

Dual authorial identity of Asian American writers:

The case of Amy Tan

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Taking Lanigan's typology of East-Asian and Western cultures as a point of departure for ruminations on what happens when a writer's life experience brings one culture into contact with another culture, I am going to argue that due to such cross-cultural exposure a writer acquires a **dual identity** which allows him/her to see reality through bifocal lenses.

It is, therefore, clear that the actuality of a cross-cultural author encounters two reality constructs which cannot be divided into neat categories of 'Oriental' and 'Occidental' cultural orientations which are simply additive. The construction of such a bicultural authorial identity is the outcome of complex identification processes which equip the writer with several selves, interplaying with each other. In the case of Asian American writers these selves are constituted by holistic, context oriented cognitive and social processes typical of East-Asian culture on the one hand, and the discrete and analogue perspective of Western cultures on the other. The blend of these contrasting perceptions creates a type of logic that features multi-dimensional and expansive thinking confronted by digital and reductive reasoning.

The empirical case of Amy Tan is then presented. Drawing on her Chinese-American experience I will examine her understanding of English as a tool for communication for her as a writer, and as a daughter of Chinese parents. The description of her struggle of how to reconcile the requirements of plain Anglo-American academic rhetoric (which demands a perspective in which the "horizon" is the "line" marking Width) with an East-Asian expansive logic (which requires a perspective in which the "horizon" is the "line" marking Depth) may provide valuable insights into the nature of a dual identity of Asian Americans.