructed, partial and egocentric version of past, the notion of false memory proliferates, in the act of remembering. Because presentation of memory has lost its connection with the moment of occurrence, the truth of the narratives are disputed over.

4. The Status of Authenticity in *The Bonesetter's Daughter*

This section is an analysis of the interaction of history and memory, in creation of a plausible, continuous past, by Amy Tan. The Interrelatedness of these disciplines enriches the eligibility of the texts; yet, it endangers the authenticity of the offered data, as both discourses are exposed to miscellaneous elucidations. The migratory narratives avow truth, due to a necessity to generate an integrated collective identity, among their members; amazingly, Tan has obtained this by fusing multiple fragments of characters' memories who all claim that their recollections is reliable. By attaching different memories, Tan suggests distrust on the veracity of the documentary history, which boasts on its accuracy; thus, she exalts the incoherent individual memories of her characters, to accentuate the dynamic nature of memory, in a diasporic context. Accordingly, a collective diasporic, fragmentary and multiple identities are formulated among characters. This paradoxical shared identity is enriched by personal memory narratives that highly assert authenticity and make the act of judging the validity of the stories a complicated one.

Autobiography is an indivisible feature of *The Bonesetter's Daughter*. The assertion of authenticity intensifies as she seeks to appear more Chinese, by displaying the picture of her old grandmother, on the cover of the novel. This renders the novel a non-fictional quality; in other words, it strengthens the semi-autobiographical temperament and satisfies reader's assumption about the novel's authenticity. In *The Opposite of Fate* (2003), Tan summons up memories of her mother about communicating with the ghosts of her father and brother whom she lost, because of brain tumor, "because my mother still believed I was sensitive to the other world, she often asked me to use an Ouija board to communicate with the ghosts of my father and brother and sometimes [...] my grandmother" (p. 25). This mentioned in *The Bonesetter's Daughter* where Ruth is forced, recurrently, by LuLing to communicate with the ghost of Precious Auntie. War and its traumatic impact is another issue which prevails in the narratives of Tan. Japan and China's war which resulted in a mass migration to the United States, as an ally to China, is depicted, usually in Tan's narratives. Obviously, memory and history are fused to create an apparently subjective history of migrants, which resides beyond the official, objective and documented domains of history, resulting in articulation of a shared identity, despite the assorted experiences of characters.

4.1 Authentic Portrayal of Past in *The Bonesetter's Daughter*

Jago Morrison (2003) suggests that, migrant women writers such as Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan are intentionally overlooked in Asian- American anthologies that attempt to present a "traditionally heroic literary canon", just because there is not a "positive and strong masculinity" in their texts; they are blamed of illustrating a "distorted representation" of past, rather than an authentic one (p. 88). The prominent collection, *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian- American Writers* (1974), undeniably, be regarded as a landmark in Asian- American literary history. It also signifies the commencement of Asian- American identity debates; it was edited by writers such as Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong. It was later followed by *The Big Aiiieeeee!* (1991). Again, it had a misogynistic standpoint, that declared a war on misrepresentation of Asian images in *Aiiieeeee!*. (Preface xxvi)

Frank Chin's excuse for excluding some writers was portraying a popular westernized picture of East; he described as an effort to sell oriental texts to western audience. He challenged the authenticity of most of these texts,

We describe the real, from its sources in the Asian fairy tale and the Confucian heroic tradition, to make the work of these Asian American writers understandable in its own terms. We describe the fake - from its sources in Christian dogma and in Western philosophy, history, and literature - to make it clear why the more popularly known writers such as Jade Snow Wong, Maxine Hong Kingston, David Henry Hwang, Amy Tan, and Lin Yutang are not represented here. Their work is not hard to find. (Introduction, *Big Aiiieeeee!* Xv)

However, many praised Tan for her legendary presentation of Chinese- ness. In " 'Sugar Sisterhood' Situating the Amy Tan Phenomenon", Sau-ling Cynthia Wong (1998) adores Tan for her talent, in perceiving the readers' petition for a true Chinese oriented novel, she suggested that tan's novels are in harmony with current favors of specific audiences such as feminists and ethnic communities, " I suggest it is neither literary fate nor psychological destiny that has conferred favored status on Chinese American mother-daughter relationship, but rather a convergence of ethnic group-specific literary tradition and ideological needs by the white-dominated readership—including the feminist readership—for the Other's presence as both mirror and differentiator"(p. 52). She, then, designates the autobiographical features of Tan's novels as "markers of authenticity", which are artistically arranged to bequeath the desired outcomes, "I call these details 'markers of authenticity', whose function is to create an 'Oriental effect' by signaling a reassuring affinity between the given work and American preconceptions of what the Orient is/should be" (p. 61). Cynthia Wong, reverses the "timeless mythical" truth that is pictured, by Tan, suggesting that these "presumably authentic details—are ultimately Orientalist in spirit". She, then, denigrates Frank Chin for accusing Tan on her lack of knowledge on history, "paradoxical as it may seem, an author with more direct historical knowledge about China than Amy Tan may well be less successful in convincing the American reading public of the 'truthfulness' of her picture, since, in such a case, the element of cultural mediation would be correspondingly weaker" (p. 63). The stratagem of infusing different narrative

forms enables Tan to captivate a wide range of readers. Although she is not equipped with the official Chinese history, she is well acquainted with many personal memories that deepen her narratives. As a migrant, she perceives the thirst of western society in receiving a plausible image of orient, and presents 'her' own version of truth. This is accomplished, partly, by visual presentation of orient's image, by her grandmother's picture on the cover of *The Bonesetter's Daughter*.

Principally, Tan's narratives try to institute an innovative fabrication of history and autobiography, a mixture of a constant nostalgia for past and a plea for grasping of it. Since her texts are congested with ghosts and eccentric events, many consider her texts as fictional strife, in pursuit of a lost identity and history. Exploring an authentic past in her narratives, as most of critics are, is to emasculate her efforts to structure a new connection with the notion of homeland. Her narratives, mostly utilizing the technique of re-memory, are considered an opportunity to perceive the undocumented history of a nation that struggles to attain a sense of communal nationality. Autobiographical data such as the true story of her mother, in escaping the tyranny of communist China, leaving daughters behind or the suicide of her grandmother, which are portrayed, in two of her novels could be considered as artistic attempts to represent an authentic past. Nonetheless, Tan has been, severely, disparaged for her lack of historical knowledge; she confesses that she detested the subject. She states in an interview (1997), "I thought it [history] was completely a waste of time. It had absolutely no relevance." (p. 17). In *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, however, she acts differently. The text is rich with Chinese historical references. Tan suggests, "Today, I love history. I find it is absolutely relevant to everything that is going on. It's not just some philosophical babble of how things repeat themselves" (p. 17). This is a radical rejection of the hierarchy of memory over history; thus, believing in them as two equally constructive discourses that bestow access to past.

In this section, the 'markers of authenticity', in *The Bonesetter's Daughter* is examined. Tan utilizes more autobiographical elements in the novel to ensure its veracity which is constructed on the bones of real life experiences. Moreover, in the mass circulation of the book, an old photograph of Tan's grandmother is selected, for the cover. This picture is entitled as the major source of inspiration that motivated her to narrate. Tan's choice makes this fiction more controversial than her previous texts, for it blurs the boundary between real and fictional, history and story, private and public. And from this starting point, the audience would be curious about Tan's view who locates her own self-promotion, in fabricating the fictional aspects of the novel. *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (2001) initiates with following lines, which try to persuade the readers of their authenticity, "these are the things I know are true: My name is LuLing Liu Young. The names of my husbands were Pan Kai Jing and Edwin Young, both of them dead and our secrets gone with them. My daughter is Ruth Luyi Young. She was born in a Water Dragon Year and I in a Fire Dragon Year. So we are the same but for opposite reasons" (p. 2). LuLing points out to the possibility of multiple existence of truth, when she compares herself and her daughter as two similar and yet opposite versions of an individual. The central theme of the novel is based on the ancestral heritage that Precious Auntie has left for her daughter LuLing; dragon bones that serve as a source of income for the family, later turned out to be belonging to human being. This, itself, emphasizes on the dynamicity of truth; the bones which were once supposed to be curative dragon bones, later change to a familial curse, "the bones you have are not from dragons, he said: "They are from our own clan, the ancestor who was crushed in the Monkey's Jaw. And because we stole them, he's cursed us. That's why nearly everyone in our family has died" (p. 98). Relativity of truth is vividly depicted in the course of the novel, where Ruth suspects the validity of her mother's memory and tries to find it tainted, "sometimes Ruth listened with interest, trying to determine how much of the story LuLing changed in each retelling, feeling reassured when she repeated the same story" (p. 166).

According to Tabatabaei Lotfi (2014), "the capacity to construct stories in a linear, temporal order creates a sense of coherence in individuals, which is then contributed to all aspects of life. In patients with severe cases of memory loss, the sense of fragmentary 'self' is the major reason for social withdrawal; it gradually kills the feeling of belonging to a community. In the case of migrant communities who are highly dependent on close familial and tribal intimacies, this memory loss would result in identity loss of a nation" (p. 144). In the novel, the danger of amnesia, in the form of Alzheimer, urges the mother to narrate her past, hastily, to remember her exact ancestral family name. LuLing frequently tries to recall the past and preserve it, "these are the things I must not forget... And Precious Auntie flapped her hands fast: *A person should consider how things begin. A particular beginning results in a particular end*" (p. 86). There is a precise tendency in making meaning of past, in accordance with the present condition of LuLing. In preserving a continuous account of past, there is a strong claim of truth,

Her mother often surprised her with the clarity of her emotions when she spoke of her youth, elements of which matched in spirit what she had written in her memoir.... At times she also blended the past with memories from other periods of her own past. But that part of her history was nonetheless a reservoir which she could draw from and share. It didn't matter that she blurred some of the finer points. The past, even revised, was meaningful. (p. 192)

Mingling real past experiences with fantasy is a natural method to extract meaning out of memories that had no signification, at the time of occurrence. This is also true for history, since it is considered to be the subjective testimony of objective events, open to interpretations over time. To solve the dilemma of memory and history and their eternal assertions of authenticity, the best stratagem is to consider these disciplines the "enigmatic interweaving of traces deposited" by the mixture of "fantasy and memory", without regarding the "false dichotomies" of them (Showalter,

2004, p. 252). It means to affirm memories' role in exhibiting a fractional history that is inevitably interwoven with fantasy. This fantasy is at the service of truth, too.

The second half of the novel is composed mainly of LuLing's manuscript. Images of bones preoccupy the script and the life of LuLing, as she struggles to make sense of past, before she forgets all about it. The bones are used as a cure that also connect generations, as Precious Auntie tells LuLing that the bones are the means of reviving the past, "*Someday, when you know how to remember, I'll give this to you to keep. But for now you'll only forget where you put it*" (p. 90). When the scientists begin excavating fossils from the mountain, the bones become the key to understand the mysterious past; eventually, they convert into the instruments of preserving familial history. The act of excavation and searching for bones becomes the metaphor for probing about the past, as LuLing digs in her memories to discover the real name of her mother. The third part of the novel is solving the mysteries, by translation of LuLing's manuscript by Mr. Tang. The real identity and ancestral name of the family is revealed; Ruth sympathizes with her mother and initiates documenting her own ancestral history, "and side by side, Ruth and her grandmother begin. Words flow. They have become the same person" (p. 197). The novel ends with the reunion of generations, a deep appreciation, followed by foundation of a collective identity, yet in a diasporic context that is marked by heterogeneity and multiplicity.

Ruth, as a ghost writer, instigates to chronicle her familial history, in order to preserve not only the 'oracle bones' which she has inherited from LuLing, but also the memory of her family, in a book. She knows that documenting the real truth is unfeasible, as memories mingle with fantasy. LuLing's reminiscences are appropriated, based on the present condition of her life, but the only thing that matters is that it makes sense, "Ruth remembers how her mother used to talk of dying, by curse or her own hand. She never stopped feeling the impulse, not until she began to lose her mind, the memory web that held her woes in place. And though her mother still remembers the past, she has begun to change it. She doesn't recount the sad parts. She only recalls being loved very, very much" (p. 196). The genuineness of memories, "ensure a sense of self and identity" and the nature of the "self-guaranteeing" truth in the memories "could not be doubted" (Showalter 138). This is exactly what LuLing does, generating an integrated wholeness that protects her from mental breakdown.

LuLing's crisis resides in her inability to communicate with her daughter. This is one of the difficulties of patients, afflicted by dementia. They lose the connection with present, being caught in the past. Their stories are always perceptible by a mixture of sorrow and anger to recall. In the case of migrants, who feel a moral commitment to transfer their narratives to next generation, the response is more severe, because there is a danger of identity loss for the victim and her/his nation, in diaspora,

Indeed, these accounts are characterized by the attempt of the caregiver to remember and recreate a past life that preserves the person's identity. But they also speak of the great frustration, anger and guilt that arise from the inability to establish communicative links to the person in the present. (Soulsby, 2006, p. 88)

This is vividly demonstrated in the novel, by LuLing's frustrated repetitive attempts to recall her mother's name. Remembrance would fabricate a secure sense of identity. She is threatened by her disease, since the present time is an alien temporal zone. She, almost, lives in past and connecting to current stream of life is impossible. This is the reason of her incapacity to communicate with her educated American girl. The wide gap between them is deepened by their cultural differences. One belongs to the first generation of migrants who tries to preserve her national identity and the other struggles to assimilate with the host culture, completely, in a diasporic context.

Unlike the common tendencies to evaluate the authenticity of claimed past, by referring to the official documented histories, there is an affinity to trust the personal memories of characters, among the migrant writers. They ensure the legitimacy of such narratives by inserting factual subjective memories into the fictional realm of the novels. It is worthy to suggest that assertions of authenticity, in this novel, are very strong, even if the writer is unaware that memory and history are commingled with fantasy. Apparently, Tan distrusts the claims of objective history, in favor of creating a partial history, based on memories, to articulate a collective Chinese identity, not only among her fictional characters, but also among Chinese readers. This is accomplished by referring to the historical events and autobiographical elements. "I don't know. So much of history is mystery. We don't know what is lost forever, what will surface again. All objects exist in a moment of time. And that fragment of time is preserved or lost or found in mysterious ways. Mystery is a wonderful part of life" (p. 194). By these lines, Tan accentuates enigmatic temperament of memory; some part of this secret is lost and some will be discovered by mind. However, memory is a part of an individual's life that cannot be ignored or completely excluded by suppressive external forces.

5. Conclusion

This essay was an analysis of the concept of authenticity in Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter* by investigating the contingent interrelatedness of memory and history, in documentation of past. Amy Tan's strong claim of genuineness, despite her use of fantasy, is in concordance with a quest for gaining a shared collective identity in the characters of her novel; although, cultural multiplicity is practiced by characters, in the form of disparate modes of demonstrating past. Diasporic assertions of authenticity among different characters make the evaluation of truth very difficult. Amy Tan challenges the fortified structure of acknowledged national histories and substitutes it with a more subjective, yet authentic adaptations of personal memories which will result in construction of a communal identity among the characters of the novel. Accordingly, a pristine diasporic identity is fashioned that defies the geographical and temporal borders by presenting a humane perspective of past.

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