

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

ROOTS IN CHINA – CHILDHOOD IN AMERICA:

The search of ethnic identity in between two cultures -

**The study of the mother-daughter dialogue in the film
"The Joy Luck Club"**

A Pro Gradu Thesis

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2001

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Pro gradu -työ

Englantilainen filologia

Kesäkuu 2001

82 sivua

Tutkielman tarkoituksena on selvittää ”The Joy Luck Club” elokuvan kiinalais-amerikkalaisten tyttärien identiteettien muotoutumista. Neljän äidin ja neljän tyttären keskinäisiä suhteita käsittelevä elokuva perustuu kiinalais-amerikkalaisen Amy Tanin samannimiseen teokseen. Tutkimuskohteena on erityisesti neljän tyttären etnisen identiteetin muodostuminen kahden kulttuurin puristuksessa. Jännitteitä syntyy siitä että äidit ovat syntyjään kiinalaisia, kun taas tyttäret ovat syntyneet ja kasvaneet Amerikassa. Tutkielman peruskysymyksenä on millainen elokuvan neljän tyttären identiteetti ja sen kehitysprosessi on ja mikä heidän äitiensä rooli on siinä.

Tutkielman taustatiedoiksi esitellään teoriaa henkilöahmojen tutkimisesta narratiiveissa sekä vuoropuheluiden tutkimuksesta. Lisäksi määritellään etnisen identiteetin käsite ja sen muodostumisprosessi sekä hieman amerikkalaisen ja kiinalaisen minä –käsitteen eroavaisuuksia.

Analyysi perustuu elokuvassa käytyihin vuoropuheluihin sekä elokuvasta suoraan tehtyihin visuaalisiin havaintoihin. Päähuomio on äitien ja tyttärien välisissä keskusteluissa, mutta aineistona on käytetty myös heidän keskustelujaan muiden henkilöahmojen kanssa. Lisäksi analysoidaan sekä äitien että tyttärien sisäistä vuoropuhelua ja käytyjen keskustelujen aiheita ja kielellisiä piirteitä. Tutkielmassa analysoidaan jokainen äiti-tytär pari erikseen ja esitellään heidän elämäntilanteensa ja siihen liittyvä menneisyys. Lisäksi analysoidaan hahmojen visuaalisia puolia sekä elokuvan tapahtumapaikkoja.

Tutkimuksessa ilmeni että äideillä on merkittävä rooli tyttärien identiteetin muodostumisessa. Huolimatta neljän tyttären erilaisista luonteista ja elämäntilanteista, heidän käyttäytymisessään ja identiteetin muotoutumisessa voidaan havaita yhtäläisyyksiä. He kaikki hakivat toiminnallaan äitiensä hyväksyntää ja näkivät itsensä epäonnistujina ja riittämättöminä heidän silmissään. Osittain tähän oli syynä heidän tietämättömyytensä kiinalaisista tavoista ja arvostuksista sekä äitiensä menneisyydestä, minkä takia he tulkitsivat väärin äitien kommentit. Elokuvassa jokainen äiti-tytär pari kävi läpi merkittävän keskustelun, jonka kautta heille selvisi äidin menneisyyden lisäksi heidän omat henkiset juurensa. Tämän äitien välittämän kiinalaisen kulttuuriperinnön kautta tyttäret löysivät vahvemman etnisen identiteetin lisäksi myös positiivisemmän minä -kuvan.

Asiasanat: Chinese-American, characterization, dialogue study, narratives, ethnicity, identity, mother-daughter interaction, Amy Tan, The Joy Luck Club

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1 INTRODUCTION

"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.

Then the woman and the swan sailed across an ocean many thousands of li wide, stretching their necks towards America. On her journey she cooed to the swan: "In America I will have a daughter just like me, but over there nobody will say her worth is measured by the loudness of her husband's belch. Over there nobody will look down on her, because I will make her speak only perfect American English and over there she will always be too full to swallow any sorrow! She will know my meaning, because I will give her this swan- a creature that became more than what was hoped for" But when she arrived in the new country, the immigration officials pulled her swan away from her, leaving the woman fluttering her arms and with only one swan feather for a memory. And then she had to fill out so many forms she forgot why she had come and what she had left behind.

Now the woman was old. And she had a daughter who grew up speaking only English and swallowing more Coca-Cola than sorrow. For a long time now the woman had wanted to give her daughter the single swan feather and tell her "This feather may look worthless, but it comes from afar and it carries with it all my good intentions." And she waited, year after year, for the day she could tell her daughter this in perfect American English.

The subject of my study, the film *The Joy Luck Club*, tells the story of a four Chinese-American women and their four daughters. The mothers immigrated to America in 1949. The reason for this was the triumph of Communists after World War II, which led to millions of Chinese leaving their homeland (Schell 1989 [as cited in Shear 1993], Xu 1994). The story above is told in the beginning of *The Joy Luck Club* and in my opinion it nicely defines the starting point of the story. Also as my study focuses on the four daughters, this extract provides the mothers' side of the story as a comparison.

The film is a multi-layered assembly of stories of the mothers and the daughters. The underlying plot and the present time in the film is the going-away party for June, who is leaving for China to meet her newly discovered

sisters. All the characters are present in the party, except for June's mother, who had already passed away. The gathering gets the characters to reminisce their past, which creates a nuanced story. The events of the story change a lot, and they take the viewer fluently from the present time to the China of the mothers' past to the daughters' childhood America.

The subject of this study is the film based on the book *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan. I will investigate the film with the help of narrative theory and my focus will be on the dialogue between the mother-daughter pairs. In addition I will also examine some of the visual effects such as the characters' appearance and the setting to back up my analysis of the dialogue. I will concentrate my study entirely on the film due to its visual side. The aim of my study is to portray the daughters' identities and show how they are formed in the interaction with their mothers. Because the daughters are influenced equally by two different ethnic cultures, it makes the process more complicated. Hence my emphasis will be on the formation of ethnic identity.

1.1 The film "The Joy Luck Club"

The data for my study is the film, directed by Wayne Wang (1993). Because the original story and the film script have many differences and the film also excludes parts of the novel and gives different features to the characters, I have decided to exclude the novel from my study. Firstly, I will present the theoretical background for my analysis. Secondly, I will analyze the four mother-daughter pairs individually by focusing first on their relationship on a general level and then on the visual level. This will be followed by an analysis of the mother-daughter interaction. Finally, I will summarize the findings of my study.

My interest in the film is both narrative and also personal. *The Joy Luck Club* provides excellent material for a narrative study. Especially the characters are interesting. The complexity of a mother-daughter relationship

has always interested me, especially linked with identity development and ethnicity. Firstly, as Frances A. Nadeau (1995:1) puts it, the mother-daughter relationship is a fascinating topic, because: "Understanding the (mother/daughter) relationship is critical to young adult girls because daughters bond with their mothers in a complex, interdependent association that often inhibits a daughter from establishing her own identity."

Secondly, the differences in the American and the Chinese cultures are big and an investigation of how these cultures can be bind together is an interesting issue. Thirdly, the fact that all the central characters are women like me makes it a very close subject to me. It is also easy for me to identify with the daughters because my roots are also in a different soil, in the Karelia. I've been raised by my grandmother who in her teens had to leave her own home and was never able to return. The situation in the story is of a different kind but there still is a strong connection. In both cases the reason for leaving was the war. Like my grandmother, the mothers had to leave China due to the diaspora of World War II in 1949. Further, even in the film there was a cultural barrier to be crossed. For my grandmother it was lower than for the Chinese women thanks to the same language in the two cultures. Nevertheless, for her as well as for the Chinese women the crossing was not easy.

Like the mothers' China and the unpleasant memories come up in the story, Karelia and grandmother's memories are a big part of her life. Sometimes they are a story or only a tear in my grandmother's eye, but it is a part of her and me as well, a part I am very proud of. I cannot even start to imagine the pain of loosing one's home, the horrors of the war and having to come and live in an unknown place where nobody wants you. However, her experiences and life have made it easier for me to understand that in life you should never take anything for granted. As with the four daughters in *The Joy Luck Club*, I believe that knowing about the past of one's role model, it makes it easier to find one's identity and to put things into a right

perspective. Knowing your own past is a gift that should be treasured; a treasure that money cannot buy.

Finally, the film gives interesting materials for a narrative study, which I am also very interested in. The cinematic means introduced by the director Wayne Wang give *The Joy Luck Club* its own personal flavour emphasizing the characters traits and their emotions, which I like. I find the film very touching and captivating.

1.2 The author/script writer Amy Tan

The writer and the script writer of *The Joy Luck Club* Amy Tan (b. 1952 in California) herself is of Chinese origins. She grew up in the San Francisco Bay area surrounded by influences from both Chinese and American cultures. According to the internet link (<http://voices.cla.umn.edu/authors/amytan.html>), Tan's first novel *The Joy Luck Club* is an example of her writing in which she deals with the problems of Chinese child adjusting to American society. Further the article continues to value her work as follows:

Critics have said that her works are not necessarily "Chinese" in nature, but are instead stories with universal themes (generational conflicts, war of the sexes, etc.) that have an added dimension of being told through narrators that are constantly searching for a balance between their Chinese heritage and American lifestyles. (<http://voices.cla.umn.edu/authors/amytan.html>)

According to the review, what is typical of Tan's writing as well as to the film is flashbacks, storytelling, and mysticism. The book *The Joy Luck Club* has won many awards and it became a bestseller. This popularity has helped to promote this particular genre of literature which also include writers such as Maxine Hong Kingston and Wakako Yamauchi.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter I will firstly present the notion of characterization. After that I will discuss the tools of dialogue analysis and finally the term of identity, and ethnic identity in particular.

2.1 Characterization

My study on the filmatisation of the novel *The Joy Luck Club* draws on narrative theory on characterization; and my main focus will be on its eight main characters: four mothers and four daughters and their one-on-one conversations. These dialogues fit Rimmon-Kenan's (1989:2) definition of narrative as a 'communication process in which the narrative as message is transmitted by addresser to addressee'. The characterization theory by Rimmon-Kenan will give a backbone to my study on the film, and my analysis of the mothers and daughters will be very much based on it, because the true opinions and emotions between the mothers and the daughters seem to appear outside the actual dialogue.

According to Rimmon-Kenan (1989:36), characters are 'a construct, put together by the reader from various indications dispersed throughout the text'. This applies well to my study, because in the film you gradually build a notion on the character from his/her appearance, actions and sayings. As cited by Rimmon-Kenan (1989:37), Chatman takes this theory a bit further and sees characters to consist of personality traits. These traits are fairly stable and dominating in the characters actions and they with alliance with the events create the plot. Some of these traits are directly given to the reader/viewer and the others are only implicated. This theory on characters is suitable for my study on *The Joy Luck Club*, because my conclusions on the characters are based on their traits and also because this gives justification to make conclusions based on one's own observations on the characters.

In studying narratives often a basic division is made between the story, the discourse and narration. The story means the chain of events that are abstracted from the original text. The text is according to Rimmon-Kenan (1989:3) 'spoken or written discourse which undertakes the telling of the events'. The third aspect, narration is according to Rimmon-Kenan 1989:3) the act or process of production of the text ie. a spoken or written discourse. The characters are part of the story consisting of different traits, which may or may not appear as such in the text. (Rimmon-Kenan 1989:59) Regarding my analysis on *The Joy Luck Club* this is important because in the film the scriptwriter as well as the director determine what character traits from the original story are emphasized. As Amy Tan herself has made the script, the characters are likely to be very close to the ones in the book, but the visual presentation gives more opportunities for the characters to grow into a certain direction. Also the director, Wayne Wang, through camera angles and other cinematic means, makes a certain contribution to the presentation of the characters.

According to Rimmon-Kenan (1989:59), characters can be defined through two basic types of character indicators ie. through direct definition and indirect presentation. The direct definitions of a character can be given verbally or with other means of characterization that are obvious for the viewer in the character's appearance. They name the character by an adjective ('she was good-hearted'), an abstract ('his goodness knew no bounds') or other kind of noun ('she was a real witch') or part of speech ('she loves only herself') (Rimmon-Kenan 1989:59). However, direct definition is being used less and less in contemporary narratives, because it requires generalization and classification. Especially now the emphasis being on the individuals, putting people into fixed categories is considered to be undesired. There is also a problem in the respect that the direct definition has to come from an authoritative source in the story in order to be reliable. (Rimmon-Kenan 1989:60-61) Even though direct definition is to some extent problematic my intention is to base my analysis partly on it.

My analysis is based also on the second aspect of character indicators, the indirect presentation, which gives the characters traits through such indirect means as for example action, speech, external appearance and environment. The actions of a character can be one-time or habitual. One-time action makes the character seem dynamic, and habitual static. According to Rimmon-Kenan (1989:61), both kinds of actions can be categorized as actual things done by the character (act of commission), something the character should, but does not do (act of omission) and something the character unconsciously plans or intends to do (contemplated act). Actions can also have a symbolic aspect. Also the character's speech can tell about him or her through its content or form. This is relevant to my analysis because the mothers are speaking English with a Chinese accent. In the film *The Joy Luck Club* this becomes a major issue due also to the characters' bilingualism. The mothers speak Chinese as their mother tongue. Their English is totally understandable but lacks fluency and correct grammar. On the other hand, the daughters speak English fluently and speak Chinese very little or not at all. This can lead to a cultural gap between these two generations. By being American-Chinese it also gives the characters a certain kind of special trait through the general cultural knowledge. By this I do not mean the stereotypes of a members of a certain ethnic group, but the tradition and the variation in customs in different countries. The first priority in the Chinese culture is to respect your elders and to be obedient. This film presents a different picture due to the fact that all the four girls were born and have been raised up in the United States and they do not automatically have 'Chinese' manners.

A characters' external appearance acts also as a character-indicator. The character's appearance, the way in which s/he for example wears her/his hair and the way in which s/he is dressed can express the character's personality, opinions and mood. The settings of a character is also a crucial factor in studying film narratives. For example, if the setting is the person's home, it supports the character's image. The scenes also reinforce the theme

of ethnicity in *The Joy Luck Club*. The definition of environment by Rimmon-Kenan (1989:66) includes, in addition to physical things surrounding the characters also the people s/he is close to, such as family and friends. For my purposes this is again important because, the main theme of my analysis is the mother-daughter relationship and I am using environment as well as action, speech, external appearance as my analytic tools in constructing the characters in *The Joy Luck Club*.

2.2 Study of dialogue

In the *The Joy Luck Club* the mother-daughter relationships are conveyed mainly through their one-on-one dialogues. Dialogues as a form of interaction in drama have been studied thoroughly by for example Vimala Herman (1995). She emphasizes that the study of spoken discourse has to remember that speech is always firmly related to the context and the occasion. She also points out that: “ Utterances are thus always embedded in situations, in cultures, and are open to various social and not grammatical meanings alone.” (1995:18).

A similar view is also put forward by Lyons (1977:611 as quoted by Herman 1995:19) who writes that:

[s]peech events occur within contexts, an immediate context of situation, within the wider context of culture. The cultural load of the context of situation in which the speech is used can be considerable, even if unconscious, since it includes all the ‘knowledges’ that native speakers maybe assumed to draw upon in order to communicate and use language coherently and appropriately in the multifarious situations in which they perform.

Once more this is very relevant to my study, because the influence of culture is very much present in *The Joy Luck Club*’s speech events, due to the two different ethnic cultures colliding in every mother-daughter conversation. The daughters seem not to have the enough knowledge about

the Chinese culture, likewise the mothers lack the knowledge about the American culture. This results in miscommunication between them.

Herman (1995:20) also discusses the notion of speech community, which suggests that the participants in a speech event have the same language and cultural norms. She considers it a very complicated issue, because the language mode is not a uniform entity due to language variation, dialect and bilingualism. This concept seems a very interesting one in relation to my study, because the linguistic and also cultural connections between the mothers and the daughters are very complicated. The cultural norm link is there, but the influence of the American culture is evident and even interfering. Also the mothers' bilingualism and its effects to the dialogue give an interesting point in relation to my study.

In analyzing dialogues one can choose from different features of interaction to focus on; who of the characters are speaking and what and how it is said. For example, Herman (1995:122) introduces turn sequencing, which my study uses as one of the tools to interpret the dialogues. This includes the introducing and changing of the topic and turn taking. However even more importantly, Herman (1995:164) introduces pragmatics, which concentrates on the content and meaning of dialogue. Pragmatics will be an essential tool in my analysis determining the daughters' identity. As stated by Herman (1995:165:) "Meaning in dialogue is meaning in the abstract, not univocal, but that constructed with respect to the other in discourse, and is thus often negotiated." She also sees meaning to be constructed in between the turns. Also this applies to my study well, because my main focus in the dialogue analysis is on how the meanings get mixed in the mothers' and daughters' conversations, and how the pauses between the turns are very significant.

Further, it is argued by Herman (1995:199) that, "Understanding includes not only the conventional or coded meaning of the utterance, but also whatever is inferred as speaker wants, desires, beliefs, etc.-" This idea is

also useful for my study, because in *The Luck Club* it seems that the fact that the mothers and the daughters do not really know each other and, consequently, they are unable to infer each others wants and needs, which results in misunderstandings between them.

2.3 Ethnic identity

Because this study focuses on the formation of ethnic identity in the mother-daughter interaction in *The Joy Luck Club*, some theory on ethnic identity and language is necessary to understand the relationship between ethnic identity and language. I will define first what is meant by the term identity and then review the different views on ethnic identity and its relationship with language, and also discuss which one of these views are relevant to my study.

Identity (e.g. ego, self, self-concept) is according to Hoyle (2000) a puzzling term to which the social and behavioral scientists, despite their great interest in the subject have not been able to find a generally accepted definition. My view of the concept of identity in this study is based on the theory of social constructivism, according to which the identity is not seen as a pre-set construction in a human being, such as suggested by for example Erickson (in his view, it develops through an eight step scheme through which the identity is achieved). Instead, like for example Galperyn (1995:163) has suggested that identity is seen as a theoretical construct or a story which society helps the individual to develop. The person's identity is shaped by the world around him/her and the interaction between people and the surrounding world determines how the individual sees himself/herself. This identity theory sees identity as socially constructed and emphasizes people's interaction in the process of determining their identities.

More specifically, in this study I will focus on the so called linguistic identity (see e.g. Thornborrow 1999). According to Thornborrow, identity is built constantly through interaction with others. This concept emphasizes

the role of language in studying peoples identity (Thornborrow 1999:136-137) The same view is also shared by Laura Leets et al. (1996:115) who define ethnic identity as "construed and measured as a dynamic phenomenon, subject to societal, situational and communicative forces." They also present the communication theory of (ethnic) identity by Hecht et al. (1993) which in my opinion is particularly relevant to this study. According to Hecht et al. (as cited in Leets et al. 1996:128) conversationally there are two options to view identity a) as a narrative told to oneself or existing within the culture and b) as a way of enacting a conversation. This view also sees identity as a multi layered concept with personal, enacted, relational and communal levels.

The major focus of my analysis being on the *The Joy Luck Club's* daughters ethnic identity, the fact that they are all born in America and lack the experience of the real China, makes their identity formation complicated. According to Waters (1990:16), ethnic identification is a dynamic process, and it can be a matter of choice: an immigrant's descendant can either suppress or adopt his or her parents' ethnic heritage. In her view, a person's ethnic identity can be constructed based on the information coming from family members, which also seems to be the case in the film. This transfer of information about ethnic origin in this case, as the daughters are second generation, is a result of socialization (see Waters 1990:57).

As it is very important regarding my study to know the concept of identity, it is even more important to know what is meant by ethnic identity. According to Joshua A. Fishman (1999:3), ethnicity can mean different things depending on the researchers' view and the field of study. The study can focus on different ramifications such as social, psychological, economic, political and cultural interaction. According to Thompson (as cited in Leets et al. 1996:11), ethnic identity can be seen as a biological, cultural, political, psychological or social process. For example, Keefe 1988 (as cited in Leets et. al 1996, 116) sees ethnicity to consist of shared values,

beliefs, norms, tastes, shared in-group memories and loyalties. This is a very interesting point regarding my study, because it seems that the process requires all of the mentioned 'ingredients' to function and the daughters in *The Joy Luck Club* seem to be lacking especially the in-group memories. Further, Thernstrom (as cited in Leets et al 1996:116) specifies the features of ethnic identity and sees it as a some combination of 14 different factors; importantly few of those being 1. language 2. shared traditions, values and symbols.

Further, Haarmann (1999:61) argues that identity is the 'self' that is seen in contrast to the 'others' and that its aim is to find a balance between the individual self and the individual in the group. He also divides the identification process into three categories: Identifying with one's 1. Relatives 2. Community and 3. Cultural value system. Concerning the relationship between language and ethnicity, Haarman states: "Language is always involved in ethnic relations as the most refined vehicle of the interacting according to local behavioral tradition, of expressing attitudes and values, and of stereotyping culture" (1999:63). In other words language plays a crucial part in the process of identification, but Haarman also sees that it is not always central and the sole marker of ethnicity. This is a very significant to my analysis, because my aim is to draw conclusions on the daughters' ethnic identity through the language they are using in interaction with their mothers.

In my opinion DeVos & Romanucci-Ross 1982 (as cited in Guanipa & Guanipa 1992) capture the essence of the term ethnic identity and it will apply very well to the them in *The Joy Luck Club*, which is as follows:

Ethnicity refers to specific characteristics of shared unique cultural tradition, and an heritage that persists across generations. Ethnic identification is defined as a real awareness of self within a specific group, which is followed by a great sense of respect and pride, and it constitutes a base for the development of a healthy self-concept.

My analysis will also unavoidably include the mothers and their role in their daughters lives in *The Joy Luck Club*. They have a great deal of influence on their daughters ethnic identity through how they present China to them. The mothers own ethnic identity is crucial, because as Carmen & Jose A. Guanipa (1998) state, "In the same way parents who have difficulties with the process of acculturation and their own ethnic identity may facilitate adolescents' conflicts." So the way the mothers have themselves adjusted to the American society affects also the daughters immensely. In other words, the role of the family is very important for a person's ethnic identity formation, especially in a situation like the one described in *The Joy Luck Club*. According to Rosenthal and Feldman (as cited in Guanipa 1998), the requirement for a person in a different culture to develop a firm ethnic identity is to have a firm sense of self and to this they need help. "Ethnic identity formation is a very complex process. It involves an interaction of contextual and developmental factors. For example, similar to Haarman the family is a major influence in this process. The family provides its children with their first experiences as a member of particular ethnic group. There is evidence to suggest that parents' involvement in the ethnic community is directly related to an adolescent's stable sense of ethnic identity (Rosenthal & Feldman, 1992 as cited in Guanipa 1998) The fact also that the daughters in *The Luck Club* cannot speak Chinese represents a hindrance in acquiring their ethnic identity, because ethnic language is the only carrier of real ethnic content. (Dorian 1999:31)

In analyzing *The Joy Luck Club* and ethnic identity it is also relevant to know something about the Chinese perception of self and other, because it varies from the traditional western view. According to Sun (as sited in Gudykunst et al. 1996:83) opposed to the western free and independent individual, Chinese culture sees individual as an incomplete entity. Further, according to Markus and Kitayama (as cited in Gudykunst et al. 1996:84) the Chinese self is considered to be completed by others and its focus should be to other's needs and desires. This notion emphasizes also the Chinese

interpersonal relationships and explains the rules and norms used in them. According to Joy (2001), "the self that is celebrated and encouraged in Chinese culture is the "familial self," and attaining family-oriented goals is the true measure of self-realization and self-fulfillment." Joy (2001) also notes that "Although each individual also has a private or inner self (chi), this is subject to the collective will and this idea is in keeping with Confucian ideals that encourage the individual to focus on the development of internal moral constraints and to conquer selfishness in the pursuit of social propriety." The family's role is very important and central, which is seen in the following extract: "In the Chinese culture, the family serves as the most significant and influential environment in which people learn to develop their self-concepts, to interact with others and to conduct appropriate communication" (Gudykunst et al 1996:85).

In addition to knowing 'the Chinese self' it is also relevant to my study to know about how the American culture sees the concept of the self in order to see the difference between these two cultures and more specifically the gap that is between the mothers and the daughters in *The Joy Luck Club*. According to Chu (1985:257) in the American culture the main emphasis is on the individual. The role of materials and objects is very central when the individual is defining his or her relationship to others. In contrast, the Chinese self is more oriented to the what Hsu calls the significant others, in other words, the family and the social environment around the individual and he also states that "the traditional Chinese self exists primarily in relations to significant others". Hsu (1985:258) demonstrates this along with the position of women in traditional China with the following extract:

[b]efore marriage, a woman followed her father. After marriage, she followed her husband. After the death of her husband, she followed her son. The self had a little meaning outside these rigidly defined social contexts. The idea that a woman would stand on her own, and be herself, simply did not seem possible.

–woman measured the **worth** of herself not by what she had personally achieved, but by the extent to which she lived up to

the behavioral **expectations** of the significant others-. [my italics]

The two words are emphasized in the citation because I see them to be the two key words in *The Joy Luck Club* in the mothers' point of view. They come up many times in the film and they seem to cause confusion in the daughters.

In addition to the friction between the two different cultures, there seems to be a dividing factor in the Chinese culture itself regarding the mother-daughter relationship in the film. The mothers seem to rely on the traditional Chinese self, but the daughters are obviously seeking for a new era. As regards to this, Hsu (1985:273) also presents the idea of a new Chinese self. According to him it is the result of social and cultural changes in the new generations, whom he sees to be more out of touch with the past and also the family. The new generation does not share the old idea of being submissive to authority figures and they have less respect for the traditional Chinese values. As a result of this, Hsu (1985:273) sees the new Chinese self to be more insecure than the traditional one. But it is also an improvement, because the new Chinese self is more active with the social environment and is able to be more individual and collective in his or her doings. (Hsu 1985:273)

3 ANALYSIS

In this chapter I will analyze the four mother-daughter pairs individually. The analysis includes first a general description of the life situation and the past of the main characters', then comments on their visual presentation and finally the role of the setting and the camera angle in *The Joy Luck Club*. This is followed by a more detailed analysis on the actual mother-daughter dialogue, the focus being on its topic(s) and conversation style, characters' inner speech and the theme of ethnicity. The analysis will be conducted with the help of several extracts from the film, basing on observations on them and their visual aspects.

3.1 An-mei and Rose Hsu

An-mei was brought up in China by her grandparents and other relatives. Her father had died when she was very little and her mother was banished from the family for reasons which were kept from An-mei. The only recollection she had of her mother was the scar she had got from the boiling water spilled as a result of an argument when her mother was kicked out of the family. It was not until her teens she saw her mother again as she came to see her mother as she lay on her deathbed. She did the most obedient thing she could do for her sick mother: she cut a piece of her own flesh and made a soup out of it which was to cure her. Despite of the refusal of the family An-mei went to live with her mother where her mother lived as a concubine.

An-mei's mother was the least respected member in the new family, because she was the newest wife and had no children. She had no desire to stay there, but the circumstances had forced her to come there. It was not long after An-mei had come there that her mother felt the past too hard to bear and left this world. Before her mother killed herself, An-mei found out about her mother's tragic past and how she had given birth to a baby boy (An-mei's brother) who was taken away from her. This event was significant in An-mei's life, because after her mother's death, as she put it, she "learned to shout", which in reality meant that she stood up to the family and claimed his brother and her mother's reputation. She found her inner strength and believed that her mother had died to give her a stronger spirit. An-mei saw that her mother had not seen her own worth, and was determined to raise her daughter to be aware of her own worth.

Rose-Hsu, An-mei's daughter, was married to an American, Ted, who was an heir of a wealthy white upper class family. The family was all along against the relationship, and Ted's mother tried to talk Rose-Hsu out of seeing her son. Rose-Hsu fought their prejudices and stood up to Ted's

mother with conviction, which is seen in her firm reply to her as she was taken for another nationality: "I'm not Vietnamese, I'm an American" Though she was eager to defend herself and their relationship, she had from the start reservations on how to cope with the pressure of being surrounded by a totally different kind of society. This is seen what she said to Ted on their first date: "Only I don't know who you are. I know who your family is and what they do and suddenly I'm starting to wonder whether I belong in this conversation. I don't like feeling this way." This reflected on the doubts and fears she had about seeing herself equal to the Americans, but also about the responsibilities as a house-wife.

The fears though fell into the background, but only momentarily as she fell in love with him and before long they were talking about marriage. As the relationship got serious also the pressure of coping took over Rose-Hsu, which is seen in her inner speech: "In six months we were married. After the wedding the fears began to sink in, take hold. Everything I had married into, the pressure, the weight of it." Even though scared and worried, she decided that she was going to make it " I promised myself I could handle it. That nothing, nothing could ever change me or us." Ironically, her thoughts were already going through a change before the wedding, which is seen in her thoughts about how Ted defended her from her own mother who insulted her: "I wasn't sorry for what his mother did. How else would I have known if he had not rescued me how wonderful he was and that he loved me." Rose Hsu does not say anything about her own feelings, which shows her need to emphasize Ted's opinions and the way she chooses to make him the first priority from the start.

At first the marriage was happy, and Rose-Hsu took the role of a traditional Chinese housewife: obedient, trying every possible way to please her husband, having no will or life of her own and saying "I just want you to be happy". Rose Hsu's behaviour does not apply to the totally opposite view of MacMicheal (2001) according to whom "In a white male/Asian female

relationship, the Asian females are given the opportunity to grow and become stronger as individuals, making this relationship like "moving a level up." With Rose Hsu the situation was the opposite one and she felt pressured to please her husband and be accepted by others and thought that it would be a way to sustain her marriage. She gave up her own career and focused on entertaining Ted's potential clients and waited on her husband hand and foot.

Opposed to this obedient housewife role, Rose Hsu was a very confident young woman before the marriage: She was very active, expressing her own opinions in the relationship. But after marrying Ted she started to treat him very differently. She seemed to have lost her own will and desires completely. This is seen in their discussion about what to have for dinner:

Rose-Hsu: Honey, should we eat in or out tonight?
 Ted: You decide.
 Rose-Hsu: Ah – if we eat in I've got some lamb chops or I could call Ernie's or..
 Ted: Whatever you want – it'll be great.
 Rose-Hsu: Okay- I didn't mean to interrupt your work. I'll figure something out.
 Ted: You're not interrupting me. Really meant what I said. I want to eat what you want.
 Rose-Hsu: Cause I can defrost a chicken if the lamb chops are too heavy. You've had a hard day. I don't really care. ***I just want you to – be happy.***
 [my italics]

In this extract Rose-Hsu never really gave direct answers and is only trying to get Ted to give his opinion. The key phrase and Rose Hsu's attitude is the underlined last sentence. It is interesting that she has no trouble giving instructions to the kitchen staff: "Wayne, could you chop this up to smaller slices, last time they were too big. Also could you..", but she was unable to give one straight answer to her husband. Also the scene where she cleaned the floor after Ted had spilled his drink is very striking and as she gets down on one knee in front of her husband looking up to Ted very humbly, like a servant, drew a good picture of the roles in their marriage. Even though

Rose-Hsu saw that there was something wrong with her actions, she still pretended that everything was alright and got on convincing herself as follows:

At first it was just a bunch of little things, loving things a wife would do behind the scenes without him even knowing. You know, like paying the household bills, buying him special gifts that showed my love. The beautiful part was he never had to ask for any of this. In fact he never even knew. I told myself that it was the selfless way, the loving way and not the chicken shit way.

Ted saw the change in Rose-Hsu and disliked the fact that she had lost her own will and ability to make decisions. This shows in the conversation on the topic about the dinner plans:

Rose Hsu: Honey, what's wrong? Did I say something wrong?
 Ted: It's just that once in a while I would like to hear your voice. Even if we disagree. It used to be different.
 Rose Hsu: Different?
 Ted: You used to have an opinion. We used to argue.
 Rose Hsu: Is that what you want? You want us to argue?
 Ted: I want you to be here.
 Rose Hsu: Honey, I'm here. I'm here for you. You just have to... Just tell me what you want.- I told you, I'll do the chicken.
 Ted: Are you happy?
 Rose Hsu: (pause) Of course I am.

Rose-Hsu saw that Ted was not happy with her answers and was at one point getting a bit desperate because she was not able to please her husband. Ted was desperately trying to get her wife to realize that he was not happy about the marriage and that there had to be a change in their relationship on Rose Hsu's part. Things changed, but it got still worse. After Rose-Hsu noticed her husband's discontent, she tried to please him even more, which is seen in her inner thoughts : “ –I could see that Ted was becoming bored, we said less and less. So I tried harder.” Trying harder meant for her that she

gave birth to a daughter in order to keep her husband happy. After that it did not take a long time before the marriage got into trouble again. The baby did not seem to be enough to save their relationship and Ted wanted to get out using an affair as an excuse. Ironically, her behaviour and actions had had the opposite effect on Ted and were partly the reason for their separation.

3.1.1 The visual presentation of An-mei and Rose Hsu

The direct presentation of Rose Hsu reinforces the nature of her character in the film. Her appearance changed along with the switches from the role of an ordinary student to the role of an obedient housewife. Her clothes and hair style went through a change as she got married. She gave up jeans and modern and colourful clothes in favour of darker and very conservative clothes which made her look older than she really is. She also wore her beautiful long dark hair in a bun in contrast to the free look she had earlier. Especially when she was entertaining Ted's clients, she looked very out of place and as she obediently chose to stay silently in the background when entertaining guests, she looked more like a doll than a wife. While married Rose Hsu's outer appearance gave the impression that she was very uncertain of herself and seemed to live only through her husband. She is seen smoking and also the expressions on her face got more serious. Another change occurred after she solved her marital problems and was at June's going away party. Now she had very stylish clothes on and her dark hair was free and cut to a fashionable length in other words she looked very much her own age.

An-mei's visual appearance also reinforced her character traits. Her harmonious and subtle clothing went with her calm and friendly character. Her clothes were inconspicuous but classy and her black hair with a little touch of gray was short and neatly cut. Her voice was gentle but at times a bit louder due to the worry for her daughter, but it never seemed to lack compassion.

3.1.2 The setting and the camera angles

The events of *The Joy Luck Club* took place both in China and in San Francisco which gave certain boundaries to creating the authentic setting. In some of the other mother-daughter sequences the setting played a role in the discussion, but in the case of An-mei and Rose Hsu the focus was on the characters and the viewer got a very limited picture of the setting. Though in some cases the inanimate objects are a way to reinforce some ideas. For example, the camera angle on Rose Hsu through the mirror as she is smoking and wondering about her actions as a wife gives the impression of her as an insecure person lacking independence.

Camera angles have got their own emphasis to give to the story and I agree with Joel Brouwer (1997:506) who says that the director of the film, Wayne Wang, gave the film his own perspective on the issue of Chinese American identity. The director succeeded in capturing little details that emphasized and clarified the daughters' point of view and the two different societies in between which they live. For example, as Rose Hsu was packing the groceries into the car, the camera angle is sure to show the whole view on the western car. As another example, in the mother-daughter dialogue the camera stays on the daughter, even though the mother is speaking. This emphasizes the way how Rose Hsu tried many times to end the conversation by turning her back on An-mei, but did not succeed in it. Also the shots taken through the glass window are director's way to emphasize the daughter's inner feelings. This was seen in two different takes: first by showing her insecurities about the marriage and her way of coping when the glass between Rose Hsu and the camera lens reinforces the impression of her frailty. Secondly, the scene where Ted told her about the affair the raindrops running down the glass window represented her tears and despair of her failing in the relationship.

3.1.3 The mother-daughter interaction

3.1.3.1 The topics

The dialogue between An-mei and Rose-Hsu concentrated on the daughter's current life situation. An-mei is trying to get her daughter to realize the real state of her failing marriage and to understand that she was as worthy as the others. The discussion begins with the following dialogue that takes place as they are coming from the food store and are just to about to get into the car and it is about the pie that the daughter was going to bake to please her husband who was coming over to make the divorce settlement.

- An-mei: Ted coming to dinner?
 Rose-Hsu: Why do you ask that?
 An-mei: Cause you bought flour, eggs, bitter sweet Hershie-bar and – chunky. Good only for chocolate peanut butter pie. Who else eat?
 Rose-Hsu: Well.. it's not a dinner exactly, sort of a meeting at the house tonight.
 An-mei: Meeting?
 Rose-Hsu: Yeah well we both thought it was time to settle all the property stuff.
 An-mei: Both?
 Rose-Hsu: Yeah, both absolutely.(Turns away to get into the car)
 An-mei: What's you're going to ask for?
 Rose-Hsu: (sighs) What are you talking about?
 An-mei: Talking about what's your worth.

In reality, the mother is using the pie as a metaphor on the daughter's marriage and is trying to get the daughter to realize the situation and the conversation continues.

- An-mei : What you going to do with leftovers after he eat one slice?
 Rose Hsu: Through it away I guess.
 An-mei: You ask yourself why you make this. Because I know even if you don't.
 Rose Hsu: I like being tragic, mom. I learnt it from you.

Maybe it is due to this Rose Hsu's last comment or the fact that she had been just reminiscing her own mother before the discussions, but at this point An-mei's tone of voice changes and she brings up her own mother into the conversation as she says:

You think he sees this pie, how he so sorry take you for granted. You think this you the foolish one. Every time you give him a gift like begging take this, I'm sorry, please forgive me. I'm not worth as much as you. So he only take you more for granted. You just like my mother, never know what's your worth.

Until then the very last sentence Rose Hsu had paid very little attention to her mother. But this finally got her full attention and she turned to her mother. An-mei saw a similarity between the unhappy lives of both her own mother and daughter; neither the mother nor the daughter seemed to realize their own worth. However, Rose Hsu did not seem to understand her, which triggered An-mei to tell her the story of her late mother and how she saw her and her life.

An-mei told Rose Hsu how she lived with her mother and her husband, Wu Tsing, along with three other wives and their children. Her mother was only the fourth wife and was considered the lowest in the hierarchy. An-mei told Rose Hsu how impressed she had been of the pearl necklace she had got from Wu Tsing's second wife, which was the most honorable of the wives because of her son. She could not understand how her mother resisted them so much, and kept them due to the second wife's insistence thinking they were very valuable. The shock was quite big when her mother proved them fake by smashing them with a cup. This disappointment was also seen in An-mei's comment: "My precious pearls that had almost bought my mind and heart. It was made of glass" This incident was significant to their mother-daughter relationship, not only because of An-mei realizing the truth, but also because of the important words of her mother: "Why should you believe me? I'm no good, nothing but the fourth wife. Cheap concubine.

But I wasn't always like this. I was the first wife, your father's only wife. Don't you ever forget it. You're the daughter of a first wife." (My translation from the Finnish subtitles; This is spoken in Chinese in the film) Through these words An-mei got valuable information about her past and got closer to her mother.

While her staying with her mother An-mei learnt also other things about her mother's life and how after An-mei's father had died, she had been raped by Wu Tsing with the help of the second wife. She tried to go home, but her parents did not believe her story. She had no other choice but to go and live with the man who had raped her. As mentioned earlier, the baby boy was taken away from her by the second wife. Soon after that An-mei's mother died and she tells about this like this:

Second wife told me that my mother had died by accident, taking too much opium. Lies. I know my mother killed herself on purpose. She had eaten sticky sweet dumplings one after the other, filled with opium. When the poison broke into her body, she whispered to me that she would rather kill her own weak spirit so she could give me a stronger one. My mother chose the date of her death to give me the power over her enemies.

After telling the story Rose Hsu asked An-mei, as if knowing her reasons for telling it: "Mom, what does it mean? What does it mean for me?"

An-mei gives a long answer as an advice to her daughter and the most striking thing she says is: "This cannot be, this not knowing your worth. This not begin with you. My mother not know her worth until too late. Too late for her, but not for me. Now we will see if not too late for you." As she said this she also showed affection towards Rose Hsu for the first time during there conversation by stroking her hair.

3.1.3.2 The language features and the style of the dialogue

The words used in the conversation were very 'everyday' as were the issues. The mother does not speak English very well, which is shown in the many

grammar mistakes in her speech such as: “Ted coming to dinner?” The structure in this sentence is very simple and the word order gets mixed up. An-mei’s speech was very ‘economical’ and the sentences are very short, which is seen for example in her line “Who else eat?” In addition to these language features, An-mei’s speech seems to carry similarities with the speech of a typical bilingual Asian person. This is seen through the study made by Crown and Feldstein (1981) as cited on page 49, which indicates special features in the speech of native Chinese speakers who speak English as their second language. The study showed that Chinese speakers used longer pauses and shorter vocalization while speaking both English and Chinese. The vocalizations were even shorter when speaking English. An-mei’s speech is consistent with both of these special language features: She takes long pauses and vocalization is shorter compared to Rose Hsu’s English.

Rose Hsu spoke perfect American English and there is no sign of her Chinese heritage in her speech. She was never taught to speak Chinese, which gave her the opportunity to acquire the native English language skills. This was in a way surprising, because as argued by Coulmas (1999:402), the Chinese language has always held a special meaning in preserving the Chinese culture and the mother’s decision to exclude the daughter from the language seemed at first odd. But it was solely done to protect and help the daughters as is seen from the tale in the beginning of the introduction as the mother says: “[n]obody will look down on her, because I will make her speak only perfect American English.” The variation between the language usage of the mother and the daughter did not in this case seem to cause any friction in their relationship. However, it could be a dividing factor in their relationship due to the misunderstandings it might cause. It could also emphasize the fact that they belong on the other hand to different cultures.

The discussion style between An-mei and Rose-Hsu changed a lot during their interaction. In the beginning the mother introduced most of the topics

by asking 'sharp' questions: "Ted coming to dinner? Meeting? Both? What you going to ask for?" . The daughter gave hesitant and short answers "Well... sort of..." and was reluctant to talk about the situation, and An-mei seemed a bit pushy. Daughter talked very little and without raising her voice, in a monotone voice and at times avoiding eye contact. The daughter seemed to be in her thoughts and did not pay much attention to the conversation. She for example went through her drawers while her mother was talking. Only by mentioning her own mother and actually telling her mother's story, An-mei succeeded in getting her daughter's attention.

Here is also the point where the conversation style seemed to change a great deal. Prior to the story, An-mei kept the conversation going by asking questions and giving comments while Rose Hsu was only a reluctant and passive participant answering very briefly and showing no interest to continue the conversation. But as An-mei started her story, Rose Hsu stopped what she was doing by the table and came to sit by her mother. She also got into eye contact with An-mei, which she had been avoiding from the beginning of the conversation. An-mei talked most in the dialogue, but in the end Rose also started to ask questions and to talk more

There was a contrast between Rose Hsu's conversation with her mother and those with her future husband. When talking to Ted she confessed to have been interested in him in beforehand and told him how she felt and was mainly the one who was speaking as shown in the dialogue:

- Rose Hsu: I don't know why I'm saying this. I knew who you were when you came up to me. I've watched you for weeks like all the girls want you and I was excited and flattered when you came on to me, so I baked you this pie and we had dinner.-
- Ted: I love you said that
- Rose-Hsu: I didn't say this to impress you.
- Ted: That's why it did.

She also expressed her negative feelings to Ted, but only when she was very angry. This is seen in the following dialogue which took place after Rose Hsu had discovered that Ted was having an affair:

Rose Hsu: What's her name? Is she beautiful?

Ted: Look, I think that we have to sell the house, but anything that you want, any special things that you need-

Rose Hsu: (interrupts) What's her fucking name?

Ted: What's the difference? This is not the reason.

But as she talked to her mother, she did not express any emotions she had and talked in a very general way and her answers were short.

3.1.3.3 The characters' inner speech

Both the daughter and the mother went over the past in their minds, but their memories were kept hidden except for the story An-mei told Rose Hsu about her mother. Thus the mother crossed the line as she told An-mei about her own past and feelings. The conversation and the story intertwined with the past and the present. An-mei was one minute remembering her mother's suicide and how she did not realize her own worth until it was too late and another minute asking Rose Hsu about her worth as they were discussing the property settlement: "What your going to ask for?" In her inner speech An-mei expressed her feeling about growing without her birth mother as seen in the following quotation: "As a little girl I wondered every day. Worst of all I had to wonder in secret. I had no memory of my mother, because she was kicked out of the house, when I was only four years old. The scar from the soup was all that I had left of my mother" In addition to An-mei's feelings, this line reflects the way things were taken care of in the Chinese way; family affairs were considered secrets and they were to keep silent. Furthermore in this case the secrecy went hand in hand with dishonesty, as is seen in An-mei's inner thoughts: "My grandmother, my uncle and my aunties they taught me to hate her. They accused her of breaking her vow of the widow-." But fortunately An-mei learnt the real truth about her mother eventually.

In contrast to the way she talked, Rose-Hsu expressed her feelings in a very straightforward manner in her inner speech. She used stronger expressions like “chicken shit way”, referred to the pregnancy as ‘the last attempt to hang on’ and compared Ted’s mother’s speech like it was from “a cheap racist movie like *The World of Suzy Wang*”. This showed that she also had her own opinions and both the ability and the courage to express them. Another example is a scene in which she was thinking about her marriage and said: “I was offered a fellowship in Fine Arts in the school I had admired in Idaho. Of course it was out of the question. The interesting part was I never asked the question, not even of myself.” This showed that Rose-Hsu expressed in her inner speech that she saw the motivations of her actions and her false role in her marriage, but, in contrast, refused to hear the same kind of thoughts from her own mother. When reflecting on her marriage and the mistakes she felt she had made, she can see that her actions as an obedient housewife were due to her attempts to fit in to her husband’s society, which was very different from her own. In this respect, she didn’t feel to be worthy enough to be part of the ‘rich’.

3.1.3.4 Ethnicity

By hearing the mother’s story, the daughter got also an insight into the Chinese culture. A good example of this is the part of the story where An-mei tells about how her mother tried to help her dying mother, which is seen in the following extract:

It was an old Chinese tradition, only the most dutiful of daughters would put her own flesh in a soup to save her mother’s life. My mother did this with her whole heart. Even though my grandmother had disowned her. This is how a daughter honours her mother. The pain of the flesh is nothing. The pain you must forget. This is the most important sacrifice a daughter can do for her mother.

Through this story Rose Hsu saw the tradition of obedience and forgiving. But also as An-mei told about her actions after her mother’s suicide as she

vindicated her, gave Rose Hsu also the idea of woman's right to defend herself and to have own ambitions and individuality and, foremost, a mind of her own. She saw that she had no other choice but to change her ways. In a way, by telling the story, the mother gave Rose Hsu a stronger spirit, just like her mother had given to her. It was too late for the mother, but as An-mei said to Rose Hsu "Now we will see if not too late for you."

Ethnicity also came up in the actual conversation as the mother said: "I was raised the Chinese way: I was taught to desire nothing, to swallow other people's misery and to eat my own bitterness. And even though I taught my daughter the opposite, still she came out the same way." For one, this shows that their life long interaction had resulted in An-mei unintentionally passing the Chinese pattern of behaviour on to her daughter, despite of her opposite efforts. An-mei's determination to raise her daughter differently from the Chinese tradition in order to give her daughter a better chance to cope in the American society and to give her more self-esteem and belief in herself had failed and she saw that the traditional pattern had again repeated itself. This point is supported by MacMichael (2001) who states about the role of cultural tradition in bringing up children in a strange culture and brings up an interesting viewpoint to this issue with the following extract:

The home is a[nother] place where changes must take place. Judging from the interviews, it is important for parents to continue cultural traditions even after moving to the United States and becoming a part of the American culture.

This means that oppose to An-mei's good intentions, she would have prepared Rose Hsu better if she had emphasized the Chinese traditions in bringing up her daughter. So knowing your roots and cherishing the Chinese heritage is seen as an asset oppose to a burden in the process of adjusting to the American culture. Fortunately, the mother finally saw this and helped her daughter to acquire her ethnic identity.

3.1.4 The outcome of the mother-daughter interaction

After the mother told Rose Hsu the story and to realize her own worth, there was a major change in Rose Hsu's attitude. As Ted came to talk to her about selling the house, their conversation is very different from the previous ones, as is seen in the following extract:

Ted: Rose, I'm standing out in the rain ringing the doorbell for fifteen minutes. Are you okay?
 Rose Hsu: (No answer)
 Ted: Honey, are you okay?
 Rose Hsu: Get out of my house. You heard me. Get out.
 Ted: Honey, it's our house, we agreed to sell it. That's why I'm here.
 Rose Hsu: You are not taking my house. You are not taking my daughter. You are not taking any part of me, because you don't know who I am. I died sixty years ago. I ate opium and I died for my daughter's sake. Now get out of my house.
 Ted: I'm listening.
 Rose Hsu: It's not your fault. None of it. I was the one who told you that my love wasn't good enough that my love was worth more than mine. I was so full of shit.

Rose Hsu did not answer Ted's questions right away and raised her voice to him expressing anger "You're not taking any part of me" which she had never done before. Ted was very surprised but also very pleased with the change in Rose Hsu's attitude. She stood up to her husband, which she never did before. This resulted in a breakthrough in their communication and they stayed married.

Rose Hsu went through a major change in her identity in *The Joy Luck Club*. First through the experiences of low self-esteem and feelings of not belonging to Ted's world and second the self confidence she acquired from her mother and her roots, with which help she was able to switch her role to more 'western' having a very positive influence on the marriage. More so because the role she had adopted in the marriage resembled very much the

traditional role of Chinese women. In this case it seemed that the traditional Chinese way of giving into the man's will did not apply to the American society. So Rose Hsu became even more clearly faced with the cultural differences.

Also the relationship between An-mei and Rose Hsu changed in the story. They first seemed a bit distant to each other and there were tensions between them. Rose Hsu did not like An-mei's interfering in her affairs and kept them as much as possible to herself. An-mei was very concerned with her daughter's life and was eagerly giving her advice. It seemed that An-mei had not told Rose Hsu much about her past, because when An-mei started to talk about her mother, she got her attention immediately. An-mei's storytelling like she was thinking out loud, partly because it resembled her inner speech so much. Due to this openness from An-mei's part, it seemed that Rose Hsu got for the first time an insight to her mother's world. The story brought them closer together and the shared past gave them more unity and Rose Hsu started to understand her mother more. There was a change in their interaction and they were more at ease with each other in the later scenes in the film. An-mei and Rose Hsu found the generational as well as the cultural connection and the An-mei thoughts about her own mother fit in my opinion as a summary of Rose Hsu's new relationship with her mother: "I saw my own face looking back at me."

3.2 Ying Ying and Lena

Ying Ying's life in China had left her with a permanent mark and the unpleasant memories of her marriage there seemed to follow her also to America. She had met her future husband, when she was only 16 years old and had the innocent belief of love's blissfulness. This was why it was easy for her to get caught in his toils which led to marriage. Her inner speech tells how happy she was as first: "After that everything like this dream, our wedding, our son." But the marital bliss did not last long and the man who first had seemed very charming and decent, turned out to be the opposite.

He cheated on Ying Ying with no shame and did it so openly that she had no choice, but to admit it to herself.

Ying Ying's thoughts about discovering the truth about her husband become evident from the following extract from her inner speech: "There he was with this opera singer. This was not the first conquest, only the first I permitted myself to recognize. By then I knew what kind of man I had married. Happiest when he was cruel." This shows how disappointed and devastated she was. And she got even more upset, when her husband came to their home with one of her mistresses and even broke a plate in order to harm him physically, but she backed out. This though hurt her so much that she made a very desperate thing: in order to get revenge, she let her only new-born son to drown into the bathwater which is seen in the following extract:

Ying Ying is leaning over the bath tub holding her baby boy firmly just above the water surface. The baby is calm and is looking into his mother's eyes. The only sound is the sound of the water moving from the baby's moves. Ying Ying's eyes are wide open as she almost with fury looks away from the baby: "My mind kept repeating the single thought. He had taken from me my innocence, my youth, my heart, everything. **So I took from him the only thing I could** (my italics)" At the same time her grip from the baby is slipping and the baby sinks into the water. Ying Ying realizes the situation only after the boy is already dead and starts to shout. (An extract from the script)

The death of her baby boy left her with great anxiety and the past did not stop haunting her even after she moved to America. The act was done in anger and surely the sorrow of losing her only son was bound to leave a mark on her. She remarried and had a daughter, but was still suffering from the ghosts in her mind. She was at times very depressed which also reflected on her daughter Lena. The daughter's anxiety is seen in her inner thoughts as she says: "As I was growing up, there were times when mom went through these bad spells. She often seemed scared and sad, but she would

never talk about it.” If Ying Ying had told Lena what was bothering her, it would have maybe made it easier for her to cope with these situations. Instead the mother’s silence kept Lena from getting close to her and made her in a way fragile. This is shown in a scene in the following extract, where Lena is taking breakfast to her mother.

At first Lena looks at her mother timidly from the door as if she is scared to go in. Ying Ying is sitting in a chair by these big windows which offer a wide view over the city. The folds are half way done and there are also folds blocking the sun, so the room looks dark. Ying Ying does not react in anyway to Lena’s speech as she says: “Mommy – are you hungry? “ and tries to give her the tray. After getting no response Lena puts it on the floor and then straightens her mothers scarf and gently caresses Ying Ying’s cheek. With no reaction Ying Ying just sits there and stares into space with a horrified look in her face. This frightens Lena and she looks very distraught.” (an extract from the script)

The fact that Ying Ying did not respond to Lena at all was very frightening to a young girl and it left Lena very insecure about herself. She seemed to have a low self-esteem, which also had an effect on her search of ethnic identity. This is view supported by Guanipa & Guanipa (1998) according to whom ”Culturally different adolescents need help to achieve a firm sense of self, before they can integrate or develop an inclusive and general sense of self.”

The fact that Ying Ying did not tell Lena the reason for her depression, made it even more difficult for her to understand it. The only thing the mother revealed was that she had been married to ‘a bad man’ in China. In this scene the roles of the caretaker and the child have been turned upside down. The mother was incapable of taking care of her daughter’s needs and had to be taken care by Lena. In my opinion Lena had chosen Harold to be her husband, because he was financially dependable and she thought that he could got the care she did not get from her own mother. This would have also explained why she was agreeing to Harold’s unusual finance keeping.

Lena was also desperately seeking acceptance from her mother and she thought that by marrying well she could please her. And divorce did not fit in to this picture and she decided to overlook Harold's faults.

So Ying Ying's daughter Lena was married to Harold, a Chinese-American, who had his own successful firm. His wealth was seen in their expensive new house, which Ying Ying referred as it 'a million dollar house'. Money played a very important role in their marriage, which was seen many times in Lena's inner thoughts like for example: "We agreed love yes, false dependencies no. But most everything we keep track of what we spend and split it fifty-fifty. Of course we agreed early on not to include personal stuff." Lena's working for Harold caused friction to their marriage, because it seemed that Harold had adopted the authoritative work role also outside the office. Also the fact that he paid Lena less money compared to his salary, but still insisted that the expenses should be divided in half, bothered her a great deal. However Lena kept her discontent to herself and expressed it only in her inner speech: "We were equals. Except that I work in his firm and he pays himself seven times more than he pays me. Seven and a half." But as an obedient wife, Lena went along with it in the beginning of the marriage. Despite their wealth, Harold was very stingy and made Lena pay for every single thing; 'equally' as he put it. This is seen in the following conversation they had in a restaurant as the check came.

Harold: Forty one dollars.

Lena: Oh total?

Harold: Each. What you don't have enough?

Lena: No uuh. It's just – I was never good at math.

(Her inner thoughts at the same time: "So what if I had a salad and he had three courses")

Even though hesitant Lena did everything Harold told her to do, even paid for his food. She took every complaint from him and did not get upset about his remarks like for example : "Lena, when you buy charcoal, you have to buy lighter fluid. Don't you know that yet. Do I have to remind you every

time?” Even though the frames of the marriage were very American, their relationship was very traditionally Chinese. As MacMichael (2001) puts it, “In a traditional Asian male/Asian female relationship, things are unbalanced, with the female playing a subservient role, working to make her man happy.” This was exactly the way Lena was behaving, which also meant that Lena had adjusted herself unintentionally to the behavioral pattern of a Chinese woman.

Untypical of a traditional Chinese marriage pattern they nevertheless seemed to argue a lot, like for example about the cat’s food, from which Harold had his certain views: “Honey, isn’t there a generic brand of cat food? I mean do they really know the difference?” Also the cat’s flees and who should pay for them got Lena upset: “You gave her to me as a birthday gift and now you want me to pay to get rid of her flees?” Even though Lena seemed to give in to Harold eventually, they did discuss it as seen in Lena’s inner speech: “But we still have these philosophical arguments about the gray areas. Like magazines I subscribe to which he reads, but only because they are there.”

As was pointed out above, their marriage seemed to evolve solely around money, which meant that emotions were secondary. She did not get love from her husband and also Ying Ying’s mental problems in her childhood seemed to have deprived her from mother’s love as well. Ying Ying resented Lena’s giving into Harold’s ill-treatment, because maybe it reminded her of her ex-husband. It seemed that her memories triggered her to confront both Lena and Harold about their relationship. After Ying Ying pointed out the unfairness of Lena having to pay for something she did not use, it made Lena look back on the unfairness of her husband. This aggravation in Lena led to a disagreement. This argument too might have been a harmless argument with no consequences, but Ying Ying interrupted it and got Lena to come upstairs. The conversation got Lena to evaluate

what she really wants from her marriage and eventually led to her leaving Harold.

3.2.1 The visual presentation of Ying Ying and Lena

Ying Ying's appearance changed a lot in the film. As Ying Ying at the age of sixteen looking with admiration into her future husband's eyes wearing a white dress having a shy smile and a long dark hair, it gave the picture of an innocent and inexperienced girl. The shyness came out also in the way she in the scene avoided eye-contact. At that time her face was also more lively with many expressions on it. Later as she was sitting in her daughter's kitchen, dressed in dark and fashionable clothes with a blank expression on her face, wearing a fashionable short hairdo and smoking a cigarette, she conveyed a totally opposite picture of herself: very distant and even sad (She did not smile at all and her face lacked emotion). However her expression changed in the episode; when she held Lena in her arms and stroked her hair, her face seemed to come alive. Though Ying Ying's appearance was very different from An-mei, they both had the same intentions regarding their daughters and their actions are basically the same.

Lena's appearance also changes during the story. When she was still married to Harold she looked sad, dressed in dark clothes and looking with slight contempt at Harold, when he was adding up which groceries belong to him and which ones to Lena. As she was with Harold, she directed her need to show affection to their cat instead of her husband. The character's appearance gave a slightly ambiguous indication of her traits, when Lena's output and her inner voice were totally the opposites as she was pretending to be willing to pay for more than her share of her and Harold's meal. With a big smile on her face she was thinking how unfair it is for her to pay half, even though she ate only a salad. The impression was totally opposite when Lena was at the party with her new boyfriend and was telling a story; she was smiling and being very talkative, dressed in brighter colors and openly showing affection to her friend by giving him a kiss.

In general the expressions on both Lena's and especially Ying Ying's faces, said a lot more than words. For example, the hatred and disappointment with which Ying Ying looked at her husband after realizing his affairs said much more than words. Also the expression on Lena's face as she was trying to interpret her mother's reactions as on her first visit showed her worry and search of acceptance.

3.2.2 The setting and the camera angles

In the film the setting was supporting the images and themes that are dealt with in the actual story and it was very much in harmony with it and it could easily go unnoticed, in other words being chorus-like. This was mostly the case as in the scenes from Ying Ying's youth, which took place in China and the setting was a very traditional Chinese one. The Chinese atmosphere was created with authentic oriental looking benches, plants and buildings. The most striking effect of the environment was in the scene in the dancing hall. There were both Chinese and American elements in the picture. The hall had big Chinese paintings on the walls, but the tables, chairs and lamps looked very western. Even the band stand was very American like. Without the Chinese background music and people the scene could have been taken from any western country. Besides the setting, the scene was very striking due to the constant focus being on Ying Ying and his husband-to-be dancing and there were no words, just the background music.

The setting became a part of the story, when the mother-daughter dialogue took place in the house of Lena and Harold. The house was very modern and the general look was very dark; big empty walls in silver and dark gray. It was not a quasi-participant, but it was emblematic, representing and symbolizing the bad marriage. The mother saw the house as a coffin with slanting walls, a place of unhappiness. The daughter hoped that her mother would see how happy she was living in a one million dollar house, but she was wrong of either one of them being happy about the marriage. The house was very dark and simplistic. There was a also symbolism in the staircase:

the camera angle from the ceiling made it look like a dark well or a ravine and the footsteps on the staircases sounded very hollow. There was nothing on the walls and the staircase would more likely to be from a warehouse or a store than somebody's home. Personally it left me the notion of an endless staircase; you just climb and climb and never reach the top. It was very different from the Chinese setting and also the place where the June's going away party took place. The party setting was very home-like and comfortable and full of light and happy people. As an opposite view there is Lena's house was empty, even though there are two people living there.

As was pointed out above, the different camera angles gave the director's own perspective into the story. In this case for example the close-up shots in the mother-daughter dialogue emphasized the characters' feelings. According to Brouwer (1997:508), "the closeup of faces visually reinforce the affective quality of the narrative." Like for example when Lena was trying to convince her mother about her happiness, the long close-up of the unhappy face made Ying Ying's position very clear. Gilles Deleuze (as cited in Brouwer 1997:508) uses the term affection-images, which do not provide the viewer with additional or rational information, but emphasize the emotion.

Also Wang's way of showing the dance hall scene as described earlier; long shots with no music, made the man seem like a gentleman opposed to his true nature and as if it was seen through Ying Ying's eyes. The director used also space in his shots to emphasize the emotions; for example, as Lena is trying to contact her mother without succeeding in it, half of the screen is empty which emphasizes their actions. In addition to different camera angles, Wayne Wang also used shadows and lights as a way to create special impressions. As Ying Ying was talking to Lena in the final scene the shadows from the folds made the mother-daughter interaction more impressive, because shadows gave the connotation of fear and despair but

the light coming between the folds gave the sign of there being hope for Lena.

3.2.3 The mother-daughter interaction

3.2.3.1 The topics

As with An-mei and Rose Hsu, again the mother had a crucial role in making the daughter to realize the state of her marriage. Even though Ying Ying influenced Lena through their interaction, they spent less time on the actual mother-daughter dialogue, because Lena also spoke with her husband. The conversation between Ying Ying and Lena focused on the daughter's marriage, but the topics were much on a symbolic level until the final scene. Lena's husband was very dominant in their relationship, which annoyed Ying Ying. Lena was obviously submitting herself to the bad treatment by Harold, who treated her like a doll, was giving her very little worth and concentrating on the finances of the marriage instead of the emotional side.

The mother-daughter conversation took place in the new house of Lena and Harold where Ying Ying was visiting for the first time. Lena was doing something in the kitchen as her mother was across and observing her. Lena sees the doubtful look in Ying Ying's face and starts up the conversation:

“Don't worry – everything is fine (pause) He is very nice to me.” Ying Ying looks at her with her at the same time blank and worried face and answers “Nice – nice, very nice,” in a monotonic voice.

While saying this she got up from the chair and walk near the refrigerator, where she saw an interesting piece of paper. There was a list on things to share: As she got closer she asked “What's this? “ Lena tried to get her mother away from the kitchen and said: “Why don't you rest in the living room. I'll make you some tea, okay. I've got some chrysanthemum tea. Ying Ying though continued :”What's this writing?” and Lena replied “It's

nothing, no, it's just things we share." Significant about this scene was that Lena tried to change the topic, because she already knew how Ying Ying would react and was determined to give a very polished picture of her marriage.

Ying Ying could not get her eyes off the list and even though she returned to her seat, she continued reading it while Lena continued her work. Ying Ying noticed an interesting item on the list and continued the conversation as follows:

Ying Ying: Ice-cream you don't share – you don't eat ice-cream. Ever since that time you gone sick on strawberry and chocolate flavored together. I remember. Now you must pay for half of his ice-cream. Why you do this?
 Lena: (No response)

Harold comes into the kitchen.

Harold: Lena. Lena, when you buy charcoal, you have to buy lighter fluid. Don't you know that yet. Do I have to remind you every time?
 Ying Ying: Lena cannot eat ice-cream.
 Harold: What? What are we talking about?
 Lena: It's true. I've hated ice-cream all my life. I don't touch that stuff.
 Harold: Well I assumed you always tried to diet to something.
 Ying Ying: Oh yes. She's lost so much weight you can't see her anymore.
 Harold: (grinned)

What is interesting about this dialogue, is the way everyone of the participants seem to have their own personal subjects they are talking about ignoring and misunderstanding what others said. For example, Lena's answer to Harold's question does not reply the asked question, she just gives her opinion on the matter without explanations. This in my opinion reflects Lena's general attitude towards her husband; she is tired of his comments and his ideas altogether, but she has decided to put up with it and is somehow surrendered to the situation.

Even though the topic of the first part of the dialogue between Ying Ying and Lena was ice-cream, the real issue was the state of the daughter's marriage and the issue of sharing the ice-cream is only symbolic. Lena gave contradictory answers to her mother, when she expressed her worry about Lena's marriage and the way her husband Harold is treating her. In her inner speech, her opinion was totally opposite to her statements to her mother. Obviously, she was not happy, but she nevertheless said that everything is okay. This was also confirmed by her voice-over narration at the same time as she was complaining about the husband's way of splitting the costs in half.

The mother-daughter dialogue continued in the upstairs bedroom. Again Lena was making herself busy, this time she was changing the bedclothes. My impression is that Lena kept herself busy in order not to have to speak to her mother, because she sensed her mother's worry about their relationship. This is also seen in their conversation as follows:

Ying Ying: One million dollars and the walls are still crooked. Bad luck.

Lena: Harold wanted to keep it that way for the effect.

Ying Ying: For effect. A person has to lay here thinking he's in a coffin.

Lena does not respond, but as Ying Ying touches the vase on the table it almost falls and Lena hurries to help to keep it from falling

Lena: Not so sturdy. Harold made it back in college.

Ying Ying: Why do you keep it? **You put one more thing on top of it and all falls down.** (my italics)

Lena: You need anything else?

Ying Ying: No. Nothing.

Again there is symbolism in the mother's speech and the table is used as a comparison for Lena's relationship; the sentence italics applies to their marriage as well as to the condition of the table. Even though Lena did not respond to her mother's innuendoes, they did manage to get a reaction out of her. This is seen in the following argument between Lena and Harold

taking place downstairs while Ying Ying is upstairs. Even though the purpose of my study is to analyze the mother-daughter interaction, at this point in my opinion it is also important to include a conversation excluding Ying Ying. The reason for this is that it seemed that even though not present, she was the initiator of this following conversation. In this scene Harold is watching television and cursing how stupid the player is in a Quiz-show and Lena is sitting on a chair across Harold. The conversation is initiated by Lena and it goes as follows:

Lena: It's cold.
 Harold: Excuse me?
 Lena: I said would you close the window. It's cold.
 (Harold goes to shut the window. Lena still looks very angry and goes into the kitchen, takes the list and crosses out ice-cream with lipstick. Then she takes the list and throws it straight at him)

Harold: Honey move – What's going on?
 Lena: I don't think you should get credit for your ice-cream anymore.
 Harold: Agh. Fine. You've got it. End of discussion.
 Lena: Why do you have to be so god damned fair?
 Harold: Just what is this about exactly?
 Lena: I don't know, maybe everything. The way we count for everything, what we share and what we don't share. I'm sick of it. Adding things up the track making it to come out even when it's not. I'm sick of it.

Harold: You're the one who wanted a cat.
 Lena: What are you talking about?
 Harold: All right, if you think that I'm being unfair, we'll both pay for the flees.
 Lena: This is not about the flees. That is not the point.
 Harold: Then please tell me, what is the point.
 Lena: It's.. I just think that we need to change things, we need to think about what this marriage is based on. Not this balance sheet.

Harold: Well, I know what our marriage is based upon and if you don't than you better think about it before you start to change things!

Lena: Mom.

This extract shows the state of their marriage; based on the inconsistencies in their questions and answers, there is a lot of miscommunication between them. Lena being cold symbolizes her attitude towards Harold and the marriage. Also Harold's last comment shows his attitude and dominant role in the marriage, which was that of a traditional Chinese male. Considering this the following extract by MacMicheal (2001) provides an interesting perspective into their relationship.

What also tends to occur **when individuals identify closely with their traditional ethnic gender roles** (my italics) is that an Asian male may be more likely to feel intimidated by white women, since they are viewed to be more liberal (Voon interview). <http://www.laze.net/culture/asianamident.html>

This could explain Harold's last comment and willingness to control Lena, because he is very determined to keep the marriage going in his own terms. He sees white women as too strong and powerful that he needs to show his powerful position over Lena. Lena's answers show her unhappiness and want for a change. Ying Ying's earlier mentioned role in the conversation is seen from the fact that the ice-cream issue triggered the whole dialogue. She also participated in it by breaking it after Harold's comment and got Lena to come up and also had a crucial part in the process of making Lena realize that she has to leave her husband and or to get more appreciation from Harold.

Ying Ying's means to get Lena's attention was with the sound of the vase smashing onto the floor. It dropped or was being dropped from the table, which the mother and the daughter earlier talked about. In my opinion it was the mother's way of showing Lena the state of her marriage by dropping the vase intentionally. This is supported also by Ying Ying's simultaneous inner speech: "All around this house I see the signs. My daughter look, but she does not see. This is a house that will break into pieces." The touching scene of the last mother-daughter dialogue took place as Lena came upstairs to

check that everything was alright with her mother. In this touching scene the mother helped Lena in making a decision about her marriage.

Ying Ying: Do you know what you want (pause) I mean from him.

Lena: Respect (pause) tenderness

Ying Ying: Then tell him now and leave this lob sided house. Do not come back until he give you those things with both hands.

Lena: I can't (weeping)

Ying Ying: Loosing him does not matter. It is you who will be found and cherished.

3.2.3.2 The language features and the style of the dialogue

Lena spoke perfect English and there were no grammar mistakes in her speech. Her sentences were short and she only gave answers to the given questions or did not respond at all. For example, as Ying Ying was talking about her not being able to eat ice-cream, there was no reaction in her until Harold came into the kitchen to ask something and got her immediate attention. Ying Ying's English was quite good, but it was possible to detect a Chinese accent and there were also a few minor grammar mistakes. For example, her line "If you put one more thing on top of it, everything falls down." Here the correct verb phrase would go 'will fall' instead of 'falls'. She used phrases like 'gone sick, which showed that English was not her native tongue. Her speech was though very fluent and she was very comfortable with her English.

Almost all of the topics were introduced by the mother. First she mentioned the issue of ice-cream and how Lena should not be forced to pay for it. She also talked about the house as a sign of bad luck, as trying to get Lena realize the situation. " One million dollars and the walls are crooked. Bad luck. "Lena was reluctant to talk about these issues and tried to avoid them by trying to change the subject.

However there was one exception, where Lena started up the entire mother-daughter conversation as described in the previous chapter. It was in the very beginning of the dialogue as Ying Ying was sitting in the kitchen preparing something. Lena sensed worry in her mother and tried to convince her that she is happy and she would not have to worry about her. Ying Ying lighted up a cigarette and looked inquiringly Lena as exhaling smoke. Then with an uncertain voice she started to talk about how Ying Ying should not worry, because everything was fine. This example showed also showed that the turn-taking was very polite; there were long pauses between the utterances and no overlaps even though the topic was unpleasant. Also during the pauses there were these meaningful looks. The pace was very calm and also during the mother-daughter dialogue neither one of them ever raised their voice and the tone was very civilized and ‘unspirited’.

Both Lena and Ying Ying just went straight into the point as they started to talk, which meant that there was no ‘small-talk’. The tone of the whole conversation was very serious due to the topics and the speakers’ mood. Lena did not speak much, which gave a shy impression of her. She also avoided eye contact, the same way as her mother did as she saw her future husband before courtship. With Ying Ying it was the opposite case, she looked straight at Lena and was eager to start a conversation.

Silence seemed to be a crucial part of the communication between Lena and Ying Ying. At first when the mother was feeling depressed over the unhappy past as described earlier, the silence coming from the mother gave rise to confusion in Lena. This is seen in their dialogue, which was analyzed also above:

Lena:	Mommy Silence
Lena:	Are you hungry? Silence
Lena:	Mommy (desperately) Please answer me. Mommy, oh mommy.

But later the mother and the daughter seemed to be reaching an understanding between them through silence. The silence was also the result of them both having the tendency to sink into remembering the past and that was shown through their inner speech, which is very central in the scene.

3.2.3.3 The characters' inner speech

Ying Ying's inner speech dealt with her past experiences in China. She never talked about them to Lena, but went through them very distinctively in her mind and expressed also her inner feeling like for example about the way she felt as her husband came home with another woman "My whole life turned in this moment. If I had left him or killed him I would not have lost the one thing that mattered." She also dealt with her relationship to Lena and how she saw herself as a mother in her inner speech: "Years later I moved to America, but what I had done in China, was always with me. In time I remarried and I had a daughter, but Lena had no spirit, because I had none to give her." Based on this and the following example there seemed to be a strong notion of passing on spirit from generation to generation in the Chinese tradition. The following extract illustrates how with a significant silence and the last part of their conversation the mother gave Lena the spirit she had been lacking. This was seen in her inner speech:

It's not too late. All my pains, my regrets, I will gather them together my daughter will hear me calling even I said no words, she will climb the stairs to find me, she will be scared, because at first her eyes will see nothing – she will feel in her heart this place where she hides her fears, she will know...I am waiting like a tiger in the trees now ready to leap out and cut her spirit loose.

Lena's inner speech dealt mostly with the finances between her and Harold as seen before, but she also thought about her relationship to her mother as is shown in the following extract: "Over the years mom got better although it seemed like all her fears turned into worries about me. So now that I'm married and she is visiting our new house, I hope she can finally be for me."

3.2.3.4 Ethnicity

Talking about the Chinese elements in *The Joy Luck Club* Yuan Yuan (1999:1) discussed the China narratives in Tan's work. Contrary to his opinion, I believe that Tan's narrative has not lost its reference to China. In Yuan Yuan's view the mothers' China is only in their past, but I think that they 'carry' the China in their hearts and reminisce it so much that it is very real to them and also the reference to the actual China exists. This applied to all of the four mothers and their memories, but the reason why I presented it at this point was that despite of the fact that Ying Ying's reason for living China was the most sad and traumatizing, she still had the strength to go through the painful memories and to get the strength from the Chinese traditions.

Yuan Yuan (1999:1) also stated that "the present American context provides meaning and determines the content of the China narrative. Only under such circumstances as loss of origin can China experiences emerge as a China narrative." I think that the American context does influence the text immensely, but the contact to the actual China is also present in the stories and the reference is there. This view is supported by Xu (1994:4) who states: "Memory is not just a narrative,--; it is more importantly an experiential relation between the past and the present, projecting a future as well." On the other hand, I agree with Yuan Yuan (1999:2) that in *The Joy Luck Club* both mothers and daughters are forced to re-evaluate their China narrative as they go along, but I do not think that the mothers have lost their identity as Yuan Yuan claims.

In the case of Ying Ying and Lena, in addition to the mother's memories China, they also came up in the form of Chinese traditions and beliefs. Ying Ying firmly believed that the reason for Lena being so unhappy, was that she was not able to give her a stronger spirit. She thought that she lost it as she let her baby drown into the bath water as she puts it in her inner speech:

“My baby was so light in my arms because his little spirit had flown away. And with his my sprit had gone too.” The traditions were also present in the everyday life, which is seen in Lena’s line as she said: “So mom sees this mirror in foot of our bed, and she says: “Ai, a mirror there is bad luck, all the romance will hit the mirror and boom go back the opposite direction.”

3.2.4 The outcome of the mother-daughter interaction

The conversation between Ying Ying and Lena led to Lena to leaving her husband and finding a more balanced and equal relationship. When she was unhappily married to Harold and, like her mother said, unspirited, she was looking sad and talking very little, but when she later is with her new boyfriend in June’s going-away party, she is smiling and talking all the time. Also as a result of the dialogue Lena got closer to her mother, which was seen in the end of the conversation as Ying Ying took Lena into her arms and stroked her hair. This touched also Ying Ying very deeply because for the first time she had a smile on her face.

Lena got more confidence and she learnt that she also deserved respect and also her identity changed. She saw herself as a equal party in her ethnic group, because she was no longer frightened to express her true feelings and she was also allowed to criticize other people. The daughters’ sense of self and self-esteem varied in *The Joy Luck Club*, but Lena seemed in the beginning to have very little confidence in herself and she tended to belittle herself. The fact that she found more self-respect with the help of her mother, also helped her to find her ethnic identity.

3.3 Lindo and Waverly

As the other three mothers, Lindo had a colorful past behind her. She was separated from her family when she was only fourteen, due to her mother’s agreement with the matchmakers. Lindo had been only four years old, when she had been set to marry Huang Tai Tai. From that moment on in order to

fulfill the matchmakers requirements, her mother started to train her for the role of an obedient wife. She taught Lindo manners and was more like a trainer than a mother by giving Lindo advice every chance she got. Lindo sensed the change in her mother, and saw that it was her mother's way of letting her go gradually. "She did not say these things because she didn't love me, she said these things so that she would not wish for something that was no longer hers."

This made Lindo feel that the distance to her mother grew day by day: "For the next ten years my mother treated me as if I would already belong to Huang Tai Tai." It was very difficult for the fourteen year old Lindo to understand why her mother left her to be with strangers and to marry a man she had never laid eyes upon. Even as an adult she still wondered her mother's actions by thinking: "To lose a mother so young to wonder why. Even to this day I wonder, how my own mother could give me up."

Even though Lindo did not understand her mothers actions, she did not rebel against her. She got married to Huang Tai Tai, a very young boy who still played with lizards and only giggled as he saw Lindo naked. However, Lindo had a mind of her own, which is seen in her thoughts before seeing her husband:

That night I would meet my husband for the first time. The one who would control my destiny, who would decide whether I was happy or not. This one moment would decide for my whole life- whether fear would rule or I would. I decided underneath I knew who I was. I promised myself to never forget.

Even though she saw that she was to be obedient to her husband and that her future was up to him, she decided to also to follow her heart. This she did by inventing a story, which got her to get out of the marriage. Because Lindo and Huang Tai Tai were more like a sister and a brother, there was no sign of an heir to the family. This made Lindo's mother-in-law very upset and

she made Lindo's life very unpleasant, which encouraged her to try to get out of the marriage. By referring to a fake dream about the ancestors and a curse over Huang Tai Tai as long as he remained married to Lindo, she convinced the family to let her go. Lindo turned out to be a very resourceful and clever girl, and she got what she wanted. Even though she was amazed at her mother's actions above all, she still wanted to be obedient to her in her doings. "So you see- I still kept my promise to my mother, but years later things were somewhat different with my daughter Waverly."

The relationship between Lindo and her daughter, Waverly seemed to be very difficult and full of tension. The first part of the mother-daughter dialogue took place in Waverly's childhood, where the reason for the problems in their relationship seemed to partly lie. The problem in that time was due to Waverly's hobby the chess. Waverly liked to play it and she was very successful. Lindo was very proud of her, which is seen as she was boasting about her daughter's accomplishments on the street: You not see Life-magazine? I told my daughter, use your horse to run over your enemy. She won very quickly this way." This shows that besides of her being proud, Waverly's games were as Xu (1994:6) puts it not only her daughter's battle's but her as well.

3.3.1 The visual presentation of Lindo and Waverly

Lindo's character gave the impression of a very firm and often unhappy person. She spoke very bluntly and seemed to be very sure of her opinions. Her silence at times said more than words and the discontent was also many times seen in her face as she for example frowned in the hairdresser's chair. She dressed up very conventionally and neatly. She obviously did not spend a lot of money on herself, because she thought that paying for a hair-dresser was totally ridiculous. This is also seen in Waverly's comment at the hair dresser's "God forbid she'd pay for anything professionally done".

Waverly was very sophisticated looking and was dressed very fashionably. She wore stylish jewelry and was very well groomed. There was a certain sadness to her character, which mostly came up in her interaction with her mother. She did not smile a lot around her and appeared to be edgy. Here was a contrast to the young chess champion Waverly who smiled a lot. She seemed also very much happier being around her future husband Rich. But while she was around her mother, she got at times this look full of worry and even anger.

3.3.2 The setting and the camera angles

The first part of the mother-daughter dialogue took place in the street and then in their own home. What was significant about the street scene as well as the home scene was the way the American signs of living are mixed with Chinese ones. As Waverly was arguing in San Francisco's China town with her mother, there was a brand new American car behind her and an American pop song is playing. The home was filled with Chinese things, but there was also for example a television shown in the picture. There seemed to be a mixture of both cultures in the set.

The second part of the conversation took place in a totally different environment. The first place was Waverly's modern home overlooking the city with big window walls that made the place look very wide. The interior was very modern, but the signs of living like for example shoes lying around giving it a home-like feeling. The second scene was at Waverly's hair salon, which was also very modern, and the mirrored walls gave it a wide and at the same time a heartless and clinical sense. The place also seemed to be a very expensive one.

In this dialogue different camera angles played a significant part in the story. For example, the part of the mother-daughter conversation in the hair salon the camera angle gave the impression of being in a mirror. This gave a new dimension and also the characters standing in front of it had to look

through it to each other. This also gave a certain new element to the dialogue; as if the mirror was a part of the process when Waverly and Lindo finally for the first saw to each other's minds. The camera angle directed to Waverly as Rich and Lindo were talking put the emphasis on the fact of how important it was to Waverly to get her mother's approval and how much she valued her opinions.

3.3.3 Mother-daughter interaction

3.3.3.1 The topics

The mother-daughter conversation taking place in Waverly's childhood was about the daughter's chess playing. She was getting to be a very skilful player and Lindo was of course very proud of her success. The conversation started as Lindo was on the street parading with the cover of the Life-magazine with Waverly's picture on it. This annoyed Waverly and she tried to get her mother to stop showing off by saying "I wish you wouldn't do that, telling everyone that I'm your daughter" Lindo took this the wrong way and answered "What do you mean? You so ashamed be with your mother?" as thinking that Waverly was embarrassed at, not only what she was doing, but also at the fact that she was her mother. Waverly tried to make her point clearer by saying "It's not that. It's just that it's so embarrassing". And as Lindo kept pressuring her and asked "What?" The misunderstanding had already happened, Lindo was not able to see her daughter's point of view, and the dialogue continued as follows:

Waverly: That's all.
 Lindo: Embarrassed to be my daughter.
 Waverly: It's not what I said!
 Lindo: What you say? Look at me. Look at me!
 Waverly: Why do you have to use me to show off? If you wanna show off, why don't you learn how to play chess? (After saying this she, despite of her mother resistance, wrenched her hand free from her mother's hand and ran into the crowd)

By this Waverly hurt her mother in two different ways. Firstly, by protesting against her mother, even though due to a misunderstanding from Lindo's part; secondly, by running off and disobeying her mother's orders. By this she hurt her mother because Lindo believed that a child was to obey her mother no matter what. This was a notion she had adopted from her childhood. Keeping one's promise to your parents had been a guiding thought in her life, even though they had abandoned her.

After Waverly's protest, Lindo's attitude towards her changed. As she came home, the mother totally ignored her, which upset her even more. In order to get attention she announce that she would stop playing chess altogether, but her mother said nothing. Lindo's attitude change was not only a temporary thing, which was seen in Waverly's inner speech as she said: "For months I kept expecting ma to beg me to play chess again. But she never mentioned it, as if I had never played at all." This also showed that she had given the decision of quitting only to spite her mother and wanted to continue playing. But there is also another angle to Waverly's behaviour. As seen by Wang (1985:23) in order to acquire a firmer sense of self, one has to reject all authorities, both Chinese and American. So by rejecting both the family and the society Waverly was just in a quest for selfhood, but was misunderstood by everybody. And also was left with feeling of insecurity and low self-esteem.

It was not long after the fight that Waverly with a smiling face went to her mother believing that she would be jumping for joy to hear her news, but she was wrong as seen in the following extract:

Waverly: Guess what mom? I've decided to play chess again.

Lindo: You think it is so easy? One day quit, next day play. Everything for you is this way, so smart, easy, fast. Not so easy anymore.

However, Waverly was so much influenced by her mother that when Lindo discouraged her in her playing chess again, she failed, believing that Lindo had taken her strength. This is also seen in her inner speech:

What she said it was just like a curse. This power I had, this belief in myself I could actually feel it draining away. I could feel myself to become so ordinary. All the secrets I once saw, I couldn't see them anymore. All I could see my mistakes, my weaknesses. The best part of me just disappeared.

This episode left a permanent mark in their relationship. The closeness was gone and this is seen in the other parts of the dialogue. As they talk at Waverly's, Lindo did not spare her comments and this resulted in a small outburst by Waverly.

Waverly: This is what I wanted to show you. (walks into the room wearing a long fur coat) Rich, you know the guy I told you about. I don't know why he got it for. It's never cold enough to wear. You wanna try it?

Lindo: (Takes the coat and strokes it) This is not so good. Only left over strips. See fancy shot, no long hair.

This hurt Waverly's feelings, because her showing the coat was her way of letting her mother know about Rich. She was very happy about the relationship as well as about the coat and was pleading for her mother's approval and recognition. She felt that Lindo, by saying bad things about the coat, also expressed her disapproval of Rich. Waverly was so upset that she did not manage to hide her feelings, which shows in the dialogue as she said: How can you criticize a gift? (With annoyance) Rich gave this to me with all his heart. And when her mother answered: "That's why I told you. Not so good." she got really upset and decided to confront her mother directly about the issue of Rich and him living there.

Waverly: Aren't you gonna say anything else?

Lindo: What I should say?

Waverly: About the apartment, About this (showing the coat), about this (taking Rich's ties from the

drawer and showing them) or this. All of this?
(Throws Rich underwear into the air and one of
the boxers land on Lindo's head.)

As to her usual calmness, Lindo just took the boxers and did not say anything why this was. Usual was because this dialogue resembled the scene, where young Waverly after the street episode returned home, got no kind of reaction out of her mother even though she raised her voice by saying: "I'm never gonna play chess again! You can't make me. You can torture me all you want. I still won't!!" As already pointed out above, with this Waverly was trying to get her mother's attention by saying something to upset her, just out of spite. And she also thought that mother would try to get her to continue playing, but she was wrong, as she was wrong to think of getting a reaction out of her by confronting her about Rich.

As the wedding day approached, Waverly tried hard to get her mother's approval of Rich. She brought him to her birthday party and for a while she thought that she had won her over. As she introduced Rich to her, she observed her mother to warm up a little and she indicated this with a smile. She even said to Rich: "I think maybe we got her" The joy was though very brief, because Lindo's first comment to Waverly about him was: "So many spots on his face." And after the dinner party where Rich behaved impolitely against Chinese customs, Waverly was again convinced that she hated Rich. After the party she said to Rich that the reason she did not say anything to Lindo about the wedding plants was, because she saw Lindo's opinion to be that: "She'd rather get rectal cancer."

So the tension between Waverly and Lindo continued. And it was no surprise that the following phone conversation before going to the beauty parlor got Waverly upset again.

Lindo: Waverly, you're already at the beauty parlor?
Waverly: No.
Lindo: No.

Waverly: No. I have a headache.
 Lindo: Headache. You have a headache, so you cannot keep your promise to your mother?
 Waverly: Ma!
 Lindo: Don't come. Why should I want you to come? When all you telling me you don't want to come.
 Waverly: Ma. That's not what I said.
 Lindo: What's wrong with the way I look now? I just go to wedding with old hair. (She hangs up, before Waverly gets to say anything)

After the conversation Waverly got almost angry at her mother and said to Rich: "Shit. She always does this" She is referring to the way Lindo is twisting her words and accusing her of being disobedient. This aggravation was also seen in the later part of the dialogue in the beauty parlor. What Waverly did not know, was that just before the phone conversation Lindo had been reminiscing her marriage and the concessions she had made to obey her mother's wishes. Because Waverly was already in a bad mood as she came to the hair salon, the conversation did not begin with the best terms. Even though it took place on Waverly's turf, she nevertheless seemed to get no advantage from that. By this I mean that it would think that Waverly would have been more comfortable confronting her mother in a place, where she was familiar with.

In the beginning of the dialogue Waverly gave instructions to the hair stylist about what kind the hairdo should be, as if Lindo herself had been unable to say what she wanted. This hurt Lindo's feelings and she answered sharply as she was criticized about her home dyed hair: "Why I should pay? What for, why I should pay 90 dollar to act like you? So important. Go to fancy barber with torn-up jeans." The same attitude continued in the dialogue as Lindo suddenly started to hesitate about the whole thing:

Lindo: Maybe I don't go.
 Waverly: What do you mean?
 Lindo: Maybe I don't go to your wedding.
 Waverly: Don't be ridiculous!
 Lindo: Maybe already ridiculous, too ridiculous for future husband family.

Lindo felt very insecure in this situation, and these comments were a sign of her fear of embarrassing her daughter and she felt that Waverly was ashamed of her. She expresses this directly, but only in her inner speech. “I could see her face looking at me, but not see me. She was ashamed, so ashamed to be my daughter.” But Waverly saw this as yet one indication of her resentment towards Rich and got really upset. Only after she saw Lindo wiping tears from her eyes, she realized that something was wrong, and the conversation continued as follows:

- Waverly: Mom, what’s wrong?
 Lindo: Nothing – Only thinking of my mother, how much I wanted to be like her.
 Waverly: Your mother?
 Lindo: She told me all the hopes she had for me. Words I never forget:
 (the story takes back to Lindo’s childhood and to the scene with her own mother) “You are lucky, you didn’t inherit my ears. You will get a better life, but just think carefully what you do. Do you feel it in your heart what I’m telling you? Promise me that you will never forget these words. This is the last advice I will ever give you.” (spoken in Chinese: own translation)
 Lindo: In my memory my mother very important to me. Just like her words. Easy to appreciate memory.

Apparently Lindo had never told much to Waverly about her own mother and that was why she really got her full attention, when she mentioned her. As Lindo was telling this, she was showing her emotions openly and was crying, which touched Waverly also. The conversation was getting emotional, and Waverly saw her opportunity to bring up the issue that had been bothering all along.

- Waverly: Ma, why don’t you like Rich?
 Lindo: Is Rich you afraid I don’t like? If I don’t like your Rich, I act polite, say nothing, let him have big cancer, let my daughter be a widow. I like Rich, of course I do. To allow him to marry such a daughter.

Here was the first big break through in their relationship, because Waverly discovered that she had been interpreting her mother wrong all along. This also got her to open up even more and she confessed her true feeling towards Lindo:

Waverly: You don't know. You don't know the power you have over me. One word from you. One look. And I'm four years old again and crying myself to sleep again., because nothing I do can ever please you (weeping).
Lindo: (long silence) Now, now you make me happy.

From this point the tears turned to laughter and they seemed to connect like never before. Lindo saw that instead of shame, she had been an authoritative figure to her daughter as her mother was to her. Waverly's life long misunderstanding of underachieving and doubt seemed to loose its ground and the beginning to a more open relationship had been made.

3.3.3.2 The language features and the style of the dialogue

Again as with the three previous mother-daughter pairs, the mother spoke English in a 'Chinese' way. The intonation was similar to the Chinese language and even though her speech was fluent, it had minor grammar mistakes like for example " You not see Life-magazine?" "What I should say?". These are word order mistakes typical of her speech. She also used singular forms instead of the plural, in for example "Why I should pay 90 dollar ...?" Waverly, in turn, spoke very standard American English and there were no grammar mistakes in her speech.

Turn-taking in the dialogue was very polite, even if the women were arguing. Both got to finish their sentences except in the phone conversation, when Lindo hung up before Waverly got to say anything. Otherwise the conversation pace was very slow, even though Waverly at times raised her voice. Lindo used also silence as a means for communication, which Waverly hated. This accounted also to the fact that the topic was more often

introduced by Waverly. For example, she brought up such topics as she being uncomfortable about Lindo's bragging, not wanting to play chess, and she living together with Rich. But Lindo also introduced few topics from which her bringing up her own mother were the most significant and epoch-making event ones in the dialogue.

The style of Waverly's speech, while talking to her mother, gave often the sense of discontent and discord, but it was conveyed through expressions on her face most of the time. Lindo and Waverly did not make many gestures while they were talking. However, Waverly seemed to use gestures in situations where she was very angry. The most striking gesture Waverly does is in the hair salon, as Lindo was talking about not taking part of the wedding. As Lindo looked down, she moved her hands so that it looked like she was strangling her and she grimaced. Also individual actions played an important role in the film, like for example there was a symbolic meaning as she as a young girl swiped all the chessmen from the chessboard as to demonstrate against her mother. Lindo, on the other hand, used expressions to show her emotions: The sour look she had on in the barber's chair and while shampooing gave her away totally.

In the hair salon scene, Waverly's aggravation towards her mother was seen also in the way she was giving instructions to the barber about the hairdo. "Look she doesn't want it too short otherwise it'll be too tight for the wedding. And we don't want her looking too weird or too kinky. Isn't that right ma, N-o-t t-o-o k-i-n-k-y? She was acting like Lindo did not understand a word of English and talked very loud and articulated very thoroughly. Lindo was obviously hurt, which was seen in the sour expression she had on her face. Also the feeling of embarrassment was easy to detect from it. Although this was not very common for Lindo, because this was the only case when her emotions were so obviously read from her face. For example at the dinner table as Rich insulted her cooking, there was no reaction seen in her.

3.3.3.3 The characters' inner speech

Waverly reflected in her inner speech on her feelings towards her mother much more directly than in the dialogue with her. She explained how she saw their relationship and the influence her mother had over her which is seen in these two examples: “My mom always does this. Whatever I say, whatever I do, whatever I think. She always has got the perfect counter move.” “It was the only part of my life to this day, when I trusted myself completely.—I was safe there. I still cry remembering that.” (Refers to the time when she was in sync with her mother in other words before the fight) She also saw her own participation to the conflict they had in her childhood: “But I can't put it all on my mother. I did it to myself. I never played chess again. Waverly also reflected in her inner speech her mother's view on her. For example in the following extract she examines her love life in respect to her mother:

I mean I even married a Chinese man to please her. He was gorgeous, he gave her a granddaughter, but was she satisfied. When we got divorced, she got all upset like it was my fault. And when I finally started dating again, when I tried to hint to her about Rich, that we were living together. How could she not notice. This was not going to go away, even with her silent treatment.

Lindo also thought about her own mother and the fixed marriage in China, but her inner speech also dealt with Waverly's attitudes towards her. For example at the hair salon as Waverly is the mediator in her wishes about the hair style, her thoughts are: “Why does my daughter think she's translating English for me? “

3.3.3.4 Ethnicity

The contrast of two different cultures was seen well in the relationship of Lindo and Waverly. Their relationship was stressful for both parties due to the different cultural values and manners they both have, which was seen in

the dialogue. Having been brought up in America, Waverly had absorbed the Western attitudes, she did not realize the implications of her standing up to her mother. Of course the American upbringing values obedience too, but it is not seen as grave an insult as in the Chinese culture. So when Waverly as a young girl protested against her mother, she did not see it as bad as Lindo did. She saw it as if Waverly had let down her entire family, which was also seen in her remark to her: “This girl have not concerning for us, we not concerning this girl.” This Lindo’s comment emphasized the Chinese way of bringing up children according to which they are as said by Chiu (as cited in Gudykunst et al. 1996:86) “taught to remember themselves as members of the family and to remember that what they do, good or bad, will affect the family.”

The issue of ethnicity came also up in the dinner table scene. Rich was unaware of the Chinese traditions and his actions, which were typical for the American customs, were totally opposite to the Chinese ones. This is seen through Waverly’s eyes in her inner speech as follows:

He shouldn’t have had that second glass, when everyone else had had just an inch for taste. He should have taken only a small spoonful of the best dish until everyone had had a helping. He shouldn’t have bragged that he was a fast learner. But the worst was when Rich criticized my mother’s cooking and he didn’t even know, what he had done. As is the Chinese cook’s custom, my mother always insults her own cooking. But only with the dishes she serves with special pride. That was queue to eat some and proclaim it best she’s ever made. (Instead he added soya sauce without testing it first)

If Waverly had been more familiar with the Chinese customs, she would have known that no matter what Rich did at the dinner party, he would have not been totally accepted right away into the family. The reason for this is the fact that in the Chinese culture as said by Gu (as cited in Gudykunst et al. 1996:87) there is a division between insiders and outsiders in all interpersonal levels. An outsider can become an insider but it is not so easy.

So Rich was considered an outsider, who according to Gu (as cited in Gudykunst et al. 1996:87) “must follow the rules”

The fact that Waverly was very much devoted to her career, also represented a cultural conflict. As said by Godukunst et al.(1996:89) there is a close connection between a Chinese person’s sense of self and his/her social standing. This could explain her ambition in her work; she tried to solve her identity problems by acquiring respect business wise. Her ambitions were seen as untypical to the Chinese culture because as pointed out by Joy (2001) the Chinese tradition does not approve bringing out one’s pursuit of being more competent than the other:

[S]ince the focus in Chinese culture is on the familial self, an individual's extraordinary **needs for self-gratification and recognition** (my italics) through self-gifts are **deemed dysfunctional** to smooth group functioning and are consequently **discouraged**.

3.3.4 The outcome of the mother-daughter interaction

Even though the topic of the dialogue is supposed to be Rich, they in fact evaluate their relationship with each other, which is seen also in their inner speech. So the key issue is not really what Lindo thinks about Rich, it is about both of them seeking acceptance from each other and finding understanding of these two totally different, but at the same time similar lives. They see themselves very unlike and far from each other, but in fact they are very similar. Lindo is uncertain about herself and is afraid if Waverly is ashamed of her. Waverly, on the other hand, is desperately trying to do the right thing and please her mother and feels that she fails her whatever she does.

Waverly does not like her mother’s way of ignoring her and her life and she saw it as a sign of disapproval and discontent. So there was a big misunderstanding preventing their relationship to work. The dialogue at the

beauty parlor seemed to bring them closer to mutual understanding; Waverly got to say what has been bothering her and the way she felt. She also got to see Lindo's vulnerable side and the way she really felt about her. This brought them closer together and they were more at ease and happier around each other which can be seen in the party scene. Waverly also acquired more self-esteem and her identity problems were solved. By resolving issues with her mother, she became more confident about herself and she saw herself as an equal member of the ethnic group as well. Again mother's revelations about her own mother/daughter relationship helped to mend the relationship between Lindo and Waverly.

3.4 Jing-mei and June

Jing-mei's reasons for leaving China were also dramatic. She had to escape her hometown with her twin baby girls to go to Chungking to meet the babies' father. It was a trip during which, as she put it "By the time she reached Chungking, she had lost everything". On the way there she had got so ill and weary that she had no choice, but to leave the babies by the roadside. She thought that she was about to die, and decided that it would be very harmful for the babies to be found next to a dead mother. June's father put it this way: "She thought, better not die next to my babies – nobody saves babies with such a bad luck. Who wants two babies with ghost mother following them. Very bad luck. Very."

In the beginning of the film the relationship between Jing-mei and June was complicated and it was shadowed by a very significant misconception from June's part. She thought that she has been the biggest disappointment in her mother's life and felt that no matter what she did, it was never enough for her. This is seen in the dialogue:

June: I'm just sorry that you got stuck with such a loser. That I've always been so disappointing.
 Jing-mei: What do you mean disappoint? Piano?

June: Everything. My grades, my job, not getting married. Everything you expected of me.

June also expressed her insecurity in her inner speech. As Waverly was commenting on June's shortcomings, she felt to be 'the worst quality daughter'. "That's how my mother was. Everything had to be the best. She believed the same about me that I could be anything- instead I was the biggest disappointment in my mother's life." The mother also answered Waverly about June not having style "True cannot teach style. June not like Waverly, must be born this way." June's opinions thus seemed to get reinforcement and she was convinced that she was a total failure in her mother's eyes. June also saw that she had stayed estranged from her mother. "There were so many things to my mother I never understood".

This mother-daughter pair was significantly different from the other three pairs. Firstly, this was because in the film's present time Jing-mei had already passed away and the mother-daughter dialogue was only reminisced by June. Secondly, their relationship was very central to the film, because it provided the film with its plot. The story was built around June's going away party, where all of the mother-daughter pairs were present. The basic story-line dealt with the process of June discovering her lost twins and how she was preparing for the up-coming trip despite of the fact that the twins were told in a letter, that their mother would come to see them instead of June. Thirdly, there was a third participant in the dialogue: June found out about Jing-mei's past and thoughts from her father only after Jing-mei's death. However, the mother seemed to be very much present even after her death. It was as if she was talking to June through her husband, in words which had a profound effect on her. This is seen in the following extract from the father-daughter talk right after June discovered that Jing-mei was forced to leave the babies due to her illness. June is holding a swan feather from Jing-mei, which she wanted for June to have.

Father: No - no no. She thought se wasn't worthy enough mother to give it to you.

June: Worthy enough for me?

Father: Because she gave up hope about her other daughters. How can she show you how to hoping when she had lost hope. Mother – mother can never give up her hope for her own children. Never.

June: Never.

Father: So she never did, On the day you (were) born, she transfer all her hope to you. All hope from those babies.

June: She transferred all her hopes to me?

Father: Mine too.

June: I love you daddy.

This touching conversation shows June the reality of things and she finds out a vulnerable side to her mother. In the case of Jing-mei and June the film concentrated more on the actual mother-daughter relationship and not like with the other daughters on their marital problems. The issues of piano playing and June's work did come up in the dialogue, but only briefly. The dialogue went straight to the point, even though June started off with the remark of Jing-mei not eating her crab at dinner. June's current life situation was not the major issue; the focus was on June herself and the relationship to her mother.

3.4.1 The visual presentation of Jing-mei and June

Jing-mei's character gave the impression of a very balanced and calm person in the dialogue scenes. Her appearance was very neat and her she did not wear any bright colors. Her beautiful long dark hair was mostly in a bun, except for the festive occasion as June performed at the recital. That time she let her hair be free as if to celebrate her daughter. Her posture was good and it conveyed the sense of dignity. The sense of her being Chinese was both in the appearance and the gestures. At times she bowed her head in the Chinese way; as to shy away from something. A good example from this is the end of the mother-daughter dialogue, when after giving the necklace, Jing-mei turns her head away from June, but June gently makes her to raise

her head. As their eyes meet again, there is a lot of love and understanding in that moment.

Jing-mei showed her calmness in the film by her behavior and also silence. As she was arguing with the nine-year-old June, she did not get upset, when her daughter brought up the twins she left behind in China. It was a very sensitive subject especially because June did not know the true story, and her daughter accusing of her killing them hurt her deeply. Even though this was obviously very painful for her, she did not say anything but, just looked at June with distraught. She succeeded in hiding the truth from June and kept quiet until her grave.

June's character traits were actually very similar to Jing-mei's. Her appearance was very subtle; harmonious colors and understated. She gave the impression of a kind and flexible person, who was also, if needed, ready to stand up to herself. She had suffered all her life thinking that her mother did not value her at all. She had been hiding that pain for a long time, and had learnt to keep quiet. This was why she looked very calm, but at the same time sad, and at times distraught. However, there was a significant change in June's appearance after she had sorted out her misconceptions about her relationship with her mother; she smiled a lot more and also talked directly about her feelings as she gives a speech in her going away party. There was a lot more compassion and self-confidence in her in the party scene. In addition, she told the story of a swan to Rose Hsu's little girl, which gave a totally opposite picture of her than before; she was smiling calmly and reminiscing her own mother with love.

3.4.2 The setting and the camera angles

The setting was in both scenes very much in harmony with the story and it very easily went unnoticed. The recital scene took place in a very common setting; there was the stage and the audience. This was a very American setting, because there is a strong tradition in the USA of showing children's

talents to parents on such occasions. The camera angle also supported the intensity of the moment by showing only close-ups of the audience as well as of the stage. Also the children waiting their turn by the stage brought the feeling of anticipation and excitement.

The other childhood scene took place at home. There for a moment two objects became part of the story: the television and the piano. June watching television represented again a very American way of life, which will be discussed in more detail later. Also owning a piano and a television was a sign of a high standard of living. With these two items the house was portrayed as a very American household, leaving Chinese influence to the background.

The second part of the dialogue took place also at home and as with Ying Ying and Lena, in the kitchen. The setting was very inconspicuous: the focus was on the characters and the camera angles were close-ups. You can not get a full picture on the set and the viewer's access to it was meant to be very limited. The limited view on the kitchen gave a very domestic impression, because there are many things on the wall; especially the rooster caught the viewer's attention. Because the setting was left at the background, the focus was unavoidably on the characters.

The most impressive setting in this episode was in the scene where Jing-mei was in China with her twins. The horror and fear of the fleeing masses was being transmitted to the viewer well. The scene where people were leaving the burning town and war behind looked very authentic. As Jing-mei was with her last shreds of strength pushing the babies in a wooden wheelbarrow, the difficulties of the journey became very real and tangible to the viewer.

The different camera angles emphasized certain aspects in *The Joy Luck Club*. Again, Wang uses face close-ups i.e. affection images. Both Jing-mei

and June were many times in close-ups especially in the kitchen scene; the more emotional the dialogue got, the closer was the camera angle. In addition to close-ups Wang was also able to emphasize emotions from a wider perspective. This is for example shown in the scene in which Jing-mei dragged June to the piano; the wider camera angle left a bigger space open, which draws attention to the actual action. According to Brouwer (1997:508) these shots are typical for Wang's films and they are called "any-space-whatever"-shots, which by leaving a wide open space of nothing in to the screen gives frame to the actual event. Wang also emphasized emotions in a dialogue by showing the listener instead of the speaker. For example, as Waverly was criticizing June about her work as seen later, the camera angle showed June's face which showed signs of disappointment and hurt.

3.4.3 The mother-daughter interaction

3.4.3.1 The topics

The dialogue was in two totally different sections. The first one took place as June was nine years old, and the issue was practicing piano. She was performing in her first music recital, where she was to make her outstanding piano debut. This scene also included an exceptional feature compared to the other mother-daughter pairs. There was a short dialogue between two mothers before June's performance: Jing-mei and Waverly's mother Lindo. Both of the mothers hide their sense of pride into these lines, which obviously are meant to brag about their daughters' accomplishments.

Lindo:	I ask my daughter, help me carry groceries. You think this too much asked. All day long she plays chess. I dust of all her trophies. Appreciate me, no. You lucky you don't have the same problem.
Jing-mei:	My problem – worsen than yours. If I tell June to come wash the dish, she hear nothing but music. It's just like she can't stop this natural talent.

The recital though did not go as planned which is seen in June's voice-over narration on the events as she was on stage:

Until that night I didn't believe I was a prodigy. In fact I used to go out of my way to prove my mother wrong. That I wasn't cut out to be best anything. I could only be me. It was incredible, it was like my hands were possessed by Mozart and everybody could see this, could hear this. I was a genius. I had been discovered. And then I heard it. (a wrong note, after which the whole piece went very poorly)

The failed performance got June thinking that she could stop playing. "After the talent show fiasco I figured I never had to play the piano again" To her surprise Jing-mei wanted her to continue practicing and came to her and said: "Four o'clock. Turn off TV. Practice piano time." June's inner thoughts were "I couldn't believe what she was saying, like I was suppose to go through the same torture again. Forget it."

Jing-mei: What I say? Four o'clock.
 June: I'm not gonna play anymore. Why should I?
 Jing-mei: What did you say?
 June: I'm not your slave. This isn't China. You can't make me.
 Jing-mei: Get up! (Takes June and drags her to the piano despite of her resisting)
 June: No no , I won't!

June's behaviour got Jing-mei very upset, because she valued obedience over everything. Even though the dialogue starts off with the issue of piano playing, it got beyond that very quickly. As the dialogue continues, it showed that June's rebellion was on a more general level.

June: You want me to be someone I'm not. I'll never be the kind of daughter that you want me to be.
 Jin-mei: There's two kinds of daughter, obedient or follow their own mind. Only one kind of daughter to live in this house. The obedient kind.
 June: And I wish that I wasn't your daughter. I wish you weren't my mom.
 Jing-mei: Too late to change this.
 June: **And I wish I was dead, like them, the babies that you killed in China.** (my italics)

These June's last words seemed to cut like a knife into Jing-mei's heart. June's rebellion can be seen as an act of spite, but it had also deeper implications. This is supported by Nadeau (1995:1) who states that "The mother/daughter relationship undergoes added conflict and strain in the adolescent years because the mother is the primary role model and teacher of cultural values." And June's outburst was a sign of this tension. Also she felt pressured about her mother's great expectations on her, as she in her inner speech puts it: "When I was nine years old my mother's version of believing in me was believing that I could be anything. Anything she wanted; the best piano prodigy this side of China – I never practiced."

In this mother-daughter dialogue the issues were dealt in a more direct way and there was not so much symbolism as with the two previous mother-daughter pairs. As an exception to this, the necklace that Jing-mei gave to June held a great symbolic value; the Chinese heritage was this way passed on to June. Also the conversation was from the beginning about their relationship, even though the first lines are about the crabs. This dialogue differs also from the previous ones, because it is not initiated by the mother. The second part of the mother-daughter dialogue happened little before Jing-mei passed away, after the last crab dinner she prepared. The dialogue is triggered by a comment from Jing-mei to Waverly's criticism towards June's work at the dinner table discussion. The discussion was very exceptional, because there were two mother-daughter pairs present, which is also why it is here investigated as a whole:

- Waverly: Didn't you play the piano once?
 June: No, not really.
 Waverly: Yeah, I could have sworn.
 Lindo: Hey June how your business go? Your mother tell me your busy busy busy.
 June: It's going pretty good, although one of my clients seems to think that freelance means free, just because we're friends.
 Waverly: Listen June, I don't know how to tell you this. But the stuff you wrote. Well the firm decided it was unacceptable.

- Lindo: (says something in Chinese to Waverly with annoyance)
- June: You're lying- (Jing-mei tries to calm her down)
You- you said, you said it was terrific, you said that-
- Waverly: I didn't want to hurt your feelings, I was trying to see if I could fix it somehow. But it just won't work.
- June: Look, All copy needs fine-tuning. Re-writes are free of course. I'm just as concern about making it perfect as you are.
- Waverly: June, I really don't think.
- June: Just tell me what they wanna have changed. I'll give you a call next week okay. We'll go over it line by line.
- Waverly: June. I can't. It's just not well-sophisticated. I'm sure what you do for your other clients is wonderful-
- Lindo: (says something in Chinese to Waverly)
- Waverly: Ma! And we are a big firm and we need somebody who understands that. Who understands our style.
- June: What does style have to do with?
- Waverly: Agh, I mean really June, 3 benefits, 3 needs, 3 reasons to buy, satisfaction guaranteed for today's and tomorrow's-
- June: That's just part of it.
- Waverly: Yeah, the bad part.

(The underlined part is spoken simultaneously)

In this conversation the style is totally different from the mother-daughter dialogues. The tone of voice is at times even hostile and there are many overlaps which shows how insensitive the situation is. This also shows how different the American conversation style is from the Chinese one. The different attitude is also shown in the mothers' way of trying to silence their daughters as they directly criticize each other. What is also interesting about it is the difference in June's reactions to criticism. When Waverly blames June's work, she talks back and tells directly what she thinks of her friend's comments, but as Jing-mei gives the same kind of comment about June lacking style, she does not say anything. Just looks at her mother with contempt and seems to be more upset to have heard it from her mother than

from Waverly. One interesting point is that the men in the table keep silent the whole time.

The actual mother-daughter conversation started off after Jing-mei notices June's great annoyance as they are sorting out the dishes in the kitchen with the following dialogue: Jing-mei: What – you're mad at Waverly? June: How can I be mad at someone with all that style? It's just a shame I wasn't born that way. Jing-mei: So it's me you mad at ? This continues, as I already pointed out, by June telling about how she sees herself in relation to Jing-mei.

Jing-mei: Not expect anything. Never expect, only hope. Only hoping the best for you. This not wrong to hope.

June: No – well it hurts. Because every time you hope for something I couldn't deliver. It hurt. It hurt me mommy. And no matter what you hoped for, I'll never be more than what I am. You never see that. Who I really am. (weeping)

This dialogue crystallizes the problem in the relationship between Jing-mei and June: Jing-mei's good intentions are seen by June as a burden, and, instead of encouragement, they have all the time served as discouragement. June's words get Jing-mei to see that her daughter needs to hear how she is truly seen by her mother, and she thinks that it is the time to pass on the necklace she has cherished all her life. As Jing-mei gives the necklace she also shows her feeling to June with very touching words.

June, since your baby time I wear this next to my heart. Now you wear next to yours. It will help you know. I see you. I see you. (long pause) That bad crab, only you tried to take it. Everybody else want the best quality. You – you're thinking different. Waverly took best quality crab, you took worst because you got the best quality heart. You have style no one can teach, must be born that way.

The necklace is a symbol of the heritage Jing-mei wants to pass on to June for strength and good luck. The same had happened when she, believing to

die soon, left all her valuables with the babies. June's father tells about this to June like this:

You know. Everything she had she left with those babies. Everything worth anything. She left a note with all her gold promising more if babies brought to their father in Chungking. So much bad luck. Then she thought even worse luck someone save her after she left them. Put her in a truck, she woke up in a hospital, screaming, wanting to die."

This dialogue showed finally to June the devotion and the care Jing-mei had for her children. Jing-mei considered her surviving a tragedy, because she was not able to save the babies. Her love was so strong that she would have given everything, even her own life, to save them.

3.4.3.2 The language features and the style of the dialogue

As with the other daughters, June spoke perfect American English. Jing-mei's language was fluent, but there is a different intonation to it which gave away that English was her second language. There are also a few grammar mistakes in her speech. She for example uses the comparative form 'worse' and omits the plural form in the saying wash the dish[es]. Also her pauses are different from the American style. For example, in the line "So it's me – you mad at?" there is a longer pause in the middle of the sentence. Mother's speech is also stripped from words that are typical for English. For example, "Like I say at dinner, not hungry." In addition to the grammar there could be more adjuncts in sentences (e.g. Like I *already* say (said) at dinner, I'm not *that* hungry).

While talking to each other the style of the dialogue was very polite and there are no overlaps. Even though they were arguing they get to finish every single utterance and turn taking was subtle and consistent. The tone was nevertheless very negative in June's voice and the pace of the speech was at times very fast, and there was resentment in her voice. The most evident sign of her being upset is, however, the murderous glances June

threw at Jing-mei. The childhood mother-daughter discussion differed slightly from this because June raised their voice to Jing-mei as she protests against piano practicing.

3.4.3.3 The characters' inner speech

The story had access only to June's inner speech, and so the inner world of Jing-mei was left unrevealed. However, Jing-mei's past was shown in the film, but only through June and her father acting as narrators. In her inner speech June sorted out her feelings towards her mother regarding the 'lost' twins as follows.

I always tried to picture in my mind what really happened. But she would never explain. She would only say by the time she reached Chungking she had lost everything. And I said wait what do you mean everything? What happened to those babies? There were so many things about my mother that I never understood. This was the only one I never forgave.

This attitude resulted from the fact that Jing-mei never told June about how the story of her leaving the babies really went. She was so ashamed of it and thought that June would think less of her, if she knew. Ironically, based on June's emotional reaction and tears as she hears the truth after Jing-mei's death, it would have brought them closer to each other.

June showed her real emotions in her inner speech and they were at times contrary to her actions. For example, after the discussion at the dinner table there was a contrast in her inner thoughts versus her doings: as she after the dialogue is sitting and keeping quietly calm, her inner thoughts are the opposite: "I was so humiliated, outsmarted by Waverly and betrayed by my own mother."

3.4.3.4 Ethnicity

China was very much present in the dialogue, but it is directly mentioned only on few occasions. One striking example is June's answer to Jing-mei's persistence to get her to play the piano. "I'm not your slave. This isn't

China. You can't make me play." This reflects the impression June has got of her ethnic origin; it is a strict one and people in China are not free. The same scene shows in a very subtle way the fact that there is a cultural gap between the mother and the daughter: As June is happily watching television believing that she does not have to practice any more, the program from which June is dragged away from is the favorite American show *The Monkees*. In my opinion it has got a symbolic value in the scene showing the daughter being Americanized.

The Chinese culture was at times shown very subtle in the film. For example, as Waverly is with harsh words criticizing June for her work, the camera angles stays on June's parents. As Waverly says "It's just not well sophisticated" Jing-mei bows her head down, but there is no reaction in the father. This showed how the mother was the key person in bringing up the children and the father stayed in the background. Hence the father was able to tell her story only after Jing-mei was gone. Keeping things very much to oneself seemed to be characteristic for the Chinese culture and it would be interesting to know how much of this was due to cultural versus individual tendencies.

3.4.4 The outcome of the mother-daughter interaction

June's conceptions about her mother as well as her identity changed radically during the film. She found her self-worth through getting inside of Jing-mei's past, her thoughts and motives. She found out that instead of a big disappointment, she had been a source of hope and joy to her mother. Because she had believed all her life that her mother did not appreciate her, it had been also easy for her to misunderstand her words. When they were discussing June's work, as I stated earlier, June was sure that the comment about style and she not having it, was to be an insult to her part. Instead Jing-mei had intended the remark to Waverly, who had shown to have slightly a "bad quality heart" compared to June.

This mother-daughter pair was significant concerning the film's structure. It was the beginning and the end, because June's childhood memories were in the beginning of *The Joy Luck Club* and the resolving mother-daughter dialogue was the last one in it. The unique structure of the film with both mothers' and daughters' flashbacks and the underlying theme of June's going away party gave the film according to Brouwer (1997:509) a connection between the Chinese heritage and its position in the lives of the American daughters. The following extract defines his view more thoroughly:

Through these memories in flashbacks, each mother connects her perception of her daughter's life difficulties with a problem of confidence or identity or self-worth suffered by the daughter's Chinese grandmother. This generational connection suggests that the daughters, though quite thoroughly Americanized- , still carry the mark of their Chinese heritage. Brouwer (1997:509)

In June's case this carrying of the Chinese heritage was seen most evidently in the scene where June told Rose Hsu's daughter, Jennifer the story of the swan feather. This following dialogue of the story-telling also in my opinion strongly symbolizes in general the successful transfer of the Chinese cultural legacy in *The Joy Luck Club* from the mothers to the daughters and crystallizes the film's message.

June: And now the woman was old and she had a daughter, who grew up speaking only English and swallowing more Coca-Cola than sorrow.

Jennifer: What's sorrow?

June: Sadness.

For along time now the woman wanted to give her daughter the single swan feather and tell her —

Jennifer: (interrupts) Is the swan there? Is there really a swan?

June: I don't know, baby. **It's my mama's story.**

Jennifer: And you can't ask her, because she's dead.

June: (nods) And the woman would tell her daughter.: "This feather may look worthless., but it comes from a far and carries all my good intentions."

Jennifer: What's intentions?

June: Well a good intention means everything your mommy wants for you. Like blowing out candles on your birthday cake.

This dialogue also shows how differently the third generation immigrants seem to take their role in the adult-child conversations. They are more inquisitive and eager to participate in the discussion and by this way indicating the benefit from being more open about things like for example in this case about June's mother and her story.

In *The Joy Luck Club* June seemed to finally find a balance in her mother-daughter relationship. She realized that Jing-mei understood her after all and that there was a profound meaning in her words "I see you". The inner peace was seen from June both in the serenity with which she was making her farewell speech when leaving for China and in the way she cherished the necklace she had got from Jing-mei. The trip to China represented a sort of closure in the mother-daughter relationship. This was seen from June's inner thoughts, as she was reunited with her long lost twin sisters: "It was enough for them and for me, because really she was there. And I'd finally done something for her. I had found the best of myself. Her long cherished wish."

4 CONCLUSIONS

In *The Joy Luck Club* the daughters' identity seem to be very much built on the things that the mothers say. They seem to validate themselves based on their mothers' opinions. As they have been born in America, they do not fully understand the meaning of the Chinese heritage and even though they are being familiarized with the customs and traditions, they don't seem to totally be into it. (Nevertheless, this changes during the film) Even though they are brought up in America, they are living in a Chinese community in San Francisco which brings the Chinese element into their lives. This creates tension and makes it difficult for them to form a complete ethnic identity. As stated by Yuan Yuan (19991) in this situation that in order to obtain her identity, the daughter has to negotiate her place in the different

discourses like for example family, ethnic group and also history. And this is done by confronting the past i.e. the mothers' stories. This means that the stories told by the four mothers in *The Joy Luck Club* are very valuable in the daughters' ethnic identity formation process. This is also suggested by Ben according to whom the mothers' memories are more than just narratives; they provide the daughters with a link between the past and the present.

In this cultural clash the mothers had the goal of making the daughters very American, but they still demanded the same obedient traditional Chinese behaviour as well. So the mothers' actions as well as the expectations on the daughters were contradictory and hard for the daughters to understand. But by telling their stories, the mothers' made it easier for the daughters to understand their attitudes and behaviour.

In general, the topics are mainly introduced by the mothers and they also do most of the talking. The daughters also talk, but they do not tell directly or voluntarily their actual feelings and are avoiding the real issues. The daughters try to introduce topics, but they are just interrupted and the topic is just being switched and ignored by the mothers. The conversation and turn-taking are always nevertheless very polite: sentences are always finished and there are no interruptions. The tone of the voice is calm and pretty monotonic even when talking with passion. What is significant about this is that all of the daughters seem to change after the mother-daughter confrontation. They become more self-assured and even happier. This shows the power the mothers had over their daughters.

In the film all the mother-daughter relationships improve. When the mothers share their memories of the past or their true feelings, it has a profound effect on the daughters and their self-image as well as their self confidence and identity. This is supported by Yuan Yuan (1999), according to whom the mothers' motives for telling these stories is to help the daughters in

constructing their identities so that their 'remarkable' Chinese experiences and traditions would continue in them. Even though this is true, the mothers do not want the daughters to continue in the role of a traditional Chinese woman in the light of their own experiences. Two of the daughters are for example faced with marital problems, because they are living by the code of obedience, pleasing their husbands and keeping their true feelings to themselves. Both of these 'crises' are solved with the help of the mothers. The mothers also realize that the values and ideas that apply to Chinese way of living and the time of their childhood, don't necessarily apply to their daughters lives in America. However, by giving insight into their past and the way of seeing things, the mothers give them the strength and the ability to cope with their life situations. This also brings the daughters closer to the Chinese way of thinking.

The theme of ethnic identity is very important in *The Joy Luck Club*, because the key issue in all four mother-daughter relationships is the daughter's quest for their sense of self. Even though the mother-daughter pairs are different, there develops a pattern how the mothers help their daughters in confronting their Chinese heritage one way or the other. Here is also an interesting point considering further studies; How much of the difficulties in the relationships are not bound to the cultural issues but to the basic problematic nature of mother-daughter relationships. Even though not included in this study, this can be seen from the following statement by Nadeau (1995:2) "All women are daughters and must resolve the conflicts inherent in the mother-daughter relationship, if they are to understand themselves and ultimately to establish their own identity." Another possibility for further study would be to include the novel itself into the study and see if the image of the daughters' identity is conveyed in it differently. Also focusing more on the mothers' identity formation or on the cultural features in general, would provide interesting angle to the study.

In *The Joy Luck Club* the importance of ethnic identity issues is shown in the actual dialogue but also in the setting and as discussed above also the director Wayne Wang brings his own views on identity as stated by Brouwer (1997:509): “Wang chooses physical structures and screen images, which reinforce also identity issues.” The setting in the film is very much in sync with the story. However, there is symbolism in the way the scenery is depicted. For example, the clothing is not provocative, but very ordinary. The mothers’ appearance is very subtle and it emphasizes their subtle behaviour and the ethnic heritage. (The ethnic heritage is unavoidably seen from both of the characters due to the typically Chinese appearance). In my opinion the importance of ethnicity is shown in the film by not emphasizing it too much. The China of the mothers’ memories is pictured in a very authentic way and even with rugged beauty, but it somehow in its honesty rises above and becomes the soul of the story. Because the mother-daughter relationships are seen in a very affectionate light and from many different angles, the film also helps to understand the complexity of ethnic identity formation.

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