

Chapter 5

Conclusion

It cannot be denied that the philosophy of Confucius promotes the authority of the male by delineating the proper functions of both men and women. Man is accepted as the apex of authority in the microscopic world of the family, the smallest social unit in society. Thus, women have their given roles as well as responsibilities as the subordinate complement of men; serving and maintaining the proper hierarchy within and without the family unit. The roles are all consequently properly divided and policed by the encouragement in the belief that social harmony will be achieved if men and women recognize as well as adhere to their functions and roles. Moreover, the benign patriarchal dominance of the men is structured in a hierarchical order that moves upwards where the ultimate authority lies within the exalted state and body of the king or emperor. The emperor thus becomes the penultimate metaphor that symbolizes male power and authority. Thus, the subordinate roles of women are continuously reinforced through the Five Confucian Classics and the Four Classics for women. The

classics for women resemble the Five Classics classics in structure. In content however, the Four Classics for women echo closely Pan Chao's Nu Chieh. Nu Chieh which is a collection of familial instructions demands that women adhere strictly to the behavioural roles as that of the daughter, wife and mother. Therefore, the woman must cultivate the values of humility, respect, caution, dedicated devotion, steadfast obedience to her husband while shouldering the responsibilities of running the household as well as in her daily conduct with her in-laws (Young 358 - 360). What is clearly obvious, nevertheless, is how Confucianism promotes a patriarchal society that is not only highly structured but conservative as well as hierarchical.

It is this traditionally conventional configuration of society that tragically affects the female protagonists in both Kingston's as well as Tan's novels. In Kingston's autobiographical novel, The Woman Warrior, the writer embarks on a journey to find her self identity through a deliberate literary reassembling of Confucian beliefs and practices as well as traditional legendary myths. Amy Tan, on the other hand, concentrates on the fluidity of the mother-daughter dyad, emphasizing the cyclical nature of the characters' accounts of their life histories and the inherent link between mothers as well as daughters. Nevertheless, one similarity can be observed in both novels where all the personas reclaim their connections to their mothers or grandmothers.

The above is important for it reflects clearly how women are marginalized in the structure of Chinese society to the complementary subservient roles of the daughter, wife and mother. The protagonist in Kingston's book appropriates Confucian belief in male descent to reconnect with her forgotten aunt, mother and immediate aunt. She assumes masculine valour from the myths of Hua Mulan and Yue Fei to recreate her own myth as a means to cope with the problems of daily life in America. The characters from Amy Tan's novel however, transcend their restricted Confucian positions as women in Chinese culture by the deliberate act of telling their life experiences. The above allows them to voice out and break the marginalizing silence which is imposed by Confucian values on women. What is significant is how this constant negotiation between the irreconcilable Chinese as well as American cultures allows the protagonists of both novels to conceive and give birth to hybrid identities. These symbiotic personalities are significant for they attest to the marrying of values from both cultures. The personas who traverse the two cultures not only acknowledge their inherited cultural heritage but the cultural nuances of American society where they were born or now live.

Furthermore, the attainment of the symbiotic personalities achieved by the characters in both novels reveal how each of the protagonist negotiates and works within the boundaries of Confucian concerns to transcend the rigid constraints of the codes of conduct for women. One approach will be the appropriation of male qualities and male roles in contrast to the traditional roles of the daughter, wife and mother. Thus, Kingston's heroine takes the independent, initiating and

aggressively self-sufficient characteristics displayed by the legendary figures of Hua Mulan as well as Yue Fei. By employing exclusively male virtues, the protagonist combines both masculine as well as feminine qualities to become a 'masculinized' woman who manifests forceful attitudes in defense of her family and yet remains loyal as well as connected to her mother and family. Therefore, the taking and using of male characteristics as shown in the assertion of independent free becomes another way that characters from both novels use to overcome traditional duties as well as responsibilities. The use of the story of T'sai Yen in The Woman Warrior supports the above idea. The protagonist in the book reveals that will had dominated over T'sai Yen's duties as wife and mother when she cut the bond that bound her to her barbarian husband and children to return to her homeland. To a lesser extent, Ying-ying St. Clair in The Joyluck Club does confront her fear to tell the horrifying story of her decision to abort her baby as an exercise of will over duty to a life with an abusive husband. The use of transgressive figures as role models for strength or even as a way to reclaim connection with one's feminine ancestress is another process of mediating within the limits of Confucian social hierarchy. As such, the imaginative rewriting of the story of the "No-name Aunt" in Kingston's novel gives the aunt a voice albeit a tragic one. Using the loopholes within the ritual as well as social practices of Chinese society is the other manner by which the characters overcome the confines of traditional obligations. The ruse used by Lindo in Amy Tan's novel allows her to escape the slavery of an arranged marriage to a boy whilst An-mei's mother's suicide becomes a clever act of defiance in order to obtain strength of

position for An-mei herself. It is observed that in surmounting Confucian rites and practices, Kingston as well as Amy Tan have shown us how the protagonists have employed masculine virtues and values of courage, the assertion of independent free will and initiative to prevail against the social norms. Thus, it allows them to achieve symbiotic personalities combining both male as well as female characteristics that would allow them to accept and transcend both masculine as well as feminine expectations of both Chinese and American society.

Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan have been successful in portraying characters who have negotiated between the demands of Chinese and American cultures to attain symbiotic characters as well as have arbitrated within the limits of Confucian expectations for women. Nonetheless, this marrying of values between cultures and between masculine as well as feminine virtues in Chinese society is very often an uneasy alliance for the protagonists in both novels. Kingston's protagonist exhibits this at times awkward partnership when she consciously enacts her confused dislike at trying to be the ideally pale, fragile and quietly acquiescence Chinese girl by deliberately bullying her Chinese classmate into speaking:

I looked into her face so I could hate it close up. She wore black bangs, and her cheeks were pink and white...[S]he stood still, and I did not want to look at her face any more; **I hated**

fragility....I hated her weak neck....I wanted tough skin, hard

brown skin.(personal emphasis) (158)

In Amy Tan's novel, however, it is the mothers who achieve the balanced symbiotic synthesis within the cultures more than their daughters with the exception of June. Lindo Jong succinctly points out the uncomfortable alliance when she comments that her daughter's Waverly, superficial comments at defining herself as being 'Chinese' merely shows her total assimilation into American culture (299). What is more important is Lindo's realization that she has adapted and combined both American as well as Chinese values within herself. An-mei Hsu together with Ying-ying St. Clair achieve awareness of their own marrying of values from both American as well as Chinese cultures by observing and being aware of the shallow material concerns that seem to govern the lives of their daughters. It is this realization that impels them to tell the stories of their tragic histories as a means of reconnecting with their daughters. Interestingly, June is the only daughter who acquires a fine balancing of cultural values when she is asked to take the place of her mother at the mahjong club. Thus, her search for an understanding of her own identity begins when she starts to unravel the life history of her mother, Suyuan Woo.

Confucius and his philosophical ideals have highly evolved and developed to become social rites and rituals to help regulate the behaviour of people within

Chinese society. The aim is to cultivate a harmonious society. One can therefore conclude that the ideals of Confucianism as a philosophy have played an important part in the delineation of Chinese social structure and norms. Nevertheless, it becomes relevant to observe that the various levels of cultural symbiosis achieved by the protagonists of both the novels demonstrate the fact that they have to negotiate within the rigid constraints of Confucian social practices and values as a means of transcending them. What is achieved is a fine and at times awkward alliance for the characters. Undeniably, this constant negotiation between the irreconcilable Chinese as well as American cultures does allow the protagonists of both novels to conceive and give birth to hybrid identities.

GLOSSARY

Lun yu / Lun-yu	论语
Ren / Jen	仁
Li	礼
Yi	义
Junzi / Chun-tzu	君子
Xiao / Hsiao	孝
Di / Ti	梯
Zhong / Chung	忠
Shu	恕
Zhengming / Chengming	正名
Ming	名
Mengzi	孟子
Xunzi / Hsun Tze	荀子
Da Xue	大学
Zhong Yong/ Zhung Yung	中庸
Wu Jing/ Wu-ching	五经
Li Ji/ Li Chi	礼记
Yi Jing/ I-Ching	易经
Qian/ Ch'ien	乾
Kun	坤
Xian/ Hsien	咸
Heng	恒

Kui/ Kuei	睽
Qian/ Chien	蹇
Gui Mei/ Kuei Mei	归妹
Shi Jing / She King	诗经
Shu Jing/ Shu Ching	书经
Chun Qiu/ Chun Chiu	春秋
Tso Chuan	左传
Li-Ching	礼经
Lieh-nu Chuan	烈女传
Nu Chieh	女诫
Nu Lun-yu	女论语
Nei Hsun	内训
Nu Fan Chieh Lu	女范捷录
Sheng-tao	圣道
Fu-tao	妇道