

ABSTRACT

SELFHOOD VERSUS DUTY: FAMILIAL RELATIONSHIPS IN CHANG-RAE LEE'S *NATIVE SPEAKER*, *A GESTURE LIFE*, AND *ALOFT*

This study will seek to address issues raised in Chang-rae Lee's three novels: *Native Speaker*, *A Gesture Life*, and *Aloft*. Lee's central characters struggle to develop normalcy within the family unit, a struggle tested by challenges often found in the average familial construct.

In Lee's first novel, *Native Speaker*, the family dynamic involves the issue of loyalty to family and cultural identity. *A Gesture Life* discusses isolation and its devastating effects on the home, while *Aloft* addresses distance and age in the face of constant change.

Each novel shares several elements, pertaining directly to familial relationships, while exacerbating elements that complicate those relationships. Though each text presents different levels of success and failure, each central figure experiences a transformation that leads to a revelation that benefits the condition of the familial relationships. Lee's focus on relationships establishes the fundamental nature of family to the larger cultural context of his novels.

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