

ANALYSIS OF THE REPRESENTATION OF OTHERING IN AMY TAN'S NOVEL
THE JOY LUCK CLUB

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ABSTRACT

This literary essay attempts to analyze and explore othering in Amy Tan's novel *The Joy Luck Club* (1989). In addition, it is also intended to show how othering is represented in the characters and their relationship with each other. In *The Joy Luck Club*, the author presents 16 stories divided into four parts where one can encounter how the life and conflicts of four women and their daughters intertwine with each other and their past experiences. The analysis focuses on three drivers of othering: family, where the othering is first spotted in the novel and a place meant to comfort; language, where manifestations of othering manifested through belittling language and humiliating attitudes that works as a tool to prevail the feeling of being the "other"; and feminism, where these two driver presented get merged and bring to life the struggle of women as they are defined by everyone but themselves. As a conclusion, one finds the importance of knowing the past of the mothers and understanding the present of the daughters. It does not put aside the dilemma of the mothers raising Chinese-American daughters and the daughters' hardships to understand their mothers' expectations and struggles. In fact, it demonstrates their realities colliding and gives the readers a taste of their multifaceted connection.

Resumen

Este análisis literario pretende abordar el tema de la otredad en la novela de Amy Tan *The Joy Luck Club* (1989). Asimismo, se pretende exponer cómo la otredad está representada en los personajes y en su relación con los demás. En *The Joy Luck Club*, la autora presenta 16 historias divididas en cuatro partes en las que se puede descubrir cómo la vida y los conflictos de cuatro mujeres y sus hijas se entrecruzan entre sí y con sus experiencias pasadas. El análisis se centra en tres elementos que fomentan la otredad: la familia, donde la otredad aparece por primera vez en la novela y en un espacio destinado a proporcionar refugio; el lenguaje, donde las manifestaciones de la otredad se materializan a través de un lenguaje despectivo y actitudes humillantes que funcionan como instrumento para consolidar el sentimiento de ser el "otro"; y el feminismo, donde estos dos elementos presentados se entremezclan y ponen en evidencia las dificultades de las mujeres al ser definidas por todo el mundo menos por ellas mismas. Para terminar, se concluye la

importancia de conocer el pasado de las madres y comprender el presente de las hijas. No se deja de lado el dilema de las madres que educan a hijas chino-estadounidenses ni las dificultades de las hijas para interpretar las expectativas y las batallas de sus madres. En efecto, refleja la colisión de sus realidades y ofrece a los lectores una imagen de su relación polifacética.

Keywords: othering, representation, feminism, family, language, heritage, The Joy Luck Club, Amy Tan.

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INTRODUCTION

This literary analysis aims to explore how othering is represented through Amy Tan's novel *The Joy Luck Club*. Moreover, it attempts to reflect on the ways in which othering can manifest itself in the different facets of humankind, leading to the development of an environment that allows one to look at oneself from the perspective of being different.

It presents the analysis questions, the purpose of the project and the objectives. Following this, the background section reviews local, national and international studies and reviews. For the selection of these documents, studies related to othering in education and literary analysis in which topics related to belonging and othering were taken into account. Then, the theoretical framework includes concepts such as othering, othering and family, language and feminism. Finally, the conclusion highlights the fact of what the daughters lose by overlooking their mothers' realities and how these experiences prevail in their adulthood. Furthermore, it is shown how othering develops and influences the family environment and influences the relationships of mothers and daughters with language. Hence, a scenario is created in which, using the factors presented, women are expected to bind themselves to a mold set by those around them.

PROBLEM APPROACH

Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) narrates the story of four immigrant mothers and their American-raised daughters. The mothers came from China to The United States to find success and have a better life. Through a church they find each other and decide to form a Mahjong group called Joy Luck Club since it brought happiness to them in those moments where they were struggling with the English language. Over the years, the purpose of the club was the same, but momentarily they played with the stock market to make a fair profit from the game.

The club became a tradition and as their friendship grows, they struggle with their daughters. The death of one of the members leads them to realize that their daughters do not know their own mothers or what they have suffered to be there. **Hence**, it opens the door to othering and its presentation in literature.

Othering is the phenomenon of perceiving the "other" as someone who is not part of one's group (AbdulMagied, 2020). Othering may be manifested through age, race, sexual orientation or socioeconomic class. In this way, the fragmentation of what is considered within normality and what is deemed outlandish arises as a result and, therefore, the concept of "us" versus "them" is created.

In this way, the following research questions are proposed:

- What qualities do the characters in the book display that allow room for othering?
- In what way is their othering manifested in the novel?
- What is the impact of othering on the human relationships shown in the novel?
- How is othering developed through the characters in the novel?

JUSTIFICATION

Literary analysis is a justified interpretation of a text that allows us to appreciate its meaning at a deeper level. This literary analysis seeks to explore and understand the representation of othering in literature. Literature allows us to broaden our understanding of literary creations and ensures that such understanding not only guarantees an effective use of the foreign language, but also provides us, as future teachers, with the necessary tools to take advantage of literary texts, especially authentic texts, in the classroom. By the same token, studying literature by using authentic texts contributes to developing an insight about the world around us and allows us to learn more about our place in society. Furthermore, this type of text provides interesting, fact-based readings that are connected to the students' lives, thus creating a bridge between the teacher, the materials introduced in the classroom, and the students' realities.

While writing this analysis, I will be able to illustrate something that resembles my reality and will allow me to reflect on my experience as the daughter of a displaced mother and the difficulties she experienced coming from a rural area to a big city. In addition, for a foreign language student, this literary analysis will stimulate their level of comprehension and critical interpretation of othering addressed through literature. The relevance of this work lies in the possibility of recognizing the other through literature so one could identify oneself with them and reflect on the personal and educational environment.

OBJECTIVES

1.1. GENERAL OBJECTIVE

Analyze othering in Amy Tan's novel *The Joy Luck Club* (1989).

1.2. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- Describe how othering is represented in the characters.
- Determine how the collision between belonging and othering affects the relationship of the characters.
- Explore the vision of othering in the novel.

ANTECEDENTS

4.1. Literary reviews

The analysis of Camacho (2014) was intended to illustrate how the negation of the other forces the negation of the self in the novel *Sula* by Toni Morrison. This novel illustrates the complexity of the characters in their search for a meaningful identity within a sexist and racist society that limits their lives and aspirations with a set of moral norms. It tells the story of two black women living in Ohio who endure an oppressive, sexist and racialized rule system. This essay seeks to demonstrate through this novel how human beings are self-destructive in their determination to eradicate those who have a different view of the world and of life.

The analysis approaches the aspects of life presented in this book: self-consciousness, social, personal and racial identity, friendship, inheritance and community, as they condition one's vision of the other and, at the same time, nourish one's entire identity.

In this way, the critical approach applied to its structural level corresponds to the New Criticism. According to Ransom (1941), this approach was formulated in the United States between the 1920s and 1930s and dominated literary criticism in American colleges and universities. Through this approach, this analysis attempts to demonstrate how the different elements of the book are related to the idea of the other.

Finally, this analysis establishes a dependence of the human being on the other to name and provide meaning to their existence. These representations become a reflection of the other, and their non-recognition involves the denial of self, and therefore, the denial of the human condition.

To conclude, this literary essay enables the understanding and evolution of the other represented in literature. By identifying the problematic, it is possible to perceive human beings changing their society by recognizing each one as unique in order to strengthen the harmony of the reality.

The sociological analysis of Arias (2017) was intended to demonstrate through different analyses how the main character of the novel, Bigger Thomas by Richard Wright, constructs his identity, and how it is affected by different elements that drive him to act in a violent manner. The novel exemplifies how racial prejudice and segregation can produce devastating consequences. The story follows the life of a young man in Chicago during the 1930s, living in a reality characterized by violence, a high crime rate and all the social problems generated by the capitalist development that led to the concentration of the black population in the suburbs of the growing cities of the United States.

The analysis examines three aspects that will be developed further in this paper: 1) Masculinity and homosociality and their role in the construction of identity; 2) Determinism as a trigger of violence; 3) Violence as a mechanism for the expression of the identity.

Eventually, Wright tries to build a feeling in the reader so that they understand that it is not about being black and white, but that there are shades in the middle that need to be addressed. This novel is a novel of protest, and consequently aims to highlight the dangers of racial, social and economic relations between African-Americans and whites in a world designed by and for whites.

To conclude, this analysis creates a consciousness in the reader about the social and racial prejudices that affect communities and how they build representations of them. The author of this analysis comes up with a reflective section that explains the conception of the other in Cali. A conception that seems to be invisible but affects a growing number of people and that is not often addressed in the classroom.

The literary essay of Gebara (2021) was intended to portray how Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* has postcolonial characteristics within it. This essay seeks to demonstrate how the events that affect the characters are related to "orientalism", "othering" and feminism.

The book's story revolves around a character, John the savage, who escapes from "perfection" to a "savage" world, where they find what could be the answer to their yearning to break free from their society and its leaders. The analysis explains

how the exclusion of individuals who belong to a stigmatized minority can be interpreted from both a feminist and a postcolonial perspective. Finally, postcolonial feminism allows us to uncover the hidden male patriarchal representations of women and from this perspective, the novel reflects the oppression of women and the "othering" of non-European characters.

To conclude, the analysis represents another side of othering in terms of feminism and postcolonialism and brings to light the merging of these two perspectives into one. In this way, it opens the door to more ways of interpreting and decoding the symbolisms and issues in literature.

The article of Juyoung Song (2020) presents a review of Saudi female student's experiences in the United States aimed at the process of negotiating and constructing her gender identity. It portrays her struggles and conveys her fight against othering. This paper provides context of the origins of othering in literature and how its discourses have moved into the classrooms. Moreover, The article of Hyacinth Udah and Parlo Singh (2019) intends to introduce the concepts of identity, othering and belonging not just from a theoretical approach. It presents the notion of othering related to identity and belonging. It establishes a process through which one can appreciate the dynamic between feeling part of something and changing this perception once someone is being othered. Finally, the article of Michal Krumer-Nevo and Mirit Sidi (2019) was intended to examine representation and othering. The authors explore the structures that give space for othering and propose ways to avoid it while writing. They explain the dimensions of othering and their interpretation.

4.2. Othering in the educational context

In his article, Mengstie (2011) attempts to review the concept and process of "otherness" and how it is developed in the Ethiopian educational systems. According to Gallos and Ramsey (1997) being other can be expressed in many ways such as age, ethnicity, sex, physical ability, race, sexual orientation or social-economic class. The central idea of otherness takes root right at the dividing line of what some people consider normal and abnormal, insiders and outsiders. This creates the connotation of "Us" and "Them" and leads to stereotyping.

Education is one of the main mediums that can construct or deconstruct "otherness". The school environments, the interactions of teachers and students, the teaching-learning processes, text books, etc., are important aspects in the process of generating otherness. It is often taken for granted that the role of education influences the way students learn, create and analyze information. It is important to recognize common values and differential power in order to maintain positive relationships in multiethnic classrooms.

To conclude, the elements we find in classrooms, as well as the student-teacher relationship, influence the development of otherness and students' feeling that they do not belong in the classroom. Common things one might think innocuous can be a potential trigger in the classroom.

The study of Qais S. Ahmadi (2015) was intended to analyze the appearance of 'othering' (stereotyping) in the classroom. This investigation aimed to expose the phenomenon of linguistic imperialism in a college ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) setting in the Arabian Gulf. This study was conducted in the researcher's beginning-intermediate classroom in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) program. This investigation implemented interviews, surveys and a questionnaire for students.

It presented a perspective of the English language as a medium of unconventional othering since it is believed to bring dignity and opportunities to people. In the classrooms, 'othered' students may not be comfortable in their learning process. Most of the interviewees recognized racism against Middle-Easterners and expressed that there is a limitation of information about the students' background. Finally, the issues presented in this research imply that some teachers may have neglected aspects such as ethics, empathy, tolerance, and compassion for students.

To conclude, this study provided a wider understanding of the factors that allow othering to materialize in the classroom. Also, it creates an opportunity to discover the components that teachers must take into account in order to help students have a better learning experience.

The article of Moncada (2016) attempts to examine the notion of othering and its portrayal in the language classroom. This paper presents theoretical contributions on the concepts of the “Other” and the “Self” and it proposes pedagogical mechanisms to help the students develop critical awareness.

Following this context, classrooms are seen as conscious places to acquire information and build opportunities to transform the society. While learning languages, the students are exposed to a cultural complexity that produces the creation of different social identities that leads to questioning their own.

According to Suomela-Salmi & Dervin (2009) the notion of othering refers to the ways in which someone or a group of people is objectified, differentiated, simplified or exoticized. Subsequently, othering has drawn attention in the language learning environment by overcoming the traditional ways that emphasize some cultures as better than others.

In order to deal with othering in the classroom, teachers need to recognize and reflect upon some cultural misunderstandings that appear when behaviors and customs have opposite meanings from their own. Othering representations are permanently reproduced, reinforced, and experienced by people all around the world, regardless of their race, language, gender, class, nationality, or religion. Teachers must regard classrooms as appropriate spaces where students can understand the context of production and reproduction of othering and know that belonging is developed.

To conclude, this article breaks down the struggle of othering in the classroom and how by learning languages different from their own, students face the discourses of belongingness and otherness. This is an opportunity for both students and teachers to raise awareness and gain insight on how to address the cultural issues involved in learning a language.

4.3. Assessment of the background and research contribution

According to the analyses, the articles and researches, one can observe that othering is the process in which one identifies the “other” as someone who does not belong to their group. According to Gallos and Ramsey (1997) othering can be expressed in age, race, sex, physical condition, sexual orientation or social-economic class. This provokes the division of what someone considers to be normal and strange and as a consequence it produces the idea of "Us" vs "Them", thus shaping stereotypes.

The analyses presented by Camacho (2014), Arias (2017) and Gebara (2021), display the appearance of othering in literature. The representations constitute a reflection of the other, and their rejection means the negation of oneself and, therefore, of the human condition. Literature can embody another facet of othering from the point of view of feminism and postcolonialism. Moreover, the integration of these two perspectives allows more ways of analyzing and interpreting the symbolisms and themes of literature.

Regarding the articles of Moncada (2016), Suomela-Salmi & Dervin (2009) and Qais S. Ahmadi (2015) one can assume that education often shapes the way students create and analyze the information conveyed by the "other". The aspects presented in these research studies suggest the possibility that some teachers may have disregarded elements such as empathy, tolerance and solidarity with their students. It is established that teachers should consider classrooms as suitable spaces where students can recognize the context of construction and transmission of otherness.

The conditions that we encounter in classrooms, as well as the interaction between students and teachers, contribute to the development of othering. Some common things that might be considered harmless can be a detonating factor in the classroom. Also, learning foreign languages makes students face dilemmas about belonging and othering. This provides an opportunity for students and teachers to acquire awareness and knowledge about how to deal with the cultural implications of language learning.

These reviews have allowed me to understand and observe the evolution of the other represented in literature. It is a great opportunity to raise the reader's awareness of the socio-racial attitudes that affect communities and the way their representations are constructed. In addition, it provides an opportunity to discover the components that teachers need to consider in order to ensure that students experience enhanced learning.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Othering:

After the first concept of the other of René Descartes, othering was first introduced as an idea of *other mind* by J. S. Mill in *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy published in 1865*. According to Said (1978) and Spivak (1985), Othering is a term first used in regard to postcolonial literature to impart the relations of power of different cultural communities.

The central idea of othering takes root right at the dividing line of what some people consider normal and abnormal, insiders and outsiders. The notion of othering refers, as defined by Suomela-Salmi & Dervin (2009), to the way in which a person or group of people is objectified, differentiated, simplified or exoticized. Based on Tzvetan Todorov (2005), it is possible to identify the approach to othering as a sociocultural construction in different theoretical and philosophical approaches. There is not a single way of representing the other as different since being othered can be expressed in factors such as age, ethnicity, gender, physical ability, race, sexual orientation or socioeconomic class.

Moreover, Brons (2015) believes that othering constructs a superior self in contrast to an inferior group. Regardless of the fact that this perceived superiority and inferiority is often implicit, it does not go unnoticed since it is obvious to all sides, no matter what group one finds oneself in. Further to this, Canales (2000) argues that othering is a paradox of the self and other. In the process of describing the self, one also describes the other. Likewise, Powell and Menendian (2016) established that othering is a group of processes that provoke a lack of balance in the diversity of human differences rooted in group identities. By the same token, Deng (1995) defines identity as a way people and groups present themselves and are presented by others in terms of their ethnicity, language, culture, etc. Hall (1989) argues that identity appears as a process that is divided into parts of intersectional discourses. Eventually, Yuval-Davis (2006) argues that othering affects the way of seeing and appreciating the other and leads to a change in their perception of belonging. Feeling accepted and included in a community or group is imperative in the process of constructing one's identity. Yuval-Davis (2006) explains belonging as a dynamic

mechanism that is constructed through the creation of boundaries based on exclusion and inclusion.

Finally, Todorov (1984) proposes three categories of the connection between other and self. The first one involves moral aspects when the other is seen as good and bad. The second category implies that the other is seen as a distance from society in terms of space and mind. The last category encapsulates the other as a foreigner so their culture and history remain unknown.

Othering and family:

This analysis will focus on three drivers of othering. The first one is represented as the other in the family. Othering can be spotted in a place where one can often associate with unity. For some, the family can be the first place where one can experiment feeling different and left aside. Some members start noticing small differences and then it does not feel quite right to regard oneself as equal even when they belong to the same group.

Othering can become internalized when coerced with childhood experiences. Consequently, the family develops as a setting for othering. In the words of López and Escudero (2003), a family is viewed as a system where its members establish long-lasting relationships of proximity, correspondence, dependence, emotional affection and empowerment, conditioned by bonds of blood, legal or implicit commitment. Later on, Ríos (2005) developed a sequential update of the development in families. This may include the emerging of the young adult, family with teenage children and when family members leave home. One can recognize how otherness emerges among family members through the stages mentioned before. Kerr (2000) argues that family works as a system that influences the mindset and actions of its members.

Some of the most common circumstances that lead a family to develop an inner othering can be when they are marital conflict, jealousy, divorce, illness of a member, immigration, death of close relative, change of home, problems at work, etc. Overall,

these factors along with parents' teaching, shape their children's mindset and open room to feel invalidated at home and othered the self and those around oneself.

Othering and language:

The second one is othering and language. In this analysis, the term othering and language is used to cover the different manifestations of discriminatory behavior manifested through belittling language and humiliating attitudes. Othering in language develops as a means of defining and interpreting habits, interactions and discourses aimed towards establishing a difference between one and the other.

In this way, rules and norms are configured to affect individuals and groups that are assigned with a status and a voice, and therefore, their engagement within a given space is justified. Significantly, according to Harmer and Lumsden (2019), othering also constitutes an attempt to deny the human condition to the members of a minority group so that the alienated individuals are deemed unworthy of people's consideration and respect. As a matter of fact, Traustadóttir (2001) asserts that language becomes a major force behind the development of the Othering. As long as Othering occurs through language, then it can also be addressed by language.

As stated by Lorente (2018) in intergroup contexts, foreign language speakers often lack of a voice, despite their advanced English skills. Within this context loaded with social and personal challenges, the analysis addresses the othering transmitted and experienced by people living and working in the spaces in which they should feel safe and comfortable. Likewise, it explores the impact of the dichotomy created between one's personal world and the reality imposed by the people who oppress and discriminate.

Othering and feminism:

The last one is othering and feminism. The process of constructing the Other by itself is not a stand-alone source. It emerges as a collection and depends on the creation of images, the rejection and/or disregard of asking others for information about them and explaining them in their own way. Feminism, race and othering may be different struggles that can be experienced by the same person. Women are often the Other who is not the self, but the object, as they do not define themselves; they are defined

by those around them. As established by Traustadóttir (2001), the analysis of Othering's processes evidences the fact that all women are not treated equally. Some women are portrayed as imperfect and are regarded as not being "normal" as they are considered the "other" women.

Stories have always been a powerful form of communication, carrying ideas and experiences that uncover realities about the world from one person to another and creating a collective understanding. Feminism in literature, according to Gebara (2021) explores the underlying power relations that are obtained in texts and in life, and is used to interpret texts with a critical agenda in order to shed light on the many hidden gendered patriarchal representations of women in literature.

Representation:

The Oxford English Dictionary presents different definitions for the term of representation. In this literary analysis, the definitions used are considered the more pertinent and appropriate to be used.

- Representation as a medium that allows the audience to place themselves between reality and imagery.
- Representation as a portrayal of somebody/something in a singular idea or form.

In literature, representation discloses a wide range of interpretations. The most common definitions allude to:

- To imitate or replicate
- To replace something or someone
- To re-present

For Hall (2005), representation entails one's understanding of the way in which language and different elements of knowledge making contribute to the elaboration and diffusion of meanings. In this way, the process of representation can be understood as the intermediary for the creation and materialization of meanings.

Additionally, Coupland (2010) point out that representing a group of people or elements is more than "just mentioning them". Rather, it is the system used to

symbolically create, validate or question entities, including human identities and attributes.

BIOGRAPHY OF AMY TAN

Amy Tan was born on February 19, 1952 to immigrant parents from China in Oakland, California. They lived in various towns in California before eventually settling in Santa Clara. As a young child, Amy Tan rejected her mother's expectations that she would become a doctor and a concert pianist at the same time and instead chose to write fiction. Her parents wanted her and her brothers to be engrossed in American values without forgetting where the Chinese culture came from, their heritage, and what was respected.

She grew up surrounded by Chinese culture and her parents' friends who formed an investment group where they would pick stocks, review them, and then they would socialize over the course of time. This club was called "The Joy Luck Club", there, the women played mahjong and the men preferred to play cards. Likewise, there was a feast that made Amy and her family, especially her mother, feel at ease surrounded by people from the same place. Later on, after her father and oldest brother died of brain tumors within a year of each other, her mother moved Amy and her young son to Switzerland. There, Amy finished high school but was in constant conflict with her mother.

In Switzerland, Amy Tan found love and later on, she moved back to America with her now husband and her family. During this period, Tan learned that her mother had been married before in China. Tan's mother had divorced her first husband, who had been abusive, and had fled China with Amy's father leaving behind three daughters. Amy Tan studied English and linguistics at San Jose State University and the University of California. She was a freelance business writer who started working writing astrology. She was working approximately 90 hours a week, meaning she did not have much time to sleep or eat or be social. In search of something more meaningful, she began writing fiction.

Her first novel, *The Joy Luck Club*, was published in 1989 and went right to #1 on the bestseller list. The book was a finalist for the National Book Award and the National Book Critics Circle Award and it was the longest-running #1 book on the New York Times bestseller list. At first, Amy thought her success was not going to last since she did it for fun. After some months, she finally realized she could do this

for the rest of her life, just write stories. The movie came out in 1993 and had beautiful Asian actresses in it.

Following her success, Amy Tan got stuck writing and abandoning novels. It was not until her mother suggested she write a novel about her history. This is how her second novel "The Kitchen God's Wife" was written and published in 1991. Later on, Amy Tan published other novels such as *In The Hundred Secret Senses* (1995), *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (2001), *Saving Fish from Drowning* (2005), and *The Valley of Amazement* (2013). Also, Tan has published a collection of essays called *The Opposite of Fate: A Book of Musings* (2003), two children's stories *The Moon Lady* (1992) and *The Chinese Siamese Cat* (1994), and lastly, the memoir *Where the Past Begins: A Writer's Memoir* published in 2017.

NOVEL SUMMARY

In Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), one encounters how the life of four women and their daughters intertwine with each other and their past experiences. The novel represents the conflicts between four Chinese immigrant mothers and their American-raised daughters. *The Joy Luck Club* revolves around Suyuan's unexpected death and Jing-mei "June" duty of taking her mother's seat at a weekly mahjong gathering that's been ongoing between An-mei Hsu, Lindo Jong, and Ying-ying St. Clair. This weekly meeting is called "The Joy Luck Club" and was formed over a bonded friendship made over both shared grief and resilience. Now with her new role, Jing-mei is notified that her mother spent a lot of time looking for the daughters she left behind in China and now that they have been found, her mother can no longer go to see them. It is her duty to go to China and let her sisters know of her mother's death, and to share with them what kind of person her mother was. From this point on, Jing-mei "June", realizes her mother was a stranger to her and she does not know what to do. This sparks the stories of her mother's friends as they worry that their daughters will meet the same fate of not knowing their mothers once they are gone.

The novel contains sixteen knitted stories divided into four parts. In the first part, the mothers (An-mei Hsu, Lindo Jong, Ying-ying St. Clair) evoke their memories of their mothers and their relationship with them. An-mei Hsu grows up with her grandmother after her mother remarries in a dishonorable way. Years later, her mother returns to care for An-mei's grandmother and, subsequently, takes An-mei with her. In the process, An-mei witnesses her mother's sacrifice and her mother's history. Lindo's future is decided when she is a child and is promised to marry a wealthy boy. She is made to believe she belongs to her new family and should adapt to their way of life. Ying-ying gets lost during the moon festival when she falls off her family's boat. She wishes the Moon Lady to make her find her family, but as an adult, she doubts she was really found. Finally, Jing-mei "June" tells her earliest memory of her mother and how she died.

In the second and third parts, the daughters Jing-mei "June" Woo, Rose Hsu Jordan, Waverly Jong, and Lena St. Clair recall their relationship and growing up

with their mothers. Jing-mei “June” remembers her mother’s desire to make her a pianist prodigy and how she rebelled against her views. Rose’s stories entangle her mother as she believes she has to make everything work. Waverly’s events are related to being a chess prodigy and getting a lot of pressure to become more than she wants to be. She shares how this has been impacting her from childhood to adulthood. Lastly, Lena comments on her mother’s ability to predict bad incidents. She reminisces about her mother’s forewarning about the death of her unborn child and how Lena was going to end up with a bad man. Eventually, all those things come true. They express their hardship as adults and how they re-intertwine with their mothers even when they refuse to do so.

In the fourth and last part, the mothers encounter that their daughters are not the ones they hoped to raise since each of them has adhered to different mindsets linked to the American. The mothers attempt to balance the breach between Chinese and American values by suggesting alternatives that meet the standards of both groups and their daughters who are part of them. To conclude, Jing-mei goes to China with her father and meets her long-lost half-sisters. She feels her mother’s presence within her sisters and a deep bond with the country.

CHAPTER 1: Othering and Family

For some, the family may be the first place where a sense of othering is fostered. In the novel, embedded practices are comprised of interpersonal relationships such as those of mother and daughter. These relationships are built across generational and mindset differences. They walk one through how othering is part of everyday interaction at home and how it sets apart the self and other creating a big impact in their lives.

Mother-daughter relationships allow us to see that the reciprocity of their bonds does not depend on their similarity, but rather is reinforced by the othering nature of their experiences. In the novel, this dilemma begins when the mothers were young and living in China and now fear that their daughters will let their future generations forget about them and their unspoken promises. As stated at the opening of the novel, JING-MEI "JUNE" as an adult evokes feelings of anguish in her mother's friends, given that she embodies everything that their daughters could be, considering that JING-MEI "JUNE" and their daughters are peers that have been exposed to parallel situations.

From the beginning, mothers are encouraged to adapt to American ways if they want to succeed. Mothers are expected to hide their Chinese faces in front of Americans and praise their way of thinking. The daughters grow up being somewhat self-conscious about their mothers because of where they come from and their behavior. They stereotype them and turn them into "the other" living at home. They create a distorted image of their mothers that had to be kept inside their homes.

From a very young age, the daughters abandon their Chinese side when they pick up that America is more acceptable. They craft within themselves the "other" and only allow it to breathe once it becomes fashionable to be Chinese. The daughters have become aware of the little "specks" that lie between their families and the American families. Evidently, for ROSE HSU JORDAN, it is clear to her that they were "trying" to pretend to be something they were not. She recalls the experience of her first family vacation and the bitter jolt of reality that causes her to drift away from the comforting feeling of togetherness within her family. "We were all blind with the newness of this experience: a Chinese family trying to act like a typical American family at the beach." (Tan, p. 108)

Following the above, the daughters try to shunt their mothers out of their world. They tell false stories to everyone about their mothers and their background. For them, it is like a play in which their mothers are merely puppets for their social circle. The daughters do not try to fathom what is in front of them. They construct themselves by imitating the opposite of the "other" and stubbornly try to draw lessons from what they see outside rather than from what their own mothers have experienced. This implies that what is to be imitated is seen as something congenial, as something that favors their social growth and simultaneously serves as a strategy to fit in with the American judgment.

As a matter of fact, ROSE HSU JORDAN knows there are two sides of the coin, assuming that the American side is always the better side. She divides her American views and her Chinese views into a spectrum of right and wrong. She claims that "Chinese people had Chinese opinions. American people had American opinions. And in almost every case, the American version was much better." (Tan, p.169) One can see a development of a binary aspect that forces them to choose between the things that shape them into who they are and the things they have grown up surrounded by. American views offer many options and convey the false idea that one can select among the best choices. In contrast, Chinese views involve the advice and remarks that the mothers give to their daughters so that they do not bend to people's desires.

The way the mothers show love and wish for success are things that the daughters "weaponize" to think that their mothers are different. JING-MEI WOO expresses that the way her Chinese mother displays love is different from the rest.

"I was not too fond of crab, ever since I saw my birthday crab boiled alive, but I knew I could not refuse. That's the way Chinese mothers show they love their children, not through hugs and kisses but with stern offerings of steamed dumplings, duck's gizzards, and crab." (Tan, p.178)

The concept of family othering broadens further, in that it influences the daughters' mindsets about accomplishment and purpose. JING-MEI WOO grows up dealing with her mother's high expectations. Suyuan Woo regularly dreams of her

daughter having the perfect blend of American opportunities and Chinese characteristics. In the mother's mind, the daughter could be anything she dreams of and beyond as long as it is what the mother wants her to be. Unfortunately, JING-MEI WOO feels trapped in the small box of dreams that her mother has created for her. With her piano lesson, she does not truly practice and tricks her mother into believing it, subsequently, she blames her endowment as proof that there are enough indicators that she should not pursue such a career. At one point JING-MEI WOO gets stuck in the same place until she cannot stand it anymore. By saying: "You want me to be someone that I'm not! ... I'll never be the kind of daughter you want me to be!" (Tan, p.125) she explodes and tarnishes her mother with words that perhaps she should never have said. Merely expressing that she wished she was dead, like her mother's first newborns, is enough for SUYUAN WOO to lose all hope.

Throughout the time JING-MEI "JUNE" resides with her mother, she develops a feeling of rejection towards her mother's heritage and her way of reasoning. She feels she is being burdened by her mother's unrealistic expectations of her and consequently has no choice but to step away from her mother's persona. It is important to point out that JING-MEI WOO, as a teenager, tries to deny all her Chinese parts, as her way of thinking is American. In the novel, the American pull transcends into the personalities of the daughters and falls into the family setting.

At the beginning of her life, she devoted herself to not looking anything like her mother. In her thinking, SUYUAN was only meant to be her mother, by no means her master, and certainly not someone who could convince her to follow Chinese instructions. It is only as an adult that she reclaims her mother as part of her culture and herself. SUYUAN WOO warns JING-MEI WOO that someday she will see that Chinese was in her blood. Only as an adult, JING-MEI expresses that she feels as if she was "transforming like a werewolf, a mutant tag of DNA suddenly triggered, replicating itself insidiously into a syndrome, a cluster of telltale Chinese behaviors..." (Tan, p.235) She initiates to echo her mother's Chinese behaviors and habits. In her heart, she knows that even though she is Chinese, she will never know what it really means, given that she has spent her youth denying this part of herself and just now finds herself carrying her mother's dream.

Similarly, WAVERLY JONG meets the same fate as JING-MEI WOO because, by Chinese standards, WAVERLY does not believe anyone is good enough for her mother. WAVERLY JONG grows up as a chess prodigy that her mother uses to brag and boast that WAVERLY is capable of doing anything. She “hated the way she tried to take all the credit.” (Tan, p.149) WAVERLY becomes a trophy stuck between being true to herself and making LINDO proud.

WAVERLY fills up like a jug of water that abruptly bursts when she starts to hate that her mother is different and that it makes her feel different too. She cannot stand having that part of her mother as all her life she has been aware that her mother is the "other" who does not fit in. “One day, after we left a shop I said under my breath, “I wish you wouldn’t do that, telling everybody I’m your daughter.” (Tan, p.86) WAVERLY thinks her mother is an unfair person just because she says out loud the things she ignores. She holds her mother responsible for her mistakes as she thinks of LINDO JONG as an identity from the outside world that has been controlling her life.

WAVERLY JONG is a clear example of exclusion towards her mother by making her look like she does not belong. As a child, she appears to be ashamed of her mother, she has grown up with two worldviews that made her self-consciously wary that her mother was different. Furthermore, WAVERLY JONG seems to overlook the fact that she also has Chinese origins. Lindo reminds her that half of her “self” comes from her. Even if she tries to deny it, she will always carry it inside her. She makes known the reason she gave WAVERLY her name.

“I wanted you to have the best circumstances, the best character. I didn’t want you to regret anything. And that’s why I named you Waverly. It was the name of the street we lived on. And I wanted you to think, This is where I belong. But I also knew if I named you after this street, soon you would grow up, leave this place, and take a piece of me with you.” (Tan, p.233)

All this time, LINDO JONG only wants to be there for her daughter because she knows she is half of her. The mother wants to be invited into her daughter's life, but WAVERLY JONG is so closed off thinking she is so different from her mother that

she never dares to open the door. Coupled with that, Waverly Jong visualizes her mother as someone different and detached from her. As LINDO mentions, the daughter only sees with her outside American eyes. LINDO JONG is aware that her daughter is someone of her own and that if she were to consider her mother as her equal, WAVERLY would have respect for her. She wishes to free her daughter so that she can give her spirit to her and make her stronger.

For instance, LINDO JONG is mindful that she inadvertently creates the "other" in her daughter's mind by making comments about not belonging to her culture. Once WAVERLY wants to go to China for her honeymoon, she is scared of being mistaken and left behind in China. To this concern, LINDO mentions: "When you go to China...you don't even need to open your mouth. They already know you are an outsider." (Tan, p.222)

LINDO knows that her daughter has spent so much time denying and putting aside her Chinese side that now she does not "look" Chinese. The only thing the daughter can show on her face is her American feelings. Without having to admit what she thinks, LINDO knows that her daughter is ashamed of her and that she would rather let her head be eaten by her thoughts than consider that the old Chinese woman is her mother and should be respected and heard.

Meanwhile, YING-YING ST. CLAIR was raised assuming a submissive role as her own, however, due to this circumstance, she has become an overlooked force in her daughter's life. LENA ST. CLAIR, her daughter, has become alienated from her heritage and from her mother as an individual. LENA has pushed her mother away from her life as she believes that she is not capable of believing in her.

Paradoxically, YING-YING ST. CLAIR wants her daughter to speak her mind and not be like her. "I will use this sharp pain to penetrate my daughter's tough skin and cut her tiger spirit loose. She will fight me, because this is the nature of two tigers. But I will win and give her my spirit, because this is the way a mother loves her daughter." (Tan, p. 221)

On the one hand, it is possible to see that YING-YING ST. CLAIR has become a hushed voice longing to be heard by those around her. She perceives her daughter

as an American who has only embraced her "Chinese submissiveness." On the other hand, LENA ST. CLAIR, being mixed race, made her more passive to her mother's views. She claims that, although she has few of her mother's characteristics, she has inherited her eyes and can see things that Caucasian girls cannot see.

She witnesses firsthand how her father "others" her mother by making her feel she has to express herself in English in order to "belong" at home and builds narratives of being her mother's savior.

"Lena thinks Saint saved me from the poor country village that I said I was from. She is right. She is wrong. My daughter does not know that Saint had to wait patiently for four years like a dog in front of a butcher shop."(Tan, p. 220)

This creates an environment where "othering" is openly displayed. The daughter absorbs this behavior and begins to do the same as she grows up. LENA ST. CLAIR has been dealing with feelings of rejection towards her mother and has resorted to the point of lying to her mother so that people would not see her. LENA ST. CLAIR is keenly aware of her ambiguous features and avoids telling people about her background until they begin to pick up on her Chinese parts. She has disassociated herself from her Chinese side, taking advantage of the whiteness inherited from her father and the lack of Chinese manners.

CHAPTER 2: Language

The second aspect of othering that can be found in the novel is language. Through language barriers, the relationship between mothers and daughters has sparked misunderstandings and conflicts. Language has further fostered the fragmentation of their bond and the emergence of feelings of alienation and superiority.

When the mothers start living in America, they struggle to harmonize their Chinese and their new American identities. Despite showing their American faces, people still catch glimpses of their Chinese faces. Upon the families' first gathering, they find themselves attending a church and attempting to improve their English through the Bible. What initially starts as a slight interest of the families to learn

English, quickly becomes a strong bond of friendship that is enough to form the *Joy Luck Club*.

As they grow up, the daughters acknowledge that their mothers have much to express, but their English is limited and people try to put words in their mouths. Thereby, the daughters make no effort to try to understand their mothers in their own language, instead, they take advantage of it and treat them like everyone else. JING-MEI WOO makes it clear that the thoughts her mother used to say were not memorable. She recalls "*chabudwo*. Or maybe she said *butong*, not the same thing at all. It was one of those Chinese expressions that means the better half of mixed intentions. I can never remember things I didn't understand in the first place." (Tan, p.16)

The daughters grew up understanding only some spoken Chinese, thereby creating linguistic barriers and failing to appreciate the big picture. Furthermore, they were raised surrounded by the Chinese language, but as soon as they got to know the "world" outside the home, they left behind their Chinese customs and their mothers' ways. In the case of JING-MEI WOO, she understands that she seems to be always trying to translate what her mother will say. Despite her inattentiveness, she gives the impression of hearing less and her mother to talk more. By the same token, it is highlighted that important things are best said in Chinese. A conversation excerpted from the novel illustrates this point by stating: "It is Auntie Ying who finally speaks. 'I think your mother die with an important thought on her mind,' she says in halting English. And then she begins to speak in Chinese, calmly, softly." (Tan, p.34) For the mothers, English is not a language that can provide them with reassurance and words to describe their feelings. It makes them feel "other".

This type of situation leads to daughters diminishing what their mothers taught them. Back when the daughters were going out with their mothers, they would rely on their knowledge of English to mold their mothers' minds anytime a question came up that their mothers didn't understand. Lying or dismissing the things their mothers said became a way of making them the "others". The daughters think they are superior to their mothers just because they speak English.

“I knew this was not a true answer. But I also made up lies to prevent bad things from happening in the future. I often lied when I had to translate for her, the endless forms, instructions, notices from school, telephone calls.” (Tan, p.93)

They assume that everything they say to their mothers needs to be translated even though their mothers have spent more time in the U.S. than they have. The daughters interpret their mothers' thoughts and paint their words in colors that are not their own. In addition, as the mothers are unable to express themselves successfully in English, a sense of "othering" is transmitted to the daughters. Indeed, the daughters may unconsciously feel the "other" as they see their mother speak Chinese. In their household, an illusory environment is set up where there are two mothers and a duality is created. One expresses in Chinese and one speaks English. When speaking a foreign language, a feeling of not being like oneself since one cannot act at ease. A barrier is built upon an isolation established by the language they speak and it seems it is hard to knock down. Under these circumstances, a duality of being inferior or superior depending on the language they communicate settles upon the mother-daughter relationship.

As a case in point, during adulthood, WAVERLY JONG's fiancé refers to his mother's foreign language proficiency by saying “her English was so bad. You know, when she was talking about that dead guy showing up on Dynasty, I thought she was talking about something that happened in China a long time ago.” (Tan, p.157) He mocks her mother's English and distances what Lindo Jong has to say from her reality. It is a demonstration that linguistic barriers are not only enclosed in the mother-daughter relationship, but also in the relationship held by people close to the daughters

Alternatively, YING-YING ST. CLAIR is often downplayed and pressured to achieve a fluent level of English. Her Chinese is not seen as a part of her, but as something that can be erased at any time. She struggles greatly to be herself as her American husband fills in the blanks of her sentences and puts words in her mouth.

“My father, who spoke only a few canned Chinese expressions, insisted my mother learn English. So with him, she spoke in moods and gestures, looks and

silences, and sometimes a combination of English punctuated by hesitations and Chinese frustration” (Tan, p. 92)

By all means, communication here turns out to be ineffective as language acts as a platform for othering the mother. She cannot be independent of her feelings and certainly, is unable to convey her thoughts in a comprehensive and lucid manner. The bond shared in the family that paves their interpersonal relationship is affected by the presence of how the father and daughter act toward YING-YING. The fact that LENA's father does not speak Chinese serves only to reinforce the othering exhibited at home. Consequently, the relationship with the language extends beyond the mother-daughter relationship and involves the male figure, which in this case represents authority. Chinese is deemed as something that can be suppressed and that both LENA and her father do not have to learn.

Correspondingly, English is imposed as the sole truth and depicts LENA as a witness in her childhood and as an enforcer in her adulthood. In the process, it becomes impossible to establish a healthy dynamic between them and unveils a hidden reality in which discrimination is perpetrated and reproduced.

YING-YING ST. CLAIR only feels comfortable speaking Chinese if she is alone with her daughter. It is as if her feelings are being painted with another brush when she expresses herself in her mother tongue. During a moment of loss experienced by YING-YING ST. CLAIR, the only language she could use to let out the overwhelming grief of her unborn child was Chinese. She shouts and mumbles in Chinese, and this time, her husband is unable to encode English words, so he cannot decipher what she is feeling. Clifford St. Clair is unaware of his status of being an important factor that shapes and dismantles YING-YING. Thus, her performance is diminished and limited as her actions become motionless under his gaze.

“Betty darling, Betty darling,” said my father frantically. But my mother kept shouting these accusations to herself. She grabbed my hand and I realized her whole body was shaking...“Lena, what’s she saying?” cried my father...” (Tan, p. 98)

It is possible to see that there are many words that mothers often employ that have no equivalents in English. An attempt is made to give an explanation, but the words end up being looked down upon just like the mothers. Daughters belittle their mothers just because they have accents as they praise people with unaccented English.

"It's a great hedge on inflation," he says with authority. He speaks the best English, almost accentless. I think my mother's English was the worst, but she always thought her Chinese was the best. She spoke Mandarin slightly blurred with a Shanghai dialect. (Tan, p. 25)

It is important to point out that it is also mentioned that certain feelings seem to exist only in Chinese, as the daughters grew up hearing them in Chinese because of their mothers. Now as adults, they think in these terms when they feel isolated in certain situations. Thus reflecting their relationship with the Chinese language.

"Lately I had been feeling *hulihudu*. And everything around me seemed to be *heimongmong*. These were words I had never thought about in English terms. I suppose the closest in meaning would be "confused" and "dark fog." (Tan, p. 27)

Only later, the daughters begin to empathize with each other and with their mothers' feelings as they were growing older together. All these emotions and sensations burst out of their skin as they encounter situations that force them to connect with their Chinese side and with this, their mothers.

CHAPTER 3: Othering and Feminism

The last aspect of othering found in the novel is taken from a feminist view. In the novel, there is a long-established notion of grouping subjects into an "us" and "them" bias; by virtue of this reasoning, women have been placed in a space as the "other" of men. By pointing this out, it is taken into account that daughters have also internalized particular visions of their fathers and have portrayed their mothers as beings placed below them. The relationship between mother and daughter has never been fully established, instead, they have been defined by different people and each

other's words. Now, as the years go by, they understand that they have always translated each other's meaning.

“So you think your mother is this bad. You think I have a secret meaning. But it is you who has this meaning. Ai-ya! She thinks I am this bad!” She sat straight and proud on the sofa, her mouth clamped tight, her hands clasped together, her eyes sparkling with angry tears.” (Tan, p. 159)

SUYUAN WOO has been described by many people in such a way that her daughter finds it an insult to feel that she resembles her. SUYUAN WOO's husband always advises her on what to do and how to speak. JING-MEI WOO is a witness and shares:

“That was like my father, whom my mother always criticized for his cigarette habit and who always shouted back that she should keep her thoughts to herself. I think he now feels guilty that he didn't let my mother speak her mind.” (Tan, p.27)

From the point of view of JING-MEI WOO, with the death of her mother, she can no longer paint her mother with what she seemingly knows about her because she now understands that she does not know who her mother was, thus the colors no longer seem to be accurate. What she has in mind and what she wishes for are incomplete pieces of the puzzle that she once tried to force-fit. Momentarily, she has to say goodbye to her mother through her father's portrayal of her.

In the case of YING-YING ST. CLAIR, she was taught to remain silent and never think about her own needs, after all, a girl was supposed to listen and let "others" do what they wanted. In the novel, the first time the counterpoint of yin and yang emerges is in the story of YING-YING. While watching a play of the Moon Lady, YING-YING evokes clearly what the Moon Lady says when she has lost herself to the moon: “For woman is yin...the darkness within, where untempered passions lie. And man is yang, bright truth lighting our minds.” (Tan, p.74). This reaffirms what YING-YING has been instructed to do. Yang represents the male as strong, superior, and bright while Yin depicts the passive, inferior, and dark. This may go along with YING-YING's name, given that she was expected to be all of those things and accept her role in whatever she was told. For instance, male superiority comes from the fact

that women are unable to be vocal. Despite the language in which they speak, the issue lies within their husbands and acquaintances, who are unwilling to listen to them.

YING-YING ST. CLAIR becomes an external force in her husband's and her daughter's life. She expresses her affliction over the fact that her daughter thinks that by marrying her father, she has been saved by him. YING-YING ST. CLAIR sees her husband as an "outsider" and states that he gives off an odor that can never be washed away. She co-exists with him and they have a daughter together, yet she does not feel at ease.

Moreover, YING-YING ST. CLAIR has never opened up to her daughter about her life in China. How they made her behave and believe she was less than her name implied. Instead, her husband draws the story as he pleases and lets their daughter LENA believe that he has saved her mother. It is a clear statement that white saviorism is encountered in the depths of her life. Hughey (2010) claims that white savior narratives reinforce the perception of Caucasians as "normal" by portraying people of color as individuals with no apparent possibility of getting out of their social and cultural margins unless they are guided by a white provider. YING-YING ST. CLAIR's husband sets up a "white imagery" in which she is shown as unseen and fabricated. When married, she is no longer perceived as her own person, and instead, her integrity is put aside while her family constructs their ideas of her.

"My father proudly named her in her immigration papers: Betty St. Clair, crossing out her given name of Gu Ying-ying. And then he put down the wrong birthyear, 1916 instead of 1914. So, with the sweep of a pen, my mother lost her name and became a Dragon instead of a Tiger." (Tan, p. 91)

This brings back the claimed conformity of YING-YING's self and highlights the disassociation of her name as mentioned above. Hagström (2012) points out that someone's name is meaningful as it distinguishes one as a unique person and is used to discover and learn who a person is. YING-YING is stripped of her name as well as her zodiac and what it implies in her character. In addition, her husband

"others" her in front of their daughter by putting words in her mouth and insisting that she only speaks English. It is obvious that LENA knows well how her father has soundproofed her mother's voice ever since she came to the United States. Indeed, to the extent that her mother is eventually declared a displaced person just because she married an American.

As a matter of fact, YING-YING ST. CLAIR wants her daughter to realize that she is a part of her in the same way that Lena St. Clair is part of her. YING-YING ST. CLAIR wishes dearly for LENA ST. CLAIR to acknowledge that she ought to know who her mother is and who she is.

During her childhood, the world around LENA ST. CLAIR brings her to realize that she is not the same as her mother. She reminisces about an event in her life that was marked by judgments.

"I was still screaming after two laughing men grabbed this man and, shaking him, said, "Joe, stop it, for Chrissake. You're scaring that poor little girl and her maid..." (Tan, p.94)

Misunderstandings are commonplace, as every time she goes out with her mother they face stares and comments that make them uncomfortable enough that LENA ST. CLAIR created a barrier between her mother and herself. A Chinese woman with a girl who looks nothing like her is considered to be her servant. There is no room to think beyond appearance.

As time goes on and these displays continue to deepen, LENA ST. CLAIR gets married to an attentive man that listens to her ideas, but never gives her credit or acknowledges what she brings to their relationship. To him, she is needy and demands his help to flourish. Her husband has comfortably been misunderstanding her by making up his own mind about her and turning a blind eye to the obvious mistreatment he has given Lena. Saying things as: "As long as we keep the money thing separate, we'll always be sure of our love for each other." (Tan. p.136) under the guise of being "fair" to his employees. At the same time, he earns a higher income than she does and avoids increasing her pay even though she works harder and the idea for the business came from her.

LENA explains to her mother that she and Harold make an arrangement so they will not rely on each other. When asked why by her mother, she says: "So we can eliminate false dependencies . . . be equals . . . love without obligation . . ." (Tan, p.140) Under this circumstance, LENA is portrayed as a financially independent woman, although her income is less, and she is unconsciously trapped in a chauvinistic emotional state of mind that seeks dependence on the man to make decisions. Her mother watches from afar and suffers that Lena is trapped in that relationship.

Alternatively, LINDO JONG grows up being objectified by her family. Once she gets a marriage arrangement as a child, her family begins to treat her as if she already belonged to someone else and is not her own person. As soon as LINDO JONG starts living with her new "family", they wash away her thoughts and stamp new ones on her skin. She becomes the "other" who has to please them and value their opinions. Surprisingly, a similarity of silence is embodied in the relationships of LINDO and YING-YING given that without choosing whom to marry, it is silence that prevails in their marriages. They are two different matters in which one originates in the past and the opposite in the present, and yet they have the same outcome.

"Over the next few years, Huang Taitai instructed the other servants to teach me how to sew sharp corners on pillowcases and to embroider my future family's name. How can a wife keep her husband's household in order if she has never dirtied her own hands, Huang Taitai used to say as she introduced me to a new task." (Tan, p.50)

LINDO JONG was forced to become an obedient wife that should be grateful for her life. As a young girl, traditional women's chores and expectations turned her into a woman unable to enjoy her childhood and, above all, her dreams and yearnings. For instance, WAVERLY JONG is taught by LINDO the "art of invisible strength", which consists of biting one's tongue and not going against the wind. As explained by WAVERLY JONG, "It was a strategy for winning arguments, respect from others, and eventually, though neither of us knew it at the time, chess games. (Tan, p.77)

WAVERLY JONG is raised living under her mother's expectations and now, she wants to remarry an American man younger than her. She has no regard for her mother, LINDO JONG, since she has created a portrait of her. Thus, her mother becomes something sacred that only the WAVERLY JONG can "understand" when it comes to strangers. WAVERLY has created an analogous situation between her mother and her childhood outburst. Although her mother used to be her center and wanted her to be successful, once WAVERLY grows older, she treats her mother as helpless while she materializes her doubts onto her mother.

"How does she want it?" asked Mr. Rory. He thinks I do not understand (...) "Ma, how do you want it?" Why does my daughter think she is translating English for me? Before I can even speak, she explains my thoughts: "She wants a soft wave. We probably shouldn't cut it too short." (Tan, p.224)

LINDO JONG possessed a fine sense of control over her surroundings, even though her daughter acted as her medium to the world. WAVERLY JONG has portrayed her mother as someone who needs to be taken care of when she is not around just based on the fact that she comes from China. The daughters have created a USA-born superiority complex that simultaneously tarnishes and breaks the mothers' existence.

It is important to realize that LINDO JONG knows that her daughter sees herself as different from her and is her own person, yet LINDO JONG sees her as a part of herself that she has not yet given up. LINDO JONG always wanted the best for her daughter, everything she was denied or made fun of. She wants her daughter to belong and to take a part of herself with her.

The novel implies that the mothers grow a little distant from their roots. They do not feel comfortable in the United States. They feel the pressure to hang on so that their daughters will have a future. One can imagine how heartbreaking it can be to pretend to merge with American culture when Americans didn't even bother to understand theirs. In LINDO JONG's case, she is proud of her daughter, but her daughter is ashamed of her.

Likewise, AN-MEI HSU is taught to desire nothing and to swallow people's misery. With her daughter, she teaches her the opposite so that no one could define her, yet the daughter sprouts just like her. This creates controversy within her as she questions whether it is because ROSE HSU JORDAN comes from her just as she also comes from her mother. "All of us are like stairs, one step after another, going up and down, but all going the same way." (Tan, p.187)

As a child, AN-MEI HSU only knows her mother from the horrible things her grandmother says about her. Her mother's dreams, expectations, and reasons are not enough for the family to treat her well and allow her to see her children. AN-MEI HSU's mother was abused and in order to maintain her honor, she married a vile man and became his fourth wife by turning into his third concubine.

"So in this clumsy way, my mother found out that Wu Tsing had taken his fourth concubine, who was actually just an afterthought, a foolish bit of decoration for his new motorcar." (Tan, p.198)

Women are placed as possessions and AN-MEI HSU can only be a mere spectator given that she is a child and her fate would be similar if she does not cultivate "virtue". Nevertheless, once AN-MEI HSU learns the harsh reality about her mother, she realizes that all those pictures her grandmother took were wrongly taken and that her mother had no choice.

To a certain extent, regarding ROSE HSU JORDAN, what she had done to her mother impacted her years later when she begins a dating relationship with her husband. The family of her husband becomes the trigger that brings out her background into the spotlight before she marries him. They are reluctant to have a minority join their family, and as much as ROSE HSU JORDAN assures them that it won't happen, she ends up marrying him anyway. "I think it's nice that you and Ted are having such a lot of fun together. So I hope you won't misunderstand what I have to say." (Tan, p. 103)

ROSE HSU JORDAN's marriage has been falling apart from the beginning, as her husband does not see her as an influential part of his life, but as someone who is

not worthy enough of his full and undivided attention. The way ROSE HSU JORDAN sees it, she traces everything that happens to her back to her mother. ROSE HSU JORDAN becomes an easy target for her husband. She expresses that: "Over the years, Ted decided where we went on vacation. He decided what new furniture we should buy." (Tan. p.104) She prefers to ignore whatever happens around her and gives in to his demands as long as she remains at ease.

It is not until later that she realizes that her husband only sees her as a flower that all the time has to be watered and wants a divorce. On his behalf, she starts to show her withered leaves and it has to be changed as he cannot be there for her all the time. He manipulates her into thinking that she is responsible for the divorce.

CONCLUSION:

The author does an impressive showing of women's histories and reflecting the differences of two generations' mindsets and cultures. What the daughters lose by not knowing the past and becoming ignorant individuals to their mothers' dreams and hopes. The daughters grow apart from their mothers and only until adulthood that they create a bond filled with understanding and conversation. Tan shows us emotions and situations where conflicts are embedded within the characters. The dilemma of raising Chinese-American daughters works as a bridge to gain knowledge about their families and their identities within the misunderstandings. The novel creates a sense of unity and how parental expectations affect not only the children and their futures but the relationship of the family.

In the family, othering is watered into the daughters' personal lives and eventually, it sprouts in the other parts of the daughters' lives and their behavior. Being exposed from a very young age, the daughters develop a complex linked to their childhood experiences that influence their actions and suffocate their feelings. Meanwhile, in their search for opportunities, the mothers fail to realize that they are actually setting up an environment in which their daughters' ideas cannot coexist with their own. As the novel unfolds, a narrative emerges stating "my mother is not really the same as me at all, so I should not give her 'respect'" and "my daughter is somehow different and depends on my guidance to achieve my goals". It functions to encourage and manifest an internalized othering that seeks to distinguish and separate the characteristics that keep them equal.

Besides, such othering permeates into language as well. The creation of superiority and alignment complexes depicts both mothers and daughters as individuals who do not feel involved in the world established by internal and external drivers. For the mothers, the wish to forge a path and learn English backstabs them as they become targets of discrimination based on their accent and use of their native language inside and outside the home. On the journey to building bridges of understanding, their process is stunted by meaningless comments and, mostly, by the daughters' arrogance in believing they are better than their mothers simply for speaking "perfect" English. By favoring unaccented English speakers who can

express themselves well, the daughters constantly undermine their mothers' struggle to be their own persons. The divergence of their worlds and languages only increased the feeling of being the "other" even more. It is impossible to establish a common ground to settle on a language in which mother and daughter can dialogue without alienating each other. As language is associated with American privilege and culture, it reinforces the superiority of daughters, as it is an element that they dominate. This dismisses their mothers who cannot genuinely convey their feelings.

These factors also lead to an exploration of othering from a feminist perspective, given that in the family and through language, women have been denigrated. The women in the novel are constantly pushed to embrace people's behaviors and the harm they can inflict on them. With regard to mothers and daughters, this begins in childhood and continues into adulthood. It exhibits a continually ingrained demeanor that, in a negative way and without even intending to, has repercussions on the daughters and how they assimilate these behaviors.

Despite the efforts of the mothers to avoid committing acts that jeopardize the moral integrity and upbringing of their children, the mothers fail to ensure what they want their daughters to be. Women are defined by everyone and their stories and the hardship they go through, lie dormant in the bubble of silence created by those close to them.

Throughout the novel, their worlds collide and show us how multifaceted relationships can be. In the case of JING-MEI WOO, she meets her sisters and establishes a connection with her mother that allows her to understand all those years she spent being confused and against her mother. SUYUAN then becomes a being that complements her daughter and helps her endure a life without her in it. JING MEI-WOO is more than she ever could dream and now she sees herself transforming. Equally important, in contrast with YING-YING'S oppressive and mind-closed teaching, she wants her daughter to break free and have in mind she will always love and support her. The mothers no longer embody a patriarchal role model and instead, they thoughtfully encourage their daughters to not reiterate their past behaviors and to pursue a life where they can take control.

Eventually, each mother and daughter come to depend on the other in order to interpret their existence. They realize together that none of them has been crueler to each other than what they have been inflicting upon themselves. All those years they were turning their backs on their problems and facing their sufferings alone without relying on each other. It really leaves a feeling to be oneself on the arduous path of life. Women must stick together and comfort and guide one another. Daughters discover their mothers' beginnings causing the mothers to be more precious to them. It took some time for both of them to find a mutual room in which they could truly belong.

Given these points, it is not intended to value individuality above the mother-daughter relationship, but rather include it in one's everyday life in order to flourish as human beings and understand the hardships of living. The goal of present and future generations must be to construct a society where nothing and no one is futile, where everyone is recognized as unique, where everyone has a place, where everyone is linked and contributes significantly to the balance of life. Thus, the social and family elements attributed to the characters interact in the development of their identities, meaning that their affiliation to certain groups (age, language, nationality, and gender) conditions to a large extent the way in which the mothers and daughters are interpreted by others, and this interpretation carries along with it a relatively different message, depending on the circumstances.

The mother-daughter relationship may not have originated as a loving bond and it may have only set up patterns that allowed othering within language, family, and sisterhood, nonetheless, they grew to embrace themselves, their roots, and what it implies without resorting to shame. In the end, little by little, the mothers and daughters recognize their generational differences thereby forging an environment where they can feel acknowledged and can claim to belong. Guiding does not always necessarily mean being right and understanding often neglects other aspects of a person.

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