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THE PERCEPTION OF AMERICA THROUGH THE EYES OF FEMALE IMMIGRANTS

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Danışman

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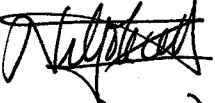
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ÖZET

Bu çalışmada, ‘Amerikan Rüya’larını gerçekleştirme umudu ile Amerika Birleşik Devletleri’ne göç etmiş bulunan farklı azınlık guruplarına dahil kadın göçmenlerin gözünden Amerika’nın algılanması incelenmiştir.

Edebiyat eserlerinin, üretildikleri dönemi ve toplumu yansıttıkları fikri esas alınıp Amerika’da yaşamış farklı azınlık guruplarına ait kadın yazarların romanlarının da iyi birer kaynak olduğu düşünülmüştür. Dolayısıyla, Yahudi göçmen grubu için Anzia Yezirska’nın *Bread Givers* adlı romanı; Çinli grup için M. Elaine Mar’ a ait *Paper Daughter* ve İtalyan göçmen grubu için de Tina De Rosa’ nın *Paper Fish* adlı romanı ele alınmıştır.

Tezin amacına uygun olarak, romanlar edebi yada dilbilimi açısından değil her bir romanın ana karakterlerinin yaşantılarından yola çıkarak, yazarların temsil ettiği azınlık guruplarının Amerika’daki deneyimlerinin ve kadın karakterlerin iki kültür arasında yaşadıkları kimlik arayışı ve ben olma sürecinin bu romanlara nasıl yansıdığı ele alınmıştır. Kadın bakış açısı esas alındığından feminist çalışmalardan da faydalanılmıştır. Tezin konu gelişiminde, ele alınan yazarların ve eserlerinin daha iyi anlaşılabilmesi açısından incelenen azınlık guruplarının geldikleri ülkelerdeki yaşam koşulları ve onları göç etmeye zorlayan sebepler ve neden göç etmek için Amerika’yı seçtikleri hakkında bilgi verilmiştir. Ayrıca romanların otobiyografik özelliklerinden dolayı, romanların özetlerine ek olarak, yazarların yaşamları hakkında da kısaca bilgi verilmiştir.

ABSTRACT

This thesis aims at analyzing and depicting the perception of America through the eyes of female immigrants, belonging to different ethnic groups who migrated to the United States with the hope of realizing their 'American Dream'.

As the works of literature are commonly accepted to reflect the cultural events of the societies and the period they are written in, ethnic autobiographical novels written by female authors from different ethnic minority groups living in the United States are considered to be the best sources for our study in our thesis. The three novels studied are *Bread Givers*, by Anzia Yeziarska, a Jewish American; *Paper Daughter*, by M. Elaine Mar, a Chinese American; *Paper Fish*, by Tina De Rosa, an Italian American.

With respect to the aim of our study, the novels are mainly analyzed with regard to their cultural contexts they were produced in rather than their literary or linguistic aspects. Moreover, as the emphasis of our study is on females, we also analyzed the characters making use of feminist criticism. Furthermore, the historical and autobiographical facts on which the novels are based are explained in detail in order to emphasize the realities reflected in the novels.

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INTRODUCTION

As it was founded by immigrants, the United States of America is widely considered to be the nation of immigrants. The social historian Oscar Handlin puts it in his introduction to *the Uprooted* as follows: “Once I thought to write a history of immigrants in America. Then I discovered that the immigrants were American History” (qtd. from Sollors, 1986: 8). Many people for some of whom America meant freedom, for others opportunity for a wealthy future, and for the rest just an escape from an unhappy life and various types of oppression came to realize their dreams in the New World.

Nonetheless, one would wonder if all these immigrants, coming with their hopes, traditions, cultures and customs realized their dreams. What were waiting for them in this totally unknown culture? Was it easy for them to adjust into this new culture? Many studies in general on immigrant experience have been carried out, usually on their nationalities, their numbers, their reasons why they migrated, or why they preferred the United States and so on, but very few focused on the experience, or the feelings of, especially female immigrants “who entered host countries as ‘family’ class immigrants and were defined as ‘dependants’ of their husbands or other male relations” (Kelson, 1999:163) in the New World. We don’t have much account of their feelings and thoughts about their identity, their perceptions of the New World, or the struggles they have gone through in adopting the customs of their new country at the same time trying to cling to their own country.

The best widely accepted source to find the above mentioned experiences is the works of literature which have been produced by the minority groups living in the United States. These works function as a mirror reflecting the period and society in which they are produced and the experiences of the authors. Therefore, ethnic novels, produced by females can be great sources of information for this study. That’s why we have chosen three novels written by the female authors from different ethnic groups living in the United States of America; *Bread Givers* by Anzia Yezierska, a Jewish American; *Paper Daughter* by M. Elaine Mar by a Chinese American; and *Paper Fish* by Tina De Rosa, an Italian American.

The main prospect of this study whose focus is mainly on the recent comers especially around and after 1900s is to observe how these female authors of different ethnic heritages reflected the perception of America in their novels. After studying the life stories of the authors and the period they lived in, we have found out that the novels have autobiographical aspects through which we have the experiences of the minority groups in general.

Before analyzing the novels we have included the historical and autobiographical facts on which the novels are based with a view to pointing out that though the novels are works of fiction, they contain some reality as well. As a result, in the first part the conditions that encouraged the migrations of Jewish, Chinese, and Italian groups are presented. Also the driving factors that attracted them to the United States rather than to other countries are explained in detail. In the following part the summary of the autographies of the authors and the brief summary of the novels to project the similarity between their lives and the experiences of the protagonists are given.

The last section focuses on the novels and the female protagonists who are the personifications of the authors themselves. Their experiences, assimilation process, as a female what discriminations they face both in the New World and in the Old World, their identity crisis, the clashes between the different values, family ties, language problems, and education as a way out are examined in detail.

I. MIGRATION OF JEWISH, CHINESE AND ITALIAN GROUPS TO THE UNITED STATES

A. Conditions in the Native Countries that Encouraged Migration

1. Jews in Russia

Jews did not come to America from one country but from many, especially from Austria-Hungary, Romania, and Russian Empire. Known as a people without a country, they had to live in the borders of other countries. Because of the Christian belief that Jesus Christ was killed by Jews, these people always had to face hostility wherever they went. They were considered to be “the universal outsiders”.... and “were periodically persecuted, massacred, or expelled en masse from various countries in Europe” (Sowell, 1981: 70).

In Russia, from which most of the Jews came to the United States, the situation was not very different for the Jews. In the nineteenth century in order to Russify the Jews, their twelve year old boys were taken away (or earlier) “for six years of training in Greek Orthodox schools, followed by the twenty-five years of military service to which all Russian males were subjected. Desperate evasions were used by the Jews- including even maiming their children.” (79)

Following the assassination of Alexander II in 1881, Czarist-encouraged pogroms (anti-Jewish riots) and mob violence put the very existence of these Jews in extreme danger. Many homes, shops, and synagogues were destroyed; and even more bloody and destructive pogroms occurred in late March.

Jews in Russian Empire were subjected to not only physical attack but also to economic harassment. Jews who mostly earned their livings through petty trade and crafts were not allowed to enter the economic centers like Kiev, Khardov, and Moscow. Furthermore, the modernization of agriculture in the late nineteenth century resulted in the displacement of petty merchants, peddlers, and artisans as

well as lorry drivers and innkeepers. Therefore, the government encouraged anti-Semitism with a view to avoiding the discontent of the Russians, giving loans to a newly arising class of merchants looking forward to business that would be left by the Jews. In brief, due to Russian paranoia, patriotism and economic self interest, Jews were kept out of many branches of the economy, which brought about their suffering from poverty.

As a result of these unbearable factors “began one of the great human migrations in history. Over the next four decades, 2 million people—one-third of all the Jews in eastern Europe—moved to the United States.” (79)

As had always been, fear was the leading factor behind the migration of Jews in Russia. Jack Fischel and Sanford Pinsker emphasized that it was especially the combination of persecution, pogroms, and poverty with cultural renewal, rather than only one of them, that led the massive emigration of the Jews. (Fischel, 1992: 270)

2. Chinese in their Country

Along with the California gold rush started the large scale immigration of Chinese around the middle of the nineteenth century until the Chinese Exclusion Act passed in early 1882. In this period, “more than 322.000 Chinese, most of whom were males, entered the United States” (Sowell, 1996: 220).

In the mid nineteenth century, the economic situation of China was not very bright. One leading factor was that China’s external commerce was under western imperialist’s control. Western powers forced the Chinese government to impose high taxes on farmers because it had to pay staggering amounts of compensation to them. However, farmers could not pay these taxes and as a result lost their lands. Natural disasters such as floods and starvation along with the increasing population forced Chinese migrants to look for survival in the United States of America which they believed could provide a higher standard of living.

Also, Chinese people, after living under military dictatorship of Chiang Kai-shek in early 1930s, suffered a lot from the bombings, the forced labor camps and the widespread famine as a result of the fact that China was at war with Japan. Consequently many wanted to leave their country.

3. Conditions in Italy

Up to the year 1861, there was not a country called Italy which had been fragmented into many provinces most of which were ruled by foreign governments or by the papacy. After the declaration of the unification, many rebellions provoked by the deposed Bourbon king, Francesco II, in alliance with the papacy took place between the troops and the peasants (Mangione, 1992:32). As a result, a large number of people feeling no trust for the new nation left, which was considered to be one of the greatest migrations within the next fifty years in world history (Ibid.).

Constituting the largest number migrating from Italy to the USA, people from the southern part of Italy surely had rightful reasons one of which was poverty. People especially the ones in the south, which is agrarian and not as industrialized as the north, felt anywhere providing an opportunity to gain a piece of bread would be their country. Not only being poor but also being powerless led to the migration.

The subjugation and ravaging of southern Italy were not simply a matter of unjust or oppressive laws being imposed. Because of the lack of central government, local lords and overlords dominated the people directly, in their own capricious ways (Sowell, 1981: 104).

Hence, looking for a better life, the immigrants first headed for Latin America and Brazil. However, nine thousand Italians died because of a yellow fever epidemic and as a result, they changed their route to the United States, which demanded cheap labor. Until American Immigration Laws discriminated against

immigrants from Eastern and Southern European nations, around 4.5 million Italians came to the USA. (Mangione, 1992: 33).

The people who left their provinces after the unification for the United States “left as Neapolitans, Syracusans, or Calabrians; they became Italians only after reaching America” (Sowell, 1981: 101). They were the members of their community or region which had its own local dialect, value and traditions.

B. Factors that Attracted the Immigrants to the U.S.A.

1. Jews

In 1890s, each year, hundred thousands of Jews among whom was also Anzia Yezierska came to the United States, which they thought would provide them with security and prosperity denied in Europe. New York having a strong economy offered many job opportunities, which meant that they can make enough money to keep their families together.

Also, the stories of poor men rising to the top spread among Jews creating the belief that mobility was possible in the New World, unlike the Old World, where success and money were achieved only if they were inherited. Moreover, mobility was not only considered a possibility, it was also put forward as a moral imperative (Kessner, 1977: 11-12).

Also the ones who had previously emigrated to the United States were also the supporters of their struggle and migration, protesting against the “spirit of medieval persecution.” Through them, many Jews had the idea that American law would protect their individual rights and freedom and so they would be secure in the borders of this country, the land of freedoms and equality.

2. Chinese

Though it started much earlier in the 1790s when America demanded Chinese for economic reasons as considered to be suitable substitutes for black labor, the mass emigration of Chinese people in fact began in the mid nineteenth century with the discovery of gold in California, which they called “Golden Mountain”. In 1849, a year after the discovery, about 100.000 immigrants, mainly males, came to California (Daniels, 1988: 12). They were young, daring but mostly uneducated men, coming with the hope of being rich and returning with a lot of money. Those who returned to their villages with money encouraged the excitement of emigration. However, there were many, like the maternal grandfather of the protagonist of the novel, *Paper Daughter*, who never became rich enough to return home after years of hard work.

Later, with the new regulations on Chinese Immigration in 1930 and in 1945, many Chinese man could bring their wives or future wives to the United States which “helped ease the sex imbalance and permitted more normal family life” (Sowell, 1981: 143).

3. Italians

Because of the harsh conditions and poverty in their country similar to the other immigrant groups, Italians, upon seeing the pamphlets distributed in European countries, left their native countries and emigrated to the USA which was at that time in need of cheap labor as a result of industrial growth after the Civil War.

Meanwhile, the agricultural depression of 1870s and 1880s in Italy encouraged the unemployed artisans to emigrate in large numbers (Di Leonardo, 1984:50-51).

Also the ones who previously emigrated to the United States wrote letters praising the life there and urged them to join them. What's more, the ones who returned with enough money to buy land or establish their business constituted a good example and

reinforced the image of America as a land where Italians could prosper, and where, regardless of lack of property or artisan skills, one would be treated with respect and even kindness (Mangione, 1992 :88).



II. ABOUT THE WRITERS AND THE NOVELS

A. Anzia Yeziarska / *Bread Givers*

The youngest of nine children, Anzia Yeziarska was born in the *shtetl* (a small town) of Plinsk to Jewish parents living in poverty, traces of which is clearly seen in her autobiographical novel *Bread Givers*, near the border between Russia and Poland. Late in the nineteenth century, the family emigrated to New York City and settled on an overcrowded tenement of the Lower East Side, where she worked in a sweatshop while she studied English at night school.

Yeziarska's father was a Talmudic scholar and patriarch, a tyrannical dreamer portrayed in her fiction as relying on the labor of his wife and children for the family's living and from whom Yeziarska had to escape to begin life as an independent woman and a writer.

Patriarchal nature of his Jewish culture towards women is exemplified in her highly autobiographical novel *Bread Givers*. "Only through a man can a woman enter heaven" (Yeziarska, 1975: 137). Unable to endure the Old World tyranny of her father, before she was twenty, Yeziarska escaped from home to "take advantage of the liberty that she believed America offered to all of its citizens" (Fried, Brown, Chametzky, and Harap, 1988: 321). After a period of hard work and poverty, she eventually managed to acquire a university education and published her first story in 1915. Before this in 1910, she was briefly married to an attorney, and then she married a teacher. She had a daughter but she gave up her child to her husband's care as she found life as a wife and a mother too oppressive to lead. For the rest of her life she devoted herself to her career as a writer.

In 1920, *Hungry Hearts*, her first collection of short fiction about Jewish immigrants, was published. The film producer Samuel Goldwyn brought her to Hollywood soon afterwards to make a silent movie out of her book. Yeziarska was called "Queen of the Ghetto" and "The Immigrant Cinderella" by the Goldwyn

studio publicists. After a year on the West Coast, she returned to New York's Lower East Side, where she felt more at home and resumed her writing.

In 1923 she published her second collection of stories, *Children of Loneliness*, and her first novel, *Salome of the Tenements* (1922). Two more novels appeared in the twenties: *Bread Givers* (1925), and *Arrogant Beggar* (1927). In 1932 she finished her fourth novel *All I Could Never Be*. Before she died in California in 1970 she published her last book, *Red Ribbon on a White Horse* (1950).

Bread Givers, as Werner Sollors asserted in his famous work, *The invention of Ethnicity*, is probably Yezierska's "most successful novel" presenting "the story of the young immigrant Sara Smolinsky, a daughter who must rebel against her tyrannical Old World father to gain independence and happiness as a new American woman" (Sollors, 1975: 106).

The story is based on the real life accounts of Yezierska herself. It is set in the 1920s on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, in Hester Street. Sara and her family live in New York but their world view is heavily shaped by their origins in the Old World of eastern Europe.

In that society, the male head of the household is the master. Not only does he dare claim that women have no place in running a household, but he also can point to the Torah as justification. Sara's father, the Reb Smolinsky- a Talmudic scholar who considers himself too holy and relies on the wages of his wife and daughters, can be considered to be the representative of the patriarchal values, accepting the males superior to the females.

The Smolinskys are on the verge of starvation. Six of them, including four daughters, live in two rooms. However, one of the rooms is solely occupied by the autocratic Reb Smolinsky and houses his volumes of "Holy Torah." On Sabbath he alone eats the small portion of meat the family can't afford.

Bessie, the oldest, is a young woman defeated by twelve-hour days in an airless factory. She is the family's economic mainstay; therefore, her father arranges a marriage (similar to the other marriages for all his daughters), after which the husband and Bessie must continue to support him. However, when these marriages go predictably bad, he avoids responsibility by telling them, "As you make your bed, so must you sleep in it" (Yeziarska, 268).

Bessie is, on the other hand, aware of her father's cruelty, but too crushed to change the course of her life. When her suitor Beryl Bernstein asks her to marry him at City Hall, she refuses out of fear. "I know I'm a fool. But I cannot help it. I haven't the courage to live for myself. My own life is knocked out of me. No wonder father called me the burden bearer" (50).

Predictably, both sisters fall in love with men their father does not accept. Fannie's love, Morris Lipsky, is a struggling poet. Mashah's boyfriend is a concert pianist from an Americanized, wealthy Jewish family. Reb Smolinsky objects to the match because Jacob plays piano on the Sabbath.

Similar to the author Anzia Yeziarska, Sara Smolinsky, the youngest daughter, watches these small tragedies unfold from the sidelines of childhood. As the book's perceptive narrator, she conveys how the burdens of womanhood are imposed by the entitlements of manhood. Like Yeziarska, Sara realizes that the only escape from the ghetto is through economic independence. And the only way to achieve that independence is through education.

Contrary to her sisters' reluctant obedience, Sara has the courage to choose a different path. She runs away from home as her father's disapproval of her life becomes so unbearable. Thereafter, she finds work and takes on a second shift as a student in night school. She perseveres with her studies and wins a scholarship to college. In the end she returns the ghetto as a teacher. By the end of the novel she is a confident woman who strolls into a department store to buy herself a fine suit for her first day as a teacher. When she finds true love she never considers asking for

her father's approval. Sara succeeds in her quest for the American Dream and eventually learns to deal with her father and wins his support.

2. M. Elaine Mar / *Paper Daughter*

M. Elaine Mar, the author of *Paper Daughter*, is a first generation immigrant who came to the USA at the age of five together with her mother on April 17, 1972. Her father had immigrated in December 1969, and accordingly it took him more than two years to earn enough money to send for his family.

Even though they lived in Hong Kong at the time Elaine was born they originally came from Toishan, "a small rural district...in the southeastern Chinese province of Guandong" (Mar, 1999: x), and their language was a local dialect of Cantonese or Guangdonghua called Toishanese.

In the book Elaine uses the name Man Yee which is the name her parents gave her. Man means intelligence, expressing the hope that she would be smart, and Yee means righteousness, commemorating Mao's Cultural Revolution. However, the book is not signed by Man Yee but by M. Elaine Mar, which, according to the writer, is the name of "who I've become – the self expressed in English" (xii). Hence, already in the introduction we are made aware of the different identities working in the text and how identity is not fixed but always in process.

Before coming to the Kennedy School, she worked as a youth caseworker. After graduating, she worked in Dorchester, Massachusetts, with a family strengthening program but realized that she's not good at these things, so she decided to shape her life through writing which was more appealing to her and wrote her first novel *Paper Daughter*.

In fact Mar had intended to write a very different book, one based on an article she had written for *Harvard* magazine ("Blue Collar, Crimson Blazer," November/December 1995) about working-class students and their experiences at

Harvard. However, she decided to write a memoir about her experiences and wrote her novel including the similar things.

Now living in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Mar has received great professional feedback about her narrative voice since *Paper Daughter* was published, so she's leaning towards fiction these days.

Paper Daughter, which is set both in China, Hong Kong, and in the USA, covering a time span of 58 years, from China in 1930 to Hong Kong in the late 1950s, and finally in America from 1972 to 1988, is the story of M. Elaine Mar, in other words; Man Yee, whose family moved from Hong Kong, China to Denver, Colorado when she was only five years old. Just old enough to remember a safe, happy Chinese life, she was thrust into the cold, competitive American culture.

Her family remained isolated in Denver in the small group of other immigrants while working in her aunt's Chinese Restaurant, so Elaine was forced to act as a bridge between her family and the English speaking world. She was often scorned by her family for adopting American attitudes, which are in direct conflict with Chinese customs. At the same time, she had to deal with American school children acting out their parent's racist beliefs, lowering her self confidence.

However, in the end, she gained her confidence through her hard work and, as a result, good command of English, developing into an independent, Chinese American, especially when she was accepted to Harvard University.

3. Tina De Rosa / *Paper Fish*

A third generation Italian-American, Tina De Rosa was born in Chicago as the daughter of an Italian father and a Lithuanian mother. As a child she identified herself mainly with her paternal grandmother, Della (in the novel Doria), whom she considers the most influential person in her life. Born in Boscoreale, near Naples,

probably in 1888, Della came to the United States when she was about seventeen years old. She died in 1963, when the author was nineteen years old.

De Rosa defined her ethnicity as primarily Italian/American as her paternal grandmother kept alive her *italianita* in the family and as her maternal relatives were reluctant to discuss their origins and the reasons for the family's emigration. (in the novel *Paper Fish* we don't have much about Carmolina's maternal grandparents). Her mother's family lore remained mysterious.

By contrast, she was exposed in her daily life to the Italian language and customs, both in her household and in the Little Italy where she grew up. Until she was seventeen, De Rosa lived with her family in the Taylor Street area on the west side of Chicago where the story takes place. She was one of the few people in her neighborhood to go to college; she attended Mundelein College of Loyola, Catholic University in Chicago.

She wrote *Paper Fish* in 1979. Her other major works are "My Father's Lesson", an autobiographical essay published in 1986 and "An Italian Woman Speaks Out" published during 1980s.

In her novel *Paper Fish*, Tina De Rosa reflected her and her extended family's experiences in the United States. The story takes place during the 1940s and 1950s. The two main characters are a child, Carmolina Bella Casa (the author's childhood) and her paternal grandmother, Doria.

Doria is a first generation Italian American, having left her small town in the hills near Naples as a young woman. Doria is a widow, her husband Dominic, had died years earlier. She told stories of her old world memories, acting as a vehicle to transmit the culture to the new generation that was Carmolina.

When she was eight, on hearing her family discuss institutionalizing her beautiful but mute sister Doriana, Carmolina runs away, and away from the protection of her family and the environment-Little Italy. The book closes with the demolition of the Italian ghetto leading to the vanishing of the culture.



III. THE PERCEPTION OF AMERICA THROUGH THE EYES OF FEMALE IMMIGRANTS AS REFLECTED IN THE NOVELS *BREAD GIVERS, PAPER DAUGHTER, AND PAPER FISH*

A. Assimilation and Alienation

1. *Bread Givers*

Usually the main concern of the immigrants, coming to the United States of America, is not to assimilate into a new culture but to get rid of the burdens of the Old World and to head for a better life as in the case of Jews coming from East European countries, many of whom were from Russia.

The severe pogroms, during which many Jews were killed, brutal attempts to 'Russify' the Jew, taking Jewish males at an early age for six years of training in Orthodox schools and then to make them fulfill twenty-five years of military service away from their families, restricting laws and economic difficulties made Jews realize that Russia was not their homeland and that they had to find a true home.

These historical events were documented in Anzia Yezierska's highly autobiographical novel, *Bread Givers*, telling the tale of a Jewish family who have immigrated from Russia to New York. Complaining to her four daughters, one of which is Sara, the main character and the narrator of the novel, about the things the way they happen in America, the traditional Jewish mother, longing for her past, tells the reason why they came to America:

Because the Tsar of Russia! Worms should eat him! He wanted for himself free soldiers to make pogroms. He wanted to tear your father away from his learning and make him a common soldier-to drink vodka with the drunken mouzhiks, eat pig, and shoot the people.... (Yezierska, 33).

Unlike her father Reb Smolinsky, Sara's mother was from a wealthy family. Her grandfather chose Reb as his son-in-law since he was an educated man. Jewish culture, in the Old World, invested high status in religious learning: parents sacrificed to send their sons to religious schools, and they were proud to have their daughters marry scholars of the Talmud. For Jews, learned people were more respected than rich people. Therefore, Sara's grandfather was also very proud to have an educated Talmud scholar as a son-in-law and was eager to support them financially all their life.

However, in order to prevent his being taken away from her to make him a Russian soldier, Sara's mother had to give all they had to the officers of the army, in other words, bribed the army. She tells her resentful feelings as follows:

There was only one thing to do, go to the brass buttoned butchers and buy him out of the army. The pogromshchicks, the minute they smelled money, they were like wild wolves on the smell of blood. The more we gave them the more they wanted. We had to sell out everything, and give them all we had, to the last cent, to shut them up (33).

Then, the bread giver of the family, Sara's grandfather dies, leaving them all his money. Because Reb was not very good at business, a very short time later they came face to face with severe poverty, leaving them no chance other than move away." And when everything was gone from us, then our hope was to come to America, where Father thought things cost nothing at all."(34).

By the beginning of the World War I, most of the emigrating Jews went to the United States, the country of "freedom and a better life," as they had heard through stories. This far away land was considered a "Garden of Eden," "the Golden Land," where Jews no longer suffered from massacres and harassment.

However, like many, Reb Smolinsky was disillusioned with the idea that everything would be very easy in America. He believed he would continue the way he lived in the Old Country, learning his preaches. He thought he didn't have to work because he had to continue his studies of Torah. Sara, "her sisters, and her mother live to support their revered, Torah-reading father;" they lived in "crowded shared rooms so he can study undisturbed" and all but he, worked to maintain the family and support "his books, charities, and manner of dress; his constant and often impossible demands" (Larsen).

Reb was not willing to give up anything, though Sara is, in order to attain the American Dream that he expected to simply fall into his lap upon arrival in this country. He had the same "streets made of gold, milk and honey" impression of America as most immigrants of the time had; he even tells Mother,

What for will you need old feather beds? Don't you know it's always summer in America? And in the new golden country, where milk and honey flows free in the streets, you'll have new golden dishes to cook in...(9)

He goes on to say, do

not weigh yourself down with your old pots and pans. But my books, my holy books always were, and always will be, the light of the world. You'll see yet how all America will come to my feet to learn (9).

Nevertheless, things were different in America. According to Maxine Seller in *To Seek America*, Talmudic scholars were no longer valued in America.

Because of language problems...professional people such as lawyers, teachers, and writers, whose skills

depended on language, were often unable to pursue the occupations for which they were trained. Sometimes their own communities no longer wanted their skills. Talmudic scholars, honored in Europe, were ignored in the Jewish quarter of New York. The suffering of such people, through poverty and loss of self-esteem, was enormous. (Seller, 1977:119)

Aware of this situation, Sara's mother admiring and pitying her husband at the same time, tells one of her neighbours "Who would ever dream that in America, where everything is only business and business, in such a lost corner as Hester Street lives such a fine, such a pure, silken soul as Reb Smolinsky?" (16). Also aware that he doesn't belong to this New World she, suffering from poverty, utters "if he was only so fit for this world, like he is fit for heaven, then I wouldn't have to dry out the marrow from my head worrying for the rent"(16).

However, Sara's father, leaving all the responsibility of making a living on the shoulders of his wife and daughters, continues to live through the Old World values, ignoring the new codes which require one's dependence on himself by making his own living. As when Berel Bernstein, who wanted to get married to Bessy, the eldest daughter, and was rejected in turn by her father, Reb, who requested a lot of money as he thought he would lose all the money Bessy brought home regularly, said; "In America they got no use for Torah learning. In America everybody got to earn his living first"(48).

His struggle to lead his life according to Old World values was not that difficult in America since they lived in a ghetto which only consisted of Jewish people. The Lower East Side of New York City, Hester Street was almost like their own village in Russia.

Despite the similarities, it was also different in significant ways. Though it was composed mostly of Jewish society, according to Ronald Takaki, there was also "an American atmosphere of breathless enterprise and breakneck speed" (Takaki, 1993:283). Life was not normal when compared to the Jewish life in

Russia because everybody was in a hurry running after money which was seen as the main point of life in America. This was a fact that Jewish immigrants had to realize in a short time.

Even Talmudic scholar Reb Smolinsky thought one can make fortunes in America and as many poor Jewish did, he took Rockefeller and Morgan as a model, whom he believed “began with empty hands” and whose “only capital was hope, courage to work out their ideas”(Yeziarska, 133).

Also, we observe that while looking for suitors for her daughters, Reb's main criteria is first their being rich and then their being religious enough. Suffering from poverty a lot, Sara's mother, who admired her husband because of his being educated, also accepts his notion of a right suitor he must be rich. It doesn't matter for her if they are religious or not.

Being the first generation immigrants, Sara's parents were not assimilated into the new culture. It was too late for them. Her mother acted according to the teachings of the Old World. She did not have any other alternative. She had already been domesticated and brought up to accept the values taught to her. Usually it is the second generations who are assimilated and are introduced to the new code of values. But at the same time they are the ones who suffered most as they are in between two cultures.

When we look at Bessie, the burden bearer, we see that she shares the same destiny as her mother, whose life, long before, had been designated by her own father and husband. Bessie also let her father govern her own life. She was also the second generation in America. She did have a way out. She could rebel; could go against her father's will, get an education and become self-sufficient and independent. American society would accept it and that together with other things was the promise of the New World. Unlike her mother, she could choose to go to different ways. The choices were not easy. They required strength, courage, determination and stamina but, nevertheless, they were real. The simplest choice

was to carry on the parents' traditions, obey them and suffer through life much like the mother. So did she.

That's the choice that Sara's sister Bessie took. Because of the poverty and tyranny she suffered, she did not find an inner strength to rebel against parents and therefore wound up married to Zalmon, the fish-peddler, who was an ugly old man with a lot of children, and who suffered, like many other lower East Siders, from poverty, financial insecurity, and the struggle to become someone in the new country.

Poor Bessie served to his father until she was thirty, suffered humiliation of his preaches and in the end could not find courage to run away. She simply went from one servitude to another, even more harsh. Instead of an old master, her father, she received a new one, Zalmon.

Sara's other sister Mashah seems to try to fit herself in American society. With her very limited income which she hid from her family, she tried to be stylish and clean like American ladies she looked with envy in the Fifth Avenue. Because of this, she looked as if she were selfish as all the other members of the family, except for the father, strived for a penny to buy something to eat.

However, later on we learn that she takes "her lunch money for something pretty [she] got to have"(3). When she fell in love with the Americanized Jewish piano player Jacob Novak, she even went to a cooking course which taught how to make "American way of cooking vegetables and fixing salads"(56).

After her heart was broken because of her love ended with unhappiness, her strength of living for herself disappeared and because she wanted to get away from home and her father's endless preaching, she let her life's control in his traditional Jewish father's hand. "She didn't care about any man at all. But like all of us she was sick and tired from the house and crazy to get away"(77). Her father, claiming to be a successful matchmaker, married her daughter Mashah to a 'crook' who had pretended to be a diamond dealer. In the end we observe her suffering from poverty with three children and an irresponsible husband.

Sharing the similar reason with Mashah; that is, to get away from house, Fania, hopeless to get married to her beloved poor poet Morris Lipkin because of her father, accepts to get married to another suitor, her father offered: Abe Schmukler, working in the cloaks-and-suits business, who later turns out to be a gambler.

Witnessing what had happened to her sisters and the endless poverty, Sara experiences a separation period and is alienated to her own ethnicity, growing a sense of hatred to her father, and as a result, to the values of the Old World. She finally bursts out with anger, telling:

*His heartlessness to Mother, his pitiless driving away
Bessie's only chance to love, bargaining away Fania to a
gambler and Mashah to a diamond-faker—when they each
had the luck to win lovers of their own—all these tyrannies
crashed over me. Should I let him crush me as he crushed
them? No. This is America, where children are people
(135).*

Sara eventually leaves home to strike out on her own. Like Yeziarska, Sara realizes that the only escape from the ghetto is through economic independence. And the only way to achieve that independence is education. She enrolls in college during the day, studying to become a teacher, and works at night in a laundry to pay for books, tuition, a small one room apartment, and her food.

On the other hand, she finds that she is caught between two worlds. The people that she works with look down on her saying "give only a look on her, the lady! Who does she think she is?...Leaves a father and mother for God knows why" (179). Yet she doesn't fit in with the people at school either. "Even in school I suffered, because I was not like the rest ... Maybe if I could only live like others and look like others, they wouldn't pick on me so much, I thought to my self" (181). Sara struggles with assimilating into a new culture, and in doing so loses the ethnic identity of the people from which she came.

Sara manages to become a teacher after a long period of struggle, pain, and discrimination. She, in the end, turns out to be a stylish American woman in her dark blue suit, with “more style in its plainness than the richest velvet”(239)

She perceives America as a country, providing an opportunity that allows her to distinguish herself as a true human being, while for Reb, American values destroy her as a woman. As Sara moves on to college, new challenges confront her. She feels alienated by her peers. Still, she gets through.

At graduation, she wins not only the essay contest, but finally the acceptance of her classmates. As her name is announced, "...all the students rose to their feet, cheering and waving and calling my name, like a triumph, 'Sara Smolinsky---Sara Smolinsky!'" (234). College provides Sara with the education she needs to pursue a career, and also with a feeling that she finally is accepted by those around her. She has become a successful individual in the eyes of others.

Being her main character, Sara, like Yeziarska herself, is drawn back to the neighborhood of her family as she takes a position there as a teacher. Not only does Sara return to her old neighborhood, but she also returns to her father, whose power and control she had despised.

As a result, accepting her ethnicity and compromising with her past, realizes that her father, a first generation immigrant, will never adjust to the new world and that she is his only hope for survival.

Then suddenly the pathos of the lonely old man pierced me. In a world where all is changed, he alone remained unchanged—as tragically isolate as the rocks. All that he had left of life was his fanatical adherence to his traditions. It was within my power to keep lighted the flickering candle of his life for him (296).

At the end of the story Sara, we witness her realization and rediscovery of her ethnic identity. This is also when she stops putting the weight of the blame on her father, Reb Smolinski; she realizes “It wasn’t just [her] father, but the generations who made [her] father whose weight was still upon [her] (297). She is intelligent and sensible enough to realize that many of her and her father’s problems are due to generational and cultural differences and that he is not going to change.

2. *Paper Daughter*

Long time of suffering from poverty and decades of violence after the civil war in 1930s and the war with Japan made many Chinese seek for a way to leave their countries to survive.

The main character in the novel, Man Yee’s words on their background clearly summarizes the condition in China then: “My grandmother’s lessons. The sound of war. The word *hunger*” (Mar, 1999: 7).

America was the place to soothe their hunger. Therefore, “airplanes took of for the fabled gold mountains of America”(9). People in China during late 1960s still thought America as a hope for their and their children’s future. They called America “*Mei Guo*”, meaning “Beautiful Land” which enabled many fathers, including Man Yee’s father, to make money so that the ones, remained in the home country, could eat and the children could go to school.

Her grandmother, whose husband could never return from the United States, would tell “people there wear nice clothes all the time. It’s safe, you can walk the streets and not worry about thieves stealing from you” (29). They perceived America something very nice unlike their country. To Yee, their language, English “sounds like they’re singing, not speaking”(32). When Yee’s mother announced that they are also going to America, Yee’s teacher asserted that whether it is small or big, the city where they are going does not matter if it is in America, which in their minds was a land of comfort, therefore, the promised land for them.

However, Elaine Mar also gives in the very first chapter of her novel the case of her grandfather as one of the early immigrants who went to America to be rich but never could return home as if to show the reader that many were disillusioned by the image of America.

Her grandfather had left his family in China just a few months after Man Yee's mother was born in order "to find work in the U.S."

They were starving, so of course he had to go, what can you do? Like many sojourner laborers, he left with a promise to return. But one year became five and five became twenty, and still he wasn't a rich man, not rich enough to retire and move home (6).

Therefore, he could only send money for the family to survive. In the end, he died in America without ever seeing her family and country again.

Yee and her mother arrive in America in 1972 and are met by her father, Aunt Becky, Uncle Andy and San, Aunt Becky's son, the same age as Yee. Her Americanization process begins with observing the differences around her primarily with Aunt Becky's driving the car despite her being a woman and her words which filled all the way home: "...the way we do it in America," she was explaining. In America. America, America, America, America. She was telling us how to live in America."(37).

The reason they came to America was to improve their socioeconomic situation but what they didn't consider was that in order to reach this goal they had to fit in the target society which required the acquisition of similar life styles and values. The ones who went there as adults like Yee's mother and father had only one major concern that was to survive but life meant more especially for the ones who were to grow up there like Yee.

Family is a very important institution for the Chinese community. People live a communal life. Individuality is disfavored, everybody lives for the family. Therefore, Aunt Becky welcomed them into her house and naturally employed her brother in Annie and Casey's restaurant, whose kitchen she ran. Her mother and father were living in a closed society formed by Chinese only, so they didn't have to get the manners of America. They continued to live the way they lived in China except for some minor differences.

However, this was not the same with Yee who had the American name 'Elaine' so that she could go to school which is one of the major assimilation device as Aunt Becky affirms with these words: "You need an American name to fit in"(61). This is her first dramatic disintegration with her past and family, which she can't accept easily as she experiences separation to her self and to her extension, her mother, telling "Mother won't be able to say my name if it's American. She doesn't know English." A horrible thought struck me:" I don't know English, either. How will I know my name?" (61). Since Chinese names always meant something, and Yee's cousin's name San, who lived in the US denoted rise or upward, it was natural to ask what American names connoted as well. Finally, when she was given the name Elaine, both Yee and her mother realized that her American name did not stand for anything, her "life cleaved in two" (62). In other words, she becomes conscious of her dual identity.

After she starts school, the gap between her family especially her mother, who is like a device to transfer all the Chinese values to the new generation, that is, her daughter Yee, gets bigger and bigger as she tries to fit in, tries to learn the American way of living. "I wanted to be American like San. I wanted to fit in, to be chosen during games of "heads-up-seven-up." She wants to be a member of the dominant society. However, the dominant society members; her classmates don't accept her into their group, mainly because of her insufficient knowledge of the language and partly because of her Asian look. Sometimes even her cousin, San ignored her in class.

As a teenager Yee also tries to be like stylish Americans but her poverty and, ethnicity, she believes, consists great obstacles to her desire.

More than anything, I wanted to obscure my foreignnes, that combination of ethnicity and poverty. I would have given anything to slip into the ordinary. But my parents foiled all attempts. They turned me into an object of ridicule. Mother chose my clothes for me, cotton dresses and skerts sewn out of restaurant flour sacks, acrylic sweaters from K Mart, and—the best of the lot—hand-me-downs donated by Diana, a waitress's daughter (158).

Her family also feels miserable as the disintegration in the family is obvious. Her father had a fight with Uncle Andy and he lost his job along with their accomodation, which led to severe poverty and worse than this lack of hope. He was not happy anymore and started gambling. As a result, he started to act irresponsibly; for example, he would't come home early in the evening and many times Yee couldn't go to school on Mondays as her father forgot to take her daughter to school because of gambling.

Her mother was unhappy as well. Nothing was the way she lived. She was in constant confusion by the way things happen in America. Her relationship with her husband was also ruined in America. What's more, since she didn't know how to speak English, she felt trapped in this new world. Her control over her daughter lessened as Yee grew up and got, according to her, undesirable character traits such as disobedience and independence. Whenever, she did not understood the way things happen she accused America using a curse 'what rotten country'.

In the end, we see that Yee experiences an alienation period and wants to break her ties with her Chinese background, the old and turns her face to the new, American culture. The author, M.Elaine Mar, personified by Yee in the novel

severely criticizes the Chinese in America for not trying hard enough to learn the English language and she feels “annoyance and guilt” when her uncle arrives from Hong Kong because he “embodied everything [she] hated about [her] family – the inertia, the displacement, the lack of hope” (278).

In the epilogue called “The Second Immigration” Man Yee tells the reader the intimidating experiences she endured during Freshman Week at Harvard, and due to this experience, how she lied about her parents throughout the time she spent at university:

I didn't want to explain that over four years the distance between Denver and Cambridge had grown until I was as far away as another country. My parents weren't able to visit. Like my grandfather, I'd immigrated with no way to send for my family (292).

In other words, she had become a paper daughter; she had traveled so far away from her parents' way of living that she could not go back, they belonged in the “old country.” One might also say that she has been uprooted twice, that is, first from her Chinese environment in Hong Kong, and second from her familiar setting in Denver's Chinatown, until she finally settled down in Boston. The changing of her names from ManYee to M. Elaine Mar, the person she has become, connotes her transition to the “new country.”

3. Paper Fish

As above seen, the other characters from the novels of immigrant writers present their characters trying to fit into American culture; in *Paper Fish*, however, we don't come across this trial much as the book mostly concentrates on the Italian ghetto life including the characters trying to preserve their life style as it is. This book “stands as an elegiac reminiscence drenched with the sounds, colors, and

smells of the quotidian life of an Italian/American family living in a cold- water flat on the West Side of Chicago”(De Rosa, 1996: 135).

The migration from Italy between the years 1880 and 1914 was mostly from the southern part and people, coming from there settled in several diverse Little Italys rather than in one large all-Italian neighbourhood.

Little Italy can be said to be a world where extended families live together in cold water flats (like the main character Carmolina’s family do), laundry dries on clothesline outside windows, and women “dress on Sundays in black, on Tuesdays in black, and during the rest of the week in black” (41). Here cars share the streets and alleys with Gustavo the rag picker and his blind horse; Consuelo complains about the quality of the onions, pulling Giuppeto’s horse-drawn vegetable cart, and Mrs. Shiavone, the butcher’s wife, whacks off the heads of the chickens “when they aren’t looking”.

The ones inside this community were safe and did not feel much the bigotry and discrimination towards their ethnic identity. We see the traces of the prejudice in the novel, which was set in the aftermath of the war, when the situation because of Mussolini worsened for the Italians in the United States.

In the very first parts of the novel we learn that Carmolina’s father, Marco is a policeman. This is misleading as one can think that he has been Americanized, integrated into the American culture; however, De Rosa doesn’t let us think like this. She introduces him as “a young man tall and thin, still not comfortable in his policeman’s uniform.... He was in the eyes of the police department, still a rookie, Italian and stupid. He was treated politely but with little respect.” (4) Though Marco is aware of this prejudice, he is “proud with the pride of a young man who has found his place in life” (4), which shows his desire to fit into American culture. He accepts the city as ‘his’ city, feels pride to wear the uniform, the badge and to carry the gun which he ‘was allowed to’ as he feels he was trusted.

Except for his father who never spoke English, the other members of his family showed great respect serving him the best meat in the evenings. Later on after his daughter Carmolina is lost, he questions his desire to be a policeman “He wondered if he could spend his whole life as a policeman. He wondered if he would die as one, with the thin metal star on his chest like some kind of artificial heart” (83). Hopeless to find his own daughter in this alien world, he even did not trust the American institution, the police though he was a member of them and he did not report to the police office that her daughter is missing for three days.

In a way he had the false image of integration into American culture. He did not fit into it. As a second generation Italian American Marco experiences an alienation within two cultures.

If he could look into the future, ah then. But the future had eyes of stone. And if you looked into the past, you saw the pictures. You couldn't turn from them. You wish you could change them, alter a world, a sentence, a year, maybe adjust your tie.... the past flashed them for you over and over again like a gambler with drunken eyes and a steady hand. (83-84)

He feels he is also lost, not being able to find the gate out. He remembers the time when Carmolina was little and the first time he felt lost. His American dream would be his daughter Carmolina's success.

when he was a boy, he had searched for the gate, for the key, for the door which would lead to everything. The baby Carmolina lying in the crib, she would find it, she would give it to him. She would find the door and point to it for him (13).

Carmolina runs away feeling alienated to her family as she hears the talking about institutionalizing her beautiful but mute sister Doriana. On going out of Little Italy, Carmolina encounters the outer world and experiences cultural tension when she is approached by a group of boys who ridicule her and call her “dago” and “wop”. She is far from her house in a distance where her mother is “somewhere on the other side of the city, at the other end of the streetcar line” doing something in her kitchen. Here she is the “other”, different from the majority. It was certain that this difference was not favorable, presented in the boys words; “you the dago kid come and dirty up our streets”.

The Americans, unable to understand the differences in religious beliefs and customs, considered the Italian more of a liability than an asset to their community. They saw Italian immigrants as inferior, illiterate, dirty, lazy, and unable to contribute positively to society (Virtualitalia: 2002). Therefore, Carmolina, going out of her isolated environment faces the prejudice the boys have.

Typical Italian immigrant sticks with the more conservative values of the Old World and resists the new values in America especially the first generation would like their children to continue their Old World traditions and share in their heritage.

In *Paper Fish*, grandmother Doria is the representator of this thought. She acts as a vehicle to transmit the old values through giving the accounts of her homeland reminiscence. Grandma Doria would sing Italian songs and would break red peppers to put into sausages and “Grandma was making the world for her, between her shabby old fingers. She was telling Carmolina about Italy, about the land that got lost across the sea, the land that was hidden on the other side of the world. ” (De Rosa, 1996: 15)

Blending folklore and Christian beliefs, Doria manufactures tales to explain the world to Carmolina to teach her about sorrow and joy, life and death, trying to strengthen her granddaughter’s ties with her Italian background:

There is the mountain in Italy filled with candles....Each person has his own candle. When he is born the candle is lit; when the candle goes out he dies. You can see this mountain, Carmolina, only in your dream, but God will not let you see your own candle, even in a dream. If there is a mistake, and you see your own candle, you will die. This is how people die in their sleep. (24)

Grandma Doria is a living representator of Italian ethnicity trying to pass on memories, legends, and the culture of the Old World to the new generations that is her granddaughter Carmolina. Though her mother Sarah cooked the family American kind of food, that is, usually chicken and potato, “across the alley, Grandma was spooning tomato sauce over a dish of pasta which curved up like pig’s tails” (10), or for lunch Carmolina would be served by her grandmother “cheese on Italian bread, or tomatoes on Italian bread, or just Italian bread” (23).

While sometimes telling Carmolina stories, full of supernatural creatures and superstitions, sometimes teaching Italian songs, Grandma Doria would “hang long red peppers from the line with wooden clothespins”(24). She was continuing the life style she had in Italy with no intention of getting Americanized.

We understand that they came to America to settle as “the family plot was purchased as soon as they had any money, before any of them had descent clothes” (18). Immediately after they had enough money in America they bought a place in the graveyard for all the family. They did not think of going back to America but also did not want to be Americanized, trying to perceive their values and lifestyle as they are. Even until his death, Carmolina’s grandfather did not learn English; he spoke Italian all his life.

After Carmolina runs away, the family reaches a full awareness of the condition they are in. Grandma Doria accuses the city- in broader sense accuses

America for all the sufferings. She believes her lovely granddaughter Doriana is mute, her son and daughter in law are all unhappy because of the city:

... it was the city, it was the empty gray light like a spider sucking the blood of the wonderful child, the child bled out her brain and there was nothing to feed her. The buildings of the city were bones crashing against little Doriana, giving her pain. Marco, he was never home; he wore everyday the police uniform and went out where people were murdered, were butchered like pigs in the sties. He didn't gather olive, sit in the sun, but was instead white like a sheet with his eyes watching the guns, the shooting, the chopping of people in their own beds. Sarah she was pale, nervous, locked up in these small rooms with two children. The food she made was thin, they were poor. (64)

Doria wants to help them but she is poor anyway. The Italians are family oriented people; therefore, the family ties are of uttermost importance. In fact this devotion to the family underlies much of the conservative attitude they have to the new things. This often constitutes an obstacle to successful integration in American society.

First generation Doria perceives America as evil shattering her family and destroying her traditions. They came to America with the hope of prosperity. However, in America let alone overcoming poverty their traditions and family structure are destroyed.

Doriana's instability reflects the dislocation of the Italian family in America: "she seemed always to be moving towards another place, different from this" (7). "De Rosa seems to be using Doriana's illness as a metaphor for the immigrant experience of living in a world that doesn't readily welcome outsiders" (Bona, 94).

Grandma Doria tries to explain Dorian's beauty and illness telling that she is lost in the forest and she tries to come home: "Her face she so beautiful,".... "because Dorian fight so hard to come home. She look out her eyes every day and try to come home. When you fight to come home you beautiful"(De Rosa,1996: 100). Metaphorically she is lost in the dangerous, unknown outer world. She has lost her ties with her family.

We see that Carmolina replicates her sister's dislocation. She runs away and is swallowed by the streets of Chicago-the dangerous, unknown outer world. She also cannot find her way home. Carmolina wanders for three days through this frightening world which "someone turned....upside down," having "nowhere to go" (92).

Unlike her sister, Carmolina finds the "key" to exploring the forest. She comes back "home"-both to the home of the past and to a new home that she will construct for herself. She tells her father. "when I grow up... I'm going to go away forever"(107) to the new home. she will construct her self a new identity that is she will be Italian American, not Italian or American.

In the last part, following the growth of Carmolina, we see the demolition of the Italian ghetto, reflecting the vanishing of the culture that nourishes her, similar to grandma Doria's near disappearance: Little Italy disappears "as though it were a picture someone had snapped away":

The city said the Italian ghetto should go, and before the people could drop their forks next to their plates and say pardon, me? the streets were cleared. The houses of the families with their tongues of rugs sticking out were smashed down, the houses filled with soup pots and quick anger, filled with forks and knives and recipes written in the heads of the women, were struck in their

*sides with the ball of the wrecking crane and the knives
and bedclothes and plaster spilled out (136).*

B. Crisis of Identity

1. Bread Givers

From the very first part of the novel *Bread Givers*, we witness the events through Sara's observing eyes. She grows up witnessing the miserable ends of her sisters because of the old traditioned values of her father Reb Smolinsky who justified his ideas by the holy book Torah.

Also, along with her family she suffers from severe poverty and dirt all around, all of which result in her hatred towards her Jewish identity. She denies her Jewish background and accepts being American: "I am going to live my own life. Nobody can stop me. I'm not from the old country. I am American!" (Yeziarska, 138).

The only way out was to live like Americans, through which she would be independent and self sufficient. Moreover, she needed to get rid of her poverty, she suffered a lot. With an immediate decision she leaves home without having a second look behind. Then, left all alone, she decides to be a teacher remembering;

*the story from the Sunday paper. A girl—slaving away in
the shop. Her hair was already turning gray, and nothing
had ever hapened to her. Then suddenly she began to
study in the night school, on and on, till she became a
teacher in the schools (155).*

As her individuality and shaping her own identity began, the lines in the novel filled with the first person pronoun 'I'. At first she got very enthusiastic with her individuality tasting her freedom, eating, for the first time in her life, by herself in a bakery.

How strong, how full of life and hope I felt as I walked out of that bakery. The strength of as million people was surging up in me. I felt I could turn the earth upside down with my littlest finger. I wanted to dance, to fly in the air and kiss the sun and stars with my singing heart. I, alone with myself, was enjoying myself for the first time as with grandest company (157).

After getting a job as an ironer and finding a cheap but dingy room for accomodation, she enrolled in a night school where she would experience many difficulties to fit in. Both in the laundry and at school she was an outcast. In the laundry, for she was different from the girls there who were talking merely about boys, dances, cosmetics, and clothes, she felt:

she was shut out like a "greenhorn" who didn't talk their language. When they gossiped beaux, or dances, or the least styles, their mouths snapped right when [she] got near. When they planned any picnics or parties, [she] was left out (180).

At school things were not different "even in school I suffered, because I was not like the rest"(180), irritating the teachers asking many questions.

With the little money she got she had to go to school, pay for rent and survive, which were unbearably difficult. At times she got on the brink of losing her hope as she suffered much from loneliness. She was aware that the price of her independence was her loneliness.

I had made my choice. And now I had to pay the price. So this is what it cost, daring the follow the urge in me. No father. No lover. No family. No friend. I must go on and on. And I must go on—alone (208).

Her crisis of identity reached at its climax point when Sara recognised that she was not accepted into the New World though she went to college. She was in between two cultures but belonging to neither one. She didn't want a life led by highly patriarchal and old fashioned values and a life full of poverty, but at the same time she didn't fit into the New World. Upon going to the school dance she recognises her difference:

The wirling of the joy went on and on, and still I was there watching, cold, lifeless, like lost ghost. I was nothing and nobody. It was worse than being ignored. Worse than being an outcast. I simply didn't belong. I had no existence in their young eyes. I wanted to run and hide myself, but fear and pride nailed me against the wall (219).

Though she felt alienated by her peers, she succeeded in graduating from college and with her victory in the essay contest she won the acceptance of her classmates. As her name is announced, "...all the students rose to their feet, cheering and waving and calling my name, like a triumph, 'Sara Smolinsky—Sara Smolinsky!'" (234).

In the end, returning her own ethnic background Hester Street as a teacher she realizes and rediscovers her ethnic identity. She was not only a Jewish or an American, she was a Jewish American. Therefore, she gave up putting all the blame on her father, realizing "It wasn't just [her] father, but the generations who made [her] father whose weight was still upon [her] (297).

Therefore, Sara was the one to compromise, not her father. Hence, Sara took her father to live with her though she knew how difficult it would be to live with her father's constant preaching. Sara was able to do this because she was happy. She followed her dream, became a teacher, and fell in love. She was confident, strong, and intelligent. Because of that confidence and strength, she could invite her father into her home without worrying that he would change her life. Because of that intelligence she could understand and forgive him

2. Paper Daughter

The story (in fact the life story of the author M. Elaine Mar) opens up with the early reminiscences of Man Yee who will later on experience the search for her identity; Chinese?, American? or Chinese American?

The main feature about identity in the novel is that the moment the characters step into the new country they start to realize the differences in culture. Whether they want to conform to the new way of life or not does not matter, they more or less experience the conflicts.

Many Chinese parents whose, main concern is to survive and provide a comfortable future for their children, try to cling to many elements of the culture of their homeland, leading an essentially isolated life and keeping in touch with the members of the Chinese community in their neighborhood. They did not learn the language as the ones who they had to communicate with were also Chinese. Because they were already grown ups, it was too late for them to get education too. Therefore, they tried to lead their life according to their own values.

However, their children were different. Their identity process was not complete. Thus, these children coming to America at a very early age, like Man Yee who came to Denver at the age of six, were the ones to be Americanized as they were came face to face with the outer world dominated by American culture as soon as they started school. Exposition of Chinese culture at home and American culture outside their home, two totally different cultures resulted in contradictions; at home these children were uneasy Americanized youngsters at odds with the expectations of their Chinese parents, whereas at school they were considered Asian outsiders who looked different from anyone else.

What met Man Yee in Virginia Vale, Denver, was “a confusion of old and new worlds: Two fat Buddhas on top of a huge television set. TV English competing with my aunt’s Toishanese” (Mar, 39). In addition, Yee soon learned that she could not trust her mother’s judgements as valid in the US, and what she had taught Yee in

Hong Kong was not up to standard in America. For instance in Hong Kong Yee was told not to take off her shoes anywhere whereas in America she was scolded by her Aunt Becky because she wore shoes inside. When Yee's mother tries to explain she is cut off by the following answer, "You're not in Hong Kong anymore. ... In America things are different. In America people have carpets" (43). The impression that Yee's mother knew little about American life and conventions was also reinforced when she told Yee to use nail polish remover as perfume.

In Hong Kong Man Yee was described as a clever and well-behaved little girl, which in Chinese meant that she listened to instructions and did what the grown up people told her to do. When she attended school at the age of three she won the "neatest work" award for two years, and when she left for the USA two years later she "knew multiplication tables up to nine-times-nine, wrote one hundred Chinese characters, and spoke five words in English - cap, ball, hello, yes, no" (21). In other words, she was reckoned to be an intelligent child; hence, it was a shock for her to learn that in the US she was looked upon as something quite the contrary, that is, stupid. Things were different in America. She would hear this statement very often in this new country.

The first year at school Yee was thought to be stupid also because she could not explain herself in English and the other children teased her because of that. In addition, her schoolmates picked on her because of her looks. In the playground comments such as "Chink eyes, slant eyes, you're so ugly, why don't you go back to where you came from?" were regular (117), and the other children threw pebbles at her and pulled her hair. The reaction described is that of a child: "I didn't understand anything about America. In Hong Kong, everybody had liked me. Now no one did. I couldn't figure it out" (45).

When Yee was sent to a speech therapist during school hours she "thanked God for giving me thirty minutes away from my classmates" (118). At home Yee could not tell her mother about these incidents because she would just say that she did not send her to school to play neither with the "bok gui" nor the "hok gui"

children, that is, neither the white nor the black children. Her mother wouldn't understand her desire to be one of the accepted members of the majority culture as she was living in the isolated borders of her own Chinese community. Her sole concern was that her daughter needed education and that's all and this required only silence to listen to the teacher and that's all. She could not understand the process her daughter was experiencing. Therefore, Yee had to struggle all alone and do whatever she could do to fit in.

Yee was trying to be American ignoring her Chinese ethnicity, her past and therefore, was looking down upon her family.

I was proud of how American I'd become: I answered to "Elaine" first and only spoke Chinese when absolutely necessary, with my adult relatives... More than anything, I wanted to obscure my foreignness, that combination of ethnicity and poverty. I would have given anything to slip into ordinary. But my parents foiled all attempts. They turned me into an object of ridicule (158).

She experiences a separation period from her family. She wants to be a member of the dominant culture by trying to be like stylish Americans, and wants to wear like them instead of wearing her old clothes or someone else's worn out clothes. She defines being American as 'normal' and, therefore, her ethnicity 'abnormal' declaring with the words: "If only I could be normal and wear Levi's, I wished stiff, new jeans badly, but I never bothered to ask. I already knew the answer—too expensive"(158). Her ethnicity also equalled with poverty.

Being fat meant unstylish and, so Elaine wanted her mother also to be stylish and wanted her to be thin. The contradiction over identities is clearly exemplified in these words:

We were entering a long period of mutual struggle over our identities. I believed that she reflected poorly on me, and vice versa. I thought she should become more stylish—a code for “American.” She dreamed of a dutiful Chinese daughter with my face, inhabiting my body (159).

Elaine believes she created her own identity through her success at school and her language ability which her family lacked.

I was the American voice of the family, the connection between our basement room and the outside world. I’d accepted a hollow name, an empty construct, and created an identity with it in four short years. “Elaine was adored by teachers, got A’s in everything except penmanship, and watched The Brady Bunch faithfully after school (160).

Elaine is alienated by her ethnic self so much that at home she considers herself an American and isolates her mother from her conversations by speaking English at home. Also she uses her American name Elaine not Yee even in her neighbourhood, which she thinks will strengthen her independence.

However, when they had to move since her father had a fight with Uncle Andy and had to quit job, Elaine resents her parents because of their unexpected departure, and fears that her created self will shatter as had happened when they first came to America.

I was afraid that moving would erase my identity. Aunt Becky’s house, Casey’s Palace, McMeen Elementary School. They were landmarks of the self, grounding me at

*those times when I needed to look up and asses where—
and who—I was (182).*

Immigration meant blankness and “the terror of sensation without words, being caught between languages with no way to explain how [she] felt”(182), she continued telling her feelings; “It was like a devolution, being striped of all control until I was a soft pink slug that could only curl in on itself for protection”(182).

Though she was trying to be American and get far away from her Chinese background, she was too much affected by the departure from her bigger family consisted of Aunt Becky, Uncle Andy and San. She is miserable trying to fit into the new culture. Not being able to express her feelings in English words with a fear that her friends would not understand, she suffers a lot and at the same time feels miserable because of her seperation from her extended family.

The words family and home wouldn't carry the meanings I intended. Compared to their Chinese correlates, the English words were limited; they didn't imply generations bound up in one identity, rooted in one place. Using English I couldn't convey my sense of loss. I couldn't make my friends understand how much it had hurt to leave Aunt Becky's house, how lonely it was to live in Glandale now (215).

On the other hand, as she continued to live in America, she carried on her desire to fit in her class community which was the minor represantative of bigger community. However, an obvious American feature-individuality was not accepted by her mother who acts as a device to transmit the features of Chinese Culture to the new generation that is in this case her disobedient daughter Yee.

Being a traditional Chinese, mother didn't see me as an individual with needs seperate from my family's; I was

only one part of a communal whole, every part of my being subsumed for the good of my family. My money was their money. Any time I wanted to buy anything, I had to ask my parents for it specifically. From bus fare to movie tickets to lunch money to books, my parents had to approve the item first. And lots of times, they said no (217).

Therefore, in order to get her the stylish, expensive clothes she spares her lunch money, buying cheaper things. Eating less and less, she deliberately got thinner to look like Farrah Fawcett who was the symbol of female beauty. As an Asian girl she found herself ugly since she can't be blonde, buxom, and white. The only way to look like her was to be thin and wear beautiful things. By sparing her lunch money, she would achieve both.

Not only at lunch but also all through the day she started to lessen the amount of the food she consumed. In a way this was not only to get thinner and to look like Farrah Fawcett but to reject her Chinese background as food was a very important part of their life. Her family was making a living through selling Chinese food in a restaurant in which most of her childhood and her spare time passed helping her family.

Therefore, she resented all the qualities attributed to food that are; restaurant, poverty, her family, everything belonging to Chinese culture and as a result discontentment. Her denial of these led to her denial of food. "I could barely remember a time when the restaurant was not a part of my life... but now I hated it, I felt consumed by it, and I worked to purge its influence the only way I knew how—by denying food"(250). She conveys her hatred telling "in my mind, food was the source of all my unhappiness... the way its presence signalled failure"(250-251).

However, she didn't want to be a failure and the only way to succeed was to fit in and get away from her family. This can only be realized by being successful in

education, and so did she. First of all, she won scholarship to attend a six week seminar at Cornell University, in Ithaca, New York. Though her mother rejected for both economic and traditional reasons, her father let her go to New York.

When the seminars started and saw many like her, her appetite for the food returned as she discovered she fit in this community. She stopped caring about her outlook as the people there interested more in her thoughts.

When Elaine returned, she found her little Uncle had arrived from Hong Kong and felt annoyance and guilt as she thought her uncle “embodied everything [she] hated about [her] family—the inertia, the displacement, the lack of hope”(278).

Thus, she wants to get rid of these feelings and create her own world moving away from home, and when she receives her entry letter to Harvard University she sends her acceptance reply without asking her parents. Her mother would of course not let her go but her father allowed it because both Kennedy, and Kissinger, who even became a senator even though he was not born in the USA, went to that University. Therefore, Yee’s father by letting her go showed his belief in the American dream though he could not achieve it by himself.

Elaine experienced an identity crisis but in the end she chose to untie herself from her past and ethnic background telling “like my grandfather, I’d immigrated with no way to send for my family”(292). In order to fit into American culture she had to break her ties with Chinese culture which was totally different from the former one.

3. Paper Fish

Raised in an environment full of Italians, but living in America, Carmolina experiences conflicts over her identity. Does she belong to Italian ethnicity or American ethnicity.

For Grandma Doria there was no problem. She was an Italian and her granddaughter must be an Italian as well, therefore, she did everything to transfer Italian culture to her granddaughter. She told stories teaching her right and wrong, told stories full of superstitions and supernatural creatures, made her recite Italian songs while preparing long red peppers to hang.

As Carmolina was a smart girl, she even chose her as a vehicle to transfer Italian culture to the generations after her. "Now it you turn. You keep the fire inside you" (De Rosa, 116).

Carmolina, on the other hand, faced the other world when she ran away from home after she heard that her mute sister Doriana would be institutionalized. The world outside were not nice to her, slapping her face her ethnic difference: "you the dago kid come and dirty up our streets".

After wandering out for three days, growing hatred and alienation towards her family, is brought to home as she is a little eight year old child. After three days something was changed in herself. She felt she did not belong to the family there. Her alienation is very clear in these lines:

Something was wrong.

There were all their faces again finally and they were all wrong. The hard light from the street shined on them, and something was terribly wrong.

They weren't really her family at all. Her family went away and left all these strangers who just looked like them in their place, but these were pretenders. She would have to live with them and no one would ever tell her where her real family was.

She was totally alienated to her background, her ethnicity. De Rosa seems to say that children of the immigrants feel lost and are separated from their families, when they encounter with the culture of the host country.

When her father reminds her identity and background, slamming her down hard, telling “this is where you live, and you are never going to leave us again”, “she looked at him” and said “when I grow up,... I’m going to go away forever”(107).

Later on we see that Carmolina’s total belief to the stories of her Grandmother starts to shatter. On looking at the stars, “Grandma said they were angels, she always said, Carmolina, the sky she full of angels to watch over us so we no get lost, but was it? Maybe they were just stars”(108). Also its metaphorically stated in the novel that although everybody was asleep only “Carmolina was awake”(108) but called by her Daddy again to sleep. She was awakened that she was different from them all, being torn between the bonds of the past and the pull of the future.

In the last part, we see that though Carmolina, at the age of seventeen, is not getting married but is prepared to have her marriage ceremony beforehand symbolically as the whole family said “Grandma wouldn’t live to see Carmolina marry”(111).

It was very difficult for Carmolina to break the old ties when you belonged to and Italian family for whom the descent relations were very important. She wore the pearls “which were meant for her to wear as a bride”, and which “were strung each year one by one to make a full necklace for the marriage ceremony”(111), and looked at the mirror as

She opened the white satin purse, slipped the ring out. It was a cameo ring; it had belonged to Great-Grandma Carmella and her great-great grandma. Some of the names were lost. ...she kissed the ring, dropped it back

*into the purse, locked its small golden lock. "They won't
never let us go, will they?" she asked of no one. (111)*

Carmolina is clear about her identity but her old ties pull her hard. However, future is hers. When in the last line her grandmother told her "Now it you turn. You keep the fire inside you"(116), in the mirror she only saw herself not her grandmother though she was just behind her. Her Grandmother was from the Old World and old world values were dying, she was the New World and future was hers though it was very difficult to look ahead and get away from the strains of Old World demands.

C. Gender Issues

1. *Bread Givers*

Between late nineteenth century and early twentieth century about two million Jews, most of whom were single women at the ages of 15-20 migrated to the United States, whose language and culture they did not know about (Sorgun, 2001:103). These women worked mostly in sweatshops.

In the traditional Eastern European Jewish culture, women were considered to be inferior to men and women should be under control and responsibility of their husbands, if married and of their fathers, if single.

As in all other patriarchal societies, in Jewish culture also, the most acceptable gender role for women was to be a good housewife and a mother. However, different from the other cultures, women who work and bring money home were appreciated by the society.

Except for the wives and mothers, young Jewish women were approved of working and saving some money until they got married. Their money became the

purpose of many Jewish men in America. They looked for a future wife who would know how to save money.

Nevertheless, we see in Yezierka's autobiographical novel *Bread Givers* that this money becomes the reason why the tyrannical father Reb Smolinsky does not let her eldest daughter Bessie get married with the fear that he will lose the entire wage she gave. "But Bessie spends nothing on herself. She gives me every cent she earns. And if you marry her, you're as good as taking away from me my living—tearing the bread from my mouth" (Yezierska, 46).

For the Jewish immigrant women who didn't work outside, a way of contributing to the family was having boarders at home as Sara's mother in the novel did; sparing a room designed the way her neighbor Muhmenkeh advised:

Do as done. Put the spring over four empty herring pails and you'll have a bed fit for the president. Now put a board over the potato barrel, and a clean newspaper over that, and you'll have a table. All you need yet is a soapbox for a chair, and you'll have a furnished room complete (15).

Sara's mother, being a typical Jewish ghetto wife and mother, led a laborious and selfless life all through her life portraying "the nobility of life that could be found among the poor immigrant Jews on the Lower East Side" (Morovitz, 1996:147). She devoted her life to her family and she was sure to be obedient to her husband. She also acted according to the teachings of patriarchal culture as she had already been domesticated and accepted the values taught to her. Therefore, automatically, she acted in favor of men, giving the best room and the best part of the meal not to her starving daughters but to her husband.

In the novel we observe the main character Sara Smolinsky's struggle against the patriarchal Old World values personified in her tyrannical father Reb Smolinsky.

All through the book can be traced his arguments in favor of the males and against females, who are according to him inferior to men,

Reb not only has an unrealistic view of America but also has dehumanizing patriarchal values, putting himself superior to the rest of the family. He bases his justification on the teachings of his religion and their holy book Torah, from which he constantly quotes, “A woman without a man is less than nothing. A woman without a man can never enter Heaven” (Yezierska, 1975: 294). According to Jewish faith:

Only men could study the Torah. Their wives and daughters were destined to smooth the path. A woman's virtue was measured by how well she helped her husband to live a pious existence, free from daily worry and encouraged by her orthodox observance of ritual in the home. To serve her husband and father should be a woman's highest wish, and it was, in any event, her only hope of heaven (vi).

Sara refused to believe such teachings, no matter how many times she heard them. Instead, she embraced American culture. “In America, women don't need men to boss them” (137). “Thank God, I'm not living in olden times. Thank God, I'm living in America! You made the lives of the other children! I'm going to make my own life!” (138).

Sara observed all his father's attitude towards her sisters. Like her future lover Max Goldstein, her father saw women, even his own daughters like they are a piece of property that can be sold and bought. Reb was like a “sweet salesman”, selling his daughter to men they did not feel romantic love. In fact as Fania said a day before her marriage to Bessie, she did not say anything to reject his father when he wanted to marry her to Abe Schumuckler only because she wanted “to get away from [their] house”(80). Their father made the house unbearable to live with his

patriarchal preaching, leaving them no choice but to obey their father's decisions just to get away from him.

Reb, belonging to the Old World, did not believe in romantic love, telling Mashah his notion of marriage reflecting the general patriarchal male perspective, putting the male sex superior:

Any man who falls in love with a pretty face don't think to marry himself. If a man wants a wife, he looks for one who can cook for him, and wash for him, and carry the burden of his house for him (64).

His words reflect as if a wife meant to be a servant, adoring her life for the good of her husband. Also another patriarchal notion of Jewish culture which disfavors leaving husband, in modern terms divorce, is presented in Reb's words when his daughter Fania returns after marrying Abe Schumucler to whom he made her daughter marry but later on who turned out to be a gambler:

The neighbors here wouldn't believe that you left him. They will say that he threw you out. And don't forget it; you are already six months older—six months less beautiful—less desirable, in these eyes of men. Your chances for marrying again are lost forever, because no men wants what another turns down. As you made your bed, so you must sleep on it (85).

Though he himself made her marry Abe Schumucler, when it turns out to be a bad match, he rejects the responsibility, showing hypocrisy despite his claim to be true to God. Even though it is his own daughter in trouble, he supports the male interests, forcing Fania to return and continue her marriage.

Mother goes mad when Reb announces that he wanted to marry Bessie, whom he called the old maid, off to the old fish-peddler Zalmon “with a houseful of children and a wife not yet cold in the grave”(94). He explains his reason telling that Bessie is no longer a good daughter as she doesn’t “give her wages with the highest respect” and goes on showing his anger: “no wonder it says in the Torah, ‘Woe to a man who has females for his offspring’!”(95).

Mother expressing her anger and protest to her husband and the patriarchal teachings of their religion tells ironically: “Woe to us women who got to live in a Torah-made world that’s only for men” (95). Not understanding his wife Reb goes on his insulting preaches told especially to Bessie; “Women were always the curse of men,” and carried on telling:

*but when they get older they are devils and witches.
That’s why it says in the Torah that a man has a right
to hate an old maid for no other reason but because
no man had her son no man wants her (95-96).*

Having seen how the lives of her mother and sisters were dominated and ruined by her father, Sara did not want that for herself. She

*took America at its word and tried to live by its ideals. At
least in theory the ideology of success offered
opportunities to women to make the most of their
capacities. Here women could choose their husbands,
could marry for love (xix).*

Sara decided at an early age, while watching her sisters being married off to men they did not like and their living miserably because they were living according to the Old World expectations that she would marry for love or not at all. Sara was of the New World and in the New World, as Yeziarska said, if women “don’t get a husband, they don’t think the world is over, they turn their mind to something

else”(xix). Sara wanted “an American-born man who was his own boss. And would let me be my own boss” (66).

Later on when she thought she was concentrating too much on her education and thought she was away from life, she was attracted by Max Goldstein, a wealthy businessman. At first she liked him because she felt he would let her be her own boss listening to his praising words;

I like you more because you're independent. There is a magnet inside of you. It pulls me out of my senses. What's happening to me? You're so different. You're so cold. You're only books, books, books. I sometimes wonder, are you at all a woman? And yet you set me on fire (197).

Her independence surprised him as he thought only a man could be that independent and with his words “yet you set me on fire” clearly depicted the idea that an independent woman is not favored in the society he lived.

Therefore, later on Sara realized that though Max was first impressed with Sara's independence, what interested him in deep was to make her dependant on him. He believed the sole power in America was money and with that money he thought he would get anything he wanted even “a wife would be another piece of property”(19).

When Sara turns down the “opportunity” to marry Max Goldstein, a wealthy businessman, her father was infuriated at his “lawless” daughter. Sara realizes though, that “He could never understand. He was the Old World. [She] was the New” (207).

Similar to Yeziarska who refused “her parents attempt to mold her into acceptable roles” and who “wanted most of all to become a person”, Sara left her

family at the age of seventeen to shape her own life independently. She needed to be independent and possess the capacity to pursue her American Dream. It was only once these qualifications were met that she could grasp the other necessities of fulfillment.

After much struggle, pain, and discrimination, Sara, having managed to be a teacher, returns home in her "dark blue" suit, with "more style in its plainness than the richest velvet" (239). She finds her mother dying, her sisters poor and miserable, and her father spending an increasing amount of time with Widow Feinstein because he has "to eat and she's kind enough to cook for [him]" (248). God forbid a man of the Torah get up and do something for himself. Within a month of Mothers death, Reb has married Mrs. Feinstein, for the Torah says "a man must have his house and a woman to take care of him" (259).

With her professional goals met, Sara begins to see what she is missing in her life. When her mother passes on, Sara realizes that family is an important element in one's life. She continues to visit her father in an attempt to share her sensibility and vision of things, for she "had failed to give Mother the understanding of her deeper self during her lifetime. Let me at least give it to father while he is yet alive" (257). After attaining a realization of self, Sara is able to grow and incorporate other elements of happiness into her life.

After making herself a 'person', an independent one, not his father but Sara, herself, chooses "an American-born man who was his own boss. And would let [her] be [her] own boss" (66). She loves Hugo Seelig, the principal-the man with the same love of learning and teaching that she has. As they get to know one another better, they discover all they have in common, including birthplace. Hugo even asks Reb to teach him Hebrew, winning over his approval. Finally, with Hugo, Sara adds the final piece to her life. She does not have perfect happiness, but she has rediscovered her need of family, and has found a man with whom she shares a mutual respect.

2. *Paper Daughter*

Before focusing on gender issues in the novel *Paper Daughter* by M. Elaine Mar, it is a must to have a look at the traditional gender role of women in China. The pre-Communist China was a very traditional society in which Confucianism ruled the everyday life and education of people. According to these rules, women were not sent to school in order to be brought up to become good wives and mothers. Even until a short time ago girls' feet were bound to hinder their natural development.

The women of this strict culture did have difficulties when they came to live in a more liberal culture. The role that they were supposed to have was quite opposite to those of women in the United States where women worked outside if they pleased; they were educated to be independent women, which was something impossible for Chinese women. The ones coming to America at adult ages tried not to adopt American values, instead they tried to keep them and pass their traditional values to their children who were born or raised in America.

Therefore, these children especially the female ones faced, according to Ronald Takaki, four cultural dilemmas: "(1) obedience vs. independence; (2) collective (or familial) vs. individual interest; (3) fatalism vs. change; (4) self control vs. self expression or spontaneity"(Takaki, 1994:186). Takaki, in his informative book *From Different Shores*, points out Chinese women's status with the fact that

the doctrine of three obediences for a Chinese woman to her father, husband, and son well illustrates her subservient roles. The male is still perceived as major bread winner and the woman as home maker (187).

Asian values encouraged women to be submissive, passive, timid, inhibited, and adaptive, whereas being American meant to be independent, individual, and expressive.

From the very early years of her life, Man Yee is taught her place in Chinese culture, which does not allow children and females to ask any questions to the older ones and males, but expects “the young to revere elders, women to revere men” (Mar, 16). Yee is often reminded that she is a girl and therefore, ought to show respect to all family members except females younger than herself.

Surprisingly, It was not the males who taught this kind of patriarchal and hierarchical set of values but was the females of the family especially the mother who was sincerely bound to the culture she was brought up in. “ We’ll teach her to be feminine”, Mother promised” to Yee’s aunt who criticised her having boyish manners such as fierceness and passion. Her mother went on telling “Yee will always wear dresses. We’ll grow her hair long and protect her skin from the sun” (11). Also, her favourable traits according to Chinese culture are fostered by the women around praising her being clever which meant “the same as obedient” (23).

Also, through little Yee who is only three years old we learn that children are taught their gender roles at school. Returning from school Yee shows her books which included sentences and pictures forming their female identity in Chinese culture.

“I like helping mother clean,” I read pointing at the picture of the girl smiling and making beds. “I take care of my little brother . I keep him away from danger.” I showed Moy-Moy the drawing of the girl pulling a smaller boy away from an electric fan”(21).

She was praised for her ‘smartness’ which Moy-Moy’s parents explained telling “She obeys instructions so well!”(21)

Their main concern seems to be bringing up the daughters to be marriageable. Yee’s mother, a traditional Chinese woman, tries to teach her how to make delicious rice though she is only three. What’s more, when the little girl got chicken pox, her mother exclaims her terror of her daughter’s possibility of being

unmarriageable “You said that if chicken pox blisters break, the child will be scarred for life. I don’t want to have a deformed child-what would I do with her? Who would marry her?” (26).

When living in Hong Kong Yee finds the rules, she was taught, unproblematic but in America, when, three years later, she met her father, who had gone to America beforehand in 1969, she discovers that there are other guidelines and she is confused about how to behave. Her first encounter with the American way is when she and her mother are picked up at the airport: “Aunt Becky led the way. In this backward country called America, she was in charge. Not my father, not Uncle Andy, my aunt. A woman. To my surprise, no one complained” (37).

Though Aunt Becky can be considered to be Americanized because she seems to adopt some of the features of American values such as working outside and having power over men. On the other hand, even though she provides the money, the job, showing Americanization features, she’s still under the influence of Chinese culture in that she usually expresses her preference upon sons rather than daughters since she believes a son can look after her in the old age but not the daughter. Remembering how surprised with her brother’s happiness when he had a daughter, she uttered these words reflecting, in a way, the general view towards daughters in China:

I remember how San and Yee were born so close together. Shing was happy to have a little girl. Not me. They’re no good. You can’t invest too much in a girl. You have to marry them off to another family in the long run, what a waste of energy! I’m glad to have a boy, to stay and take care of me in my old age (43).

Contrary to what independence means she is still in need of dependence to a male. Though she was the one to be in charge of the kitchen, she had nothing to say

to persuade her brother to stay when her common-law husband and her brother had a fight. The right to decide was her husband's...

Being in America, and getting the name Elaine, Yee starts to realize that other than the values she has been taught, there are other values that don't degrade women. She wants to be a whole person; successful, independent, and wanted. In her parents' culture she is a waste of money and energy as her own mother tells in any related case, which results in her feeling of guilt and, after she grows up, annoyance, as well.

Thus, Elaine felt she had no place in Chinese culture except for being a mother and a wife. She naturally turned her face to American culture which, in fact, would be a painful process and meant to get rid of the old world values including her family. She tried to form her identity according to its features. Elaine learned the language which widened the gap between her parents and herself, studied hard at school, and as a result succeeded in her lessons.

However, her mother, four years after immigration, negating herself, signed her husband's name on all papers; on alien registration cards, school reports, or bank deposits because "It's the only name with meaning" (160). Yee grew more and more angry because she felt that being female was as good as being male, and she began to despise her mother for not being more American.

In addition, Yee was clever at school and appraised by all her teachers, thus she found it even more incomprehensible that her mother said she was nothing, and she explains: "I had trouble respecting her. I grew increasingly willful, violating the most sacred of cultural tenets: absolute fealty to family and elders" (160).

The conflict reached its climax when Yee was not allowed to date a "ghost" boy, firstly because she was too young, secondly because he was white, and thirdly because her father told her not to. Yee complained to her aunt Becky whom she

thought was Americanized in her manners, emphasizing her identity and individuality with the following lines;

It's my life! I shouted, storming past him to the back stoop. I fumed . How dare they treat me like I had no rights of my own? I was sick of living for my family. I was sick of having to conform, to be meek and obedient just because I was born Chinese (228).

Nevertheless, even her “Americanized” aunt gave her no support. On the contrary, she said that Yee should do what was expected of her, and if she did not obey she would shame her father’s name. When Yee asks if she does not exist as an individual her aunt replies with disdain: “You’re no one without your father’s name” (228).

She had no control over her body, no right to choose for herself. Yee was coming from a descent oriented culture and she was expected to obey the rules of this culture. Uncle Andy, trying to sympathize Yee, offers her the solution his culture allows. “when you graduate, we’ll go back to Hong Kong, San, you, and me. We’ll find you a husband. We’ll find San a wife. We can marry both of you in Hong Kong”(244). However, she was raised in a consent based country where girls chose their partners not their families and Yee felt she belonged to this country, the United States, which was allowing her to gain a self as a woman and a person.

Throughout the book multiple female voices represent different identities: Yee’s mother above all is the Chinese signifying what was attractive in the past. She makes the family remember and recollect Chinese traditions, and she makes meals that awakens Yee’s memories, which is to say that the food connects Yee with her past life in Hong Kong and she becomes a whole person again.

On the other hand, Yee’s mother is also the one who says that you have to forget the past in order to be successful in America, which signals that she has

realized that there is a difference between being Chinese in America and Chinese American, and that if she represents the former she will never be a success.

After a while, her mother's identity of womanhood shatters in America. At first she feels complete, and successful as she's a mother and a wife but then in America she feels insecure and unsuccessful especially because she feels trapped inside as she could not speak the language her daughter spoke. When she gets aware of this she lets her daughter stop writing Chinese calligraphy and urges her to study English, telling "Go learn English so you don't end up stupid like your mother!" (106).

Aunt Becky is the image of the successful Chinese American with her ranch-style house with carpets and a pink toilet and her job running the restaurant kitchen. As opposed to Yee's mother, aunt Becky made sandwiches and canned spaghetti: "Foods that erased memory and leached my [Yee's] body of desire" (49). Thus we learn that Yee struggles with her identity as an American.

3. Paper Fish

Italian women (and children), the victims of patriarchal authority, gained in fact power with the immigration experience, and the consequent assimilation process, which helped them to readdress their roles. Americanization, if considered in its broader meaning, meant development of individualistic values and thus helped women to reject pre-modern values and certain traditions. This was true especially as Americanization provided education, the right to vote and the right to work; in a more general sense pushed for the development of personal autonomy.

Men, for their part, sought in the family a guarantee of cultural continuity with the Old World and tried to gain a wife from the same ethnicity to maintain their traditional role of unchallenged authority.

Immigrant mothers were under particular pressure because they found themselves in the situation of having to exercise the dual role – the traditional one of protecting and transmitting the values of their own culture in a context which was radically different to the native one – and that of continuous mediation between old and new roles and values in order to adapt themselves and survive in American society.

Their difficulties were worsened by the fact that their daughters were keen to grasp the opportunities for independence offered by American society, which also required greater independence from the family. They were not able to mediate with a society they did not know, the daughters who found new strength in the American example to challenge maternal authority, and the family in general. They remained without having acquired the basic elements of the new culture. The first two generations had to pay the price of the rapid modernization of customs within the immigrant family.

Most of the facts stated above can clearly be traced in Tina De Rosa's autobiographical novel *Paper Fish*. As in all other books we have studied, women are supposed to remain at home; especially if they are married and mothers. They are responsible for cooking and looking after their husbands and their children, and if they are an extended family the other members of the family as well.

We learn that Carmolina's father Marco and her Lithuanian mother Sarah met when Sarah was working as a waitress. Marco fell in love with Sarah with a male feeling to see her as a woman to "be worshipped, guarded and protected" (De Rosa, 8). Though marrying a woman not from the same origin was not favored, he got married to Sarah whose mother-in-law Doria told her son Marco while getting married "I wish you father be alive even though she not Italian" (De Rosa, 47)

Traces of the patriarchal notion that married woman and mothers should not work can be seen in the novel *Paper Fish* as well. After marriage all through the novel Sarah is presented mostly inside the house, usually in the kitchen, cooking

something. Leaving her job as a waitress, she starts a new life as a wife and mother whose prior duty is to look after her family and engage with the domestic chores. While he is reading his newspaper in the bathroom, she idly carries on her life feeling nothing more than a wife in the kitchen:

Wiping one hand clean on her cotton dress, she left black chicken whiskers there. She continued the job; it was something she did every day of her life, something she would do every day for longer into the future than she dare imagine; she prepared the dinner. At the sink she ran cold water over the chicken, washing it much as she washed her own child, her own face, mindlessly, her mind on any place but here, her mind here of all places but, from which she couldn't free it (9.)

Her living area is limited with her house and her mother in law's house which are not very far from each other. We observe that the environment she's living in is also full of dirt and poverty from which all the other mothers in the above studied novels, suffered most.

The bedroom window faced into a world filled with the gray smoke of dead fish being burned at the market. Always in the summertime the fish market across the alley burned the dead fish during the day; the cold water flat filled with the smell. Sarah went pale from it; she breathed it until she could stand it no longer, then she shut the windows and watched the fish smoke outside, pressed flat against the glass like a soiled bed sheet (7).

Sarah seems to accept to be inferior to men, telling her husband 'Daddy', even when they fought and Marco was shouting at her. The reason why they fought was that she smoked cigarettes and during the fight she "wouldn't yell" (79). Since

he was a man, he believed he could smoke but his wife couldn't smoke because of her gender. Carmolina's words clearly reflect her father's superiority over her mother:

Mama wanted a cigarette but she couldn't have one because Daddy hated it. He said women shouldn't smoke and if Mama wanted one, she would have to sneak it in the bathroom(78-79).

When they get old, old women in patriarchal notion lose their female identity as they lose their ability to give birth to a baby. Similarly, a typical traditional Italian mother Grandma Doria, being old and the mother of five grown up children, all of whom are married, gains a male identity along with a dominating power even on her sons, especially after the death of her husband Dominic. Her granddaughter Carmolina reflects this thought telling "Now Grandma was the Grandpa of the family"(71).

When a decision must be taken, Grandma was the one to call everybody for the family meeting everyone had to show respect to her. At the meeting which they took the decision to institutionalize Dorian, Carmolina's beautiful but mute sister "Nobody was smoking, even though everybody smoked, out of respect to Grandma" (69).

Also, showing respect meant agreeing with what Grandma Doria said especially if you were the daughter-in-law. When Carmolina ran away and another meeting was held to discuss about how they could find her, Grandma Doria who acted like she accepted the exposed values of patriarchy, accused Sara of not taking good care of her grandchildren, telling

Why you no take more care? You first daughter, her brain is gone. You give her to the black swans. You little one,

she disappear like a penny. You the wife. Why you no take care?(38).

In return Sarah answers “you gave her the money”. Grandma Doria considers this answer as disrespect and along with other family members expects her to apologize for what she had said. In the end kissing her mother-in-law’s hand Sarah tells “Forgive me”...

Grandma Doria functions as a vehicle to protect and transmit the values of her culture. She is the living embodiment of Italian culture cooking, Italian food, speaking mostly Italian, telling stories about Italy, and telling stories full of mysterious things. As family is very important in Italian culture, Grandma Doria was the one to keep the family together.

Feeling she would die soon and accepting her granddaughter Carmolina smart enough to be able to take her place and carry on transmitting Italian values to the next generations, she tells Carmolina softly “Now it you turn. You keep the fire inside you”(116).

However, a third generation Italian immigrant Carmolina feels along with the death of Grandma Doria, the old generation values would also die. Carmolina, who ran away from home and, unlike her mother, rejected her father’s dominance at a very early age, knew that together with the demolition of their Italian ghetto their Old World values would vanish; hence, in the last line “Carmolina looked into the mirror’s silver face. It gave back to her own face”(116). It is as if in the future there will be only the new generation, not the old as the old is always bound to disappear.

D. Language as a Barrier

1. *Bread Givers*

Since it is an important part of a culture, language plays an important role in assimilation. Without the language, one lacks the necessary means to fit in the new culture. Therefore, the first years of immigration are usually painful for the new comers.

Though many immigrants were illiterate people, a great majority of Russian Jews could read Hebrew Bible as well as a Yiddish newspaper. In the novel *Bread Givers* also we have the impression that newspaper is read at home when their neighbor Muhmenkeh advised them to cover the potato barrel with a newspaper to make it look like a table. Also Sara gets the idea of going to a night school from

the story from the Sunday paper. A girl—slaving away in the shop. Her hair was already turning gray, and nothing had ever hapened to her. Then suddenly she began to study in the night school, on and on, till she became a teacher in the schools (155).

Unlike other immigrants, Jewish people were settlers with no hope to return to their hometowns as they ran away from the pogroms and persecutions. Hence, Russian Jewish immigrants were quite willing to learn English. In the novel also we see that children at a small age go to schools, at one of which the protagonist Sara works as a teacher, teaching English pronunciation.

Also to do business only a limited amount of language was enough as we learn from Max Goldstein, selling something, when he tells about his early days in the United States, crying out wrongly ‘pay cats coal’ instead of ‘Pay cash clothes’: “To me it was only singing a song. I didn’t understand the words, but my voice was like a dynamite, thundering out in the air all that was in my young heart, alone in a big city”(Yezierska, 189).

In the novel we don't come across a language problem much as the novel mostly focuses on the identity problem, conflicts over the New World values and the Old World values and patriarchy.

2. *Paper Daughter*

Language is the key factor in assimilation for it is a significant part of every culture. As a linguist H. Douglas Brown stated that a degree of assimilation is achieved through learning a second language in a foreign culture:

Second language learning in a foreign culture potentially involve the deepest form of acculturation. Learners must survive in a strange culture as well as learn a language on which they are totally dependent for communication"
(Brown, 1987:136).

Thus, the acquisition of language in the host country consists a stepping stone to assimilation. In the novels we studied as well, immigrants' degree of assimilation was in close relationship with the degree of their knowledge of English. The ones who were assimilated more were the ones who acquired the language.

On the other hand, unfamiliarity with the language is a barrier to acculturation and therefore, to assimilation. Especially, for the women who lived in the isolated ghettos or neighbourhoods full of people of their own ethnicity, not having sufficient knowledge of English makes them depend totally on their fathers or husbands. The editor of the book *From Different Shores* Ronald Takaki informs us as follows:

This barrier limits the extent to which Asian American women can express themselves, reduces their ability to make demand, restricts their access to many types of

information, [and] curtails the flow and scope of communication with others (Takaki, 1994:187)

In the novel *Paper Daughter* language is depicted as a very important factor to assimilation. Yee, raised, and San, born in America can be accepted as second generation immigrants, and are the ones to be assimilated as they had the ability to socialize and communicate through English.

However, for Yee it was also very difficult when she did know only a few words of English. During daytime the first five months in America Yee stayed at home with her mother in their room in the basement of aunt Becky's house and due to this none of them spoke any English. The consequences of this inability were above comprehension for both of them.

Because of her inability to speak English Yee was subjected to endless ridicule and accepted to be stupid as she could not answer the simplest questions of her teacher. Even though she knew the answer, she couldn't put her thoughts into English words. "I felt trapped inside my body. Language seemed a purely physical limitation. Thoughts existed inside my head, but I wasn't able to make them into words"(Mar, 66).

Even after she was teased because of her silence and her Chinese physical appearance she could not ask her teachers for assistance as she thought "[she] didn't speak enough English to plead [her] case"(73). Then after a long endurance of tortures made by her classmates, she finally learned English and even wrote poems in English.

Along with her language capability, she gained the power to be the link between the outside world and her family especially over her mother.

I had a dreadful power over my mother, one that grew with each word in my American vocabulary. As I gained

fluency in English, I took on greater responsibility for my family, and parent and child roles became murky. Mother spoke and read virtually no English. She needed my help to buy groceries, interpret the news, and complete manner of forms. I filled out the "alien registration" cards. I wrote out bank deposit slips. I showed Mother where to sign my report cards (159-160).

Her father also suffers a lot because he can't speak English. We learn that he can't work in any other place other than his sister's restaurant as the only language he can speak is Chinese. Yee's mother, getting angry at her daughter who wants a ten dollar shirt, and explaining their poverty, informs us that employment in America and how much you earn are closely related to the knowledge of English.

Your father has to work a long time, many hours, to make ten dollars. How much money do you think we have? We're not like the Americans, with their English and their four-dollar-an-hour Mc Donald's jobs! Don't you think your father would work at Mc Donald's if he could speak English? (98).

Through the end of the book, when Yee had to go to have an interview with Dr. Risotto who lived far from Denver, her father refused to drive her to the meeting place. She couldn't understand the reason. Her mother, in the end, gives the answer instead, as his father was too ashamed of the fact that he might be lost since he did not know how to read the signs which were all in English. In the end, he drove her to Dr. Risotto's house with the guidance of her daughter and as he had to go and open the restaurant, left her there, leaving her some money to take a taxi for return. Later on, however, we learn the tragic event that he could not return by himself since he feared he would get lost and therefore waited for Yee till the end of the interview.

Her mother, experiencing many difficulties because of her inability to speak English realized the importance of language and urged her daughter to learn it. When Yee announced that she wanted to go back to Hong Kong her mother took Yee's Hong Kong photo album away with the comment:

We live in America now, you need to stop thinking about the past if you want to succeed. ... Study hard, learn English, be the best at school, and every-body will like you. People always like the most clever girl (117).

Every day after school Yee had to practice Chinese calligraphy in order to remember her ancestors' names and show them respect but now suddenly her mother wanted her to do English language exercises instead; thus Yee was deprived of two important items connecting her to the past, her photo album and her Chinese calligraphy brushes.

3. Paper Fish

As mentioned before, there was a lack of unity in Italy because the country was separated in several regions and governed by different rulers. Therefore, people from different regions spoke only the dialects of their own regions. Also, "there was a high percentage of illiteracy in Italy at the beginning of the twentieth century" (Mulas, 1991:308), so people going to America especially from the southern part did jobs that did not require skill and education. As a result, on going to the United States, Italian immigrants had to learn both the standard language to communicate with their countrymen and the language of the host culture. Therefore, it was very difficult for the first generation Italians to adapt the life in America.

For all other minority groups as well as for the immigrants coming from Italy language is a great barrier to assimilation especially for the first comers. Coming to the United States at adult ages, they have great difficulty learning the language and as a result have no desire to learn it. Therefore, the first generations worked in jobs

which require no or little English, or they worked inside their community where everybody talked in mother tongue.

In *Paper Fish* we see Grandma Doria, who came to America at “turn of the century”(De Rosa, 40), prefer speaking Italian. For example, when her son Marco wanted to warn her mother about the rain “he called to his mother in English. He told her to get out of the rain. She called back to him in Italian”(6-7). Second generation Marco, feeling he belonged to America as he was born there “laughed and told her to talk to English”(7).

Though it had been many years since she left Italy, Grandma Doria would sing Italian songs which Carmolina would hear from their kitchen and “knew it was Italian, something Grandma learned in Italy where Grandma was born and Carmolina had never been”(14).

Despite her broken English, Grandma Doria’ mind was always in Italian. She liked listening to the radio given by her children to keep her company. However, she was confused by its English, so “she told it in Italian to make some sense or shut up”(42). This language created confusion in her mind; she did not feel at ease, comprehending the words. It was also like a barrier between her and her children.” His English words and the English words of her children mingled in her morning mind”(42). She felt she missed the old days and her husbands soft voice “which never learned English spoke to her mind which knew only Italian”(43).

*In her mind she felt the soft pressure of Dominic’s voice,
the heavy Italian coming slowly out from under his thick
mustache, telling her his plans for her, for his children,
now that life was settled in America.*

As for Carmolina, she is the third generation, her parents are from different ethnicities; therefore the only way of communication at home was through English, so she had no problem with the language.

E. Education as a Way Out

1. *Bread Givers*

Education is considered to be another key factor to assimilation. Usually immigrants do menial jobs that don't offer channels for upward mobility. Therefore, the children of the immigrants can only achieve mobility through education.

When we look at the characters in the novel *Bread Givers*, the only one to achieve independence in the family was Sara who has become a teacher after much struggle and pain, trying to lead her education with the little money she had from laundry work.

To Sara, education seemed to be the only plausible route to achieve her goal, becoming an independent 'person'. She rented a small, dingy room, and went to a school to become a teacher. This was her first real run-in with the dominant culture, the culture to which she was trying to assimilate: "plain beautifulness ... simple skirts and sweaters....spick-and-span cleanliness" (Yeziarska, 212). Sara demonstrated great resolve in creating her own life. She worked ten hours a day as an ironer, took two hours of night classes, and then studied for another two hours. Her studies were all that matter to her.

One day her mother came to visit her. Sara was thrilled to see her, but when she asked Sara to visit home, Sara replied that she cannot. "I'd do anything for you. I'd give you away my life. But I can't take time to go 'way out to Elizabeth. Every last minute must go to my studies" (171). Sara's mother was concerned that she would end up an old maid, but Sara assured her she would be married one day. "But to marry myself to a man, I must first make myself for a person" (172). Sara needed a sense of individuality before anything else in her life could become truly meaningful and the only way to achieve her individuality was through education.

However, we see that in the novel there is Max Goldstein, a wealthy businessman, who could be rich without any education, desiring to get married to Sara, telling her:

What for should you waste your time yet with school anymore? You're smart enough the way you are. Only dumb heads fool themselves that education and colleges and all that sort of nonsense will push them on in the world. It's money that makes the wheels go round. With my money I can have college graduates working for me, for my agents, my bookkeepers, my lawyers. I can hire them and fire them. And they, with all their education, are under my feet, just because I got the money (199).

In the end, understanding that Max Goldstein had nothing to suit her, she rejects his marriage proposal. He was rich, he reached his American goal but Sara's main priority was not money. She needed money but only to lead an independent, self sufficient life.

Hence, in the end, she achieved her goal, being a teacher and returned to Hester Street as an independent, self sufficient woman in her "dark blue" suit, with "more style in its plainness than the richest velvet" (239).

Her sisters, on the other hand, did want to change their life and get away from the ghetto life but contrary to Sara, they viewed marriage as a means of mobility and as a result failed to do so, ending up having unhappy marriages. Sara never thought of marrying someone before she gained her own identity and independence. She focused primarily upon education, postponing her interest in and decisions about marriage.

2. Paper Daughter

As is said above the ones who gain self control mainly are the ones who has the good command of the new language of the adopted country, and the ones who has education. Education and acquisition of the new language, therefore, can be accepted as the key factors in immigrants' integrating into the new culture and in their surviving on their own feet.

Like the main character Yee in the autobiographical novel *Paper Daughter*, the second generation Chinese were educated in American public schools and thus,

they had learned and adopted many of the cultural values characteristic of mainstream society and tended to be more individualistic and less imbued with traditional Chinese ethics and morality (Yin, 2000:118).

Many experienced conflicts over their identity and in the end chose to turn their face to American culture. Yin points out the factor of education in assimilation and their disintegration in their ethnic community with these lines:

Public school education thus provided not only the basis for new ideas that enhanced assimilation but was also a source of social forces that uprooted the second generation from the Chinese community and fostered its ambition to seek opportunities in the larger society and compete with the majority race (119).

In Yee's case happened the similar things. Though her family tried not to invest on their daughter much money, they did not prevent her education as they believed their daughter could succeed through only education and could become "a senator". They seemed to accept the reality that they are failures since they thought it is too late for them to get the education and learn the language.

But the price they paid was enormous. Their daughter Yee got the language and education; however, she ignored her ties with her Chinese background for the sake of Americanization. Their daughter is no more Yee, she is Elaine, their paper daughter. Especially the accounts of her feelings after she graduated from Harvard, reveals how much she got away from her Chinese background:

...over four years the distance between Denver and Cambridge had grown until I was far away as another country. My parents weren't able to visit. Like my grandfather, I'd immigrated with no way to send for my family (Mar, 292).

3. Paper Fish

Southern Italians attach great importance to family, “transcending competing claims of country, religion, and morality”(Sowell, 105). Education, on the other hand, considered to be a threat to this institution and to the southern Italian way of life “as introduced and controlled by northern Italians after the unification of Italy”(106). What lay behind was their perception of education as follows:

Education was not seen as an opportunity for upward mobility by the peasants—as in fact it was not in such a caste like society. Rather, it was seen as an intrusion into the sanctity of the family, singling out the child as an individual and teaching values at variance with those of the home. To desperately poor people, the losses of a child's work or outside earnings was also a painful sacrifice (106).

Therefore, Southern Italian immigrants, coming to the United States at the turn of the century, were mostly illiterate people. However, their children grown up in America, as well as the children of other minority groups, went to public schools.

As with other immigrant groups, American values and ways were introduced in the schools, these children becoming both bilingual and bicultural as a result of growing up in two different worlds. This facilitated upward movement in American society, but it also fostered intergenerational conflict in the family and often conflict within the individual himself (119).

In *Paper Fish* we see that Carmolina's father Marco is a policeman. It is certain that he got some degree of education in order to be a policeman. Grandma Doria is resentful because of her son's job, and life as a policeman. What all the southern Italian immigrants feared in even their own country happened, according to Grandma Doria, in America shattering the ties of her son's family. She prefers her son ran his father's store or led a life similar to the life they had in Italy. Then, she believed they would all be happy. Putting the blame on the city, that is America, she tells her feelings as follows:

Marco, he was never home; he wore everyday the police uniform and went out where people were murdered, were butchered like pigs in the sties. He didn't gather olive, sit in the sun, but was instead white like a sheet with his eyes watching the guns, the shooting, the chopping of people in their own beds (De Rosa, 64).

The story takes place in summer, so we don't know Carmolina's acculturation period at school. However, through the end of the story we see that Carmolina's total belief to the stories of her Grandmother starts to shatter. We may not tell for sure but this can be because of the education she got at school. On

looking at the stars, “Grandma said they were angels, she always said, Carmolina, the sky she full of angels to watch over us so we no get lost, but was it? Maybe they were just stars”(108).



CONCLUSION

In this study, three novels written by female authors from different ethnic groups are analyzed. The reason why these three novels have been chosen is the fact that they belong to the writers from three different minority groups that have migrated to the United States in different period of history and that all the authors are female. The main purpose of our study is to reflect the perception of America through the eyes of female immigrants.

The years that the novels published and the periods in which the plots take place are different for each novel, which means they reflect different periods in American history. However, the protagonists, who are the personifications of the authors, share similar experiences: as female immigrants, the decision to emigrate does not belong to them but it is usually their fathers or husbands, who have the right to choose. They usually experience double disadvantage in that they not only suffer from the adaptation process to fit into the new culture but also the difficulties because of their gender. In the alien culture, full of discrimination, while parents try hard to teach their ethnic culture and attach much importance to their family ties, their children growing up in America, experience conflicts, and better than males, females, who appear to believe cordially the notion that “everyone could better themselves in American society...” (Campbell and Kean, 1997:53), also have to challenge with the old values shaped mostly by patriarchal codes. In these respects it is seen that the perception of America in these three novels from different ethnic groups remains the same.

In all of the novels of our study, the protagonists experience the assimilation process and also a degree of alienation to their own culture. Usually the ones coming to the United States as grown ups try to lead a similar life they had in the Old World. They try to preserve their ethnic values and transmit these values to the new generations.

This can be exemplified by grandma Doria in *Paper Fish*, who told endless stories and her memories of the homeland to her granddaughter Carmolina, a third generation Italian American; by Man Yee's mother in *Paper Daughter*, teaching her daughter Man Yee to be obedient and submissive in order to be marriageable according to Chinese Culture, and by Sara's tyrannical father in *Bread Givers*, trying to preserve and expose the values of the highly patriarchal Jewish culture to his four daughters, to whom he gave belittling nicknames as follows; Bessie, "the burden bearer" and sometimes "the old maid"; Mashah, "the empty head"; Fania, and Sara, "the blood and iron".

This may be because these grown up immigrants are too old to get education which is usually the most important means of assimilation into the new society as it enables the immigrants to learn the culture and the language of the host country. Language is a great barrier to assimilation, especially for females who have already been wives and mothers before arrival, (and who don't work in the host country as well), they can't go beyond their ghettos which are usually their little hometowns like Hester Street in *Bread Givers*, where mostly Jewish people live; Little Italy—Berrywood Street in *Paper Fish*, and in 1970s Denver in *Paper Daughter*, where Man Yee and her family lived with her aunt's family. Therefore, they continue to live according to the life style they know among the people of their own ethnicity.

Also these mothers tried to teach their daughters the only way of life they knew. However, their daughters born or/and grown up in America, and educated in American public schools, came face to face with a different set of values and as a result, a different way of life. This difference created a severe conflict between the mothers and daughters. Their daughters started not to listen to their mothers and not to show respect as the teachings of their mothers had no use in the New World. Mothers of these second generation Americanized daughters also lost their confidence and felt uneasy as the gap between their children got bigger and bigger as happened in the novel *Paper Fish* to Man Yee's mother.

Moreover, their children, growing up in America, are the ones who suffer

most as they go through identity crisis belonging to no world; to the Old World, where their families come from or to the New World, where they were born or grew up. They are the people in between. They can speak the language of the New World; as in Man Yee's case, she even helped her parents who never learned English, being the "American voice of the family, the connection between [their] basement room and the outside world"(Mar, 160).

However, the children of first generation immigrants didn't merely learned the language, they also learned, especially females, to redefine the values taught to them. The immigration experience, and the consequent assimilation process, help the weaker members of the family that are women and the children, to readdress their roles and reject old values and certain traditions. They learn to be independent individuals who is very contrary to their ethnic cultures which required full acceptance of belonging to a community and attaching importance to the family other than one's individuality; and as a result, they experience conflicts over the values and their ethnicity..They don't feel like real Jews, Chinese, and Italian. They don't feel like American, either.

Therefore, before redefining and accepting their ethnic self they go through a crisis of identity along with a painful alienation and separation period on the way to gaining their self identity. In this period, usually they get away from their parents and the community they lived in, rejecting their ethnicity and the old world ties; like Sara in *Bread Givers* who ran away all the boundaries of the old world, personified by her tyrannical father Reb Smolinsky, to another part of town to get education and be independent and self sufficient like Americans, though she had no accommodation, no job and no money except for the little amount, her mother gave; like Man Yee in *Paper Daughter*, who leaves her family by attending Harvard University though she could also attend a university where her parents lived; and like Carmolina, experiencing crisis of identity in *Paper Fish*, who is "lost in the forest" trying to find a way to home.

They try to fit into the majority group and try to be Americanized. To be Americanized meant to be independent and self sufficient. However, this required gaining economic independence. Therefore, they, especially the females believed they could achieve this through education. Like Sara and Man Yee, later to be Elaine, did anything they could to get this education. In the end, reaching their goals, they became independent, self sufficient, Americanized immigrants though it meant to reject their backgrounds, the old values, and worse of all their families.

As three of the novels are highly autobiographical, at the early years of their lives, the protagonists as well as the authors, being female and children, are in the borders of their houses or at most in their neighborhoods. As a result, being again among the same gender; females are together with their mothers and sisters as their fathers are outside, working. (Though Reb Smolinsky Sara's father does not work, he is outside, anyway, doing charity work.) Usually mothers are at home if they don't work. Even if they work, they do the jobs which don't require intercourse with English speaking people. Man Yee's mother in *Paper Daughter* was working in a restaurant's kitchen, for example. Her father was the one who was serving and communicating with the outer world. Though she was working as a waitress before she got married, Carmolina's mother in *Paper Fish*, left work and was at home all day long cooking and doing the housework in their cold water apartment. Highly patriarchal Italian culture didn't let women work.

Only children had a way out; that is, the education as in all the protagonists case. With the education they have the chance to know the new culture and become aware of the fact that they have to be Americanized in order to be successful and to lead an independent life enabling them to get the right to choose, to say no to the oppressive values of the Old World. This process is not easy. They experience an alienation process and they first deny their own culture.

However, they cannot be happy anyway. In the end, after an identity crisis, sharing similar disappointments, struggles and being exposed to similar prejudices and discrimination in addition to poor socioeconomic conditions, all the protagonists

realize their ethnic self and accept that they are not Jewish, Chinese or Italian or American but they are Jewish American, Chinese American, and Italian American.

We see that in the novels, before arrival, America is reflected as the land of opportunities which will realize the poor immigrant's American Dream. It is a place where all their troubles in their hometowns will come to an end, offering a bright future. However, after arriving they recognized that this land is actually a land of disappointments, disillusion, and struggles and a land full of prejudices, discrimination and poor economic conditions. In all the novels we studied we observe that immigrants suffer from severe poverty. The ones who are mostly affected by poverty are mothers who have to cook the meal, warm their house in winter and feed the crying children at home.

Also, immigrants, especially the adult first comers, only wanted to get rid of the burdens on their shoulders, not desiring to lose their values, and get Americanized ones.

Their daughters, observing a different value system which may accept females as independent persons, redefined their values and rejected their patriarchal backgrounds. Especially Sara in *Bread Givers* rejected the teachings of her Talmudic Scholar father who spoiled his three sister's life by not letting them to decide on their own to get married to whom they wanted and by choosing according to his criteria his rich and religious son-in-laws, but in time who turned out to be a "crook" and a "gambler". These daughters reassessed their values but the price they paid was enormous, they broke their family ties, never to be the same again, in order to free themselves.

In conclusion, our study reveals how female immigrants view the United States, which became a leading power with the help of many immigrants. To sum up, immigrants who came to the United States with their American Dreams in their hearts could not find the conditions they had been looking for. Their children, on the other hand, tried to adapt to the American way of life and rejected the Old World

values and replaced them with the New World values. However, still most of them did not feel themselves either belonging to the Old World or the New World, as a result, experienced crisis of identity. They may have reached some of their goals but in turn lost their identities.



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