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EXPLORING THE SIGNIFICANCE GIVEN TO THEME OF HARMONY IN AMY TAN'S NOVELS

Annotation

This paper explores the thematic intricacies of the mother-daughter relationship within the context of traditional Chinese American culture, as depicted in the novels of Amy Tan. Through an analysis of Tan's works, particularly focusing on maternal storytelling and daughters' active inquiry into their maternal lineage, the study elucidates the transformative journey towards reconciliation and understanding between generations. Tan's narratives highlight the importance of familial memory and cultural heritage in fostering emotional connection and resolving conflicts, while also underscoring the significance of female friendships in navigating life's challenges. By delving into themes of cultural identity, forgiveness, and empathy, Tan's work offers profound insights into the universal human quest for harmony and unity across diverse backgrounds and experiences. Through nuanced storytelling, Tan invites readers to contemplate the complexities of familial relationships and the enduring pursuit of connection and reconciliation in a multicultural society.

Key words: Harmony, Mother-Daughter Relationship, Cultural Heritage, Reconciliation, Amy Tan, Identity.

ИЗУЧЕНИЕ ЗНАЧЕНИЯ, ПРИДАВАЕМОГО ТЕМЕ ГАРМОНИИ В РОМАНАХ ЭМИ ТАН

В этой статье исследуются тематические тонкости отношений матери и дочери в контексте традиционной китайско-американской культуры, изображенной в романах Эми Тан. Благодаря анализу работ Тан, в котором особое внимание уделяется материнским рассказам и активному исследованию дочерью своего материнского происхождения, исследование раскрывает преобразующий путь к примирению и пониманию между поколениями. Рассказы Тан подчеркивают важность семейной памяти и культурного наследия в укреплении эмоциональных связей и разрешении конфликтов, а также подчеркивают значение женской дружбы в преодолении жизненных проблем. Углубляясь в темы культурной идентичности, прощения и сочувствия, работа Тан предлагает глубокое понимание универсального человеческого стремления к гармонии и единству, несмотря на различное происхождение и опыт. Посредством детального повествования Тан предлагает читателям задуматься о сложностях семейных отношений и постоянном стремлении к связи и примирению в мультикультурном обществе.

Ключевые слова: Гармония, Отношения матери и дочери, Культурное наследие, Примирение, Эми Тан, Идентичность.

EMI TAN ROMONLARIDA GARMONIYA MAVZUSIGA BERILGAN AHMIYATI

Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqola Amy Tanning romanlarida tasvirlangan an'anaviy xitoy amerika madaniyati doirasida ona-qiz munosabatlarining tematik nozikliklarini o'rganadi. Tan asarlarini tahlil qilish, xususan, onalar haqida hikoya qilish va qizlarning onalik nasl-nasabini faol o'rganishga e'tibor qaratish orqali tadqiqot avlodlar o'rtasidagi yarashuv va tushunish sari o'zgaruvchan sayohatni yoritib beradi. Tanning hikoyalari hissiy aloqani rivojlantirish va nizolarni hal qilishda oilaviy xotira va madaniy merosning muhimligini ta'kidlaydi, shu bilan birga hayotdagi qiyinchiliklarni engishda ayollar do'stligining ahamiyatini ta'kidlaydi. Madaniy o'ziga xoslik, kechirimlilik va hamdardlik mavzularini o'rganish orqali Tanning ishi turli kelib chiqishi va tajribalarida uyg'unlik va birlikka bo'lgan universal insoniy intilish haqida chuqur tushuncha beradi. Nuansli hikoyalari orqali Tan o'quvchilarni oilaviy munosabatlarning murakkabligi va ko'p madaniyatli jamiyatda doimiy aloqa va yarashuvga intilish haqida fikr yuritishga taklif qiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: Uyg'unlik, ona-qiz munosabatlari, madaniy meros, yarashuv, Emi Tan, o'ziga xoslik.

Introduction. "Harmony" is a philosophical concept in traditional Chinese culture, an ethical concept and a lofty aesthetic realm. Firstly, this concept holds that in this world, although there are opposites and conflicts between all things, the development law of things is always the unity of opposites and reconciliation. The "harmony" of all things is the highest and most desirable philosophical realm in traditional Chinese culture; Secondly, in this world, various contradictions and conflicts often arise between people, a normal phenomenon of human relations. However, the relationship between people is also based on the highest realm of "harmony", such as "harmony but difference" and "harmony is precious" in traditional Chinese culture. Amy Tan presents the core idea of "harmony" in her portrayal of women's relationships in her novels.

The conflict and ultimately reaching reconciliation between mother and daughter is one of the recurring themes in Amy Tan's novels. However, in her novels, the obvious contradiction and conflicts between immigrant mothers and American daughters are finally resolved, and mother and daughter get reconciliation. Reconciliation cannot be achieved without mothers' strong love and good intentions towards their daughters. Whatever mothers and daughters have experienced, mothers have always kept strong love and good intentions to their daughters. Ying Ying told Jing-mei, "Your mother was a very strong woman,

a good mother. She loved you very much, more than her own life [1]." An-mei told her daughter Rose "A mother is best. A mother knows what is inside you [2]." Therefore, the mothers wait for a proper time and chance to let the daughters know about their past and family lineage.

The following are the approaches or efforts from both sides of mother and daughter, which contribute to the improvement and reconciliation of the relationship between mother and daughter.

On the side of the mother, it is the storytelling of her past. In *The Joy Luck Club*, the four mothers in turn tell the stories of their childhood, the stories of their marriage and experiences, and even the stories of their mothers. Their stories sound like a monologue, but the target listener is their daughters. Suyuan told her daughter Jing-mei many times about her experience during the wartime, how she managed a hopeful life with other female friends in Kweilin, how she had to escape from Kweilin to Chongqing, and what she saw and did on the way. Lindo told her daughter Waverly what she had experienced as a daughter-in-law since her two years old, and how she managed to escape from her unhappy sexless marriage.

In *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Winnie told her daughter Pearl how her mother fell in love with a young journalist but was forced to get married to her father's old friend replacing his dead

second wife [2]. At Winnie's six years old, her mother finally decided to leave home mysteriously. Then Winnie was sent to her uncle's family by her father just because her father didn't want to see her anymore to remind her mother's disgrace. Living in a family not belonging to "the other" for twelve years, Winnie wanted to change her fate by marriage. Unfortunately, she falls into hell, suffering from her husband's humiliation, violence, rape and other tortures beyond words and imagination. In a terrible family situation, she lost her three children. It seemed there was no place for her to hide from her husband's chasing until she was sent to jail for two years. At last, Pear was informed that her biological father was the first husband of her mother, a demonic man [3]. Upon learning about her mother's past, Pearl not only got a deeper understanding of her mother but also found the strength and hope to overcome her disease. Therefore, the author employed mothers' storytelling to reveal their suppressed hidden desires and expectations for their daughters, showing readers the mother's true emotions and hidden desires. The author's continuous extension and expansion of the stories also reflect the significance of family lineage in getting reconciliation between generations.

Carl Gustav Jung, the founder of analytical psychology, proposed the concept of "collective unconscious", which refers to the unconscious mind and shared mental concepts. Carl Gustav Jung once said that the memory of a family is hereditary and with a collective unconscious accumulation. "Jung considered the collective unconscious to underpin and surround the unconscious mind, distinguishing it from the personal unconscious [3]." The lack of maternal family memory affects the understanding of the potential impact of family, which in turn further affects the relationships between family members.

Taking the suicide tendency of Ruth's family as an example, Grandmother Precious Auntie's suicide was deeply engraved in Mother Luling's heart, becoming her emotional response mode when facing difficulties. Since Ruth was a little girl, she has been often threatened by her mother's suicide, and she felt deeply frightened. Though Ruth was very disgusted with her mother's suicidal behavior, she chose to commit suicide several times. Suicide has become a common emotional response pattern shared by the members of the family, which in turn affected family relationships.

The rupture of family memory affects the daughter's understanding of her mother, grandmother, and lineage. In *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, LuLing thought about some questions and realized that "the first word a baby learns to speak must have been: ma. For a long time, that was the only word the baby needed. A mother is always the beginning. She is how things begin [4]." Amy Tan said that she thought her mother was a wonderful person created by a specific historical period and location. She wanted to learn more about that period, that place, and more about her mother and wanted to understand her history, so she came to the place where her mother's history began.

The maternal lineage is a family lineage with inherited female blood. The inquiry into the mother's lineage is the inquiry into the mother's family history, that is, the inquiry into the mother's blood relationship. Carl Jung believed that the collective unconscious can be envisioned as a treasure trove of memory, a mark or trace of memory, originating from the condensation of countless processes of the same experience. It is the precipitation of certain constantly occurring psychological experiences. Therefore, behind the family lineage, there are many memories and experiences. On the side of a daughter, it is their active inquiry into maternal lineage, seeking root in China, willingly accepting the mother's suggestion and apology that counts more to the reconciliation of mother and daughter.

In the novels, during the daughters' growing up, they didn't understand why their mothers kept complaining, were unsatisfied with their performance, and always asked them to improve. Pearl didn't understand why her mother was so strict and demanding of her; Ruth didn't know why her mother was so irritable and worried. Not knowing the past of mothers resulted in a breakdown in emotional communication between mother and daughter. The rupture of family memory makes the daughter unable to recognize the Chinese elements in herself and unaware

that there are also things in her personality that are similar to her mother's.

However, when daughters in their thirties, encountered some problems in their lives and marriages, at the same time, their mothers are no longer their strong opponents but failing old ladies. They feel it is high time to know about their mothers before it is too late. Just Waverly realized that her mother had become "an old woman, a wok for her armor, a knitting needle for her sword, getting a little crabby as she waited patiently for her daughter to invite her in [5]."

In *The Joy Luck Club*, Jing-mei, as the core character of the novel, went to China to find her sister at the novel's end. On arriving in China, Jing-mei asked her father the story about her mum. At that moment, Jing-mei wanted to know more about her mother, to make up with her mother and to find out the part of herself as Chinese [6]. Through the story, she better understood her mother and felt her part Chinese. On the train, she thought of her mother's words, "Once you are born Chinese, you cannot help but feel and think Chinese. Someday you will see... It is in your blood, waiting to be let go [7]." When Jing-mei saw her sisters at the airport, she was very excited that she felt "And now I also see what part of me is Chinese. It is so obvious. It is my family. It is in our blood. After all these years, it can finally be let go [8]." Jing-mei's sense of familiarity with Chinese ancestry, realizing the cultural and psychological inheritance in herself, arouses her instinct to seek roots, which expresses her desire to explore blood and family lineages. Jing-mei identified with her mother through blood and spirit, hoping to reconcile with her, but her mother had passed away, and this wish could not be truly realized. The author reveals the importance of understanding Chinese ancestry and family, which will promote reconciliation between daughters and mothers [9].

When Lindo told Waverly that she didn't look Chinese, Waverly did not look pleased. Though maybe ten years ago, she would have been very glad to hear that, now she wants to be Chinese and think it fashionable. Taking her mother's advice, Waverly postponed her wedding with Rich and her honeymoon to China. When mum explained the reason for Rich "It is too hot in the summer. You will only grow more spots and your whole face will become red! [8]" At the remark, Rich was not angry but grinned and even gestured his thumb toward Lindo, and said to Waverly, "Can you believe what comes out of her mouth? Now I know where you get your sweet, tactful nature [9]." When Lindo hinted to go to China with them, Rich reacted excitedly. Though Waverly thought it a disaster to stand up with her mother's complaining, "Yet part of me also thinks the whole idea makes perfect sense. The three of us, leaving our differences behind, stepping on the plane together, sitting side by side, lifting off, moving West to reach the East [10]." The East is where things begin. Waverly and Rich show their recognition and acceptance of Lindo and China.

Ying-Ying, after many years of indifference and keeping away from her daughter, when her daughter was faced with problems in her marriage, reflected, "I will gather together my past and look.... The pain that cut my spirit loose. I will hold that pain in my hand until it becomes hard and shiny, clearer... 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 how a mother loves her daughter [11]." Then she deliberately broke the vase on the table so that her daughter Lena would come upstairs. Lena said that it did matter and she knew that would happen. Ying-ying awoke her with a simple question: "Then why don't you stop it? [12]" In this parable way, Ying-ying helped her daughter and Lena gained emotional recognition for her mother. Similarly, Rose also accepted her mother's suggestion to speak to Ted directly and prove her worth.

In *The Hundred Secret Senses*, in the beginning, Olivia disliked Kwan talking about stories in the world. She disliked almost everything connected with Kwan and Chinese history and culture. Though she got divorced from her husband, they made a trip together with Kwan to China on business. Her ex-husband got lost in a valley, then Kwan set off to look for him. At last, Olivia's ex-husband was found but Kwan disappeared forever. During the

process, Olivia had a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of love, hope, and responsibility. She appreciated the love of her sister Kwan and felt grateful to her.

In *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, faced with various confusions, Ruth, with the help of her lover, knew about her mother's memoirs so that the memory chain of three generations of women in the family is connected, achieving emotional resonance. Finally, she accepted her mother's apology: "I'm worried that I did terrible things to you when you were a child, that I hurt you very much. But I can't remember what I did... I just wanted to say I hope you can forget just as I've. I hope you can forgive me because if I hurt you, I'm sorry [13]." Therefore, the conflict between mother and daughter was eventually resolved and they achieved a true reconciliation. About the theme of *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, Amy Tan once said in a review that "it is a book about family inheritance, the core of the novel's story is the secret tragedies of my own family. The characters in the novel are emotionally based on my grandmother. My mother inspired the image of LuLing; Ruth is like me. My grandmother's terrible tragedies including rape, suicide, and loss of voice are passed down from generation to generation like DNA. I can only change the family inheritance through understanding [14].

In Amy Tan's novels, mothers in Chinese American families hid their past secrets for many years, making it difficult for daughters to understand them. Understanding is based on cognition. If daughters know nothing about mothers, they don't understand mothers' emotions and behaviors, let alone the generation of grandmothers and Chinese tradition. Therefore, another approach to solving the contradiction between mother and daughter in Amy Tan's novels is to understand the mother, to understand her family lineage, to find her belonging and attributes, and to seek the power of life from her mother's family lineage. In *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, returning to her mother's lineage is expressed, indicating Amy Tan's maturity in thinking about self-reconstruction and her strong desire to solve problems [15].

Apart from the main relationship of mother and daughter, the relationship between or among female friends, especially in the first generation of Chinese Americans, is worth studying. On good days, they are rivals, comparing with or competing for every aspect of their lives such as children, marriage, cooking, marriage, etc., while facing difficulties and problems, they are best friends to support each other. Anyway, they play an important role in the life of each other. In *The Joy Luck Club*, they are the four mothers; in *The Kitchen God's Wife*, they are Winnie (Weiwei), Helen (Hulan), Peanut (Huazheng), Great Auntie Du and Xiao Yu's mother; in *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, they are LuLing and GaoLing; in *The Hundred Secret Senses*, they are Banner (the former life of Olivia) and a one-eyed bandit girl (the former life of Kwan). They are related neither by blood nor by marriage, but they are connected closely by fate.

Winnie and Helen have different personality traits; one is a kind of pessimistic realism and the other seems optimistic. They kept confiding their secrets to each other for many years since they met in Hangzhou. Winnie helped Helen with her husband come to the United States, and Helen helped keep secrets for her and managed Winnie and her daughter to get closer by exchanging secrets [16]. During the war, Helen even saved Winnie's life.

In the jail, the women there helped each other. Winnie taught her roommates how to read and shared her letter from her husband with them. They admired Winnie's courage. Auntie Du kept seeing her regularly. She took advantage of the political environment and helped Winnie come out of jail in advance. At the same time, Helen also tried her best to help her. Helen cooked a meal as well as she could welcome Winnie back home. They were more like a family. They have accompanied each other for more than half a century.

In *The Joy Luck Club*, the mothers were always competing with each other to see who could make better delicious

dishes and hoped that their children surpassed those from the other Chinese American families. They have developed a firm sisterhood, or sister bonding, during several decades. They played Mah Jang and shared delicious food and what was happening in their life. They knew each other quite well. After Suyuan died, a letter from China arrived in her family. Lindo, An-mei and Ying-ying helped her to finish her long-cherished wish [17].

At the end of the four novels, the relationship between mother and daughter, between sisters, among companions moves to a harmonious state. The novels focus on expressing the confusion and troubles, pain and sadness, contradictions and conflicts between people, but what the author pursues and advocates is still a kind of "harmony", which shows her double temperament of China and America inherited in her blood, as well as her internal ethical and spiritual pursuits, her pursuit of both Eastern and Western values, as well as the harmonious combination of Chinese and American ethical and spiritual orientation.

In *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, Ruth hosted a mid-autumn dinner. She stood up and gave a brief speech [18]. "As the years go on, I see how much family means. It reminds us of what's important. That connection to the past. The same jokes about being Young yet getting old. The traditions. We can't get rid of each other no matter how much we try. We're stuck through the ages, with the bonds cemented by sticky rice and tapioca pudding. Thank you all for being who you are [19]." Ruth's speech demonstrated Tan's "harmony" ideology and expanded her pursuit of internal ethical values [20]. Ruth thought reunions were important, a ritual to preserve what was left of the family. She did not want her cousins to drift apart, but she feared that once the older generation was gone, that would be the end of the family ties. They had to make the effort [21].

There are many common things between different ethnic groups and cultures in essence, and this common essence is the foundation for humanity to move towards "Great Harmony"; It is precisely the commonality of human communication that enables many Chinese American works to connect the hearts or spirits of people from different eras and countries, historically showcasing the development process of Chinese and American culture and values in constant conflict and integration [22].

Conclusion. In conclusion, Amy Tan's exploration of the mother-daughter relationship within the backdrop of Chinese American culture unveils a profound journey towards reconciliation and understanding. Through the intricate portrayal of maternal storytelling and daughters' active inquiry into their maternal lineage, Tan illustrates the pivotal role of familial memory and cultural heritage in fostering emotional connection and resolving conflicts. The narratives underscore the significance of acknowledging and embracing one's roots, both familial and cultural, as a means of achieving self-reconstruction and releasing the confusion of life.

Furthermore, Tan extends her examination beyond the mother-daughter dynamic to highlight the significance of female friendships, demonstrating how solidarity and support among women play a vital role in navigating life's challenges and fostering a sense of harmony amidst cultural differences and personal struggles.

Ultimately, Tan's thematic exploration of reconciliation resonates with broader human experiences, emphasizing the universal pursuit of connection, understanding, and harmony. Through her nuanced storytelling, Tan invites readers to reflect on the complexities of familial relationships, the importance of cultural heritage, and the transformative power of empathy and forgiveness in bridging divides and fostering a greater sense of unity. In doing so, Tan's work serves as a poignant reminder of the enduring human quest for reconciliation and harmony across generations and cultures.

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