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## The Representation of Trauma in Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* (1989)

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**Abstract:** The main aim of this present paper is to analyze and investigate Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* in the light of the psychological approach. The selected novel is regarded as an interlocking collection of traumatic narratives. It deals with how the first-generation Chinese immigrants suffered from the Sino-Japanese war. This paper employs the psychological approach in order to delve into the traumatic impact of the Sino-Chinese War on the first-generation Chinese immigrants in the United States of America. It also draws upon such psychological concepts as repression and the relation between memory and trauma, to name a few. The novel revolves around a number of Chinese-American mothers who narrate their traumatic experiences to their daughters, and warn them of falling victim to depression. In creating such a novel, Amy Tan mingles her real wistful memories into myths. The paper comes to the conclusion that trauma narrative is a writing technique that can help survivors of trauma in recovering from their psychological problems. Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, thus, does not propagate sadness and pessimism. Rather, it calls for the strength to survive traumatic experiences, regardless of how difficult they are. Thus, the present study aims at highlighting the aspects of psychological approach in Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* as one of the remarkable Asian-American novels that portray the life of the Chinese immigrant families.

**Key Words:** Amy Tan- *The Joy Luck Club*-Psychology-Traumatic Experience-The Sino-Japanese War-Memory

### I.1 Introduction

Amy Tan is one of the most recognized Chinese-American authors. Her novels, short stories, and essays are packed with details about how she grew up as a first-generation American showing what it means to be a part of the Chinese culture. Her unique and emotional interpretation of her experiences in America and China always let most of her books be the highest on the bestseller lists. She is often admired and loved, and her work has been collected and studied in many textbooks and classrooms over the decades since the publication of her first novel. In her novels, there are such themes and ideas as the mother-daughter relationship and cultural identity struggles, and the meaning of the mothers' narratives.

The novel "opens with a decidedly traumatic event as Jing-mei Woo begins to narrate, she reveals that her mother, Suyuan Woo has recently, suddenly and unexpectedly died" (3). Jing-mei has a distinctive role in the novel. She represents the two generations mother and daughter as she says, "I am to replace my mother"(19). The sudden death of her mother and her responsibility to reconnect with the twins caused a catastrophe for Jing-mei. So, the novel portrays different characters who feel and live different traumatic events on their ancestors only through their own memories to those events. Dongmei mentioned that "Traumatic memory refers to those psychological, emotional and even physiological abnormalities caused by serious injury events in life. It mainly includes two elements: first, the cause of trauma must be an event with sufficient intensity, and second it emphasizes the experience of the event in the individual's heart. (Zhao Dongmei, 2009). A traumatized person has a feeling of a victim, living on the memories of past

events like the traumas of the four couples of mothers and daughters in the novel and the resulted kind of family model which formed by the traumatized mothers and daughters.

*The Joy Luck Club* is broken up into 4 sections and 16 stories narrated by 8 women whose ages are different. They are four mothers and four daughters from four families. Section I consists of the four stories told by four mothers; Section II and Section III are told by four daughters; and Section IV is concerned with mothers. As a matter of fact, *The Joy Luck Club* was first published as a collection of interlocking stories, but it was regarded as a novel. It received a popular success. Reviewers praised Amy Tan's heartfelt discussion of mother-daughter relationships, and explained that she followed the example of Chinese-American female writers such as Maxine Hong Kingston.

Maxine Hong Kingston is a first-generation Chinese American. She was an American-born Chinese author, whose father, is a scholar who had immigrated to America. Her first book is *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*. In 1971, Amy Tan was given a copy of *The Woman Warrior*, Tan says that she “didn’t think of herself as a writer at the time” she also remarked that the book inspired her that Asians can write stories too and that they “don’t have to be stories about white people”. Following the release of her novel *The Joy Luck Club*, she went and introduced herself to Kingston in one of her readings. Maxine hugged her saying” we’re sisters”, in fact the two were usually mistaken for one another in public (Randall 13).

The novel stayed more than forty weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list. In addition, in Oct. 13,1989 it was among the five finalists for the 1989, National Book Award in fiction. Also, it was nominated for the National Book Critics Award and won the Commonwealth Gold Award, Commonwealth club of California Book Awards (fiction, silver,1989) and as well won the Bay Area Book Reviewers Award. *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) deals with 4 families, namely: the Woos, Jongs, Hsus, and St. Clairs. These families have something in common which are the mother-daughter relations. All these mothers are first generation immigrants from China. Being marginalized and isolated in their host culture, they speak a little bit of English. As for the daughters, they are all born and educated in America, some of which are married to Westernizers. In China, these mothers suffered from the Japanese War, but in the United States of America the challenge is about a different culture and a different language

The novel shows the way through which a narrative is created, communicated, and explains how it makes a meaning from painful experiences. This kind of narrative is seen as a crucial step toward a survivor's potential recovery. In this book, the traumatizing events that affected the grandparents’ mental health have a negative impact on the Chinese American girls. The second generations feel torn between the dominant American culture and Chinese tradition. Such confusion is brilliantly treated by Amy Tan. In the thesis entitled “Creating an Asian-American Mythology: Storytelling in Amy Tan's Fiction” Tammy Conard writes: “Amy Tan takes her work one step further, not only challenging both dominant American culture and traditional Chinese culture but also re-mythologizing certain stereotypes and myths to form a mythology that is uniquely Asian-American” (4).

## **I. 2 Chinese Immigrants in America**

First of all, it is necessary to give an overview of the Chinese immigration to America. Chinese immigration can be divided into three classifications according to their times: 1849-1882, 1882-1965, and 1965 to the present. The first period took place shortly after the California Gold Rush and ended in an abrupt manner as a result of the passage of the

Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. (Luo) .Some Chinese migrated to the United States because they sought reunion with their families; they also were refugees (Lankevich 401). The two main causes of immigration were the desire of living in an independent country and enjoying a good standard of living. The idea of living in an independent country is caused by the fact that Chinese people were under the reign of the Communism, and then they desired more freedom. The United States represented the symbol of freedom from intolerance based upon one's particular views, the suffered from deprivation of freedom, and civil rights, and improvement for their lives, particularly those who are from poor families, as they wished to earn a good living and to send back money to support their families. The second cause is that they are able to work hard and establish a good future for them and for their parents in their new society. Some immigrants hoped to work for a few years and then go back home to enjoy their newly acquired wealth. However, the most important reason for Chinese immigration was the economic hardship in their homeland which caused by the growing British dominance over China after Britain defeated China in the Opium War of 1839-1842. Therefore, the primary goals were to get rid of poverty and to flee from the persecution, and escape from Britain's dominance in their homeland.

It should be added that the Chinese immigrants had low incomes. In the American eyes, Chinese Americans worked less than other immigrants because the locked society of Chinatowns offers low paying jobs (Mobasher & Sadri 144). Examining the history of the Chinese immigration reveals that the earlier Chinese immigrants belonged to the laboring class. In America, Chinese immigrants worked as domestic servants; they worked in all trades. They mostly occupied jobs were factory workers, especially in California at the time of the Civil War. They worked in wool mills, Cigar, shoe and garment industries. The Chinese were persuaded with low wages and ready to do any job in the United States of America. Finally, the Chinese immigrants found employment directing competition with the white people due to riots, expulsion and lynching (Kung 30). At last, their diligence and strength let them be accepted in American society. They were also the first to work in the gold fields in California, which posed as an incentive to many of them to emigrate to the west. They also began the era of railroad building through The Central Pacific Railroad Company employed around 15,000 Chinese in constructing the Transcontinental Railroad (Luo, n.d 124).

The Sino-Japanese war played a crucial role in the immigration to America. "The history of China cannot be dissociated from the Chinese immigrant experience in the United States, an experience that is deeply felt at the microcosmic level of family relationships. Cultural and historical distance, compounded by linguistic alienation, makes it difficult for the American-born Chinese subject to gain access to the history of the family with its roots in China" (*The Sino Japanese War and Chinese History in Amy Tan's Novels and Lisa See's Shanghai Girls*, 18)

## II. Theoretical Framework

The present study employs the psychological approach in order to probe deep into the post-traumatic experiences of Chinese-Americans. Amy Tan's novels are linked with the construction of identity of hyphenated Americans by showing the cultural and generational gap in the immigrant groups and the bad need to heal from the traumas of the past. Psychological fiction refers to a novel that deals with the internal conflicts of the spirit. By purposes of illustration, literary works can be studied in the light of psychology so as to show the depth of the characters. Psychology expounds on the hidden reasons for the character's acts, and sheds light upon the relationship between the conflict and psyche of characters. It also accounts for their acts in every situation. Studying literary works

through the psychological approach, the writer's choices to express a character's personality are fathomed. The psychological approach reveals the weaknesses and strengths and clarifies the aim of the writer behind the characters' speeches.

Charles Bressler clarifies that the psychoanalytical approach, including Freud's theories in the following terms:

The analytic critics believe we can unlock the hidden meanings housed in symbols throughout the story and arrive at an accurate interpretation of the text. Since Freud believes that the literary text is really an artist's dream or fantasy, the text can and must be analyzed like a dream (94).

The present paper throws much light on the connection between trauma and memory. It should be noted that memory itself is a form of narration. It relates the past to the present. Ben Xu writes:

Memory is not just a narrative, even though it does have to take a narrative form; it is more importantly an experiential relation between the past and the present, projecting a future as well. It is the difference of experiential networks between Suyuan Woo and her daughter that accounts for the daughter's resistance to the mother's nagging about hard work and persistence, as well as for her confusion about the mother's constant sense of crisis. (12)

The most influential way to insert the wistful memories into a person's life story is telling the traumatic experience. In other words, Vees-Gulani describes this process as a translation of feelings and experiences into words. (*Trauma* 31). In such a manner, writing stories can be considered to be a type of healing. Trauma studies maintains that writing about traumatic experiences can support Vees-Gulani's opinions, viz., "writing has thus shown itself to be a powerful tool in dealing with stressful events and can help to improve both physical and psychological health" (*Trauma* 32). Nonetheless, when visual images are turned words, the story unquestionably loses some truthful things. The traumatic events should be mingled into one's past memories. By hook or crook, trauma should be survived or handled by the sufferer. The suffering author must let his/her bad experiences be complexly related to the narrative.

Here, it is worth mentioning that writing about trauma has many documented benefits, as it helps people in reevaluating their traumatic experience by looking at it from a different perspective. It is also thought that it can help in easing the pressure of these traumatic experiences thus putting the person in a more peaceful state and allowing them some ease of mind. However, it cannot fully heal the trauma. Moreover, it is even less effective with people suffering from Post-traumatic stress disorder. This is because as the researcher Bessel Van Der Kolk, states in his book *The Body Keeps the Score*, trauma is not merely a stored memory that has to be expunged. In fact, when a person suffers from trauma their whole mind, brain, and sense of self can change as a result of this traumatic event (262). This is experienced by many people who feel that they have changed drastically overnight because of a traumatic event that can sometimes upend their lives.

Using writing to ease trauma's effects must be done in an empathetic space, as people need to monitor their stress levels during this process and not feel obliged to divulge details from this traumatic event. It is also important to keep in mind that the trauma remains in the past and that they survived it.

However, when people suffer from PTSD, some might experience emotional avoidance, which is the tendency to avoid or control the experience or expression of emotions (Moline, 2018). These people avoid all memories of the traumatic event in order to

survive it. This is “Effacement”, the mind effaces the bad memories until there is a second trauma that awakens the first. Moreover, they realize that any memory or retelling of the traumatic event will cause them to suffer the same emotions they felt at the time of the trauma or even feelings that they did not allow themselves to feel in the first place. In addition, they avoid putting themselves in situations that would expose them to memories of the traumatic event. That is because they believe that if they allow themselves to feel these feelings they will crumble and they will not be able to go through with their lives. Although they suppress these feelings with a big dam, this dam experiences cracks from which some painful feelings escape and sneak in on them. Therefore, they feel that if part of the suppressed feelings affects their mental health and functionality, what would process their whole feelings do to them? Therefore, they take all their memories and block them as a way of blocking the trauma, and for those, writing about traumatic experiences might feel like torture, unless done gradually in a way that helps them safely process these excruciating feelings.

It is observed that in some cases, people strive to avoid thinking about these memories, this is done consciously. Whereas, repressed memories are the memories that one unconsciously forgets. Usually, these memories include a traumatic or deeply distressing event. It is suggested by Maury Joseph, a psychologist, that when the brain registers something that is extremely distressing it drops it in a none-conscious zone, which is a zone that your mind does not think about. This concept dates back to Freud who started developing the theory when hearing about a patient, Anna Q, from his teacher. She had been experiencing many symptoms which seemed random, and during her treatment, she began remembering stressful events from her past. When she processed and dealt with these newly-recovered memories, her symptoms began to go away and she got better. Freud viewed memory repression as a defense mechanism adopted by the brain against traumatic events. Therefore, he concluded that untraced symptoms which could not be explained stemmed from repressed memories because even though one cannot remember what happened, they can feel it in their body, nonetheless. In the 1990’s many adults reported having memories of child abuse of which they had not been aware.

Here, some therapists believe that they can help retrieve repressed memories. This is done in an effort to relieve unexplained symptoms. Many practitioners use hypnosis, and guided imagery to help people access and retrieve repressed memories. More specifically, these approaches include brain spotting, somatic transformation therapy, primal therapy, sensorimotor psychotherapy, neuro-linguistic programming, and internal family systems therapy. However, this can have consequences as the most grievous being false memories, as these memories are created through the employment of suggestion and coaching. These false memories can negatively impact the person experiencing them and the people who are implicated in them. For example, a person can be accused of abuse or assault based on these false memories (Raypole, 25).

### **III. Psychological Trauma**

It is worth mentioning that trauma is a recurrent theme in the Chinese American literature. Memories of the Sino-Japanese War exercised a strong influence on these writers. Due to the long distance and time that keep them away from their country, memories from the diaspora experience always turn out to be nostalgic. China continues to exist in Amy Tan's books as a source of ancestral culture for the Chinese American diaspora as well as a memory for the first-generation Chinese Americans. It is noteworthy



to mention that their writings clarify the visions of inhospitable living conditions in China that created dreams of immigration to the New World.

In the chapter “The Sino-Japanese War and Chinese History in Amy Tan’s Novels and Lisa See’s *Shanghai Girls*” W. S. H. Lim writes:

“The history of China cannot be dissociated from the Chinese immigrant experience in the United States, an experience that is deeply felt at the microcosmic level of family relationships. Cultural and historical distance, compounded by linguistic alienation, makes it difficult for the American-born Chinese subject to gain access to the history of the family with its roots in China and also the political history of a faraway country in East Asia with which ancestral origin is enmeshed” (18)

The last chapter in the novel “*Queen Mother of the Western Skies*” shows that the mothers and the grandmothers want their daughters and grandchildren to keep away from the life of dislodgment and suffering which they had. In the prologue, a grandmother tells her baby granddaughter that she “threw away [her] foolish innocence to protect [her]self” (*The Joy Club*, 120) and told her daughter to do the same thing. She did this in order that her daughter might not suffer as she did.

An-mei says “A mother is best. A mother knows what is inside you, (*The Joy Club*, 106) because she does not want Rose Hsu Jordan to consult a psychiatrist about her problems; she is convinced that every daughter should communicate her problems to her mother. In her opinion, a psychiatrist is unable to be more aware of Rose's psyche than her mother is. An-mei brought up her daughter Rose, and then she imagines that she knows her daughter more than anyone else.

However, this attitude of thinking is wrong and outdated. Although there is a raise in awareness about mental health and seeking professional help, many people, mostly older people, still believe that seeking mental help is something to be ashamed of. The mother also thinks she can understand her child better, which is not true. The best person to fully understand what a person is experiencing is someone who can distant himself from the person’s experience, an unbiased uninfluenced outsider who can see the bigger picture. However, her mother is right in the middle of almost the same environment and is exposed to similar trauma and is naturally subjective.

When the daughters experience bad events, they should know how to behave in the best way. In contrast to their mothers, they are able to be powerful and independent. These decisions include breaking up a toxic relationship as well as embracing one's status of Asian- American. In the same vein, the mothers seek to have their daughters near to them and, as previously mentioned, want to narrate to them stories about their experiences in the China. However, the daughters are so desirous to be independent “swimming away” from their mothers. Ying-ying's describes her daughter Lena St. Clair's birth in the following terms. “She sprang from me like a slippery fish, and has been swimming away ever since (*The Joy Club* 138). Angrily, Lindo threatens her daughter: “Only two kinds of daughters. Those who are obedient and those who follow their own mind! Only one kind of daughter can live in this house. Obedient daughter!” (*The Joy Club* 78).

There is a strong gap between the first generation mothers and the second generation daughters. The mothers seek to build a bridge to connect them to their daughters who are spiritually detached to their native culture.

“And then it occurs to me. They are frightened. In me, they see their own daughters, just as ignorant, just as unmindful of all the truths and hopes they have brought to America. They see daughters who grow impatient when their mothers talk in Chinese, who think they are stupid when they explain things in fractured English. They see that joy and luck do not mean the same to their daughters, that to these closed American-born minds "joy luck" is not a word, it does not exist. They see daughters who will bear grandchildren born without any connecting hope passed from generation to generation” (*The Joy Club* 17).

The second-generation Chinese Americans strove to perceive the experiences of their mothers during the war in 1940s, particularly the experiences which occurred in the period before their mothers immigrated to America, and thus before they gave birth to their American daughters. Likewise, the mothers strove to survive their destructive traumatic experiences. In Tan’s novel, the second-generation girls seek to keep themselves away from their mother and from the post-traumatic memories that took place before their births. Despite the fact that the mothers try to avoid traumatic memories of their lives in China and the struggles of their immigration to the United States of America, these memories give the opportunity of more understanding and potential healing in the traumatized psyches of the mothers.

It is worth noting that the Chinese writer Maxine Kong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* is akin to Tan’s work that re-tells the traumatic events of China. By drawing comparison to the relation between the female characters in the two novels, both writers discuss Asian American’s cross-cultural experiences, formation of identity and struggles between the cultural heritage and host culture. On a different note, it can be said that even if the daughters are able to hear their mothers’ traumatic stories, most of these memories and stories had not been told to the daughters before. That is due to the fact that the mothers began comprehending the essentiality of these tales and the influence that can be left on their daughters’ lives. In *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and post memory*, Marianne Hirsch speaks of her parents’ Holocaust memories in the following words: “sometimes felt there were too many stories, too much affect, even as at other times [she’s] been unable to fill in the gaps and absences” (244).

Discussing such traumatic stories suddenly can have a negative effect on the daughters’ mental health, as this is described as trauma dumping. Although the term “trauma dumping” is not used clinically, it is commonly used as it describes a widespread phenomenon. According to Dr. Prewitt, a psychologist, it refers to the oversharing of difficult emotions or thoughts with others, they usually share traumatic events with others during inappropriate times (25). In such situations, the person listening to the traumatic events feels overwhelmed and is not sure how to react or respond. Trauma dumping could harm the other person’s mental health as it adds to their stress and increases their anxiety levels. This practice is usually executed by people suffering from Depression, Anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

#### **IV. The Psychological Conflict of the Mother Suyuan**

In the first part, the mother Suyuan Woo started the first *Joy Luck Club* in the Kweilin when she was a refugee who was escaping from the powerful Japanese soldiers. In the hard times, the daily activities are only to survive, physically or otherwise. Considering that a hero is a person who makes a crucial decision in the hard times, then Suyuan Woo is a heroine because her a part of her life was for seeking survive.



The conflict of Suyuan Woo began when she experienced the Japanese-Chinese war. It was a time when she was a young adolescent, that is to say, her personality was crucially being shaped. The crisis that took place at her young adulthood stage and the conflict, which came out of the war, exercised great influence on Suyuan's psychological state, because psychosocial development is regarded as 'culturally relative'. She was also influenced by the events in their era, such as industrialization, urbanization, immigration, the economic depression, and the civil right movement.

Suyuan narrates to her daughter, June or Jing-Mei, about her experience when she lived in Kweilin on Chinese war Suyuan says: "...When the sirens cried out to warn us of bombers, my neighborhood and I jumped to our feet and scurried to the deep caves to hide like wild animals." (*The Joy Luck Club* 22) Psychologically broken, Suyuan represented fears and her determination to survive when her life was so difficult. She described herself as a wild animal which symbolizes her wild experiences. This part of her memory is wild, so it should be repressed and censored. "The main job of the upper ego is to suppress and censor the id who tends to throw wild parties" (*Neuroscience Notes*, Stephen MD121)

When Suyuan was still young, she married to an officer and had two daughters. She was shouldered the responsibility for the house chores as her husband was on the battlefield. At the time, the Japanese army invaded Kweilin where Suyuan lived. Fleeing to a shelter, she wandered for a few days. Due to the fact that she was so tired to the degree that she felt like dying, she left her all possessions on the way even her twin daughters. That was the roughest act that she did along her life. Out of this painful experience, Suyuan had a very hard time to accept what happened. She thought to herself, "...can you imagine how it is, to want to be neither inside or outside, to want to be nowhere and disappear." (*The Joy Luck Club*, 22)

Suyuan felt destroyed due to all the things which happened in her life. All the things became so difficult that she could feel like imprisoned in a swirl of problems. She felt as though she was unable to escape the essential demands of life, no matter where she went. Each day brought with it new challenges, which she ultimately failed to surmount. She was feeling so stressed that she just wanted to vanish and leave everything behind. She resorted to America just as the other Chinese immigrants who "had unspeakable tragedies and had left behind in China and hopes they couldn't begin to express in their fragile English" (22).

Although Suyuan experienced traumatic events, she shows that she is not the woman that can be submissive and weak. She is so energetic in striving for her peace and happiness. She is resolved to lead a good lifestyle despite the circumstances. For her, America was a refuge where she started a new life. She did not die in China in contrast to her whole family. Determined and resistant against the traumatic events that she experienced, Suyuan can lead a new life:

"America was where all my mother's hopes lay. She had come here in 1949 after losing everything in China: her mother and father, her family home, her first husband, and two daughters, twin baby girls. But she never looked back with regret. There were so many ways for things to get better." (130)

The transformation of the Chinese immigrants, including Suyuan, is represented by a duck that transformed into a swan. An old woman bought a swan that was a duck. This swan is described as "a creature that became more than what was hoped for." The swan is

arrested by officials, and the old woman is left with a swan feather which she wished to give to her daughter.

The old woman remembered a swan she had bought many years ago in Shanghai for a foolish sum. This bird, boasted the market vendor, was once a duck that stretched its neck in hopes of becoming a goose, and now look! – it is too beautiful to eat (I).

Symbolically, it seems that Amy Tan uses the swan as a tool to represent all wishes and hopes for a better life in the new world. It is clear that the woman carries lovely hopes for her daughter. The duck is the traumatic events that the mothers witnessed. As for the swan, they are the new life in America. The duck transformed into greater what it was hoped. All the Chinese mothers immigrated to America in order that they could provide a good lifestyle to their offspring. They believed that they had the ability to bring up their children letting them enjoy the American dream. These mothers did not want them forget their Chinese roots and heritage. Lindo says: “I wanted my children to have the best combination: American circumstances and Chinese character (*The Joy Club*, 145) However, they realized that this is not possible, and this is reflected in as Lindo’s words: “How could I know these two things do not mix?” (145)

In *The Joy Luck Club*, most of the transformations are accomplished through a combination of knowledge and personal situations. In this book, the daughters' perceptions of their mothers develop as they become older, converting them (at least in their eyes) from being overly concerned and awkward old ladies into sympathetic figures. Additionally, the conditions surrounding immigration to America alter the older generation in a fundamental and perplexing way.

Among the four mother characters in the novel, Ying-ying had the most beautiful childhood. She was born to a very wealthy family but she was lost on a trip. However, it was a mere accident with no harmful consequences. However, this underrated incident in her early childhood is considered to be a sign of her unlucky life. This is the bad memory of a survivor who lost her ability to remember another life despite the fact that she really experienced it one day.

The memory is shown as a psychological defense that contributes to accounting for her traumatic experience. The human memory becomes sometimes false and tends to distort facts. Amy Tan manages to draw a character that reflects how people try to eliminate or mend their childhood’s disappointments”. Memories are tarnished with self-preserving interpretations, “How often do we tell our own life story? How often do we adjust, embellish, make sly cuts?” (13). Memory distortion corresponds to “an emotional need to preserve one’s self-esteem or protect the individual from emotional consequences of what actually happened”

In the paper entitled “Memory and the Ethnic Self: Reading Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*” Ben Xu writes:

Ying-ying's survival mentality is typical of all the woman characters who belong to the Joy Luck Club. All the Club Aunties have experienced two kinds of extreme situations: one kind is famine, war, forced marriage, and broken family in China, and the other is cultural alienation, disintegration of old family structure, and conflict between mother and daughter in America. In order to survive the drastic changes in their lives, these women need to maintain a psychological continuity, a coherent picture of life-world, and a continuity of self (24).

## Conclusion

To sum up, the Chinese-American literature is rich in the works that deal with the mother-daughter relationship and cultural identity struggles, and the purpose of the mothers' narratives. On a different note, traumatic memories need to be expressed in the form of narrative. This means that writing can be a tool of psychological healing. Such a cure is done by turning feelings and memories into words. Despite this, when visual images are turned into words, the story undecidedly misses some truthful facts. The suffering author ought to make his negative experiences interrelated to the narrative so as to get his repressed feelings out to the surface. In the novel, the mothers hope that their daughters will not live the same traumatic experiences that they had before. The daughters are different from their mothers in that the former live peacefully in America. In addition, some mothers are strong enough to overcome their traumatic experiences and start afresh. By way of illustration, although Suyuan had traumatic events, she did not surrender. She is resolved to lead a good lifestyle despite the circumstances. For her, America was a refuge where she started a new life. She can be likened to an unlucky miserable duck that turned into a lovely swan.

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