



Mother-Daughter Relations in the Novel “The Joy Luck Club” by Amy Tan

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ABSTRACT

There are many of Chinese American authors who did great contribution to the literature but among them Chinese American writer Amy Tan plays an important role. Her works mostly explore mother-daughter relationships. Moreover, the connection of the past and the present is typical of Tan's style. “The Joy Luck Club” is one of her the most famous novels which focuses on the relationship between an immigrant Chinese mother and her American-born daughter.

Keywords:

Immigrant mother, mah jong, stereotype, marriage.

The Joy Luck Club consists of sixteen interlocking stories about the lives of four Chinese immigrant mothers and their four American-born daughters.

Siouan Woo and her daughter June are the main characters mentioned in this work. While reading the novel, Amy Tan has demonstrated the mother and daughters attempt to articulate their concerns of the past, present, and intentions of themselves which will affect them later on.

Siouan and June's character have a mother-daughter relationship confused with scattered conflict. However, it will ultimately be composed of deep love and commitment for one another. Most of the conflicts that Siouan and June face are based on misunderstandings and negligence concerning each others opinions. What started the confliction was when Siouan starts to tell her daughter June that she can be anything she wants to be. At first, June is especially excited about the dreams she will become. “In all my imaginings, I was filled with a sense that I would become perfect...my parents would adore me” (143). This shattered dream will start when Siouan pushes June to be successful in areas such as dance, academics, trivia quizzes, and piano. After failing the tasks, June begins to feel resentful towards her mother

to becoming a child prodigy. She starts to see her mothers hopes as expectations, and if June did not live up to this, she would feel like a complete failure. In one incident, during a talent show, June performs a piano piece filled with mistakes. Ultimately being embarrassed, June believed that her mother was ashamed of her. “...my mother's expression was a quiet, blank look...” (143). However, June was wrong. Siouan was not ashamed, but upset. She was upset because June did not care about having the best for herself. June did not have high hopes to be successful at anything which Siouan had wished. June had failed because she did not try or care. Furthermore, Siouan had felt that June did not appreciate what she had tried to provide for her daughter.

It is not until much later, after Sycuans death, will June realize how much her mother loved her. This major event is what opened June's eyes to see the good intentions Siouan has done for her. Also, this will be the time where June will know more about her mothers tragic past. June did not know Siouan lost her two twin daughters and her family during the war. She never noticed that Siouan still felt the painful memory of her losses. Until then, does June realize that Siouan had always provided her with good intentions that she has always done

for her in different ways. Such as learning how to play the piano. June did not realize that Siouan was always proud of her daughter. In one incident, an acquaintance of June humiliates her by criticizing her work during a gathering. Siouan attempts to display her pride in her daughter by giving June a jade pendent she always wore. This pendent symbolized life's importance in which June needed to learn. Siouan wanted June to know that her life has value and it will not show until her talents will discover that value. Because June did not realize this at the time, she fears she had not appreciated Siouan enough. "Right after she died, I asked myself things that couldn't be answered. This would force myself to grieve more...but now, I ask these questions because I want to know the answers" (320). Until now, does June realize that her mother had left everything in China in place of her hopes in the US for her family. She wanted the best for June. She loved June more than her own life, but it is not noticed until June's questions were answered. June begins to understand her mother's intentions in life. This has changed June's life because she now notices that she has accomplished many things by doing small things to the best of her ability for herself and others. For instance, one of the small things she succeeds in is finding the answers to her unthinkable questions she always asks herself. Moreover, love between mother and daughter will prevail through the conflicts when Siouan's long cherished dream of uniting her twin daughters is fulfilled.

While most mother-daughter books portray the daughter's struggles for identity, *The Joy Luck Club* has foregrounding voices of the mothers and daughters point of view. Through first person narratives and linguistic differences, Tan brings the mothers to the foreground. In other words, the heroines of the *Joy Luck Club* are the mothers such as Siouan Woo for they try to help their daughters with life. In most American Literature, it is the mother who sits quietly in the background. On the other hand, Tan's *Joy Luck Club* mothers speak assertively. They disagree with popular assumptions that the Chinese people are discreet and modest, and reject any

stereotypical views. As of how powerful the *Joy Luck Club* was, Denise Chong from "In Quill and Quire" states, "These moving powerful stories share the irony, pain, and sorrow, of the imperfect ways in which mothers and daughters love each other." *The Joy Luck Club* also has an authentic dialogue which distinguishes from most Chinese-American literature. The way she writes makes a difference and alters the way we understand the world and ourselves that will later on transcend topicality.

As a result, Siouan and June's problems were solved. The attempt to articulate their concerns of the past and present is resolved. June has a different emotion for her mother Siouan although she is dead. *The Joy Luck Club* has detailed the generational and cultural differences between June and Siouan which in later time, will June understand her mother.

Conclusion

Chinese Americans have been contributing to U.S. literature for over a century, but their role did not gain recognition in mainstream culture or academia until the 1970s. Since then, over 50 Chinese American studies programs, centers, and institutes have been established on university campuses, and organizations such as *Undemand* and the *Chinese American Writers' Workshop*, presses, and journals have helped to further cultivate Asian American literature. As a result, Asian American writers may no longer feel compelled to write in particular traditional or protest modes or represent the external cultural labels pressed upon them. Chinese American writers have captured the power of the past but have ventured into new territories and discovered, created, and revealed new voices and styles.

While doing this article we have learnt how to collect the related information, how to analyze it, how to work on information and how to arrange it. Furthermore, we have learnt how to use research methods. We have improved my reading, writing skills and critical thinking abilities.

To conclude, Chinese American literature has managed to embark on a successful voyage, and as the numbers of newly published fiction and non-fiction books show, it will continue its

important work. As a consequence, this article is very essential in discovering a body of American literature as it plays an important role in the history of it.

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