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The Inevitable Inheritance: Mothers and Daughters in
Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters and English Language in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Anglophone Language, Literature,
and Civilization.**

BOARD OF EXAMINERS

Chairwoman: Dr. Houda HAMDI

University of 8 Mai 1945- Guelma

Supervisor: Miss Fatima Zahra GASMI

University of 8 Mai 1945- Guelma

Examiner: Miss Khawla BENDJEMIL

University of 8 Mai 1945- Guelma

Student:

Narimen Boukra

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Club

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Submitted to the

Faculty of Letters and Languages

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For the Degree of Master of Arts in the Subject of

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Submitted by

Narimen Boukra

Supervised by

Miss Fatima Zahra Gasmi

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Dedications

Every accomplishment requires self-efforts and also motivation from people who matter

I dedicate this thesis to the closest people to my heart

To

The one who kept faith in me, who lifted me up whenever feeling like giving up, who accepted me for the way I am and loved me unconditionally; *my mother*.

To

My sister Chahra Zed for her prayers, tenderness and cheerful character

To

Romaissa and Asma for being my second family

To

My nephew Doudy for drawing smiles on my face with his overdose cuteness and for distracting my attention with his naughty behaviors

To

Randa who offered me *The Joy Luck Club* as a valentine gift and what is greater than a book to express love

To

Meriam for being a shoulder to lean on whenever I needed support

To

Yahia for all the special things he does, for making me a better person

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Abstract

One of the masterpieces in Chinese American Literature is Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* (1989). It explores the relationship between the mothers and their daughters who are struggling to reach balance between two worlds. This thesis analyzes the psychology of female characters as affected by oppression, patriarchy and linguistic barriers. It aims at explaining how the Chinese past of the mothers inevitably overlaps with the American present of the daughters and how storytelling can connect them after a long time of cultural clash and trials to neglect the other. Such connection enables the daughters to reconcile with their Chinese heritage. At last, they can reach a sense of self and accept their hybrid identity.

Key words: Chinese American Literature, patriarchy, oppression, linguistic barriers, hybrid identity, storytelling, heritage, cultural clash.

Résumé

La Littérature Américaine Chinoise est un domaine d'étude très fructueux. Il partage de nombreux thèmes avec les autres littératures mineures et les littératures de Diaspora comme; le racisme, le sexisme et la crise d'identité, mais il présente son originalité à travers le style d'écriture, les techniques et le reflet de la culture chinoise qui est riche en superstitions et traditions uniques. L'un des chefs-d'œuvre dans la Littérature Américaine Chinoise est *Le Club de Chance* d'Amy Tan, il explore la relation entre les mères et les filles qui se débattent pour atteindre l'équilibre entre deux mondes. Cette thèse analyse la psychologie des personnages féminins comme affectée par l'oppression, le patriarcat ; et les barrières linguistiques. Il vise à expliquer comment le passé des mères recouvre inévitablement le présent des filles et comment la narration peut les raccorder après une longue période de choc culturel et des essais pour négliger l'autre. Une telle connexion permet les filles de concilier avec leur héritage Chinois. Enfin, ils peuvent atteindre un sens de moi et accepter leur identité hybride.

Mots clés: Littérature Américaine Chinoise, patriarcat, oppression, les barrières linguistiques, identité hybride, narration, héritage, choc culturel.

المخلص

يعتبر الأدب الصيني الأمريكي حقل دراسي مثير جدا وهو يشترك في العديد من المواضيع مع أدب الأقليات والشتات مثل العنصرية والتحيز الجنسي وأزمة الهوية مع ذلك فإنه يعرض أصالته من خلال أسلوب وتقنيات الكتابة كما أنه يعكس الثقافة الصينية الغنية بالخرافات والتقاليد الفريدة من نوعها واحدة من روائع الأدب الصيني الأمريكي هي نادي البهجة والحظ 1989 للكاتبة ايمي تان .

وهذه الرواية تستكشف العلاقة بين الأمهات وبناتهن اللاتي يكافحن من أجل تحقيق التوازن بين عالمين.

تقدم هذه الأطروحة تحليل لنفسية النساء المتأثرة بالظلم والسلطة الرجالية والحوازج اللغوية.

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى شرح كيف أن ماضي الأمهات يتداخل مع حاضر الفتيات و كيف يمكن للسرد القصصي ان يربطهم بعد فترة طويلة من الصراع الثقافي و المحاولات لتجنب الاخر. و مثل هذا الاتصال يمكن الفتيات من التصالح مع تراثهن الصيني. و في النهاية يمكن ان يصلن الى الشعور بالذات ويتقبلن هويتهم الهجينة.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

الأدب الصيني الأمريكي، السلطة الرجالية، الظلم، الحواجز اللغوية، الهوية الهجينة، السرد القصصي، التراث، الصراع الثقافي.

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Introduction

Discussing Diaspora literature requires knowing some basic historical information, especially if we are concerned with a Chinese-American novel. The presence of the Chinese people in America can be traced back to the nineteenth century, working as laborers in transcontinental railroads and mining industry. Despite their hard work Chinese immigrants suffered discrimination in terms of low wages, lack of basic rights and mistreatment. Later when the economy recovered they were excluded from America by the Chinese Exclusion Act 1882. Since then the situation of immigrants did not improve until The United States and China became allies in the Second World War.

Japan was a common enemy to the United States and China. The latter fought Japan in 1937 for political reasons, what is called The Second-Sino Japanese war. Aiming at gaining territory to expand its empire, Japanese invasion caused millions of casualties. Starting by Nanking, Military forces massacred the inhabitants “Rape of Nanking” and captured major Chinese cities (Darraj 15). When the United States defeated Japan in WW II, by dropping two atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagazaki, China could regain all of its seized land after eight years of resistance. During The period of war the United States opened its doors for the Chinese by passing the Magnuson Act 1943. This act has led to a massive immigration, because it permits entry and guarantees the right of naturalization, owning property, and mixed marriage. From that time on, the Chinese found a new safe home where they could settle.

However, the integration of the Chinese immigrants was not trouble-free. The main problem was cultural clash, especially when it comes to parenting. The shift to a liberal society made of parenting the most difficult task they had encountered. The American born children were frequently under pressure to conserve their ancestors’ heritage. Such pressure created an anxious familial atmosphere and troubled the parent-child relationships. This collective concern is expressed in many literary works by Chinese-American writers.

One of the well-known Chinese American writers is Amy Tan. She was born in 1952 Oakland, California to Chinese immigrant parents. The rebellious Amy ignored her parents wish; that is to be a doctor or a pianist; by choosing to study linguistics and writing to become later on a free-lance writer. Tan made a career out of her talent and was able to create many influential pieces especially fictional ones. Notably Tan writes in perfect English with an exceptional style. She uses some Chinese words written in Latin letters. After the deaths of her brother and father, her mother revealed that she had been married before and she had left behind three daughters in China when escaping the soviet invasion.

As many Chinese Americans, Amy had a troubled relationship with her mother. This issue is addressed in her masterpiece: *The Joy Luck Club* (1989). It is her first best seller novel; over two million copies were sold and it was translated into seventeen languages including Chinese. In addition, *The Joy Luck Club* was nominated for many awards like the National Book Award, Commonwealth Gold Award, National Book Critics Circle Award and others. Then in 1994 this work of fiction was adapted into a movie in which Amy Tan was a co-screen writer and a co-producer. The novel reflects too much of Tan's story with her mother Daisy, as it explores the bond between mothers and daughters.

The Joy Luck Club can be connected to Tan's and her mother's experiences in several ways. First, like all daughters in the novel the author had a disturbed relationship with her mother Daisy. They rarely communicated because of the pressure and false judgments about each other. Amy disappointed her mother when she chose to be a writer over being a doctor or a pianist in the same way June refuses to compel to Suyuan's wishes. Second, Daisy has a similar story to the mothers in the novel. When Daisy was nine years old, her mother killed herself by eating raw opium after she bore a child to an abusive man (similar to An-Mei Hsu's story in the chapter Magpies). Daisy went to America leaving behind three daughters

whom Tan did not know about at the beginning (Like Suyuan). Finally, Like June, Amy Tan could reconcile with her mother after her trip to China.

The Joy Luck Club is a very rich and interesting novel; therefore it must be deeply analyzed. Many critics and researchers deal with the main ideas which serve the topic of my thesis; that is *The Inevitable Inheritance*. A variety of books, journals, articles, dissertations and essays offer some answers to the main questions which enable reaching the objectives of this study. The questions go around the difficulties of growing up with immigrant mothers, the effect of the mothers' past on their daughters, the role of storytelling in reconnecting them, and finally the characters' identity.

To reach the objectives of this study various sources are to be used. Important books are consulted like; Jane Elliott's *Popular Feminist Fiction As American Allegory: Representing National Time* (2008), Natalie M. Rosinsky's *Amy Tan Author and Storyteller* (2006), *Today's Writers And Their Works: Amy Tan* (2010) by Mark Mussari, *Strangers of the Academy: Asian Women Scholars in Higher Education* (2006) by GuofangLi, Gulbahar H. Beckett... and others. Moreover, the mother-daughter relationship is tackled by scholars from different angles. The conflicts can also be justified according to the cultural and generational differences. In the essay entitled "Cultural Differences Reflected by Parenting in *The Joy Luck Club*", Jijie Yu¹ and Nanjing Jiangsu compare the old and new parenting methods. Suggesting that daughters find solutions to new problems using old ways and mothers find solutions to old problems using new ways.

Rather than just justifications; many scholars studied what the narrator uses to clarify the nature of the mother-daughter relationship. Gloria Shen explores in her article "Born of a Stranger: Mother-Daughter Relationships and Storytelling in Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*", the connection between the unusual narrative technique used by Amy Tan and the relationships between the Chinese mothers and their American-born daughters. What

characterizes these relationships can be deduced through the use of multiple narrative points of view and through the structure of the novel itself as a collection of fragment stories put together randomly.

The mothers' narratives are difficult for the daughters to understand because they totally contrast the American beliefs and principles they were raised with. Unlike in the American Context, the Chinese agency prioritizes the community over the individual. The family provides necessary support to the development of individuals' well-being. The construction of a collective identity is explained in Magali Cornier Michael's "Choosing Hope and Remarking Kinship: Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*". Collective identity means that one depends on their familial community in order to have a voice. The daughters cannot know their worth nor achieve their voice until they decide to listen to their mothers. This idea is mentioned by M. Marie Booth Foster in her paper "Voice, Mind, Self: Mother-Daughter relationships in Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* and *The Kitchen God's Wife*".

Furthermore on this subject, Marina Heung in "Daughter-Text/Mother-Text: Matrilineage in Amy Tan's *Joy Luck Club*" comments on the shift from "I" to "You" to arrive at recognition and identification. Cao Shuo's "Cultural Reconciliation in Amy Tan's Novels" suggests that recognizing the other is the key to reconciliation and improving the relationships, which Tan herself seeks to achieve with her mother. In addition to the above mentioned works, there are still more to be discussed in the first chapter as they are essential to the topic of this thesis; *The Inevitable Inheritance*.

To the end of this thesis, feminist psychoanalysis is to be employed. This implies analyzing the mothers' childhood experiences in order to explain their behaviors towards their daughters. Repression is a core element since the mothers treat daughters in the same mothering style used by their mothers. They have been raised in tyrannical houses with no space for personal choice. Most of the women difficulties are shaped by the patriarchal

system. In such society men are superior whereas women are totally devalued and marginalized. Male oppression has a great impact on the females' psychology including how they conceptualize themselves and the others. In this regard, the mothers advise their daughters in order not to repeat the same mistakes of silence, submission and underestimation of oneself. The problem is in the way these mothers present their feelings of love and care, which the daughters cannot understand.

This thesis is divided into three chapters each holds subtitles. The first Chapter "Introduction to Chinese American Literature" holds three sections. Section one, "Identity and Womanhood in Chinese American literature", provides an idea about Chinese American literature and addresses the concept of identity and womanhood, the second section entitled "Amy Tan and *The Joy Luck Club*" relates Amy Tan's story to the novel. Then, the last section "Mother-Daughter Relationship in Context" presents a variety of works which deal with the struggles between mothers and daughters and the solution to these struggles. The second Chapter, "Daughters Inheriting Mothers' Past", contains four parts (June as Prodigy and Hope, Waverly Inheriting Invisible Strength, Lena Inheriting Her Mother's Passivity, and Rose Inheriting Indecisive Personality), each part analyzes the relationship between a mother and her daughter. This chapter stresses the idea that despite the generational and cultural divergences, the daughters are experiencing what their mothers experienced in the past. The last Chapter named "Heritage and Identity" encloses two parts "Psychological Trauma Caused by Cultural Clash" and "Finding identity". It explains how living between two cultures affects the psychology of the female characters of the novel and how they can finally answer the question: who am I?

Chapter One: Introduction to Chinese American Literature

As the title entails, this chapter covers a set of elements required to fully comprehend a Chinese American novel, in this case *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan. For this purpose, the chapter “Introduction to Chinese American Literature” is divided into three sections. The first section named “Identity and Womanhood in Chinese American Literature” provides a sequential movement from a definition of Diaspora literature in general to the evolution of Chinese American literature. This section also deals with the common theme discussed by Chinese American writers which is identity. Next section “Amy Tan and *The Joy Luck Club*” gives a detailed biography about the author and her inspiration to write the novel. The latter tells a lot about Tan’s personal experience as well as her mother’s. The last section is concerned with “Mother-Daughter Relationship in Context”. It offers different interpretations by many scholars. It particularly deals with the struggles the mothers and daughters face and how they are able to overcome them. In this context, the problem of identity is always present, because it shapes the relationships between the Chinese mothers and their American-born daughters throughout the novel.

I.1 Identity and Womanhood in Chinese American Literature

Before moving to discuss Chinese American literature, it is important to shed light on the umbrella term “Diaspora” that covers Asian American literature as a whole. According to the Oxford dictionary, the word Diaspora originates from the Greek word diaspeirein which means disperse (‘dia’ means ‘across’ and ‘speirein’ means ‘scatter’). This term appeared in the Septuagint (Deuteronomy 28:25). Thus, Diaspora can be defined as people who have spread or been dispersed from their homeland. First people to be called Diaspora were Jews outside Israel.

To understand the notion of Diaspora, it is necessary to look back at the Jews’ Diasporic experiences. As being defeated by the Babylonians, Jews were left homeless. This

homelessness has shaped their culture and their literature as well. Most of their writings express a common sense of displacement, insecurity, and oppression. Further, Diaspora literature develops to describe more than the Jewish literature, rather it refers to all works of the victimized ethnic groups in foreign countries like; Armenians, Africans, Palestinians, Asians and so on. Now thirty ethnic groups are said to be Diasporas and their Diaspora literatures share themes of alienation, marginalization and belonging to their home countries (Cohen 1-2).

Diaspora literature is defined by Martien Halvorson-Taylor¹ based on two criteria. First definition is based on the place of production, so Diaspora literature is literature produced by writers living outside their homeland. Second definition is based on the content of the works. For example, the story of Joseph is considered as Diaspora literature, because it tells his journey far from his motherland. To further explain Diaspora literature Halvorson distinguishes it from exile literature in that; exile writings constantly calls for returning home, whereas Diasporic ones are more about the issues of identity and the experiences of a minority group (par. 2).

Asian Americans are the largest ethnic group in America and their literature is one of the prominent Diasporas. Park states, "Asian American literature assumes a multiplicity of Asian countries of origin (China, Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia, etc.) that come together into a unitary, shared American experience: hence the melting pot, the adoption of a pan-Asian identity enabled by a common claiming of a place within the American nation. Asia is multiple, America is one and the latter is where we all end up" (165). Notably as any minority in the so called democratic America, Asians suffered racism and exclusion. Not only their language and traditions were marginalized, but also their literature. At that period of time, the Asian

¹ An associate professor of religious studies, who was recently honored with an All-University Teaching Award. Professor Halvorson-Taylor, who teaches Hebrew Bible and related topics, was among the nine faculty members from across the university recognized for teaching excellence.

American writings intended to familiarize American readers with the Chinese culture rather than gaining academic success. It was until the late 1960s that Asian American literature started to gain the appreciation it merits.

As part of the Asian minority in America, neither the Chinese presence nor their literature was welcomed as well. In *Asian and Asian-American Traditions in Language Arts* (2001), Shawn Wong and Naseem A. Hines explore the evolution of Asian American literature including the Chinese American one. The first Chinese American work is called *An English-Chinese Phrase Book* (1875) by Wong San and Assistants. Rather than an organized western form of a book, this book takes the form of a series of phrases; one needs to read and memorize the whole thing. Mainly, the book depicts the experiences of the Chinese laborers from their first step in the new country; where they hoped to realize the golden American dream like any other immigrants.

During the late 19th and early 20th century, the Chinese identity witnesses a harsh rejection in the American context. Edith Maud Eaton was one of the bravest writers who challenged these circumstances and was able to express Chinese identity in her collection of stories *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* (1912). Later in 1956, Diana Chang published the first Chinese American novel "*The Frontiers of Love*"; where she emphasizes the cultural conflicts and questions the Chinese American identity. Moreover, the Chinese American canon encompasses plays and autobiographies. *The Year of The Dragon* (1974) by the famous Frank Chin is one of the successful plays denoting the familial life in Chinatowns. More popular than plays are the Chinese American autobiographies. One of the influential pioneers in this genre is Maxine Hong Kingston in *Woman Warrior* (1976), *China Men* (1980); and *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book* (1987). The works of Kingston are characterized with two major themes, family and identity.

The issue of identity is the major focus of Fae Myenne Ng's *Bone* (1993) where she portrays the hardships encountering the Chinese parents living in Francisco, because they enjoy little rights in comparison to their American born children; who have a paper indicating their American belonging. As described by one of the novel's characters "Paper is more precious than blood" (9). Even contemporary Chinese American works still concern themselves with the notions of racism, stereotypes, gender and in-betweenness. For instance, Shawn Wong's *American Knees* (1995) discusses the Asian-American gender relationships. It is impossible to speak about Chinese American literature without mentioning the amazing Amy Tan author of three best-selling novels; *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991), and *Hundreds Secrets Senses* (1995). All of Tan's novels tackle the relationships between Chinese mothers and their American born daughters and the numerous conflicts they encounter (53-62). In few words, the evolution of Chinese American literature demonstrates that identity is a collective concern of Chinese Americans from the 19th century until nowadays.

To accomplish equilibrium of one's identity, which is between a first world society and a third world society, is an extremely complex course. In her essay "Cultural Identities in The Chinese Diaspora", Marie-Paule Ha argues that constructing a cross-cultural identity is not an easy process as it is affected by many factors. Identities are shaped by the economic, social or political situations that people face in their home or host countries and their personal interests. Ha supports her idea using Wang Gunguru's book *China and Chinese Overseas* (1991).

Wang Gunguru divides the Chinese immigrants into four categories, each with a specific identity. The category that was treated as slaves after the Africans are the Chinese hard workers in plantations and mines named "the Coolie". Because of the racial rejection and extreme exploitation they went through, they could not learn English nor integrate in the society. Hence, the laborers stuck to their Chinese identity and lived under one unified

community in Chinatowns; this was their only way to survive. Unlike the Coolie, the Traders who were merchants and artisans were able to make use of their “Chineseness²” in order to manage their business in the USA. Such merchants stayed long in the host country and successfully maintained their identity through cultural associations. Then,

there is the general term Sojourners which includes all Chinese overseas with nationalist ideologies that provide financial support to their countries. Last category is Re-migrants or Chinese who re-migrated to America in the last fourteen years to pursue their professional careers. Afar from keeping a cultural identity, they seek to leave their mark abroad.

The host country also determines what identity to adopt. Ha summarizes Peter Gosling ideas in “*Changing Chinese Identities in Southeast Asia: an Introductory Review*” as following. Assimilation is necessary if the Chinese community is weak, but if the community is strong the Chinese prefer to hold on their ethnic identity whereas some prefer to adopt an intermediate one. That is to say; a mixed identity of east and west features and then it is up to the situation and the audience that one can decide which identity to use. The first generation of Chinese Americans rejected the Chinese heritage; traditions, language, beliefs, and even physical features. They constantly sought to be accepted as American citizens despite their roots. Such rejection created constant struggles between them and their parents. Regardless of all the trials to eradicate their Chinese origins, they could not integrate in the American society; they were always seen as aliens. From the above discussed notion of identity, it can be said that Chinese identity is flexible; it can change according to the social, economic, political or personal demands (Pars. 5-8).

Chan Hune (1995) and Kibria (1998) articulates about the call for a unified identity. In the 1970’s, obtaining equal rights stimulated Asian Americans to set an identity for their own. To overcome the shared experiences of racial discrimination, one needs a way to control

²Chineseness means the quality of being Chinese

governmental decision making, which can only happen through political participation. “The Asian American identity was constructed as a way for individuals of different Asian backgrounds to jointly gain political access and presentation” (qtd. in Cheryan and Tsai 132). The second generation writers are concerned with the issue of self-definition in a racist society. Consequently, they try to assert their uniqueness rejecting the stereotyped Chinese model. In Elaine Kim’s words, “Claiming America for Asian Americans...means inventing new reality, defining ourselves according to truth instead of a racial fantasy, so that we can be reconciled with one another in order to celebrate our marginality” (88 qtd. in Davis 90).

The road to self-assertion does not only involve political engagements, it involves participation in arts, principally literature. Chinese American writers have been accused of being inauthentic or *hollow bamboo* by Chinese people and pushed by the American audience to write in English. They decided to challenge both side and create a language of their own. Frank Chin, whose language is said to be authentic, criticized other writers like Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan for altering the language. Their works please the majority of public; which is American. For instance, in *Woman Warrior*, Maxine Hong Kingston uses direct transliteration to transfer the same feeling for the reader. In *The Joy Luck Club*, Amy Tan utilizes Chinese words to manifest the gap between mothers and daughters characters. Often, the Chinese words are translated to enrich the reader’s knowledge (Zeng 66-67).

Since Asian Americans in general or Chinese American in particular share history, they share a collective identity. The postmodern framework is marked by fragmentation of one’s self and the existence of multiple identities. For this reason the individual leans on the community to recognize their identity. Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates touch upon this idea, in their terms “Ethnic and national identities operate in the lives of individuals by connecting them with some people, dividing them from others. Such identities are often

deeply integral to a person's sense of self, defining an 'I' by placing it against a background 'we' ” (qtd.inNing 109).

For decades the concept of identity has been problematic for the American-born generation to Chinese parents. They develop a hybrid identity; that is between what is American and what is Chinese, they do not feel that they belong to either the Chinese community or the American one. Being torn between two worlds with almost two opposite cultures evokes the question of “who am I?” A Chinese American cannot feel like an American among Americans and also cannot fully understand the Chinese norms. The problem of hybridity is explained in the following quotation by Ien Ang:

Hybridity then is a concept that confronts and problematises boundaries, although it does not erase them. As such, hybridity always implies an unsettling of identities. It is precisely our encounters at the border—where self and other, the local and the global, Asian and Western meet—that make us realize how riven with potential miscommunication and intercultural conflict these encounters can be. This tells us that hybridity, the very condition of in-betweenness, can never be a question of simple shaking hands, of happy, harmonious merger and fusion. Hybridity is not the solution, but alerts us to the difficulty of living with differences, their ultimately irreducible resistance to complete dissolution. In other words, hybridity is a heuristic device for analysing complicated entanglement. (8)

Identity, the issue of all time, is more complex when it comes to female writings. Chow divides female identity into four categories determined by their beliefs. The assimilationist; embraces American standards and rejects the Chinese ones. This category often endures low self-esteem, guilt and identity crisis. The opposite category, the traditionalist; embraces Chinese traditions and rejects the new values. Then there is the ambivalent; who denies both culture and always feels alienated. The most successful category is the pluralist, the one who

reaches balance; that is between the assimilationist and the traditionalist. She is proud of her ethnic roots, yet engages in the American mainstream (qtd. in Fong 93-94).

At the beginning of their literary career, Chinese American writers' focus was on the issue of racial discrimination and the hard circumstances immigrants lived in America. The 1960s and 1970s feminist movements brought new dimension to the literary field. From that period, women writers exceeded male writers in number and quality. "In the literature written in English by ethnic Chinese Eurasians and published in the United States, the women not only outnumber the men, but the women's books are more authentic, more numerous, quite simply_better" (Ling xii qtd. in Hsiao 165).

Women were active in demanding equal rights and opportunities to those of men. Feminist demands include the right to freedom of expression. Fearlessly of being rejected or stereotyped, female writers then begun to write using their real names, in order to enlighten the public readers about the difficulties faced by Chinese women in their homeland as well as in the host country. Amy Tan of a Chinese American identity; is one of the significant fiction writers in the feminist literary field. She is able to portray Chinese women in a way that satisfies the American audience. "Amy Tan depicts the clash of cultures and the ensuing dilemmas and success with unique understanding and startling sensitivity. Her writings have held up a mirror to Chinese community in America, and are truly representing the work of a cross-cultural writer" (Vidhyavathi and Anbazhagan 2).

Chinese American female writers have to assert their identity. In this case, gender is a central factor. The Asian culture imposes very strict gender roles. Women are meant to be submissive, passive, and dependant housewives whereas men are meant to be strong willed, oppressive and dominant (Fong 1965, Hsu 1971, and Weiss 1973 qtd. in Fong 94). The Chinese believe that 'man' signifies 'heaven: *Qian*' and 'woman' signifies 'earth: *Kun*'. The relationship between men and women is the same as the relation between heaven and earth;

one is to dictate orders and one is to obey and serve. Such patriarchal society supports male domination *yang* and female submission *yin* (Peng 149). This oppression based on the sex is covered by Ling as following:

The three obediences enjoined a woman to obey her father before marriage, her husband after marriage, and her eldest sons after her husband's death. The four virtues decreed that she be chaste; her conversations courteous and not gossipy; her deportment graceful but not extravagant; her leisure spent in perfecting needle work and tapestry for beautifying the home. (3 qtd. in Peng 149)

Chinese American women writings expose the double segregation of being objectified by both Chinese and American cultures. The traditional inferiority of Asian women extends to the racist America, where they are stereotyped as sexual erotic objects. Media spreads many labels like: China doll, Suzie Wong sexpot, Geisha girl, and dragon lady (Fong 95). To be fit in the host country, women have to modify their identity in a way that suits the American. This is a very difficult task to "...articulate a politics of resistance and difference without resorting to purely definitional concept of ethnic identity" (Malini Johar Schueller 4 qtd. in Hsiao 165).

An important component of the Chinese identity is the family roles. The Asian culture as a whole puts the family first before everyone else even oneself. There is no self-reliance; every one depends on the others to form a harmonious community characterized by interdependence and sacrifice. Therefore, the family members share everything; and identity is not an exception (Fong 101).

Magali Cornier Michael highlights the importance of community in shaping the individual identity. Unlike the western perspective, the Chinese agency prioritizes the community over the individual. For example, a person is identified within a group rather than individually.

Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* provides a vision of the community from a female Chinese American point of view. The mothers brought to the USA their Chinese cultural values which sanctify familial interests over personal ones. The novel negotiates a hybrid way to create a comfortable atmosphere for the Chinese American daughters; which enables them to live between two opposite cultural values with the facility to interact with their mothers.

Chinese traditions imply that a person has to belong to community with shared concerns. In order to survive in a foreign country, the Chinese mothers form the Joy Luck club which is more than a place for entertainment. As similar to their original home, the club represents a community that offers them joy and luck or more like, support and hope. It does not matter how much differences exist in this community, it still be supportive (39-40).

As a conclusion, this section made it possible to learn about the essential points needed to analyze a Chinese American novel. The section opens with simple definitions of Diaspora and Asian American literature and moves to an overview about Chinese American literature. The latter includes the most influential Chinese American writers and their main works. Most importantly, it discusses the notion of identity, which is a common issue of all the Chinese American writings. The best example of the theme of identity is Amy Tan's master piece; *The Joy Luck Club*.

I.2 Amy Tan and *The Joy Luck Club*

This section is devoted to examine Amy Tan's life, especially those aspects related to the novel. At first, general information about the novel are given. Then, there are a number of important events in Amy Tan's childhood that need to be mentioned. Tackling Tan's own story does not go without stressing the role of her mother Daisy in determining her identity. Tan made the best use of her familial problems caused by cultural and generational misunderstandings to develop her writing skill. Her difficult life was a source of ambition and inspiration to produce such tour de force, *The Joy Luck Club*. Normally this novel is a work of

fiction, yet it reflects a lot about Tan's own experiences. This aspect also is explained in this section.

The Joy Luck Club (1989) is a postmodernist fictional yet autobiographical work by the Chinese American author Amy Tan. It contains four sections, each divided into four chapters. The novel tells sixteen stories of four Chinese mothers and their Americanized daughters. The core subject of this collection of interwoven stories is the daughter-mother relationships. These relationships are characterized by constant conflicts and traumas, but the novel offers a happy ending of reconciliation. The female characters' concern is finding their lost identity and this cannot happen until they establish connections to their Chinese past.

To relate Tan's story to the novel it is necessary to go back to her childhood and to her mother's past as well. Natalie M. Rosinky tells the story of Amy Tan in a very detailed way. In spite of his good looking, Daisy's first husband in China was an abusive man. Marriage was not her only painful experience; she was imprisoned for two years and then freed with the help of John Tan. Daisy left behind all the miserable incidents in her life; jail, civil war, Japanese invasion, taking away her three daughters and divorce to finally marry John and immigrate to America. Later, Amy Tan was born in 19 February 1952, Oakland California. Her real name is An-mei Ruth which means blessing from America. Because of her psychological traumas, Daisy always felt insecure and regularly changed her place of living. This displacement created an uncomfortable situation for Amy in her childhood, but when she grew older she realized the positive impact of it. Constant moving from one house to another and from one school to another enriched Amy's knowledge and enhanced her writing skill. At the age of eight the skillful child wrote her first essay entitled 'What The Library Means to Me'.

Even though Amy Tan had always great marks in Math and science, she was into writing. Amy was a good student, yet her firm parents always sent her to summer school; she rarely

took breaks like children of her age. The hard efforts of the so-demanding parents could never convince Amy to go against her will to study linguistics to become a free-lance writer. This choice was very disappointing because Daisy has hoped to see her daughter a doctor or a musical prodigy. In addition to the choice of education, there are other reasons that disturbed Amy and Daisy's relationship. The American-born daughter showed no interest in her Chinese roots; she hated the food, she hated being inferiorized in the gym team and she hated even her appearance.

The character of Daisy affected Amy's perspective about her Chinese heritage. The mother threatened that she would kill herself or return to China. From these two sentences Amy formed a false idea about China; as if going to this country resembles death. Another reason for the mother-daughter conflict is the unsympathetic treatment Amy received. One time in the funeral of their little girl neighbor, Daisy told Amy that this is what will happen when a girl disobeys her mother. At the age of 10 Amy knew about the first destructive marriage of her mother and how her grandmother committed suicide with raw opium in front of the nine-year old Daisy. Since then things started to clear up a bit for Amy (15-25).

The story of Amy Tan is further detailed by Mark Mussari. There are many factors that made of Tan a competent writer. She was an addicted reader; she would read a book in one day. Reading was more than a pleasure for Amy; it was a refuge from her miserable life. In the introduction of *The Best American Short Stories* (1999), she states "I was addicted to stories about the morbid: the beheadings, the stoning, the man who was dead for three days and stank when he came back to life. These were people with fates worse than mine". In addition, the writer developed her love to language from the bed-time stories told to her from her father John, who died in 1968 after his son's death in 1967. After these tragic events Amy Tan decided to move to Europe where she continued her educational path to get BA in English and linguistics then a MA in linguistics. In her educational period in Switzerland

Amy dated Franz, who was not the right man to date. With Daisy's assistance and continuous pushing, Amy could break up with Franz to marry later on the man she deserves (11-17).

The relationship of Amy Tan with her mother did not improve until Daisy got sick. In her trip with her husband to Hawaii, Amy's friend checked her email to find a message from home. The message holds that Daisy had a heart attack and she is in dangerous situation. She called the hospital, but she was kept waiting for long. In this period of waiting, Amy was drowning in guilt, because she rarely communicates with her mother; she knows nothing about her. In Susan Muaddi Darraj's words the phone conversation was "The Wakeup call". Since that moment Amy prayed to God to heal her mother and to give them a chance to reconcile their relationship. Finally the phone connected, Daisy was still alive and was so happy that Amy called. After recovery the mother and daughter traveled to China as Amy promised. This voyage is considered as the inspiration to write *The Joy Luck Club* (Darraj 7-11).

After exploring Amy Tan's personal story, it is easy now to relate it to *The Joy Luck Club*. Like all mothers in the novel, Tan's mother played Mahjong, which she brought with her to America. Suyuan Woo has similar past to that of Daisy; destructive marriage, escaping the soviet invasion, leaving behind their daughters to settle in San Francisco and remarry. Like Suyuan, Daisy was very demanding and always wanted her daughter to be the best quality in everything. Both mothers want their daughters to be musical prodigy and both daughters disappoint their mothers' wish. In an interview with *The American Interest*, Amy Tan states, "My mother and father were immigrants and they were practical people. They wanted us to do well in the new country. They didn't want us to be starving artists. Going into the arts was considered a luxury—that was something you did if you were born to wealth". Amy Tan is in many ways like June; they receive cruel treatment from their mothers, they do not use their real Chinese names (An-mei Ruth and Jing-mei), and both are free-lance writers.

Furthermore, Amy and all the daughters in the novel live under pressure to preserve their Chinese origins and all of them develop false judgments about their mothers. Another point to mention is that, An-mei's mother commits suicide using raw opium in front of her nine-years-old daughter, as Daisy's mother did. The trip to China was the reconciliation for Amy and Daisy as well as for Jing-mei and Suyuan. Traveling to China is not only reconciliation with the mothers, but also with their Chinese belonging. In an interview with *New York Times*, Tan's states, "When my feet touched China, I became Chinese. I knew I was not totally Chinese, but I felt the connection nevertheless. It was a sense of completeness, like having a mother and a father. I had China and America, and everything was all coming together finally."

I.3 Mother-Daughter Relationship in Context

The novel drives the reader to be participant in inferring meanings. In this context, the theme is made to appear universal. There is a shift from "I" to "you"; that is an interchangeability between the mothers' and the daughters' identities. This universality is seen through narrating the historical experience of mothers, daughters and sisters from different backgrounds, generations and races. The mother-daughter relationship can be more or less generalized in all hybrid families. Creating such a sisterhood bond attracts large audiences of female readers; "a mutation from daughter-text to mother-text to sister-text" (Heung 611).

Before digging into the content, *The Joy Luck Club's* structure by itself mirrors the nature of the mother-daughter relationships. The novel takes the form of sixteen stories told from different perspectives or a "collection of hunting memories". Tan's uses the postmodernist technique that is fragmentation to transmit the whole meaning of the text. Although the writer employs the storytelling technique, she prefers "showing" than just "telling". In the first person narrator, the characters tell their stories by externalizing all of

their thoughts, opinions, emotions, feelings, and attitudes towards themselves and towards the others. This authentic representation gets the reader into the characters' minds to sympathize with them as well as to comprehend their behaviors (Shen 3-4).

Drawing upon Shen's description of *The Joy Luck Club's* structure can clarify mother-daughter relationships. On one hand, the stories told within stories are more than just a literary technique. To make sense of each story, the reader depends on the other; this notion of interdependence exists between mothers and daughters as well. Like the stories, fragmented yet complementary, the characters cannot individually make sense of their lives. Regardless of the generational and cultural gap, the daughters can always find a way to their problems through their mothers. With the help of the mothers, they learn to appreciate themselves, to be successful women and to overcome the unhappy marriages to seek the comfortable life they deserve. On the other hand, as storytelling externalizes the insights of the characters to the reader, it does the same thing to the characters themselves. Because of the silence and lack of communication; the daughters know nothing about their mothers. In this context, storytelling does not only convey the Chinese heritage to the Americanized daughters, it becomes a bridge that reconnects them to their mothers. "...the mothers finally discover that storytelling is the best way to reach the hearts and minds of their daughters" (Shen 12).

The daughters build pre-judgments about Chinese traditions because of the parenting legacy employed by their silenced mothers. The mothers' practice of dominance and oppression is justified as following, "All the aunties (mothers) have experienced two kinds of extreme situation: one kind is famine, war forced marriage, and broken family in China, and the other is cultural alienation, disintegration of old family structure, and conflict between mother and daughter in America" (Xu 5 qtd. in Lautin 17). All the time, the

American-born daughters fail to translate their mothers' abusive treatment as good intentions or as a way to express love and hope.

The primary cause of tension between mothers and daughters is language barrier. In a society with new culture and new language, the immigrant women hold on to their heritage including their mother tongue. This choice almost eliminates interaction with the American society, as well as their daughters. The latter neglect the Chinese language, hence communication cannot take place. For example, when Jing-men tries to converse with Suyuan she replies in Chinese. Speaking Chinese alienates the daughters; they feel like strangers to their mothers. The daughters feel ashamed because they speak fluent English and they also feel confused because they hardly understand their mothers' broken English. Whereas, the mothers have an opposite point of view; the hybrid language for them is a way to resist the segregation (Guodong, Liu, and Peng 3-4).

Jiajie Yu and Nanjing Jiangsu elucidates the old methods versus the new ways of parenting. An-mei, Lindo and Ying-Ying recall their childhood in China. In China the community is sacred, thus sacrifice is necessary to reach harmony. This idea can be illustrated when An-mi's mother cuts her flesh to prepare a healing soup for her mother. The belief that, family comes first clarifies why Chinese women has no wish of their own, their fate is decided by their parents or husbands. Although, the Chinese women in the novel had difficulties in living in such communal society, they adopt its principles. Eventually the mothers practice tyranny inside their homes. In other words, they try to impose the rules based on their Chinese background on their daughters who are born and raised in an American agency. What is worse than restrict regulations is the mother refusal to justify or give explanations to their daughters. To sum up, even in American the mothers raise their daughters according to the Chinese ways of parenting.

The mothers think they are wise enough to control their daughters' choice. Though it is Waverly's wish, her mother Lindo encourages her to play chess. The accomplishments of Waverly make Lindo happier than Waverly herself. The latter is irritated by her mother's showing off because of her success. When Waverly grows up, gets married and has a child, she realizes that the child's success is a source of pride for his/her parents. She can finally appreciate her mother's support and faith in her which made her a successful woman. In addition, the silence of Ying-Ying is considered as a way of communication. Lena fails to acknowledge that behind her mother's silence, there is a heavy package of sorrowful memories. Sometimes words cannot bear the rightful meanings, in this times silence is the only way. Although passive and silent, Ying-Ying saves her daughter from a consuming marriage. Moreover, An-mei helps Rose to discover her own worth and to get what she deserves. In short, mothers use old solutions to their daughters' new problems (3-9).

More or less, the daughters' relationship to their mothers determines their attitudes and mind-set; without whom they cannot be what they are now. "...This relationship is the birthplace of a woman's ego identity, her sense of security in the world, her feelings about herself, her body and other women. "From her mother, a woman receives her first impression of how to be a woman" (Kathie Carlson 11 qtd. in Foster 18). Since the daughters are raised in the western world, they strongly believe in individualism. They do not acknowledge that their mothers are part of their identities or choose to neglect their Chineseness. It is true that they fail to interact, yet the mothers lead their off springs to discover their voice, their mind and their selfhood. For examples, to find her voice, Jing-mei has to know Suyuan; this eventually happens when Jing-mei links her mothers' narratives then visits China to end this puzzled tale (Foster 19-20).

The presence of the Chinese in the United States brought new facets to the American culture as well as the American literature. The second generation Chinese American writers were among the bravest Asians to present their uniqueness and ethnic pride. Their contribution added new flavor to the literary sphere, through producing rich pieces of writings that represent both America and China. Such literature enriches the reader's knowledge about the commonalities and divergences of the two cultures. Both in form and content, Chinese American works offer insights of the struggles in postmodern context; particularly for women. For them, literature was a weapon to fight the stereotypes and racial prejudices. The most famous writers are Maxine Hong King and Amy Tan whose works represent the female hybrid identity of the second generation immigrants. They write about the problems of integration as being the other for both Chinese and American peoples. The theme mostly emphasized in their works is mother-daughter relationship. In this context, they denote the difficulties of living with Chinese traditional mothers. Amy Tan's *Joy Luck club* highlights the importance of ethnic heritage which is inevitably inherited by the Americanized daughters. The notion of mothers bequeathing their daughters the Chinese past is further discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Two: Daughters Inheriting Mothers' Past

The second chapter offers a profound analysis of the core subject in Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*; that is the Mother-Daughter relationship. For this sake, the chapter breaks up into four parts namely; June as Prodigy and Hope, Waverly Inheriting Invisible Strength, Lena Inherits her Mother's Passivity, and Rose Inheriting Indecisive Personality. The division of this chapter comes in this order, because June and Waverly's relations with their mothers share many characteristics, both are over-pressured from their rarely-satisfied mothers to be the best. Whereas Lena and Rose share a less stressing familial mood, yet they both undergo passive marriages. The irony here is that regardless of: the space and time gap or the culture and education gap, the mothers' Chinese past always extends to their daughters' American present.

Whether desired or not Chinese heritage is part of the daughters' identity which cannot be neglected. Despite the age and the cultural divergences, the daughters can be identified to their mothers. It is possible that the daughters inherit part of their identity from their mothers; sometimes the past of the mothers overlaps the future of the daughters. Jane Elliott articulates, "... over identification and bad symbiosis perceived to characterize the mother/daughter relationship results in much the opposite effect: a world in which the weight of the suffering past inevitably eradicates positive futurity that should be the daughter's" (146).

Understanding the American present implies scrutinizing the Chinese past. Tan's narrative technique of collecting separate stories which go back and forth in time shows how daughters use the past to recognize their mothers, to understand their present lives and future as well. "The stories interact through their super structural arrangement into a narrative that stresses the importance of returning to the past in order to progress into the future... she also

implies that this polychromic progression can resolve the temporalized contradictions of Chinese American female identity (Singer 325).

II.1 June as Prodigy and Hope

Suyuan is deceased and her daughter is to replace her, thus June's narration occupies a large part in the novel. She remembers her childhood memories, tells her mother's Chinese stories, and meets her long-lost twin sisters. The relationship of Suyuan and June can be described in terms of hopes, misunderstandings, disappointments, and finally reconciliation. The first section entitled "Feathers from a Thousand *Li* Away" opens with a prologue which summarizes all of the mothers' hopes brought to America. In the form of a folktale, the prologue tells the story of a Chinese woman who travels to America with a swan. This bird does not accept its nature and hopes to be something else—a goose, which brings its end.

The woman hopes for an ambitious and strong girl; strong enough to have an independent life. This independence means that the girl measures her self-worth by her good qualities rather than those of her husband. In short, the Chinese mother wants her daughter to acquire the best American opportunities, which the mother herself could not have in China. The woman states:

In America I will have a daughter just like me. But over there nobody will say her worth is measured by the loudness of her husband's belch. Over there nobody will look down on her, because I will make her speak only perfect American English. And over there she will always be too full to swallow any sorrow! She will know my meaning, because I will give her this swan—a creature that became more than what was hoped for. (TJLC³ 5)

³TJLC hence forward, *The Joy Luck Club*

The second part of the prologue in the first section sums up Suyuan's lost American hopes. The gap between reality and dreams is too large. Unfortunately, with the immigration officials' intervention, as the woman steps a foot in America she is left with one feather from that swan. Although this event symbolizes the beginning of disappointment, she never loses hope. The woman waits until her daughter grows up to give her the swan feather and explain what it signifies for her; "This feather may look worthless, but it comes from afar and carries with it all my good intentions" (TJLC 5). After all the tragedies Suyuan have gone through, America for her equals optimism, the light which saves her from the Chinese dark past. June declares, "America was where all my mother's hopes lay... There were so many ways for things to get better" (TJLC 151).

Relentlessly, Suyuan holds very high expectations and sometimes unrealistic ones. She thinks that her daughter in America can be wherever she wishes for, a genius at any domain. Yet Suyuan denies forcing her daughter to be genius, she only asks her to be her best. The first prodigy hope is when the mother pushes June to watch celebrities on TV in her Chinese words *Ni Kan_You watch*. She has this obsession about Shirley whom she wants June to imitate, believing that it is an easy task to perform. There is a scene when Shirley cries and Suyuan asks June to perform, she says, "You already know how. Don't need talent for crying!" (TJLC 152). Further, Suyuan takes her daughter to the hairdresser in order to change her style to look like a celebrity. Eventually, Su gives up the acting idea, but this is not the end of the misery for June.

The fantasies of Suyuan of having a prodigy child have no end. When working as a housekeeper, she gathers magazines and journals to be read in details. Those details are all about prodigy children. She always puts her daughter under tests and obliges her to do extensive trainings to achieve what those children have achieved. She trains her daughter to be able to remember and pronounce all the countries' capitals in the world. Not only capitals,

Su asks June to look and recall verses from the Bible in a very rapid way. After trials, the daughter fails to the tests, and her mother appears to surrender after all.

Oups! Surrendering Suyuan's dream is no more than a dream for June. After a period, Su comes up with another plan for her daughter; that is to be a musical prodigy. One day she was watching the *Ed Sullivan Show* and gets fascinated then calls June to watch. June describes such fascination in these words, "She seemed entranced by the music, a little frenzied piano piece with this mesmerizing quality, sort of quick passages and then teasing lilted ones before it turned to the quick playful parts" (TJLC 155). The daughter knows what is after her mother's call but feels somehow safe, because they do not own a piano and cannot afford one.

Even lacking a piano at home can never stop Suyuan from realizing her wish. She sends June to take lessons from their neighbor old teacher named Mr. Chong offering him to clean his house in return. This imposed thought does not please June, but her refusal puts her in trouble. The mother's reaction is too cruel; she slaps her daughter accusing her of being ungrateful.

After June's failure at the talent-show she expects her mother to give up, yet the warrior Suyuan does not. Su tries again to force June into practice:

She yanked me by arm, pulled me off the floor, snapped off the TV. She was frighteningly strong, half pulling, half carrying me toward the piano as I kicked the throw rugs under my feet. She lifted me up and onto the hard bench. I was sobbing by now, looking at her bitterly. Her chest was heaving even more and her mouth was open, smiling crazily as if she were pleased I was crying. (TJLC 164)

The harsh treatment of Suyuan provokes June to react even harsher. She shouts, "Then I wish I wasn't your daughter. I wish you weren't my mother" then she adds, "Then I wish I'd never been born!" shouting more, "I wish I were dead! Like them" (TJLC 164). Deeply hurt,

Suyuan surrenders her child prodigy dreams and stops talking about it for the rest of her life. She is deeply hurt, because after losing her twin babies she hopes the best for June, who does not acknowledge this, “She believes that her mother’s constant criticism bespeaks a lack of affection, when in fact her mother’s severity and high expectations are expressions of love and faith in her daughter” (Iliescu 424). June does not even know that her real Chinese name_Jing-mei is of a great value “pure essence”.

When visiting China after Suyuan’s death, her husband clarifies things for his daughter. He informs her how Su never loses hope to find her twin daughters whom she left in China, when escaping the Japanese attack. Mr. Woo tells June the untold story of her twin sisters in details; after Suyuan gets very ill and becomes unable to carry them more in her escaping journey. She leaves them in front of a tree with all what she owns, and with a letter so that someone would bring them to her, “...She would go down the road to find them some food and would be back. And without looking back, she walked down the road, stumbling and crying, thinking only of this one last hope; that her daughters would be found...” (TJLC345).

Although Suyuan abandons her twin baby girls in a very hard situation, she never loses hope to find them. Su continuously writes letters to her friends and family to ask about them, after these efforts the girls are found unfortunately after her death. Canning supposes, “Maybe it was your mother’s dead spirit who guided her Shanghai schoolmate to find her daughters...” (TJLC 349). The mother’s hopeful and optimistic personality is also denoted by the meaning of her name itself “Long-Cherished Wish”.

Finding the twin transforms from Suyuan’s wish to be her younger daughter’s inherited responsibility. Now the daughter is to carry on Su’s mission; after the girls have been found, June decides to visit China to meet them on behalf of her mother. She fearfully declares to Su’s friends “the aunties”, that she knows nothing about her mother to tell her sisters. An-mei responds, “How can you say? Your mother is in your bones!” (TJLC 35). In the same

conversation, Ying-ying suggests, “Tell them stories she told you, lessons she taught, what you know about her mind that has become your mind” (TJLC 35). The aunties’ statements agree on one idea that June is so much like her mother. Thus, June is to speak on behalf of her deceased mother by telling her sisters how their mothers was and how she had no choice in abandoning them. “The integrations of mother-daughter voices as a ‘double voice’ bespeaks the mother-daughter relationship as merging and interdependent” (Yu 179).

Even that June does not recognize this at the beginning; she has inherited a lot from her mother. “A friend once told me that my mother and I were alike, that we had the same wispy hand gestures, the same girlish laugh and sideways look”, States June (TJLC 17). Not only physical appearance and gestures, even their personalities have many points in common. The moment before June contacts her sisters, she makes a pause just to tease them a bit, just like her mother who likes to test other people’s patience. Inheriting mother’s mind can further be demonstrated when June identifies Suyuan’s chair at the mahjong table at the Joy Luck club without anyone telling her, she knows her mother’s orientation is the East.

From the many things that June inherits from her mother is a necklace; a gift with loads of meanings. Su says, “For a long time, I wanted to give you this necklace. See, 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” (TJLC 250). The daughter seeks to find meaning to her mother’s Chinese gift from the bartender who is wearing the same necklace given from his mother. He articulates, “She gave it to me after I got divorced. I guess my mother’s telling me I’m still worth something” (TJLC 237). This necklace symbolizes Su’s good intentions for her precious daughter, whom she sees as the best quality.

Su’s gift also means that the mother and the daughter always depend on each other to reach completeness (or complete sense of self-worth). No matter how different, they still are interdependent. This notion can be seen when June opens Schumann book to play the

“Pleading Child” piece and notices another piece “Perfectly Contented” at the opposite side. In her expression, “‘Pleading Child’ was slower but sweeter; ‘Perfectly Contented’ was longer, but faster. And after I played them both a few times, I realized they were two halves of the same song” (TJLC 167). Meeting the twin sisters and perceiving the resemblance between them, her and her mother make June realize how the members of this family complete one another. They are all parts from the whole; that is Suyuan’s past hope.

Throughout the course of the story, Suyuan’s past always overlaps her daughter’s present. “Over the years she told me the same story, except for the ending, which grew darker, casting long shadows into her life, and eventually into mine”, June recounts (TJLC9). It can be concluded that Suyuan’s past sufferings, fears and guilt transform into future hopes. Those hopes shape the life of her daughter. In few words, June inherits Suyuan’s past.

II. 2 Waverly Inheriting Invisible Strength

Waverly and Lindo’s relationship is very complicated, because of the constant criticism. The mother is never pleased and the daughter can never understand that criticism is Lindo’s way to show her care; she seeks the best for her daughter and wants her to acknowledge that she deserves nothing less. This manner of expressing maternal love makes communication between the two almost impossible and leads Waverly to feel ashamed of Lindo. Although the daughter tries not to be like her mother, she fails. She behaves like an American, yet she is much more Chinese; not only her face but her spirit. The girl possesses her mother’s best quality, which is the art of invisible strength. This inheritance is evident through the strong impact that Lindo has on Waverly; in other terms the power of her words over her daughter’s feelings and choices.

As a child, Waverly plays chess and eventually becomes a chess champion. When she wins the first tournament, the happy girl expects her mother to feel the same. With her first trophy, she receives her first disappointment rather than congratulations and support. The

unsatisfied Lindo ruins the moment by asking for more and more; “Next time win more; lose less”. Then in the next tournament which Waverly wins, Lindo repeats; “Lost eight piece this time. Last time was eleven. What I tell you? Better off lose less!” (TJLC 105). This pressure practiced by the mother does more harm than help; the girl complains that she cannot concentrate with the presence of her mother who seems more stressed than Waverly herself. The criticism has never stopped at that point. The Chinese mother is displeased with her daughter’s personal life as well. For instance, she severely criticizes Waverly’s first husband Marvin:

I saw his brain had shrunk from laziness, so that now it was good only for thinking up excuses. He chased golf and tennis balls to run away from family responsibilities. His eye wandered up and down other girl’s legs, so he didn’t know how to drive straight home anymore. He liked to tell big jokes to make other people feel little. He made a loud show of leaving ten-dollar tips to strangers but was stingy with presents to family. He thought waxing his red sports car all afternoon was more important than taking his wife somewhere in it. (TJLC 205-206)

If we consider Marvin as an unsuitable husband for Waverly and Lindo has a point in criticizing such guy, then what about Rich? Rich is the second man that Waverly loves unequivocally and Lindo criticizes unequivocally as well. For example, when Waverly shows her mother the mink jacket brought to her as a Christmas gift from Rich, Lindo does not compliment nor even smile. She says, “This is not so good... It is just leftover strips. And the fur is too short, no long hairs” (TJLC199). When the Jongs invite Rich for dinner, Rich is a very kind man and Lindo finds no flaw to comment about, but she says that he has too many freckles in his face.

Lindo's hard character can be seen through their meeting for lunch. At first she talks about Waverly's haircut, which she of course does not like, "*Ai-ya!* What's the matter with your hair? Then adds, "Looks chopped off... you must ask for your money back" (TJLC 195). Then she speaks about the restaurant in which the two are to have lunch charging the menu to of low quality. The toughness of Lindo does not deny the fact that she has a warm heart; no matter how much she appears uninterested, deep down she cares for her daughter like any mother in the world. Waverly remembers how her mother looks after her intensively when she has fever, "...she sat next to my bed, scolding me for going to school without my sweater. In the morning she was there as well, feeding me rice...And in the afternoon, she sat in a chair in my room, knitting me a pink sweater..." (TJLC 203).

In addition to criticism, Waverly is all the time annoyed by her mother's showing off. When her daughter wins chess games, Lindo tries to take credit for such accomplishment. Such as saying, "I told my daughter, use your horses to run over the enemy" (TJLC 200). Waverly shouts to her mother to stop bragging. This sort of reaction deeply wounds Lindo, because she is proud of her daughter who does not recognize this. When Waverly asks to accompany her mother to the beauty parlor, Lindo considers that her daughter is ashamed of her. She recounts when Waverly speaks on behalf of her at Mr. Rory's beauty salon, "I smile...But inside I am becoming ashamed. I am ashamed she is ashamed. Because she is my daughter and I am proud of her, and I am her mother but she is not proud of me" (TJLC 310).

Waverly turns in the same circle, she always ends up at the same point she has started from. All of the trials not to be like mother, the different opinions, and the shame do not refute the immense control that Lindo has over Waverly. Such control leads the prodigy girl to give up her talent. Because of the mother showing off, Waverly decides to quit. After some time, the girl desires playing again, but her mother gloomily says, "You think it is so easy. One day quit, next day play. Everything for you is this way. So smart, so easy, so fast" (TJLC 202).

This statement is like a curse that causes Waverly to lose the next game. She points out, "...I lost. And what was worse, my mother said nothing. She seemed to walk around with this satisfied look, as if it had happened because she had devised this strategy" (TJLC 203).

Waverly does not only quit chess, but also her first husband. Lindo destroys her daughter's first marriage, because she believes in her daughter's worth. In Waverly's first marriage is poisoned by Lindo's nosiness, her daughter's feelings go from love to something worse than hate. Temporarily, Waverly develops similar feelings towards her next boyfriend. After inviting Rich for dinner, Lindo has her technique to penetrate Waverly's mind and instills black discomfoting thoughts as usual. The daughter says about Rich, "He looked so pathetic. *So pathetic*, those words! My mother was doing it again, making me see black where I once saw white. In her hands, I always became the pawn" (TJLC 213).

This time Waverly does not leave Rich, yet her mother's injected venomous thoughts can never leave her head. She declares when Lindo visits their renewed apartment and sees the jacket gift from Rich, "And looking at the coat in the mirror, I couldn't fend off the strength of her will anymore, her ability to make me see black where there was once white, white where there was once black. That coat looked shabby, an imitation of romance" (TJLC 199). Lindo's power pulls out to more than words; even her silence is so disturbing for Waverly, often more powerful than her words.

The quality of invisible strength Lindo acquires from her earlier life in China. When she is a young girl, she tries not to break her parents' promise and marries a man or a kid! That she does not know before. The wife is no better than a servant or a slave, she is an object to guarantee the comfort of her husband and his family, "Women are belongings and possessions to others. They do not have the rights to choose their lives. In this way, they completely lose themselves in patriarchal society" (Peng 149). Using her smart silent tactics, she can escape such marriage without hurting or disrespecting anyone. Lindo does her plan in a lucky day,

where she convinces her mother-in-law that her marriage with Tyan-yu is a bad luck for him. Speaking with tears, she tells Taitai that she sees a dream in which ancestors were informing her that the match maker lied just for money and this marriage is curse, which explains why she cannot get pregnant. Further, she points to a pregnant servant and says that this baby is Tyan-yu's. Lindo manages to convince the Huangs that this marriage has to end immediately. This smart plan saves her as well as the poor servant, because in China it is a shame for woman to have baby without being married. Similarly, Lindo wishes that her daughter could recognize her value; to avoid any kind of abusive relationship and to not settle for anything less than what she merits.

As a mother, Lindo does not change, she remains strong-willed or a horse in Waverly's terms. From this maternal force, it is now clear how Waverly develops her skills to play chess like a pro. From her mother, she learns to create invisible barriers to protect herself from the enemy. Waverly testifies, "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, neither of us knew it at the time, chess games" (TJLC 95). Not only in playing chess, the girl uses the strategy of her mother even in real life; that is silence. Waverly uses the same strategy with Lindo; that is ignoring someone to provoke them to talk then makes them feel guilty.

The Chinese mother confirms this point in common between her and her daughter. "And half of everything inside you is from me, your mother's side, from the sun clan in Taiyuan⁴". In the same conversation she inserts, "We are a smart people, very strong, tricky, and famous for winning wars..." (TJLC 216). Lindo brags her ancestral heritage; that Taiyuan people always know how to win. Even Rich deduces the resemblance between the mother and her daughter; when Lindo tells him that July is not a good time to spend the honey moon in China, because the hot weather may harm his skin. The man deduces from where Waverly

⁴Taiyuan is a Chinese city (not Taiwan)

inherits her sweet tactful nature. When looking at the beauty parlor's mirror, the mother conceives the resemblance between her and her daughter, the resemblance which goes beyond mere facial features. Lindo tells Waverly, "These two faces, I think so much the same! The same happiness, the same sadness, the same good fortune, the same faults" (TJLC 311).

The past life of Lindo justifies why she yearns for the perfect husband for her daughter. That is, the one who cherishes her feelings and appreciates her existence. Lindo's good intentions veiled by her severity are explained in this way, "I don't know what caused me to seeing you as a baby, how you looked so much like me, and this made me dissatisfied with my life. I wanted everything for you to be better. I wanted you to have the best circumstances, the best character" (TJLC 323).

II.3 Lena Inheriting her Mother's Passivity

In the Chinese belief, the mother transmits her spirit and voice to her daughter. Therefore, if the mother has neither spirit nor voice, the daughter will have none of them either and that is Lena's case. Although the relationship of Ying-ying and Lena is marked by silence, it screams with painful haunting past. That is the Chinese dark past that the girl inherited; like her mother, the girl endures a passive marriage. Trying not to lose her husband Harold, Lena loses herself "her *Chi*" in the process and becomes a ghost. She thinks that Harold is the greatest opportunity a woman can enjoy and wonders how a girl like her could win the love of such a man. Accordingly, Lena devotes herself to please Harold in every way possible wishing nothing for herself, but to be his. She gives her all and gets inferior treatment in return; that is if possible to say a relationship from one side. Seeing that her past becomes her daughter's fate, finally Ying-ying decides to speak up. The mother retrieves her tiger nature and makes use of her fierceness to save Lena from such a consuming marriage.

In China, a girl must bite back her tongue and never express her desires. There is no wrong if the girl does not comprehend what she has been asked to do; all what matters is that

she follows. At the age of four, Ying-ying dresses up like a tiger to assist the Moon Festival. The curious young girl asks her Amah too many questions about the ceremony until her Amah cries, “You do not need to understand. Just behave, follow your mother’s example. Light incense, make an offering to the moon, bow your head. Do not shame me, Ying-ying” (TJLC 72). The nosy girl does not give up asking questions, so Amah has to explain that The Moon Lady listens to girls’ secret wishes which they cannot explicitly proclaim, because girls are not allowed to ask or to desire anything. This is the kind of education a Chinese girl undertakes and becomes silenced for the rest of her life. “At an early age, Ying-ying’s profound belief in fate and her personal destiny led to a policy of passivity and even listlessness. Always listening to omens and signs, she never paid attention to her inner feelings” (Iliescu 426).

Such kind of education blocks the communication between family members. The wife is to follow her husband commands blindly and serves his needs and the children are to follow their parents blindly and obey their orders. The family orders are not discussable or negotiable; each member is to carry out his role according to the traditions. Ying-ying makes clear that the relationship between her and Lena is determined by silence for a very long time. In her words, “For all these years I kept my mouth close so selfish desires would not fall out. And because I remained quiet for so long now my daughter does not hear me...I kept my true nature hidden, running along like a small shadow so nobody could catch me. And because I moved so secretly now my daughter does not see me” (TJLC 69). Even in her silence, Ying-ying is capable of transferring her fears and suspicions to her daughter. Sacredly, Lena has always interrogation marks in her head. She cannot understand why her mother is habitually down in the dumps and do not speak about what bothers her. As a result to her Ying-ying’s blurring past, Lena lives in constant terror:

I always thought it mattered, to know what is the worst possible thing that can happen to you, to know how you can avoid it, to not be drawn by the magic of the unspeakable Because, even as a young child, I could sense the unspoken terrors that surrounded our house, the ones that chased my mother until she hid in a secret dark corner of her mind And still they found her I watched, over the years, as they devoured her, piece by piece, until she disappeared and became a ghost. (TJLC 113)

Lena hears the other apartment's fights and sometimes envies them for this. She listens behind the walls to a mother and her daughter continuously yelling at each other. The two can finally connect to each other and solve their problems after speaking out their deficiencies. Lena pronounces, "I saw a girl complaining that the pain of not being seen was unbearable" (TJLC 129). By this statement, she expresses how aching is to be invisible. This invisibility is inevitable, because the girl inherits it from her Chinese mother. Ying-ying admits, "And I want to tell her this: We are lost, she and I, unseen and not seeing, unheard and not hearing, unknown by others" (TJLC 69).

Ying-ying has the ability to see things before they happen, usually bad ones. Looking at her mother wedding's pictures, Lena comments, "My mother often looked this way, waiting for something to happen, wearing this scared look" (TJLC 116). Since then Ying-ying wears such look of insecurity especially when it comes to her daughter. One day while walking in Chinatown, Lena and her mother come across a woman who seems dry and lifeless. Lena wonders why the later is in such miserable situation to which Ying-ying answers the woman met a bad man. In another conversation, Ying-ying informs Lena that she should directly goes back home after finishing school, because she can be kidnapped, raped, bore a baby, and then kill that baby. These entire excessive warnings mirror the mother's concerns that her daughter will experience a similar past to hers. In the same way, Lena grows into an insecure girl. She

inherits her mother's Chinese eyes, the eyes which can foresee danger and become scared all the time. She asserts, "...I looked so scared. I have a photo of my mother with this same scared look" (TJLC 115).

The miserable memories that Ying-ying endures in China are shaped by patriarchy. From childhood gender roles are determined by the patriarchal society, in which boys enjoy more rights than girls. Before going to the Moon Festival, Ying-Ying is chasing dragonflies, her mother tells her, "A boy can run and chase dragonflies, because that is his nature...but a girl should stand still" (TJLC 76). Later, when they are on the boat, Ying-ying drowns and gets saved by people whom she does not know. While the girl plays between the trees, she notices a show; which is a classical musical piece performed by the Moon Lady. That piece explains the kind of relationship between a woman and her man in China; in which the woman is always passive and unnoticed. Ying-ying states, "On the other side I saw a silhouette of a man appears. The Moon Lady held her arms out to embrace him—'O! Hou Yi, my husband, Master Archer of the Skies!' she sang but husband did not seem to notice her. He was gazing at the sky. And as the sky grew brighter, his mouth began to open wide—in horror or delight, I could not tell" (TJLC87).

Ying-ying continues recounting the story which takes the form of a song by the Moon Lady. She observes, "An eternity had passed since she last saw her husband, for this was her fate: to stay lost on the moon, forever seeking her own selfish wishes. 'For woman is *yin*,' she cried sadly, the darkness within, where untempered passions lie. And a man is *yang*, bright truth lightening our mind'" (TJLC88). In the Chinese belief, a woman is worthless without a man. She is no more than an object used to ensure the happiness of her husband. There is no wrong if the man does not care about his wife's desires and feelings, because it is his nature and must be respected and prized. For this reason, the woman can be lost without her husband's guidance and instruction. That is to say, if she chooses to have a voice or to wish

something for her own; she will be punished by staying in the dark forever without the lights of *yang* husband. Undoubtedly, such masculine beliefs sculptured in the children minds determine their future destinies and that is what happens to Ying-ying.

Despite her vanity and hard taste in man, Ying-ying falls for a man a way less than what she seeks for. The girl meets the friend of her aunt's new husband and remarkably he could win her attention with his self-confidence. For instance, he says, "See, she cannot run away. She is already mine" (TJLC 298). The cocky girl remains firm trying hard not to surrender to this temptation. And because no woman can resist such a man in control, Ying-ying finds herself married to that man whom she used to call uncle, as if against her will. The young girl becomes a victim to that man, "The idea of masculinity has been implanted into the minds of these Chinese mothers. They are gradually trained to become obedient. The power is more concentrated in male hands than in female ones. Even if Chinese mothers set foot on the soil of American full of hope, they cannot still get rid of the fate of gender inequality. Because nearly all existing human societies are basically patriarchal, and oppression of women has been common to all" (Peng 151).

There is a French proverb that says: the woman, who asks for nothing merits everything. The Chinese translation of this proverb's meaning comes like this: the woman, who gives everything, gets nothing in return. This is how the young girl loses herself and becomes passive in such marriage. She says, "I became a stranger to myself. I was pretty for him" (TJLC 299). When Ying-ying gets pregnant and becomes no longer useful to satisfy his selfish desires, the immoral husband leaves with another young girl. The latter leads the wife to kill her baby before being born in order not to have anything related to her deceitful husband. Then, Ying-ying deteriorates like a flower, because a flower does not ask for water to live, it just dies in silence. "Even today, my skin is still smooth, my figure like a girl's. But

there are deep lines in my mouth where I used to wear smiles”, Ying-ying articulates (TJLC298).

All of these aching memories turn out to be more painful when the mother realizes that; her daughter goes through a passive marriage as well. When she visits her daughter’s dull house, the mother decides to take an action:

I think this to myself even though I love my daughter. She and I have shared the same body. There is a part of her mind that is part of mine. But when she was born, she sprang from me like a slippery fish, and has been swimming away ever since. All her life, I have watched her as though from another shore. And 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. (TJLC 293)

Lena falls in love with one of her colleagues at the architectural firm for restaurant design. At first the girl gets fascinated by his romance and the way he delights her; this man knows the exact words a woman needs to hear to satisfy her femininity. One night while Lena lies between his arms he whispers, “I don’t think I’ve ever met another woman, who’s so together...Nor anyone who’s as soft and squishy and lovable as you are” (TJLC 181). Lena becomes too fond of Harold’s tenderness and consequently feels afraid to lose such a perfect guy of any girl’s dreams. Believing in his capacities, Lena motivates Harold to initiate his own business. One day she says, “Harold, this firm knows just what a good deal it has with you. You’re the goose who lays the golden egg. If you started your own business today, you’d walk away with more than half of the restaurant clients” (TJLC183). Passionately, the girl persists on giving Harold some unique plans for his new project.

Applying Lena’s ideas, Harold manages to establish his own firm called “Livotny and Associates”. The supportive girlfriend wishes to provide more than new ideas for this project;

that is to provide him with money. Harold refuses any kind of financial support from her, because he wants their love to be pure without any monetary arrangements. He rather asks her to move in with him and pay the rent, if she really insists on helping him. Without giving it a thought, Lena accepts his request. The girl thinks that his apartment is way better than hers, so she gladly accepts to pay more money for rent than her actual house. In fact she is ready to do anything just to help him grow successful and happy.

As the business grows successful, Lena becomes more passive in her career. It is easy to detect this from the name of the firm itself in which she does not appear. “Livotny and Associates”; Livotny is Harold’s family name and Associates are Lena and the other employees. Besides that this firm is Lena’s idea, she as project coordinator who never been trained in the field works harder than the other associates and even harder than Harold himself who’s salary is seven times more than hers. These efforts go unappreciable and Harold persuades her that a promotion for his wife is unfair for the other associates.

Such exploitation never stops Lena from hard working. In fact she loves her work or it is more appropriate to say that she loves working for Harold. The so called “notion of equality” is exercised also at home; in which Lena pays half the grocery tabs including gifts and foods she does not even eat. For instance, she pays for ice cream though she does not like and her husband seems to never notice this. When Ying-ying points this out to Harold he replies that he thinks Lena is on diet. Ying-ying tells him that Lena becomes too that he cannot see her. She admits that her daughter inherits this feature of neglecting self worth from her; in which they deviate from their true tiger nature and turn into ghosts. She says:

I let myself become a wounded animal. I let the hunter come to me and turn me into a tiger ghost. I willingly gave up my *chi*, the spirit that caused me so much pain. Now I was a tiger that neither pounced nor lay waiting between the trees. I became an unseen spirit...Now I must tell

my daughter everything. That she is the daughter of a ghost. She has no *chi*. This is my greatest shame. How can I leave this world without leaving her my spirit? (TJLC 305-306)

Since childhood, Ying-ying warns Lena that not finishing her bowl of rice will lead to an unhappy marriage. This foresight is confirmed now when the mother visits her daughter's dull house. Everything in that house describes Harold and Lena's relationship, the cold design, the dull grey colors and fragile furniture. That is how their marriage is: cold, dull and fragile. Because Lena inherits her mother's submissiveness, Ying-ying feels responsible for saving her daughter. Determinately Ying-ying takes charge for handling the situation, "I will gather together my past and look. I will see a thing that has already happened. The pain that cut my spirit loose...I will use this sharp pain to penetrate my daughter's tough skin and cut her tiger spirit loose" (TJLC 306).

This is what a mother does; she sustains and protects her children whenever necessary. With Ying-ying intervention; Lena recognizes how much she is oppressed in this relationship, how much her feelings and efforts are exploited, how much her marriage is abusive, how much this is not enough and by loving herself she begins to recover from Harold's control over her mind and heart. Like her mother, Lena regains her tigerness and finally she decides to speak out.

II.4 Rose Inheriting Indecisive Personality

The suicide of An-mei's mother graves strength in her heart. Since then An-mei promises herself to speak her own mind and to not follow any one's directions. She seeks to pass on the spirit she inherits from her mother to her daughter. Accordingly, the latter must have her voice heard and must not listen to other people with only one exception; that is her mother. She insists that her daughter should listen and speak to her instead of her psychiatrist, because she has enough wisdom and advice to offer. This is true; since the two are alike, the mother can

understand what is inside her daughter more than anyone else. All along her life, An-mei remains faithful to God and to her will; she believes that one can change their own fate by having faith. In this regards, the mother encourages her daughter to be responsible for her choices, so that if she does not like something, she can change it in the way that suits her. Following her mother's recommendation, before things fall apart, Rose could assert her opinion and saves her marriage with Ted.

As a little girl, An-mei and her brother live in her grandmother's house, because their mother goes to chase her selfish desires. Before meeting her mother, An-mei thinks that what Popo tells her is true and her mother is nothing but a disgrace to the family. She considers her mother as a woman a ghost who leaves her family to live as a concubine. At the age of four, An-mei recalls the day her mother left, "Who is this ghost? Not an honored widow. Just a number three concubine. If you take your daughter, she will be like you. No face. Never able to lift up her head," Shouts An-mei's auntie (TJLC 43). So, the daughter stays in the family house and grows up far from her mother. Although, An-mei feels shamed, she yearns to see her mother in reality rather than just in dreams. The girl could sense that her mother is not living in comfort forgetting about her family, like it has been said to her. She is unhappy in a relationship with no feelings, just serving her man's desires as a concubine. In An-mei words, "This I knew. She did not need to tell me she married Wu Tsing to exchange one unhappiness for another... Here is how I came to love my mother. How I saw in her my true nature. What was beneath my skin. Inside my bone" (TJLC45).

This is not only a sensation; this is the truth which An-mei discovers when Popo is about to die. An-mei's mother comes to visit Popo to help her recover. There is a Chinese tradition where the daughter makes a soup from her own flesh to heal her mother. Such sacrifice proves to An-mei that her mother is a good woman who loves and honors her family. For this reason, the young girl decides to live with her mother. An-mei keeps being silent, but she feels

ashamed from her mother acceptance's to live in such condition; invisible and of no value just a piece of decoration in Wu Tsing's big house. Xiaoyan Peng mentions, "In such a patriarchal society, An-mei and her mother cannot even voice their unhappiness. They can only conform to a male-dominating culture against their own individual and common interest as women. In the face of family's discrimination and social destruction, keeping silence seems to become their unique characteristics" (151).

The servant Yan Chang enlightens An-mei about the whole story of her mother's rape and pregnancy which compel her to accept such life. Then even her baby boy is taken away from her. Then she is obliged to adjust to this life planned for her; living with her raper with three other wives. Such incidents traumatize An-mei's mother and cause her to commit suicide later on, "The cultural practice of rape-induced marriage, in reinforcing the cultural fetish for female chastity and the social emphasis on sexual implications of rape, may function to worsen the resulting trauma among the survivors" (Luo 591). In China a woman means nothing without her husband. Yan Chang says about An-mei's mother, "even in her white widow's clothes she was beautiful! But because she was a widow, she was worthless in many respects she could not remarry" (TJLC284). She realizes that her mother has no choice, hence she cannot say it out loud, she cannot say that she wants her mother to shout and regain her rights. It was until the mother commits suicide; that An-mei gains the force and faith to fight and to honor her mother, "An-mei Hsu learns from her mother's suicide how to use the world for her own advantage" (Davis 92).

In China sacrifice is a must to sustain a family. The mother sacrifices her soul to empower her daughter and the daughter present respect and honor in return; this is how An-mei learns to love her family. Fearing that her children may face danger, the mother An-mei becomes worried all the time for reason and beyond. This anxiety over controlling the fate of her children is transmitted to her daughter. Rose notices while she surveys her siblings at the

beach, “And I thought how much I seemed like my mother, always worried beyond reason inside...” (TJLC 141). In the same beach day, Rose’s youngest brother Bing gets lost and everyone assumes responsibility for this tragedy, Rose feels guilty as much as An-mei. The faithful mother does not give up looking for her son and praying to God. Rose says seeing her mother trying, “She had never swum a stroke in her life, but her faith in her own *nengkan* convinced her that what these Americans couldn’t do, she could do. She could find Bing” (TJLC 144). The girl presumes that her brother is in danger, but does nothing to stop it from happening in the same manner she does to her marriage.

Rose’s indecisive nature appears from the first days of dating Ted. She does not even know that she is his girlfriend when he introduces her to his relatives as such. The racist Ted’s mother does not like this idea only because Rose is half Asian which is sensitive for their position as a successful family. For this reason, Rose thinks that she should stop seeing Ted, to which he responds, that they should not conform to his mother’s wish. From that day, the two start their love journey and later get married. For many years, Ted decides about everything, even though he craves to hear her opinion. This is how Rose loves Ted, believing in the rightness of his decisions more than hers. She describes her love for him as following:

With imagined tragedy hovering over us, we became inseparable, two halves creating the whole: *yin* and *yang*. I was a victim to his hero. I was always in danger and he was always rescuing me. I would fall and he would lift me up. It was exhilarating and draining. The emotional effect of saving and being saved was addicting to both of us. And that, as much as anything we ever did in bed, was how we made love to each other: conjoined where my weaknesses needed protection. (TJLC 134)

Such revelation of love demonstrates how much Rose adores her submissiveness to Ted; she believes he is the *yin* that guides her in the darkness. This belief in her incompleteness

without him; is what Rose inherits from China. In contrast, Ted is fully an American who considers the woman as an independent individual with her autonomous mindset. Likewise, he considers marriage as a contract of partnership where both partners should present their opinions and share the responsibility. For Rose being submissive to this man makes her relieved and weightless, she does not know that letting all the weight for Ted would tired him one day. After years of marriage, Ted faces problems in his career and becomes unable to take charge of everything. This is just too much for him, so he protests seeking to hear Rose's voice and she still cannot decide. Here, their marriage starts to devastate and as usual Ted decides to leave the house and demand a divorce. Rose depicts how their relationship changes, "...we were like two people standing apart on separate mountain peaks, recklessly leaning forward to throw stones at one another., unaware of the dangerous chasm that separated us" (TJLC 137).

An-mei understands what her daughter is doing to her life, or it is more accurate to say not doing anything to save her life; she inherits this from China. The mother tells her daughter that they are alike. For many years, An-mei keeps her mouth closed and does not trust her ability to change things, but after her mother's death she gains herself confidence to be able to make choices. This is how An-mei puts it, "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" (TJLC 227). Consequently, the mother wants Rose to gather her power; she strongly refuses her daughter's divorce and pushes her to speak to Ted before surrendering to his decision.

From the great power of An-mei's words, Rose sees that her mother is like a mirror which reflects not only her outside look but her inside. Therefore, she decides to embrace the inherited fighter nature. After many days of depression, hesitation and maternal advice, Rose is being able to make up her mind. She refuses to leave the house for Ted claiming that the

house is part of her and he cannot have any part of her anymore, she already gave him enough, more than what should be given. Rose externalizes all of the negative energy she holds inside, “‘You can’t just pull me out of your life and throw me away’ I saw what I wanted: his eyes, confused, then scared. He was *hulihudu*⁵. The power of my words was that strong” (TJLC 234).

All in all, it can be said that the Chinese past of the mothers becomes their daughters’ present. June inherits Suyuan’s tragedies in the form of hope. The girl does not submit to these hopes, though this stubbornness is taken from her mother who never seems to give up as well. Likely, Lindo’s invisible strength to manipulate people and hard situations is transferred to her daughter Waverly, who becomes a chess champion. For Lena, inheritance is clearly manifested, because she experiences a passive marriage similar to Ying-ying’s first marriage. Lastly, Rose inherits two opposite traits; submissive indecisive like her ancestors, then she gains power to voice her opinion and to control her fate just like An-mei.

⁵ Confused

Chapter Three Heritage and Identity

This Chapter contains two sections. The first section “Psychological Trauma Caused by Cultural Clash” analyzes the psychology of the characters. In other words, why *The Joy Luck Club* mothers and daughters make them behave in uncomfortable ways towards one another. This section implies that all the struggles are caused by the culture clash which influences the process of identity formation. Whereas, the second section “Finding Identity” examines the journey to self-discovery and how the characters succeed to achieve that through cultural reconciliation. The interrelation between heritage and identity explains why these two concepts are discussed together under one title. “I would argue that, for the Joy Luck mothers and their daughters, their Chinese identity or heritage is so deeply woven into their relationships that they cannot be divided into two separate issue” (Fuji 94).

III.1 Psychological Trauma Caused by Cultural Clash

The interaction of two cultures provokes conflicts, especially if it is the interaction of a vastly open culture and a very restrict one. *The Joy Luck Club* depicts the confrontation of the American and the Chinese cultures, each with a specific belief-system. Consequently, Cultural differences trouble the relationship between first generation and second generation of immigrants. To ensure protection, the Chinese parents keep their circle small. They create a similar social structure to that of home “Chinatown”; a place where Chinese people live as one community sharing Chinese language, values, customs, and parenting style. In the novel, the mothers resist change and encourage their daughters to preserve their ancestral heritage. The latter includes Chinese thoughts and behaviors; that is the daughters must respect the elders and assume social responsibility. The girls go to school to meet another world with another language and contrasting education to that they receive at home, in which they rely on history and motherly stories for self-growth. The American education fosters self-reliance and adopting such mode of life eventually distances the girls from their mothers. The former reject

the Chinese principles including the language and the parental involvement in their personal interests. As the acculturation gap grows larger, the connection between mothers and their daughters becomes null; each speaks a language that the other does not understand and each thinks in a different light.

The women feels alienated even from their American closest people. As they feel displaced in this new land, they cannot visualize its people are nothing but outsiders, “They view all the white men as *WaiGuoRen*; even their own family members cannot eliminate the racial mark imprinted on their minds” (Peng 155). The best example is how Ying-ying feels about her husband. Only with his love and appreciation that Ying-ying resumes life and regains hope after her first destructive marriage. “Mistah” St. Clair admires everything about Ying-ying; her food and her feet...etc. In her silent moods, he puts words in her mouth and tries to explain her thoughts. Despite all of the support provided by her American husband, Ying-ying never gives up the idea that he is a stranger. She says, “He was clean and pleasant. But he smelled like a foreigner, a lamb-smell stink that can never be washed away” (TJLC 302). Ying-ying does not even appreciate his presents and misunderstands his intentions, she feels that he is treating her as poor girl who knows nothing about modern life and never sees such things.

From the very beginning, the Chinese women possess already unpleasant thoughts about the American culture and their way of thinking. As Lindo arrives to Peking, an old woman gives her addresses to find an apartment and a job. When she gives her one dollar, the greedy woman asks for more money. Lindo recalls what the girls says, “‘*Syaujye*’—Miss—‘we are in America now. Even a beggar can starve on this dollar’” (TJLC 317). Before migrating to America, Lindo pays an American-raised girl to teach her some basic English and the methods to get citizenship. The girl says, “See here, you should have a baby. Boy or girl it doesn’t matter in the United States. Neither will take care of you in your old age” (TJLC 314).

From this statement, Lindo develops an idea about the nature of the daughter that she will have there. Even after knowing this, she still yearns for a daughter, who shows Chinese character and enjoys American best living style. After Lindo gives birth to a girl from her second marriage and her daughter grows up, she realizes that these two cultures cannot be combined. The mothers think of a strategy to survive the new circumstances while appreciating Chinese values. They tend to apply strict mothering style, "...A willingness to risk everything in the pursuit of victory gives way to a cautious hoarding of the reserves necessary to sustain life over the long haul" (Xu 50 qtd. in Zeng 6).

Since language is a means of communication, speaking two different languages leads to nowhere. The mothers cannot convey their meanings to their daughters; they cannot transmit their intentions, thus fall in prejudices and vice versa. In the first prologue, as the mother migrates to America, she wishes for a daughter who speaks fluent English in order to take advantage of all possible opportunities. Indeed, her wish becomes true, her daughter speaks perfect English. Unlike what she desires, the Chinese immigrant mother fails to communicate her story to her stranger daughter, "... the daughter she had hoped for has become an unsympathetic 'stranger' who does not even speak her language" (Shen 7). Like the swan which the mother loses, the dreams have confiscated, "The achievements of the mother's dreams results in alienation" (Ling 133 qtd. in Davis 91).

The mothers feel alienated from their daughters, because of the language barrier. They often speak Mandarin and sometimes broken English. For instance, An-mei uses psychiatrics for psychiatrist and Ying-ying says arty-tecky instead of architect. When Lena laughs about this, her mother thinks it is disrespectful. Additionally, Waverly mistakes *Taiyuan* as Taiwan, which are two different places, because Lindo pronounces them identically. These misunderstandings occur in every mother-daughter relationship in the novel. On the mahjong meeting after Suyuan's death, June recalls everything told by her mother except the Chinese

words, because she does not understand them. The two hardly make a conversation, Suyuan replies in Chinese when her daughter speaks to her in English. The girl also claims that her mother's English is very ill and the worst among the other joy luck Aunties. In short, the daughters feel ashamed of their mothers' broken English and the latter perceive their daughters as ignorant, because they do not understand Chinese language or hopes. June mentions:

In me, they see their own daughters, just as ignorant, just as unmindful of all the truths and hopes they have brought to America. They see daughters who grow impatient when their mothers talk in Chinese, who think they are stupid when they explain things in fractured English. (TJLC 35)

Communication is beyond mere exchange of words, it is about exchanging feelings and consensuses. Sometimes one read a joke or a proverb in a foreign language; they comprehend the words and still cannot get it, because they do not share the same context. This is how the girls feel when their mothers speak Chinese. Lena explains, "...I could understand the words perfectly, but not the meanings. One thought led to another without connection" (TJLC 117). Rose states that she cannot find the exact English translation for the words *hulihudu* and *heimongmong*, "...Maybe they can't be easily translated because they refer to a sensation that only Chinese people have" (TJLC 224).

The daughters and their mothers cannot converse successfully, because the daughters do not listen to what is being said, they just hear. Communication only takes place if the girls understand the Chinese cultural circumstances that their mothers went through. Sharing these stories enlighten the daughters about the meanings that their mothers are trying to convey all along. Lihua and Man point out, "Women bear the family responsibility of the educating child, the role decides her unique way of expression. So when they communicate with children and education them, mother often adopts story telling form. This kind of speech likes

harmony drizzle, sometimes their address is euphemistic and mincemeat. Thus it is full of female clever glamour” (104).

English is one aspect of the American culture; that is why the Chinese mothers refuse to learn it. They do not mind speaking fragile English and they greatly insist on speaking Mandarin even with their daughters whom do not understand it. Even that America offers a refuge for the colonized Chinese, Su does not like the American from her days in Kweilin. After resettling in the new world, in order to feel safe and belonged, Su creates a mahjong gathering similar to that of home; one Chinese hopeful group sharing stories about sore history. She proudly tells June that the mahjong table is made in China, “My table was from my family and was of a very fragrant red wood, not what you call rosewood, but *hong mu*, which is so fine there’s no English word for it” (TJLC 13).

Not only mothers reject to acquire any of the American culture, the daughters also ignore everything linked to their Chinese roots. June for example observes her mother’s Kweilin story as a fairytales and underestimates the joy luck club which her mother creates. This gathering means a lot for Suyuan and the other members yet means nothing but a shameful Chinese custom for June. The girl goes further to criticize the Chinese clothing style of her mother and Auntie An-mei as being funny and strange. The criticism extends to the food served in such gatherings, “Eating is not a gracious event here. It’s a though everybody had been starving. They push large forkfuls into their mouths, jab at more pieces of pork, one right after the other” (TJLC 24). Through the course of the novel, June feels embarrassed of her mother dressing and behaviors.

Everything that is Chinese is a source of shame for the other girls as well. Waverly shows no interest in the Chinese tastes, she does not want to know the names of the meals prepared by her mother. One time, a Caucasian photographer visits Waverly Place and the girl recommends that he should eat at the Chinese restaurant. When he asks her about what the

restaurant serves, she answers in a mocking way, “Guts and duck’s feet and octopus gizzard!” (TJLC 97). Moreover, she teases Lindo by asking her about Chinese torture, to which her mother responds, “Chinese people do many things. Chinese people do business, do medicine, do painting. Not lazy like American people. We do torture. Best torture” (TJLC 98). Although Waverly plans to spend a honey moon in China, she does not want to appear Chinese afraid that they will force her to stay there. Lindo tries to comfort her daughter, “Even if you put on their clothes, even if you take off your makeup and hide your fancy jewelry, they know. They know just watching the way you walk, the way you carry your face. They know you do not belong” (TJLC 307). In addition, to June and Waverly shame to be Chinese, Lena despises her narrow eyes and widens them trying to overcome her Chinese look. Besides, despising Chinese appearances and customs, Rose completely neglects her genes and claims that she is an American. Accordingly, Rose chooses a white husband admiring the fact that he is from New York not Tientsin. The girl utters, “Over the years, I learned to choose from the best opinions. Chinese people had Chinese opinions. American people had American opinions. And in almost case, the American version was better” (TJLC 228).

The second prologue demonstrates how the daughters do not respect their mothers Chinese beliefs. When the mother warns the girl about riding the bicycle around the corner, because it is mentioned in the Chinese book named “The Twenty-Six Malignant Gates”, the girl shouts in her American voice that her mother knows nothing. The mother proves nothing, until her daughter goes to play and falls off the bicycle. This is the comportment of an American daughter; does not consider taking orders from parents without explanation, free to express her thoughts, and autonomous in her choices.

In America, the individual wish prevails over the collective one. The child seeks self-actualization without the involvement of the other members of the family. The latter only praise the child talent and encourage him/her to do the things that he/she likes. Rather than

criticism, the parents persistently compliment their children. Because “I” is more important than “we”, the child cannot be obliged to do anything beyond his will. In China, Collective interests matter more; the child is pushed to do whatever his/her parents think is suitable. Such cultural expectation leads to conflict when the child behaves unlike what it is expected.

June rejects her mother’s forcing into piano practice claiming that this is not China and she is not Su’s slave. This disobedient ways hurt Suyuan, because she was raised the Chinese way; looking for familial peace and unity instead of selfish desires. The mother’s frightening treatment does not affect June’s decision; she screams that she is not willing to play anymore. Suyuan screams back in Chinese, “Only two kinds of daughters. Those who are obedient and those who follow their own mind! Only one kind of daughter can live in this house. Obedient daughter!”(TJLC 164). As long as the girl behaves the American way, expectations keep on failing the Chinese mother. The Americanized girl declares that each time she asserts her will her mother feels disappointed, “Jing-Mei’s self- protective strategy against the mother who expected her to be a child prodigy is to disappoint her mother whenever possible, Feeling bound in American culture the daughters bold and even rebellious and they make their own decisions rather than follow the whims of their mothers” (Loktongbam 57).

This boldness to express one’s thoughts is remarkably possessed by Waverly. While shopping one day, Lindo keeps telling everybody that this chess champion is her daughter. Such repeated act becomes irritating so that Waverly cannot hold her tongue anymore. Reacting so American, the girl shouts telling her mother to stop showing off, because it is so embarrassing, then she runs away. The rebellious Waverly does not come back home until dinner time. Since this dishonoring event, Lindo stops talking to her daughter. In China such thing is not allowed to happen; a girl cannot yell her mother and cannot go out without parental permission. In another time, Lindo asks Waverly to finish her coffee, the girl replies, “Don’t be so old-fashioned, Ma...I’m my own person” (TJLC 309).

The mother feels frustrated by her daughter's audacious attitudes, because she is Chinese and has been raised in China. Lindo is very obedient and whatever the orders are, she is ready to compel. At the age of two years old, a rich woman visits Lindo's home accompanied with the matchmaker. The latter is responsible for discovering whether a man and a woman are compatible for a happy marriage or not. On that day, Lindo's mother promises that as long as her daughter grows up, she will marry the son of this woman. The mother promises that her daughter will be a good obedient wife and to serve her mother-in-law like a horse in her old age. From that day, the baby girl has been treated like if she is not a member of her family. Her mother feeds her well, dresses her properly and teaches her appropriate manners in order to please the Huangs family. This education comprises learning to; never say no, to bow head for respect, and to wish nothing for her own but the Huangs' consent. Even being treated as such, Lindo never voices her insights; she still does not complain about how much the feeling of being an outsider wounds her or about not wanting to engage in such marriage.

Respectfully, Lindo accepts her mother's decision in order not to bring disgrace. To honor her family, Lindo sacrifices herself whereas her daughter Waverly cannot obey the simplest of instructions. More than not blaming her mother for deciding her destiny, Lindo understands her mother; because they are a poor family, the girl acknowledges that her mother wants her to have better circumstances. For this reason, Lindo feels enormously proud when her mother tells her that the two are alike, unlike Waverly who feels ashamed even with her mother's Chinese look. Besides Lindo, An-mei and Ying-ying comprehend the traditional behaviors of their mothers, "Instead of being angry with their mothers for abandoning them and for treating them coldly, An-mei, Lindo, and Ying-ying sympathize with them and attempt to excuse their mothers' actions by portraying a tradition that requires women to sacrifice their daughters" (Yu and Jia 3).

The Chinese mothers believe that the daughters are not qualified to decide for their own. Therefore, they should intervene in all what is related to their daughters' lives, including choosing a husband. Such intervention causes Waverly to get a divorce from her first husband, yet Lindo does not stop at this. The latter tries to find flaws in her daughter's new boyfriend. This pushes Waverly to hesitate in telling her mother that she and Rich are getting married. This is America, the daughter chooses whom she wants to marry then brings the guy to meet her family, not like Chinese arranged marriages. Rich wonders Waverly's hesitation, because he is an American and so does not understand how a Chinese mother thinks. This is also the case of An-mei who keeps insisting that her daughter must listen to her in order to save her marriage. She does not accept that her daughter speaks to a psychiatrist rather than her mother. This is the appropriate way to learn, to listen to the mother's advice and past stories to obtain the best examples and to not repeat her previous mistakes.

All the mothers' stories contain some kind of Chinese traditions and superstitions. When An-mei loses her youngest son, she tells her daughter that they should throw things in water to get Bing back. The mother throws sweetened tea and a blue ring telling Rose that, "An ancestor of ours once stole from a sacred well. Now water is trying to steal back. We must sweeten the temper of the Coiling Dragon who lives in the sea. And then we must make him loosen his coils from Bing by giving him another treasure he can hide" (TJLC 147). The Americanized Rose does not believe in such thing, she insists they should leave, because her brother is nowhere to be found. Chinese people are more spiritual whereas Americans are more rational. When Ying-ying tells her daughter that not finishing her rice bowl will make her marry a bad husband, the rational Lena mocks this belief and then starts leaving more rice in her bowl. Afterward the girl ends up in unhappy marriage. Moreover, An-mei believes in The Twenty-Six Malignant Gates book which contains all the dangers that may encounter a child if he/she does not behave. More and more myths the mothers believe in unlike their

daughters. Like telling secret wishes to the Moon Lady at the ceremony, a crab missing a leg is a bad luck for the New Year, women become ghosts after dishonoring their families and so on and so forth. Most of the superstitions that the mothers believe in help them to avoid any coming dangers, mainly dangers related to their daughters' lives. "...the theme of Superstition turns out to have a perfectly rational explanation particularly if Superstition is practised in an uncertain world in which 'lack of confidence, insecurity, fear and threat, stress and anxiety are in abundance'" (Becker 1975, Barsky et al. 2002 qtd. in Deeb 88).

Not only Chinese stories filled with superstitions are of a great meaning to the mothers, even the gifts they offer to their daughters. Suyuan offers June a jade pendant on a gold chain for New Year celebrations. This symbolic necklace is important to Su, because it reminds the girl who wears it of her worth. June does not appreciate such gift. She murmurs, "The pendant was not a piece of jewelry I would have chosen for myself. It was almost the size of my little finger...To me, the whole effect looked wrong: too large, too green, too garishly ornate. I stuffed the necklace in my lacquer box and forgot about it" (TJLC 236). The girl does not know that this is a way of maternal love, it is later when Suyuan dies that June starts to rethink about the value of these things.

The Chinese women expect that their daughters learn from the past examples, but the Americanized girls are more about talks and discussions. Lena for example detests her mother's silence and envies the neighbors for fighting all the time. She wishes that they two can undergo a normal conversation, in which each externalizes her thoughts and feelings. She wishes that her mother communicates with her, so that they can understand one another. Waverly feels the same when her mother refuses to talk to her; she keeps throwing words to attract her mother's attention and insisting so that they can make a conversation. In spite of her trials, Lindo remains silent and things remain unclear for her daughter. Sometimes the

daughters even blame their Chinese origins for their problems. Lena and Rose suppose that being inferior in a relationship is drawn from Chinese humility.

One crucial aspect of the American culture is privacy. Unlike Chinese people, Americans sanctify privacy; this explains why the daughters in the novel live independently from the family house. In this American houses, the girls adopt an American lifestyle. That is, one must call before visiting them or any visitor must be given the guest room if willing to sleep over. This is difficult for the Chinese mothers to digest, since in China all the family lives in one large household governed by the elders' rules. Hence, the mothers have the right to invade their daughters' private lives. When Waverly informs her mother that she has to call before arriving, Lindo concludes that her daughter does not want her and consequently decides not to visit her anymore. Ying-ying claims that she accepts her daughter's American ways; nevertheless visiting her house makes her feel like an outsider. She complains, "My daughter has put me in the tiniest of rooms in her new house. 'This is the guest bedroom,' Lena said in her proud American way" (TJLC 293).

The Chinese mothers enclose in their little groups and leave no space to know their daughters. The opposite is absolutely right as well, the Americanized daughters neglect their Chinese inheritance. Each one is constructing a barrier to protect herself from the other. Each one of them behaves according to the culture she adheres to; none of them permits the other to present her point of view and none of them opens to listen to what the other has to say. Throughout their lives, the girls feel ashamed of the Chinese traditions and looks, and the mothers does not agree with the American behaviors presented by their daughters. This clash does not stop until each one learns to tolerate the other's culture. Compromise is the solution to such conflicts; they do not need to agree on everything the other does or says, but at least they must show respect in order to have a healthy familial atmosphere and a stable mother-daughter relationship. Each culture has its benefits and shortcomings; this is why it is

preferable to make use of the positive side and neglect the negative one. The African-American writer Audre Lorde summarizes it all in one saying, “It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences”. Later in the story, the mothers and their daughters acknowledge that humanity is not a uniform, they do not have to change to please others; they should only embrace the differences to reach peace and to reconcile their relationships with one another. Having a sense of tolerance towards the other helps the women especially the daughters to accept their selves for what they are, and to find their true identity. This notion of identity will be further discussed in the next section.

III.2 Finding Identity

The concept of identity can be defined as the personality traits, looks and attitudes which make a person(Wikipedia). In this sense, identity is what differentiates a person from other people and what relates him or her to other ones. The identity is flexible, so it can change all along the person’s life. That is, a variety of factors influence its construction such as; family, society, gender and ethnicity. In this regards, *The Joy Luck Club* manifests the journey to self-discovery of four Chinese women and their four U.S-born daughters. Torn between two worlds, the characters in this novel are in constant struggle to define themselves. The mothers’ identities are shaped by the societal familial norms acquired in China and the hardships they undergo in the past whereas the daughters trouble to find their true selves, because of the culture clash and their mothers confusing behaviors. The latter help their daughters to make sense of the self and to develop a sense of belonging through recounting their Chinese stories. The girls are enabled to understand their mothers after a long time of misinterpretations, through making peace with their ancestral past; from which they can seek solutions to their American issues, “...where they become more receptive to their mothers and to the wisdom of their cultural heritage opening up their lives to change, growth and

authenticity (Trudeau 12 qtd. in Shuo and Yucui 241). This eventually leads the daughters to accept themselves as women of hybrid identities.

Leaving the home place has a major impact on one's identity, especially if it is an obligation rather than a personal choice. Fleeing from the Japanese invasion, Suyuan migrates to the U.S leaving behind plenty of miserable memories; burnt house, killed husband and abandoned twin baby girls and taking only her silky dresses. After all of this, the hopeful woman seeks to start a new life in the country of dreams and to have a daughter that realizes her mother's unfulfilled wishes. At their arrival to San Francisco, Suyuan's husband makes her hide those dresses she brings from China and to American ones instead, in order not to look like a foreigner. These dresses are too large for the Chinese woman. This event symbolizes the status of Su in the America; the woman does not fit in the American society in the same way she does not fit in the American clothes. Mrs. Woo remains loyal to her Chinese ethnic identity by forming the joy luck club, a gathering of four Chinese women. The ethnic identity involves, "self-identifying with one's racial/ethnic group members; being involved in ethnic practices; proudly and positively viewing one's racial/ethnic group; and being interested in, knowledgeable about, and committed to the group" (Ferrera 2011 qtd. in Leung 142).

These immigrants share miseries and sufferings from marginalization, patriarchy, oppression and all of the andocentric Chinese beliefs. Hence, the joy luck gathering helps them to feel at home rather than outsiders in the new country. It stands as a shoulder to lean on in order to maintain hope whenever feeling like losing heart. In this club the women celebrate their Chinese cultural identity; they speak Chinese, play Chinese game "the mahjong" which they smugly distinct from the Jewish one, eat Chinese food, and tell Chinese jokes.

Lindo adheres to Chinese traditions to satisfy her family's wish, by accepting to engage in an abusive marriage, yet she never fails to recognize her self-worth. At her wedding, Lindo observe her true nature what she is; powerful like the wind invisible but can do a lot. Looking at the mirror, she notices even her inner qualities. In her words, "I had on a beautiful dress, but I what I saw was even more valuable. I was strong. I was pure. I had genuine thoughts inside that no one could see, that no one could ever take away from me" (TJLC 58). Believing in her inner capacities, Lindo is not scared to endure this experience. In order to have babies, the matchmaker advises Taitai to remove the gold jewelry off her daughter-in-law. Such action makes Lindo feel free, independent and capable of escaping such marriage. Since her first marriage in China, she maintains her identity as a Chinese woman of great value "twenty-four carats of genuine gold". She knows well what she wants and what she can do to obtain that.

Lindo is aware that to benefit from all the American advantages she has to use an American face. In order to handle a situation, she switches to her American identity whenever necessary. When Waverly makes her mother sense that she is ashamed of her, Lindo covers her ache with a smile. She recalls, "I smile. I use my American face. That's the face Americans think is Chinese, the one they cannot understand" (TJLC 310). She learns this from the girl she pays to teach her how to gain citizenship before her arrival to San Francisco. The lesson is to be part of this society, Lindo has to tell them what they want to hear; that she migrates wishing to study religion. After so many years of migration, when visiting China, people perceive Lindo as a foreigner, because America has changed her. She mentions that one cannot have two faces at the same time, "I think about our two faces. I think about my intentions. Which one is American? Which one is Chinese? Which one is better? If you show one you must always sacrifice the other" (TJLC 324). Lindo knows to what extent the U.S alienates her, she is no more one hundred percent Chinese and never be.

In *The Moon Festival*, Ying-ying tells the story of becoming the person she is today. As a little girl full of life, she admires her shadow which is restless just like her. This restlessness makes her fall off the boat in the ceremony day and nobody seems to notice her absence. From that moment, the girl feels lost for the rest of her life. Even though the girl makes a wish to the Moon Lady that she will be found; when her family finds her, Ying-ying claims that she is no longer the same person she was before. The Chinese patriarchal society plays a great role in shaping Ying-ying's identity. As a result to the ceremonies advocating men's superiority and the beliefs in female lower status gravely held by her mother and her Amah, the girl loses herself. Xiaoyan Peng points out, "Admittedly, The Joy Luck mothers are oppressed, silenced, and alienated by patriarchy both in China and in America. They, as "gender Other," are all victims of the male-privileging system. They can only hide in their own "cage" moaning and groaning" (151). Ying-ying is highly representative of the Chinese archetypal female identity. In brief, she is a voiceless woman surrendering to the gender roles set by the traditional culture.

Even Ying-ying accepts herself for what she is; a lost *chi* and a tiger ghost after experiencing a consuming marriage, then marrying a foreigner harms more her identity. "St. Clair continues the process of erasure of his wife's experiences by changing her identity and appropriating her story. Ying-ying loses her own identity once again in a similar male-dominating society" (Peng 151). As family highly affects one's identity, especially when it comes to mother-daughter relationship. So, seeing Lena coming the same way and experiencing similar marriage prompts Ying-ying to restore her true nature to protect her daughter from danger. Ying-ying emphasizes her nature as tiger. The tiger is made of two colors, black and gold. The gold represents fierceness and the black represents the dark nature of hiding between the trees to carefully observe then attack.

Unlike Ying-ying, An-mei does not give up to the Chinese abusive traditions; expect believing in that the daughter must listen to her mother. An-mei's inherits her mother's spirit and becomes a powerful woman who knows who she is and who does not settle for anything devaluing her. Before sacrificing her soul, An-mei's mother teaches her not to cry. Crying is humiliating; it weakens the woman and satisfies the ego of other people symbolized by magpies, birds that greedily drink tears. The mother states, "Your tears do not wash away your sorrows. They feed someone else's joy. And that is why you must learn to swallow your own tears" (TJLC 260). Through witnessing how giving up to others' choices leads to miserable life and following her mother's lessons, An-mei rebels against the Chinese passive identity. She manages to develop a very strong-willed character and learns to shout.

Nancy Chodorow explains the formation of female identity through mothering. Using Freudian Oedipus theory, she emphasized that the psychological growth one person depends on the presence of another person. In her terms, "Female identity is primarily based on the connection and closeness to the mother and the placement of women in culture is defined by the bonding between mother and daughter" (Chodorow 100). The same idea is applied to the *The Joy Luck Club* characters relationships. The intersubjective theory of Jessica Benjamin clarifies the interdependence in constructing the female identity. This notion suggests that recognizing the other helps recognizing the self "mutual recognition", because the daughters are part from their mothers and their identity is derived from them as well. The daughters gains a sense of self only in relation to their mothers, this includes recognizing the differences and similarities (Benjamin 19-20 qtd. in Yu 3).

The daughters spend more time with their mothers than the rest of the world, which has an extraordinary effect on their self-actualization. In the American context, this happens at early years, but as the girls grow up they gradually distance themselves from their mothers. They no more need to depend on the other to know how they are instead they seek to find it

by themselves through autonomous experience. In this case, the mother and the daughter enjoy a mature relationship, in which they treat each other as friends. In contrast, the dependency on the mother for self-assertion does not stop at early years. In fact the whole Chinese society uses the “we” in order to define the “I”, a person must belong to a group. The absence of individuality in such culture makes it difficult for the Chinese mothers to understand why their daughters reclaim to stand on their feet to reach a sense of self without maternal interference.

The mother is the first school from which the girl learns to become a woman. So, all of the mothers’ perceptions and behaviors influence their daughters’ construction of self-image. While the need for maternal cuddle and protection is always present, the daughters require some space to discover life by themselves. Mrs. Woo tells her daughter about her nature. That she is made of too much water, she is flowing in many directions, because she does not know her abilities. Therefore, she gets half degree in biology, half in art and then later works as a copywriter. The Chinese mother believes that her daughter is late blooming like Einstein. She only needs maternal intervention to discover her best qualities to become a prodigy. Doing so, Su tries to make plans for her daughter to be a successful person, even someone that she is not. The dismissive mother follows the strategy of controlling rather than supporting. Practicing the Chinese mothering style, she ignores her daughter’s personal choice and need for space. Su shows, “...fierce love for her daughter, often expressed as criticism; a distress at her daughter’s desire to shake off her Chinese identity in favor of an American one; and a fear that she may be alienated from her daughter either because of her own actions or because of their divergent ages and cultural upbringings” (Iliescu 424).

June is a U.S born, so after serious efforts she gives up the idea of pleasing her mother. All time, June wonders why her mother does not accept her the way she is and why she does not respect her free will to decide who she is or who she wants to be. June believes that she is

good at her job even if it is not the career of her mother's dreams. The girl insists on defending her distinctive identity; that is far from what her mother wants as following:

And then I saw what seemed to be the prodigy side of me—because I had never seen that face before. I looked at my reflection, blinking so that I could see more clearly. The girl staring back at me was angry, powerful. This girl and I were the same. I had new thoughts. Willful thoughts, or rather thoughts filled with lots of won'ts. I won't let her change me, I promised myself. I won't be what I am not. (TJLC 154)

June's trip to China changes her view about her Chinese identity she tries to overcome all along the course of the novel. As she steps a foot in this country, the girl feels at home, "...my blood rushing through a new course, my bones aching with a familiar old pain. And I think, My mother was right. I am becoming Chinese" (TJLC325). For the first time, the girl meets her family and her twin sisters and she does not feel displaced. It is like; June finds the missing piece to complete her puzzled self. Being in her ancestors' homeland activates her genes to feel her Chinese identity which has been lost confronting the American culture. June perceives how she and her sisters complete each other and all together look like their deceased mother. This cultural reconciliation is also seen through June acceptance of her Chinese name "Jing-mei" and envying her sisters' for mastering the Chinese language, which she wishes to learn herself. Li Zeng observes June's Chinese experience as such:

...we see an ethnic awakening, an isolated self-embraced by acultural wholeness, and the rupture in a diasporic family healed by connecting with the larger family of China. With a structure of multiple first-person narratives that basically contain scattered events and focus on the problems of many singular "I"s and are engaged in experiential transformation. *The Joy Luck Club* ultimately reconfigures a Chinese-

American identity, that is, a wellbalanced ethnic bipolarity in a diasporic individual. (7)

Similar to June, Waverly neglects her Chinese identity. Lindo confirms that her daughter is all American made; her sour face, her walk and her attitudes. The Chinese mother assumes responsibility for her daughter's identity formation. She admits that she is faulty by thinking that Chinese character and American circumstance can fuse in one person. She is faulty by expecting that by practicing a tyrannical mothering style, her daughter will acquire the typical Chinese female identity; that is obedient, respectful and silent. These expectations cause an opposite effect in that Lindo becomes a stranger to her own offspring. Those efforts are of no use since the daughter meets outside a world with different ways of thinking. Being born and raised in the U.S certainly implies that Waverly adopts the mainstream culture; which determines how she perceives herself and her mother.

No matter how Waverly acts independent and strong, she is often guided by her mother. The girl divorces her first husband when her mother perceives him as unsuitable, she cannot remarry without her mother's approval and listens to her mother's advice in delaying honeymoon until autumn. Even one time when Lindo tells her daughter to finish her coffee and Waverly protests that she is her own person that needs no instructions, she does finish her cup! American girl does not require her mother's consent to pursuit her personal life. This is all made-in-China; the obedient attitudes that Waverly cannot escape and this interdependence to achieve self-realization. In the end, Lindo decides to communicate with Waverly to inform her that she inherits her inside from her parents; that is how she becomes powerful and short tempered. Waverly and the other *Joy Luck Club* daughters have hybrid identities; they feel neither completely Americans nor Chinese. They all prefer the American cultural identity, yet it is impossible to overcome they Chinese one, because it is in their veins. Instead of overcoming it, Amy Tan employs the Chinese culture as a resolution to the women two-ness,

“...However, she relies too heavily on Chinese identity as the cultural healing. It is impossible to be completely Chinese or American” (Shuo and Yucui 244).

At the beginning of Lena's marriage, she accepts her passive identity. She delivers love and care unaccountably encouraging her own invisibility. Ying-ying feels responsible for lightening the road to self-recognition for her daughter, because this part of her identity is all Chinese. The girl succeed to regain her self-esteem and to rethink about her position in such relationship. Lena becomes conscious that she is of no inferior status; she is equal to Harold, so she should not just settle for what he is giving her. The girl realizes her smartness and beauty and decides to reclaim her true self, the tiger attitude she gets from China, which has been deemed for many years. One day when the couple is heading to work, Lena tells Harold that she loves him while touching his hand. To which he responds, “I love you too. Did you lock the door” (TJLC 197). Since then, the tiger girl acknowledges that this is not enough.

Rose by her turn resembles Lena to some extent; both link their acceptance to be marginalized to their Chinese roots. Even having been raised in the U.S, Rose's comportment is very Chinese. She believes in Ted's dominance over her soul and mind. This submissiveness which she thinks is relieving causes her to lose her marriage and herself in the process. The “*Yi*” girl is in constant state of confusion, uncertainty and inability to make a choice. Failing to conceptualize her identity, An-mei decides to interfere to put an end to her daughter's hesitations. The mother tells the daughter that her person lacks woods, Rose recalls, “My mother once told me I was so confused all the time. She said I was without wood. Born without wood so that I listened to too many people. She knew this because once she almost become like this” (TJLC 224). The mother then motivates her daughter to think about what she wants and to assert her opinion strongly for Ted. An-mei does not give up until her daughter claims that she is not abandoning her house, or any part of her to please her husband.

As the Chinese inheritance highly affects the daughters' self construction, even without recognizing this, their identities sometimes are interchangeable with those of their mothers. Such interchangeability can be seen through the form of the novel itself. Bella Adams confirms this suggestion, "...In some respects, *The Joy Luck Club* lends support to this argument about interchangeability because its complex form – sixteen stories, four parts, and two generations of narrators, when coupled with narratives that move back and forth in time and across continents without any apparent concern for order... lead to an obvious uncertainty about who is who" (Iliescu 423).

Despite that each of Chinese mothers possesses a distinct personality; all of them share a Chinese heritage. The mothers represent a background that the daughters can always rely on. In the end, it can be concluded that the daughters can only make sense of their selves by understanding their ignored Chinese culture and the mothers also seek validation through their daughters' success. Both mothers and daughters resolve their identity issues depending on the other. Despite the conflicts, *The Joy Luck Club* mother-daughter relationships are linked with a strong bond; that is shared ethnicity and gender. This section "Finding Identity" seems much interwoven with the previous sections, simply because, the inevitable component of the daughters' identity is the inherited Chinese past. The characters cannot discover who they truly are until they reconcile with their Chinese heritage after long time of psychological trauma caused by culture clash.

Conclusion

Writing in a hybrid context reflects a variety of experiences, especially when it comes to literary productions of women. The latter dominate the Chinese American literary sphere and their works become representative of the Chinese American female identity. This issue is discussed by the second generation writers in accordance with the theme of mother-daughter relationship. In *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), the novelist Amy Tan offers insights about the difficulties of growing up with conservative mothers in a liberal society. There are different factors affecting the mother-daughter relationship which is characterized by constant tension. This fact is universal, because it exists in all multicultural families including Tan's.

In the novel, the four Chinese mothers cannot connect to their daughters, because of their cultural backgrounds. Each one has a different mindset that the other cannot cope with. The Chinese mothers have tragic experiences which the daughters cannot understand or even imagine. They suffer extreme oppression in a patriarchal culture, in which they are compelled to accept in order to survive. They accept abandoning their families to live as servants for their husbands and their families, they do not have the right to work even to state their views. Hence, the American dream for these mothers is more than just earning a financially comfortable living in a safer place than home; their dream is to have daughters with better fortunes than theirs. This urge to see their daughters as successful women who value their worth and who are able to engage in happy marriages, make the mothers to act in unpleasant manner. Unfortunately, the translation of these good intentions into American ones takes the wrong way. Conflicts rise, because the mothers express themselves using Chinese ways they absorb from their society; criticism, pressure and most of the time silence. These behaviors are so Chinese cannot be accepted in an American context; the daughters expect freedom of choice, compliments and conversation. Each one does not negotiate her standards, thus it is

impossible for the mothers to transfer their feelings of pride and affection leading to misinterpretations.

The daughters lay on their mothers' attitudes to discover China which they do not know. They stereotype the Chinese female woman as old fashioned, repressive and ignorant especially when their mothers use broken English. Though they should not forget that they are Chinese as well or half Chinese in Lena's case. Even living in a modern world does not deny that Rose and Lena live in patriarchal houses. The American mainstream encourages women independence, yet still Lena and Rose accept to live voiceless enjoying their submissiveness. This humility is associated to Chinese culture that the daughters are trying to disregard. June and Waverly are bold in voicing their desires like the American women without fearing parental dismissal. The daughters act independent, though they always try to attain their mothers' approval and love. Maybe Lindo and Suyuan seem silent, yet determinant in obtaining what they want like their daughters.

The Chinese mothers insist to preserve their cultural identity and refuse to integrate into the mainstream and the daughters refuse to accept that this cultural identity is part of them. They admire the American values and refuse to open to the Chinese ones. These troubles created by cultural divergences lead to identity crisis. The mothers cannot assimilate into the American life and the daughters are trapped between two continents. The girls are lost; looking and sometimes behaving Chinese, and claiming that they are Americans. The characters can only know who they are and cherish their hybridity through storytelling.

The mothers' narrations sound bizarre filled with myths, superstitions and told in a strange language for the daughters, but they carry lots of lessons. Despite, they are living in modern context, the girls can always relate to the past stories to derive meanings of the present context. They provide justification for the mothers' exhausting behaviors and unusual way of love. Further, the U.S-raised girls come to understand their own personalities,

problems and find solutions to these problems in their ancestral background. As the mothers are the primary units from where the daughters learn social interaction, the Chinese heritage definitely leads to harmony and balance. In spite of all the barriers blocking the way to communication; cultural clash, language, generational gaps and identity crisis, the Chinese past forms the daughters' present experiences. Here, the notion of interdependence is always present. The daughters cannot live without the presence and support of their mothers. 'Like mother, like daughter', this thesis confirms that, the inheritance between mothers and daughters is inevitable.

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