



منظور اجتماعي لغوي للتفاوض الثقافي في الميراث، بقلم لان سامانثا تشانغ

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المخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة مفهوم التفاوض الثقافي في رواية *Inheritance* (2004) للكاتبة لان سامانثا تشانغ، من خلال توظيف النظرية النقدية ونظرية ما بعد الاستعمار والدراسات الثقافية ونظرية الشتات، مع التركيز على أفكار هومي ك. بهابها حول "الحيز الثالث" والهجنة، حيث تُبرز كيفية موازنة الرواية بين الرغبات الفردية والتقاليد الثقافية والتوقعات الاجتماعية في سياقات الهجرة والاقتراع والتغيرات التاريخية، وبالاستناد إلى مفكرين مثل إدوارد سعيد وستيوارت هول وماريان هيرش، تجادل الدراسة بأن الهوية ليست ثابتة بل تتشكل باستمرار عبر عمليات تفاوض متواصلة، إذ تعيش الشخصيات في "حيز ثالث" تلتقي فيه الثقافات وتختلط فلا تحافظ كلياً على التقاليد ولا ترفضها تماماً، بل تُنتج هويات هجينة، ومن خلال قراءة تحليلية لمقاطع أساسية تكشف الدراسة عن أشكال التفاوض الثقافي على المستويات الفردية والعائلية والاجتماعية، حيث تعيد شخصيات مثل جونان وبينان وهو مودان وإيفيتا تشكيل التقاليد الموروثة مع التكيف مع ظروف جديدة، كما تلعب الذاكرة والصدمات والتاريخ العائلي عبر الأجيال دوراً محورياً في تشكيل الهوية، وتُظهر الدراسة أن بعض الشخصيات تحقق قدرًا من الحرية عبر التغيير بينما تظل أخرى عالقة في الصمت والتكرار، لتخلص في النهاية إلى أن الرواية تقدم التفاوض الثقافي بوصفه عنصرًا أساسيًا في حياة الشتات، حيث تُعاد صياغة الهوية باستمرار من خلال الذاكرة والاقتراع والتقاليد والحياة الحديثة، مما يعمق فهمنا لكيفية انعكاس الضغوط الثقافية والعائلية والتاريخية في الأدب الآسيوي الأمريكي

A Sociolinguistic Perspective of Cultural Negotiation in *Inheritance* by Lan Samantha Ch
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Abstract

This study examines cultural negotiation in Lan Samantha Chang's novel *Inheritance* (2004) using Critical Theory, Postcolonial Theory, Cultural Studies, and Diaspora Theory, especially Homi K. Bhabha's ideas of Third Space and hybridity. It focuses on how the novel shows the balance between personal desires, cultural traditions, and social expectations in situations of migration, displacement, and historical change. Using thinkers such as Bhabha, Edward Said, Stuart Hall, and Marianne Hirsch, the study argues that identity is not fixed but always changing through ongoing negotiation. In the novel, characters live in a "Third Space" where cultures meet and mix, so they neither fully keep nor fully reject tradition but form hybrid identities. Close reading of key parts shows cultural negotiation at personal, family, and social levels, as characters like Junan, Yinan, Hu Mudan, and Evita reshape inherited traditions while adapting to new situations, while memory, trauma, and family history across generations strongly shape identity. Some characters gain freedom through change, while others remain stuck in silence and repetition. The study argues that *Inheritance* presents cultural negotiation as a key part of diasporic life, showing how identity is constantly rebuilt through memory, displacement, tradition, and modern life, and helping us better understand how Asian American literature reflects cultural, family, and historical pressures.



1.1 Introduction

Within literary theory, literature is not regarded as something solid or clearly defined but something valuable to write, whose meaning varied through different periods and is closely linked to society's ideologies (Eagleton :22). It functions as a space for exploring and questioning all the elements, including aspects related to culture, ideology, and identity. Culture itself is understood as flexible and constructed, a "tradition" made up by people for particular purposes at specific times in history, rather than a fixed reality (Eagleton : 23). Critical theory emphasizes power, representation and meaning production, demonstrating the connection between ideology and what we believe and say, and is associated with its view of the power structures of society (Eagleton, 2008: 26).

Cultural negotiation occurs in the "in-between" spaces where different cultures come to meet producing moments of displacement and tension (Bhabha, 2004, p. 41). It is a continuous, complex process through which hybrid cultural identities can emerge, they are created by historical change and a mix of lived and learned languages (Bhabha, 2004: 36). This process involves both conflict and connection as elements are rearticulated, or translated, in such a way as to challenge existing structures (Bhabha, 2004 : 74). In critical theory, negotiation is not fully closed yet and is also apparent in the imbalances and contrasting experiences of colonizer and colonized (Said, 1993, p. 62). Culture becomes a kind of stage where narratives and power struggle against each other and discourse, who gets to tell the story, who is silenced, is central to shaping of reality (Said, 1993 : 12–13).

Diaspora describes a state of being historically displaced in which notions of home, belonging and identity are continually challenged so that cultural experiences become fragmented . In this sense, identity is developed as a result of memory, suffering from displacement and inherited collective histories (Brah : 12–13). Diasporic subjects experience a "homing desire," the longing that does not mean a return to a homeland but the negotiation of a sense of self in the context of loss and a sense of inherited pasts (Brah : 27). Memory is never completely personal but is shaped by postmemory the inherited memory of traumatic experiences by previous generations . Photographs are instruments that link generations, mediate memory, both personal and collective, and assist diasporic communities in negotiating continuity across time as well as space. Identity, then, is built through imaginary involvement with the stories and images of the past of others (Hirsch, 1997: 40–41).

Asian American literature is closely involved with cultural negotiation, exploring the fact that the field itself is temporally shaped as a textual coalition (Wong, 1993:19). It deals with negotiations between necessity and extravagance balancing diverse and sometimes conflicting influences (Wong, 1993, pp. 18–23). Critics pay attention to context and intertextuality in defining its American character while resisting Orientalist expectations and actively constructing a tradition out of the several voices (Wong, 1993: 18–19). Asian American writers interrogate the themes of identity by using a mix of autobiography,



myth and storytelling as they address issues of assimilation, racism and stereotyping. Literary negotiation opens up the negotiation of hybrid identities, in which voices and styles arise in response to dominant cultural norm (Grice : 81–82).

Lan Samantha Chang's *Inheritance*(2004) is an important text as it deals with family, culture and identity . Her tales of immigrants and their children show conflicts of desire over cultural obligation (Lorre : 78). Ordinary, everyday experiences are often caricatured with extreme and almost hallucinatory levels of detail to illustrate these conflicts (Lee, 2013, p. 130). Historical change is experienced as the internal voice of modernity that pushes individuals to choose either to embrace the new opportunities or stick to the traditional roots (Lee: 125). The narrative style itself is a reflection of cultural negotiation through a "minimal narrativity" using disconnected scenes and small and empty shapes to express a modern sense of a fragmented time. Through this, Chang shows how everyday life tends to be a space where identity gets built up, negotiated, and, cautiously speaking, balanced (Lee : 3–4).

The objective of this research is to examine cultural negotiation in Lan Samantha Chang's *Inheritance* using the critical theory as a framing technique to examine the role of characters, narratives and family structures as mediators between the two contexts of personal desire and inherited cultural expectations. Approaching this study with critical frameworks especially postcolonial and diasporic perspectives, finding ways in which to place *Inheritance* in larger debates about identity, power, and cultural continuity in the realm of the literary text. Such an approach contributes to both cultural and literary studies because it shows how texts can help one gain insight into the process by which individuals and communities navigate a series of competing social, familial, and historical demands.

1.2 Lan Samantha's Biography

Lan Samantha Chang was born in 1965 in Appleton, Wisconsin, to Chinese immigrant parents. Growing up in a predominately white Midwestern town, she frequently felt like she was born between the two worlds: the Chinese culture of her family and the culture of the surrounding Americans. These early experiences influenced her own sense of identity, her family and belonging, themes that occur time and time again throughout her stories. Her parents had experienced difficult times in China prior to their immigration, and Chang would later write about the role of history and family on personal choices and self-perception (Kong: 102). This background gave her special insights into the problems of immigrants and their children, especially the conflict between cultural obligation and individual desire.

Chang's path of academics reflects her intellectually curious center and the interest in narrating stories that are developing in her. She studied East Asian Studies at Yale University, and completed her Masters of Public Administration at Harvard University. She was stouter than a typical writing sylvan and she had a great time, *Extreme Words* - despite her impressive academic credentials she realized that writing was her true calling.



She pursued an MFA in fiction at Iowa Writers Workshops where she learnt how to develop characters, to explore the interior life of characters, and to experiment with forms of narration (Kurjatto-Renard: 218). The experience of being in Iowa helped her to grasp the subtle ways that memory, family and culture all influence identity, and this lent a very powerful emotional and cultural depth to her stories.

Her first book, *Hunger: A Novella and Stories* (1998), immediately revealed her ability in the making of family and cultural tension. The stories depict everyday domestic moments of meals, conversations, sibling interactions, and so forth as places where the characters are negotiating cultural expectations and personal desires. Kong explains how in *Hunger*, the home serves as a place where one's identity is challenged and this is made evident in how the people attempt to secure a balance between tradition and individuality (104). Patrycja Kurjatto-Renard (2004) notes that Chang's rambling in his storytelling reflects the feeling of being between cultures with the focus on memory and heritage in one's day to day life (222).

Her novel *Inheritance* (2004) develops these themes over generations with the story of sisters whose lives are affected by their family and by historical events in China and the United States. As Rey Chow points out, such narratives accentuate the role of cultural *inheritance* and memory in the negotiation of one's personal identity since they illustrate the multifaceted ways in which people navigate their sense of self in relation past/present (45). Cheng's alternating between different perspectives and interior thoughts can help the readers see the tension her characters experience between family obligations and desires for themselves. Ying Ma also indicates that in her novels, she places a focus on the experiences of women, in the way they are affected by gender, culture, and family expectations in establishing their identity (421)

1.3 Synopsis

Inheritance is an epic generational novel about the ways that family, culture, history and personal choice meet to create identity as time goes on. The narrative starts in China in the year 1931 with sisters Junan and Yinan whose mother died tragically from the burden of society's expectations that she should bear a male heir (Takaki: 212). This event is the first in a series of experiences to test the loyalty, resilience and understanding of their cultural heritage in the sisters. In the aftermath, Junan and Yinan get a solemn promise to stay together, a bond that proves the strength of family ties, as well as the gravity of cultural obligations, on their own decisions (Lee, 2015 :134). Cheng describes their formative years in dramatic detail, demonstrating how mundane domestic routines, interrelations within the family and societal expectations converge in the formation of an identity. Through these formative experiences the novel sets up the main tension between individual wants and family obligation - a tension that is played out throughout the novel and upon the generations (Lin : 76).



The story shifts the perspective to the daughters of Junan and Li Ang, Hong, who sets out to reconstruct her family's broken history (Yamamoto: 102). Through Hong's learned voice of contemplation, the novel moves forward in a past-present way, making clear the ways that the choices of an earlier generation live on and affect identity and familial relationships. Hong's perspective gives readers the opportunity to experience the effects of secrecy, unspoken pain, and cultural expectation and the ongoing impacted felt by Hong shows us that history is not only outside, but internalized in memories and identity of descendants. Her trouble understanding the experience of her mother and aunt illustrates the negotiation of cultural inheritance by younger generations-whether those who need to migrate due to societal shifts and historical turmoil-force their family to reckon with their new social and cultural scenario (Lee : 145).

Central to *Inheritance* are the tensions between cultural obligation and a personal desire, something that Chang develops through the contrasting personalities of Junan and Yinan. Junan's pragmatism, resilience and obedience to duty are in stark contrast to Yinan's sensitivity, quiet devotion and emotional vulnerability (Lin : 85). These differences influence the sisters' responses to pressures by society, such as arranged marriage, gender roles, filial duty and how it affects the life of the next generation. These dynamics are made even more complicated by migration. The eventual move of the family to Taiwan and the United States presents new cultural environments with which to negotiate between old world traditions and new societal norms. Chang illustrates the ways by which historical events war, displacement, and migration serve to intensify existing familial tensions and to demonstrate that identity is both historically and culturally constructed, and is constantly influenced by personal choices and external forces (Yamamoto : 110).

1.4 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is informed by key ideas from Cultural Studies, in order to consider the processes of identity formation and cultural negotiation in *Inheritance*. It combines perspectives from Critical Theory, Postcolonial Theory and Diaspora Theory as it examines the issues of power, displacement and belonging. Additionally, the concept of hybridity and the Third Space that has been developed by Homi K. Bhabha form a lens to understand how identities are constructed between cultures. Together, these approaches provide a complete basis on which to analyze cultural interaction and change in the novel.

1.4.1 Critical Theory

Critical Theory is the study of power structures, ideology and social inequalities in cultural texts. Emerging out of the work of the Frankfurt School it concentrates on how culture and knowledge are influenced by systems of domination and control. Thinkers like Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno claimed that cultural productions tend to reproduce dominant ideologies as a consequence which renders social inequalities natural or inevitable (Horkheimer & Adorno, 95). In terms of literary studies, critical theory



examines how texts expose class differences, institutional power and ideological power. It also explores the process of constructing meaning and how readers can spot assumptions hidden within the cultural representations (Eagleton, 108). In so doing, this promotes a more profound awareness of the workings of power through language, culture and discourse.

Critical therapy keeps in with the importance of critique in the latter seeking for transformation of a social injustice. It does not just interpret cultural texts but also tries to question and resist the systems of inequality therein. Scholars stress the role ideology plays on people's perception, the fact that it often narrows their perception of other social possibilities (Eagleton, 120). Therefore, it is with critical reading that contradictions in dominant narratives can be empirically revealed and mechanisms of control exposed. This approach also deals with the topic of how marginalized voices can resist and re-interpret dominant discourses, in order to create space for alternative voices. the critical theory offers a way of understanding culture as an arena of struggle over power, resistance and meaning which is incessantly negotiated (Horkheimer & Adorno, 118).

1.4.2 Post-colonial Theory

Postcolonial Theory looks at the cultural, political and psychological impacts of colonial histories upon the formerly colonized societies and around the world those who are like diasporas It concerns the relationship between power and identity, language and representation especially in cases where Western dominance has affected the cultural hierarchies and social structures (Said, 25). In literary studies these are the ideas that have been used to analyse the way in which texts portray resistance, adaptation, and negotiation of identity in unequal power relations (Ashcroft et al. 38). Through this, when literature is seen through the lens of minority voices challenging dominant versions of culture and recontextualising their own cultural identities, literature becomes a space for those who may or may not be marginalised. Post-colonial criticism also concerns concepts like hybridity, mimicry and cultural displacement and focuses on the fact that identity is not fixed, but is constantly assumed and constructed by historical and social forces (Bhabha, 112).

In *Inheritance* post-colonial theory is a useful framework in which to explore the complexities of cultural negotiation and identity formation. The tensions in which the characters endure between cultural values they have inherited and the new values of the dominant society represent more general post-colonial themes of displacement and belonging (Hall, 223). Their struggles tell us about the making of identity based on historical memory as well as on the realities of the present societal conditions, thus a modern negotiation between assimilation and cultural identity. This dynamism shows the creation of hybrid identities that lie between cultures that reinforces the concept of identity being fluid and constantly being constructed (Bhabha, 56).

1.4.3 Cultural Studies



Cultural Studies is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the way that culture is produced, represented, and consumed in society. It came into being in the mid-twentieth century, especially in a certain body of research, namely, the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, where scholars were interested in the role between culture and power. Cultural studies defies traditional notions of "high" and "low" culture, promoting interpretations of everyday types of activity as well as media and popular texts as equally important to the analysis. It is concerned with the nature of meaning-making via language, symbols and social practices and the meditation of how and what meanings are shaped by ideology and history (Hall: 3). As focusing on the importance of audiences and interpretation, the intersection of the two has been stressed by cultural studies, suggesting that meaning is not fixed but negotiated by subjects in particular cultural contexts, that there can not be a single reading of the same text (Storey, 2009, 15).

A major issue in Cultural Studies is that of the relationship between culture and power, specifically the question of how dominant ideologies are perpetuated or resisted in representation. Scholars like Stuart Hall proposed important concepts like encoding and decoding which explain the ways media messages are created and interpreted differently by audiences (Hall, 25). This is a perspective that focuses on the idea that audiences are not passive receptacles but also active participants in the construction of meaning. Cultural studies also examines the problems of identity such as race, class, gender and ethnicity and the way they are constructed and negotiated in cultural contexts . It seeks to understand the extent in which the cultural texts can reinforce and/or resist social inequalities as it uncovers the complex interplay between structure and agency (Storey, 2015, 42).

1.4.4 Diaspora Theory

Diaspora Theory is a branch of study that focuses on the experiences of individuals living outside of their ancestral homelands with particular focus on the social, cultural, and psychological consequences of migration and displacement. It touches on issues of negotiators in diasporic communities that deal with identity, memory and belonging in order not to lose their links to their origins (Clifford 305). Diaspora theory stresses how one's identity is not immutable but sturdy enough to be constantly redefined through interactions with countries of residence, the passage of time, and cross-border (transnational) connections. Through this lens, scholars can examine the significance of migration and exile from the literature and cultural texts to understand the effect these concepts have on how individuals view themselves, their position in society, and how they express themselves culturally. The theory also covers the issues of tension between assimilation, hybridity, and preserving the heritage, as well as the fact that diasporic individuals find themselves dealing with more than one cultural framework at a time (Safran 83).



In the fields of literary and cultural studies, diaspora theory offers knowledge about character as an expression of the complexities of 'living between cultures'. It views feelings of displacement, nostalgia, and longing as chief components of diasporic identity (Clifford 312). This perspective highlights the challenges of balancing cultural retention with adaptation to new environments, showing how individuals negotiate language, traditions, and social expectations..

1.4.5 Third Space & Hybridity(Homi Bhabha)

Homi K. Bhabha used his concept of Third Space and hybridity to address the ever-negotiations of cultural identities in their process of cultural displacement, migration and colonial encounter. The Third Space is the in-between space where cultures interact, be in conflict, and merge thus paving the way for new forms of identity and meaning (Bhabha 37). Hybridity is born in this space as people mixing-and-matching elements from several different cultures; blurring the solid notions of national, ethnic or cultural identity. This notion is especially important, when it comes to understanding the complexities of the modern multicultural societies, where the individual tends to live between the dominant and marginalized cultural frameworks. It lays emphasis on the fact that identity is not singular nor is it static but it is rather something that is constructed through continued negotiation and interaction(Bhabha 39).

In literary and cultural studies, Third Space and hybridity is a concept that can be used to analyze characters and communities as they move through different cultural influences. In this framework, identities are perceived as fluid, as those of continuity with heritage and of accommodation to new relationships (Bhabha 38). Hybridity also disrupts hierarchies of binaries, such as colonizer/colonized or traditional/modern by exposing zones of creativity, resistance and transformation. The Third Space establishes a lens through which scholars can explore the ways that there is a negotiation of culture, liminality, and the emergence of new cultural meaning through the literature and other cultural texts reflect the fluid, complex, and contested nature of identity formation (Young 44).

2. Critical Analysis of *Inheritance*

Inheritance by Lan Samantha Chang is a work of fiction that gives a picture of the life of the four generations of Chinese women whose life is influenced by war, displacement, migration and historical change. Embedded in the changing landscapes of revolution and exile, the novel develops the theme of how people who are placed in the state of diaspora balance between the old and the new social worlds continuously. According to Iain Chambers, the means of origin is to be a stranger and live in the connectivity of memory and history, when dispersal is succeeded by the re-inscribing of the self into the dynamics of new cultural forms. The result of this state is what Homi Bhabha develops, the Third Space, a state between subjects that are not settled and detached but the creation of identities through hybridity and negotiation.



This following passage illustrates what Homi Bhabha refers to as colonial mimicry – mimics the ways of those in power, but changes them somehow. Junan is not opposed to arranged marriage, but she turns it into her own for her own purposes. Her desire to "create her own, more modern marriage" indicates her participation in the Third Space (where old traditions aren't simply preserved or entirely abandoned, but transformed into new forms). From the diaspora perspective, Junan illustrates how people construct their intercultural identity. Her careful choice on marrying an orphan to shun the strict family rules demonstrates she can work within the family tradition while tackling it in the right direction – with independence. This depicts the aspect of cultural negotiation which demonstrates how identity is defined by choice and situation, as opposed to simply being inherited. At the same time, the passage contains a hint of an emotional cost: Her refusal to expect love feels like a kind of protective tactic informed by fear and uncertainty in the past. Diasporic negotiation is, as is pointed out by the scholars, not solely rational, but encompasses feelings that cannot be controlled totally. The modern marriage of Junan seems both a means of freedom and a restriction, taking mixed feelings in hybrid identities. The lives she led tell us that identity is essentially an activity and the traditions people can take and transform to help meet their own end by living in a changing cultural world. Hong as narrator describes Junan's reasoning:

She embarked upon her marriage with a personal agenda: she did not expect to love her husband, nor ever to lean on him for happiness or money. When seen in this light, her own marriage was promising. Li Ang's lack of family brought advantages. Since Li Ang was an orphan, she could live with her own family. (54) .

The real importance of the prophecy produced by the fortune-teller is the display of cultural negotiation in a state of historical change. Her dictum that Junan "will decide itself" fits the progressive increase of female authority in a society deeply invested in patriarchal authority. Speaking from a marginal yet cautious position, the nun represents liminality; an observer who is able to see changes that those fully inside rigid tradition are not able to see. The prophecy, from the postcolonial perspective, breaks that is made by modernity and colonial encounter. Cultural norms regarding love, power, and independence are no longer set in stone. Chanyi's insistence on beauty as the criterion of value indicates her adherence to an old order that is passing away. Her inability to adapt illustrates what diaspora theory means by cultural rigidity – the unwillingness to reinterpret inherited frameworks. The fortune-teller looks forward to hybridity. She recognises that a "new world" is emerging, one which is characterised by re-negotiated gender and social relations. This awareness is in line with Bhabha's conception of historical change as a space of ambivalence within which old and new co-exist in tension. Cultural negotiation becomes inevitable here; survival is one's capacity for reforming tradition in the new history. The prophecy points out how individuals and societies need to take an active role in tradition, respecting the rules inherited while knowing that it is the need of a changing world. Through this lens, the fortune-teller stands for the quality of foresight, revealing that the negotiation of culture is at the same time both a necessity and



an instrument of negotiation to deal with the uncertainties of historical transformation. The fortune-teller as a nun states her prophecy:

'She will marry a soldier.' 'That's impossible.' The woman shrugged. 'But she'll have a generous dowry. And look at her,' Chanyi protested. 'Surely she's worth more.' 'She will decide herself. She will let him in.' 'What do you mean?' For a brief moment the nun caught Junan's gaze. 'We are entering a new time,' she said. 'A new world with its own ideas of love and power.(11)

Hu Mudan's reply involves a confrontation between lived cultural understanding and western Christianity. While she does listen to the missionaries and she does find comfort in the atmosphere of the church, she ends up believing in her own experience rather than in the doctrine. From a postcolonial standpoint, it can be viewed that this refusal is a strategy of resistance concerning ideological control. Missionary religion has promised transcendence and eternal salvation, but Hu Mudan puts these promises to work against her body's knowledge. Her description of disease and recovery confirms an interpretation of spirit that is not separated from physical existence. Such embodied knowledge is a challenge to theological abstract authority. Diaspora theory accents her in-between position even more. She is not fully fulfilling traditional Chinese spirituality and is not totally converted to Christian western religion. Instead, she occupies a space of partial belongingness – a state of unhomeliness. This condition is uncomfortable, but critical distance. By evaluating competing cultural narratives rather than accepting either uncritically, Hu Mudan demonstrates cultural negotiation rooted in experiential truth. Her approach demonstrates that identity is actually produced through interaction with inherited and introduced systems of thought. In negotiating between Chinese and Western frameworks she combines wisdom from the body with consciousness of ideological pressures. Hu Mudan's example is important in underscoring that negotiating culture is not merely an intellectual exercise, but a practical and lived process, affected by the interaction of personal knowledge, historical circumstance, and cross-cultural influence. Hu Mudan states her belief about the afterlife:

'I don't think there is any world waiting after this one to help anyone get over anything they've done.' 'You think they can't recover?' 'Not necessarily. All I know is that this god has nothing to do with it.' 'Then you don't believe there is an afterlife?' 'When I was a girl, I was once very ill... I could feel myself disappearing, my spirit and mind dissolving as my body grew weaker. When I grew strong again, my spirit returned. I think that when my body leaves this earth, then so will I.' (248)

In the following passage that captures the awareness of the second generation in the diaspora. Evita has "hidden inwardness" that echoes the psychological complexity of living in multiple cultures without fully being a part of either. Her situation calls to mind W. E. B. Du Bois's concept of double consciousness – the feeling of seeing oneself through multiple lenses of our culture simultaneously. From Bhabha's perspective, Evita is



a representation of the hybrid subject that is created in the Third Space. Unlike earlier generations that were consciously aware of the need to balance tradition and change, Evita's negotiation is for her an ongoing condition. Her identity is neither entirely Chinese nor entirely American but formed through their constant interaction. The reference to the faces of the ancestors emphasizes cultural memory. Identity does not just survive across generations through institutional and conscientious teaching; it also survives through osmotic and unconscious transmission. Yet for this *inheritance* to have distance. The past is an enigma from a time of rupture in diaspora. Cultural negotiation for the second generation involves balancing identities and confronting loss – the impossibility of fully recovering what history has displaced. *Inheritance* shows cultural negotiation as layered and generational. Diaspora theory shows how characters develop hybrid identities between their homeland and hostland, their memories and adaptations. Postcolonial theory exposes the power structures that are embedded in these negotiations; this helps reveal a world history of colonialism, which determines possibilities for agency and self-definition. Junan reframes marriage in an effort to achieve autonomy without abandoning tradition. The fortune-teller is aware of historical transition as inevitable metamorphosis. Yinan translates national trauma into inherited gender metaphors. Hu Mudan judges foreign religion from embodied knowledge. The last characteristic Evita possesses is to live negotiation as an inherited condition rather than a conscious strategy. Together, these figures prove that cultural identity isn't fixed and singular. It is constantly being worked upon from time to time, through *inheritance*, but transformed by circumstances. In *Inheritance*, cultural negotiation emerges not as optional but as the fundamental condition of diasporic existence – a relative process through which individuals reinterpret the past while creating meanings suited to changing worlds. Hong as narrator describes Evita's hidden inwardness:

She was a child of her generation. They possessed their look: the hidden inwardness of people who have learned, by necessity, to divine the mysteries of two cultures they do not entirely inhabit. The past to her was as mysterious as her own beautiful face when she looked in the mirror, the face of her ancestors. (284)

This following passage shows what happens when cultural negotiation fails or is avoided. The Nationalist exiles who went to Taiwan after 1949 carried not only possessions but also psychological wounds – a "fever" of trauma showing as "contagious blindness" and "seductive forgetfulness." The obsessive mahjong of the women symbolizes a rejection of the negotiation necessary for establishing the link between the past and the present. They reveal a failure of this Third Space. Instead of dealing with the wider range of Asia in the present, they are stuck in a mainland that exists only in memory. Their mahjong becomes a fixation, a bird in the hand to help them defend against change and uncertainty. The "fever" and "defeat" are a reflection of trauma that keeps one from being open to the new, which is required for hybrid identity. "Contagious blindness" and "seductive forgetfulness" indicate the problems of refusal: namely, identity is formed by remembering and translating the past but they try only to erase it. The repetitive mahjong



games reflect their frozen identities. Playing "relentless games to hold back thought" substitutes for actual dialogue and reflection. They eventually betrayed them – their bodies had eyes to burn, arms to ache, dawns were physical and time realities intruded, showing avoidance cannot last. From Bakhtin's perspective, these women have renounced dialogue. Theirs is monologic silence, silencing other voices. The game of mahjong is a monologic substitute, a ritual of noncommunication. "Hold back thought" shows that they refuse internal reflection. Yet dialogue takes place indirectly: the narrative through Hong gives voice to those who do not speak. Cultural negotiation goes on, carried by memory and story, and dialogue remains unavoidable. Hong as narrator describes the exiles' arrival in Taiwan:

We arrived in Taiwan suffering from defeat. The whole island was awash in it, a fever that had been carried across the water from the mainland by those of us who had fled our homes, abandoned our lives, and brought what we could salvage to this unfamiliar ground.(178)

Conclusion In conclusion, this study has explored the work of cultural negotiation in Lan Samantha Chang's *Inheritance* with ideas from Critical Theory, Postcolonial Theory, Cultural Studies, and Diaspora Theory through ideas of Homi K. Bhabha's Third Space and hybridity. The novel demonstrates the concept that cultural negotiation is not a series of acts but a process whereby the characters reinterpret traditions while inventing new meanings appropriate to changing circumstances. Identity is constructed in areas where cultures intersect and mingle, in Junan's arranged marriage transforming tradition for her own need and in Yinan's understanding of political conflict through Confucian ideas combining old frameworks with modern realities. Hu Mudan's rejection of missionary teachings in favour of personal experience shows another form of negotiation based not on ideology, but on a critical form of thinking. The novel also brings forward the emotional and ethical aspects of negotiation by the long rift between Junan and Yinan and Hu Mudan's call to forgive, which emphasize on connection and responsibility. On the contrary, the example of Nationalist exiles in Taiwan provides a living example of the consequences of rejecting negotiation showing how identity becomes rigid and dialogue is lost. Through its narrative strategies - multiple perspectives, broken time, and the writings on domestic spaces - *Inheritance* reflects the multiple process of cultural negotiation wherein we see that identity is shaped through personal decisions and large social forces. Chang's novel shows us how the diasporatic people manage demands of tradition and change, memory and adaptation, belonging and autonomy, and presents the idea of identity as something fluid and constantly created in the in-between spaces of cultural encounter, which is important in contemporary Asian American literature.

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