



**A COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHINESE IMMIGRANT MOTHER
AND AMERICANISED DAUGHTER IN "THE BONESETTER'S DAUGHTER"
BY AMY TAN**

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to discuss the relationship between mothers and daughters in "The Bonesetter's Daughter" by Amy Tan. Three female characters from separate generations—Precious Auntie, LuLing, and Ruth—are crucial to the plot and are remembered in fragments. The novel's plot is divided into multiple levels of narration, with the opening section serving as the book's basic structural unit. The author, uses a variety of stories featuring several characters, especially those focused on the mother-daughter relationship, rather than concentrating on just one to convey ethnic anxieties and identity. Forgetfulness.

Keywords: Amy Tan, Relationship, mother and daughter. The bonesetter's daughter. Culture. Traditions. Misunderstanding. Truth.

Introduction

A mother, is the first person, who comes in contact when a daughter reaches adulthood, even before we are born as the womb where the mother emotionally bonds with her daughter. They are the early role models we have in the house. Our mother-child bond serves as a model for all other relationships we will have in the future, making it extremely significant and important. So, what are some typical reasons mother and daughter don't get along? The daughter's adulthood can lead to conflicts. From the mother's point of view, the shift could be challenging because it calls for her to renounce her motherly responsibilities, which could cause her to experience grief and a sense of identity loss. The gift of independence and the freedom to be who she is should be given to daughters by their mothers. For instance, daughters often discover commonality and dependence in their relationships with their mothers as they try to disengage from the family in search of personal identity and independence.¹ Much of the interaction and contrast between the two generations centers on the differences and tensions between the traditional Chinese mother struggle against fate and their American-born Chinese daughter struggles for maturity. Another source of tension comes from the communication and expression of affection. The first generation Chinese mothers express their affections for their Chinese American daughter very differently from those of the dominant US cultural groups.

¹Eugenia Scabini and Claudia Manzi. Family Processes and Identity. Research Gate. P. 575



We all know that Amy Tan as one of the most famous Chinese American writers today. Her novels, short stories, and essays are filled with intimate details about growing up as a first generation American and about what it is like to be both separate and a part of Chinese culture. Her unique yet honest and heartfelt examination of the American experience has led to the majority of her books topping best seller lists. So, in the novel "The Bonesetter's Daughter" the author tells the story of three generations of women, mother to daughter to granddaughter. Tan does not hesitate to reveal the pain and conflict in these relationships that cause the women to struggle with each other, as well as the love and loyalty that keeps them together. Throughout the novel, family relationships are defined with some fluidity, starting with LuLing being adopted by Mother to cover up the scandal of her birth outside wedlock. Moreover, there are several themes in this novel and one of them is the theme that stood out the most was how communication is necessary for a healthy relationship to develop. A central theme of Tan's stories is the conflict faced by Chinese Americans who find themselves alienated both from their American milieu and from their Chinese parents and heritage.

When Ruth was fifteen, she and her mother were at a particularly antagonistic point in their relationship.² The story begins with Ruth's life in America and her tense connection with her Alzheimer's-stricken mother LuLing. The story places a lot of emphasis on the relationship between mothers and daughters and how their generational differences make it difficult for them to comprehend one another. Chinese mothers are raised according to stringent regulations and customs. The daughter, Ruth, resides in America and leads a more liberated lifestyle. From one side, the mother tries to raise her daughter strictly and she wants her to succeed so that she won't be shamed in society. From the other side, the daughter, however, is unable to comprehend such a rigorous lifestyle regulated by Chinese cultural norms and laws.

The Bonesetter's Daughter starts with a prologue entitled "Truth". It is a metaphorical beginning which summarizes the situation of Chinese people in America since they cannot attach themselves to their past in China and they feel lack of belonging and attachment to heritage.³ Lu Ling's current distressing circumstance is a result of her inability to recall her family name in China. LuLing keeps several items hidden, including the jacket and the bone her mother gave her. She received from her buddy, as well as the clothing her spouse gave her. I kept those things hidden for so long that I almost forgot I had them, she claims. Nearly everything that was important to me has vanished, and losing the name of Precious Auntie is the hardest.

Mothers tend to experience their daughters as more like, and continuous with, themselves. Correspondingly, girls tend to remain part of the dyadic primary mother-child relationship itself. This means that a girl continues to experience herself as involved in issues of merging and separation, and in an attachment characterized by primary identification and the fusion of identification and object choice (Chodorow, 1978: 166-7).

² <https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/raisin/character/ruth-younger/>

³ Gülden YÜKSEL. ETHNIC ANXIETY AND IDENTITY IN AMY TAN'S THE BONESETTER'S DAUGHTER. . idil, 6 (28), p.68.



In the book, people who are consistently denied power—especially women—develop alternative forms of resourcefulness. The female protagonists in the book go through violence and abuse, have limited economic options, and are unable to make decisions for themselves about their own life, like who to marry. Sexual assault still poses a threat to Ruth as she grows up in modern-day California. The women, who lived in various eras and locales, experienced losing their power in a similar way, which made them resilient and resourceful. Despite catastrophic events, LuLing and GaoLing manage to move to America and start new lives. Despite Precious Auntie's suicide, she leaves her daughter with her knowledge and abilities. When it seems like the Liu family riches has been lost, even Mother demonstrates amazing fortitude and cunning.

In the book, lying causes trauma that lasts for a long time. By concealing her true identity as LuLing's mother, Precious Auntie believes she is shielding her daughter from harm and securing her future. The similar strategy is used by LuLing, who believes that by keeping Ruth's past a secret, she will save her the suffering of earlier generations. However, both women's relationships are strained as a result of lying to their daughters. Because of LuLing's ignorance, Precious Auntie commits suicide, which plagues LuLing for the rest of her life. Nevertheless, LuLing guards crucial information, narrowly avoiding Ruth going her entire life without learning the truth about her mother. Ruth is unaware of how challenging LuLing's life has been, which causes tension in their relationship. Ruth is considerably more kind and patient with her mother after learning the truth about her, in contrast to LuLing's anxieties.

There is a sense of separation between LuLing and Ruth's lives and experiences because Ruth's narrative takes place in a very different milieu and adopts an entirely different viewpoint. Ruth leads the opportunities and demanding lifestyle of a contemporary American lady. She works long hours and puts in a lot of effort to support others because her profession is flourishing. She is in a love partnership that is distinctly contemporary in that she cohabitates with a divorced man she is not married to and devotes time to raising his girls without giving birth to any of her own. Even though it seems like Ruth is living a free life, there are indications that she may not be fully content. Her yearly silence shows that she feels voiceless or weak in the relationship with Art and that it is somehow related to them. Although Art is an usually loving partner, there are times when he also believes Ruth would handle most of their home concerns despite the fact that she has a demanding job of her own. Ruth's story diverges much from that of her mother, although there may be some similarities between the two women despite the fact that Ruth's recurring voice loss resembles Precious Auntie's speech impairment.

As an Americanised daughter, Ruth often felt embarrassed because of her mother's poor English. Even if her mother's sister Goaling arrived in America at the same time spoke, much better than her mother. Ruth worries that LuLing has recently become forgetful despite the fact that she is in good health for a 77-year-old lady and does not visit the doctor frequently. Ruth, however, finds it challenging to predict changes in LuLing's emotions because LuLing has consistently made suicidal threats throughout Ruth's whole childhood and has a history of being irate and despondent.

After translating the Chinese calligraphy, which were written by her mother, Ruth starts to piece together details about her mother's past. She begins to gradually grasp how little she

actually knows about her mother. Then, Art and Ruth start looking for nursing homes for Luling. After some consideration, they choose Min Mar Manor as Luling's ideal future residence. In an effort to persuade her to leave, Art fabricates a radon-related evacuation notice for Luling's building. The assisted living facility is where Luling eventually settles down. Gaoling and Ruth discuss Gaoling's and Luling's pasts in depth. Overall, the conclusion is quite happy.

In conclusion, Amy Tan portrays the interaction between the mothers and the daughters to demonstrate ethnic concern. A mother plays significant roles in the lives of their daughters because the daughters may view their mothers as role models or they disobey their mums and take a different path.

REFERENCES

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