

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

8 MAY 1945 UNIVERSITY / GUELMA

جامعة 8 ماي 1945/قالمة

FACULTY OF LETTERS AND LANGUAGES

كلية الآداب و اللغات

DEPARTMENT OF LETTERS & ENGLISH LANGUAGE

قسم الآداب و اللغة الإنجليزية



Option: Literature

Amy Tan's The Joy Luck Club (1989) as A Work of Migration Literature

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters and English Language in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Language and Culture**

BOARD OF EXAMINERS

Chair: Mrs. SETITI Rinad
Examiner: Mrs. BOURSACE Houda
Supervisor: Dr. BOUREGAA Meryem

M.A.A University of 8 May 1945-Guelma
M.A.A University of 8 May 1945-Guelma
M.C.B University of 8 May 1945-Guelma

Submitted by:

TOUAHRI Iyed Eddine

DJEBAIRIA Mohamed Tahar

Supervised by: Dr. BOUREGAA Meryem

June 2025

Acknowledgements

First, we would like to express my deepest gratitude to our supervisor, Dr. Bouragaa Meryem for her continuous support, valuable feedback, and kind encouragement throughout this work. Her guidance helped us stay focused and improve our writing at every step.

We would also like to extend our sincere thanks to the respected members of the jury for their time, effort, and insightful evaluation of my dissertation. Their comments and observations are truly appreciated and contribute greatly to the value of this academic work.

We would also like to thank all the teachers and staff at the Department of English for providing a helpful and supportive learning environment. Our appreciation goes as well to our classmates and friends who shared this journey with me and offered their advice and motivation.

Finally, we are thankful to our families for their love, patience, and constant support during the entire process of writing this dissertation. Without them, this work would not have been possible.

Abstract

This dissertation examines *the Joy Luck Club* (1989) as a work of migration literature that narrates the complex journey and experiences of four Chinese mothers and their daughters in the United States of America. The novel clearly presents the main characteristics of migration literature such as displacement, in-betweenness, nostalgia, cultural hybridity, identity crisis, cultural clash, and the continuous search for belonging. These aspects reflect the historical and cultural realities of minorities in America. Through their stories, the novel addresses the cultural and generational conflict between them. Here the novel depicts the difficulties of maintaining one's cultural roots while adapting to this new environment. The mothers hold firmly to their Chinese traditions and values, while their American raised daughters embraced the American ideals and mentality. Even though they had a big cultural gap between them, but they worked towards reconciliation. This study approaches migration literature as a historical, cultural and literary phenomenon that defines minority literature. In this sense, *The Joy Luck Club* (1998) stands as a significant example of migration literature through presenting its core features

Key Words: Migration Literature, Identity, Nostalgia, In-betweenness, Hybridity, Cultural Clash, Chinese American.

Dedication

This work is lovingly dedicated to my dear mother. I chose to continue my studies and earn this Master's degree to honor her and to make her proud. Her love, strength, and endless support gave me the courage to keep going and never give up.

To my father, thank you for always being there, believing in me, and quietly supporting me through every step of this journey.

To my family, I hope this achievement brings pride and joy to all of you, just as your presence has brought comfort and strength to me.

Finally, to the people who once doubted me or disappointed me. I thank you, too. Your doubt became my drive, and your silence became my motivation. I turned disappointment into determination, and this success is proof of that.

Touahri Iyed Eddine

Dedication

First and above all, I want to thank Allah for his endless grace and mercy. This success is by his favor, not by my own effort

To my dear parents, who have supported me unconditionally since day one. Their constant presence has been my strongest foundation

To my brother, who has always been my support and strength in this world, his instructions and presence have always given me stability in every step

To my sisters, whose sincere prayers have accompanied me along this journey, their support meant more than words could express

To my supervisor, for her valuable guidance, patience, and continuous efforts that have contributed greatly to the accomplishment of this work

To my dear friends, whose constant support and true companionship have been a light throughout this journey.

Djebairia Mohamed Tahar

Table of Content

Acknowledgements	I
Abstract	II
Dedication	III
Dedication	IV
Introduction	1
Chapter One: Theoretical Background:	4
I.1 Migration Literature: Definition, Types, and Features	4
I. 2 Chinese Migration and Chinese American Literature	11
I.3 Migration Literature and Postcolonial Theory	13
Chapter Two: The Joy Luck Club as a Migration Narrative.....	22
II. 1 The Mother's Experiences: Displacement, Nostalgia, Cultural Mixing.....	22
II.1 Daughters Experiences: Identity, Belonging, and Hybridity	32
Chapter Three: Culture and Identity in <i>The Joy Luck Club</i>	42
III.1 The Mothers' History and Cultural Memory	42
III.2 Reconciliation and Identity Construction across Generations	44
Conclusion	55
Works Cited	57
Résumé	60
ملخص.....	61

Introduction

Amy Tan's work is a powerful novel that explores the complex lives of four Chinese immigrant mothers and their American born daughters. The narrative presents a series of personal experiences and cultural memories that reflect the inner and outer struggles of individuals living between two different worlds. Through its deeply emotional and personal storytelling, the novel offers a valuable insight into the generational, linguistic, and cultural gaps that arises within immigrant families. This story is not just about personal journeys, but also, about how individuals construct their identities while carrying memories, values, and beliefs across cultural boundaries. The joy luck club presents characters who find themselves balancing between traditions of their heritage and the demands of their new environment. The current study scrutinizes the key themes associated with migration literature, a genre that focuses on the emotional, social, and cultural transformations that take place when individuals or families leave their homeland and settle in a new country. The novel provides strong illustrations of displacement, nostalgia, hybridity, identity crisis, cultural clash, and the tension of belonging. These elements allow for an exploration migration not simply as a physical move, but as a psychological and emotional journey filled with challenges and adaptations. The mothers in the story bring with them the memories and values of their Chinese background, while the daughters grow up in an American context that often contradicts their mother's beliefs. The novel offers examples of how both generations strive to find a sense of harmony within their experiences.

This dissertation aims to *analyze The Joy Luck Club* as a significant example of migration literature, with the goal of understanding how the novel illustrates core aspects of immigrant life. It attempts to answer several key research questions, most importantly: how can this novel be read as a work of migration literature? The study also seeks to examine the

following: how immigrant identities shaped and transformed throughout the story? What characteristics of migration literature are reflected in the novel's characters and themes? What types of immigrants are represented, and how does their experience vary across generations? In order to answer these questions, the research draws on postcolonial theory, migration studies, and cultural criticism. These combined approaches make it possible to explore how literary texts like *The Joy Luck Club* can represent deeper cultural and emotional realities tied to the immigrant experiences.

Migration literature is understood in this research as a literary genre that addresses the lives of those who have left their homeland and are navigating the process of building a new identity in a different cultural context. It is not only concerned with travel or displacement but also with memory, cultural preservation, belonging, and negotiation between conflicting identities. Characters within this genre often face challenges such as losing or adapting cultural practices, feeling emotionally distant from their roots, and dealing with language barriers. These issues are all present in the novel, where Chinese mothers and their American born daughters live in a continuous state of in-betweenesse, affected by their different languages, environments, and ways of thinking. The novel provides space for reflection on how cultural values are passed on or resisted, and how personal identity becomes a site of constant negotiations.

The methodology adopted in this dissertation brings together different academic perspectives to analyze the novel more deeply. Drawing postcolonial theory, migration studies, and cultural critics, the research investigates the portrayal of displacement, hybrid identity, intergenerational trauma, and cultural conflict. These frameworks provide the tools to interpret the behaviors, decisions, and values of the novel's characters in light of the historical and social forces that shape immigrant life. The cultural values carried by the mothers are examined through their storytelling, traditions, and interactions with their

daughters. Meanwhile, the daughters' lives reveal how individuals born in the host country adapt differently, often distancing themselves from the cultural norms of their parents.

Through this lens, the novel becomes more than just a fictional account, it becomes a literary reflection of real world tensions and emotions shared by immigrant communities.

In focusing on these elements, the dissertation contributes to a deeper understanding of how literature can capture and represent the lived experiences of immigrants. It highlights the way in which cultural memory, identity shifts, and family relationships are impacted by migration. By analyzing the novel through the lens of migration literature, the study provides insights into how personal stories reflect broader historical and social dynamics. This approach allows for a nuanced discussion of how individuals build identity and belonging while living between two worlds. The emotional weight of such experiences is especially strong when told from the perspectives of both mothers and daughters, as each generation faces its own unique struggles, yet remains connected by shared heritage.

Chapter One: Theoretical Background:

The first chapter in this work is a theoretical one. It examines the nature of Migration Literature as an important writing that appeared in the 60s to give a voice to those who could not express their feelings and portray their experiences during their journey of being immigrants in a foreign country. Therefore, this chapter is an intent to define Migration Literature and present its types, characteristics, and its relation with The Post-Colonial Theory. The second section of this chapter turns to a specific example: Chinese migration to America. This section explores the reasons behind Chinese migration and the different forms that it has taken over time. It also discusses the unique features of Chinese American writing and shows how Chinese American literature fits into the larger body of migration literature. By looking at these writings, we can see how Chinese American authors express their struggles, hopes, and cultural blend.

I.1 Migration Literature: Definition, Types, and Features

“Enclosed in my own four walls, I found myself as an immigrant imprisoned in a foreign country; ... I saw my family as strange aliens whose foreign customs, rites, and very language defied comprehension..., they forced me to participate in their bizarre rituals; ... I could not resist.” (Kafka 16)

In Kafka’s words, he sees himself like an immigrant stuck in a strange land, where even family and familiar customs feel foreign. This simple image shows that Migration Literature is about more than just moving, it be about feeling lost, out of place, and always searching for a true home. In addition, it shows how identities evolve and blend, “we are all migrants,” a phrase that captures the universal nature of migration experiences (Babaei). In addition, according to Mahdi Babaei Migration Literature refers to works that are produced during the times of migrations that are full with migrations experiences, works like books,

stories, and even poems. This Literature sometimes change the way stories are written, using different language or style to show the mix of cultures.

Migration literature tells the stories of people who leave their homes to start a new life in another place, it talks about their struggles in order to reach their dreams, it talks about a child grips his mother's hand with wide eyes full of both fear and wonder. Migration is not only about crossing borders but it is social, scatological, spiritual and culture experience as Salman Rushdie states, "It may be that writers in my position, exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back" (Rushdie 10). Migration literature is the voice, the picture, and the piece of art that describes the details of some long journey that contains a lot of memories and scenes, a journey of someone who left dreams, language, and stories behind in order to create new ones in a whole new world searching for belonging Edward Said highlights this emotional struggle when he writes, "Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place" (Said 173). Sometimes it takes strong hard feelings. "I once sacrificed my life to keep my parents' promise. This means nothing to you, because to you promises mean nothing" (Tan 49). Such quote demonstrates how migration cost deep emotional suffer, the sacrifices made, and besides all of that, there is a big generational gap in understanding those struggles.

But for many migrant writers, their experience goes beyond just moving to a new place, it also means writing in a language that is not fully their own, this is where minor literature comes in; Minor literature is written by people who belong to minority group but use the language of the majority to tell their stories and write about. It is not called "minor" because it is less important, but because it comes from voices that are often overlooked

Migration literature and minor literature probably are the same in delivering stories and picturing scenes, but Migration Literature is often seen as a part the larger body of Minor

Literature because it tells the complex stories of migration through a language that migrants use to express their unique experiences. Both migration and minor literature share three key characteristics which are; deterritorialization, political commitment and collective value outlined by Kafka in his article (*Toward a Minor Literature*.)

First, it shows deterritorialization, where migrants reshape a dominant language to express new realities; as they put it, “A minor literature doesn’t come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language” (Deleuze and Guattari 16). Migrant writers use the language of the majority as tool for migrant revolution.

Secondly, Migration Literature carries a strong political commitment, meaning that personal narratives become powerful critiques of social injustice: “Minor literature is completely political because its cramped space forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics” (Deleuze and Guattari 17). Accordingly, Migration Literature is a political Literature that tackles the political issues that minorities suffer from.

Lastly, migration literature gains its collective value by uniting individual voices into a shared expression of resistance and transformation, as seen in the way it “expresses a collective assemblage of enunciation, uniting individual outcries into a single, transformative force” (Deleuze and Guattari 18).

Many writers believe that they often feel displaced and always searching for a sense of belonging and stability but never finding it completely. Martin Heidegger tried to express this idea when he says, “Homelessness is coming to be the destiny of the world” (Heidegger 219). He suggests that because of changes like culture, language, and homes, people no longer feel deeply connected to one place or identity.

Edward Said explains that being a migrant or living in exile creates a “discontinuous state of being” (Said 357), meaning that a person no longer feels fully connected to their

original home. In some cases, it can even feel like being in conflict with where they come from. Migration and the crossing of cultural borders are central themes in modern discussions about identity and belonging. As Said points out, migration is not just about physical movement it also “involves a ‘discontinuous state of being,’ a form of picking a quarrel with where you come from” (Said 358). Over time, this experience has “been transformed ‘into a potent, even enriching, motif of modern culture’” (Said 359). Furthermore, Said states, “I have never belonged anywhere, and yet I belong everywhere” (Said, *Out of Place* 12).

People move from one place to another for all kinds of reasons, and migration can generally be divided into four main types: internal migration, international migration, voluntary migration, and forced migration, these different types help explain why and how people leave their homes. Some move for better job opportunities, others for safety, and some simply for a fresh start. Migration has always been a part of human history, shaping societies in different ways. As Castles, de Haas, and Miller put it, "Migration is a central dynamic within globalization and a key force of social transformation" (Castles, de Haas, and Miller 10).

Internal migration happens when people move within the same country. One of the most common examples is rural-to-urban migration, where people leave small villages or towns to live in bigger cities. Most of the time, they move for better jobs, education, or healthcare. Cities grow because of this kind of movement, and it has been happening for generations. The *International Handbook of Migration and Population Distribution* explains, “Urbanization has been one of the most significant migration patterns of the modern era, driven by industrialization and economic opportunity” (White 45). However, the opposite also happens, some people leave cities and move to smaller towns or the countryside. This is called urban-to-rural migration, and it usually happens when people want a quieter lifestyle, cheaper living costs, or just a break from the fast-paced city life.

International migration is when people move from one country to another. Some do it legally, with visas or work permits, while others migrate without official approval. This is called irregular (undocumented) migration, and it happens when people leave their country even though they do not have the right paperwork. Many do this because they feel they have no other choice. According to Castles, de Haas, and Miller, “Irregular migration has become a global challenge, shaped by restrictive immigration policies and the persistence of economic inequalities” (Castles, de Haas, and Miller 56). In other words, stricter immigration laws and financial struggles push many people to take risks, even when it means leaving without legal status.

Voluntary migration is when people choose to move. This can be for economic reasons, like finding a better-paying job, or for personal reasons, like retiring in a warm, sunny place. Some people just want a fresh start in a new country, while others are drawn to different lifestyles. Unlike forced migration, voluntary migration is about making a decision rather than being forced to leave.

Forced migration, on the other hand, happens when people have no choice but to leave. This includes refugees and asylum seekers, who flee from war, persecution, or violence in their home country. Another form is environmental migration, which happens when people are displaced due to natural disasters, climate change, or environmental destruction. The *International Handbook of Migration and Population Distribution* explains, “Climate change is an increasingly significant driver of displacement, particularly in vulnerable regions” (Black 112). Unfortunately, some people are also forced to migrate because of human trafficking and forced labor, where they are taken against their will and exploited. Unlike voluntary migration, forced migration often involves fear, danger, and uncertainty about the future.

These types of migration are often connected. For example, someone might leave their home country because they cannot find work, but they could also be escaping war or the effects of climate change at the same time. Migration is complicated and influenced by many factors, including money, politics, and global events. As *The Age of Migration* states, "Migration is not just about people crossing borders; it is about the transformation of societies on a global scale" (Castles, de Haas, and Miller 5). It is not just about individuals moving; it is about the way countries, cultures, and economies change as a result.

Migration literature focuses on themes like movement, displacement, identity, and cultural change. It tells the stories of people who live between two different cultures, and societies and often feeling caught between two worlds. These works capture the personal, social, and political sides of migration, showing how it shapes who people are and where they feel home, feel safe, and feel they belong.

One of the most common themes in migration literature is the feeling of not belonging. Migrants often feel like they are outsiders, unsure of where they truly fit in. Edward Said, in *Out of Place*, shares his own experience of exile, showing how migration can make someone feel like they do not fully belong anywhere (Said 1999). This struggle appears in many migration stories, where characters far away from home but also try to adapt to a new place.

Another key idea is how identity changes over time. Migration literature challenges the belief that identity stays the same. Instead, it shows that identity or who we are is shaped by different cultures and experiences. Stuart Hall, in *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, explains that identity is not fixed; it keeps evolving through migration and cultural encounters (Hall 1990). Many migration stories explore this by showing characters who feel torn between old traditions and new ways of life.

Migration Literature also highlights cultural mixing. Migrants do not just leave one culture behind and take on another. Instead, they blend different cultural influences, creating a mix of traditions, languages, and beliefs. Iain Chambers, in *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*, explains that migration breaks cultural boundaries and leads to new, mixed identities that do not belong to just one place (Chambers 1994). Many migration stories show this mix, with characters who speak different languages, follow different traditions, or struggle to find a balance between the two.

In the space that lies between the familiar and the alien, where the borders of identity are constantly redrawn, a 'third space' emerges a productive zone in which the forces of hybridity and translation create a new terrain for cultural expression and resistance. This in-between is not simply a gap or a void, but a dynamic field where the self is continuously reconstituted through the interplay of difference and negotiation. (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 112).

Homi Bhabha's idea of "in-betweenness" also plays a big role in Migration Literature. Many migrant characters exist in a middle space, not fully belonging to one culture or the other. This can be difficult, but it can also be a space where people create something new. Bhabha's theory shows how migrants find ways to fit into different worlds while keeping parts of their own identity. "The third space of enunciation is the site where the rigid boundaries between cultures are dismantled, allowing the migrant to negotiate multiple worlds and forge a hybrid identity that retains fragments of both the old and the new." (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 112)

Another strong theme is nostalgia and the search for home. Many migration stories talk about missing home or struggling to make a new one. Home is often a complicated idea because migrants might feel attached to where they came from but never fully accepted in their new country. This feeling is common in postcolonial literature, as Gayatri Spivak

discusses in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*. Many migrant characters long for the past but also try to build a future.

Migration Literature also questions the idea that cultures and countries have clear borders. It shows how migration changes societies and identities, proving that cultures are not isolated. Ulrich Beck, in *The Cosmopolitan Vision*, explains that in a world shaped by migration, no culture remains untouched by global movement (Beck 2006). Many migration stories explore this, showing characters who keep strong connections with their home country while adapting to a new one.

On top of personal struggles, Migration Literature also talks about the challenges migrants face in society. Many stories focus on issues like discrimination, poverty, and political struggles, giving a voice to people whose stories are often ignored. The book *Migration, Culture, and Identity: Making Home Away*, edited by Yasmine Shamma and Suzan Ilcan, looks at how migrants rebuild their lives despite hardships. Migration literature often highlights injustice, inequality, and the difficulties of living in a new place.

Overall, Migration Literature questions traditional ideas of home, identity, and culture. It shows how migration shapes people's lives, revealing both the struggles and the new opportunities it brings. Whether it is about feeling out of place, mixing cultures, missing home, or fighting for a better life, Migration Literature captures what it means to move, change, and adapt in a world where migration is more common than ever.

I. 2 Chinese Migration and Chinese American Literature

Migration Literature and postcolonial theory are deeply connected, as both examine displacement, identity, and cultural change. Postcolonial theory offers a critical lens to see how historical and political forces, especially colonialism, shape migration, while migration

literature brings these ideas to life through personal and shared stories of struggle and resilience

In his book *Out of Place*, Edward Said captures the sense of exile felt by migrants, describing it as a “discontinuous state of being” where one is always caught between different cultural identities (Said 1999). This idea of feeling “out of place” reflects postcolonial concerns about belonging and displacement.

Stuart Hall, in *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, challenges the notion of a fixed identity. He argues that identity is not stable but is continuously redefined through migration and cultural encounters “cultural identity is a matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being,' a shifting location, a production” (Hall 1990). This fluid view of identity supports the understanding that migration reshapes who we are over time.

Iain Chambers, in *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*, shows how migration leads to cultural hybridity by disrupting fixed cultural identities and creating new mixed forms “migration disrupts traditional cultural boundaries and produces new, mixed cultural forms that challenge the notion of a fixed cultural identity” (Chambers 1994). This blurring of boundaries resonates with postcolonial ideas, such as those discussed by Homi Bhabha, where differences merge to form something innovative and unique.

Similarly, Spivak says, “the traditional idea of home is destabilized by the forces of displacement and the legacies of colonialism” (Spivak 1999). She examines how colonial histories complicate the meaning of home. Migrants may feel tied to their homeland while also struggling to belong in a new society, revealing the complex nature of home and identity in a postcolonial context.

Both Migration Literature and Postcolonial Theory question the idea of strict national and cultural borders. They show that cultures and nations are not isolated but are constantly

shaped by migration and historical movements. Ulrich Beck, in *The Cosmopolitan Vision*, explains that migration forces societies to reconsider their ideas of belonging and national identity “in a world of constant movement, the idea of fixed borders is an illusion, as migration continually reshapes our sense of national identity” (Beck 2006). This reflects postcolonial concerns about how colonial histories continue to shape modern nations.

Moreover, Homi Bhabha asserts, “the site of enunciation is a space where colonial discourses are disrupted, allowing for the emergence of hybrid identities” (Bhabha 115). This insight further links postcolonial theory to migration literature by showing how migration challenges and transforms established cultural boundaries. Such hybridity presupposes the emergence of what Bhabha calls the third space.

These perspectives illustrate how migration literature not only recounts the journeys of individuals but also challenges and transforms the understanding of identity, home, and belonging in a postcolonial world.

I.3 Migration Literature and Postcolonial Theory

Migration has been the most highlighted movement of the modern era as a result of its wide Spread all over the world and it Is was defined by specialists as “Migration is the movement of persons away from their place of usual residence, either across an international border or within a state” (International Organization for Migration) meaning that migration is always related to changing one’s original geographical location to another new one.

History shows a strong bond existing between the Migration of Asian people and the Immigration movements to America as historians said that “Asian Americans have recently been reported as the largest incoming immigrant population and the fastest growing racial group”(Paik et al.) this explains that Asian Americans are the largest newcomers to the United States of America and how fast they are growing as a racial group formulating their own

communities there. Also, to show that China has a long history full of migration experiences to Latin America especially to the United States of America, Because Between 1850 and the Great Depression over than 300 thousand Chinese migrants moved to Latin American countries (Chang Rodríguez et al) This important state shows the huge numbers of Chinese immigrants and the large scale of Chinese Migration to Latin American countries and the USA specifically as the perfect destination that They chose. Since the immigration law changed in 1965, the number of the Asian Americans has grown significantly not only affecting the overall Population there, but also the American society became more varied after many new ethnic groups arrived (Ngai).

There are many reasons behind this international phenomenon that is still Occurring until this very moment of the present times, which may vary from one person to another depending on the ongoing circumstances in his country. However, individuals that choose to migrate are generally looking for a higher quality of life conditions, “There are many reasons driving people to migrate to another area. The most common and general reason will be the desire to pursue a better life in the new area.” (“Indo-Chinese Migration” 1) this quote explains the human’s continuous pursuit of living a life of ease and comfort through moving to a new place which is the most common and shared reason in all migration experiences.

Scoping on the Chinese Experiences we can see that Chinese people had similar reasons that pushed them to migrate to The United States of America ,The mid –1800s the California gold rush and the booming of the railroad industry attracted a lot of Chinese laborers , in this sense Wong said that "The group now known as Chinese Americans can trace a long history in this country dating back to the first influx after the gold rush of 1848 and the massive importation of laborers to build the transcontinental railroad in the 1860s."(Wong 39).Because of the American need for workers on the transcontinental railroad, Chinese laborers saw it as a good opportunity to migrate and work there to escape the horrible

circumstances that they suffered back in China. Many of Chinese people run away from the Rigid political and social restrictions of China that prevented them in a way or another from feeling that sense of liberty and freedom financially and socially , Hoping to find better chances and opportunities to start their business projects in a more liberal environment and societies like America (Chang-Rodríguez et al.; Chang; Meager; pan) those political and societal constraints of the limited freedom of self-expression , and the continuous government's interference in their private businesses and enterprises lowered their chances to be financially and socially free which served as a strong push reason to leave China . While America offered them more space and freedom because they had more chances and support to launch their investments and gain more growth on the personal level. In this vain Kristof mentioned that” In the 1950s, chairman Mao Zedong implemented the hukou system to control the population by categorizing citizens as either rural or urban, strictly enforcing this to prevent rural farmers from flooding the cities” (Kristof) in this sense the hukou system strongly prevented rural Chinese citizens from better getting opportunity in the cities. Because of this restricting system, migration became the best option they are left with.

The Chinese migration to America took many form as the earliest pattern was when they arrived to America as labor contracted workers because they worked in projects like plantation economies or building railways in north America and it was described to be transitional because they went back to China after their contracts ended showing how poor they were and the size of the economic hardships they were facing to accept working in such exploitative conditions , They worked for long hours to get some food , shelters , or low wage salaries in exchange for their painful efforts. Another pattern they followed when heading to America was arriving as merchant entrepreneurs buying goods for as low as maximum and selling them for the highest price they can get with the intention to establish their businesses there (fahrenbruch) accordingly Chinese citizens who migrated to America did not only came

to work as laborers in those fields , but also came with business based mindsets because they did opened restaurants , shops and traded depending on their own hard work to maintain stability and gain respect in this foreign country .

One of the most recent patterns was the “Huaqiao pattern” as Wang named it that was developed in the early 20th century and refers to the quality of Chinese Immigrants, in this vein Wang said “...was that it focused on quality, especially the quality of Chinese among all the Chinese abroad.” (Wang 38) means that this new wave migrated to America with more quality individuals and more skilled ones, it was considered as a shift towards more selective emigration making quality Chinese individuals as a top priority.

Defining the Chinese American literature would be helpful in understanding the characteristics of The Chinese American literature later and it can be simply put as “It is literature by Americans of Asian descent which is concerned with topics relating to identity and ethnicity” (mokrani 19) so this type of literary works is produced by authors of Asian origins living in the United States of America which is specialized in writing about major themes. As it treats topics like Identity and ethnicity. accordingly, “Chinese American literature is a mode of expression that negotiates the distance between ancestral and American realities, often giving voice to personal and collective memory” (Cheung 2) this definition shows how Chinese American literature was used not only for personal storytelling but also to a deeper purpose which is to preserve identity, memory and culture across generations. Like any other literary type ,The Chinese American literature stands by its own as a whole section in the history of the American literary heritage and this is because of the huge amounts of contributions Chinese writers made within the American literature and its own Special aspects that characterize it , ranging from the techniques used when writing , its structure to the wide range of themes that it treats which differentiate it from any other Literary type .Asian

American literature and the Chinese literary works has always been known for mixing the traditional Chinese culture with the experiences of the new arrivals to America.

There are some classical features that define Chinese American literature and characterize it as Lim mentioned that "Asian-American writing exhibits the variety of voices, forms and genres which marks mainstream American literature." (Lim 57) Accordingly, Asian American literature is not limited to one style, theme or technique of writing as it includes many forms like poetry and fiction with different genres such as novels, folktales or memoirs. Chinese American literature is a part of Asian American literature as they both serve the same goal but we can specify it as "Chinese American literature explores the borderland between two cultures, portraying the tensions, adaptations, and creations born of that intersection." (Ling 5) Ling meant that the Chinese American literature scope is on highlighting the space between the Chinese and the American cultural identities, also describing the conflict or the in-betweenness that the characters have experienced moving to America and what they did to adapt to the new American society.

The Chinese American literature does not only reflect or talk about the migration experiences of the character and the hardships they faced navigating their identities but it is also related to the Chinese culture through describing food, Clothing and symbolism bound to the Chinese culture. Accordingly Su and Gopal noted that "Chinese literature has grown over time and now plays a significant role in the literary world" (Su and Gopal 1) through addressing themes of culture and identity. From another angle food has always been one of the main cultural symbols in their literature, Because it served as a preserver of belonging and memory. This quote by Xu "food can be, and has been used by writers to represent the many complex layers of cultural identity and self-identification" (Xu 2) shows the central role food played in the Chinese American literature as they used it metaphorically to describe deep cultural aspects of belonging and beliefs. One of the key aspects Of the Chinese American

literature is its direct connection with culture and identity. Liu showed this relation when he said, “The literary articulation of Chinese American identity often emerges from negotiating cultural belonging and historical memory within the American landscape.” (Liu 148) emphasizing that the cultural identity is shaped by both the heritage and the reality of life on the American landscapes as he described it. Alongside this deeply rooted connection, the Chinese American literary works do talk about the importance of tradition. because ling stated that “Traditional Chinese values—filial piety, collective harmony, respect for ancestors—are often embedded in the family structures and moral codes of Chinese American narratives.” (Ling 9) which means that the Chinese American literature preserves the traditional values and keeps them alive through their narratives of storytelling, showing respect and obedience to elders also keeping the harmony between their communities.

Rituals and customs are recurrent in this literary type. Authors used term like ceremonies and religious practices to show that “Writers embed rituals, religious practices, and family ceremonies to signify cultural continuity and collective memory.” (Cheung14) to show how characters preserved their cultural identities and heritage in this new country through this sacred practice. A good example of this appears in *hundred secret senses* (1955) by Amy tan, where it had Kwan performing Chinese ghost traditional rituals like communicating with spirits and offering food, these practices serve more than just traditions but also to preserve their real identities. *The Frontiers of love* (1956) by Diana Chang explored the symbolism of clothing as it reflected a shift of identities between the western and the Chinese cultural expectations, as an example of that the traditional garments represented family duty, While the western style reflected freedom and modernity.

The key Aspect of the Chinese American literature was symbolism to express different Cultural meanings and to navigate their identities, “Symbols derived from Chinese philosophy, mythology, and religion—dragons, ghosts, red envelopes, yin-yang—recur in

Chinese American narratives as powerful cultural markers.” (Hsia 36) symbols are used and linked to deep cultural meanings and authors utilize them to explore heritage, spirituality and mostly important the identity of the characters. After discussing the aspects Of the Chinese American literature, we should explore how are they presented in the literary works. Authors such as Maxine Hong Kingston have produced Multiple works that reflect their cultural heritage and cultural identity using those aspects, In *the woman warrior* (1976) Maxine Hong Kingston gave a very good example of that saying “When we Chinese girls listened to the adults talking-story, we learned that we failed if we grew up to be but wives or slaves. We could be heroine’s swordswomen.” (Kingston 19) meaning that immigration stories are told and passed through the technic of storytelling, the quote describes the clash between gender roles and self-identifying desire in the new landscape of America.

After seeing how a work like *The woman warrior* (1976) by Maxine Hong Kingston which highlighted how storytelling preserves the Chinese culture, we should also know that the Chinese American literature has its own spot as a migration literature, this literary type shows how the characters immigrated, the hardships they faced, how they adapted to the new life, and how immigration shaped identity. Hsu mentioned, “Chinese American literature serves as a historical testimony to immigration, detailing journeys marked by pain, dislocation, and survival.” (Hsu13) .in the meaning of that the Chinese American literature does not only tell immigration stories but also document them and shows emotions are experiences through this journey. It is also important to understand how characters immigrated to the USA, and highlight what factors affected their decisions, this quote by Zhou “Many Chinese immigrants were sojourners, men who came not to stay but to work and eventually return, shaping a transient narrative in early Chinese American texts.” (Zhou 29). This shows how they were economically driven, in an attempt to survive and provide to their families more than it was a personal Choice after landing in America they were faced by the

harsh living and working conditions as narratives had shown, Lee mentioned that “Facing exclusion laws and racial hostility, Chinese immigrants were denied equal rights, making literature a space to voice their silenced histories.” (Lee 51). This literature became a form of resistance and resilience against the racial stereotyping they faced there and the discrimination they suffered. These tough conditions draw how characters experienced their new lives in America. At this point writers used fiction to picture how immigrants adapted in a new society, which did not fully accept them, “In fiction, Chinese Americans often live between two worlds—economically marginalized, socially excluded, and culturally displaced.” (Kuo 118), this quote shows how characters are stuck between the harsh reality they faced and the promise of the new life, taking cultural displacement, poverty and isolation as literary themes. The emotional and social exclusion created internal conflicts for the characters. Their literature portrayed well the cultural clash between their new world and the old one. Concerning this point Park noted, “Chinese American protagonists are often trapped in a cultural in-between space, struggling to meet the expectations of both heritage and host cultures.” (Park 74) accordingly maintaining balance is difficult between their Chinese traditions and practices with the new American norms, leading to identity crisis and generational clash. This cultural tension left a lasting effect on the characters and even on their children, “The effects of immigration ripple across generations, influencing how language, memory, and belonging are inherited.” (Wong and Santa Ana 135). Here literature reflects how immigration shaped identity across generations through passing culture, trauma and values from the elder generation to the young one.

Many literary Chinese works differentiated between the first generation of immigrants and the American born second generation, as they considered the first generation to be “The first-generation clings to cultural memory, trying to reconstruct a homeland in the new land through rituals and language.” (Chan 92) in order to preserve their original traditions although

facing the harshest conditions. In contrast, the second-generation characters faced that cultural clash and belonging crisis, Ling “Second-generation Chinese Americans frequently struggle to reconcile inherited traditions with their desire for American belonging.” (Ling 35) there is constant belonging struggle that they faced as they found themselves too Chinese to be American and too American for their mothers. The second-generation writers found themselves in a struggle with their parent’s traditional values and the new American mentality that made it hard for them to choose between and individuality. Many³ of them used literature as a strong tool for resistance against the racial stereotyping and discrimination they faced, in this sense Zhou mentioned, “These writers have used literature as a space to resist both the racial oppression from mainstream America and the cultural restrictions imposed by traditional Chinese norms.”(Zhou 92) this quote clearly shows how the second-generation writers used their literature to fight back against that stereotyping, as they wrote about their struggles to express their real identity.

Chapter Two: The Joy Luck Club as a Migration Narrative

In this chapter we explore how *The Joy Luck Club* fits squarely within migration literature by examining four key themes; Immigration, Not Belonging, Cultural Mixing, and Nostalgia, first through the experiences of the four mothers, then through their daughters. Each theme shows how leaving one's homeland reshapes identity, how exile breeds both loss and resilience, and how the blending of two cultures can generate new forms of hope. By weaving together critics' perspectives and personal insights, highlighting the ongoing emotional journey of Migration.

II. 1 The Mother's Experiences: Displacement, Nostalgia, Cultural Mixing

When Suyuan Woo, Lindo Jong, An-Mei Hsu, and Ying-Ying St. Clair each stepped onto American soil, they were fleeing very different crises, but all shared a sense of desperate urgency. Suyuan left behind twins during wartime, hoping they might be found later (Tan 5). Lindo escaped an arranged marriage that would have bound her in silence (Tan 105). An-Mei ran away from family shame and violence (Tan 173). Ying-Ying abandoned a fearful childhood marked by superstition (Tan 219).

Critics note how such choices blend survival and sacrifice. Lee argues these women “had no real choice but to seek refuge in America” when war, poverty, or persecution threatened their lives (Lee 62). Wong points out that their departures were also bids to escape cultural captivity— “not just physical danger but the erasure of their own voices” (Wong 78). Kim adds that America promised fresh starts yet demanded that they uproot entire pasts, including family rituals and comforting customs (Kim 55).

Each mother's journey is a testament to both human courage and profound loss. Immigration in the novel emerges as an act of faith, a painful severance from all one has

known, and a hopeful leap toward a future that might restore dignity, if not the old home itself.

Suyuan escaped the Chinese Civil War, leaving her twin daughters behind. Her tragic story was later shared by her friends with her daughter Jing-Mei. In San Francisco, she founded the Joy Luck Club to bring together women like her, to share stories and create a support system. It became a way for her to preserve Chinese culture and offer hope in a new land. She worked hard and met her second husband through family connections, trying to build a new life while keeping her past close. “She had come to San Francisco in 1949 with two suitcases and a newborn baby, and no money in her pocket” (Tan 21).

Lindo left China as a teenager, escaping an arranged marriage by pretending to be an obedient wife until she could leave without shame. In America, she lived on Waverly Place and named her daughter Waverly, hoping to bring her good fortune. Her other children had names like Winston, a nod to winning and strength. Lindo believed that America could offer better opportunities, but she also struggled to pass down her traditions. “I once sacrificed my life to keep my parents’ respect. But now I see it is worse to abandon your own self.” (Tan 252).

An-Mei’s mother had been forced into concubinage and died tragically. An-Mei carried the shame of her mother’s treatment and left China with hope for a new beginning. In the U.S., she joined a church and tried to become part of the community, but her old values sometimes clashed with American ways. As An-Mei said talking about her mother “My mother said she was like a ghost, seeing things nobody else could.” (Tan 242).

Ying-Ying had a wealthy but lonely childhood in China, where she was raised to be quiet and obedient. After a painful first marriage and years of emotional silence, she moved to America with her second husband, Clifford. Though her life seemed peaceful, Ying-Ying still

carried the pain of her past, which made her quiet and distant. She rarely spoke up, and her daughter Lena often felt confused by her silence. Ying-Ying believed in fate and old Chinese traditions, and she didn't always explain her feelings clearly. But in a touching moment, we see her love when Lena breaks down in tears and Ying-Ying holds her close. She says, "The girl grabbed her bag and began to cry. I took her into my arms and comforted her" (Tan 242). This simple act shows how Ying-Ying tries to pass her strength to Lena, not with words, but with care. Even though she struggles to speak about her past, Ying-Ying teaches her daughter that strength can come quietly, through presence, protection, and love.

Even after coming to America, the mothers in *The Joy Luck Club* don't feel at home. They may live in a new country, but a big part of their hearts still lives in China. Their past doesn't just stay in their memories; it comes back again and again in small and big ways. They remember people, smells, food, music, mistakes, and heartbreaks. These memories sometimes bring comfort, but often they bring pain too. They feel torn between two places, two times, and two identities.

Suyuan Woo is deeply haunted by the twin daughters she had to leave behind during the war in China. She left them under a tree with her few remaining belongings, including a photo and a note, hoping someone kind would find them. All her life in America, Suyuan carried the hope that her daughters might still be alive, even though she never told June the whole story. When Suyuan founded the Joy Luck Club, it wasn't just a social gathering, it was her way of creating a little piece of home in a foreign land. The red tablecloths, the Chinese dishes, and the game of mahjong helped her keep her culture alive, but every time she laughed, a sadness sat quietly behind her smile. She missed her daughters and longed for the past she couldn't return to. Even though she remarried and had June, part of her heart was still with the twins she left in China.

Lindo Jong left China at a young age, escaping an arranged marriage she had been forced into as a girl. Although she was smart and brave enough to get out of that situation, she never truly let go of the expectations and traditions she was raised with. In America, Lindo tried to give her children better chances. She named her daughter Waverly after the street they lived on, hoping it would bring luck. But Lindo often felt like she didn't fully belong, not in China and not in America. She used what she called her "American face," a fake smile she wore to hide her real feelings when she was hurt or ashamed as she said "I put on my American face. I was proud of my quiet dignity, my Chinese humility." (Tan 289). Deep inside, Lindo missed the values she grew up with, and it bothered her when Waverly rejected Chinese traditions. She saw her daughter drifting away, and it made her feel both angry and sad, like she had lost something precious twice: first in China, and now in America.

An-Mei Hsu carries the memory of her mother, who lived a painful life as a concubine and eventually took her own life. An-Mei was taught by her grandmother that her mother was shameful, a ghost who had no place in their family. But when An-Mei later lived with her mother, she saw the deep suffering her mother went through and began to understand her pain. In America, An-Mei holds onto her mother's strength, even as she feels the weight of the sadness her mother carried. She tries to teach her daughter Rose how to speak up, how to choose her own path, and how not to be passive like she once was. But it's hard for An-Mei to connect with Rose, who lives in a world of therapists and quiet struggles. Sometimes, An-Mei's old stories and warnings don't make sense to Rose, and that makes An-Mei feel helpless, like her past doesn't matter anymore, even though it shaped everything she is.

Ying-Ying St. Clair is perhaps the most haunted of all. As a child, she was full of spirit and wild energy, but over time, life's traumas dimmed her light. She lost a child, lived through a difficult marriage in China, and was later changed again by her American husband. She became quiet, almost invisible, as if hiding in her own home. She always had a fearful

look on her face, and her daughter Lena inherited that same nervousness and silence. Ying-Ying's sadness wasn't always spoken aloud, but it filled the spaces in her home. She told Lena scary stories and gave her constant warnings, hoping to protect her. But Lena didn't always understand. To her, it just felt like her mother was afraid of everything. Ying-Ying's memories of being unloved and unnoticed in China never left her. She believed she was a "ghost", someone who couldn't be seen or heard and she feared Lena would grow up the same way.

All these mothers share a deep feeling of being stuck between the past and the present. Their lives in America are filled with daily routines, but their hearts are often somewhere far away. They feel that their culture, their language, and their memories are fading, and sometimes, they feel that their daughters don't understand or respect what they've been through.

Critics have also noticed this deep feeling of not belonging. Zhang says that the mothers often feel like outsiders because they don't speak English well and depend on old Chinese sayings that don't always make sense to Americans. Lee says the emotional gap between mothers and daughters shows how far apart their worlds have become. But Wong adds that this painful feeling can also make the mothers stronger, because in the space between cultures, they learn how to survive in new ways.

In the end, these mothers don't belong completely to China or to America. But in the small circle of the Joy Luck Club, they find comfort. They share food, stories, and laughter. They don't have to explain their pain, because the other women already understand it. That small table in San Francisco becomes a piece of home, a place where they can remember, mourn, and hope, all at the same time.

The mothers' lives in America are marked by a creative blending of traditions. Iain Chambers observes that migration "breaks down traditional cultural boundaries and produces new, hybrid forms" (Chambers 94). The mothers do not simply forget their old lives when they arrive in America. Instead, they carry parts of China with them and slowly mix those traditions with new ones they learn in their new home. This mixing is not always smooth or easy—it's something they figure out over time. Each of them finds her own way to keep her culture alive while still trying to fit into American life.

Suyuan Woo, the founder of the Joy Luck Club, brings Chinese traditions into her American home not just through words, but through actions. She gathers three friends regularly to play mahjong, eat traditional dishes, and share stories in their native tongue. At the mahjong table, they laugh, cry, and remember their lives before America. Suyuan even gives her daughter Jing Mei Chinese proverbs and folk tales, but tells them in English. This way, her daughter can still connect with her roots, even if she can't speak Mandarin well. These stories, like the one about the swan feather, are Suyuan's way of passing down culture, not through lessons or books, but through emotion and memory.

Lindo Jong also finds ways to keep her Chinese identity alive in a place that often doesn't understand her. She celebrates American holidays like Thanksgiving but adds her own touch, serving mooncakes and wearing traditional clothes. She teaches Waverly Chinese values, such as honoring your elders and working hard, but also wants her to be strong and successful in an American way. For Lindo, strength is part of her culture. She is like the wind: invisible, but powerful. At times, she uses what she calls her "American face", a smile that hides what she's really feeling, to blend in when she needs to. But deep down, she never forgets who she really is.

An-Mei Hsu blends the past and the present through small but meaningful acts. In her kitchen, she brews strong-smelling herbal teas and medicinal soups, while the radio plays soft

American music in the background. She speaks to her daughter in Chinese, but still makes space for the girl's new ideas. An-Mei's way of mixing cultures comes from the heart. She believes in the power of stories to carry meaning. She doesn't always understand American culture, but she listens and tries to connect. In one scene, she brings a bowl of soup to her daughter, believing it will bring peace, just like her own mother did. This act may seem small, but for An-Mei, it means keeping her family safe with love and tradition.

Ying-Ying St. Clair is the quietest among the mothers, but even in her silence, she blends her old self with her new life. She teaches her daughter about superstition, telling her to finish her rice so she won't marry a bad man. Her home is filled with soft symbols of the past, tiny jade animals, worn silk, red envelopes. She dresses simply, sometimes mixing her old Chinese robes with American shoes or coats. Even when she doesn't speak, her presence carries tradition. Ying-Ying doesn't try to fight against change, but she doesn't let go of her past either. Her silence is full of meaning, like the moon she once wished on as a little girl.

Critics call this cultural blending a "creative hybridity." Wong describes the Joy Luck Club as a kind of "cultural laboratory," where the mothers preserve rituals while making room for new ones (Wong 82). Lee believes that their way of combining respect for old values with new freedoms shows that identity can grow rather than disappear (Lee 75). Kim agrees, saying that new rituals, formed from the mix of both cultures, can be even stronger and more meaningful than either one alone (Kim 68).

In my view, this blending is not only a way to survive but also a way to heal. The mothers don't try to erase their Chinese past or fully become American. Instead, they take what is meaningful from each world and build something new. It's like planting seeds from two different places in the same soil. Some grow strong and familiar, while others bloom into shapes they never expected. This is not a perfect process, it's messy, emotional, and sometimes confusing, but it is real. And it shows us something important: that culture is not

something we leave behind or take in all at once. It grows with us, just like love or memory. The mothers show that we can hold on to the old and still make room for the new.

Nostalgia in *The Joy Luck Club* is both comfort and ache. It drives the mothers to clutch tokens of home; Suyuan's single swan feather, Lindo's faded village photographs, An Mei's protective ribbon, Yingying's jujube seeds, each a bridge to a past that no longer exists. Zhang notes that their memories act as "living presences," guiding daily choices (Zhang 74). Lee describes nostalgia as "a bittersweet heart," offering warmth yet reminding them of what was lost (Lee 80). Wong adds it can burden them with longing even as it empowers them to face today (Wong 85).

Their longing for home comes straight from the heart. When they clutch that swan feather or those faded photos, they're sharing pieces of themselves, the laughter and tears of their old lives, with their daughters. It's like handing over a small lamp in the dark, so the next generation can always find their way back to where they came from. In each story they tell, the past doesn't stay buried; it breathes life into today and lights the path forward, so their children carry both memory and hope in every step they take.

In the prologue of the novel, Amy Tan tells the story of a woman who came to America carrying a single swan feather, a symbol of all the good things she hoped to give to her daughter. This feather, "once had been a creature that flew a thousand li, from one end of China to the other," represents everything the mother wanted to pass on her dreams, her history, and her culture (Tan 3). Though the swan is lost, the feather remains a fragile but powerful piece of the past. This image perfectly explains the mothers' nostalgia: even if they lost their country, they still have something to give.

Suyuan, for example, never forgets the two daughters she had to leave behind during the war. This memory is part of everything she does in America. Even when she starts a new

family and creates the Joy Luck Club, part of her heart is still with the girls she lost. Her longing becomes Jing-Mei's journey when she travels to China to meet her half-sisters. That trip is not just a visit; it's the end of Suyuan's story and the beginning of her daughter's understanding.

Lindo always remembers her life in China, where she had to trick her way out of a marriage she did not want. Though she builds a new life in San Francisco, part of her still holds onto the way things were. When her daughter Waverly wants to marry an American man, Lindo agrees, but with a condition. She tells her daughter to spend their honeymoon in China, in a month full of festivals, so she never forgets where she came from. Later, Lindo herself returns to China after many years, finally reconnecting with the place she left behind.

An-Mei keeps her mother's lessons close. Her ribbon and her belief in silent strength help her teach Rose to stand up for herself. When Rose is mistreated by her American husband, it is An-Mei's voice that encourages her to ask for a divorce and find her strength again. Her past pain becomes a tool for her daughter's freedom.

Ying-Ying, the quietest of all the mothers, holds her memories deep inside. As a child, she believed in ghosts and fate. She keeps her superstitions even in America, but she also wants her daughter Lena to speak up and stop living in silence. When Ying-Ying sees that Lena is trapped in a cold marriage, she tells her, "I once sacrificed my life to keep my parents' respect. I gave up everything. But now I see it is worse to ignore your own voice."

I feel their longing for home comes straight from the heart. When they clutch that swan feather or those faded photos, they're sharing pieces of themselves, the laughter and tears of their old lives, with their daughters. It's like handing over a small lamp in the dark, so the next generation can always find their way back to where they came from. In each story

they tell, the past doesn't stay buried; it breathes life into today and lights the path forward, so their children carry both memory and hope in every step they take.

II.1 Daughters Experiences: Identity, Belonging, and Hybridity

After understanding the mothers' journeys of immigration, we move to their daughters; Jing Mei (June), Waverly, Lena, and Rose. These daughters were all born or raised in America, so they did not experience immigration in the same direct way as their mothers. However, immigration still affects their lives deeply. They live between two worlds: the Chinese culture their mothers bring from the past, and the American life they grow up in every day.

Jing Mei, who was born in America, grows up feeling distant from her Chinese roots. She does not speak the language fluently, and often feels her mother, Suyuan, expects too much from her. At one point, her mother tries to make her into a child prodigy, signing her up for piano lessons, beauty school, and even talent shows. Jing Mei fails and rebels. She says, "I won't be what I'm not" (Tan 154). But after Suyuan dies, Jing Mei travels to China to meet her long-lost twin sisters. This trip changes her heart. In China, she says, "My bones ache with a familiar old pain... I am becoming Chinese" (Tan 325). This shows that even though she was raised in America, her identity is still deeply connected to China.

Waverly, like her mother Lindo, is clever and ambitious. She becomes a chess champion as a child. But while she is proud of her success, she often feels embarrassed by her mother's traditional behavior. Lindo, on the other hand, wants her daughter to succeed in America, even naming her "Waverly" after the street they lived on, hoping to bring her luck. Although Waverly sees herself as fully American, she later understands how much her mother shaped her. Lindo tells her, "You are my daughter. You do not have to be like me, but you will always have something from me" (Tan 311).

Lena, the daughter of Ying-Ying, lives a quiet life and works in an architectural firm. Like her mother, Lena grows up quiet, always watching, never speaking up. Ying-Ying's silence and fear of her past become part of Lena's personality. She marries a man named Harold who treats her unequally. She pays half of everything, even though she earns less and never questions it. Lena grows up believing she must stay silent, just like her mother.

Rose, the daughter of An-Mei, also faces problems in her marriage. She lets her husband, Ted, make all the decisions, believing that is what love looks like. When Ted leaves her, Rose is lost. She cannot decide anything for herself. But An-Mei, who once learned to stand up after losing her own mother, gives her strength. Rose finally says, "You can't just pull me out of your life and throw me away" (Tan 234). This moment shows that Rose begins to find her own voice, guided by the pain and wisdom of her mother.

Critics support this idea. Wong says the daughters are on "a quest for self-definition," trying to balance where they come from and who they want to be (Wong 80). Kim writes that second-generation immigrant often struggle between two different worlds "past wounds and present freedoms" (Kim 55).

These daughters carry their mothers' dreams and their mothers' pains all at once. June, Waverly, Lena, and Rose each hold onto stories of sacrifice and hope from back home, mixed with the freedom they've grown up with here in America. They learn to pick what matters: keeping a mother's advice while also finding their own way, blending old traditions with new habits. It isn't always easy, sometimes old memories hurt, and making choices feels hard, but by holding onto both their past and their present, they find a new sense of who they are. Their journeys show that you don't have to give up one culture to embrace another; instead, you can build something that's truly your own.

After exploring how the mothers feel a deep sense of not belonging in America due to their pasts and cultural ties, we now turn to their daughters, Jing Mei, Waverly, Lena, and Rose; who face a different kind of struggle. These daughters are born or raised in the United States, yet they often feel like strangers in both their American surroundings and their Chinese roots. They live in a space between two cultures, not fully accepted by one, and disconnected from the other. This creates a quiet but strong feeling of confusion, frustration, and searching for identity.

Jing Mei, or June, wants to be a normal American girl. She wears sneakers and eats hamburgers, while her mother holds onto Chinese traditions. When her mother speaks to her in Mandarin or tells her about the Joy Luck Club, June feels embarrassed. She says she doesn't understand what the stories mean. At family dinners, June hears the aunties speaking in a mix of Chinese and English and feels left out. At one point she says, "They see daughters who grow impatient when their mothers talk in Chinese, who think they are stupid when they explain things in fractured English" (Tan 35). But this changes when June travels to China after her mother's death. There, she meets her half-sisters and begins to see where she came from. Although she still feels unsure, something inside her starts to feel more connected. Her confusion turns into understanding.

Waverly, who was born in Chinatown, becomes a chess champion. On the surface, she fits into American society better than her mother, Lindo. But deep inside, she feels torn. She is ashamed of how her mother acts in public, the way she speaks, or the food she cooks. At one point, Waverly tells her mother to stop showing her off like a trophy. She runs away in anger, not realizing that her mother's pride is mixed with love. Later, when she wants to marry a white man, Rich, she feels nervous to tell Lindo. She fears her mother's disapproval because deep down, she knows how important Chinese values are to her mother. Even when

she tries to act like an independent American woman, Waverly can still feel the invisible strings that tie her to her roots.

Lena, the quiet daughter of Ying-Ying, also feels out of place. She grows up in a house filled with silence. Her mother rarely explains things; instead, she warns her with strange stories and old sayings. Lena says, "I could understand the words perfectly, but not the meanings" (Tan 117). Lena watches her parents' unhappy marriage and carries the same silence into her own life. She marries a man named Harold who treats her more like a business partner than a wife. She splits every cost with him, even though it feels unfair. But like her mother, Lena does not speak up. She is afraid to make noise. The feeling of not belonging becomes a wall between her and her mother, and also between her and her true self.

Rose, the daughter of An-Mei, is kind and soft-spoken. She always lets others make decisions for her, especially her husband, Ted. She believes that being quiet and easy-going is the best way to be loved. But when Ted asks for a divorce, Rose falls into deep sadness. She cannot decide what to do. Her mother, who once lived through losing her own mother and being silenced, tells Rose to speak up. An-Mei says, "You must stand tall and listen to your own voice." This is a turning point for Rose. Slowly, she starts to see her value and gains the courage to fight for herself in court and in life. Her journey of not belonging helps her understand what it means to claim her place, even in a world that feels unfamiliar.

Critics support these experiences. Zhang writes that the daughters feel lost between two cultures, "not fully accepted by either side" (Zhang 70). Lee explains that they often become translators, not just of words, but of feelings, traditions, and expectations, trying to connect two worlds (Lee 67). Wong adds that this in-between space, while painful, becomes the ground where they grow stronger and find themselves (Wong 80).

These daughters are like bridges. They connect the world of their mothers with the world they live in now. But walking on that bridge is not easy. Sometimes they feel lost, torn, or ashamed. Other times, they feel proud, lucky, and grateful. As I read their stories, I see how hard it is to carry two identities in one heart. But I also see how this struggle helps them grow. Each step they take, whether in confusion or courage; leads them closer to understanding who they really are. Not belonging becomes not just a wound, but also a path, a path toward healing, connection, and becoming whole.

In *The Joy Luck Club*, cultural mixing is one of the most important ideas. It shows how people don't just leave their old culture behind or completely become part of the new one. Instead, they take parts of both and mix them together. This mix is sometimes messy and full of tension, but it also brings growth and creativity. The daughters' experiences are different. They grow up in America, so they learn English first, go to American schools, and often want to fit in with American friends. But their mothers keep reminding them of their Chinese roots.

Jing Mei reads Shakespeare and eats hamburgers, but she also listens to her mother's stories about China. She grows up not understanding their meaning, but later, especially after her trip to China, she begins to see how her mother's culture is part of her too. She starts to feel proud of her background and realizes that she doesn't have to choose between being Chinese or American, she can be both (Tan 325).

Waverly blends her Chinese upbringing with her American lifestyle. She becomes a lawyer and hosts dinner parties where she serves both dumplings and pizza. Her success in chess also reflects this blend, she uses Chinese strategy and American competition. She learns how to use her mother's strength while also building her own path. At one point, she says, "I was six when my mother taught me the art of invisible strength... It was a strategy for winning arguments, respect from others, and eventually, though neither of us knew it at the

time, chess games” (Tan 89). This quote shows how her Chinese upbringing helped her succeed in an American game, blending two cultures into something new.

Lena’s home shows a mix of both cultures, Chinese and American. She places modern furniture alongside Chinese paintings, and her space feels like a quiet attempt to balance the two worlds she lives in. One of the most meaningful objects she owns is a jade bracelet her mother, Ying-Ying, gave her. This bracelet is not just a pretty piece of jewelry; it carries deep emotional meaning. It’s a silent message from her mother, reminding Lena of who she is and where she comes from. In the story, Ying-Ying gives her this jade as a symbol of strength and protection, even if Lena doesn’t fully understand it at first. Lena remembers the moment with quiet emotion: “The girl grabbed her bag and began to cry. I took her into my arms and comforted her” (*The Joy Luck Club*, p. 242). This quote happens shortly after Ying-Ying opens up to Lena and tries to give her the emotional support she never did before. It shows how Ying-Ying, through the bracelet and her actions, is trying to connect with her daughter in a way that brings healing and understanding. The jade becomes a sign of love and guidance passed from mother to daughter, a way of holding on to their shared Chinese heritage even as Lena walks through her American life.

Rose, the daughter of An-Mei, goes through many challenges in her life that eventually lead her to a deeper understanding of herself and others. At the beginning, she is very unsure of herself. She marries Ted, a confident American man, and lets him make all the decisions. She believes this is what love means; trusting someone so much that you don’t question their choices. But over time, this way of living breaks her down. Ted begins to lose patience with carrying all the responsibility, and when problems come up in his career, he asks Rose to take a stand, but she cannot. This leads to their separation. At first, Rose is lost. She becomes depressed and uncertain about everything. But her mother, An-Mei, who had once been through deep pain herself, encourages her to speak up. An-Mei reminds her that

they are alike and that she has a voice inside her. She tells her, “A girl is like a young tree. You must stand tall and listen to your mother standing next to you. That is the only way to grow strong and straight” (Tan 227). Slowly, Rose begins to change. She stops relying on others to make decisions for her and starts choosing for herself. She even refuses to move out of the house when Ted asks for a divorce, saying, “You can’t just pull me out of your life and throw me away” (Tan 234). This moment of power shows that Rose has finally found her voice. With this strength, she chooses a new path. She becomes a therapist, not just someone who listens, but someone who helps others heal. In her sessions, she uses not only what she learned in school but also the folk wisdom her mother passed on to her. She realizes that blending Chinese traditions with American ways helps her understand people better. Her healing comes from both cultures, and through her work, she helps others heal too.

After looking at the stories of Jing-Mei, Waverly, Lena, and Rose, we can see that each daughter creates her own way of mixing two cultures. They take what they’ve learned from their Chinese mothers and blend it with their American lives. Sometimes it’s confusing or painful, but it helps them grow. Through food, language, stories, careers, and even small traditions, they build identities that belong to both worlds. Their journeys show that cultural mixing is not just about living between two places, it’s about creating something new from both.

After exploring how the mothers in *The Joy Luck Club* hold on to memories of China, we can now understand how their daughters also feel a deep sense of nostalgia, even though they grew up in America. For the daughters: Jing Mei, Waverly, Lena, and Rose, nostalgia doesn’t always come from personal memory but from the stories, emotions, and objects passed down by their mothers. These memories help the daughters understand their identities and feel closer to the culture they didn’t grow up in directly.

Jing Mei (June), for example, shows a strong emotional connection to her mother's memories during her trip to China. At first, she feels unsure about visiting her late mother's homeland. But when she meets her long-lost twin sisters, something changes inside her. She says, "My bones ache with a familiar old pain... I am becoming Chinese" (Tan 325). Even though she grew up American, this visit helps her feel the roots of her mother's past, and she begins to carry that past with love, not confusion. Her journey to China is not just a trip; it is a moment of spiritual connection, where her mother's memory becomes part of her own path.

Waverly, on the other hand, remembers her mother's food and care. At one point, she finds herself craving her mother's cooking, which brings back feelings of love and pride from when she was a child. The smells, tastes, and traditions of food remind her that no matter how modern or American she becomes, a part of her still finds comfort in the old ways. The same mother she once found overbearing now becomes a source of strength and pride.

Lena holds onto objects that remind her of her mother, Ying-Ying. She keeps a jade bracelet, not just because it is beautiful, but because it carries her mother's beliefs and hopes. Her mother believed in luck, symbols, and silent strength. Lena doesn't always understand these things, but the bracelet becomes a quiet guide, helping her remember that strength can come from within, just like her mother showed her through silence and small actions.

Rose connects with her mother, An-Mei, through stories. After going through hard times in her marriage, Rose finds comfort in the stories her mother once told her. She writes down these stories in a diary, and they help her find courage. One day, she tells her husband, "You can't just pull me out of your life and throw me away" (Tan 234). In that moment, Rose speaks not just with her own voice, but with the strength and wisdom her mother gave her. Her nostalgia is not just for a place, but for the lessons and love she finally understands.

I think nostalgia is like a trusted friend they carry with them. Those warm memories light the way when they face new challenges, reminding them where they came from and helping them choose their path forward. Even as they learn new customs and build different lives, the past stays close, offering comfort when days feel hard and guiding them toward the people they want to become.

As Wong writes, “The story of migration is not just one of loss, but of transformation” (Wong 82). This idea is deeply reflected in the daughters' lives. Rose finds power in her mother's stories. Lena sees meaning in a simple bracelet. Waverly is brought back to her roots through food and memory. Jing Mei reconnects with her family's past and feels the ache and pride of belonging. Their nostalgia might not always come from their own memories, but it comes through the stories, objects, and feelings passed on by their mothers. This emotional inheritance becomes part of who they are.

According to Andrea Iliescu, “The daughters cannot discover who they truly are until they reconcile with their Chinese heritage after a long time of psychological trauma caused by culture clash”. This supports the idea that nostalgia is not just longing for the past, but a tool for healing. It's a way for the daughters to rebuild their identities by weaving together what they've learned in America with what was quietly passed down to them from their mothers.

I believe this is the heart of *The Joy Luck Club*. Through loss, these women find strength. Through confusion, they find clarity. Through silence, they find voice. The past is not something they leave behind; it becomes something they carry forward with pride and understanding.

In *The Joy Luck Club*, Amy Tan shows us that migration is not just about crossing a border or starting a new life, it is a deep emotional journey that affects people for years and even generations. Through the lives of the four mothers and their daughters, we see how

immigration brings both pain and hope. The mothers leave behind countries, families, and memories that never fully go away. Their daughters, born or raised in America, carry their mothers' memories and also face the challenges of finding their place in a world that often feels split between two cultures.

The four themes we explored: immigration, not belonging, cultural mixing, and nostalgia, help us understand that migration is not just one experience. It is many small steps: leaving home, learning to survive in a new place, remembering the past, and trying to build a future that makes space for both. Each mother shows how the past can live on through food, language, stories, and even quiet moments of love. Each daughter learns how to take those gifts and turn them into something new.

As critic Andrea Iliescu says, the daughters must reconnect with their heritage before they can truly know who they are. Their mothers' love, even if it is sometimes silent or strict, becomes a light that guides them. Migration, then, is not just about distance, it is about identity. It is about holding on and letting go. It is about pain and healing, silence and speaking out.

This chapter has shown that *The Joy Luck Club* is not just a story about four families. It is a story about how people survive change, how they hold onto what matters, and how love and memory can travel across oceans and time. The book teaches us that even when things are lost, something always remains, a story, a lesson, a piece of culture; that helps the next generation find their way.

Chapter Three: Culture and Identity in *The Joy Luck Club*

Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* showed how the cultural identity of Chinese mothers and daughters had been shaped through their experience of migration to the USA. And how it was passed from older generations to the younger ones. In order to achieve this wanted purpose, they tried to share their past especially traditions. Which caused a generational conflict between them. The first part of this chapter concentrates on the mother's lives back in China, what stories they shared at *The Joy Luck Club* and how food and clothing kept their culture alive in this new cultural setting, while the second section looked at the Americanized lives of the daughters, because as they grew older, they started to understand their mothers better and felt more connected to their original roots. That cultural clash between the Chinese and American cultures taught the daughters to build a new sense of identity respecting their past while leaving a space for their American lives.

III.1 The Mothers' History and Cultural Memory

The mothers used their past memories and what they have experienced back in China, which formulated their real cultural identities as a main tool to pass the Chinese cultural identity to their American born daughters, those stories that were shaped by sacrifice and marked with silent painful resilience.

All of this silent resilience and sacrifice accompanied Lindo Jong's story since day one of her life, because her story is a representation of Confucian values, family loyalty and parent's obedience, when she was forced to accept an arranged marriage at such young age to fulfil her parent's wishes. "I once sacrificed my life to keep my parents promise" (Tan 50). She bowed out the red candle, saving her dignity without disgracing her parents. This great attitude of resistance and resilience reflect that Chinese woman always found strength within obedience. Guiyou Huang explained that "Chinese immigrant women often preserve inner

strength through surface obedience” (Huang 97). her memory was never just a normal experience but it transformed into a cultural message about obedience and dignity for her daughters.

The other mothers in *The Joy Luck Club* carried pain from their past too, as Ying Ying’s story started during their Chinese moon festival, when she got lost in that large crowd and watched the moon lady from a far, she quietly said “I wished to be found” (Tan 83). This exact moment marked her emotional disconnection, she was never fully recovered, simply she was traumatized, as she never talked about this later in America. She only did when she saw her daughter Lena started to suffer saying, “now I must tell her everything about my past. it is the only way to penetrate her skin and pull her to where she can be saved” (Tan 274). Accordingly the scholar Wendy explained, “the mothers stories are not just personal memories, but cultural transmissions meant to guide identity in exile” (Wendy 63). So her silence was never a weakness, but more of strength and how she prepares to pass it when the right moment appears.

Unlike Ying Ying’s silent pain, An Mei Hsu story was covered by more visibility. She performed one of the most painful acts in the novel. When she catted off a piece of her own flesh to make a soup to her dying mother.” She put a knife to her arm and cut off a piece of her flesh, and put it in the soup (Tan 48). such sacrificial act came from her deeply rooted Confucian belief, that honoring your own parent is sometimes more important that you own self. She never forgot this, because this experience shaped how she really sees strength. Her mother’s sufferance was not weakness but more of family loyalty and love. Amy ling argued that such moments and experiences shows “female endurance shaped by ancestral duty” (Ling 141). This strong mother learned that true strength does come from sacrifice, which became a solid part of her identity that she tried to pass it down to her daughter rose.

Out of the four mothers' stories, Suyuan Woo came with even greater loss. Her story was shaped by what she never said. Because she was forced to leave and abandoned her twin daughters during the Japanese invasion of China to escape that war zone, she never shared this past with her newborn American daughter, Jing Mie learned the truth only after the death of Suyuan, and she traveled back to China to meet her half-sisters. Therefore, her journey became a way to fulfil her mother's story. In this vein Wendy Ho expressed that "silence in immigrant woman's narratives is not erasure, it is a survival strategy (Wendy 71). Suyuan's silent strength later shaped how she raises Jing Mei, also her memory played a crucial tool of cultural and generational reconnections.

All of these stories thought they are different in detail, but are related in emotion. Moreover, showed how the mothers in *The Joy Luck Club* used their silence and personal memories to pass their cultures and beliefs to the coming generation.

III.2 Reconciliation and Identity Construction across Generations

The novel presents another dimension alongside to the mothers' personal stories, it highlights how the Chinese cultural identity is preserved through *The Joy Luck Club* itself, this club presented a cultural institution built of traditions, and shared survival stories.

Suyuan Woo initially founded this club back during war in China, where women gathered weekly their special meals and play mahjong in an attempt to bring some joy in the middle of that conflict. Suyuan believed that sharing stories and stories could help them stay close to each other and keep their dignity. Moreover, Sau Ling Wong explained that the rituals they perform together are a way "to resist cultural erasure by maintaining emotional and communal identity" (Wong 22). And not just trivial practices. This club started as a survival tool, but later became a tradition, because when she immigrates to America, she takes it with her and rebuild a new club in a new cultural setting.

After she arrived to California, Suyuan accompanied with other three Chinese women recreates the joy luck club. These women whom she met at the refugee center in San Francisco. They started to gather there, play mahjong and cook Chinese traditional food, allowing them to directly pass on their values through communicating and storytelling. Accordingly, Chu stated that “such cultural spaces function as soft forms of resistance, where immigrant women preserve dignity and community” (Chu 92). In this sense, *The Joy Luck Club* is more of a cultural identity in the rebuild on a foreign soil. Through time the club was more about the daughters when they got involved too even if they didn’t understand its significance and meaning in the start.

Jing Mei was invited to sit in the mahjong table with them in the same place of her mother after she passed away, this invitation itself did symbolize the passing of identity and memory to the daughters already, “they see daughters who will bear grandchildren born without any connecting hope passed from generation to generation” (Tan 40). At this stage, the mothers saw that they could trust Jing Mei to carry their told stories, “Jing Mei’s role in the club marks a reawakening of generational memory and recovery of her silenced cultural heritage” (Wendy 67). Therefore, the act of her sitting on the same table with them represented the start of passing traditions to the new generation. Which also in more varied ways throughout the novel through gestures and symbols.

Waverly’s relationship with her mother Lindo was shaped by the idea of invisible strength, Lindo gave her daughter a small red jade pendant, and told her that it will bring luck, at first Waverly did not accept the idea because she values logic and personal success as her own beliefs, “not quiet strength. You don’t have to be so smart to win chess. It is just tricks (Tan 187). She told her daughter. Lindo have always seen trickiness as an important skill of survival, especially when you are a place that underestimates women. In this sense Chu noted that “Lindo’s trickster survivalism is coded as culturally Chinese, which her daughter sees as

weak, even shameful” (Chu 77). Meaning that what Waverly saw as manipulation, her mother believes that it is a necessary skill to survive. Misunderstanding appeared also appeared in the story of An Mei and her daughter rose when it comes to spiritual strength.

Since rose was a child, she did never understand her mother’s belief in fate, warnings and luck. She only knew that her mother’s words had power, “a girl is like a young tree. You must stand tall and listen to your mother...that is the only way to grow and straight” (Tan 191). Little rose grew bending to others and doubting herself, but her marriage failed, she started to remember the words of her mother. Until she finally got the strength to speak. Scholars accordingly observed that “the Chinese mothers voice, dismissed as irrational, reemerges as the emotional grounding of female empowerment” (Cheung 121). Therefore, what was seemed irrational to them became the source of resilience.

The Joy Luck Club was not just a setting or a tradition, but their living memory. Using rituals, food, storytelling and the quiet strength. the mothers successfully passed down their culture that adapts but not disappear, even though their daughter rejected missundrestanded or resisted it at first. Nevertheless, they the saw what their mothers were trying to teach them. “Memory in tans work is not backward looking, it is the bridge between loss and meaning, between the generations that carry both trauma and hope” (Wendy 72). Therefore, the joy luck club became a style of survival for both the older and the coming generations.

The Joy Luck Club showed how the Chinese mothers preserved their cultural identity alive in a new setting, through simple ways such as clothing, and food, these practices carried the cultural memory and emotional power between mothers and daughters. In *The Joy Luck Club*, food was more of a memory preservice and emotional communication between the mothers than it was nourishment, suyuan when she arrived in Kweilin during war, described the hills as they were fried fish heads, cabbages and onions. After the city was bombed, she saw it as “the dripping bowels of an ancient hill” (Tan 25). This clearly shows how food

became a way to frame and express sufferance and fear. Rachel lee explained that “food in Asian American writing often acts as a lens through which trauma and survival are visualized” (Lee 141). The vision of suyuan reflected even how hunger could be shaped by culture. At the same time, food did not only serve just as physical survival. Also, even more making connections between mothers and daughters because it replaced words that cannot be said.

Moreover, Jing Mei explained that “that’s the way Chinese mothers show they love their children, not through hugs and kisses but with stern offerings of steamed dumplings, ducks’ gizzards, and crab” (Tan 207). There are a lot of scenes in *The Joy Luck Club* where food expressed love and even power. The Chinese mothers used food to control, comfort and even to guide their daughters, “in tans world, food replaces verbal intimacy, becoming the main medium for emotional expressions between generations” (Cheung 118).

Just like food, Clothing had also carried cultural significance, because it marked social classes, identity and even emotional transitions mainly for the mothers as immigrants. Suyuan lost everything when she escaped China except for her clothes “by the time she reaches Chungking, she only has three silk dresses left that she’s wearing on her body” (Tan 24). This is important because in the Chinese culture silk reflected status, elegance and beauty. so this act of her keeping silk dresses reflected an attempt to preserve her identity in hard times. This made the scholar Shirley Lim explain that “clothing in tan’s work functions as both class marker and emotional armor” (Lim 203).

Clothing kept being used by the mothers not only for preserving their real identity and status, but also a marker of strength, luck and for belonging. A good example of this is when lindo gave her daughter Waverly that necklace made of red jade after she won a chess tournament, “I wrote this on my skin, so when you put it on your skin, then you know my meaning. This is your life’s importance” (Tan 208). Jade was believed to bring good luck,

health and balance in the Chinese culture “material symbols like jade offer a way to silently communicate values that cannot be explained through language” (Chu). Argued Chu, Lindo passed strength through this object to her daughter even if she doesn’t understand its significance at that time. Furthermore, food in *The Joy Luck Club* did present cultural loss through An Mie mother story of exchanging western fashion for her mourning robes.

An Mie’s mother removed her mourning clothes and dressed herself with western style garments before entering Wu Tsing’s house, which signaled the transition from tradition to adaptation. At first An Mie was surprised by the new clothes, but she soon understood the low status of her mother, “it’s hard to keep your face in America” (Tan 294). Amy Ling commanding that in fiction, dress becomes both mask and mirror, it can disguise emotion but it also reveals shift in identity” (Ling 148). accordingly changing her clothes was not only about appearance, but a strategy to protect her daughter and navigate in a new world.

Food and clothing in *The Joy Luck Club* were not just cultural symbols, but also emotional tools too, because they carry heavier meanings of lessons and even protecting dignity of the mothers, they did not express what they wanted to say to their daughter using words but using food and texture to show care and love to them. Whether it is through a jade necklace or a traditional bowl of soup, the daughter has come to understand what their mothers tried to teach them eventually.

Mothers in *The Joy Luck Club* relied on silent resilience, memory and tradition to preserve their Chinese cultural identity, their new born American daughters absorbed the American culture as they were raised there, the culture that contradicts their mothers’ beliefs creating a deep cultural and emotional gap between them.

The American competing values in *The Joy Luck Club* shaped the cultural conflict between the mothers and daughters, as personal freedom, self-expression and independence

are the core components of the American culture. at the same time when the Chinese culture teaches obedience, modesty and discipline. these two contradictory systems resulted a generational clash between them, Min Zhou explained that “second generation Asian Americans often internalize mainstream values that diverge significantly from their parents” (Zhou 38). In this sense, Tan used the daughter’s lives in order to see how identity is formed when these daughters had to choose between societal belonging and family heritage. Waverly Jong’s story had clear generational tension when her mother’s pride faced her desire to be independent.

An obvious clash appeared between the American ideas of independence and individual success that she had, as she is a chess master, she already values autonomy and achievements, while her mother Lindo saw the success of her daughter as a family honor, when she brag about her in public, Waverly protested “I wish you wouldn’t do that, telling everybody I’m your daughter” (Tan 99). this escalated to an open conflict, as Lan Dong said in this vein that “Waverly’s rejection of her mother’s involvement reveals the pull of American self-reliance against Chinese relational identity” (Dong 61). further more we can say that this disagreement was more than personal conflict between a mother and her daughter but a cultural clash between two different values that guide one’s actions. These differences went more than just attitudes or words, but appeared in the daughters’ dressed or designed their homes.

Waverly’s new lifestyle appeared in her personal aesthetics, which was not very appreciated by her mother Lindo, whenever Lindo visited her home, she directly criticized the design, while it is modern but this decor made her feel out of space, because for her it does not present the Chinese tradition of balance and harmony, accordingly Lindo also criticized her fashionable haircut saying “Ai_ya! What’s the matter with your hair?” (Tan 92). Waverly with her new American mentality found this embarrassing, in this sense the tension was about

identity and not just taste, as sheng Mei ma argued, “the daughters embrace of American style signifies not only independence but also symbolic distance from ethnic legacy” (Ma 83). Tan here showed how can basically appearing and house designs became a site of cultural representation. The sounds of disagreement and critics were also raised inside other houses, especially Jing Mei who felt embarrassed too but because of her mother’s appearance in public.

She remembered walking in Chinatown with her mother and feeling ashamed because of her mother’s clothes, this embracement of her mother’s mismatched clothes reflected the existing cultural dissonance between them, shaped by the new American style, Jing Mei saw her mother’s clothes as out of place, she even mocked the Chinese traditional customs worn by her mother’s friends saying, “too fancy for real Chinese people...and too strange for American parties”(Tan 121).accordingly the scholar Rocio Davis said “clothing in tans novel becomes a visible marker of generational tension, a medium through which cultural heritage is worn, misunderstood, or rejected”(Davis 178). Moments like this illustrated how assimilations could affect choices of what to wear and how-to walk-in public.

While the daughter’s mentalities were shaped by American ideals of independence, *The Joy Luck Club* continues to show that the Chinese heritage kept shaping their relationships and emotions, this title investigates the ultimate daughter’s reconnection to their original Chinese culture and how this was reflected on their identities.

The Daughters when they were young, have always interpreted the stories told by their mothers as a manipulation or as nagging, while mothers like lindo and suyuan tried to share wisdom through their stories or silence, the American born daughters raised in such context of emotional clarity and direct speech, rejected and failed to understand these signs, accordingly Davis argued that “intergenerational conflict in tans fiction stems not from lack of love, but from incompatible narrative frameworks”(Davis 180). A good example of this, Jing Mei had

always saw her mother's advice as harsh and cold, missing that it was out of love. The meaning of these stories and symbols became more valued by the daughter after they grow a bit older and started to face their own struggles. especially for Jing Mei.

After her mother's death, Jing Mei was asked to take her place and participate at the mahjong ad then travel to China, she resisted the role at first, but her desire to meet her half-sisters played a turning point, she directly said "I am becoming Chinese" (Tan 306). This event represented a real reconnection to her identity, in this vain Patricia Chu observed" Jing Mei's transformation is not one of cultural replacement, but of emotional and narrative inheritance" (Chu 111). Moving to China did awaken her dormant Chinese identity. Other daughters too started to realize that their mothers silence or strictness was out of care, though it is too late, but never far to be understood.

The relationship between Waverly and her mother is shaped by conflict, at a very young age she felt used by her mother and represented her family pride, "she used to discuss my games as if she had devised the strategies" (Tan 170). However, as she grew older, she found herself still craving her mother's approval, especially when she introduces her fiancé. The critics of Lindo's to her daughter Waverly's house and hair was misunderstood as disapproval of rich, here lan dong noted that" Lindo's survival tactics, misunderstood as coldness, reflect cultural ways of showing love through preparation and subtlety" (Dong 64). Waverly finally realized that her mother was never objected to rich, this opened the doors for reconnection between them. This realization got all of the daughters when they reinterpreted their mother's gestures and silence.

Jing Mei dismissed the jade necklace her mother suyuan gave her at first by saying "too large, too green, too garishly ornate" (Tan 197). But, after her mother passed away, the jade necklace became a valued and sacred gift for her, suyuan once told her daughter," I wore this on my skin, so when you put it on your skin, then you know my meaning. This is your

life's importance" (Tan 208). This pendant became a tool for emotional transmission. so accordingly, Lim explained, "in tans fiction, physical tokens serve as repositories of maternal memory" (Lim 205). Those gifts and object served heavier meanings of family and hope the daughter finally get to understand. Rose and h Lena went through this shift in perception too, because they learned the reality of their mothers as survivors not passive or oppressive.

Rose Hsu was emotionally passive at first, but after she had a failed marriage managed to remember her mother's lesson when she once told her, "You must stand tall and listen to your mother" (Tan 191). Wong did comment on this situation by saying, "tan reframes maternal silence as a strategy of survival and transmission, one that demands reinterpretation from the next generation" (Wong). Rose at that situation did took strength that was passed by her mother as she decides to stand up to her husband. Lena too did learn from her mother's stories, Ying Ying's personal experience of loss opened Lena's eyes to the danger of staying silent to her husband, her mother told her "I will use this pain to cut her tiger spirit loose" (Tan 242). Through listening Lena found the strength to act, Wendy ho said, "tans mothers resist passivity by reactivating voice through narrative, reclaiming agency and passing it to their daughters" (Wendy 78).

The cultural clash between the Chinese mothers and their American born daughters in *The Joy Luck Club* was not a cause of pain only, but the core of the driving force that made the reconciliation happen, at first all of the daughter did whether rejected, resisted or misinterpreted their mothers gifts, messages and mostly important their Chinese values and beliefs in exchange of the American ideals, like freedom, individuality and autonomy, however, due to the tension and chaos in the daughters lives they are forced to remember and reinterpret their mothers messages and experiences. This cultural clash opened their eyes to the limited American ideals they were embracing at first, and realize the hidden strength in the culture they were refusing and resisting, of family duty, silent resilience, which are needed

skills to navigate a living in the new cultural setting, accordingly, the cultural clash did strengthen their identities and not destroy it, then getting back to their mothers is not a contraction but a rebalance, however, they did not took of their American identity , but learned to carry both of them in a balances conscious way.

As the story progresses, each daughter reconnects with her mother in her own way, they are closer now after that emotional distance that once separated them. Jing Mei fulfills her mother's late dream by traveling back to China to meet her long lost twin sisters. This journey became a powerful moment of reconnection, not only with her mother's past, but to her Chinese roots too. Waverly begins to understand her mother Lindo after she finally accepted her cultural background, even considering taking her mother on her honeymoon to China. Rose, after a long time of passiveness, listens to her mother's An Mei advice and stands up for herself in her marriage, which only means that she has inherited her mother's silent strength. Lena, influenced by Ying Ying, realizes that her marriage is unbalanced and starts to voice up her feelings. These endings show that, although the daughters were raised in a different culture, they did manage to reconnect with their mothers' hopes but each in her own way.

Finally, in *The Joy Luck Club* both the mothers and their daughters experienced the feeling of living between two cultures. The mothers represented the Chinese cultural heritage, rooted in tradition, sacrifice and survival, while the daughters grew up in America, mainly shaped by ideals of individualism and freedom. This cultural gap caused tension, but by the end, these two generations manage to reconcile. They came to understand that their differences are part of a shared immigrant story, a story of in-betweenness, of searching for identity between two different worlds. The journey each daughter takes brings her closer to her mother's past, and through that connection, the two culture find a chance to unite. This

resolution offers a message about healing, identity and passing cultural practices across generations.

Conclusion

This dissertation examined *The Joy Luck Club* as an example of migration literature, exploring the difficulty of immigration, identity navigation, and the cultural conflict. Throughout the novel Amy Tan presented the experiences of Chinese mothers and their American born daughters in this new setting, focusing on the emotional and cultural complexities caused from living between two different cultural worlds. This study aimed to analyze the cultural, social and psychological aspects of migration experience that affected both generations, while also highlighting how traditions, beliefs, personal experiences and generational conflict can shape the sense of self and belonging for the characters. The core problematic of this dissertation is that how *The Joy Luck Club* reflected the aspects of migration literature and the characteristics that define the immigrant experiences.

Using different theories of history, culture and literature. Immigration could be defined as a historical phenomenon, cultural and mainly literary context that defines minor literature and especially Amy Tan's novel which represented the different features of immigrant literature in its core. Throughout the novel, the characteristics of immigrant literature were clearly portrayed in many occasions: one of the main characteristics was displacement, as all of the four mothers had to leave their original homelands for different reasons which created emotional scars that they carried with them all the way to America. Hybridity was presented too, as the daughters grow up trying to balance between Chinese traditions and the American values in their lives. Third, language conflict plays a crucial role too, because mothers and their daughters often struggle to fully understand each other due to the language barrier, which created a gap between them. Another characteristic was the identity crisis, where the American born daughters felt lost between who they are and what their mothers wants them to be. The novel also presents memory and storytelling as an important tool through which the mothers passed their culture to the daughters. Generational

conflict appeared strongly as daughters challenged their mothers while mothers worry about losing their daughters to the American ideals. All of these features made *The Joy Luck Club* a clear representation of migration literature.

The coexistence of Chinese and American cultures in the novel created and strongly emphasized the feeling of in-betweenness or the cultural clash that immigrants are always experiencing, the mothers did symbolize the Chinese culture through preserving traditions, clothing, storytelling and preparing Chinese traditional food. They carried the responsibility to pass these cultural values to their daughters, while their daughters presented the American lifestyle by marrying American husbands, building successful careers and growing distant from their original Chinese roots. Often, they either ignore or misinterpret the Chinese traditions, language, and expectations imposed by their mothers. This cultural clash created emotional distance and tension between the two generations throughout the novel. However, by the end of the story, they managed to achieve unity and reconciliation, as the daughters finally started to understand and reconnect with their mother's past. This made them able to embrace and keep their Chinese identity while maintaining their American lives.

Finally, *The Joy Luck Club* can be read as a work of migration literature because it clearly presents the struggles and dualities that immigrants face throughout their experiences. Migration literature is characterized by the conflict between two cultural worlds, identity navigation and the attempt to reconcile past and present. The characters in this novel demonstrate all of these features through their personal experiences. The novel addressed different types of immigrants, as the mothers were first generation immigrants who directly experienced migration, and second-generation daughters who got the effect of migration indirectly. These shared experiences of displacement, cultural negotiation and final reconciliation presented in the novel made *The Joy Luck Club* a great example of migration literature.

Works Cited

- Babaei, Mehdi. *Minor Literature and the Language of the Minorities*. 2021.
- Beck, Ulrich. *The Cosmopolitan Vision*. Polity Press, 2006.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.
- Castles, Stephen, Hein de Haas, and Mark J. Miller. *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*. 5th ed., Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- Chambers, Iain. *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*. Routledge, 1994.
- Chan, Sucheng. *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History*. Twayne Publishers, 1991.
- Chang, Iris. *The Chinese in America*. Viking, 2003.
- Chu, Patricia P. *Assimilating Asians: Gendered Strategies of Authorship in Asian America*. Duke University Press, 2000.
- Davis, Rocío G. "The Politics of Memory in Asian American Autobiographical Writing." *Asian American Literature in the International Context*, edited by Rocío G. Davis and Sämti Ludwig, LIT Verlag, 2002, pp. 171–187.
- Dong, Lan. *Reading Amy Tan*. Peter Lang, 2009.
- Fahrenbruch, Roy G. *Chinese Immigrants in America: Entrepreneurship and Identity Formation*. Historical Press, 1995.
- Golchin, Simin. "Cultural Memory and Mother-Daughter Bonds in *The Joy Luck Club*." *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, vol. 42, no. 3, 2021, pp. 248–261.
- Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, edited by Jonathan Rutherford, Lawrence and Wishart, 1990, pp. 222–237.
- Ho, Wendy. *In Her Mother's House: The Politics of Asian American Mother-Daughter Writing*. AltaMira Press, 2003.

Hsia, Chih-Tsing. *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*. Yale University Press, 1971.

Hsu, Madeline Y. *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration between the United States and South China, 1882–1943*. Stanford University Press, 2000.

Iliescu, Andrea. *Amy Tan and the Art of Mother-Daughter Memory*. Intercultural Press, 2018.

Kim, Daniel Y., and Crystal Parikh, editors. *The Cambridge Companion to Asian American Literature*. Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Kingston, Maxine Hong. *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts*. Vintage Books, 1989.

Kuo, Cheng-Tian. *Global Competitiveness and Industrial Growth in Taiwan and the Philippines*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995.

Lee, Erika. *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882–1943*. University of North Carolina Press, 2003.

Lim, Shirley Geok-lin. *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context*. Temple University Press, 1992.

Ling, Amy. *Between Worlds: Women Writers of Chinese Ancestry*. Pergamon Press, 1990.

Ling, Huping. *Surviving on the Gold Mountain: A History of Chinese American Women and Their Lives*. SUNY Press, 1998.

Liu, Cynthia W. "The Politics of Memory and Chinese American Literature." *American Literary History*, vol. 12, no. 1/2, 2000, pp. 142–159.

Mokrani, Marwa. *Chinese-American Women between East and West in Amy Tan's The Joy Luck Club*. Master's Thesis, University of Guelma, 2018.

Ngai, Mae M. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. Princeton University Press, 2004.

Park, Josephine Nock-Hee. *Apparitions of Asia: Modernist Form and Asian American Poetics*. Oxford University Press, 2008.

Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981–1991*. Granta Books, 1991.

Said, Edward W. *Out of Place: A Memoir*. Knopf, 1999.

Said, Edward W. “Reflections on Exile.” *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, Harvard University Press, 2000, pp. 173–186.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. “Can the Subaltern Speak?” *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, Macmillan, 1988, pp. 271–313.

Su, Xiaochun, and Revathi A/p Gopal. “An Overall Review on Chinese American Literature Study.” *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2023, pp. 1–10.

Tan, Amy. *The Joy Luck Club*. Vintage Books, 2013.

Wang, Gungwu. *The Chinese Overseas: From Earthbound China to the Quest for Autonomy*. Harvard University Press, 2000.

Wong, Sau-ling Cynthia. *Reading Asian American Literature: From Necessity to Extravagance*. Princeton University Press, 1993.

Zhang, Xiaojing. *Remapping Asian American History*. University of Washington Press, 2021.

Zhou, Min. *Contemporary Chinese America: Immigration, Ethnicity, and Community Transformation*. Temple University Press, 2009.

Résumé

Ce mémoire explore la nature de la littérature migratoire à travers l'analyse du roman *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) d'Amy Tan, considéré comme un roman de migration qui raconte le parcours complexe et les expériences de quatre mères chinoises et de leurs filles aux États-Unis d'Amérique. Le roman présente clairement les principales caractéristiques de la littérature migratoire, telles que le déplacement, l'entre-deux culturel, la nostalgie, l'hybridité culturelle, la crise identitaire, le choc culturel et la recherche constante d'un sentiment d'appartenance. Ces aspects reflètent les réalités historiques et culturelles des minorités en Amérique. À travers les histoires de ces femmes, le roman aborde le conflit culturel et générationnel entre les mères et leurs filles. Il montre les difficultés à préserver ses racines culturelles tout en essayant de s'adapter à un nouvel environnement. Les mères restent attachées à leurs traditions et valeurs chinoises, tandis que leurs filles, élevées aux États-Unis, adoptent les idéaux et la mentalité américaine. Malgré le fossé culturel qui les sépare, elles cherchent à se rapprocher et à se réconcilier. Cette étude considère la littérature migratoire comme un phénomène historique, culturel et littéraire qui définit la littérature minoritaire. En ce sens, *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) représente un exemple important de la littérature migratoire en mettant en lumière ses caractéristiques essentielles.

ملخص

تتناول هذه الأطروحة مجال ادب الهجرة من خلال تحليل رواية إيمي تان *نادي الحظ السعيد* (1989) بوصفها رواية هجرة تسرد الرحلة المعقدة والتجارب التي تمر بها أربع أمهات صينيات وبناتهن في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية. تعرض الرواية بوضوح الخصائص الرئيسية لأدب الهجرة مثل الترحيل، العيش بين ثقافتين، الحنين إلى الماضي، التمازج الثقافي، أزمة الهوية، الصراع الثقافي، والبحث المستمر عن الانتماء. وتعكس هذه الجوانب الواقعين التاريخي والثقافي للأقليات في أمريكا. ومن خلال قصصهم، تسلط الرواية الضوء على الصراع الثقافي والاختلافات الجيلية بين الأمهات وبناتهن. حيث تصور الرواية صعوبة الحفاظ على الجذور الثقافية أثناء محاولة التأقلم مع البيئة الجديدة، فبينما تمسكت الأمهات بالتقاليد والقيم الصينية، تبنت بناتهن الأمريكيات المبادئ والعقلية الأمريكية. وعلى الرغم من وجود فجوة ثقافية كبيرة بينهم، إلا أنهم سعوا لتحقيق المصالحة. تأخذ هذه الدراسة أدب الهجرة بوصفه ظاهرة تاريخية وثقافية وأدبية تعرف أدب الأقليات. ومن هذا المنطلق، تعد رواية *نادي الحظ السعيد* (1989) مثالا مهما لأدب الهجرة من خلال عرضها لخصائصه الجوهرية.