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THE GENDERED ETHNIC SELF IN SELECTED FICTIONS OF AMY TAN AND BHARATI MUKHERJEE

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ABSTRACT

"Immigrants were American history," wrote Oscar Handlin in his book The Uprooted. His argument implies that the history of migration is fundamental to American identity; that all Americans are descendants of immigrants; and that American selfhood is founded on a seemingly paradoxical sense of mutual differences. The depth and complexity of American literature and culture was due to the inherent ambiguity of a common national identity as well as racial disparities. Knowing ethnicity is a critical element of American identity. The term "ethnicity" is derived from the older adjective and noun form "ethnic," which can be traced back to the Greek word "Ethnikos," which refers to non-Israelites or Gentiles in the Greek Bible. In a prominent American scholar debate about Mccarthyism in 1953, David Reisman expanded the dimension of the word "ethnicity." After twelve years in North America, both the United States and Canada, Bharati Mukherjee returned to India in 1973. The year-long sabbatical from Canada, chronicled by Mukherjee and her Canadian husband Clark Blaise in Days and Nights in Calcutta, was not a homecoming (1977),enabled Mukherjee to conceptualize her migrant position: ―The year in India had forced me to view myself more as an immigrant than an exile (Blaise and Mukherjee 296). Through the year as a ―desolate tourist‖ in her birthplace, Mukherjee's conception of her migrant position changes from exile in Canada to immigrant (297); she transformed. In 1988, she transformed yet again and became a naturalized citizen of the United States of America.

Keywords: Ethnic, Selected Fictions, Amy Tan, Bharati Mukherjee