

The Intricacy of Kinship: a Psychological Study of Conjugal Dissolution in My Tan's the Valley of Amazement.

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Abstract: In the valley of amazement, Chinese-American writer Amy Tan artistically portrays the various facets of her identity, beginning with a daughter's bonding with her mother and the confused state of the same young woman regarding her cultural identity. Tan's novel describes the creation of Tan's familial relationships, her love of English and her desire to affirm her Chinese cultural heritage. Tan clearly depicts the complexity of the conjugal relationship. The betrayal of women, the adverse events in their lives as concubines and their longing for love and the reunion of family members are among the "amazing" features of Tan's the valley of amazement. Tan also observes the subjugation of the emotional artifact which the couples experience as they attempt to sustain their relationships. Steve Duck's Theory of Dissolution reinforces the importance of the conjugal relationship in Tan's research. By applying Duck's phases of dissolution theory, this study conducts a psychological study of the marital relationship and the devastating problems couples confront that result in prostitution.

Key words: Amy Tan, dissolution theory, kinship, marital relationship, steve duck, subjugation, the valley of amazement

INTRODUCTION

Amy Tan's the valley of amazement portrays disloyalties, torment, trepidation, satisfaction and affection. Narrated in Tan's distinctively efficient and matter-of-fact style, The Valley of Amazement is full of noteworthy characters. Its bright, multilayered stories are given further profundity by Tan's affecting portrayals of mothers and daughters. Tan's characters are strong women struggling to survive and have been created by a writer skilled at touching the emotions. Her narrative describes their experiences as they follow their hearts. The author also describes how her hapless characters, deceived by their friends and family and in need of money in a foreign country, are compelled to become concubines. Tan's novel encompasses three generations of women whose lives are shaped first by demonstrations of adoration and later by the deceptiveness of their friends and family. Tan captures the essence of Chinese-American society. An American girl, Lucia, falls deeply in love with a refined Chinese man, Lu Shing and follows him to China.

Tan's effective characterization in "The valley Of amazement": Tan clearly depicts the cultural conflicts that cause a young woman to seek refuge in a distant land; she is unable to return to her native land because

her parents have spurned her. Lucia's frantic efforts to improve her financial situation in a foreign land lead her to decide to achieve success as a concubine. One of Tan's most prominent themes is that the success of a conjugal relationship can be threatened just when both partners have demonstrated their genuine love and appreciation for one another. Tan also comments on how cultural heritage influences the marital relationship. Tan creates parallels between Lucia's life and that of her daughter, Violet. Tan also portrays how the innocent Violet grows up in a courtesan house and reluctantly becomes a courtesan herself. Violet, eager to enter married life, begins a relationship with Edward Ivory. Unlike Lucia, Violet is deceived by her paramour and bears a daughter, Flora. Tan concludes with a reunion as Lucia's search for penance and redemption brings her to a startling reunification with Flora and violet.

The relationships of Tan's married couples: In the valley of amazement, Tan flawlessly describes the complex relationship between husband and wife. Each relationship Tan delineates is unique, as is each character. The relationship between Lucia and Lu Shing is characterized by social rejection and disloyalty whereas the relationship between Lucia's parents, John Minturn and Harriet, is characterized by John Minturn's betrayal of Harriet. Tan's artistic depiction of other marital relationships reflects the

influence of social status on relationship dynamics. Violet and Edward's relationship is happy but Edward's first marriage to the deceitful Minerva is tragic.

The marital relationships traced by Tan in the valley of amazement reflect the theory of dissolution proposed by Steve Duck who identified several models utilized by couples when separating or dissolving their relationships. Tan focuses on the emergence of clashes between husband and wife which can be mapped onto the theory of dissolution. As indicated by Duck, the dissolution of relationships is a complex process composed of several parts and can be either progressive or unpredictable. Unpredictable dissolutions occur with the assent of both of the partners involved in the relationship (Berry and Willingham, 1997).

Duck's theory of dissolution explains how relationships

end: "Relationships can succeed or fail as much because they become disorganized as because the partners stop liking one another as people" (Duck 113). This statement implies that a relationship can end when the marital partners cease to like one another which occurs among Tan's characters. Minerva and Edward's relationship is threatened by a growing aversion between them. In addition, Duck (2007) have demonstrated that "memory for past relational events is influenced very strongly by the present state of the relationship" (Duck 116). When conflicts begin to arise in a relationship, they have a tendency to corrupt memories of the past. This is vividly depicted in the clashes between Lucia and Lu Shing. Discord in the present destroys the happiness the couple shared in the past. Clearly, understanding the intricacies of a relationship requires knowledge of the strategies and alterations that have been used to maintain the relationship. However, conflict or other reasons may lead the partners to end the relationship. Thus, Duck has described the multiple phases of dissolution that precede the termination of the marital relationship.

DUCK'S REASONS FOR ENDING A RELATIONSHIP AND THEIR CORRESPONDENCE TO THE MARRIAGES DEPICTED BY TAN

As indicated by Duck, there is an infinite number of reasons for relationship dissolution. Duck proposed three models of dissolution. The pre-existing doom model describes a relationship in which the partners are mismatched and the relationship is predestined to fail. In the mechanical failure model, the partners feel that they can no longer live together because the relationship is not meeting their expectations. Finally, the sudden death model describes a prompt, complete end of a romantic relationship.

The first model of incompatibility and ultimate failure can be used to describe the relationships between Lucia and Lu Shing and between John and Harriet. The second model best describes the complete disappointment experienced by Edward and Minerva. Finally, the third model of sudden death can be applied to explain Edward and Violet's relationship. Duck acknowledges that the "official" reasons given to others (including one's partner) to justify the separation are significantly more appealing psychologically than the genuine reasons. The psychology of relationship dissolution involves individual psychological strategies, social tenets and self-presentation. However, this understanding applies chiefly to sentimental family relationships.

MARITAL UNHAPPINESS AND RELATIONSHIP DISSOLUTION IN TAN'S NOVEL

Duck identified several components that make a marriage likely to be hopeless or to end in separation. Duck asserted that younger couples generally experience early parenthood and have little time to adapt to the new commitments of marriage before financial and housing issues are compounded by a child. Couples with low-income backgrounds and little education tend to have children early in their marriages. Moreover, couples who do not share key aspects of identity, such as race and religious beliefs, face issues that could devastate their relationship. Finally, partners who experienced parental separation during childhood or who have had multiple sexual partners before marriage are more likely to enter doomed relationships.

The depictions of Amy Tan's characters correspond to Duck's models. Lucia and Lu Shing's separation seems to be caused by various racial and religious issues. John and Harriet's relationship failed because John had multiple sexual partners. Edward and Minerva's relationship disintegrated because of Minerva's traitorousness toward Edward. Duck's dissolution model includes four stages, each of which begins when a threshold is reached. The end of a marital relationship is final when the two individuals become completely accessible as partners to other individuals. They must craft a narrative describing the end of the relationship that casts them in a positive light as potential partners. Marital relationships are therefore usually severed transparently and in a way that incriminates the ex-partner and frees the other partner from exclusive responsibility.

Critical analysis of lu shing's betrayal of lucia using duck's dissolution theory: Tan traces the unlikely

relationship between Lucia and Lu Shing from the early phase of adoration to the couple's eventual separation. Tan describes the relationship between Lucia and Lu Shing as sincere. Lucia could have remained with Lu Shing; however, social impediments eventually destroyed their relationship. Lu Shing's apprehensions about how his family would respond to a marriage with Lucia were realized in his family's negative reaction which caused him to negotiate with Lucia to end their relationship. Imagining what could have been if Lucia was Chinese, Lu Shing states, "If you had been born Chinese, I would have wanted you as my wife" (Tan 469), implying that in such circumstances he could have convinced his parents. Hence, Lu Shing indirectly communicates his problem with marrying a girl of Chinese origin to Lucia.

Marriage in China is arranged, in our family and is not based on love. It is more akin to a business arrangement between old friends and meddling mothers. My future wife is a stranger to me. I don't even know if I will ever like her. She might be unattractive or have nothing interesting to say (Tan 468). Lu Shing's verdict accords with a statement by Duck (2007) in which he rightly notes the influence of demographic elements: "Many of us would perhaps not recognize or accept that marriages are actually 'arranged' by religion, social position, wealth, class, opportunity and other things over which we have little control, even within our own culture".

Duck comments that in some cultures, arranged marriages are supported by the parents and other types of relationships are not encouraged. This phenomenon is in harmony with Tan's portrayal of Lu Shing's parents, who rigidly adhere to their cultural hierarchy, thus completely abandoning Lucia. Lu Shing's decision clearly shows Tan's perception of Lucia and Lu Shing's marital life. When Lu Shing explains the cultural differences that would affect their marital life, he indirectly informs Lucia of their impending separation. This is an example of Duck's intrapsychic phase which begins when one partner realizes his or her "unbearable dissatisfaction" with the relationship. In this phase, partners search for the causes of their dissatisfaction with the relationship and evaluate the negative and positive aspects of being in that relationship. They ask questions such as "Am I happy? Are things between us okay? Will I be better off by myself or with so-and-so?" (Duck, 2007). These types of questions are explored by Tan's character, Lu Shing and lead him to indirectly propose ending the relationship because of their cultural differences. Many researchers report that in the intrapsychic phase, the partner who is dissatisfied in the relationship feels under benefitted.

The first stage of relationship dissolution is the search for reasons to dissolve the relationship. Lu Shing

enters this stage when he perceives that there is a cultural issue in their relationship but does not discuss it openly with Lucia. In contrast, Lucia's relationship with Lu Shing is more trusting. She knows that Lu Shing obeyed his parent's words and although he seems to have rejected her, she believes that he should marry her. She states, "I wasn't suggesting I would marry you" (Tan 463). Moreover, Lucia thinks, "I had not intended to use pregnancy as the reason he should marry me. I would have preferred marriage by desire and not necessity. If he married me based on the advent of a baby, doubt would always exist over the reason we were together" (Tan 469). Lucia attempts to persuade Lu Shing by reminding him of her behavior toward her parents. Tan's portrayal of Lucia's feelings about her relationship emphasizes the strength of her affection for Lu Shing. As noted by Bandura (1977), "Liking for partner can be re-established or aided by means such as keeping a record, mental or physical, of the positive or pleasing behaviour of our partner rather than listing the negatives and dwelling on them in isolation". He suggests that affection from one of the partners leads them to forget the negative aspects of the relationship. Indeed, Lucia focuses on living with Lu Shing rather than living apart from each other in China. However, Lu Shing tries to end their relationship by mentioning his parents' cultural importance and fame. His negotiation of the relationship accords with Duck's stages of dissolution. Lu Shing attempts to dissolve the relationship between himself and Lucia, saying,

I don't know what I could offer that would be acceptable to you. My family will not break the marriage contract and because you're a foreigner, they would never permit you into the house, certainly not for the purpose of visiting me (Tan 470). Duck explains, "Once a person comes to the mental realization that leaving the relationship might be better than staying in it and resolves to confront the partner about this issue, the second phase is engaged. During the dyadic phase, the focus becomes interpersonal. Here, the person must confront the partner with his or her dissatisfaction, express his or her discomfort and present his or her view of the relationship" (Duck 93). Lu Shing enters the dyadic phase when he tells Lucia he wants to leave her for the sake of his parents and that he plans to marry another girl.

Lu Shing fulfills Duck's dyadic phase when he completely confronts his dissatisfaction with Lucia and explains his reasons for ending their relationship (Tan 473). He accepts the fact that his circumstances and his family are hindrances to their relationship. He leaves Lucia, stating, I can't explain the reason, except to say that what I think and do is lodged in my head, heart, character and spirit. This is not a comparison to your

importance to me. However, no matter how much I love you, I can't extract that part of me and change into someone who would betray his family. I can't expect anyone could understand the enormity of my responsibility unless they were raised in China and in a family like ours (Tan 470).

Tan intends Lu Shing's character to be admired for giving prime importance to his parents' opinion. Although he was in love with Lucia and reluctant to abandon her, he faced a dilemma: "I won't abandon you, Lucia. I have never loved anyone more. I simply don't know yet what we can do" (Tan 471). Such statements are consistent with the dyadic phase while revealing the dissolution of the relationship to Lucia, he also claims that he loves her more. Psychologically such actions are based partly on the reality that when this process begins, the two individuals do not actually know how it will end. They discuss their mutual discontent in a context in which one partner might experience both amazement and astonishment; however, they could both compromise based on mutual acceptance of the legitimacy of the other partner's views. "The dyadic phase is the phase when partners try to confront and talk through their feelings about the relationship and decide how to sort out the future. Assuming that they decide to breakup" (Duck 99). Certainly, Lucia experiences extreme agony, viewing Lu Shing's discontent as a betrayal when he tells her, "I would risk fortune and being banished into nonexistence for you. However, I can't destroy my family" (Tan 486). Lucia expects a positive response from Lu Shing but after hearing Lu Shing's stern decision to give prime importance to his family, Lucia becomes frustrated with the relationship. She expresses her sense of betrayal: "I destroyed mine. I have nothing. And now you're willing to place your family's reputation over my life?" (Tan 486). Research shows that during discussions between disturbed partners who are trying to save their relationship, the behaviors and actions of the partner being persuaded lead to predictable expressions of discomfort (Gottman and Levenson, 1994).

Tan's depiction of Lucia's condition and Lu Shing's family issues parallel Duck's dissolution theory in Lucia's expression of a feeling of treachery and sadness about the end of her relationship. Lucia realizes that their relationship is rife with antagonism. She has therefore reached the dyadic phase of the marriage relationship which occurs when the partners communicate their disappointment, further eroding the relationship. Additionally, Lucia and Lu Shing both feel the need to maintain their respect before the general public so that they can remain accessible for future relationships as

Duck explains. The dissolution of a relationship is a process that occurs over time and across several episodes of interaction, not as a single event.

In Duck's account of disengagement, it is possible for a couple that breaks up to remarry. When the relationship ends, however, the partners decide how this should be done. This initiates the social phase of dissolution. In the novel, Lucia and Lu Shing end the relationship publicly and in a dignified manner and begin a new life. Modifications to Duck's dissolution theory emphasize the intricacy of the dissolution process and include the psychological need to prepare mentally to move on rather than remaining preoccupied with thoughts about what occurred between the separated individuals. Lu Shing engages in this phase by leading his life with his Chinese wife despite the fact that Lucia marries Danner and leads a happy life. Tan describes this relationship from Lucia's perspective: "I was married to a kind man named Danner and I had a daughter and I lost them both" (Tan 528). The relationship between Danner and Lucia matches Duck's description of living in a mutual relationship.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LUCIA'S PARENTS, JOHN AND HARRIET MINTURN

The relationship between Lucia's parents, John and Harriet Minturn, is a marriage between people with different interests: John is a professor and Harriet is a scientist who loves conducting research on plants and insects. The couple's relationship is not close. Harriet is completely involved in her research; she does not care about Lucia or her husband John. John takes advantage of her preoccupation to have many affairs with other women. Tan suggests that Harriet's complete trust in her husband and misplaced priorities are the major factors in John's philandering. Moreover, the miscommunication between John and Harriet plays a pivotal role in the failure of their relationship, resulting in "the communicative fallout of the whole thing and adds an extra process ('resurrection') that addresses the ways in which people prepare and launch themselves for new relationships afterwards" (Duck 100). Tan comments that Harriet is unaware of her husband's affairs which are revealed by their daughter, Lucia. "Mother, do you know how many women Father has had sex with behind your back?" (Tan 474). These circumstances are described in Duck's hypothesis of dissolution, in which one partner may feel dissatisfied because of the habits of the other and feels trapped in a relationship. This stage of Duck's framework is called the intrapsychic phase, in which one partner feels dissatisfaction while the other is unaware of the dissolving relationship.

John is characterized as “under benefitted” because of the lack of communication between him and his wife. Finally, Lucia tells her mother about her father’s infidelity. In Duck’s intrapsychic phase, social withdrawal and resentment affect communication between the married couple. The isolation of one of the partners from their habitual community and the subsequent resentment of that partner occur because of depression or other emotional, psychological or personal issues. These factors lead to the breakdown of the interaction between the partners, destroying the relationship. Lucia believes that revealing her father’s infidelity to her mother will cause their relationship to dissolve but to her surprise, Lucia later discovers that: Mother and father still lived there and they were not shattered, as I believed they would be. Mother still gardened but I did not see her retreat to her study to look at her insects. My father’s office had been swept clean of his collections (Tan 528).

Johnson reports that the dissolution of a relationship is typically influenced by social issues and commitment to the relationship. Moreover, older people are more likely to analyze the problems related to the dissolution and this is reflected in the novel. Harriet and John constructively restore their relationship during the dyadic phase. Duck clearly notes, “Together, the partners must make a choice between repairing the relationship or allowing its demise; in so doing, they weigh the pros and cons of the relationship and consider alternative forms of the relationship” (Duck 93). Thus, John and Harriet choose a constructive approach to maintaining their relationship; they understand each other’s mistakes but because they are a mature couple, they choose to live their lives together. Duck explains that older couples in long-term relationships share complementary behaviors that take into account each other’s needs which helps them to resolve their relationship problems.

EDWARD AND MINERVA’S LONG-TERM GRAVE-DRESSING PHASE

The relationship between Edward and Minerva reveals a mismatch between the partners. Their incompatible personalities, the predominant cause of dissolution in Duck’s hypothesis, are obvious. Edward’s belief is that “our marriage has never been a happy one. It was a mistake” (Tan 233). He asserts that their relationship had been never loyal and trustworthy, a problem that led to the social phase of Duck’s dissolution model. Duck argues that some intimate relationships, particularly sexual or romantic relationships, can alter

overtime or stagnate until they fail completely. This occurs in Minerva and Edward’s relationship, in which their sexual intimacy defined their married life. However, after encountering Minerva’s infidelity, the marriage relationship completely failed.

Minerva persuaded Edward to marry her by claiming she was pregnant with his child. When she felt sure of Edward’s affection, she revealed that she was not pregnant. This created a marked distance in their relationship. Edward ruminates, I thought I was being morally good by marrying her [...] and goodness had punished me. I told Minerva I would never love her and she said in turn that if I tried to divorce her, she would kill herself and to prove her threat was real (Tan 235).

In Duck (2007)’s theory of dissolution, the final stage of relationship dissolution is likened to death and is called the grave-dressing phase: once the main psychological “work” of dissolving a personal relationship is over, the problem remains of what to do with the memories associated with it. The processes here remind me of grave-dressing: the attempt to neaten up the last resting place of the corpse and to erect public statements of its form, contribution and importance. Much of the activity of getting over a relationship concerns simplification, rationalization and beautification of the course, themes and outcomes of the relationship while it still flourished. The relationship between Minerva and Edward reached the grave-dressing phase because of Minerva’s betrayal of Edward. As Duck notes, miscommunication or betrayal typically results in the drastic ending of the relationship.

Once the relationship is dead we have to bury it ‘good and proper’ with a tombstone saying how it was born, what it was like and why it died. We have to create an account of the relationship’s history and, as it were, put that somewhere so that other people can see it and, we hope, accept it (Duck 99). Minerva and Edward’s relationship clearly enters this grave-dressing phase. According to Weber, during the complete dissolution of a relationship, Accounts often serve the purpose of beginning the “getting over” activity that is essential to complete the dissolution. A large part of this involves selecting an account of dissolution that refers to a fault in the partner or relationship that pre-existed the split or was even present all along (Duck: 100).

However, Edward’s remarriage to Violet indicates that the relationship between Edward and Minerva is completely terminated. Coleman and Ganong state that in “many broken up relationships, people remarry or enter new roles and so reconfigure their family and also their experience of what ‘a family’ is” (Duck: 135). Tan’s portrayal of Edward’s abandonment of Minerva accords

with the grave-dressing phase proposed by Duck. Edward has accepted the death of their relationship in his mind. He prepares himself for another intimate relationship with Violet, publicly accepting her as his wife.

GENUINE LOVE SHARED BY EDWARD AND VIOLET

Violet meets Edward Ivory, a tormented American who has fled a miserable marriage and overbearing parents to seek a new life in Shanghai. Violet soon becomes pregnant. When Edward learns this, he responds, "Violet, you have no idea how happy you've made me. If I could jump to the moon to show you, I would." Violet and Edward, two lonely individuals with troubled pasts, are able to comfort one another. "We lived in our little world, in the cozy intimacy of married life" (Tan 269). They have a little girl together and name her Flora. Edward describes his daughter Flora as "the most perfect replica of the most perfect woman in all eternity" (Tan 271). According to Winch, "happy marriages are often based on each partner's ability to fulfill the other's needs." However, after Edward dies in the Spanish influenza epidemic of 1918, his legal wife arrives from the United States and claims Flora as her own (Tan 455).

Tan emphasizes the intimacy shared by Edward and Violet. Edward's final words are, "My darling, you had no dinner. There is nothing in your throat" (Tan 276). "'What a fearless girl you are, I love, I love.' Edward's voice drifted off" (Tan 277). These statements demonstrate the intimacy in their relationship and Edward's death leaves Violet in emotional agony. Edward and Violet's relationship reflects Duck's statement that "truly committed romantic relationships necessarily involve the foregoing of other romantic relationships and commitment to only one partner ('forsaking all others', as it says in the marriage ceremony)."

In this way, Tan vividly depicts the intimacy between Edward and Violet. Though it was natural death that took Edward away from Violet, their relationship accords with Duck's perspective toward commitment in relationships. The Lifelong Journey to Maintain a Fruitful Wedlock Several basic elements must be present for a relationship to last. The most basic of these elements is trust and appreciation. When a couple shares each other's trust and each partner understands the other, their relationship is considered extremely satisfactory. Age also affects the relationship in the long term as it is maintained over time. This results in the development of new complexity in a settled relationship. Over time, the reaction of each partner toward these factors determines the course of

their relationship. Satisfaction with the matrimonial relationship also determines the health of the relationship. People generally spend the early years of their relationship endeavoring to learn about each other and adjust; it is in these circumstances that they begin to consider how satisfied they are with their marriage. Frustration may result in extramarital activities that have disastrous effects. Love and psyche sustain a relationship. The effect of communication also becomes clear over time. Good communication between partners may result in a strong relationship but its nonexistence may result in presumptions that over time may have negative effects. Social unions between members of different groups are generally the outcome of previous understanding and mutual affection. Both partners are infatuated, so when they marry, it matters little whether they meet the other's expectations. However, as time passes, these radical differences begin to impact their relationship. Issues may arise concerning the group in which the children should participate. Compromise and forgiveness give a marital relationship substance and strength.

"provoking betrayal in marriage" as depicted by tan: Married life, as portrayed by Tan, is characterized by an emotional imbalance between Lucia and Lu Shing, whose cultural differences hinder their marital relationship. Violet and Edward's marital relationship is shown to be the most personal and Edward's sudden death destroys Violet's life (Tan, 2013). The newly married couple's relationship could be negatively impacted by either social factors or infidelity. A marriage based on love but without parental approval could drastically hinder the marital relationship from a social perspective, as evidenced in Lucia and Lu Shing's relationship. In addition, infidelity can result when one of the partners does not genuinely demonstrate affection for the other. Men's betrayal of women is universal in Tan's novel; Lu Shing betrays Lucia by pursuing his marriage to another girl and listening to his parents, leaving Lucia alone. John Minturn is unfaithful toward his wife Harriet and his affairs with other women cause Harriet to experience great agony. Similarly, Minerva's betrayal of Edward causes the complete dissolution of their relationship.

CONCLUSION

This study foregrounds the marital relationship and spousal betrayal. Amy Tan's the valley of amazement contributes to revealing the sufferings of women. Moreover, this study critically analyzes the marital

relationships of Tan's characters using Duck's theory of relationship dissolution. Lucia is betrayed by Lu Shing for racial and social reasons. She decides to enter the concubine profession to assuage her disappointment at being denounced by Lu Shing. Violet, however, is reluctantly forced to become a concubine for the sake of wages. She finds Edward and leads a happy life until natural death takes Edward away. Similarly, the complete termination of Edward and Minerva's relationship has been critically investigated using Duck's dissolution theory. The concluding remarks of the valley of amazement confirm the conflicts experienced within marital relationships and their accordance with the theories of dissolution.

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