

Amy Tan

A Literary Companion

MARY ELLEN SNODGRASS

McFarland Literary Companions, 3



McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers
Jefferson, North Carolina, and London

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The oppressed without hope are mysteriously quiet.
When the conception of change is beyond the limits of the possible,
there are no words to articulate discontent
so it is sometimes held not to exist....
But the fact that we could not hear does not prove that no pain existed.
Sheila Rowbotham
Women's Conscious, Man's World, 1973

You are beauty, and love is beauty and we are beauty.
We are divine, unchanged by time.
Amy Tan
The Bonesetter's Daughter, 2001

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Preface

For readers seeking a greater knowledge or understanding of Amy Tan's contributions to feminist, American, and Amerasian literature, *Amy Tan: A Literary Companion* offers an introduction and overview. It equips the reader, feminist, historian, student, researcher, teacher, reviewer, and librarian with analysis of characters, plots, allusions, literary motifs, and classic themes from the works of one of America's most lauded writers. The text opens with an annotated chronology of the author's life, Chinese heritage, works, and awards, followed by a family tree of the Tans. The 97 A-to-Z entries combine analysis from reviewers and critics along with generous citations from primary and secondary sources. Each entry concludes with a selected bibliography on such subjects as yin and yang, suicide, China, the historical milieu, autobiography, men, dismemberment, superstition, humor, and wisdom. Charts elucidate the convoluted genealogies of the Bonesetter Gu, Hsu, Jong, Kwong, Louie, St. Clair, Woo, Yee, and Young clans. In addition to clearing up confusion about Chinese names, these family trees account for connections between kinship lines, as with the link between the Youngs and the family of Dr. Gu, evidence that Winnie Louie and Helen Kwong are not related by blood or marriage, and the recovered sisterhood that joins Jack Yee's two daughters with the prestigious Bishops of Hawaii. Generous cross references point to divergent strands of thought and guide the reader into peripheral territory, e.g., from violence to the Taiping Rebellion of 1864, abortion to spousal abuse, journeys to diaspora and reunions, patriarchy to disillusion and polygyny, and storytelling to talk-story, the female outlet for repressed memory and an antidote to the patriarchal silencing of women.

Back matter is designed to aid the student, reviewer, and researcher. Appendix A orients the beginner with a time line of historical events in China and during World War II and their intertextual importance to crises in the lives of fictional characters, for example, the approach of Communists to Shanghai and Wen Fu's rape at gunpoint of his ex-wife. The entries contain abbreviated reference and page numbers of the works from which each event derives.

A second appendix compiles a glossary of foreign terms and idioms, such as multiple meanings of *chang* and mathematical descriptions of *li* and *yuan*, along with

parts of speech, translation, and the appearance of the terms in Tan's published works.

A third appendix provides forty-five topics for group or individual projects, composition, analysis, background material, enactment, and theme development, notably, cross-cultural mythology, motifs of matriarchy and marital discord, character attitudes toward materialism and spirituality, the author's choice of narrative modes, and the use of medical terms as character motivation.

Back matter concludes with an exhaustive chronological listing of primary sources and reprints followed by a general bibliography. Many entries derive from journal and periodical articles and reviews of Tan's essays, novels, short fiction, and memoirs in the newspapers of major cities in the United States, Great Britain, Canada, China, and Australia. Secondary sources, particularly those by experienced reviewers, are useful for the study of works that have yet to be analyzed thoroughly in academic journals.

A comprehensive index directs users of the literary companion to major and minor characters, peoples, diseases, belief systems, deities, movements, events, eras, historical figures, place names, landmarks, traditional rituals and holidays, published works, sources, authors, and issues, e.g., Precious Auntie, Lao Lu and Buncake, Hakka, multiple sclerosis and Alzheimer's disease, Taoism, Amitaba and Buddha, God Worshippers, Boxer Rebellion and Sino-Japanese War, Sung dynasty and Ching dynasty, Chiang Kai-shek and Claire Chennault, Kweilin, Chinatown, herbalism and Chinese New Year, *The Color Purple* and "Fish Cheeks," calligraphy, Maxine Hong Kingston and Michael Dorris, and foot-binding, bride price, and matchmaking.

Introduction

Amy Tan's writings are a model of the writer's truism that the best subject lies close to home. Her domestic scenarios have the ring of authenticity, in part because she draws material from anecdotes and events that impact her own family. From closeness with her mother, Daisy Tan, the author absorbed a subjective appreciation of Chinese traditions, rituals, and history. Without apology, the author mined from talk-story a lifetime of oddments and topical strands to flesh out the attack of Manchu mercenaries on a Christian enclave, the terror of a refugee fleeing Japanese invaders, a despairing concubine's death from deliberate opium consumption, an inkmaker's loss from fire at a Peking shop, and an industrial magnate's face-off against occupation forces. Flashes of realism leap from the pages as a teenager salts her diary with cruel taunts to her mother, a banner collapses on the elaborate funeral banquet honoring a Chinese matriarch, an apartment dweller eavesdrops on the intimate conversations of neighbors, a rebel child humiliates her parents by botching a piano recital, first-generation Chinese-American daughters distance themselves from their partially assimilated Chinese mothers, and a concubine lops off her hair as a gesture of defiance to patriarchy.

It is no accident that Tan's works are filled with engaging images of strong girls and women. The self-liberation of Daisy Tan impressed the author with the instinctive growth of feminism from centuries of feudal repression. Without politically correct cant or subtextual intent, Tan expresses the yearnings and risk-taking of Chinese women who seize freedom by accepting the consequences of overturning anti-female Confucian principles and of battling the misogyny of the lapsed Ching dynasty. It is no accident that their rage at gender disparity and attendant cruelties erupts simultaneously with military threats to China's survival. At a time when black American soldiers in Europe rid themselves of plantation racism during World War II and the contributions of female soldiers and nurses and of Rosie the Riveter prophesied the expansion of opportunities for women in the post-war United States, China's women threw off the shackles of paternalism, a horror worsened by arranged marriages, marital rape, and the foot-binding of little girls.

Valor and pride flourish in Tan's female characters. The laundress Nunumu

rescues her friend Nelly Banner from slaughter. Sister Yu champions in Communist doctrine the concepts of Christianity that promise an equal distribution of food to hungry peasants. Drawing courage from the example of the feminist martyr Little Yu, Peanut extends a network of shelter and encouragement to refugees from patriarchal marriage. Lindo Jong concocts a nightmare so real that her in-laws gladly release her from a doomed union with a child-husband and pay her way to America. Suyuan Woo makes a new home in California while searching China nearly a half century for her lost twins. LuLing Liu Young earns renown and a comfortable living for brushing on parchment the artful pictograms of the Chinese alphabet she learned in childhood. Winnie Louie ends the torment and slow murder of children by aborting the fetuses sired by a monster husband. In each case, heroines confront self-doubt while remaining true to gut instinct.

To assure realism in characters, Tan avoids the easy out. Her fictional women bear their share of faults—materialism in Lindo Jong, gluttony and treachery in Helen Kwong, arrogance in Waverly Jong, spinelessness in Lena Livotny, mania in Precious Auntie, and meddling in Kwan Li. Eluding the tyranny of political correctness, Tan's characters abide by idiosyncratic principles. Old Aunt teaches female compliance and obedience to her motherless niece. Big Ma turns foster daughter Kwan Li into a child slave. Olivia Yee Bishop scapegoats her husband's old lover as the cause of marital failure. Rather than develop creativity, Ruth Luyi Young chooses an auxiliary role as ghostwriter and nurturer of mediocre talents. Winnie Louie swallows her sorrow and wears a brave face among the pilots' wives living at a makeshift billet in a monastery. For these characters, false values precede a soul-salving turn-about.

To emphasize redemption and grace, Tan offers her characters life-altering opportunities, some of which derive from hardship and heartbreak. GaoLing Young abandons Reagan era materialism by caring for her aged sister. Rose Hsu Jordan battles post-separation despair by defying her manipulative husband and rejecting his bribe. During wartime occupation, San Ma and Wu Ma cast off subservience by rescuing Jiang Sao-Yen from penury, illness, and neglect. Olivia Yee Bishop outgrows self-absorption and honors her martyred sister Kwan by taking her surname and passing it on to Samantha "Sammy" Li, Olivia's miracle child. June Woo adds depth to her two-dimensional life by retracing the Chinese diaspora to convey her deceased mother's love to adult children, Chwun Hwa and Chwun Yu, whom Suyuan left behind during a national panic. These extraordinary examples of devotion and fortitude elevate women in a society that traditionally overlooks their potential and negates their contributions.

In amassing women's stories, Tan chooses candor over artifice. She refuses to whitewash China's abysmal record of child endangerment, wife enslavement, and dehumanizing of the poor, aged, and handicapped; she chooses not to exonerate a motherland that allows Machiavellian politics to spawn a mass diaspora of its citizenry. Against a deluge of criticism from author Frank Chin and other writers espousing a pro-China stance, she opts for a forthright examination of feudal misogyny and praise for the pace-setters who led Chinese women toward equality. Without fear of reprisal from angry Amerasian males, Tan follows her staunchest heroine, Winnie

Louie, from teen engagement and dowry arrangements through a hellish marriage to a sexual deviate and child batterer. Over a cycle of brutality, Winnie develops guile and backbone. After the deaths of her infant daughters Mochou and Yiku, she rescues Danru, her first son, from the dominance of Wen Fu and accepts imprisonment rather than resumption of a domestic nightmare. Tan turns Winnie's experiences into grist for talk-story to affirm her daughter, Pearl Louie Brandt, during a battle with multiple sclerosis. The transformation of tragedy into instruction illustrates the author's belief that secrets and silence are insidious enslavers of women.

Tan's pro-female scenarios bear humanistic touches of grace. Suyuan Woo alleviates insecurity in her daughter June May by giving her a jade necklace and a nudge toward self-esteem. Ying-ying St. Clair urges her daughter Lena to protest the devaluation that the egotistical Harold Livotny heaps on her through petty list-making. The clairvoyant Kwan Li releases pent-up hurts by talking over the past with the ghost of Big Ma. Ruth Luyi Young acquires respect for her grandmother, Precious Auntie, by having a biographical manuscript translated from Chinese into English. Auntie Du remains in Shanghai to be near Winnie Louie during her fifteen months in women's prison while Winnie turns incarceration into a chance to help female inmates find their own way in a man's world. The woman-to-woman spread of hope and uplift epitomizes Tan's optimism and justifies self-liberating trickery among women who have nothing to lose.

While elevating the efforts of women to survive and prevail, Tan pairs them with equally admirable males. Bonesetter Gu loves his daughter enough to spare her foot-binding and to defy convention by teaching her medical and herbal skills. Geologist Pan Kai Jing convinces his bride LuLing that family curses are outdated superstitions. Jimmy Louie cradles his lover Winnie and tenderly frees her from flashbacks of trauma. Canning Woo comforts his daughter June by supplying details of his late wife's heroism and devotion to motherhood. Long Jiaguo redeems himself from female batterer to loyal husband by marrying Helen, his victim's sister. Gan, a young pilot, offers Winnie Louie a male-female friendship that boosts her morale at a low point in her marriage. Photographer Simon Bishop agrees to a journey to China with his estranged wife to further their career and restore their former intimacy. When measured against the sybaritic Wu Tsing, aristocratic Jiang Sao-yen, womanizing Lin Xiao, and demonic Wen Fu, Tan's supportive males coordinate well with the women they admire and refute charges of critics that Tan uses fiction as a form of male-bashing.

Tan's skill at fiction extends from plot and character to the intricacies of literary devices. She uses a whimpering fish as a metaphor for the coerced concubine, a bursting watermelon as a symbol of the opportunist's conquest of a virgin, scattered pages of "The Good News" as evidence that Christian missions made little change in the people they evangelized, and a legless crab as a parallel of damaged goods that a self-defeating daughter willingly settles for. Tan's frequent recitations of Chinese aphorism bear insights into attitudes, as with the reminder that raising a female child is as profitable as feeding the neighbor's pig. The judicious placement of fables and exempla offers insight into dilemmas and predicaments, for instance, the cautionary tale about a woman who buys a swan feather to pass on to her daughter and the

myth of farmer Zhang, the ungrateful husband whom the Jade Emperor of Heaven turns into the judgmental Kitchen God. Tan's tweaking of the latter story results in Lady Sorrowfree, a nameless deity whom the author turns into a spokeswoman for beleaguered women. These deft touches elevate Tan from a writer of popular ethnic fiction to a masterful contributor to world and feminist literature.

The huge following for Amy Tan's writings attests to her success at feminist and universal themes. Her novels, stories, and essays brim with support for strong mother-daughter and woman-to-woman relations. She fills her plots with praise for female characters who accept near-impossible tasks—a pregnant bride traveling by wartime conveyance over much of China to reach safety in Kunming, a mother searching a California beach for the body of her drowned son, a friend who steals a pedicab to escape falling bombs, and a Chinese ghost-seer who retreats into a past life to offer her Amerasian sister another chance at domestic happiness. Fans greet Tan at book-signings and campus lectures with thanks for her sincerity. Awards and photo ops picture her as a rising star whose light springs from inner truth.

Chronology of Tan's Family History, Life and Works

1924 Author Amy Tan was influenced by the discord and tragedy in her maternal family line. Her mother, Daisy Du Ching, was born into what one reviewer called the "florid decay of imperial China" (Walsh). Tan's maternal grandmother, Gu Jingmei, was widowed after her scholarly husband died of influenza. In an insidious example of polygyny, in 1924, a wealthy industrialist raped Jingmei and added her to his household of three wives. She was known as the Replacement Wife for Divong, a previous wife whose death Jingmei helped to mourn.

New Year's Day, 1925 Out of despair at being a concubine of lowly rank, in 1925, Jingmei swallowed raw opium concealed in New Year's rice cakes. Her death took place in front of her nine-year-old daughter, Amy's mother, who became a vocational nurse and hospital technician in Shanghai. Of the social implications of parental suicide, Daisy later confided, "We had no face! We belonged to nobody! This is a shame I can never push off my back" ("Lost Lives of Women," p. 90).

1935 Daisy grew up pampered by servants and grandmother and showered with privileges. At age nineteen, she married Wang Zo, an abusive womanizer and pilot for the Kuomintang air force, whom she barely knew.

1941 During the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), Daisy met John Yuehhan Tan and his brother on a lengthy boat trip on a southwestern Chinese river to Wang Zo's new billet. Tan, a translator for the U.S. Information Service and amateur photographer from Beijing, recurs in his daughter's fiction as Jimmy Louie, the *bon vivant* suitor in *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991).

1945 While John Tan was working in Tientsin, he encountered Daisy on the street and discovered that their love-at-first-sight had endured a four-year separation.

1947 After a wretched marriage to a batterer and the deaths of a son and daughter in infancy, Daisy blamed her husband Wang Zo and ran away, leaving behind three daughters, ranging in age from four to eleven. He retaliated by refusing her visitation rights with the girls. The Shanghai tabloids ballyhooed the events of her twelve-year marriage to Wang, who had her apprehended by the police and put on trial.

Daisy served a prison sentence for adultery with John, the man she eventually married. At age thirty-four, he rejected a scholarship to study electrical engineering at M.I.T. to pursue theology at the Berkeley Baptist Divinity School. He became a Baptist evangelist, as had his eleven younger siblings.

Summer, 1949 After two years in prison, Daisy gained her freedom and immigrated to the United States to marry John Tan. The couple spoke different dialects—Daisy fluent in Mandarin and Shanghaiese and John more conversant with Cantonese. During a period of civil war preceding the Communist takeover, she was wise to flee her homeland only five days before the frontiers closed to emigrants. Because Chinese law favored the father's rights to children, she left behind the three daughters sired by Wang Zo. In California, John found work building tiny electromagnetic transformers at home. Amy Tan later clarified her parents' intent in starting anew in America: "Immigrant parents come to America with the idea that they're going to lose ground, economically and socially, but that their children will eventually benefit from what they've done" (Chatfield-Taylor, p. 178).

February 19, 1952 A native Californian, An-mei Ruth "Amy" Tan was born in Oakland. The Tans named their middle child and only daughter for two missionaries; her Chinese name means "blessing from America." Reared in an insular home, she valued her family lineage, "the tapestry of who created us in our past, our parents, our grandparents, and beyond" (Kanner, p. 3). Up close, the family circle was less amiable. Her off-center relationship with Daisy began in toddlerhood with listening in Mandarin and replying in English. Tan remarked, "She raised me with all her fears and regrets. She hinted at great tragedies. She had so much advice ... and I didn't want to listen" (Kropf, p. E2). The author later revealed that assimilation required her to reject Chinese culture and embrace the American milieu as her home culture. The violation of her mother's viewpoint and values caused constant clashes, particularly her insistence that Amy was unattractive. Education in history classes that excluded the Chinese role in World War II increased the distance that grew between Amy's Amerasian generation and their immigrant parents.

The author described her mother as small, but combative—"just determined as hell" (Somogyi & Stanton, p. 24). Daisy's feisty public behaviors caused Amy to long for a mother "like Donna Reed in the 'Donna Reed Show' or Jane Wyman in 'Father Knows Best'" (Fong, p. 123). Throughout Amy's early life, her father offered comfort and sanctuary during Daisy's volatile displays: "She was very dramatic in her depression—she would throw the furniture upside down, things would be smashed. She always threatened to commit suicide. Once when the family traveled a California freeway, she opened the door of the car and threatened to jump out" (Singh Gee, p. 85). Daisy kept the family in constant suspense and demanded frequent moves to

new quarters to escape disruptive spirits. The nomadic shifts placed Amy in eleven districts before she graduated from high school.

1955 Reared in the coastal cities of Oakland, Hayward, Santa Rosa, Palo Alto, and Sunnyvale before the final move to Santa Clara, Tan was the perpetual loner and new kid on the block. She struggled to harmonize American roots with her parents' Asian customs and with being the only Asian face in her class. She admitted to *Bookpage* interviewer Ellen Kanner that life with Daisy was difficult because of her belief in ghosts and her imaginative storytelling in fractured English. Daisy erroneously assumed that Amy communed with the spirit world from age three. Daisy regretted not having the powers of otherworldly communication, but insisted that Amy was able to move between the two dimensions and to relay messages from the dead. Amy commented, "She's always asking did you talk to your father today" (*Ibid.*).

Despite Daisy's quirks, Tan grew up in a loving matrix of strong women. Her mother actually organized a female gathering like the Joy Luck Club. Amy recalls, "It was named by my father—a group of people I grew up with and met regularly for their game of [mah jong]" (Taylor, p. F1). Integral to a strong womanly support system were the players "whom I called aunties, though they were not related" (*Ibid.*). With an impish drollery, in adulthood, Tan started her own club, Fool and His Money, an investment group.

1957 Amy's parents held high behavioral and intellectual standards for their three bilingual children. From their father came devotion to God. To a BBC interviewer, Tan reminisced about home worship: "We prayed at every meal, we asked for God's guidance, there were certain rules of behavior that we followed; no drinking, no swearing, no even using any partial words that might allude to blasphemous terms" ("Amy Tan"). The author summarized twenty years of her mother's instructions in three sentences: "First, if it's too easy, it's not worth pursuing. Second, you have to try harder, no matter what other people might have to do in the same situation—that's your lot in life. And if you're a woman, you're supposed to suffer in silence" (Kepner, p. 59). Taken together, the three precepts produced a no-win situation that left the mother in complete charge. As a result, Amy developed into a worrier, a pattern of insecurity and irrational fears that followed her into adult life.

Daisy demanded straight A's from kindergarten onward and forced Amy to practice piano daily. The author told Esther Wu of the *Dallas Morning News* how her parents coveted other children's success: "When I was growing up, my parents used to point to Ginny Tiu [a child pianist who performed often on "The Ed Sullivan Show"], and say, why can't you be like her?" (Esther Wu). In adulthood, Tan met Tiu and confessed to hating her in childhood for being a prodigy.

Daisy was aware that Amy lacked concentration and that she chose autonomy over obedience: "She always wanted independence, never did what I told her, didn't do the schooling she could have" (Goodavage, p. 12D). Amy suffered pressure exacerbated by fear that she might fail her mother and father. She did poorly on standardized tests because she bypassed easy answers to multiple choice questions in search of more complex solutions. She escaped mental unrest through reading, especially Grimms' fairy tales, Aesop's fables, fairy tales, bible stories, and the prairie

memories of Laura Ingalls Wilder. In 1996, Tan reflected, "Books were my salvation. Books saved me from being miserable" ("Interview"). In *The Opposite of Fate: A Book of Musings* (2003), she identified books as "windows opening and illuminating my room" (p. 1).

1958 As early as age six, Tan felt the effects of depression, a serious mental debility that caused her mother to erupt in self-destructive tantrums, prophecies of death, threats of suicide, and object-hurling that the author described as "emotional terrorism" (Longenecker). She explained in *The Opposite of Fate*, "She had a need to cling to and then reject everyone she loved" (p. 340). In the chaotic household, Amy kept personal unhappiness to herself. At a breaking point, stress caused her to attempt suicide by cutting her wrist with a butter knife. Reflecting in adulthood on the high number of female suicides in her family, she admitted to irrational moments: "The urge was always to destroy myself violently. Like crashing my car into a tree" (Singh Gee, p. 86). She reflected on the "slippery slope" of self-annihilation and observed with wry wit, "I consider depression my legacy" (*Ibid.*).

1960 In third grade at Matanzas Elementary School, eight-year-old Tan joined her father in a weekly library visit. She was bright enough to skip a grade, but remained with her class. The teacher, Miss Grudoff, encouraged her to express herself through art and imagination, a suggestion that influenced Amy's fiction. She won a transistor radio and publication in the *Santa Rosa Press Democrat* for an essay on the subject of "What the Library Means to Me." She developed the thought with a pulpit minister's eye to the collection plate, by beginning with what good friends books are to readers and concluding with support for the Citizens for the Santa Rosa Library. Her own contribution was her life's savings of seventeen cents.

1962 While living the standard American childhood, Tan maintained a double life by following Chinese customs at home. At night, she slimmed her broad Asian nose by clipping it with a clothespin. Her father shared his sermons with her by reading them aloud and asking if there were any words that needed explaining. She profited from her father's storytelling ability, Chinese fables and fairy tales, and the gossip and family anecdotes that circulated in Shanghaiese between her mother and aunts while they shelled peas, snapped beans, chopped vegetables, or pounded dough.

Although living with a family that spoke English poorly and owned no mentally challenging books, Amy began reading more intellectual library books, including Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960), and two forbidden books, J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) and Richard von Krafft-Ebbing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886). Tan later developed a strong love of free speech and intellectual liberty and a hatred of book banning. Free perusal of books contributed to her skill as an analyst of human secrets. She commented that conflicting ideas raised serious questions that enabled her to judge experiences from different perspectives. "That's what I think that a storyteller does, and underneath the surface of the story is a question or a perspective or a nagging little emotion, and then it grows" (Giles).

July, 1967 Daisy's sixteen-year-old son Peter fell into depression, then lapsed into a coma in May 1967 before he died of a brain tumor two months later. After his

diagnosis, Daisy Tan blamed his decline on a failing grade for the semester in an English course after another pupil copied his report on Evelyn Waugh's *The Loved One* (1948), a satiric novel on the theme of death. Peter's loss occurred at an uncomfortable phase of Amy's adolescence, when she rebelled against her bicultural background and resented the Tans' contributions to poor cousins in Taiwan.

1968 The death of Peter Tan preceded a sudden paralysis on one side of her father's body. John Tan's death from brain tumor at age fifty-four exaggerated Amy Tan's teen funk and her expectations of failure. She told a BBC interviewer, "I was rebelling against any kind of hope in the world" ("Amy Tan"). She reminisced in *The Opposite of Fate* that she watched two members of her family "waste away to skeletons" (p. 369). Her uncle worsened family gloom by blaming John Tan for marrying a divorcee. Contributing to Amy's unhappiness was her job as Daisy's translator and scribe for personal letters and thank-you notes to friends and well-wishers. Another ill omen was Daisy's loss of religious faith. Ironically, the family learned in 1993 that she developed a benign meningioma of the brain about the time that Peter and John died.

Daisy's explanation of family turmoil was typical of her Chinese upbringing — the Tans and their neighborhood labored under a curse. To identify the forces that harried her family, she began visiting mediums and faith healers and instructed Amy to consult a Ouija board in hopes of contacting the spirits of her son, husband, mother, and grandmother. Amy recalled in an interview over National Public Radio: "She exhorted the doctors to try new chemotherapies and she spoke in tongues, went to religious groups. She hired geomancers to check out the *feng shui* [the Chinese concept of harmonious arrangement] in our house to see if we could change things and that would cure them" (Hansen). On a more practical level, Daisy also considered sending Amy to a Taiwanese school for wayward girls.

Meanwhile, Amy sought counsel from the family minister, who tickled, then sexually abused her. On her family's sufferings, Daisy remarked, "You have to have strength to survive that. I learned all my strength in China and I survived" (Goodavage, p. 12D). She used the opportunity to reveal that she had two deceased children and three living daughters from a first marriage and that she and John left them in China to flee to America. Amy, shocked by the disclosures, rebelled at revelations that altered her position in Daisy's life and became a hip, wise-mouthed rebel. She later reflected, "At age fifteen, I was busy finding my own identity. I didn't want to be connected to all this family stuff in China" (Doten, p. 63). In secret, Tan worried that Daisy might prefer children who spoke Chinese and who might abide by strict Chinese deportment codes.

August, 1968 After viewing a can of Old Dutch cleanser as a divine directive, Daisy secretly decamped with her son and daughter aboard the S.S. *Rotterdam*, then drove from Werkhoven, Holland, south across Germany by Volkswagen Beetle. In September, she made a home in Switzerland in a chalet and enrolled Amy and her surviving brother John at the Institut Monte Rosa Internationale, a private language-centered boarding school in Territet-Montreux founded in 1874 and housed in a turreted stone building. To interviewer Catherine O'Brien of the *London Times*, Amy described life at a new school: "In America I had been a dateless dork; in Switzer-