

Chapter One

Introduction

The cathexis between mother and daughter ? essential, distorted, misused ? is the great unwritten story.

Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born*

Identifying a matrilineal Asian American tradition is important in terms of not only racial politics within feminism, but also gender politics within cultural nationalism.

Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, ? 'ugar Sisterhood' ”

Intellectual and scholarly research into motherhood and the mother-daughter relationship has arisen and flourished along with the development of the second-wave feminist movement in the United States, especially since the 1970s. American feminist writer and theorist Adrienne Rich is the first to bring to public attention the absence of these two related subjects ? important as they are in women's lives ? from codified knowledge. In her extraordinary work *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (1976),

Rich writes about this absence due to deliberate silencing on the part of the dominant patriarchal culture:

Yet this relationship has been minimized and trivialized in the annals of patriarchy. Whether in theological doctrine or art or sociology or psychoanalytic theory, it is the mother and son who appear as the eternal, determining dyad. Small wonder, since theology, art, and social theory have been produced by sons. Like intense relationships between women in general, the relationship between mother and daughter has been profoundly threatening to men (1995: 226).

And as the first systematic study of motherhood and the mother-daughter relationship, Rich's book serves as a passionate and sonorous call for feminist scholars and writers alike to make further efforts in breaking the silence and filling the gap (Hirsch 1981: 201). The years following its publication in 1976 have witnessed an avalanche of creative writings and social-science studies on the subjects from a wide variety of approaches. All of these works contribute to the recovery, reclamation, and reconstruction of a tradition of matrilineal discourse, whose centrality to the overall project of feminist theorizing has been acknowledged by many feminists, as Marianne Hirsch puts it:

There can be no systematic and theoretical study of women in patriarchal culture, there can be no theory of women's oppression, that does not take into account woman's role as a mother of daughters and as a daughter of mothers, that does not study female identity in relation to previous and subsequent generations of women, and that

does not study that relationship in the wider context in which it takes place: the emotional, political, economic, and symbolic structures of family and society (1981: 202).

It is under such circumstances that critical studies of literary representations of mothers and daughters have come to the fore. Such studies, at the very beginning, respond to Rich's statement of absence and attempt to "prove that the story of mother-daughter relationships has been written even if it has not been read? (Hirsch 1981: 214). Among them, Nan Bauer Maglin's essay "Don't ever forget the bridge that you crossed over on? The Literature of Matrilineage" deserves the most attention.^① In this essay, Maglin not only seeks to recover "the lost tradition? of literary mother-daughter relationships but also names this tradition "the literature of matrilineage? And she even gives a simple but convenient schema for identifying this literature of matrilineage:

1. the recognition by the daughter that her voice is not entirely her own;
2. the importance of trying to really see one's mother in spite of or beyond the blindness and skewed vision that growing up together causes;
3. the amazement and humility about the strength of our mothers;
4. the need to recite one's matrilineage, to find a ritual to both get

① Maglin's essay is collected in Cathy Davidson and Esther Broner, eds., *The Lost Tradition* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1980), pp. 257-67. This essay is referred to in Marianne Hirsch, "Mothers and Daughters? *Signs* 7.1 (1981): 214-19 and Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, "Ungar Sisterhood? Situating the Amy Tan Phenomenon? in *The Ethnic Canon*, ed. David Palumbo-Liu (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), pp. 176-77.

back there and preserve it;

5. and still, the anger and despair about the pain and the silence borne and handed on from mother to daughter (quoted in Wong 1995: 176? 77).

As the feminist movement gives rise to new literary works of matrilineage, more recent literary studies go beyond the archaeological approach and deal with contemporary authors. More and more, the mother-daughter relationship is integrated into broader literary studies of female development and experience, both individual and communal? and its “crucial role in women’s literature” is recognized by the large majority of feminist literary critics (Hirsch 1981: 219). Yet as a product of the second-wave feminist movement, studies of the literature of matrilineage cannot help assuming its preferences and biases. Just as the white-centered and middle-class oriented movement claims a universalist agenda by speaking for all women and working for the good of all women, so the literary studies are conducted on the basis of a presumably universalist canon which actually privileges white middle-class mothers and daughters and marginalizes mothers and daughters of color. Marianne Hirsch’s acclaimed book *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism* (1989) only discusses several African American works on the mother-daughter relationship and most of the works surveyed in Mickey Pearlman’s contemporaneous book *Mother Puzzles: Daughters and Mothers in Contemporary American Literature* (1989) are authored by white Americans. Even the latest publication *Mothers and Daughters in the 20th Century: A Literary Anthology* (2000) fails to do justice to minority literatures of matrilineage and as far as Chinese American

literature of matrilineage is concerned, only Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* (1976) and Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) are excerpted and reprinted.

A reversal of such under-representation and marginalization in terms of race depends upon the independent development of feminist literary criticism by women of color themselves. Concerning the criticism of the literature of matrilineage in particular, Asian/Chinese American women have made some initial yet fruitful efforts. Two pioneering critics are Shirley Geok-lin Lim and Sau-ling Cynthia Wong. In a 1991 essay "Asian American Daughters Rewriting Asian Maternal Texts? Lim, perhaps for the first time in the history of Asian American literary criticism, puts forward the concept of "the deep and broad tradition of the thematics of the maternal in Asian American literature? (1991b: 239). Since the essay is primarily devoted to analyzing Japanese American woman writer Joy Kogawa's novel *Obasan* (1981), Lim just mentions a few works in the tradition: Chinese American woman poet Merle Woo's "Letter to Ma? (1981); Chinese American woman poet Cathy Song's poem "Blue and White Lines After O'Keefe? (1983); Japanese American male writer John Okada's *No-No Boy* (1957); Japanese American woman writer Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter* (1953); and Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*. Obviously, Lim's list does not limit itself to the mother-daughter relationship since male writers' works on the mother-son relationship are included.

And in a 1995 essay "Fugate Sisterhood? Situating the Amy Tan Phenomenon", Sau-ling Cynthia Wong also gives voice to two notions: a matrilineal Chinese American tradition and a matrilineal Asian American tradition under which the former is subsumed. Also

provided is an accompanying list of works, which is further enriched in her 1997 essay “Chinese American Literature?” and her 1999 essay “Gender and Sexuality in Asian American Literature” (co-authored with Jeffrey J. Santa Ana). And somewhat different from Lim, Wong focuses upon women’s writings with the theme of the mother-daughter relationship, or matrilineage in general which is addressed “not just in the figure of the mother but also in grandmothers/matriarchs, aunts/surrogate mothers, and a multigenerational female line?” (Wong 1999: 195). On Wong’s rather comprehensive list of works in the matrilineal Chinese American tradition, there are autobiographies such as Helena Kuo’s *I’ve Come a Long Way* (1942) and Jade Snow Wong’s *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (1945) which are characterized by pro-patriarchal sympathies and only occasional intrusions of matrilineal consciousness? Su-ling Wong and Earl Cressy’s little-known? *Daughter of Confucius: A Personal History* (1952), and Alice P. Lin’s “combined ethnic/matrilineal root-seeking journey?” in *Grandmother Has No Name* (1988) (Wong 1995: 177–178). Also included are autobiographical novels such as Chuang Hua’s *Crossings* (1968) in which the father-daughter relationship far outweighs the mother-daughter relationship in settings both European and American, Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior*, and Ruthanne Lum McCunn’s fictionalized biography *Thousand Pieces of Gold* (1981) which, despite its irrelevancy with mother-daughter relationships, is construed by Wong as part of matrilineal literature in that it constructs the life of a “heroic female ancestor” who crossed the ocean to come to America (Wong 1995: 203). The majority of the works, however, are novels by younger writers such as Amy Tan’s *The Joy Luck Club* and *The Kitchen God’s Wife* (1991) which is set mainly in China; Fae Myenne Ng’s *Bone* (1993); Gish Jen’s *Mona in the Promised Land*

(1996); and Mei Ng's *Eating Chinese Food Naked* (1998). Wong, moreover, does not turn a blind eye to short fiction and poetry that deal with matrilineage and her list even broadens to include Asian/Chinese Canadian works.^①

The significance of identifying a matrilineal Chinese/Asian American tradition, Sau-ling Cynthia Wong claims, lies in two aspects: firstly, it promotes "racial politics within feminism"; secondly, it contributes to "gender politics within cultural nationalism" (1995: 179). Wong's words can also be applied to the criticism of Chinese/Asian American literature of matrilineage and more broadly, the establishment of Chinese/Asian American discourse of matrilineage, which constitutes an alternative of resistance to the hegemonic white matrilineal discourse. King-Kok Cheung, in her "Re-Viewing Asian American Literary Studies?" (1997), also recognizes that many Asian American feminist critics "champion cultural nationalism in their own way by contending not only against Asian and white patriarchy but also against Eurocentric feminism?" (1997: 12). Firstly, some of these critics have taken women writers to task for "espousing white liberal feminism at the expense of 'third world' cultures?" (Cheung 1997: 12). A case in point is Inderpal Grewal's and Susan Koshy's criticism of Indian American woman writer Bharati Mukherjee's novel *Jasmine*.

① Sarah Lau's short story "Long Way Home?" (1990) and Wen-Wen C. Wang's "Lemon and Coffee?" (1990) are mentioned. And among the Chinese American poetic works, there are Nellie Wong's *Dreams in Harrison Railroad Park* (1977); Fay Chiang's *In the City of Contradictions* (1979); Kitty Tsui's *The Words of a Woman Who Breathes Fire* (1983); and Cathy Song's *Picture Bride* (1983). And on Wong's list, Denise Chong is a Chinese Canadian and her work *The Concubine's Children* (1994) is set in Canada and China. To add a point, Amy Tan's latest novel *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (2001) also addresses the theme of the mother-daughter relationship.

Secondly, some critics such as Cheung herself have variously challenged a “wide-spread Anglo-American assumption ? the notion that silence is synonymous with submissiveness and passivity and that voice is tantamount to power and truth? (Cheung 1997: 12). Notedly, Cheung does not say a word about Asian American women writers’ rethinking and retelling the mother-daughter relationship from their own point of view, which ultimately constitutes a challenge to and a transformation of the Eurocentric discourse on matrilineage. The reason is, simply, that there is little critical attention ? at home and abroad ? to this dimension of Asian American literature of matrilineage. While Sau-ling Cynthia Wong emphasizes the importance of identifying this literature as a tradition of its own, she fails to probe deeper into the question and her essay “ ‘Sugar Sisterhood’ ” is more about white (feminist) co-optation of Amy Tan’s *The Joy Luck Club* and *The Kitchen God’s Wife* than about their contribution to a distinct Chinese American matrilineal discourse. And of the criticisms by scholars and students in mainland China and Taiwan,^① only two essays deal with the theme of mother-daughter relationship in *The Woman Warrior* and *The Joy Luck Club*, but in terms of Chinese American culture and history nevertheless.^② Herein lies part of the necessity and significance of writing this book, which will be outlined

① Studies of Chinese/Asian American literature in mainland China and Taiwan, as the bibliography of this book shows, appeared much later than in America. Compared with Taiwan ? let alone America – in mainland China works in this field are scant and unsystematic and no study of book length has got published.

② The two critical essays on the mother-daughter relationship are as follows: 程爱民(Cheng Aimin), “论谭恩美小说中的母亲形象及母女关系的文化内涵(The Cultural Significance of the Mother Image and the Mother-Daughter Relationship in Amy Tan’s Novels)”, 《南京师大学报·社会科学版》(*Journal of Nanjing Normal University [Social Science]*), No. 4 (2001): 107? 13; and 陆薇 (Lu Wei), “母亲/他者:《女斗士》中的对抗叙事策略 (Mother/Other: The Counter-Narrative Strategy in *The Woman Warrior*)”, 《四川外语学院学报》(*Journal of Sichuan International Studies University*), 17.2 (2001): 34? 7.

later.

The other part of the picture has something to do with “gender politics within cultural nationalism”. Asian/Chinese American cultural nationalism, which arose during the era of the civil rights movement and the anti-Vietnam War protests, is of vital importance for a group who has historically undergone “internal colonialism” within American territory and has been discriminated against politically, exploited economically, and silenced culturally. The problem is that it has been an “androcentric? cultural nationalism monopolized by

asculinists? such as Frank Chin and the other members of the *Aiiiiiiii!* group (Wong 1999: 189). From the beginning, race and gender have been intertwined in Asian/Chinese American history since “in the peculiarly American tangle of race and gender hierarchies, the objectification of Asian Americans as permanent political outsiders has been tightly plaited with [their] objectification as sexual deviants: Asian men have been coded as having no sexuality, while Asian women have nothing else? (Kim 1990: 69). Politically and economically, a whole series of racist exclusionary laws ? especially before 1943 ? led to an absence of wives and traditional families in the Chinese American community and resulted in “bachelor societies? of single Asian men who performed forms of work that are traditionally considered women’s work” ? such as menial jobs in a restaurant, laundry, and hotel. Such social and economic oppression of Chinese Americans, in conjunction with a longstanding Orientalist

tradition^① that casts the Asian in the role of the silent and passive Other, have in turn provided material for degrading sexual representations of the Chinese in American popular culture. Frank Chin and Jeffery Paul Chan note in an essay "Racist Love? (1972)"^② that while "racist hate? casts masculine? stereotypes of blacks, Indians, and Mexicans as studs, savages, and bandits, "racist love? defines Asians as the evil Dr. Fu Manchu and the asexual Charlie Chan, as a race "completely devoid of manhood devoid of all the traditionally masculine qualities of originality, daring, physical courage, creativity? (1972: 68). Chinese American history is actually viewed by the two writers as a wholesale and systematic white attempt to emasculate the Chinese American male. "The deprivation of language? is part of the castration process:

[It] has contributed to (1) the lack of a recognized Chinese-American cultural integrity and (2) the lack of a recognized style of Chinese-American manhood? Language is a medium of culture and

① For an adequate understanding of Orientalism, Edward Said's *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979) is a must. For more information about American Orientalism, see David Leiwei Li, "The Production of Chinese American Tradition: Displacing American Orientalist Discourse?" *Reading the Literatures of Asian America*, eds. Shirley Geok-lin Lim and Amy Ling (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), pp. 319? 31 and *Imagining the Nation: Asian American Literature and Cultural Consent* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 3? 7; Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 1? 6; and Gary Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture* (Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 1994), pp. 3? 0.

② Much of the idea of this essay is repeated in "An Introduction to Chinese and Japanese American Literature" authored by the *Aiiieeeee!* editors. See Frank Chin, and et al. eds., *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian American Writers* (New York: A Mentor Book, 1991), pp. 3? 8.

the people's sensibility, including the style of manhood? On the simplest level, a man, in any culture, speaks for himself. Without a language of his own, he no longer is a man (Chin & Chan 1972: 76–77).

Chin and Chan, perceiving this denial of language as affecting essentially Chinese males, consider the literary success of Chinese American women writers as yet another form of emasculation of the Chinese American male: “The mere fact that four of the five American-born Chinese-American writers [Jade Snow Wong, Diana Chang, Virginia Lee, Betty Lee Sung, Pardee Lowe] are women reinforces this aspect of the stereotype [of the Asian male as completely devoid of manhood]? (1972: 68). While their point that the deprivation of language contributes to the Chinese American male's crisis of identity is a valid one, their implication that literary creativity belongs in the domain of men is very disturbing. In fact, in taking whites to task for disparaging Chinese Americans, the two writers seem nevertheless to be bolstering up patriarchy by invoking gender stereotypes. The same impetus to reassert manhood and the same sexist biases also underlie the ongoing attempt by Chin, Chan, Lawson Inada, and Shawn Wong to reconstruct Asian/Chinese American literary history. Besides *Aiiieeeee!* (1974), they have compiled *The Big Aiiieeeee!* (1991) in which they seek to revive an Asian heroic tradition by celebrating famous war epics, all written by men and not one living Chinese American women writers is included. In creative writing, correspondingly, Frank Chin, as well as many other male writers, is intent on defining Chinese fathers and sons as subjects and recuperating their identity as Americans. Many women critics have

elaborated upon the fact that in most contemporary Asian American men's writings, women continue to be defined only in relation to men, often as "voiceless obstacles to or objects of their search for America" (Kim 1990: 73). A misogynist tendency can be found especially in Frank Chin's writings: playing auxiliary roles, the women characters are cheap, stupid tramps or malicious, cruel, promiscuous, castrating women.^① Moreover, in critical practice, Frank Chin and some other male critics simply outlaw texts with an anti-patriarchal agenda such as Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* by accusing them of falsifying Chinese culture, reinforcing white stereotypes of Chinese American males and fawning on white feminism.^② All in all, the androcentric cultural nationalism undertaken by the *Aiiieeeee!* group, essential as it is, nevertheless ignores the experience of the doubly oppressed Asian/Chinese American women in terms of gender and race and functions to silence them. In this context, no one can fail to see the political significance of Chinese American women writers' unrelenting efforts in creating female-centered narratives, in

① On the portrayal of women characters in Asian/Chinese male writings in general and those of Frank Chin in specific, see, among many others, Elaine H. Kim, "Such Opposite Creatures? Men and Women in Asian American Literature", *Michigan Quarterly Review* 29 (Winter 1990): 68-73, and *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), pp. 173-97; Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, "Gender and Sexuality in Asian American Literature" *Signs* 25.1 (1999): 171-26; Mary E. Young, *Mules and Dragons: Popular Cultural Images in the Selected Writings of African-American and Chinese-American Women Writers* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1993), pp. 96-104.

② See, for example, Frank Chin, "Introduction" "Come All Ye Asian American Writers of the Real and the Fake" in *The Big Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Chinese American and Japanese American Literature*, eds. Jeffery Paul Chan, Frank Chin, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong (New York: Meridian, 1991), pp. xi-vi; pp. 1-2.

combination with critics' active attempt at establishing a female literary tradition. And this book, in focusing upon representative Chinese American narratives of the mother-daughter relationship, hopes to join in the critical camp and contribute to the "gender politics within cultural nationalism".

Here, it is necessary to clarify the definition of Chinese American literature as employed in this book. According to Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, just as ambiguities surround the term "Chinese Americans?" so there exists "no consensus?" on what properly falls within the purview of Chinese American literature; and the boundaries of the field, as inferred from critical practice, have "fluctuated with changing historical conditions?" (1997: 39). Over the years, the definitions of Asian American literature ? and by implication, Chinese American literature ? have undergone massive revision,

initially emphasizing the function of the literary works to effect social change, later encompassing a broader-based thematic coalition pertinent to a variety of texts, and most recently delving into the continuities between Asian American literature and the cultural artifacts of scattered Asian diasporas across the globe (Rachel Lee "Asian?" 54).

The narrowest definition is probably that of the *Aiiiiiiii!* group who "valorizes works written in English by American-born writers on American subjects addressed primarily to fellow Asian Americans, preferably with a pronounced anti-Orientalist agenda, working-class sympathies, and an interest in rehabilitating Chinese American masculinity?" (Wong 1997: 40). And in its broadest sense, Chinese

American literature “encompasses the oral and written literary traditions of [Chinese] immigrants in North America, of American-born generations of [Chinese] ancestry, and of [Chinese] populations living in U.S. territories? (Rachel Lee “Asian”: 50). A typical example is King-Kok Cheung’s definition in *Asian American Literature: An Annotated Bibliography* (1988, co-edited with Stan Yogi) and *An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature* (1997): “works by people of [Chinese] descent who were either born in or who have migrated to North America? (1997: 1). In fact, although most critics of Chinese American literature are in favor of an inclusive definition, which truly expresses its richness and heterogeneity, in critical practice they tend to adopt a working definition that falls between the broadest sense and the narrowest and best suits the purpose or agenda of their research.^① As far as this book is concerned, the priority is given to works written in English on the Chinese American experience by writers of Chinese descent who have decided to reside permanently in the United States.

Therefore, this book does not concern itself with Chinese Canadian literature of matrilineage. And the choice as to which texts to study is made chiefly on the basis of Sau-ling Cynthia Wong’s list. Yet it is impossible to do justice to all the works in the Chinese American literary tradition of matrilineage within one book, and in view of this limitation, the texts for discussion will narrow down to

① A survey of definitions of Asian/Chinese American literature put forward by influential critics such as Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, Elaine H. Kim, Frank Chin, Shirley Geok-lin Lim, and Amy Ling is given in 张子清(Zhang Ziqing), “与亚裔美国文学共生共荣的华裔美国文学(Chinese American Literature That Coexists and Coprosperes with Asian American Literature)? 《外国文学评论》(*Foreign Literature Review*) No. 1 (2000): 93? 4.

those book-length prose works in which not only the theme of mother-daughter relationship but also the American setting predominates. And more importantly, since the purpose of the present study is to develop a new method of reading Chinese American literature of matrilineage and contribute in the form of a critical project to the racial politics within feminism as well as the gender politics within cultural nationalism, works popular or influential not only within the Chinese American community but also in mainstream America make a suitable candidate. Therefore, the focus of this book falls upon Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, which has been cited by the Modern Language Association as the most widely taught work by a contemporary writer on college campuses today? (Skandera-Trombley 1998: 2), and Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, whose popularity has been recorded to the full in the above mentioned "Ugar Sisterhood" essay. Fae Myenne Ng's *Bone* is also chosen from among more recent works for two reasons: firstly, the novel has been greeted by a large enthusiastic readership both white and Chinese American (Ng and her book make a feature in *Contemporary Literary Criticism: Yearbook 1993* and *Hitting Critical Mass: A Journal of Asian American Cultural Criticism*, an electronic periodical edited by Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, devotes a special issue to the criticism of *Bone* in 1994); secondly, Ng's novel is unique among the works by young writers in that it depicts the relationships between one mother and three daughters, which form an interesting comparison and contrast with the relationships between one mother and one daughter in *The Woman Warrior* and four pairs of mothers and daughters in *The Joy Luck Club*.

The present study is based on a thorough research into existing criticisms of the texts under discussion. It must be pointed out that

misreadings abound in relevant white criticisms, motivated by a desire to appropriate and co-opt texts by women of color for mainstream discourse on the mother-daughter relationship. Sau-ling Cynthia Wong is one of the Chinese American critics who attempt to put the phenomenon in perspective. In her article "Diverted Mothering: Representations of Caregivers of Color in the Age of Multiculturalism" (1994), Wong examines the images of the caretaker of color in novels, autobiographies, and films of the 1980s and 1990s. These works typically represent a woman of color who has to put her own mothering ? pregnancy or child rearing ? on hold in order to nurture the white employer's family, as well as the related figure of a desexualized man of color as servant or healer. The subtext of frustrated motherhood, Wong contends, points to a larger dynamics in American society in which the vibrancy of the cultures of people of color is diverted and appropriated to shore up a dominant culture in decline. What is the most important, Wong mentions "diverted mothering" ? if this concept is "broadened beyond thematics to include audience-author relationships" ? in the overwhelming popularity among white readers, especially white women with feminist sympathies, of mother-daughter stories by women writers of color (1994: 82). And this idea is substantiated later by a case study of the success of Amy Tan in the 1995 essay "Sugar Sisterhood"? The popularity of Tan's mother-daughter stories, Wong claims, comes as a "convergence of ethnic group-specific literary tradition and ideological needs by the white-dominated readership ? including the feminist readership ? for the Other's presence as both mirror and differentiator" (1995: 177). Yet significantly, Wong's emphasis is upon white appropriation of Tan's works for the longstanding Orientalist

tradition instead of the Eurocentric feminist discourse on matrilineage. Rather, she is keenly aware of an “ethnic group-specific” literary tradition of matrilineage although she fails to investigate how it differs from and transforms the Eurocentric feminist discourse on matrilineage. And this is what this book intends to examine.

To accomplish this aim, this book sees it necessary to avoid certain pitfalls in relevant existing criticisms authored by critics from the Asian/Chinese American community and China, scant and unsystematic as they are. First and foremost, any adequate reading of the works of Chinese American women writers must be premised on the fact that they, in the words of Elaine Kim, “address themselves directly to affirming both their racial and gender identities?” (1982: 252). Like other women writers of color, these writers are aware that they are both a member of racial minority and a female who should fight simultaneously against racial and gender inequalities. Therefore, racism and sexism are central concerns in their writings. They depict the plight of Chinese American women who suffer doubly or even triply, not only from racism in the United States, but also from forms of misogyny within three patriarchal cultures ? traditional Chinese, Chinese American, and modern American. As reflected in their writings, women of color as mothers and daughters are situated at the intersection of race and gender and experience their relationships quite differently from their white counterparts. Accordingly, the category of race must be inserted into any analysis of the mother-daughter relationship in Chinese American literature as it is inextricably interwoven in the racial history of oppression and discrimination. A contrary case is Japanese American critic Esther Mikyung Ghymn’s reading. In her book *Images of Asian American Women by Asian*