

**Negotiating Identities
in
Asian American
Women's Writing:
Gender, Ethnicity, Subjectivity**

Helena Grice

**Thesis submitted in Candidature
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
University of Wales, Aberystwyth,
June, 1998**

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed (candidate)

Date 15/1/99

STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated.

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Signed (candidate)

Date 15/1/99

Signed (supervisor)

Date 15. 1. 99

STATEMENT 2

I hereby consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

Signed (candidate)

Date 15/1/99

I hereby consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loans after expiry of a bar on access approved by the University of Wales on the special recommendation of the Constituent College.

Signed (candidate)

Date 15/1/99

CONTENTS

<i>Abstract</i>	i
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ii
<i>Terminology</i>	iii
Chapter One	
Identity Matters	1
<i>Ethnic Identity</i>	2
<i>Gender and Identity</i>	6
<i>The Evolving Identity of Asian American Literature</i>	9
<i>Critical Identities</i>	13
<i>Asian American Identities in Europe</i>	17
<i>Asian American Identities</i>	19
Chapter Two	
Genre and Identity	27
<i>Genre 1: Theories of Genre</i>	27
<i>Genre 2: Asian American Women's Texts — A Generic History</i>	31
<i>Genre 3: Mixed Genre Writing/Theoretico-Narratives/ Auto-representational Fictions</i>	41
Chapter Three	
Mother/Daughter Discourses and Asian American Women's Writing	54
<i>The Myth of Origins, or, Origins of the Myth</i>	55
<i>Origins in Myths</i>	59
<i>Motherhood as Institution and as Experience</i>	61
<i>From Othered Mothers to Other Mothers</i>	63
Chapter Four	
Mother Tongue: Language and Diaspora	88
<i>Language, Culture and the Polity</i>	89
<i>The Language of Borderlands</i>	100
<i>Translation</i>	106
<i>Symbolic Ethnicities</i>	113
<i>Nomenclature</i>	116
<i>Writing Polyglottic</i>	120

Chapter Five	
Face-ing/De-Face-ing Racism: Physiognomy as Ethnic Marker	126
<i>A Brief History of Physiognomy</i>	128
<i>Spec(tac)ular Acts</i>	131
<i>Anti-Miscegenation Discourses and the Eurasian Subject</i>	133
<i>Gendered Responses and the Technologies of Race</i>	141
<i>Counteracting Stereotypes</i>	153
<i>Rehabilitative Representations?</i>	162
Chapter Six	
Citizenship and National Identity: Cultural Forms and Formations	168
<i>National Identity and Japanese American Internment Narratives</i>	173
<i>Border Subjects and National Identity: Maxine Hong Kingston's 'China Men'</i>	193
Chapter Seven	
Homes and Homecomings	213
<i>Owning Space</i>	217
<i>Exile, Displacement, Migration</i>	225
<i>Domestic Spaces and Ghostly Places</i>	230
<i>Ethnic Women in the House of Fiction: Narrative Homecomings</i>	235
Bibliography	243
Primary Texts	243
Secondary Texts	247
Appendices	
Appendix I	267
Appendix II	268
Appendix III	269
Appendix IV	270

Abstract

A central concern of much of the emergent literature of Asian American women is the question of how identity is defined. Living in, and writing from, what has been called the 'between worlds' condition, engenders an often contradictory and frequently shifting sense of identity in Asian American women's texts. The 'hyphenated identity' is further destabilised and complicated by gender.

This precarious female subjectivity is often reflected textually through shifting narrative voices and fractured narratives. A self-consciousness can be detected in the relation between the structures of narrative and the construction of self. Conventional genre distinctions are often traversed so that in particular the demarcations between fiction and autobiography are challenged.

I refract current theoretical discussions of identity and the processes of identity formation through a series of texts by Asian American women which are preoccupied to varying degrees with the question 'Who am I?' Several possible answers are suggested to the question of where identity actually originates. They are: the maternal, language; physiognomy; 'home' and the prominent cultural marker of national identity. It is around these locations of cultural identity that I organise my analysis.

Chapters One and Two introduce a discussion of the ways in which identity is negotiated in this group of texts, and analyse the ways that genre is used and abused by these writers to suit their purposes. Chapter Three addresses the prevalence of mother/daughter writing in this body of work, suggesting that in their depiction of alternative maternal-daughterly arrangements, several Asian American women writers actually challenge dominant analyses of the mother/daughter dyad. As I discuss in Chapter Four, linguistic identity is also a focus of extended interest for many writers, for whom bilingualism is an uneasy condition.

In Chapter Five, I address the Asian American feminist re-writing of the body as signifier. The body is often a battleground of identity. Asian American women's texts repeatedly address the practice of reconstructing the body to project less racially marked identities, as part of a wider project of recovering a positive sense of self-identity. This emphasises the corporeality of identity as well as the connections between the internal and external body.

Chapter Six stresses the roles of culture and the polity in defining and creating identities, through the culturally and legislatively defined identity afforded by citizenship. I argue that particular texts by Asian American women may be read as challenges to dominant constructions of national identity, constructions which sought to exclude certain Asian American groups at critical moments in American history. Chapter Seven addresses the dynamics of space and home, a preoccupation with the idea of return as fundamental to the negotiation of identity. The search for 'home', both as psychological construction and real location, is a recurrent preoccupation in many texts.

Acknowledgements

My greatest debt of gratitude is to my supervisor, Professor Lyn Pykett, for finding so much time for me during her very hectic period as head of department. I would also like to thank Dr. Martin Padget, in his capacity as my second supervisor, for reading drafts of this work at different stages, and for providing helpful advice for further reading. Diana Chang's generosity in lending me her publicity photograph is gratefully acknowledged. I would like to thank Dr. Timothy Dunne, of the Department of International Politics, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, for discussions which clarified my thinking about issues of citizenship and national identity; and Dr. Tim Woods for editorial help, proof reading and computer assistance, above and beyond the call of duty. In addition, I wish to acknowledge the financial support of the Department of English and the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. I would also like to thank my mother for continuing financial rescue packages and encouragement throughout the last three years.

Several chapters of this thesis have been published, or are soon to be published, in altered forms elsewhere. Chapter One has been published as 'Asian American Writing in Europe: Problems and Paradigms' in *Hitting Critical Mass: A Journal of Asian American Cultural Criticism*, Vol.4, no.1. Chapter Two, will be published as 'Asian American Women's Prose Narratives: Genre and Identity', in Esther Ghymn, ed., *An Asian American Studies Reader* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998); Chapter Five as 'Facing/De-Face-ing Racism: Physiognomy and Racism in Eur/Amerasian Texts by Women', in Yuko Matsukawa, Josephine Lee and Imogene Lim, eds., *Re/Collecting Early Asian America: Reading in Cultural History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998). Part of Chapter Six will be published as 'Border Subjects and Territoriality: Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men* as Frontier Literary History', in *Borderlines: Studies in American Culture* (forthcoming); another part of Chapter Six will be published in Alison Donnell and Pauline Polkey, eds., *Representing Lives* (London: Macmillan, 1999). Part of Chapter Seven will be published as 'Reading the Nonverbal: The Indices of Time, Tactility and Taciturnity in Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*', *Melus* (forthcoming).

Terminology

Many of the terms used in ethnic and racial theory are used in different ways. My usage largely follows that of Ellis Cashmore's *A Dictionary of Ethnic and Racial Theory*, where more expansive definitions may be found.

Asian American refers to North American writers (including Canadian) of Asian descent.

Ethnic refers to a group of people assumed to share, or who feel that they share, a common cultural descent.

Ethnicity is the sense of being 'ethnic'. This may be accentuated or de-emphasised by the individual through cultural practices.

'**Race**' was a term of classification, now largely discredited, arising out of biologist, pseudo-scientific nineteenth-century discourses. It endures as a potent signifier or trope of irreducible otherness or difference. It is often erroneously used interchangeably with 'ethnic'.

'**Racial differences**' is occasionally used here, as elsewhere, to discuss black/white dynamics of interaction.

Anglo is a term which in an American context means of 'European, white descent'. In this context it often denotes a culturally dominant group, and is often used, rather problematically, in opposition to 'ethnic'. It is also used interchangeably with 'Euro-American' or 'AEA' ('Anglo/Euro/American').

Nikkei are Japanese Americans.

Issei are first generation Japanese Americans.

Nisei are second generation Japanese Americans.

Sansei are third generation Japanese Americans.

CHAPTER ONE

Identity Matters

'Who I am is a difficult question'
— Geeta Kothari, 'Where Are You From?'

That identity matters is increasingly reiterated and attested to by the proliferation of theoretical discussions of what Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates refer to as 'the cliché ridden discourse of identity'.¹ As Diana Fuss reminds us, 'identity is never in a moment of critical repose'.² Likewise, Judith Kegan Gardiner notes:

Identity is a central concept for much contemporary cultural and literary criticism, which, along with its even vaguer terminological twin, the 'self' has become a cliché without becoming clear. The word 'identity' is paradoxical in itself, meaning both sameness and distinctiveness, and its contradictions proliferate when it is applied to women.³

The need to both concretise and clarify issues of identity is a project which this thesis seeks to partly undertake. I refract current theoretical discussions of identity and the processes of identity formation through a series of texts by Asian American women which are preoccupied to varying degrees with the question 'Who am I?' These texts negotiate and re-negotiate identities predicated upon markers of gender, ethnicity, language, geography, nationality and corporeality.

The fact that identity matters may be seen in the way that we discuss it. We speak of a 'crisis' of identity or of a 'loss' of identity. Identity may be defined as 'the interface between subjective positions and social and cultural situations'.⁴ That is, identities are manufactured, regulated, claimed or rejected within the sphere of culture. It is often the nature of our everyday cultural practices — eating, speaking, celebrating, writing — which define and constitute our identity. Cultural practices are important

signifiers of identity because they frequently demarcate the boundary between one group and another. One's religious and cultural identity as Jewish, for example, may function as the predominant marker. But if identity is marked by what one is — or does, it is equally determined by what one is not. That is, identity is equally defined through difference. Identities are rarely solitary; they are usually shared by a group, whether through processes of self-identification or through enforced belonging. Our identities are plural, and contingent: we simultaneously belong to several different identity groups. It is the collision of competing identities that often produces a crisis of identity.

We have extensive investments in particular identities and may struggle to assert one identity over another or to reject a particular identity. Although we can claim certain identities, this ability is always dependent upon cultural regulations, and material and social conditions. It may be that certain marginalised groups find themselves unable to escape that marginalised identity, such as disabled people, people of colour, gays or lesbians. Not all identities are available at any particular moment and the processes of identification are frequently curbed. This is often especially the case for marginalised groups.

Ethnic Identity

Racial(ist) discourses often view identity in essentialist ways: racial identities are often linked to corporeality in order to emphasise the immutability of that identity. Such concepts of identity as primordial and fixed depend upon the biological, pseudo-scientific discourses that support them. As I later discuss, such discourses were notably prevalent in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century theories of race and were often used to support institutionalised structures of discrimination. Increasingly, however, there has been a shift away from discussions of *race* in culture in favour of a focus upon *ethnicity*.⁵ This is not just a terminological shift. 'Ethnic' derives from the Greek 'ethnos' meaning 'nation' or 'people' (i.e. a group), and the Greek 'ethnikos' translates as 'heathen' or 'other'. 'Ethnic' thus denotes a particular group of people who share a common cultural descent. However, 'ethnicity' has gained common currency in the United States recently as a term which in broader cultural arenas defines non-Anglos. Thus, 'ethnicity' has replaced 'race' as a less heavily charged term, and the distinction between 'racial minorities' as people of colour and 'ethnics' as white immigrants has been blurred.⁶ This is despite the fact that there is actually no direct relationship between

the two terms, although so-called 'racial minorities' may share the experiences of a marginalised group. It is also the case that 'race' and 'ethnicity' are polysemic constructs and are often misunderstood to be synonymous, and thus continue to be used erroneously in academic and popular discourses alike. As Henry Louis Gates notes: 'Our conversations are replete with usages of *race* which have their sources in the dubious pseudosciences of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries'.⁷ 'Race' in fact, is a term which is increasingly losing its intellectual validity as a classificatory term, even though its usage as a potent signifier continues to be widespread.⁸

This terminological shift reflects the 'post-essentialist reconception of identity' defined by Gates and Appiah in their recent collection, entitled *Identities*.⁹ Emerging out of the new social movements of the 1960s, this move stresses a non-essentialist concept of identity in which individuals possess the agency to adopt, adapt or abandon ethnic identities. A leading proponent of this view is the ethnic theorist, Mary Waters. In *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America*, Waters views ethnic identity as 'a social process that is in flux for some proportion of the population ... ethnic identifications, in fact, are a dynamic and complex social phenomenon'.¹⁰ Waters rejects the 'belief that ethnicity is biologically based' and instead explores the possibilities of 'decid[ing] on one's ethnic identification'.¹¹ She surveys a range of ethnicity markers, including language (predominantly surnames), physical appearance, food, recreational activity choices and cultural rites of passage such as funerals and weddings.

Whilst Waters' analysis is wide-ranging and astute, her assertion that '[e]thnicity is increasingly a matter of personal preference', in her attempt to communicate the element of agency in ethnic identity, tends to under-estimate the cultural prohibitions and regulations of our identity.¹² Although 'symbolic ethnicity' is undoubtedly common amongst ethnic group members, it suggests an agency clearly not open to everyone. For example, the character Maibelle in Aimee Liu's novel *Face* is of mixed Chinese and Anglo ancestry. Her ability to identify as Anglo is curtailed by her physical appearance as part-Chinese; equally, her self-presentation as Chinese is tempered by her auburn hair and green eyes.¹³ Many Asian American women's texts challenge Waters' ethnic 'free-for-all' in articulating the tensions between the desire to identify in one way and an imposed identity. 'Symbolic ethnicity' is the project of accentuating and laying claim to a particular ethnic identity.¹⁴ Migration and diaspora often problematise this project by distancing the ethnic subject from the ethnic roots which determine that identity. Thus, it

is particularly the case that groups like Asian Americans may have to work harder to locate a secure sense of ethnic identity because the processes of migration frequently result in a loss of or separation from ethnic group identity, especially if the migration has been caused by political upheaval. This is also the case for second, third and subsequent generations. The Asian diaspora has been created as the result of a series of emigration 'push' factors: war and conflict (Korea, Cambodia), poverty (China, Japan, India), famine (China, Cambodia, Laos) and colonisation (Philippines). The processes of migration may produce several contesting identities. A Chinese American woman, for example, may find her identity as a Chinese daughter in conflict with her identity as an American woman, as was the case for Chinese American writer Jade Snow Wong, whose work I will later discuss. But what diasporic identities underscore is that identity is a process, and that identities are always in flux, subject to changing social, political and economic pressures. Similarly, the project of negotiating an identity is an on-going one, and this is especially the case for those whose identities are insecure or marginalised on the basis of gender or ethnicity. In the texts under consideration in this thesis, Asian American women's identities are represented as precarious, unstable and in a position of embattlement. The project of negotiating identities in these texts is not just a case of locating one identity, or resolving a conflict between identities, but is a continual quest for answers to the question 'Who am I?' Paul Gilroy has named this sense of identity, one arising out of diaspora, as 'diaspora consciousness', 'in which identity is focused less on the equalizing, proto-democratic force of common territory and more on the social dynamics of remembrance and commemoration'.¹⁵

As Bonnie TuSmith has emphasised, the claiming of an ethnic identity is extensively bound up with gaining the security that derives from membership of a group.¹⁶ An ethnic group is a community of similar people and thus membership of that community extends affirmative sentiments to its members. But this ethnic community works dialectically: identity within the community is defined in opposition to those without. Ethnic group identification thus depends upon the border for its definition. Yet, many Asian American women, for example, exist both inside and outside of the ethnic group. The processes of immigration and then assimilation problematise the maintenance of ethnic group identity. As Stephen Fugita and David O'Brien have shown in relation to Japanese Americans, whilst first-generation immigrants tend to stay rigidly within an ethnic community, subsequent generations increasingly move beyond or in and out of it,

as they become more Anglo-Americanised.¹⁷ Thus, the factors that become the means of Anglo-Americanising, such as language, citizenship, decisions about where to live, and the signifiers of dress, eating and other cultural practices, become the very battlegrounds of ethnic identity. The experience of ethnicity is often also a negative one. If the ethnic group is united by shared interests and experiences, then those experiences are often of economic deprivation, political disenfranchisement or racism. Thus, the positive aspects of ethnicity emphasised by Waters, whereby the accoutrements of ethnic identity: ethnically marked clothing and food, for example, become the *accessories* of identity, are undermined by the prohibitions that identity brings with it. It is, however, the case that a self-conscious shared recognition of discrimination can lead to a political mobilisation founded upon collective identification, as was seen in the 1960s civil rights movements. This may also result in textual coalitions. As I discuss in chapter two, the proliferation of Asian American women's anthologies is an apposite example of political intervention in Anglo cultural hegemonic structures through a collective identification.

Whilst the processes of identifying with one ethnic group in preference to another and resolving conflicts of identity are highly complex, ethnic identity also often works symbolically in simpler ways. Symbolic ethnic identity may involve no more than a choice of dress, food or language in order to signify an identification. Obversely, racism simplifies ethnic identity to the lowest common denominator, be it food or physiognomy. Racist name-calling, for example, works through highlighting a cultural practice stereotypically identified with that ethnic group, so French people may be called 'frogs', referring to a choice of food, or Chinese people 'chinks', based upon a supposedly shared physiognomic feature. Equally, as symbolic ethnicity highlights one identification in preference to another, racism recognises only the identification which is the source of prejudice.

Our considerable investments in our identities make them highly charged issues, with much at stake. Contests about identity may lead to war. The language of identity is a rhetoric of inside and outside, and opposition, the language of conflict. The lack, loss or debarment of a particular identity can be especially critical. For example, a catalytic moment in Japanese American ethnic group identity came when the United States government interned Japanese Americans following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, a move effectively excluding the group from membership of 'the nation'. Equally critical moments came for Chinese Americans with a series of Chinese Exclusion Acts, notably

in 1878, 1884, 1892 and 1904. As Benedict Anderson has shown, 'the nation' is a particularly exclusive and critical group identity, a point which I discuss further in chapter six. Non-membership of this exclusive group causes particular problems and may lead to either the de-emphasising of ethnic identity or, alternatively, to its accentuation. This underscores Ellis Cashmore's notable observation that 'ethnicity is basically reactive'.¹⁸

Ethnic identity works dialectically, in both positive and negative ways. At times, the distinctiveness of an ethnic group may be desirable, at other times it may bring with it unwelcome discriminations, as was the case for Japanese Americans during the Second World War. Generational differences often bring a shift in balance between positive and negative ethnic identity. Whereas for first generation immigrants, ethnic identity may be an unwanted burden in a hostile society, for subsequent generations, ethnic identity may become more of a question of choice, as Waters suggests. This is especially the case for those whose ethnicity has weakened, as they have progressively assimilated into Anglo culture and are increasingly removed from the experience of living in an ancestral country. In some cases, ethnic identity may become a foreign, even exotic, adornment.

The complex inscriptions of identity under consideration in this thesis demand from us as readers a sophisticated understanding of hybrid identities and cultural syncretism. In many of the texts discussed in this thesis, identity is a transcultural mixture which does not lend itself to being separated out into its component elements, but must instead be negotiated as a '*métissage*' or 'cultural braiding' of a series of 'strands' of identity, including those of both ethnicised and gendered identity.¹⁹

Gender and Identity

In my analysis of the work of Asian American women writers, I enter into dialogue not just with theories of ethnic identity, but also with feminist theories of gendered identity as well. In so doing, I also bring Asian American women's writing itself into dialogue with current feminist discussions of identity. As Rita Felski has noted:

If theory can be used to illuminate contemporary feminist writing, it is also the case that aspects of women's current literary practices can be drawn upon to

problematize the more abstract and speculative claims of feminist literary theory.²⁰

Although the texts discussed in this thesis depict women who lead very different lives, all are united, to varying degrees, in their articulation of the debilitating patriarchal as well as racist structures which delimit the project of defining self-identity. I view Asian American women's writing as a form of meaning production, a construction of gendered as well as ethnicised identity which draws upon various cultural and ideological frameworks rather than representing some 'given' Asian American female reality. Thus, Asian American women's self representation challenges theory in a reciprocal reworking of identity, politics and subjectivity. I recognise that the patterns of cultural and theoretical influence and exchange are multi-directional. This process has recently been described by Françoise Lionnet, writing of postcolonial women writers generally, as 'transculturation'.²¹

As Shirley Geok-lin Lim has shown, Asian American women's negotiations of gendered identity partly have their roots in traditional Asian patriarchal constructions of society.²² Lim suggests that it is only since the early 1980s that Asian American women's writing has been recognised as having specific things to say about Asian American, female identity, a tripartite construction which seeks to acknowledge both gendered and ethnicised aspects of identity.²³ These 1980s articulations asserted that gender and ethnicity cannot be treated as separate, or, indeed, separable, issues in the negotiation of identity; nor can they be reduced to generalisations. As Sucheta Mazumbar argues:

The impact of gender on Asian women in America varies enormously even within the same class and ethnic group. While the idea that female children are of less value than male children permeates all Asian cultures ... the effect of this value-system on American-born women is quite different than on an immigrant one.²⁴

As Lim, too, notes: 'Asian American women have been busy inventing new plots that are complicated by race and class issues'.²⁵ One of these new plots challenges the 'Asian kinship nexus' by focussing upon the relations between Asian American mothers

and daughters, which is the emphasis of my analysis in chapter three.²⁶ I argue that this exploration also brings into question white feminist explanations of the mother/daughter dyad in a double-edged and double-focussed critique of both patriarchal, gender-blind and ethnically-blind, culturally generalist analyses of mother-daughter relations. In several texts motherhood emerges as a 'politically contested identity',²⁷ and daughtering, too, is recognised as an important relational identity, one which is also deeply imbricated in questions of ethnicity and cultural identity.

Nancy Walker has noted that what characterises the contemporary novel by women 'is not merely a fluidity of identity, but a consciousness of the ironic distance between the self as formulated externally by cultural heritage, and the self as an internal process of redefinition and discovery'.²⁸ This distance is particularly evident in relation to linguistic identity, as I discuss in chapter four. Maxine Hong Kingston, for example, is especially conscious of Chinese culture's naming of women as 'slave' (the ideograph for 'woman' is synonymous with that for 'slave'), or as absence, as seen in the 'no name woman' sections of *The Woman Warrior*. Kingston herself, is never named by her family or culture as 'Maxine', but is instead referred to as 'Biggest Daughter' or 'Little Dog'. She combats this by writing about herself as 'Maxine'. Jade Snow Wong, another Chinese American woman writer, is also acutely conscious of this same phenomenon, as her linguistic identity in Chinese culture is the equally hierarchical 'Fifth Chinese Daughter', a name which she ironically appropriates as the title of her autobiography.

Another 'new plot', to return to Lim's phrase, is the Asian American feminist re-writing of the body as signifier, which I analyse in chapter five. If 'the body offers potential boundaries to the self',²⁹ it becomes a battleground of identity in the way that I outline above. In our technological age, we have increasing degrees of control over our bodies and the ways in which they signify. The body is a cultural text which can be rewritten, through surgery and other interventions, to project a particular identity. Yet our bodies are constraining as well as facilitating and may signify in unwanted ways, as a racially marked subject for example.³⁰ Technological intervention allows a means of altering or disguising that identity. As I discuss further in chapter five, Asian American women's texts repeatedly address the practice of reconstructing the body to project less racially marked identities, as part of a wider project of recovering a positive sense of self-identity. This emphasises the corporeality of identity as well as the connections between the internal and external body.

Chapter six stresses the roles of culture and the polity in defining and creating identities, through the culturally and legislatively defined identity afforded by citizenship. Many Asian American women's constructions of identity both interrogate and interact with the United States' constructions of itself. I argue that particular texts by Asian American women may be read as challenges to dominant constructions of national identity, constructions which sought to exclude certain Asian American groups at critical moments in American history. These include Japanese American women's narratives of internment during the Second World War and Maxine Hong Kingston's novel/memoir/biography *China Men*, a text which retrospectively raises questions about American treatment of newly immigrant Chinese men.

Chapter seven addresses the dynamics of space and home, a preoccupation with the idea of return as fundamental to the negotiation of identity. In *Homebase*, an important text by a male writer, Shawn Hsu Wong writes that 'Identity is a word full of home'.³¹ The search for 'home', both as psychological construction and real location, is a recurrent preoccupation in many texts. For diaspora subjects, 'home' is frequently not a space/place that can be taken for granted; it may be contested, lost, out of reach or exist simultaneously in different locations. 'Diaspora' itself suggests a dislocation from 'home' as a source of identity. Writing about 'home' traces a path across different communities and geopolitical spaces, and may be a difficult project for Asian American women. As I show in chapter seven, the ideas of home and space are charged with meaning for writers like Meena Alexander, Maxine Hong Kingston and Sara Suleri.

The Evolving Identity of Asian American Literature

Asian Americans began emigrating to the United States in 1849, when Chinese men began to arrive in the United States, escaping the 'intense conflicts in China caused by the British Opium Wars', and 'the turmoil of peasant rebellions ... and the bloody strife between the *Punti* (Local People) and the *Hakkas* (Guest People) over possession of the fertile delta lands'.³² This pattern of immigration was mainly to California, where Chinese joined the 'Forty-Niners' in the search for gold. This initial surge of movement coined the Chinese term for the United States, 'Gold Mountain', a name that is still in use today. As prospecting dried up, and Chinese immigrants were made to feel increasingly unwelcome in California, many moved into railroad construction, becoming involved in the building of the Central Pacific Railroad. Once this source of labour

disappeared in 1869, the Chinese immigrants either moved to Californian cities, where they entered low-paid service sector work as laundry men, cigar workers and in manufacturing, or in more rural areas they became involved in agricultural construction work. These early migrants were all male; Chinese tradition and culture limited the migration opportunities for women, and the 1875 Page Law prohibited the emigration of Chinese women to California too. Despite this, some Chinese women travelled alone to the United States, mostly, as Ronald Takaki notes, as prostitutes. Early Chinese American literary production maps this immigration pattern. As Elaine Kim discusses at length in *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and their Social Context*, early Chinese American literary production was mainly limited to autobiographies by male writers, often in the medium of Chinese.³³ The first Chinese American female writing, as Amy Ling has made clear in *Between Worlds: Women Writers of Chinese Ancestry*, was by upper-class female emigrés, often from diplomatic backgrounds.

This pattern is largely mirrored by early Japanese, Filipino and Korean immigration and subsequent writing. Japanese began emigrating following the economic hardships of the 1880s, at a time when the Japanese government starting allowing limited Japanese emigration to the United States. However, unlike the gender imbalance of Chinese immigration, Japanese women emigrated too, mainly to Hawaii and California, where they largely became involved in agricultural work. This pattern of Japanese immigration had a crucial effect on the Japanese American demographic profile in the early twentieth century, as well as upon its literary production. Since women emigrated as well as men (largely as a result of the 1907 'Gentleman's Agreement' between Japan and the United States, which permitted male and female immigration), Japanese in the United States started families far earlier than the Chinese, so a *nisei*, or second, generation, appeared quite swiftly. As Elaine Kim has argued, this led to substantial amounts of *nisei* writing from the 1920s and 1930s onwards, by both male and female *nisei*.³⁴

Ronald Takaki pinpoints the beginnings of Korean immigration as 1903.³⁵ Like the Japanese, many of these early immigrants went to Hawaii, escaping Japanese aggression in Korea. As the Korean immigration also included women, the same early appearance of a second-generation occurred as with the Japanese. Surprisingly, given this fact, Korean American women were slow to start publishing: although Elaine Kim

discusses the work that Korean American male writer Younghill Kang produced between 1931 and 1937 at some length, she mentions no female writers. Korean American female writing really came of age in the 1980s and 1990s, when Margaret K. Pai published *The Dreams of Two Yi-min* in 1989 and Mary Paik Lee published *Quiet Odyssey* in 1990. Both of these autobiographical accounts retrospectively deal with their subjects' experience as immigrants at the turn of the century, although they were only written in the latter part of the century. Quite why this is the case is not clear, although in her introduction to Mary Paik Lee's book, Sucheng Chan suggests that the distance of time is necessary for such narratives to appear.³⁶

Filipinos began migrating to the United States in large numbers between 1900 and the 1920s following the United States' annexation of the Philippines. Most of these early migrants were farm and agricultural workers, although a few were students. Filipinos also often brought their wives with them, although the large majority of men who migrated were single and unmarried women did not migrate. Like Korean American writing, Filipino writing has a noticeable gender imbalance. There are no early texts by women comparable with Carlos Bulosan's *America is in the Heart*, published in 1943. It is only in the last few years that Filipino American texts by women in English have started to be published, with the most notable example being Jessica Hagedorn's very successful novel *Dogeaters*, published in 1991.

South Asian immigration has a slightly different history from those groups that I have mentioned so far. A very short burst of immigration occurred from 1907 to 1917, after which immigration was halted by the United States Congress. This immigration was almost exclusively male: although these young men were mainly married, their wives stayed at home. In addition, the 1917 Immigration Law prohibited men from bringing their wives to America anyway. Initial South Asian immigration was largely a reaction to British colonial activities in India, as Ronald Takaki suggests.³⁷ This early wave of immigration was not sustained, due to immigration restrictions. Takaki notes that by 1940, the Asian-Indian population in the United States numbered only 2,405, sixty percent of whom resided in California.³⁸ This uneven immigration pattern helps to explain the relative absence of South Asian American writing until recently, when writers like Bharati Mukherjee and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni began publishing in the 1970s and 1980s.

These groups — Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, Koreans and South Asians — together form the earliest Asian presences in the United States. It is no coincidence, then, that these groups (and especially Chinese and Japanese Americans), have the most developed and more prolific literary traditions in America. This is true of writing by both men and women, with Chinese American women's writing standing as the most prolific of all Asian American women's writing, and, indeed, continuing to be the literary vanguard of Asian American female literary production. Newer and later immigration groups include Laotians, Vietnamese and Cambodians, many of whom have emigrated since the 1965 Immigration Law, which abolished immigration quotas. A large proportion of these new immigrants were seeking sanctuary from civil war and famine. Takaki observes that many Vietnamese, for example, view themselves as sojourners, and see their stay in the United States as temporary, a fact that has affected the literary production of these groups.³⁹ Since the 1965 law was passed, there has also been a new wave of immigrants from China, the Philippines, Korea and from South Asian countries, notably from Pakistan. These waves of immigration have invigorated the literary production of their respective ethnic groups, producing a new generation of writers.

Periods of intense Asian American literary production map quite exactly on to the history of Asian reception in the United States, and on to the relationship between the United States and various Asian countries at particular moments. For example, the relatively powerful position that Japan's Meiji government enjoyed on the world stage at the end of the nineteenth century, facilitated Japanese immigration as well as affecting the reception Japanese received in America. Chinese, in contrast, experienced a far more hostile reception from the United States government due to China's relatively weak position at that same time. Thus, Japanese American literary production flourished quite early. In contrast, during the Second World War, when Japanese Americans were interned by the United States government, very little work was published by Japanese Americans in what was an anti-Japanese climate. Later, Japanese Americans retrospectively wrote about this time, in a newly reconciliatory climate after the war. This pattern is perhaps most starkly illustrated by the rapid development and proliferation of Asian American writing after the 1965 Immigration Law, a time which also witnessed the new social movements which sought to combat discrimination of different kinds in the United States. In particular, the curriculum innovations that emerged out of the new social movements paved the way for more self-conscious

reflections upon issues of identity and ethnicity like those in the texts that I discuss within this thesis. In fact, as Shirley Hune has recently argued, the advent of Asian American Studies programmes has been catalytic in the self-conscious advancement of Asian American interests (Hune uses the term 'transformatory').⁴⁰ Yet, as Sucheta Mazumbar has shown, Asian American studies programmes have been concerned to stress the *Americanness* of Asian America, often at the expense of the respective Asian heritage.⁴¹ This emphasis can be detected in the proliferation of literary and autobiographical texts which have emerged since 1965, which largely focus upon the problems of assimilation and encounters with racism, and are usually set in the United States (even when, as in *The Woman Warrior*, the Asian country is visited in the mind of its protagonists).

However, as Amy Ling has recently argued, the United States is increasingly becoming more 'pro-ethnic' (what Bonnie TuSmith has elsewhere characterised as 'ethnic fever'), notably through the critical attention being paid to so-called minority literatures. Ling cites the recent publication of the Heath and Norton American literature anthologies, with their extensive inclusions of non-Anglo writers, as an apposite example.⁴² She goes on to note: '... we may say with great excitement and anticipation that we are now on the brink of an Asian American literary and artistic renaissance. It is a renaissance in which women are playing a prominent, if not dominant part'.⁴³ The reason for this renaissance, Ling suggests, is 'the matrix of political, social, economic, historical, and cultural forces today. The time is ripe, and the majority seems at this moment more and more ready to listen to the *other* and to its own formulations of the *other* as reflected in texts produced by these others'.⁴⁴ The time *is* ripe, and in this thesis I attempt to both listen to the 'other' of Asian American women's writing, as well as to acknowledge Asian American women's own formulations of the 'other' to be found within their literature. Why has it taken so long for this chorus of Asian American women's voices to be heard? It may be, as Ling suggests, that this is due to a 'double silencing', 'both by the dominant culture and within the Asian communities themselves'.⁴⁵

Critical Identities

My own position as a white, British woman researching the work of Asian American women writers has led me to address the two separate but interconnected questions of

ethnic and racial differences and national and cultural differences, both of which intervene in my contact with Asian American literary and cultural forms and formations. In particular, to what extent are Asian American texts circulating in Europe, and what is the nature of that circulation? How thoroughly or partially has Asian American studies permeated Europe? We need to ask these questions, as the locus of Asian American literary reception and critical attention is not just within the boundaries of the United States, but also lies beyond its geographical limits. My own entry into the field has necessitated a rigorous engagement with the politics of my own reading and researching strategy. Some of the questions that I have been forced to ask myself pertain to white women — and men — almost anywhere who are engaged in the study of the literatures of people of colour, but some questions are more locally relevant to my position as a white woman in Europe.

For the critic who is a white, British woman, two separate but interconnected issues become relevant, those of cultural and national location. Many explorations of American cultural forms by European critics from across the Atlantic fail to explore the problematics of their own involvement and approach, and the consequence is often a lack of cultural specificity. In 1994, Sau-ling Wong claimed that ‘it certainly helps to be Asian American when one is interpreting Asian American literature’, but conceded ‘the theoretical possibility that non-Asians can manage to do excellent criticism on Asian American literature’, adding, however, that ‘I haven’t seen a whole lot of these scholars yet’.⁴⁶ Since then, coinciding with the cultural moment that has seen a surge of interest in ethnic literatures, Asian American literature has been a focus of increasing interest for non-Asian, as well as non-American scholars, myself included. Concern has been voiced in certain ethnic quarters about the appropriation ethnic literatures by white critics, and the perils of misreading such texts. In Asian American letters, writers such as Frank Chin bewail white (critical) interest in Asian American texts as ‘racist love’; and debates continue to rage in various forums over the directions in which Asian American studies ought to go.⁴⁷ As Sau-ling Wong highlights above, an important difference in the positions of Asian American and Anglo/European critics respectively vis-à-vis Asian American studies is that the Asian American critic will always be in a position of noticeable advantage in the study of Asian America. S/he possesses an easy familiarity with particular linguistic and cultural nuances and idioms, and is likely to be able to draw upon a ‘fund’ of comparable daily experience. Indeed, the literary representations and

traditions of Asian America are firmly rooted in the lived experience of Asian Americans. Nevertheless, it is crucial that we do not over-emphasise the importance of shared experiential realities in the contact between texts and readers. Henry Louis Gates and Kwame Anthony Appiah, amongst others, have recently warned against subscribing to this form of reader essentialism and have instead called for a 'post-essentialist' reconception of notions of identity, of texts, contexts and readers.⁴⁸ Ethnic and racial differences operate through highlighting divisions between some individuals and by stressing connections with others. Any attempt to read and reach across these differences entails a recognition and understanding of these dynamics. Within the field of African American studies, Houston A. Baker, Jr. and Patricia Redmond have offered an especially useful discussion of the politics of white intervention and participation in the study of African American texts. They posit the necessity of 'earned participation' of white critics in what is still an 'evolving work'.⁴⁹ Such earned involvement would include the development of the disciplinary field through 'laborious research, ample scholarly production and demonstrable commitment' in such a way as to 'keep alive always both the community itself and questions of its definition at any given moment'.⁵⁰ Like Baker and Redmond, Eva Lenox Birch uses the language of legitimation in her discussion of her own position as a white, British critic of African American writing. She labels as 'dishonest scholarship' any work which fails to interrogate its own status in relation to its subject and suggests the necessity for white academics to offer 'critical comments' upon their own positionality.⁵¹ This is a view shared by Elizabeth Abel, a white critic who explores the production of white feminist readings of black texts. Like Birch, Abel advocates self-reflexivity as a necessary framework for such a project:

If we produce our readings cautiously and locate them in a self-conscious and self-critical relation to black feminist criticism, these risks, I hope, would be counterbalanced by the benefits of broadening the spectrum of interpretation, illuminating the social determinants of reading and deepening our recognition of our racial selves and the 'others' we fantasmatically construct — and thereby expanding the possibilities of dialogue across as well as about racial boundaries.⁵²

Abel's model of self-reflexive reading includes the recognition of our 'racial selves' and the avoidance of implicit 'othering' produced by a white reading strategy which fails to acknowledge the importance of race in white reading. The ways in which race enters into white reading are complex, as illustrated by Abel's careful tracking of her own assumptions in her reading of Toni Morrison's racially encoded short story, 'Recitatif'. Abel concludes that there is *no* unproblematic grounding for white readers which displaces the politics of race, so self-reflexivity is necessary as a means of recognising whiteness as a standpoint and as a set of cultural practices. White self-criticism may then be able to offer a useful contribution to the study of black and ethnic texts by serving to endorse the racialisation of whiteness and to emphasise the role of race in the reading process.

That these debates have already been thrashed out in African American studies but have hardly begun within the field of Asian American studies is not surprising. The still-nascent status of Asian American studies means that its boundaries and aims remain in constant re-negotiation, and issues such as white involvement in the field are only now being tentatively addressed. One critic who has broached the subject at some length is Sau-ling Wong, whose discussion on the matter I referred to briefly earlier. Wong notes the role of African American studies as the theoretical vanguard of this particular debate and indeed cites white critical involvement in African American studies as one reason for a similar involvement in Asian American studies. Like Birch and Abel, Wong also advocates a reading process attentive to racial and cultural investments:

... in boundary crossing situations there is often an asymmetry of power that we don't realize. People in the dominant culture often assume that they can cross any boundary. [...] Readers from the dominant culture who are accustomed to believing their own reading position to be transcendent, universal, unbiased, tend to see those invested in 'minority' literatures as caught up in identity politics. In fact, they are caught up in their own identity politics too, only it's been 'naturalized', made invisible. There are certainly limits to any critical endeavor.⁵³

Although focused upon the dynamics of American cultural engagement, Wong's comments pertain equally to the position of white readers beyond the geographical boundaries of America, particularly the emphasis upon denaturalised reading positions

and the recognition of our own racial as well as cultural and national selves. Self-reflexive reading interrogates cultural and national as well as ethnic and racial particularities and differences. As an insistence upon racially-aware reading produces context-sensitive analyses of texts, so culturally and nationally located criticism likewise engenders an attentiveness to the social and cultural contexts that produce it. As Birch notes, just as 'all writing must be seen and approached as the product of a particular historical conjuncture within a particular national context',⁵⁴ so must the critical act be sensitive to its own rootedness in social, cultural and national conditions. Such an approach avoids essentialising texts and readers, and also offers fruitful ground for contextualised and historicised analysis. So, for example, the situation of Asian American literature may be compared and contrasted with the literature produced by Asian Britons. This process can be observed in recent comparative work which examines the cultural production of writers of Asian ancestry in different locations.⁵⁵

It is no coincidence that much of this groundbreaking work which attempts to traverse ethnic, racial, cultural and national differences, stems from a feminist epistemological basis. A feminist reading position frequently insists upon an awareness of the problems attending the application of theoretical models to literary texts, and stresses the importance of not creating critical authority at the expense of the writing under consideration.⁵⁶ In my own reading, I situate myself broadly within a feminist reading position, trying not only to read the literary text through the theoretical work, but also to go on and read the theoretical work both through and against the literary text, and thus to ensure that the theoretical basis of analysis is not privileged in any absolutist or reductionist way over the literary piece. It does, however, remain the case, as Wong warns, that '... a literature ... can't be captured by one single reading strategy' and that 'there are certainly limits to any critical endeavor'.⁵⁷

Asian American Identities in Europe

Many factors govern the nature of Asian American cultural influence in Europe, but the main interconnecting determining conditions may perhaps best be identified as the structures of education, the processes of corpus and canon formation and the economics of publishing. American culture has had, and continues to have, a colossal influence upon Europe.⁵⁸ With the advent of mass media, American literature, American television, American music and American films, together with other forms of popular

culture, have an enormous and very visible impact upon the daily lives of Europeans. American literature tends to reach us via two routes: those texts read by a general reading public and those texts which appear on university and college curricula (these may be thought of as unofficial and official canons). Each means of dissemination remains to a large extent under the control of the publishing industry, indeed, the politics of publishing play a highly significant part in mediating literary contact between the United States and Europe. In Britain, at least, Asian American literature has a dual publishing identity: some texts travel to us via multi-national mainstream publishers, whilst others are marketed by smaller, more ideologically motivated presses. So, for example, Tan and Kingston are both published in the UK by mainstream publishers: Minerva, Reed Consumer Books, Picador/Pan and Flamingo/Wheeler Publishing, all companies which have historically had an interest in bringing successfully track-tested American titles to Britain. By contrast, Sylvia Watanabe's novel *Talking to the Dead* is published by a feminist publishing house, The Women's Press (as was Hualing Nieh's *Mulberry and Peach* until recently). Likewise, Virago, originally a feminist press (although now part of Little, Brown, but that is another story), publishes Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*, *The Holder of the World* and *The Middleman and Other Stories*, and Han Suyin's *Winter Love* in their 'Lesbian Landmarks' series. And that's it! In Britain, at least, these authors and titles constitute the current corpus of Asian American literature, wholly dictated by text availability. Beyond the boundaries of British publishing, multinationals like Penguin do import a proportion of their (successful) titles published in the States. Aimee Liu's novel *Face*, published by Plume, an imprint of Penguin USA, comes to Britain this way, as does Jessica Hagedorn's edited collection, *Charlie Chan is Dead*. This publishing pattern has important implications for both the study of Asian American writing in Britain and for Asian American studies more generally. It is worrying that the expansion of the Asian American corpus outside of the United States is so dependent upon the proven profitability of a title or author in the United States as a prerequisite. Such a situation means that although 'insiders' like Amy Tan, Maxine Hong Kingston, and, increasingly, Bharati Mukherjee, are now routinely published within the United Kingdom, new or lesser known writers, less likely to achieve high sales figures, may not reach our bookshelves. Frequently, ideological concerns run counter to the economic strictures governing publishing decisions, so that even for presses like The Women's Press, committed as it is to expanding the British readership

of American women writers of colour, publishing writers and titles with uncertain market appeal is becoming a less viable option. Furthermore, although the period since the 1970s has seen the establishment and success of many feminist presses and imprints, presses committed to publishing writers of colour are scarce. This has already resulted in a gender-bias in the British corpus of Asian American writing: no male writers are published by domestic presses or publishers (although Granta imports Chang-Rae Lee's novel *Native Speaker*). As the blurbs on their jacket covers attest, the context in which these writers are marketed is on the basis of their gender, rather than, or as well as, their Asian-American identity, so that it is less likely that these texts will be read as Asian American.

I do not want to suggest that the situation is wholly negative though. It may be, for example, that different patterns of centrality and marginality emerge as a result of these different kinds of publishing patterns: owing to the fact that much Asian American writing comes to us via mainstream multinationals like Penguin, it is more likely (as my own students' responses have shown) that some Asian American texts will be received and read as mainstream, and may even be viewed as among the defining texts of American literature. This has already been demonstrated by the dissemination, reception and subsequent popularity of African American writing in certain areas of Europe.⁵⁹ It has also recently been evident in the reception of Amy Tan's latest novel *The Hundred Secret Senses*, which in Britain received unprecedented critical attention and radio and television coverage for an Asian American text.⁶⁰

Asian-American Identities

The field of Asian American studies itself grew out of an ethnically-conscious move to coin the portmanteau term 'Asian American' as a political category; and the field has remained committed to the politics which led to its genesis.⁶¹ Elaine Kim has importantly noted the necessity of making 'certain that our work does not simply trail the issues facing our community but is useful for analyzing and addressing real problems outside the academy'.⁶² Kim stresses that the responsibilities of the Asian Americanist include the political aims of actively defining and contributing to the development of the field. Kim's remarks were made in the context of the 1993 Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian American Studies held at Cornell University, entitled 'Privileging Positions: The Sites of Asian American Studies'. This conference's importance partly stems from

its place at a critical juncture in Asian American studies, a point at which those involved in the field turned their attention to questions of self-definition.⁶³ Kim's insistence upon the necessity of maintaining the political stance and goals of Asian American studies was echoed throughout the papers as well as elsewhere in subsequent Asian American scholarship. For the academic in Europe, the question arises as to the ways in which s/he may actively be(come) involved in these political endeavours. I can only offer some tentative suggestions as to how this may be achieved here. Dana Y. Takagi has argued the need for a greater intellectual as well as institutional interdisciplinarity, in order that Asian American studies may move more extensively into the thick of theoretical debates like those that have developed around the issue of postmodernism in recent years.⁶⁴ The sites of European engagement with Asian American studies tend to be scattered across a wider disciplinary spectrum than within the United States, so that it is possible for Asian American studies to move increasingly into wider disciplinary locations. This may be accompanied by an entry into theoretical debates taking place in other disciplinary sites, of the kind that Takagi suggests. Kim's call for Asian Americanists to help further race relations in the 1990s, may likewise be acted upon through the teaching of Asian American studies in new geographical as well as academic locations.⁶⁵ As Eva Lenox Birch notes:

Teachers of literature have both opportunity and responsibility to facilitate the building of racial bridges by joining students in serious reading of writers whose cultural and historical roots are significantly different to those of white British *and* white American writers.⁶⁶

Indeed teaching this body of literature is necessary to avoid making racial exclusions, whilst remaining cautious of racial tokenism. In addition, although white readers may not share an encounter with racism as suffered by readers of colour, their contact with literature describing that experience may nevertheless help them to reach an awareness of their own culturally shaped prejudices.

Yet we must be wary of over-emphasising the political potential of course and canon formation. If, as Lisa Lowe argues, the academic institution is one of the sites of the formation of Asian American identity, then the presence of Asian American culture within traditional disciplinary boundaries, but not yet beyond them in an interdisciplinary

formation, demonstrates both the still-provisional tenure of Asian American studies in Europe as well as its failure to disrupt disciplinary boundaries, which, in Lowe's words, 'subordinate ... the concerns of non-Western, racial and ethnic minority peoples'.⁶⁷ Moreover, the Asian Americanist in Europe should beware of institutional exploitation of her subject within a multi-culturalist agenda, whereby the teaching of Asian American texts is pressed into service as evidence of that institution's ethnic and racial inclusiveness. Likewise, Asian American texts taught *within* courses with different organizing frameworks such as genre, contemporary fiction, or diaspora, run the risk of being read and evaluated alongside vastly different texts and traditions which ignore crucial issues of the social and cultural context of production. This also places an increased demand upon those texts to become 'representative' of a vastly different group of texts and peoples.

'Asian American women's writing' is not a 'fixed, geographical, ethnically or nationally bound category of writing'.⁶⁸ Instead, it is a term which is used to refer to North American women writers of Asian descent, although my usage of the term recognises that it gathers together writers of diverse national origins, including Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Filipinos, South Asians and Pacific Islanders, amongst others. In this usage I am following the precedent set by the pioneer scholars of the field, including Elaine Kim, Sau-ling Wong, Amy Ling and King-kok Cheung. Asians in the United States and Canada, as Cheung reminds us, 'have had parallel experiences',⁶⁹ and it is this fact which justifies a comparative study of these writers such as this one here. My decision to spotlight Asian American *women* writers perhaps requires greater justification. Women's writing has been treated as a separate locus of interest and attention increasingly in the last twenty years in literary and critical analysis. As Rita Felski writes:

The emergence of a second wave of feminism in the late 1960s justifies the analysis of women's literature as a separate category, not because of automatic and unambiguous differences between the writings of women and men, but because of the recent cultural phenomenon of women's explicit self-identification as an oppressed group, which is in turn articulated in literary texts in the exploration of gender-specific concerns centered around the problem of female identity.⁷⁰

The same is true of Asian American women's writing. Most of the texts that I discuss here identify oppression predicated upon both gender and ethnicity. Asian American women's writing and experiential realities are frequently marginalised in both canonical critical discourses and wider cultural locations. The recognition of this, and the self-identification as marginalised, throws Asian American women's textual negotiations of identity together in what Sau-ling Wong has termed 'a textual coalition'.⁷¹ It is also the case, as Amy Ling has noted, that to focus upon the study of Asian American *women* writers is to focus upon the most significant texts and writers.⁷² Indeed, Werner Sollors has noted that it is

important to identify a core of women's and ethnic literatures, in order to then note how they overlap with each other and the dominant literatures, how their boundaries are blurred, and how they interact with each other.⁷³

The particular claim that I make for the texts in this thesis is that they are also united in the urgent negotiation and renegotiation of the problematics of gendered, ethnicised and nationalised identity; and furthermore, that in so doing, these texts make important interventions in dominant discourses of identity and critical discussions of identity formation. As Françoise Lionnet has asserted: '... fictional works make concretely visible the networks of influence and the questions of identity that are central to the debates over authenticity and postcolonial culture'.⁷⁴ Part of these texts' uniqueness is their disruption of a writer/theorist binary, as I elaborate further in chapter two. Generic disruption in this manner constitutes a form of transformation and transgression of traditional, patriarchally-informed discursive codes, and occurs with some frequency in this corpus of writing. Thus, it is the case that these texts become examples of what Carole Boyce Davies has termed 'uprising textualities'.⁷⁵

The explorations of identity in these texts are produced in changing historical and cultural circumstances, and my analysis attempts to mark the changing social and historical conditions of production and reception of the works I discuss. For example, in my exploration of Asian American women's negotiation of corporeal identity, I analyse how historically shifting attitudes towards race and miscegenation affected the transcription of a racially marked identity.

It is not just the texts under discussion here that have been produced on the historical 'move'. A small revolution has occurred since I began this thesis in the summer of 1995. At that point, Asian American writing was largely unknown outside of the United States, with the exception of the successful novels of Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan. When I embarked upon this project, the theoretical material pertaining to the body of Asian American literature amounted to three texts, to Asian American women writers in particular, one text. Now new theoretical treatments appear almost monthly, each one with a more specific focus; at the time of writing, the more specific analyses include a discussion of Asian American representations of race and ethnicity on the contemporary stage, Asian American poetry and images of women by Asian American women writers. Specific authors have whole texts devoted to them, including Maxine Hong Kingston and Hisaye Yamamoto. There are texts dealing with the politics of Asian American publishing, Asian American popular cultural representation, representations of Asian American ceremonies and literary representations of early Asian America in preparation. Many of these new works are edited collections, which display both the range and variety of work currently being produced in this field and the proliferation of scholars interested in Asian American writing. This thesis started out as a study of twelve writers, several of them out of print, but has become a much larger study, one which speaks to the extraordinary vitality and range of writing currently being produced in this field in the United States. Anthologies of American, women's or ethnic literatures now also routinely include texts by Asian American writers.

The literary production of Asian America has continued to grow apace. The majority of Asian American texts which have appeared since 1993 are by Asian American women. This body of texts is emerging as the literary vanguard of the Asian American movement and of Asian American literature. As I will illustrate, Asian American women's texts uniquely navigate the tricky waters of identity and identification in ways which often come to question prevalent theories of identity formation in skillful ways.

However, the treatment of Asian American women's writing as a distinct corpus remains a relatively new critical development. The only study dealing specifically with the writings of Asian American women as a group is Esther Ghymn's *Images of Asian American Women by Asian American Women Writers*, a text which has a quite narrow critical focus. Amy Ling's *Between Worlds: Women Writers of Chinese Ancestry* is

perhaps the closest proto-text for my own work within these pages, although I also owe much to Sau-ling Wong's *Reading Asian American Literature: From Necessity to Extravagance*, King-kok Cheung's *Articulate Silences: Hisaye Yamamoto, Maxine Hong Kingston, Joy Kogawa*, and, of course, Elaine Kim's pioneering work, *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writing and their Social Context*. I have found Sau-ling Wong's approach particularly useful in formulating my own work within this thesis. *Reading Asian American Literature* also adopts a largely thematic approach, one which identifies the 'intertexts' of Asian American literature, in the sense in which 'mutual allusion, qualification, complication, and transmutation can be discovered between texts regarded as Asian American, and how a sense of an internally meaningful literary tradition may emerge from such an investigation'.⁷⁶ My own analysis spotlights an emerging tradition of Asian American women's writing. I hope that this study will add to insights in the works that I mention above, particularly in bringing issues of identity into a sharper focus in relation to Asian American women's texts, and by promoting what is increasingly being recognised as an interesting and important body of writing.

Notes

¹ Henry Louis Gates and Kwame Anthony Appiah, eds., 'Introduction', *Identities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p.1.

² Diana Fuss, 'Fashion and the Homospectatorial Look', in *Identities*, p.93.

³ Judith Kegan Gardiner, 'On Female Identity and Writing by Women', *Critical Inquiry*, 8.2 (Winter, 1981), p.347.

⁴ Kathryn Woodward, ed., 'Introduction', *Identity and Difference* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1997), p.1.

⁵ As discussed by Bonnie TuSmith. See *All My Relatives: Community in Contemporary Ethnic American Literatures* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), p.2.

⁶ A point made by TuSmith. See *All My Relatives*, p.3.

⁷ Henry Louis Gates, *Loose Canons: Notes on the Culture Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p.48.

⁸ See Ellis Cashmore, ed. *A Dictionary of Ethnic and Racial Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

⁹ *Identities*, p.1.

¹⁰ Mary C. Waters, *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p.16.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.18; p.57.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.89.

¹³ See my discussion of *Face* in chapter five.

¹⁴ As defined by TuSmith, pp.7-8, amongst others.

¹⁵ Paul Gilroy, 'Diaspora and the Detours of Identity', in *Identity and Difference*, p.318.

¹⁶ *All My Relatives*, pp.21-24.

- ¹⁷ Stephen S. Fugita and David O'Brien, *Japanese American Ethnicity: The Persistence of Community* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), pp.4-5.
- ¹⁸ *A Dictionary of Ethnic and Racial Theory*, p.123.
- ¹⁹ See Françoise Lionnet's discussion of *métissage* in *Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989).
- ²⁰ Rita Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), p.1.
- ²¹ Françoise Lionnet, *Postcolonial Representations: Women, Literature, Identity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), p.11.
- ²² Shirley Geok-lin Lim, 'Feminist and Ethnic Literary Theories in Asian American Literature', *Feminist Studies*, 19.3 (Fall, 1993), pp.572-3.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p.573.
- ²⁴ Sucheta Mazumbar, 'General Introduction: A Woman-Centered Perspective on Asian American History', in *Making Waves: An Anthology of Writings By and About Asian American Women*, ed. by Asian Women United of California (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), p.15.
- ²⁵ 'Feminist and Ethnic Literary Theories', p.580.
- ²⁶ Lim's phrase, 'Feminist and Ethnic Literary Theories', p.580.
- ²⁷ Kathryn Woodward, 'Motherhood', in *Identity and Difference*, pp.239-298 (p.242).
- ²⁸ Nancy Walker, *Feminist Alternatives: Irony and Fantasy in the Contemporary Novel by Women* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1990), p.78.
- ²⁹ Chris Shilling, 'The Body and Difference', in *Identity and Difference*, p.65.
- ³⁰ A point made by Shilling, p.72.
- ³¹ Shawn Hsu Wong, *Homebase* (New York: Reed Books, 1979), p.32.
- ³² Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (New York: Little, Brown, 1993), p.192.
- ³³ See Elaine Kim, *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and their Social Context* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1982), pp.23-32.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.73.
- ³⁵ Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New York: Penguin, 1989), p.53.
- ³⁶ Sucheng Chan, 'Preface', in Mary Paik Lee, *Quiet Odyssey: A Pioneer Korean Woman in America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990), pp.xiv-xvii.
- ³⁷ *Strangers from a Different Shore*, p.63.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.314.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.455.
- ⁴⁰ Shirley Hune, 'Area Studies and Asian American Studies: Comparing Origins, Missions, and Frameworks', in *Asian Americans: Comparative and Global Perspectives*, ed. by Shirley Hune, et al. (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1991), p.1.
- ⁴¹ Sucheta Mazumbar, 'Asian American Studies and Asian Studies: Rethinking Roots', in *Asian Americans: Comparative and Global Perspectives*, p.30.
- ⁴² Amy Ling, "'Emerging Canons" of Asian American Literature and Art', in *Asian Americans: Comparative and Global Perspectives*, p.191.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.192.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.194.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.193.
- ⁴⁶ Sau-ling Wong, 'A Conversation with Sau-ling Wong', *Tamkang Review*, 25.1 (1995), 118-133 (p.126).
- ⁴⁷ See Elaine Kim, *Asian American Literature*, pp.174-89, for a discussion of Chin's views.
- ⁴⁸ *Identities*, p.1.
- ⁴⁹ Houston A. Baker, Jr., and Patricia Redmond, eds., 'Introduction', *Afro-American Literary Study in the 1990s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p.3.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁵¹ Eva Lenox Birch, *Black American Women's Writing: A Quilt of Many Colours* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), p.1.
- ⁵² Elizabeth Abel, 'Black Writing, White Reading: Race and the Politics of Feminist Interpretation', in *Identities*, p.270.
- ⁵³ 'Conversations with Sau-ling Wong', pp.125-6.

- ⁵⁴ *Black American Women's Writing*, p.3.
- ⁵⁵ See, for example, Patricia Duncker, *Sisters and Strangers: An Introduction to Contemporary Feminist Fiction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), chapter seven, 'Writing Against Racism'.
- ⁵⁶ For a discussion of this insistence, see Beverly Skeggs, ed., *Feminist Cultural Theory: Process and Production* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), especially Lynne Pearce's essay, 'Finding a place from which to write: the methodology of feminist textual practice'.
- ⁵⁷ 'Conversations with Sau-ling Wong', p.125.
- ⁵⁸ For a discussion of American cultural impact upon Europe, see Huck Gutman, *As Others Read Us: International Perspectives on American Literature* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991).
- ⁵⁹ A point made by Huck Gutman. See *As Others Read Us*, p.6.
- ⁶⁰ For example, Tan read at the Royal Festival Hall on 7 February, 1996; was interviewed on Radio Four's 'Woman's Hour' programme by Sarah Dunant, was reviewed by all the major newspapers and literary reviews, and appeared on daytime television too.
- ⁶¹ For a discussion of this see Sau-ling Wong, *Reading Asian American Literature: From Necessity to Extravagance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp.4-7.
- ⁶² Elaine Kim, 'Beyond Railroads and Internment: Comments on the Past, Present, and Future of Asian American Studies', in *Privileging Positions: The Sites of Asian American Studies*, ed. by Gary Okihiro, and others (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1995), p.17.
- ⁶³ See Gary Okihiro's discussion in 'Theory, Class, and Place' in *Privileging Positions*, pp.1-9, for a discussion of the importance of this conference.
- ⁶⁴ Dana Y. Takagi, 'Postmodernism from the Edge: Asian American Identities', in *Privileging Positions*, p.41.
- ⁶⁵ 'Beyond Railroads', p.17.
- ⁶⁶ *Black American Women's Writing*, p.4.
- ⁶⁷ Lisa Lowe, 'Canon, Institutionalization, Identity', in *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), p.40.
- ⁶⁸ Carole Boyce Davics, *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.4.
- ⁶⁹ King-kok Cheung, *Articulate Silences: Hisaye Yamamoto, Maxine Hong Kingston, Joy Kogawa* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), p.xv.
- ⁷⁰ *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics*, p.1.
- ⁷¹ *Reading Asian American Literature*, p.9.
- ⁷² Amy Ling, *Between Worlds: Women Writers of Chinese Ancestry* (New York: Pergamon, 1990), p.16.
- ⁷³ Werner Sollors, 'Comments', in *Cultural Difference and the Literary Text: Pluralism and the Limits of Authenticity in North American Literatures*, ed. by Winifried Sicmerling and Katrin Schwenk (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1996), p.3.
- ⁷⁴ *Postcolonial Representations*, p.187.
- ⁷⁵ *Black Women, Writing and Identity*, p.108.
- ⁷⁶ *Reading Asian American Literature*, p.11.

CHAPTER TWO

Genre and Identity

'It is up to the writer to transcend trendy categories'

— Maxine Hong Kingston, 'Cultural Mis-readings by American Reviewers'

'No matter that critics question what my genre is — fiction? nonfiction? — there is a reader in every audience who will ask: "How's your mother doing?"'

— Maxine Hong Kingston, 'Personal Statement'

'A woman's fiction of identity shapes the identity of her fiction'

— Joan Lidoff, 'Autobiography in a Different Voice: *The Woman Warrior* and the Question of Genre'

Genre 1: Theories of Genre

Shirley Goek-lin Lim has recently claimed:

As a distinctive corpus, Asian American women's writing goes back only to the early twentieth century with the life stories of elite Asian women living in the United States. But writers such as Maxine Hong Kingston, Joy Kogawa, Bharati Mukherjee, Hualing Nieh ... and others collectively are creating a body of literature that inscribes as central the experience of Asian American women in which the Asian American is still the model, because invisible, minority.¹

It is no coincidence that in the above remark, Shirley Goek-lin Lim refers only to prose writers. My own study of the work of Asian American women writers also focuses predominantly upon prose narratives. As Asian American feminist critics Sau-ling Wong and Amy Ling have both pointed out, 'prose narratives — novels, novellas, autobiographies, short stories' largely constitute the corpus of writing by Asian American women.² Such a concentration, then, in Amy Ling's words, is 'to focus ... on

the most significant texts and writers'.³ Whilst recognising that increasingly, Asian American women are also publishing volumes of poetry and drama, to which I will occasionally refer,⁴ I will mainly concentrate my discussion upon other forms of literary production by Asian American women.

Any study claiming the discussion of 'prose narratives' as its subject necessarily finds itself implicated in questions of genre. An imprecise term, 'prose narrative' gathers together such diverse kinds of writing as novels, autobiography, biography, journals, short stories and novellas, forms with very different histories, expectations and rules. These categories further split into more kinds of writing: adventure stories, allegories, fables, fairy tales, elegies, epics, fantasies, romances, science fiction, pastoral, ghost stories or novels of manners. When discussing these specific kinds of prose narrative, we use the term 'genre'. 'Genre' has been variously described as a 'horizon of expectation' (Tzvetan Todorov),⁵ a 'social contract' (Fredric Jameson),⁶ or 'a set of expectations, a set of instructions' (Jonathan Culler).⁷ Each of these definitions asserts the *law* of genre, that is, genre is thought of as a set of regulations to which the author is expected to adhere and the reader expects to find.⁸ Yet, as Jacques Derrida has argued, a closer analysis of the law of genre reveals it as something of a red herring. Derrida's argument in his essay, 'The Law of Genre', is paraphrased by Derek Attridge:

The question of *genre* — literary genre but also gender, genus, and taxonomy more generally — brings with it the question of law, since it implies an institutionalized classification, an enforceable principle of non-contamination and non-contradiction. But genre always potentially exceeds the boundaries that bring it into being, for a member of a genre always signals its membership by an explicit or implicit mark; its relation to the generic field is, in the terminology of speech act theory, a matter of *mention* as well as *use*.⁹

In his essay, Derrida notes the slipperiness of the law of genre. Although in our critical definitions and discussions genre is often posited as a highly regulated form of literary discourse (Helen Carr suggests that genres are 'best understood as particular forms of discourse'¹⁰), when transferred to the literary material, such definitions prove less than watertight, and it is this state of affairs which accounts for the continuation of the question of genre as a vexed issue in contemporary literary studies.

A survey of the history of genre theory also reveals its gender blindness. Traditional studies of genre ignore questions of gender. Even such recent works as Todorov's *Genres in Discourse*, which analyses genre from a structuralist viewpoint, or Marjorie Perloff's edited collection *Postmodern Genres*, fail to address adequately the relationship between gender and genre, notably as a result of the scarcity of examples by women.¹¹ Critical attempts to gender genre have taken place predominantly within the feminist sphere. Increasingly, women's fiction is being scrutinised for the ways in which it uses, misuses and abuses certain genres. For example, such works as Anne Cranny-Francis's *Feminist Fiction* or Rita Felski's *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change* track women writers' use and abuse of genres like the romance or the confession.¹² Sally Munt's *Murder by the Book: Feminism and the Crime Novel* interrogates women writers' adoption of the detective novel, while Lucie Armitt's analysis of female science fiction in *Theorising the Fantastic* would be yet another example.¹³ Nancy A. Walker's *Feminist Alternatives: Irony and Fantasy in the Contemporary Novel by Women* addresses the ways in which women writers have imported aspects of genres such as fantasy into other kinds of writing.¹⁴ In addition, Rachel Blau DuPlessis' *Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers* takes as its focus the manner in which both codes of gender and genre are reassessed by women writers in their work.¹⁵ A final example, a wider-ranging study, Helen Carr's 1989 edited collection, *From My Guy to Sci-Fi: Genre and Women's Writing in the Postmodern World*, provides a useful overview of women writers' revision of a range of genres, including the romance, the detective novel, science fiction, poetry and auto/biography. Carr's collection is also particularly useful in its inclusion of the manipulation of genres by women of colour, including Asian British writers and Caribbean women writers.

A slightly different, but parallel line of feminist inquiry has taken autobiography as its focus in gendering a specific genre. Early work revisited the territory of male autobiography criticism, such as the work of James Olney (*Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography* and *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*) or Phillipe Lejeune (*Le Pacte Autobiographique*) in order to highlight the absence of women's texts from the critically-created corpus of auto/biography.¹⁶ Examples include Estelle C. Jelinek's edited collection *Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism*, Domna Stanton's edited *The Female Autograph* and Elizabeth W. Bruss's

Autobiographical Acts: The Changing Situation of a Literary Genre.¹⁷ Two collections, Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck's *Life/Lines: Theorizing Women's Autobiography* and Shari Benstock's *The Private Self*, of the same year (1988), built upon this early work by theorising works of autobiography by women previously excluded from the canon of autobiography.¹⁸ Most recently, the work of Sidonie Smith (*A Poetics of Women's Autobiography and Subjectivity, Identity and the Body*),¹⁹ Françoise Lionnet (*Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture and Postcolonial Representations: Women, Literature, Identity*),²⁰ Leigh Gilmore (*Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Self-Representation*)²¹ and Linda Anderson (*Women and Autobiography in the Twentieth Century: Remembered Futures*)²² has furthered the critical discussion of women's auto/biography by developing highly sophisticated analytical approaches specific to women's auto/biographical writing as a genre. Smith's focus is on the fictions and fictiveness of subjectivity, which she later links to the body, Anderson's nostalgia, memory and the search for 'home', Gilmore focuses on 'autobiographics' as a multiply situated discursive practice and Lionnet explores the 'métissage' or cultural braiding of Francophone women writers' cultural productions. Yet, excepting Lionnet's work, none of these studies offer a sufficient account of the intersection of ethnicity and gender in relation to autobiography. Anderson only briefly discusses Audre Lorde's *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*. Both Gilmore and Smith discuss Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* at length, but in each case, Kingston's text emerges as an ethnic variation of women's reworking of autobiography. Sidonie Smith views Kingston's position as one residing on the margins of culture, a location resulting in a textual self-consciousness about her position as an ethnic woman writing in an androcentric and ethnocentric culture. Smith partly falls into the trap of 'adding on' ethnicity as a variable to the liminality of the woman writer as a result of her gender, a mathematical move whereby the ethnic woman's autobiography becomes 'doubly or triply the subject of other people's representations'.²³ Gilmore's *Autobiographics* likewise discusses *The Woman Warrior* as its main ethnic text, viewing it as a creation story through the representation of the female body. Gilmore offers a persuasive reading, but once more one which privileges gender representational politics over those of ethnicity.²⁴

In contrast to these works, Françoise Lionnet's *Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture*, as its title suggests, seeks to subvert the move whereby white

feminism has privileged the politics of gender over ethnicity in its theories of autobiographical identity. Lionnet's analysis of the work of Maya Angelou, Zora Neale Hurston, Marysé Condé and Marie-Therese Humbert as '*métis*' (culturally mixed) writers demonstrates the ways in which gender and ethnicity may be 'braided together' theoretically in a manner which does not subordinate one aspect of identity over another, in order to 'encourage lateral relations'.²⁵

Lionnet's theory of '*métissage*' (cultural 'braiding') is specific to her focus upon certain postcolonial women writers. It is my contention that writing by Asian American women must be read from (and as) a theoretically-formulated position, like *métissage*, which arises out of its own terms of production, histories, languages and cultural constructs. This is not to advocate a form of theoretical essentialism, but instead to avoid the kind of theoretical appropriation I have already outlined in which difference is dissolved or elided in favour of the furthering of a Euro-American political-theoretical agenda. Asian American feminist criticism has already begun to do this. All of the main studies of Asian American writing by women address, to lesser or greater extents, the specificities of that writing, and articles devoted to the particularities of Asian American women's writing are appearing increasingly regularly. Yet, at the time of writing, there are only three works devoted solely to the specificities and commonalities of writing by Asian American women: Amy Ling's *Between Worlds* is specific to Chinese American women writers and King-kok Cheung's *Articulate Silences* to three female Asian American writers, two Japanese American and one Chinese American. Esther Ghymn's *Images of Asian American Women by Asian American Women Writers* covers a wide range of writers, but with quite a narrow thematic focus.—Questions of genre are addressed at some point in all of the main studies of Asian American literature, usually focusing upon prose narratives, especially autobiography. Building upon this work, in the rest of this chapter, I intend to explore Asian American women's particular adoption and adaptation of genres and to seek a reading strategy and theoretical paradigm attentive to the nuances of Asian American women's literary production.

Genre 2: Asian American Women's Texts — A Generic History

The publishing marketplace has had, and continues to have, an extensive influence upon the generic profile of Asian American women's writing, as it does in other areas too. For example, as Amy Ling has shown, early Chinese American women were under pressure

to provide texts for an orientalist market, texts which fed the dominant culture's appetite for exotic tales of depraved Chinatowns and their inhabitants.²⁶ More recently, King-kok Cheung has attributed the predominance of autobiography within the body of Asian American women's writing to 'trade publishers' predilection for Asian American personal narratives'.²⁷ She continues to suggest that the popularity of autobiographical texts may reside in the extent to which they conform to what David Palumbo-Liu has called 'model-minority discourse' — a narrative in which 'problems' of ethnicity and gender are resolved in a bildungsroman-esque narrative.²⁸ Or it may be the case that stories tracking the writing/written subject's assimilation into the dominant culture fulfil a cultural need for a literature which resolves problems of ethnicity and difference (examples would include the novels of Amy Tan and Gish Jen, as well as autobiographical works like Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter*).²⁹ Cheung also suggests that the predominance of autobiographical narratives may be due to the tastes of a reading public which judges American minority writers by the ethnic content of their work, ignoring works which don't dwell upon problems of ethnic identity.³⁰ This raises questions of the hierarchy of genre. That autobiography is an extremely popular form is well documented.³¹ Likewise, the extensive and extending market for ethnic autobiography has been noted by observers.³² Yet these conditions of reception also tell us something about the relative values of literary genres. Valuing Asian American works predominantly as autobiography (particularly when the generic identity of the text is not clear-cut) is one way in which these texts are routinely devalued as literature: autobiography has traditionally been regarded as an inferior form to fiction and other literary genres.³³ Readers often search for the autobiographical content of a text by an ethnic woman writer, as if this is most interesting, or appropriate. For example, Ann Rayson notes that for ethnic writers 'autobiography becomes the proper form for the transmission of cultural reality and myth'.³⁴ Texts which negotiate the problematics of identity, particularly those by culturally marginalised subjects, are all too often read autobiographically, whatever the generic identity of the text, as if a discussion of identity can only ever go hand-in-hand with a project of self-representation. But, as Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith have observed, autobiographical writing is only one of a range of forms of life writing.³⁵ Aware of this, Asian American feminist critic Shirley Goek-lin Lim, in discussing Asian American women's writing, prefers to speak of 'life stories', rather than of 'autobiography', as her term allows for a range of styles and differing

degrees of referentiality. This enables her, for example, to place Joy Kogawa's fictional account of the Japanese American internment experience in *Obasan* alongside Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter*, a text presented as autobiography, in order to show how Kogawa's work is 'a fiction which impersonates the discourse of autobiography while at the same time ... mask[ing] the genre of autobiography'.³⁶

Autobiography, along with other kinds of life writing, has often been used by those in culturally marginal positions (such as Asian American women) to assert the validity of their experience.³⁷ Autobiography carries its own kind of textual authority, one that rests upon a claim of its veracity and thus irrefutability as a culturally authoritative narrative. At particular moments, certain Asian American women writers, in common with members of other culturally marginalised groups, have had recourse to the autobiographical as a counter-cultural medium in which to express their own versions of identity and experience in opposition to 'dominant' versions and paradigms. Most notably this occurred when several Japanese American women wrote autobiographical texts protesting, refuting and revising 'dominant' American versions of the Japanese American internment experience in the Second World War, which I discuss in chapter six. Another way in which the 'truth-claim' of autobiography has been taken up and used by Asian American women writers is as a currency of cultural exchange, in which 'ambassadors of goodwill' sought to sell Asia, Asians and Asian Americans to white America, especially during tense periods in the history of Asian Americans.³⁸ A notable example of this is Jade Snow Wong's autobiography, *Fifth Chinese Daughter*. Sau-ling Wong has alternatively named this kind of writing 'autobiography as guided Chinatown tour',³⁹ referring to its authors' well meaning if misguided attempts to offer a culturally compatible portrayal of Asian American life in America for white readers.

Whatever the reason, autobiography, autobiographical fiction and other permutations of life writing are undeniably prominent forms within the corpus of Asian American women's writing. Yet these exist alongside and within other forms too, not just recognisably American (Western) forms like the novel, or short stories, but other specifically Asian American forms, a point I will elaborate later. This introduces another crucial point: that the specificities of cultural location extensively affect — even dictate — the forms or genres chosen. One example of this is the on-going debate in Asian American letters over the 'Asian American-ness' or not of autobiographical forms of writing. Several critics have queried Asian American writers' use and access to a form of

writing heavily imbricated in a Judeo-Christian Western tradition of thought about the self, as well as a form possibly incompatible with certain Chinese and Japanese behavioural codes and traditions.⁴⁰ This view has also been vehemently contested. This debate, coined the Asian American ‘pen wars’, has most recently centered upon the writer Maxine Hong Kingston, whose work *The Woman Warrior* has been lambasted for its purported pandering to a white readership. Critics such as Benjamin Tong and Jeffery Chan, asserted that the text was obviously fictional, and that its publishing identity as an autobiography or as a memoir reeked of racist marketing ploys.⁴¹ Frank Chin further attacked what he saw as the book’s suspect generic status on the grounds that the autobiography is not a Chinese form, so Chinese Americans should not — indeed cannot — use it without ‘selling out’.⁴² But to raise such an objection is to assume that Asian literary forms constitute the main literary inheritance for a group of writers often at least equally influenced by American (Western) forms of writing, and to ignore the fact that diverse cultural influences may lead to the creation of hybrid textual forms. Chin, Tong et. al. seem to be subscribing to a highly problematic notion of generic purity as linked to cultural purity, the validity of which would probably not withstand recent theories of cultural exchange and hybridity.

The much-debated troubling generic identity of *The Woman Warrior* and the ‘pen wars’ surrounding its reception also speak to the question — or more accurately the problem — of readership for many ethnic writers. Much of the criticism levelled at *The Woman Warrior* by Asian American critics like Frank Chin, Ben Tong and Jeffery Chan ensued from their belief in the responsibilities, as they saw them, of the ethnic writer to his or her ethnic community. This view was set out in the manifesto for Asian American writers, authored by Frank Chin together with Jeffery Chan, Lawson Inada and Shawn Wong, in the introduction to *Aiiieeee!*.⁴³ In this piece, these authors’ ideas about cultural and generic purity versus the contamination found in texts like Kingston’s (their terms are ‘real and ‘fake’) were linked to the idea of the ‘ideal’ Asian American writers as super-masculine, who would combat racist stereotyping of Asian Americans as emasculated Charlie Chan figures. This is a combatorial view of writing with ironic resonances of Kingston’s own work. These and other critics have condemned Kingston for her failure to render Chinese language, myths and traditions accurately, and for failing to represent faithfully the sociohistorical reality of the experience of Chinese Americans (as they see it) in her work. Katheryn Fong has summed up these objections,

in addressing Kingston, suggesting that the 'problem is that non-Chinese are reading your fiction as true accounts of Chinese and Chinese American history'.⁴⁴ Furthermore, several male Chinese American critics, notably including the *Aiiieeee!* group, have accused Kingston of writing a fashionable feminist work aiming for white acceptance. All these charges rest upon an understanding of the ethnic writer's role in her community as an ambassador to white society, with a duty to her 'own' ethnic group. They also proceed from a hyper-awareness of Anglo society. Kingston's wholehearted rejection of such responsibilities attests to her self-made role as ethnic 'trickster', manipulating literary tools like the form of her work-as-a means of avoiding precisely the kind of ethnic pigeonholing about which the *Aiiieeee!* critics and others have been so anxious. *The Woman Warrior* masquerades as a series of different kinds of writing, without ever faithfully fulfilling the readerly expectations of any one mode. In so doing, it addresses different readerships by turns. Kingston has discussed how her use of cultural reference points like the Fa Mu Lan myth allows her to hail, or exclude, certain groups of readers at different points in her narrative. Genre acts as one such reference point in the text, teasingly suggesting itself as autobiography, myth, or fiction in turn. In this sense, Kingston manipulates her own readership. Yet, as I suggest later, she partly lost that control once the text moved into the publishing marketplace, as the continuing tendency to read her work as a faithfully rendering of her own reality and experience shows.

Asian American forms, as Lisa Lowe has argued, are forms in flux, because as a body Asian American literature continues to be developed and extended as new groups add their particular textual permutations to the corpus (a recent example is Thai American writing).⁴⁵ Assigning texts to a particular genre therefore fails to take account of the dynamic ways in which Asian American women writers adopt, adapt and abandon certain generic categories. If, as Michael M. J. Fischer has argued, being Asian American 'exists only as an exploratory project, a matter of finding a voice and style', then part of that project is the active creation of forms of writing apposite to the task of negotiating different identities.⁴⁶ Talking of 'genre' is, in fact, a less than helpful way in which to approach the multitudinousness of Asian American women's writing.⁴⁷ Whilst some texts clearly are recognisable as novels, or biographies, many more blend other discursive modes in dynamic ways. It is unfortunate that the mixing of genres and discourses is so often perceived by readers and critics as a problem. If genre is a contract

between author and reader, then the failure to obey the law on the part of the author necessitates a less censorious reading on the part of the reader than is evident in the responses to Kingston's work by Chin et. al. Genre is never as stable as its promise, as Derrida has illustrated. In fact, as Helen Carr notes, 'Genres represent a set of conventions whose parameters are redrawn with each new book and each new reading'.⁴⁸ Many women writers, in common with other culturally underprivileged groups, as Leslie Dick notes, engage in 'ripping the genre off', by 'making use of the elements of the genre, while discarding the implicit values of the genre as institution', as a subversive strategy in which genres are destabilised and new textual identities are created.⁴⁹ In this study I seek to avoid the 'fixing' of the generic categories of these works, and to remain attentive to the diverse kinds of writing I find. With this end in mind, I have frequently deliberately avoided assigning texts to a particular genre and instead hedge my bets using that critical evasion, 'text'. This also emphasises the role that readers and critics, as well as publishers and writers, play in assigning the generic status of a text. Kingston's frustration at always being read autobiographically, cited in my opening epigraph, is only the most well-known example.⁵⁰ In this study, I therefore rarely read a text as being straightforwardly, or self-evidently autobiographical, biographical, fictional or historical, but instead usually refer to the most noticeable emphasis or emphases that are evident in that text. This way of reading, I hope, recognises the fluidity and sophistication of the discursive modes in these works. Within the different ethnic groups and diverse texts gathered together in the name of writing by Asian American women, there are, of course, very different histories of the use of discursive modes, which are particular to the immigrant patterns and reception of that group in America. It is thus necessary at this point to delineate the development of particular Asian American women's literatures, forms and genres by separating Asian American women's writing into its composite ethnic groupings.

Chinese American women's writing, as Sau-ling Wong and Amy Ling have demonstrated, has the longest history of any of the groupings of Asian American women's writing.⁵¹ This is despite the relatively late immigration of Chinese women to America in comparison to men, and the economically and educatively disadvantaged profile of those who did emigrate early in Chinese America's history.⁵² Early Chinese American women immigrants were either indentured prostitutes or 'paper brides' who did not or could not write. The first Chinese American women's writings were often life

stories. In fact, Sau-ling Wong notes that from the turn of the century, autobiographical narratives were a very popular form.⁵³ Another, slightly later, form of writing that emerged was novels focusing upon Red China from the critical perspective of America.⁵⁴ Increasingly, these different kinds of writing were blurred and Chinese American women's writing became more mixed-genre. Notably, this included the diasporic writings of upper-class 'emigrés', like Chuang Hua (*Crossings*), Mai-mai Sze (*Echo of a Cry*) and Han Suyin (*The Crippled Tree*), texts which reside rather precariously in and between traditional generic categories.⁵⁵

Chinese American female literary production has always developed unevenly, reflective of an immigrant history which in turn saw Chinese women banned from, then encouraged to emigrate to the United States. There are several identifiable phases of Chinese American female literary production, three of which I have already mentioned.⁵⁶ Another, recently prevalent, phase has seen writers focusing upon matrilineality, a phenomenon often read by white feminist critics as productive of, or at least coinciding with, the cultural moment which has seen a surge of interest in mother/daughter writing and theory (I discuss this in more detail in chapter three).⁵⁷ These texts include Fae Myenne Ng's *Bone*, Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, Andrea Louie's *Moon Cakes*, Julie Shigekuni's *A Bridge Between Us* and Arlene Chai's *The Last Time I Saw Mother*. Most of these texts were written in the 1970s and the 1980s and may be seen as drawing upon and reacting to popular discourses of the same time.

Japanese American female literary production is mainly that of second and third generation writers (*nisei* and *sansei* respectively). First generation, or *issei*, mainly wrote in Japanese, using traditional Japanese forms like *haiku*, *tanka* or *senryu*.⁵⁸ Women *nisei* mainly became active in literary production from the 1940s onwards, producing amongst other kinds of writing, short prose pieces for the many Japanese American vernacular newspapers that sprung up on the West coast.⁵⁹ In particular, the experience of the Second World War, during which many Japanese Americans were incarcerated by the American government and Japanese Canadians interned by their government, prompted several Japanese American women to write in the form of life stories, poems and fictions, including Hisaye Yamamoto, Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, Miné Okubo, Joy Kogawa, Yoshiko Uchida, Monica Sone and Mitsuye Yamada, whose work I discuss in chapter six. *Sansei*, or third generation, Japanese American women,

have become even more formally experimental, from Janice Mirikitani's activist writing, or Sylvia Watanabe's fiction/history *Talking to the Dead*, to Cynthia Kadohata's formally experimental, haunting works *The Floating World* and *In the Heart of the Valley of Love*.

Early Korean American writers were mainly male, but a group of women writers have produced works in the 1980s and 1990s, including autobiographies: Mary Paik Lee's *Quiet Odyssey*, Margaret K. Pai's *The Dreams of Two Yi-Min*, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee*; and novels: Ronyoung Kim's *Clay Walls*, for example. As a result of the politically-turbulent history of their ancestral country, Korea, Korean American female writers have produced texts politically activist in both tone and form, which, especially in the case of *Dictee*, defy traditional generic classification. I discuss this further in my chapter on language (chapter four).

South Asian American women's writing, like Chinese American and Korean American women's writing, came of age in the 1970s and 1980s. Most of these writers are middle or upper-class, well educated women; three are academics.⁶⁰ This fact is reflected in the development of a South Asian American memoir/fiction-as-theory, seen in the work of Meena Alexander (*Fault Lines*) and Sara Suleri (*Meatless Days*), which I discuss more extensively in chapter four. Other 'critical fictionalists' include the highly prolific Bharati Mukherjee, and, more recently, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni.⁶¹ In contrast to the prolific, varied and generically adventurous literary production of those ethnic groups discussed so far, Filipina American writing and Vietnamese American women's writing has been markedly absent. The exceptions include Filipina American writer Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters*, and the work of Vietnamese American Wendy Larsen.

Each of these ethnic groupings draws upon and mixes their respective Asian literary traditions in their work, as well as drawing upon American (Western) traditions, in a way that engenders particularly Asian American forms.⁶² For example, Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan utilise the Chinese tradition of 'talking-story' as a structuring device within their prose narratives. 'Talking story', as its name suggests, is the female Chinese practice of telling stories, often from one generation to the next.⁶³ In Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, *The Kitchen God's Wife* and *The Hundred Secret Senses*, the maternal habit of talking story serves to organise the narrative. King-kok Cheung has explored the ways in which Kingston's use of talk-story allows her to cross and problematise genre categories: 'Her recourse to talk-story

— which blurs the distinction between straight facts and pure fiction — accomplishes two key objectives: to reclaim a past and, more decisively, to envision a different future'.⁶⁴ Cheung suggests that Kingston 'uses fantasy the way other women writers ... use science fiction, historical romance, or utopian novels'.⁶⁵ That is to say, in common with other women writers, Kingston, and Amy Tan too, deliberately misuse and problematise certain generic conventions, not only to underscore the elusiveness of generic fixity, but also as a means of imagining both different kinds of writing and the experiences that writing communicates. As Asian American writers, both women are able to bring to the feminist project of problematising genre diverse forms of narrative, both oral and textual, culled from Asian as well as American cultures.

A similar case may be found in the way that Chinese American writer Ruth Lum McCunn has taken up and reworked the Chinese form of the 'wooden fish song' as a narrative device in her historical novel, *Wooden Fish Songs*. The novel is set in the nineteenth century, and tells the true story of nineteenth century pioneer, Lue Gim Gong. Lue travels to the United States, where he becomes a renowned horticulturalist. His story is told by the three women he becomes involved with. The wooden fish is a Chinese percussion instrument, and wooden fish songs were the laments sung by Chinese women left behind by husbands seeking to make their fortunes in America. In McCunn's historical novel, the wooden fish songs form the structure of the narrative as a series of laments by the three women attached to the male character, Lue Gim Gong. Two women, one Chinese, one American, Sum Jui and Fanny Burlingame, each relate part of Lue Gim Gong's story, one bound up with their own. Later in the narration a third voice is added, that of an observer, Sheba, the daughter of a slave. By utilising the form of the wooden fish song in her historical novel, McCunn is able to portray the story of Lue through the simultaneous and cross-cultural lenses of two narrative traditions, those of the wooden fish song and the historical novel. In so doing, McCunn gestures to both the history of Chinese immigration to America as a backdrop to Lue's, Sum Jui's and Fanny's stories, and also to the isolation and dislocation caused by that history to the individuals involved. This isolation and displacement is further emphasised by the introduction of Sheba's narrative, one preoccupied with issues of imprisonment and hardship. As with Tan's and Kingston's work, the text is generically hybrid, a mixture of the wooden fish song and the historical novel, reflective of the cultural hybridity of the experiences that it relates. It also betrays McCunn's feminist concern to foreground

female experience too. Although the story is principally Lue's, the narration is handled entirely by the three women, stressing that the story of male immigration to America is also the tale of its effects upon the women with whom those men were involved, a story often eclipsed in narratives of this experience. As with the tradition of talking-story, too, the form of the wooden fish song is also specifically female, and McCunn's use of this form acknowledges the existence of a strong Chinese female tradition of oral narrative which is one element of her literary inheritance.

Another example, Hisaye Yamamoto's short story, 'Seventeen Syllables' skilfully blends Japanese and American (Western) forms of writing. The seventeen syllables of the story's title refer to the highly formal structure of the Japanese poetry form of haiku. Yamamoto's story relates the experience of young *nisei* girl Rosie, who, impatient with the stultifying life of her family, finds excitement in the form of an illicit meeting with the family's Chicano helper, Jesus Carrasco. Rosie's preoccupation with her own life overshadows that of her mother, an *issei* woman forced to marry beneath her social class due to a pregnancy in Japan. Rosie's mother seeks solace from her unhappy marriage through the composition of haiku, a form traditionally associated with the refined classes in Japan. When she wins a competition, she is awarded with a beautiful Japanese 'floating world' painting.⁶⁶ In an act of anger, her husband sets fire to the painting, thus symbolically also consigning Rosie's mother's life as an artist to the flames too. Rosie's mother's story and unhappiness only emerge at this point, towards the end of the story, when, as she watches the painting burn, she asks her daughter never to marry. It is Rosie's mother's haiku that structures the narrative. The story opens with one example, as Rosie's mother patiently explains the symbolism and sparse images of her latest effort to an uncomprehending daughter. Later, we witness Rosie chuckling over a less serious and poorly crafted haiku that she comes across. Rosie's uneducated response to her mother's talented efforts thematise the generational chasm between mother and daughter. But the haiku has significance in the story beyond the thematic. Yamamoto uses the haiku as a submerged structuring device in her story. The story may be split into three, reflective of the three lines which make up the haiku form: Rosie's innocence, Rosie's induction into sexual experience with Jesus and Rosie's subsequent realisation of her mother's unhappiness. These stages are punctuated by two pivotal actions: Rosie and Jesus's meeting, and the burning of the painting. Also reflective of the haiku form is the space given to each section. The story is narrated from Rosie's

perspective, and the event that she feels to be most important, her meeting with Jesus, forms the central, and most extended section of the story, as in a haiku, the central line of seven syllables is the longest. Yet, as the haiku must be taken in its entirety in order to appreciate its full meaning, so in reading Yamamoto's story must we view all of the events as contributing to Rosie's awakening. In addition, although at first reading, the story appears rather minimal in detail, the significance remains below the surface, accessible only by careful interpretation, which is also the case with haiku.

A final example is the way that Filipina American Jessica Hagedorn draws upon gossip, central to her Filipino society, in her novel, *Dogeaters*. This novel tells the stories of a range of Filipino characters, from the precocious and privileged young girl, Pucha, to the impoverished youth, Joey, who turns to prostitution as his only means of survival. Hagedorn's many characters represent the spectrum of society in the Philippines, but she favours the stories of the disenfranchised fringes of that society. As Lisa Lowe has extensively argued, Jessica Hagedorn 'radically alters the form and function of the novel and of historical narrative through explorations of alternate means for representing the history of "the popular"'.⁶⁷ She juxtaposes the discourses of history, such as Jean Mallat's 1846 history of the Philippines, with what Lowe calls popular genres, like radio melodramas, and the popular discursive form of gossip, in order to destabilise generic and discursive registers. Thus, *tsismis* (Tagalog for gossip), in its very leakiness as a narrative not contained — it is described in *Dogeaters* as a form which 'ebbs and flows' — and a narrative often exaggerated, typifies the generic and discursive lawlessness of much Asian American women's writing.⁶⁸

Genre 3: Mixed Genre Writing/Theoretico-Narratives/Auto-representational Fictions

Sau-ling Wong has suggested that we need to view Asian American literature as 'an emergent and evolving textual coalition', an approach which seeks to stress the collective, politically activist mode of discourse produced by many Asian American writers, while at the same time marking the heterogeneity of the field (a 'coalition' is a *temporary* alliance of *distinct* groups).⁶⁹ Building upon this, I suggest that Asian American women's writing may be thought of as a textual coalition in its own right, in its various attempts to write/right the wrongs of racism, sexism and colonialism. This is not to imply that somehow Asian American women writers speak as one group, but rather to emphasise a mode of intertextual, symbiotic influence which functions through

a sense of a textual community. Community, as Bonnie TuSmith has shown us, is fundamental in the creation of political coalitions; nowhere is this more the case than with ethnic groupings.⁷⁰ Ethnic group identification works through a sense of community/commonality: a member identifies with and is identified as part of that ethnic group.⁷¹ As TuSmith has argued, ethnic literary history must be understood not in terms of individualism, as is often the case with white, male literary history, but in terms of a collectivist, communal interaction.⁷² Both Elaine Kim and Mary Dearborn have asserted the communal/community orientation of ethnic literature: Kim of Asian American writing generally, and Dearborn of ethnic women's writing generally.⁷³ Drawing the work of Kim, Dearborn and TuSmith together, it is possible to view the specific ways in which Asian American women writers have recourse to, and proceed from, notions of collectivity and community in their work.

Many Asian American women writers incorporate a sense of community within their work. Maxine Hong Kingston, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha and Amy Tan, to name but three writers, have produced polyvocal texts, in which many voices, perspectives and stories are heard. In this sense, these writers utilise the oral traditions of their inherited Asian cultures, for example in the case of Chinese Americans Tan and Kingston, of 'talking-story', or in the case of Chinese American Ruth Lum McCunn of the wooden fish song. Storytelling, in this sense of polyvocality, is a communal act. TuSmith views this act as a vernacular act, in the sense that the vernacular — folklore, myth, talk-story — works as the literary material.⁷⁴ The use of vernacular codes and forms by Asian American women writers creates a community, a community united by common speech acts (I discuss this further in my chapter on language, chapter four). The use, for example, of the Chinese American vernacular links writers Amy Tan, Gish Jen and Maxine Hong Kingston, amongst others. Likewise, the vernacular Japanese American folktale Momotaro (the boy who was born of a peach) links Joy Kogawa's novel *Obasan* and Lydia Minatoya's *Talking to High Monks in the Snow*. Vernacular texts like those of these Asian American women writers provide the opportunity to blend different discourses or narrative/literary modes within the same text. Thus, Maxine Hong Kingston and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, for example, recite history alongside the inherited oral narratives of their ancestors. This may at once destabilise the literary authority of certain genres, whilst according others a greater authority. I discuss this in more detail in my analysis of Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men* in chapter six.

Community is also created in these texts through their relationship with other texts. Most of the works that I discuss are by second-generation Asian American women. This creates a sense of generational community, and I approach many works as 'daughter' texts in contrast to earlier 'mother' works, particularly in my chapter on mother/daughter writing (chapter three). Sau-ling Wong, too, has defined generational differences as crucial to a theoretical approach to Asian American autobiographical writing.⁷⁵ Chinese American writers Maxine Hong Kingston, Amy Tan, Andrea Louie, Gish Jen, Aimee Liu, Jade Snow Wong, Chuang Hua, Julie Shigekuni, Arlene Chai and Evelyn Lau may all be thought of as 'daughter' writers. Likewise, Japanese American writers Joy Kogawa, Monica Sone, Yoshiko Uchida, Miné Okubo, Lydia Minatoya and Hisaye Yamamoto are all 'daughter' writers (they are all *nisei*, or second generation) sharing a commonality of cultural experiences.⁷⁶ (Where I discuss an earlier, first-generation writer, I make this explicit).

This model of Asian American women's literary history is by definition genealogical, but it also serves to emphasise the communal aspects of Asian American cultural productions, and thus offers a fruitful alternative to both androcentric and ethnocentric models of literary history. TuSmith has illustrated that a paradigm which stresses community, works as an ethnic-sensitive version of ethnic literary history contrary to traditional accounts which stress the individuality of the artist.⁷⁷ Likewise, evolutionary paradigms of literary history, whilst useful, must take care not to stress modes of vertical influence (in the sense of a genealogy of writers) at the expense of forms of horizontal influence (in the sense of a contemporary peer-group), which are important as well. It is therefore useful to think of Asian American women's writing as a textual coalition bound by the threads of communal experiences, goals, orientations or texts, across certain barriers of space, culture and time. I am thus primarily interested in the intertextual relations both between works by second generation Asian American women and in their relationship with earlier writers and forms of narrative, and I view this as a form of inter-generational community.

These writers are also linked through a sense of the need to intervene in dominant discussions of identity formation. As Donald Goellnicht has recently pointed out, we need to read Asian American women's texts as both theoretically informed and informing.⁷⁸ Reading creative texts as theory usually occurs in relation to Euro-American texts, often by men. As Goellnicht notes: 'texts by writers like Maxine Hong

Kingston and Joy Kogawa are classified as autobiography or fiction, or autobiographical fiction, but rarely as theoretical fictions or fictionalized theory'.⁷⁹ But many Asian American women's texts are not just reflective of contemporary debates about mothers and daughters, identity, or language, but actively seek to intervene and interject into these arguments. One example would be Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, which has mainly been read as autobiography. Knopf's decision to publish it as autobiography, with the Library of Congress classification as 'biography', largely influenced this reception. The text won the National Book Critics Circle Award for best nonfiction in 1976. Yet the subtitle is 'memoirs', a third different classification. The text itself is a disjunctive series of five separate but interlinked personal as well as cultural memories. Therefore, both intra- and extra-textually the text offers itself as a series of conflicting generic categories, as memoir, auto/biography or as another category, one attested or suggested by the texture of the text itself. *The Woman Warrior*'s hazy generic status has not just troubled autobiography theorists, but has actively revised theories of women's autobiographies.⁸⁰ It is an important theoretical text in its own right, a theoretical text lurking beneath a slippery textual guise.

Another example would be the phenomenally successful text *The Joy Luck Club*, which has not just keyed into, but has actively revised theories of mother/daughter relations. Nancy Chodorow, one of the most influential theorists of the mother/daughter dyad, has used Tan's novel to revise her theories of mothering and daughtering.⁸¹ Yet another example would be the way that Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660* successfully contested dominant versions of national identity in her own narrative of the Japanese American internment story, a challenge so successful that the text was actually used as evidence at the United States reparation hearings in the 1980s.⁸²

Thus it is the very form of these texts, to use Goellnicht's term, as 'theoretico-narratives' which serves to destabilise genre theories.⁸³ The existence of these texts within and between different discourses serves to challenge those discourses. This is a strategy whereby minority women writers offer a potent feminist and ethnic assault upon phallogocentric laws of genre as well as upon androcentric and ethnocentric discourses of identity.⁸⁴ The question to ask, then, as Linda Anderson poses it, is not how far a work is autobiographical, or even how entitled we are to read it in that way, but rather how that text speaks to and revises problems of identity.⁸⁵

Memory is one place where identity is formed.⁸⁶ Various kinds of prose writing inscribe memory in differing ways. The texts that I consider in this thesis mostly refuse the assignation of particular generic identities and instead insist upon new textual identities of their own, ones which speak to the slippery and elusive nature of recollection. Recent scholarship taking ethnic texts as its subject has asserted the importance of memory for ethnic writers in the negotiation of identity.⁸⁷ The personal recollections of ethnic subjects, in common with other culturally marginal subjects, may contradict other 'official' or culturally authoritative versions of the past. Many culturally marginal writers foreground the workings of memory in their work, and this is also the case in much writing by Asian American women. Such an emphasis is useful for the way that it allows us to read what the text does not say, as much as what it does. The insistence upon the workings of memory as incomplete, flawed, often ahistorical, subjective, may, for example, open the way to acknowledge certain textual excesses,⁸⁸ such as silence, or forgetting, not accounted for within conventional theories of the representation of the past. Recent work on the role of memory in ethnic writing has recognised that ways in which it has destabilised traditional generic categories:

Memory ... shapes narrative forms and strategies toward reclaiming a suppressed past and helps the process of re-visioning that is essential to gaining control over one's life and future. The ethnic narrative thus becomes, in Stuart Hall's phrase, 'an act of cultural recovery', and the emergent ethnicity embedded therein develops a new relationship to the past, which is to be recovered through both memory and narrative. These strategies of the ethnic writer often deny the validity of the linear progression of the traditional narrative.⁸⁹

Many ethnic American writers remember the racism that culture has asked them to forget; ethnic American women writers also remember oppressions that are the result of the combined effects of racism and sexism. The emphasis upon and use of memory in ethnic American women's texts is partly responsible for the ways in which these writers upset the apple cart of genre. The workings of memory in a text cut across and through generic categories, touching upon and mixing the processes of officially-authorised memory (history) with personal histories (autobiography, memoir, journals) as a counter-cultural tactic. At the same time an emphasis upon the processes of

remembering acknowledges the partiality and fictiveness of that process. The workings of collective memory may also be foregrounded, as they are inscribed culturally through songs and stories. Thus a text like Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* has a textual identity part-fictional, part-historical, part-autobiographical, in its collective remembering of the treatment of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War. In this sense it is what Goellnicht calls an 'auto-representational fiction'.⁹⁰ But it is also a 'theoretico-narrative', to continue with Goellnicht's terminology, because it intervenes in and forces a revision of the ways in which we have explained not just the past, but the strategies by which we represent that past.

Asian American female memory often privileges the vernacular. Myths, folklore, bed-time stories and other vernacular forms are sanctioned as valid versions of the past alongside, often over and above, other forms like laws and written histories. For example, Kingston's *China Men* or Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee* foreground the stories of their ancestors, inherited via journals and conversations, over maps, histories or 'The Laws', to quote Kingston.⁹¹ Excavating the workings of memory in many of the texts that I will discuss allows us to progress from considering questions of genre and to avoid categorising these works in reductionist ways. *The Woman Warrior* is precisely *not* an autobiography, but neither is it a fiction, a history, or a memoir. It is self-consciously a 'rememory', to borrow Toni Morrison's phrase, which listens to and speaks the multifariousness of the past as we receive it, through both legacies of orality and textual modes of inscription.⁹²

The main focus of this thesis will be the frequently mixed-discourse, theoretically self-conscious writing I discussed above. However, not all of the texts that I address can be subsumed under the paradigm of 'theoretico-narratives'. There are other traditions and genres of writing by Asian American women, for example biographical work or literary history, which have quite separate trajectories of development. In common with much feminist work from the 1970s, this kind of writing seeks to uncover and recount the stories of 'ordinary' or forgotten Asian American women.⁹³ Examples of this kind of work include Ruth Lum McCunn's *Thousand Pieces of Gold*, which tells the story of Chinese American woman pioneer, Lulu Nathoy (Anglo name Polly Bemis), Lisa See's family biography, *On Gold Mountain: The One-Hundred-Year Odyssey of a Chinese-American Family* and Annette White-Parks's literary biography, *Sui Sin Far/Edith Maude Eaton: A Literary Biography*.⁹⁴ This kind of writing has done important cultural

and political work in raising and developing Asian American political consciousness. Such writing is clearly not totally separable from more theoretically self-conscious writing, indeed, in its formulation of discourses of identity, and the political motives of writing, there is much overlap.

Another important kind of Asian American women's writing which deserves separate mention is the anthology, which has functioned as the textual sword in the rise of Asian American women's political solidarity. Two important anthologies, *The Forbidden Stitch: An Asian American Women's Anthology* and *Asian Women United of California's Making Waves: An Anthology of Writings By And About Asian American Women* illustrate this.⁹⁵ The very title of *Making Waves* speaks of its interventionist stance. The anthology is an example of a kind of Asian American women's textual coalition working in practice. In fact, many of the Asian American women involved in the writing and production of these anthologies are also writers and academics in their own right. The anthology also illustrates the ways in which an Asian American textual coalition not only intervenes ideologically in dominant discourses defining identity, but also how it works pragmatically and institutionally to bypass the restrictions of the publishing marketplace and academic institution. Most of the anthologies have been published by relatively small, politically motivated presses, such as Beacon Press in Boston and Calyx Books in Oregon. This tradition is still continuing, with recent examples including Sharon Lim-Hing's edited collection, *The Very Inside: An Anthology of Writing by Asian and Pacific Islander Lesbian and Bisexual Women* (1994); Sylvia Watanabe and Carol Bruchac's edited *Home to Stay: Asian American Women's Fiction* (New York: Greenfield Review Press, 1990), Garrett Hongo's edited *Under Western Eyes: Personal Essays from Asian America* (1995) and Sonia Shah's *Dragon Ladies: Asian American Feminists Breathe Fire* (1997).⁹⁶ Hongo's collection further illustrates how much Asian American writing cuts across and through generic categories. Its subtitle, 'personal essays' announces a kind of writing, which is rooted in the personal, yet is not recognisable as autobiography, and is distinct from the short story, academic essay or any other form. The continuing growth of this kind of mixed genre prose is not just specific to Asian American women's writing, it is also an increasingly popular form in other areas of ethnic, feminist and women's writing.⁹⁷ Once more, this may be attributed to the political and ideological motive and force of this sort of collectivist textual coalition. In addition, anthologies further destabilise genre categories. Do we

take the material text, its contents or its declared generic status (if there is one) as a guide to that text's genre? The anthologies referred to above are all multi-genre, mixing recognisable and new kinds of writing together.

All the texts that I have discussed so far define themselves, or are defined by their marketing, as 'Asian American'. Some are more obviously marketed as 'ethnic' texts than others, such as Maria Hong's edited collection, *Growing Up Asian American*, or the novels of Amy Tan and Gish Jen, who are both writers who have been marketed as addressing — and resolving — problems of ethnic identity.⁹⁸ However, many texts by Asian American women writers do not address questions of ethnic identity, but instead deal with other issues. Some, like Evelyn Lau's novel *Other Women*, are not discernibly Asian American in content at all.⁹⁹ Such works have often been ignored by a readership which seems to prefer texts which deal with questions of ethnic identity. Other texts may be categorised as genre fiction: Cynthia Kadohata's *In the Heart of the Valley of Love* as science fiction, Han Suyin's *Winter Love* as lesbian romance. Since ethnic and gender identity is central to the work of the majority of Asian American women writers, this is what I have chosen to focus upon. I remain aware, however, that this concentration on identity-centred texts at the expense of other themes and preoccupations risks reproducing the tendency whereby white readers search for the ethnic content of a work, to the detriment of other issues. The increasing appearance of writers who do not address such questions, but are instead publishing other kinds of writing, may be suggestive of the increasing diversity and maturity of Asian American women's writing, no longer contained by and within an ethnic niche of the publishing marketplace. It may also be argued that this is also a sign of increasing acceptance within the United States of the 'fact' of ethnic and cultural diversity.

Notes

¹ Shirley Geok-lin Lim, 'Japanese American Women's Life Stories: Maternity in Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter* and Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*', *Feminist Studies*, 16.2 (Summer, 1990), 289-312 (p.309).

² Sau-ling Wong, *Reading Asian American Literature: From Necessity to Extravagance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, p.12).

³ Amy Ling, *Between Worlds: Women Writers of Chinese Ancestry* (London: Pergamon, 1990), p.16.

⁴ Most notably, prominent Asian American women poets include Mitsuye Yamada, Janice Mirikitani, Cathy Song, Genny Lim, Geraldine Kudaka and Kimiko Hahn. Further details are given in the bibliography. Asian American female dramatists are less numerous, and their work less available, another reason for their absence in this study. However, for a discussion of their work, see

- Josephine Lee, *Performing Asian America: Race and Ethnicity on the Contemporary Stage* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1997).
- ⁵ Tzvetan Todorov, *Genres in Discourse* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.18.
- ⁶ Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodern Consumer Society', in Hal Foster, ed., *Postmodern Culture* (London: Pluto, 1985), pp.111-125.
- ⁷ Jonathan Culler, 'Towards a Theory of Non-Genre Literature', in *Surfiction*, ed. by Raymond Federman (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1981), pp.255-262.
- ⁸ See Jacques Derrida, 'The Law of Genre', *Glyph 7* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).
- ⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, ed. by Derek Attridge (London: Routledge, 1992), p.221.
- ¹⁰ Helen Carr, 'Genre and Women's Writing in the Postmodern World', in *From My Guy to Sci-Fi: Genre and Women's Writing in the Postmodern World*, ed. by Helen Carr (London: Pandora, 1989), pp.3-14 (p.8).
- ¹¹ Marjorie Perloff, ed., *Postmodern Genres* (Norman, OK, and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989).
- ¹² Anne Cranny-Francis, *Feminist Fiction* (Cambridge: Polity, 1990); Rita Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).
- ¹³ Sally R. Munt, *Murder by the Book? Feminism and the Crime Novel* (London: Routledge, 1994), Lucie Armitt, *Theorising the Fantastic* (London: Edward Arnold, 1996).
- ¹⁴ Nancy A. Walker, *Feminist Alternatives: Irony and Fantasy in the Contemporary Novel by Women* (Jackson, MS, and London: University Press of Mississippi, 1990).
- ¹⁵ Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).
- ¹⁶ Philippe Lejeune, *Le Pacte Autobiographique* (Paris: Seuil, 1975); James Olney, ed., *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980) and *Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972).
- ¹⁷ Estelle C. Jelinek, ed., *Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980); Domna Stanton, ed., *The Female Autograph* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Elizabeth W. Bruss, *Autobiographical Acts: The Changing Situation of a Literary Genre* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).
- ¹⁸ Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck, eds., *Life/Lines: Theorizing Women's Autobiography* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988); Shari Benstock, ed., *The Private Self* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).
- ¹⁹ Sidonie Smith, *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987) and *Subjectivity, Identity and the Body: Women's Autobiographical Practices in the Twentieth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).
- ²⁰ Françoise Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989) and *Postcolonial Representations: Women, Literature, Identity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).
- ²¹ Leigh Gilmore, *Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Self-Representation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994).
- ²² Linda Anderson, *Women and Autobiography in the Twentieth Century: Remembered Futures* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1997).
- ²³ *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography*, p.51.
- ²⁴ *The Woman Warrior* is discussed as a bodily representation alongside Cherrie Moraga's *Loving in the War Years*. I do not want to charge Gilmore with either essentialising or reducing Kingston's work: her analysis of bodily identity is astute and persuasive. Yet, although the work of women of colour is quite well represented here (Kingston, Moraga, Lorde and Sandra Cisneros), Gilmore does not focus upon these writers' negotiation of their gendered and ethnicised identities at length. The same may be said, to a lesser extent, of Sidonie Smith's discussion of bodily identity in *The Woman Warrior*.
- ²⁵ *Autobiographical Voices*, p.7.
- ²⁶ *Between Worlds*, p.10.

- ²⁷ King-kok Cheung, 'Re-viewing Asian American Literary Studies', in *An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature*, ed. by King-kok Cheung (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.17-20.
- ²⁸ Ibid. See also, David Palumbo-Liu, 'Model Minority Discourse and the Course of Healing', in *Minority Discourse: Ideological Containment and Utopian/Heterotopian Potentials*, ed. by Abdul JanMohamed (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).
- ²⁹ See Cheung, as above. This is a point also made by Sau-ling Wong. See 'Sugar Sisterhood: Situating the Amy Tan Phenomenon', in *The Ethnic Canon: Histories, Institutions, and Interventions*, ed. by David Palumbo Liu (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ See *The Private Self and Life/Lines* for commentary on the increasing popularity of autobiography.
- ³² A point attested to by Paul Eakin's edited collection, *American Autobiography: Retrospect and Prospect* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), and James R. Payne's edited collection, *Multicultural Autobiography: American Lives* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992).
- ³³ Amy Tan, in particular, has suffered from being read autobiographically in this way. LeiLani Nishime reminds us that the problems of generic distinctions are endemic to Asian American literature, because, as Trinh T. Minh Ha has put it, 'the *minor-ity's* voice is always *personal*'. LeiLani Nishime, 'Engendering Genre: Gender and Nationalism in *China Men* and *The Woman Warrior*', *Melus*, 28.1 (Spring 1995), 67-82 (p.69).
- ³⁴ Ann Rayson, 'Beneath the Mask: Autobiographies of Japanese-American Women', *Melus*, 14.1 (Spring, 1987), 43-57 (p.44).
- ³⁵ Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith, 'De/Colonization and the Politics of Discourse in Women's Autobiographical Practices', in *De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography*, ed. by J.Watson and S.Smith (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), pp.xiii-xxxi (p.xvi).
- ³⁶ 'Japanese American Women's Life Stories', p.301.
- ³⁷ This is especially the case for Japanese American women, who wrote autobiographies of their time in internment camps in the Second World War, in order to contest 'national' versions of their story.
- ³⁸ The phrase 'ambassadors of goodwill' is Elaine Kim's. See *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and their Social Context* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1982), pp.24-32.
- ³⁹ For a lucid discussion of this phenomenon, see Sau-ling Wong, 'Autobiography as Guided Chinatown Tour? Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and the Chinese American Autobiographical Controversy', in *Multicultural Autobiography*, pp.248-79.
- ⁴⁰ This debate has been played out over the last few years, most notably relating to the cultural authenticity — or not — of Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*. Frank Chin, one of Kingston's harshest critics, has been most vocal in denouncing her work as culturally inauthentic and pandering to a white readership, arguing that the autobiography is not an Asian American form. Many Asian American feminist critics have come to Kingston's defence. For a concise summary of this debate, see King-kok Cheung, *Articulate Silences: Hisaye Yamamoto, Maxine Hong Kingston, Joy Kogawa* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), p.78.
- ⁴¹ Benjamin Tong, 'Critics of Admirer Sees Dumb Racist', *Journal* (San Francisco), 11 May, 1977, p.20; Jeffery Chan, 'Letters: The Mysterious West', *New York Review of Books*, 28 April, 1977, p.41.
- ⁴² Frank Chin, 'This Is Not an Autobiography', *Genre*, 18.2 (1985), 109-30.
- ⁴³ Frank Chin, et. al., eds., *Aiiieeee! An Anthology of Asian-American Writers* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1983).
- ⁴⁴ Kathryn Fong, 'Woman's Review of "Woman Warrior"', *Journal* (San Francisco), 25 January, 1978, p.6.
- ⁴⁵ See Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), especially chapter three, 'Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Marking Asian American Differences'.
- ⁴⁶ See Michael M. J. Fischer, 'Ethnicity and the Post-Modern Arts of Memory', in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. by James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p.210.
- ⁴⁷ Furthermore, talking of 'genre' seems problematic in that it is a term which in usage has referred mainly to literary modes. The increasing cross-pollination over discursive boundaries, such as

between history and literature, requires that we use 'discourse' rather than 'genre', as history cannot properly be considered a genre. More appropriately, we should speak of 'historical discourse'.

⁴⁸ *From My Guy to Sci-Fi*, p.7.

⁴⁹ Leslie Dick, 'Feminism, Writing, Postmodernism', in *From My Guy to Sci-Fi*, pp.204-214 (p.209).

⁵⁰ See *Articulate Silences* for a discussion of this.

⁵¹ See *Between Worlds*, pp.9-17; also Sau-ling Wong, 'Chinese American Literature', in *An Interethnic Companion*, p.41.

⁵² See Ling's discussion of Chinese women's history, in *Between Worlds*, pp.9-17.

⁵³ See 'Chinese American Literature', pp.46-7.

⁵⁴ For a more detailed rendering of this history, see Amy Ling's discussion in *Between Worlds*, especially her section, 'Focus on China: Stances'. This kind of writing has continued, most recently with the publication of Adeline Yen Mah's *Falling Leaves: The True Story of an Unwanted Chinese Daughter* (New York: Penguin, 1998). Other texts in this tradition would include the phenomenally successful *Wild Swans*, by Jung Chang (London: Flamingo, 1993), Anchee Min's *Red Azalea* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1993) and Jan Wong's *Red China Blues* (London: Bantam, 1997).

⁵⁵ Amy Ling and Sau-ling Wong both discuss these works as a separate form in themselves, one dictated by cultural (multi)situatedness. See *Between Worlds*, pp.106-112; and 'Chinese American Literature', p.49.

⁵⁶ A similar delineation may be found in 'Chinese American Literature'.

⁵⁷ Perhaps I should talk about phases as well as strains here because, as Sau-ling Wong has argued, although matrilineal writing is currently prospering, texts focusing upon matrilineality may be traced back through the century. This further attests to the need for a model of literary history of Asian American women's writing which can account for diachronic as well as synchronic modes of influence.

⁵⁸ See Stan Yogi, 'Japanese American Literature', in *An Interethnic Companion*, p.126.

⁵⁹ Hisaye Yamamoto, in particular, published — and continues to publish — in such papers as *Rafu Shimpo*.

⁶⁰ A point made by Ketu H. Ketrak. See 'South Asian American Literature', in *An Interethnic Companion*, p.194.

⁶¹ I use the term 'critical fiction' here to designate a work in which politics speak critically and importantly through a text identified mainly as fiction. This definition is taken from *Critical Fictions: The Politics of Imaginative Writing*, ed. by Philomena Mariani (Seattle, WA: Bay Press, 1991), and I view this as a form of theoretically informed and informing writing, characteristic of much Asian American women's writing.

⁶² My use of the term 'Asian American forms' needs qualifying. I do not mean that there are forms of writing characteristic of Asian Americans as a group, but instead that there are Chinese American, Japanese American or Filipina American forms, specific to that ethnic group. The way that these works are collectively Asian American in form may be that they share a textual/generic hybridity reflective of the 'between worlds' status of their authors. In this sense, we may also talk about ethnic, immigrant, or even postcolonial forms.

⁶³ King-kok Cheung notes that talking-story is a female practice. See *Articulate Silences*, p.102.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.121.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.123.

⁶⁶ The 'floating world' painting is another organisational device. It is used most extensively by Cynthia Kadohata in *The Floating World*, where a Japanese form (the 'floating world' painting) is transposed as both a metaphor and a structure for a novel about ethnic dislocation in America.

⁶⁷ See *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics*, p.112.

⁶⁸ See *Immigrant Acts*.

⁶⁹ See *Reading Asian American Literature*, pp.9-17.

⁷⁰ See Bonnie TuSmith, *All My Relatives: Community in Contemporary Ethnic American Literatures* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), p.13.

⁷¹ This is a point also made in relation to Japanese Americans in *Japanese American Ethnicity: The Persistence of Community*, by Stephen S. Fugita and David O'Brien (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991).

⁷² *All My Relatives*, pp.16-24.

- ⁷³ See Mary Dearborn, *Pocahontas's Daughters: Gender and Ethnicity in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Elaine Kim, *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and their Social Context* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1982), both cited in *All My Relatives*, p.21. More recent work on the question of redefining ethnic literary history may be found in A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff and Jerry W. Ward, Jr., eds., *Redefining American Literary History* (New York: MLA, 1990).
- ⁷⁴ See *All My Relatives*, pp.25-6.
- ⁷⁵ See Sau-ling Wong, 'Immigrant Autobiography: Some Questions of Definition and Approach', in *American Autobiography: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. by Paul Eakin (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), pp.147-151.
- ⁷⁶ All of these women lived through the experience of being interned by the American government during the Second World War.
- ⁷⁷ *All My Relatives*, pp.19-32.
- ⁷⁸ Donald C. Goellnicht, 'Blurring Boundaries: Asian American Literature as Theory', in *An Interethnic Companion*, p.340. I am indebted to Goellnicht's work in this piece in shaping my own approach.
- ⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.341.
- ⁸⁰ This revision has taken place through the work of autobiography theorists Sidonie Smith, Leigh Gilmore, amongst others.
- ⁸¹ See Nancy Chodorow, *Femininities, Masculinities, Sexualities: Freud and Beyond* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1994).
- ⁸² A point which I elaborate further in chapter six.
- ⁸³ 'Blurring Boundaries', p.351; p.356.
- ⁸⁴ It is necessary to clarify my use of the terms 'discourse' and 'genre' at this particular point. I use 'discourse' to refer to the language of a particular subject, with corresponding power structures and ideologies. A genre is a highly formally regulated form of literary discourse.
- ⁸⁵ *Remembered Futures*, p.115.
- ⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.10.
- ⁸⁷ See, for example, the two collections edited by Amritjit Singh, Joseph T. Skerrett, Jr. and Robert E. Hogan, eds., *Memory, Narrative, and Identity: New Essays in Ethnic American Literatures* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1994) and *Memory and Cultural Politics: New Approaches to Ethnic American Literatures* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996). Also see Michael M. J. Fischer, 'Ethnicity and the Post-Modern Arts of Memory'.
- ⁸⁸ A textual excess such as silence becomes evident when one searches for what has been left out of the narrative. Work in this area includes King-kok Cheung's *Articulate Silences*.
- ⁸⁹ *Memory, Narrative, and Identity*, p.19.
- ⁹⁰ 'Blurring Boundaries', p.152.
- ⁹¹ Kingston, for example, juxtaposes her relatives' memories alongside the official inscription of the past via 'the laws' in her text, *China Men*.
- ⁹² Toni Morrison, 'Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation', in *Black Women Writers: A Critical Evaluation*, ed. by Mari Evans (New York: Anchor/Doubleday, 1984), pp.339-45.
- ⁹³ This kind of writing is closely in line with the early feminist endeavour of recovering women's lives and stories.
- ⁹⁴ Details of these texts may be found in the Bibliography.
- ⁹⁵ I only mention a brief selection here. For bibliographic details of these, and other, anthologies, see the Bibliography.
- ⁹⁶ Although Hongo's text is not limited to Asian American women, it contains many important contributions. For bibliographic details, see the Bibliography.
- ⁹⁷ I am thinking here in particular of two collections: Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa's edited collection, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983) and Elena Featherston's edited anthology, *Skin Deep: Women Writing on Color, Culture and Identity* (Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1994).
- ⁹⁸ This is a point made succinctly by King-kok Cheung, who has also noted the success of texts dealing with ethnic issues in soft focus, whereas those writers who 'rage' over racism are largely ignored. See King-kok Cheung, 'Re-viewing Asian American Literary Studies', in *An Interethnic Companion*, especially pp.17-20.

⁹⁹ In a conference paper, Sneja Gunew has recently commented upon the manner in which Lau actively disassociates herself from ethnic identifications. Sneja Gunew, 'Operatic Karaoke: the pitfalls of seeking diasporic legitimations' (unpublished paper), 'Transformations: Thinking through Feminism' conference, Institute of Women's Studies, Lancaster University, 17-19 July, 1997.

CHAPTER THREE

Mother/Daughter Discourses and Asian American Women's Writing

As Marianne Hirsch made clear in her 1981 review essay on mother and daughter literature, theories of mother/daughter relations are often interdisciplinary.¹ More than ten years on, it is now even more true to say that concepts of the mother/daughter dyad have evolved and continue to evolve out of various and diverse discursive sites, including psychoanalysis, literature, film and autobiography. Versions of mothering and daughtering are now far more varied. This is the result of the emergence of discourses of mothering and daughtering which are less determined by traditional and patriarchal psychoanalytic theories of female subjectivity.² As I go on to discuss, challenges and changes to the nuclear family unit such as single mothering, mothering by extended family, mothering combined with work or even absent mothering have rendered obsolete mothering as a unitary subject position and practice. Thus, theories that are predicated upon a unitary understanding of mothering as a discursive practice, such as a Freudian version of maternity, likewise have become problematic. In addition, increasing cultural hybridity has contributed to discursive challenges to the authority of traditional versions of maternity. This can be seen, for example, in the diaspora fictions of women of colour. In particular, several Asian American women writers frequently depict alternative maternal paradigms, where, for instance, the grandmother or aunt may undertake a significant part of the childcare. Consequently, the biological mother cannot be said to have the kind of exclusive relationship with her child suggested in many psychoanalytically-based narratives of the mother/daughter dyad. As I shall argue, therefore, new discourses of mothering and daughtering in several Asian American women's texts can be seen to disrupt and question the epistemological authority of Western-based paradigms. In this chapter I shall look in detail at four Asian American women's texts as explicit interventions in the ongoing debate of mother/daughter relations. I shall start by looking back at the still-pervasive 'master' discourse of

mothering provided by Freudian theories of the family and sexuality. Both countering and following this are the theories of Nancy Chodorow and Adrienne Rich, both of which have been accorded an important historical position and authority in terms of how we look at the mother/daughter dyad despite remaining in the cultural shadow of Freudian influence. I shall then look at a new generation of discourses of mothering and daughtering which can be regarded as 'daughter' texts in terms of a new interest in and attempt to take account of the daughter's perspective. In addition, I also suggest that the renewed interest — some might even say obsession with — the mother/daughter relationship in popular cultural media has contributed to the evolution of mothering and daughtering as discursive constructs.³

The Myth of Origins, or, Origins of the Myth

Whether focussing upon the oedipal or pre-oedipal, attempts to interrogate subjectivity are usually located in an engagement with the genesis of the self. Perhaps the most powerful and certainly the most pervasive story of the self originated with Freud. Despite an absence of the maternal as a primary focus in Freud's work, he nevertheless provided us with an enduring narrative of the mother/daughter relationship.⁴ Freud's contribution to theories of motherhood and daughterhood is important despite the fact that his writings do not focus specifically on this subject because his family paradigm positions the mother as other and, until recently, she has remained there. As Marianne Hirsch made clear, Freud's 'optic' was determined by the story he took as central, the story of Oedipus.⁵ Both the mother's and the daughter's relationship in the Oedipal narrative are displaced by the more crucial tripartite drama of mother, father and son. Almost as afterthought, Freud asserted that the daughter's development was different from the son's. Freud argued that the daughter's pre-oedipal relationship with the mother was 'extended, intense and ambivalent'.⁶ The mother's identification with the daughter was likewise posited as stronger than that with the son and heavily imbued with narcissistic tendencies, so that, in fact, the mother would experience her daughter as an extension of herself. Unlike the boy's final rejection of his mother in favour of the Father and the Phallus, girls never successfully, according to Freud, sever themselves from the relation with the mother. Despite turning to her father and becoming hostile towards her mother, as her brother does, the daughter's 'love for her father and rivalry for her mother is always tempered by love for her mother, even against her will ... the

internal relation and connection to the mother tend to persist in spite of her daughter's defensive manoeuvres'.⁷ The female oedipal narrative is therefore a never-ending story as her entanglement with the mother continues as a primary identification for the girl-woman. The ongoing relationship between mother and daughter is thus fraught with the ambivalence of a desire for separation on the one hand and the need for a continuing symbiotic relation on the other.

Despite the recognition that 'the Freudian edifice is built on shaky ground',⁸ Freud's theory of mother- and daughterhood is a powerful master discourse still producing our own explanations of the mother/daughter dyad. His narrative of mother/daughter relations has been so absorbed and reproduced by the institutions of cultural production that we actually perceive the relationship through Freudian lenses.

In this paradigm, the Freudian mother is reduced to her function as childbearer and caretaker. In this, she is shown to be nurturing but also stifling, fulfilling but ultimately lacking. As a result of her status as an object of her child's desire within Freudian discourse, she is othered as she simply is not present or accounted for as a subject in her own right. Blamed, silent and (partly) rejected, she hovers at the edge of the Freudian narrative.

The negative residue of the Freudian discourse of motherhood has remained long after Freudian thinking has been attacked for its 'excesses and blindnesses'.⁹ The mother has remained where the father of psychoanalytic theory has left her, on the outskirts of the family romance, silenced, but most importantly, blamed. As we shall see, mother blame has continued to permeate discussions of motherhood and daughterhood, so much that it has even been observed by an American feminist to be a national activity.¹⁰

Freudian thinking has explicitly influenced several strains of psychoanalytic and cultural theory, the most pertinent of which can be delineated as: object relations revisions of the mother/daughter dyad; Lacan's reworking of Freudian theory in relation to language and feminist attempts to counter the oedipal story by uncovering other influential mythic versions of motherhood. Object-relations theory, in particular, has provided us with an influential reworking of Freud's theory of mother- and daughterhood, in particular in the work of Nancy Chodorow.

Freud's model of the oedipal family arrangement is both pre-text and prototext for Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering*. Chodorow's revision of the Freudian paradigm is significant for the re-empowerment it could be seen to offer the mother in

two ways. Firstly, her emphasis on the *mother* (and daughter) shifts the 'emotional weight' and the focus of attention from the oedipal drama to the relationship between mother and daughter.¹¹ This results in a more woman-centred narrative than the peripheral status she is assigned in Freud's story. Secondly, the continuing intersubjectivity of the mother and her daughter is seen in positive terms rather than the unwelcome residual burden placed on the daughter by Freud.

Chodorow's central assertion, based on the Freudian model of the family which places man as the primary wage-earner and woman as the primary childbearer and carer, is that women are taught to mother and are subject to societal pressure to do so. As primary childrearer, the mother is the first and most important referent for the infant who therefore develops his/her sense of self in relation to her. Chodorow's work remains true to Freud in so far as she also acknowledges that the oedipal stage is different for boys and girls. Girls remain in the pre-oedipal much longer, in fact, they never completely leave: 'mothers tend to experience their daughters as more like, and continuous with, themselves. Correspondingly, girls tend to remain part of the dyadic primary mother-child relationship itself'.¹² Like Freud, Chodorow charts the daughter's struggle for independence as an ambivalent struggle for a sense of separateness and independence from her mother which is never fully successful.

However, Chodorow does go beyond Freud to suggest that as a consequence of the continuing dependence upon the mother 'girls emerge with a stronger basis for experiencing another's needs or feelings as one's own'.¹³ Not only do girls tend to identify more strongly with others, but the girl's ego boundaries are more fluid so that in fact she even experiences herself as 'continuous with others'.¹⁴ It is not just the daughter who is forced to remain in subjective interdependency with the mother, but also the mother, because she is also daughter, but in addition because as a mother she does remain intrapsychically associated with the daughter.

Chodorow also asserts that the achievement of independent selfhood becomes almost impossible for women: 'the development of a sense of autonomous self becomes difficult'.¹⁵ The disabling connotations of this aspect of Chodorow's work start to emerge and the initial suggestion of the possibility of empowerment for the othered mother and stifled daughter of Freud's model starts to disappear. Although women's interaction is seen to be 'kin based and to cross generations',¹⁶ and the mother/daughter story has now taken centre stage, neither the mother nor the daughter ever fully appear

as subjects. The mother remains trapped as (m)other, identified only with her child (and thus her biology) rather than as a subject in her own right. The daughter is unable to emerge as an autonomous subject and remains locked forever in an oedipal intersubjective struggle with her mother. Chodorow's model is still based upon the nuclear family with the husband as the most important person in the household (despite his absence). It is a *Western* family model that is seen to (re)produce mothering. Chodorow writes: 'In Western society ... households have tended to be nuclear, in that there is usually only one married couple with children in any household (and thus only one mother with young children)'.¹⁷ As I shall discuss in more detail later, a theory predicated upon the Western nuclear family becomes problematic in relation to the family structures of other, non-Western cultures. As I shall show, Asian American fiction by women depicts a familial arrangement in which the extended family is very important. The grandmother, especially, is often the most important member of the household and also takes on a significant share of the childcare and this clearly problematises notions of a unitary identification with the mother.

Moreover, Chodorow's family model is located very firmly within a patriarchal and capitalist society. She suggests that the economic need for the father to work and the capitalist expectation that woman will mother (and thus remain economically dependent upon the father) reinforces the reproduction of mothering in Western society. Again, if the family unit has also been subject to influence from alternative ideological environments, as is often the case for diaspora groups like Asian Americans, cultural expectations might prove quite different.

Chodorow's recent book, *Femininities, Masculinities, Sexualities: Freud and Beyond*, attempts to address some of the criticisms outlined above. She writes: 'I have been previously misread to be claiming a universal, idealised, usually pre-oedipally constructed mother-daughter attachment'.¹⁸ Chodorow argues here that she has been mis-interpreted and that she is concerned not with making prescriptive generalisations but with identifying patterns. Theoretically, this is a shift in focus from the theory as prototext to the theory explicating empirical/existing examples. Chodorow also recognises that theories of mother- and daughterhood are multiply situated discourses and it is this eclecticism that she uses to counter charges of cultural essentialism: 'I have yet to come across any woman patient, or any narrative (fictional, autobiographical, biographical, poetic) written from the daughter's point of view ... from whatever cultural

group — for whom in the broadest sense we could say that “love” for a daughter’s mother was not central’.¹⁹ It is significant that one of the texts that Chodorow cites as an example is Asian American writer Amy Tan’s *The Joy Luck Club*, a text which I shall later argue is itself intervening in the mother/daughter discussion.

It is perhaps here that Chodorow comes closest to recognising the problem with psychoanalytic theories of the mother/daughter relationship. Namely, psychoanalytic theories, by definition and by practice, deal with the psychic, the psychological, inner realm, a space (traditionally) ahistorical, acultural and non-specific. As a gendered discourse, however, psychoanalytic theory has been a focus of attention for feminists anxious to revise Freudian and Freudian-derived theories of the gender-specific acquisition of subjectivity which in different ways have continued to position woman — as mother or as daughter — as other.²⁰ This search for a way to revise Freudian theory has been a return again and again to the origins of psychoanalytic theory. When Chodorow defends her psychoanalytic approach, she is attempting to historicise and acculturate her analysand by turning to more historically and culturally specific discourses such as autobiography and fiction for examples/evidence. (It is also the case that here the text also *becomes* the analysand so that Chodorow can be seen to be entering the very different theoretical arena of psychoanalytically-influenced *literary* theory. This shift in discursive arenas arguably allows Chodorow more freedom because there is less pressure in this discourse for an empirical base to a thesis). Implicit in this defensive move by Chodorow is the recognition that we need to turn to more externally located discourses for specificity and cultural difference in our analysis of the mother-daughter relationship.

Origins in Myths

There have several attempts to counter the primacy of the oedipal drama in Western thinking. Susanna Danuta Walters discusses the status of the grand narrative of the Oedipal relationship in her book *Lives Together/Worlds Apart: Mothers and Daughters in Popular Culture*. She writes: ‘never achieving the status of the Oedipal spectacle, the mother/daughter nexus nevertheless wanders through our cultural landscape in a sort of half-light present and persistent but rarely claiming center stage’.²¹ Walters describes the status of mother/daughter stories as “B movies” to the “epic narrative” of the mother/son story’.²² Walters, along with other writers like Marianne Hirsch have

attempted to change the status of the mother/daughter story from a secondary to a primary narrative by recovering mythic versions of the maternal. Clytemnestra, Demeter and Persephone are all cited as possible alternatives to Oedipus. These mythic versions of womanhood are regarded as powerful discursive representations of motherhood and daughterhood, prototexts that are 'a moment to return to and depart from'.²³ Walters and Hirsch are both cautious, however, in suggesting the enabling power of such myths. Walters recognises the potency of the Demeter myth as a pervasive proto-narrative. However, this is tempered by her recognition of the need to break down the discursive power of myth-as-grand-narrative to 'tell this story and no other'.²⁴ The danger is that the Demeter myth, while partly constituting a release from the totalising Freudian chronicle of mother/daughter relations, will simply reproduce an equally prescriptive and monotypic version of motherhood. Marianne Hirsch goes further in warning of the absence of maternal subjectivity as the result of an inability to move on from paradigmatic myths like those of Clytemnestra and Demeter. Clearly, an interest in such myths must therefore be cautious. In addition, it is questionable whether such myths do offer more liberatory paradigms: even the Demeter/Persephone dyad is fraught with ambivalence as Demeter remains caught between staying with and separating from her daughter.

It is also important to remember that in acknowledging the potency of Western myth as we see it embedded in our cultural discourses it is easy to ignore the existence of alternative mythic narratives. What power, for example, do the myths of Oedipus and Demeter have to influence the Asian American writers that I am interested in here, who, to some extent, stand outside of Western mythic tradition? How do we account for culturally hybrid narratives like Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* that give equal weight to the influential and pervasive Chinese myths of Ts'ai Yen and Fa Mu Lan?²⁵ This is a point to which I will return. It is possible to argue that these Chinese myths simply offer different available versions of womanhood and that this hybridisation is part of the postmodern proliferation of subject positions. If one were to accept this, could it then be the case that cultural hybridity is a way out of the Western positioning of the mother in negative terms? That multiple situatedness offers a release from the repressive effects of monolithic versions of motherhood and daughterhood so that we then become able to imagine new paradigms?

Motherhood as Institution and as Experience

So far I have looked at discourses of motherhood that are heavily influenced by and derivative of psychoanalytic theory. Indeed, the genealogical development of mother and daughter theory that I have traced remains firmly within the parameters of psychoanalysis. This delineation has produced a false picture for it has ignored the influence of Adrienne Rich's work upon feminist theory generally and theories of maternity in particular. Rich's 1978 book *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* still to some extent acknowledges a debt to psychoanalysis, but links this far more explicitly to the social arena. Rich differentiates between motherhood on the one hand as experience, in terms of the psychological and social interaction between mother and child, and motherhood as institution, which outlines the mother's capacity as an instrument of patriarchy used to educate her child in patriarchal expectations: 'patriarchy depends upon the mother to act as a conservative influence, imprinting future adults with patriarchal values'.²⁶ This seems quite close to Chodorow's theory of the reproduction of mothering as essential for the perpetuation of patriarchy by tying the mother's role in society to her biology. The two writers here do to some extent meet, which is not surprising as the works of both are products of the same historical environment. Rich's analysis does, however, differ from Chodorow's in three fundamental ways. Rich is, like Chodorow, concerned with a Western analysis. However, Rich's experience of cultural marginalisation as a Jewish American woman means that she recognises that cultural difference renders problematic those reductionist theories of motherhood based on a Western nuclear family model. Ethnicity is explicitly recognised as a variable producing different and diverse forms of mothering. Rich is also far more interested than Chodorow in textual representations of the mother/daughter cathexis (although it is clear, as I have already argued, that Chodorow does move closer to Rich in this in her later work) and she uses examples drawn from ethnically diverse writing like Navaho theory and Asian American poetry. Perhaps the most significant way in which Rich departs from Chodorow is her explanation of the ambivalence in the mother/daughter dyad. Whereas Chodorow sees this ambivalence wholly in psychoanalytic terms as a contradictory urge for separation on one hand and a desire for intrapsychic dependency on the other, on the part of both mother and daughter, Rich explains the ambivalence far more from the daughter's viewpoint. Although acknowledging that both 'mothers and daughters alike hunger for, pull away from, make

possible and impossible for each other';²⁷ Rich focusses predominantly on the daughter's pain and ambivalence towards her mother. She names this 'matrophobia' which is not the fear of one's mother, but the fear of becoming one's mother. Significantly then, the daughter's negative feelings are predicated upon her recognition of the connectedness with the mother: that she is like her and may become more like her. Rich portrays this ambivalence in far more in social terms (although matrophobia is also seen as a psychoanalytic phenomenon): it is also the social position of the mother that is feared, as a woman in a patriarchal society:

Many daughters live in rage at their mothers for having accepted, too readily and passively, whatever comes ... a mother's victimisation does not merely humiliate her, it mutilates the daughter who watches her for clues as to what it means to be a woman, like the traditional foot-bound Chinese woman, she passes on her own affliction'.²⁸

Significantly, Rich's revised edition of *Of Woman Born* contains a new chapter entitled 'Motherhood and Daughterhood'. Her earlier text can be seen as possessing cultural authority and a prototypic status in mother/daughter theory. Rich's revised edition, by taking account of the daughter's perspective as it does, locates itself very firmly within the new era of daughter texts intervening in the ongoing debate about mother and daughter relations. To some extent, Rich is responding to texts like those of the Asian American women writers I discuss later. As Amy Tan, for example, is intervening in mother/daughter debates, so Rich is entering into dialogic engagement with new theories and paradigms as suggested in texts like Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* and *The Kitchen God's Wife*. In her revised chapter on mothers and daughters, Rich actually refers to Amy Tan's work in particular, as an example of the new daughterly textual representations. Fiction and theory thus to some extent converge/merge in these new daughter texts of the mother/daughter story. For example, Rich, like Tan, describes daughtering in active terms, which serves to take some of the pressure off the mother: both actively contribute to the dyadic relation and play a role in constituting each other's subjectivity. Rich's description of the mother/daughter drama thus closely mirrors those representations found in Asian American women's writing.

From Othered Mothers to Other Mothers

In Asian American women's writing, the maternal voice or presence is often defined more loosely than is seen in Chodorow's theory of the nuclear family. The grandmother, aunt, or even a mother-surrogate or mythic mother may constitute the maternal presence in the text. By expanding the narrow definition of motherhood to be found in Western discourses such as psychoanalysis, women writers of colour are able to bypass the pitfalls of essentialising notions of mothering in their work. For example, in both Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* and Cynthia Kadohata's *The Floating World* it is an elderly female relative who serves as the maternal figure in relation whom the female protagonist is by turns drawn to and distanced from. In Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, Gail Tsukiyama's *Women Of The Silk* and Fiona Cheong's *Scent of the Gods* the mother-surrogate becomes a replacement nurturer, teacher and custodian of cultural values. For example, *Women of the Silk* tells the story of the women who worked in China's silk industry in 1926. The female characters of the novel forge a sisterhood in the harsh conditions in which they work which eventually leads to a strike against their atrocious working conditions. In *Women of the Silk* the mother surrogacy is crucial as central character Pei was separated from her mother at the age of seven when she was sold into the silk work. Auntie Yee acts as a surrogate mother to all the girls living in the boarding house in the silk village. *The Joy Luck Club* is the story of a series of mothers and their daughters, and the surrogate mothers are protagonist Jing-Mei's actual aunts, Lindo, An-Mei and Ying-Ying who stand in for Suyuan Woo, Jing-Mei's actual mother, who has died. These aunts assume responsibility for Jing-Mei and for the passing on of the matrilineage, seen to be more crucial because of the new, more hostile environment in which they are living. Fiona Cheong's novel *Scent of the Gods* is the story of young girl, Su Yen, growing up in Singapore in the 1960s. She lives with her family, but in *Scent of the Gods* it is the grandmother who stands in for the absent mother, who again has died. Therefore, maternity takes on a broader meaning because of the more extended patterns of filiality in these texts.

Perhaps as a result of the diversity of maternal presences in these Asian American women's texts, they constitute daughter discourses of the mother/daughter relation. There is no unitary form of motherhood in these texts and all adopt 'daughterly' viewpoints, towards the actual or imagined filial connection with other women. Marina Heung has discussed *The Joy Luck Club* as a daughter-text addressing

the mother(s).²⁹ The act of addressing the mother of course in part constitutes her as a listening, if not yet speaking, subject. *The Joy Luck Club*, *The Woman Warrior*, *Women of the Silk* and Sky Lee's *Disappearing Moon Café* are all dedicated to the mother. Kingston also dedicates her text to her father but has made clear in a recent article that *The Woman Warrior* tells 'the women's stories'.³⁰ Julie Shigekuni's *A Bridge Between Us* is dedicated to her grandmothers. The mother is also mentioned as an important influence or the text is partly inscribed to her in *The Scent of the Gods*, *Obasan*, *Talking to High Monks in the Snow* and *Moon Cakes* amongst others. The mother is therefore frequently acknowledged textually to be both an important influence but also a source of inspiration. In this way, then, a matrilineage is constructed textually: the daughters are acknowledging a debt to the mothers as source of their stories. With the exception of *Disappearing Moon Café* all the above texts are narrated by the daughter and the mother is the central focus of attention, so that by writing her story the daughter constitutes her mother's subjectivity textually. Not only is the maternal both foregrounded and seen as an important influence, but Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*, Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, Julie Shigekuni's *A Bridge Between Us* and Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* are all texts engaged in a search for, and often a struggle with, the mother. In these texts the mother is, for different reasons, lost or separated from the daughter. As I discuss in more detail later, this loss of the mother is also partly a loss of the mother-culture, so that mothering and daughtering also become textual tropes for the diaspora situation. The daughter's hybrid status and diaspora situation often renders her alienated from her mother, more rooted as she often is in the ancestral/'mother' culture. The daughter's differing social and cultural embeddedness often results in a barrier between mother and daughter which needs to be traversed in order to recover mother-figure and mother-culture. Asian American women's writing can thus be seen to offer a more culturally-specific discourse of mothering and daughtering than those discourses examined so far, offering as it does an account of the social, historical and (trans)cultural forces intervening in and complicating the mother's and daughter's engagement with each other. In *Obasan* and *The Joy Luck Club* the mother is also physically lost because she is dead. The search for the mother is thus often a symbolic search for cultural roots but also is an attempt to reconstitute the mother through memory. This is the textual act. The recovery of the mother in the text is enacted through the (re)constitution of a matrilineage. This matrilineage, cultural,

psychological, historical and genealogical, is itself multiply situated accounting for the social, historical as well as psychological and genealogical genesis of the daughter and her mothers. Again, this renders these texts more socially and culturally specific in recognising and charting the differing influences in the formation of selfhood. The matrilineage is used by the daughter as a counter tactic to the loss of the maternal, both actually and textually. As the matrilineage emphasises the connectedness between mother and daughter, and so recovers the relationship between them, this body of Asian American writing also recovers the mother from discourses of mothering and daughtering in which she is lost in an essentially patriarchal narrative.

The matrilineage it is always there but due to cultural and/or familial separation it is hidden or lost and needs to be recovered. In her essay on matrilineage, Nan Bauer Maglin identifies five interconnecting themes in the literature of matrilineage:

the recognition by the daughter that her voice is not entirely her own; the importance of trying to really see one's mother in spite of or beyond the blindnesses and skewed vision that growing up together causes; the amazement and humility about the strength of our mothers; the need to recite one's matrilineage, to find a ritual both to get back there and preserve it and still, the anger and despair about the pain and silence borne and handed on from mother to daughter.³¹

Bauer Maglin's thematic analysis is immediately recognisable in the work of many Asian American women writers. I suggest that the literature of matrilineage offers a version of mother/daughter relations which can provide a way out from the more repressive paradigms discussed earlier. Matrilineal storytelling is a conceptual framework for the intrapsychic mother/daughter relationship. It addresses the intersubjectivity between mother and daughter in listening to the voices and stories of both and acknowledging that both are intertwined. The ambiguity present in the mother/daughter relationship is recognised and struggled with as part of the daughter's search for the mother in the attempt to recover her textually. Matrilinealism both acknowledges and seeks to move beyond the cultural repression passed on from mother to daughter in the way outlined by Adrienne Rich earlier.

The (re)construction of the matrilineal connection by the daughter is therefore a political, feminist-inspired move. It is important because subjectivity is constructed through links between women and this intersubjectivity is acknowledged to be a source of power. Most mother/daughter theory rooted in a psychoanalytic tradition sees separation rather than continuing psychological interdependency as the ultimate goal. Several matrilineal texts by Asian American women writers like those I am concerned with here refute this and instead identify interconnectedness between women as a mutually affirming objective in itself. Matrilineal literature by Asian American women therefore moves beyond the terms of psychoanalytic discourses by positing the mother-figure as the origin of affirmative subjectivity. Significantly, she is frequently silent, as in psychoanalytic discourses like the Freudian narrative. The rediscovery of the matrilineage produces the move from silent non-subject to speaking subject on the part of the maternal in the text, as the mothers' stories are given both a textual and extra-textual space and audience.

This pattern can be seen in *Obasan*, *The Joy Luck Club*, *A Bridge Between Us* and *The Woman Warrior* where, in each case, the maternal is lost and needs to be rediscovered. Many of the texts that I am concerned with here are both elegy and eulogy. The daughter's lament and longing for the mother leads to a search and finally a rediscovery of the maternal through matrilineal storytelling. The mother's story is frequently indistinguishable from the wider history of the mother's ethnic group. The Japanese American character Aunt Emily, for example, tells Naomi in *Obasan*: 'You are your history. If you cut any of it off you're an amputee'.³² In *Obasan*, the mother's tale is that of the destruction caused at Nagasaki by the atomic bomb. Chinese American Jing-Mei Woo's mother Suyuan Woo in Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* and Pearl Louie's mother Winnie Louie in *The Kitchen God's Wife* were both victims, in differing ways and places (Shanghai and Kweilin) of the Japanese invasion of China in World War Two. Maxine's mother in *The Woman Warrior* tells a less war-torn but equally embattled story of female persecution and struggle in Canton.

The mother's ensuing separation from her daughter is sometimes physical (Naomi Nakane's mother died at Nagasaki of her wounds), but it is always psychological: the mothers are frequently seen to think and behave in what is perceived to be an alien way by their daughters. Amy Tan and Maxine Hong Kingston both attribute this psychological alienation to cultural differences between mother and

daughter. In all cases, the mother is Chinese or Japanese, and the daughter bears a 'hyphenated' identity as Chinese (-) American or Japanese (-) American.

Jing-Mei Woo notes that 'My mother and I never really understood each other's meanings and I seemed to hear less than what was said, while my mother heard more'.³³ The mothers and daughters do not communicate successfully in Tan's and Kingston's works because of this cultural difference and until this gap can be bridged, matrilineal healing through storytelling cannot take place. These cultural differences are seen operating linguistically: the mothers speak what Tan calls 'their special language' — a pidgin dialect which the daughters (mostly) understand, but do not speak.³⁴ This further precludes maternal-daughterly communication. As Marina Heung notes: 'Language is an instrument of intersubjectivity ... as a medium of transmission from mothers to daughters'.³⁵ The mother tongue thus becomes a sign of difference between mother and daughter. Maternal silence can be literal, as it is in the case of Suyuan Woo and Naomi's mother (both of whom are dead), but it is also figurative: often the mother *is* speaking, but the daughter is not present as a recipient/addressee of the mother's speech because she is not listening or cannot yet understand.

When the daughters start to listen to the mothers, maternal silence is broken, and the subjective cultural histories of the mothers are transformed into intersubjective dialogue with the daughters. Speech thus proves therapeutic, a 'talking cure' for personal tragedy and struggle, but also, as in *Obasan*, speech functions as a partial panacea for the previously literally unspeakable tragedy of the atomic holocaust in Japan. Cultural histories like those of Nagasaki are repeatedly represented as burdensome. In *Obasan*, Naomi notes:

All our ordinary stories are changed in time, altered as much by the present as the present is shaped by the past. Potent and pervasive as a prairie dust storm, memories and dreams seep and mingle through cracks, settling on furniture and into upholstery.³⁶

The act of telling one's story is also an act of unburdening the self, again the talking cure manifested. Grandma Kato writes in her letters about Nagasaki: 'If these matters are sent away in this letter, perhaps they will depart a little from our souls ... for the

burden of these words, forgive me'.³⁷ The mother's monologue thus becomes dialogue as the gap between mother and daughter closes.

Accompanying the longing for the mother is the desire for recognition or praise from the mother by the daughter. These Asian American daughters are repeatedly seen striving for success in order to please their mothers. This is seen most extensively in Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* where each of the mothers exerts pressure upon her daughter to succeed. This produces the desire to please the mother in the daughter. An example is Waverly's chess-playing, which is encouraged by her mother. In *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Pearl often tries to please her mother, in particular presenting her job to her mother in a way which will render it both acceptable and laudable in her mother's eyes. In Han Suyin's *The Crippled Tree*, Rosalie Chou frequently seeks praise from her almost indifferent mother by learning to play the piano. In *The Woman Warrior*, Maxine's comment: 'I got straight A's, Mama', is likewise met with indifference. Maxine wryly comments in the voice of her mother: 'My American life has been such a disappointment'.³⁸

In *Ethnic Passages: Literary Immigrants in Twentieth Century America*, Thomas Ferraro suggests that the ethnic mother's ambition for her daughter acts as another form of oppression.³⁹ One of the contradictory messages that the Asian American daughters receive from their mothers is that on one hand, they are taught to become the good wives and mothers that patriarchy requires in the way that Rich and Chodorow have outlined. However, they are also offered liberatory possibilities in the form of cultural fictions and myths of female selfhood which constitute part of the matrilineal inheritance. Examples would include the story of Ts' Ai Yen or Fa Mu Lan in *The Woman Warrior*, or The Queen of the Western Skies in *The Joy Luck Club*.⁴⁰ Beyond this, the mother herself often constitutes a female — even feminist — model. Brave Orchid, Maxine's mother in *The Woman Warrior* is one such figure. Her very name symbolises her identity as a warrior woman.⁴¹ Brave Orchid's story charts her various struggles against institutions and individuals: her struggle to become a doctor, her fight for the 'professionalisation of other women'⁴² and her battle of wills with the literal as well as figurative ghosts that she encounters. Brave Orchid therefore represents female heroism and strength and yet simultaneously suppresses her own daughter's voice, freedom and individuality. Thus, Maxine finds herself confused by her role model. Brave Orchid's linguistic messages are similarly ambivalent. Her daughter describes her

frequently uttering powerfully repressive Chinese idioms such as 'girls are maggots in the rice',⁴³ 'it is more profitable to raise geese than daughters' and 'feeding girls is feeding cowbirds'.⁴⁴ Yet her mother also teaches her the song of the warrior woman: 'she said I would grow up a wife and slave', Maxine writes, 'but she taught me the song of the warrior woman'.⁴⁵ Brave Orchid thus offers two versions of female identity to her daughter. As symbolised by her name, Brave Orchid embodies both the warrior woman and the wife/slave — 'brave' with male, warrior associations and 'orchid' signifying femininity. Maxine chooses heroism over female subservience and docility: 'I am not going to be a slave or a wife', she tells her mother.⁴⁶ Maxine thus accepts the inheritance of her mother's fighting spirit, and uses it to fight patriarchy: 'If I took the sword', she says in response to a sexist and racist employer, 'I would put colour and wrinkles into his shirt'.⁴⁷ Other female and feminist models include Naomi's mother in *Obasan*, who, after the holocaust, stays in Nagasaki rather than bring the burden of her tragedy home to her family. Naomi describes her as 'Martyr mother'.⁴⁸ Similarly, in *The Joy Luck Club*, Jing-Mei Woo is told of her mother Suyuan's sacrifices saving her two children in the Japanese invasion of Kweilin. Her aunt tells her: 'Your mother was a very strong woman, a good mother'.⁴⁹ Jing-Mei is therefore offered her mother's story as a tale of female strength to aspire to (her aunts recite her story to persuade Jing-Mei to go to China), but her mother also carries the ambition for her daughter that Ferraro suggests is repressive. Jing-Mei says: 'My mother believed that you could be anything you wanted to be in America ...'.⁵⁰ Suyuan Woo, as well as the other Joy Luck mothers/aunties, Brave Orchid and Winnie Louie all put pressure on the daughters in the way outlined by Ferraro. The mothers have bought into the American dream and now live their ambitions through their daughters. Perhaps the most extreme example of the ambitious mother is Maibelle Chung's mother Diana in Aimee Liu's recent novel, *Face*. Diana Chung is a successful and socially poised art gallery manager, gourmet cook and interior designer. Her ambitions for her daughter (significantly closely bound up with her own personal ambitions) extend to her trying to manipulate her daughter's life into the career she has chosen for her, as a photographer. Maibelle by turns rejects and goes along with her mother's machinations but finally realises that she herself wants to be photographer. The novel thus endorses the view, frequently seen elsewhere, that 'mother knows (her daughter) best'. The mother's ambition for her daughter is not always transculturally specific (Diana Chung is American, for example); however, the tales of female strength

slowly unveil great maternal sacrifices which are more culturally specific. Naomi's mother, Suyuan Woo and Winnie Louie have all made sacrifices in the respective Asian country for their Asian American daughters in America. Naomi's mother did not bring her pain and suffering to Canada, Winnie Louie hid the story of her horrendous first marriage in China from her daughter and Suyuan Woo actually left two daughters behind in China. When these stories are revealed, the ancestral country thus becomes identified with pain and suffering and this engenders ambivalence towards the mother culture in the daughter. Paradoxically, then, the maternal sacrifices that the daughters discover serve to offer the models of great heroism and bravery which they are under pressure to match. As a result, the figure of the woman warrior can be seen as a partly oppressive influence upon the daughters in these texts. There is much to live up to when your mother turns out to be a woman warrior.

It is this pressure to become warrior women in the footsteps of their mothers that explains the matrophobia that can be detected in many of these Asian American daughters. Matrophobia (the fear of *becoming* one's mother in Adrienne Rich's definition) is displayed in most extreme form in Han Suyin's *The Crippled Tree*, which could almost be described as a psychodrama of the most negative facet of the mother/daughter dyad. When her mother tells her that her mixed blood will engender hatred in others, Rosalie tells her mother: 'I hate you'.⁵¹ In another example in *The Joy Luck Club*, Lindo Jong notes her daughter's horror when someone comments on her similarity to her mother in looks. Matrophobia in both cases functions through colour: both Han Suyin (Rosalie Chou) and Waverly Jong want to reject the looks they share with their mothers because it is a sign of their ethnicity. Matrophobia is not always so culturally specific, however. A Eurasian like Rosalie Chou, Maibelle Chung's matrophobic impulse is not directed towards her mother's physiognomy as an ethnic marker, but rather she revolts against her mother's ambition and social machinations. In *The Joy Luck Club*, too, both Waverly Jong and Jing-Mei Woo reject their mother's versions of good daughtering and in *The Woman Warrior*, Maxine deliberately smashes plates as a means of rejecting her mother's version of good daughterhood.

The daughter's path from separation (or sometimes rejection) from the mother towards matrilineality is often initiated by another maternal figure, that of the *obasan* or aunt. As I suggested earlier, Asian American women's writing is important in the way it depicts alternative maternal economies influencing the daughter in formative ways.

Extended family becomes much more important and the aunt or *obasan* is one such example. 'Obasan' is a Japanese term for an elder female relative, a grandmother or an aunt; it stands for an aunt in the novel of the same name, and as a grandmother in Cynthia Kadohata's novel *The Floating World*: 'two Japanese words for "grandmother" are "obasan" and "obachan". You call your grandmother Obasan if you're not close to her, Obachan if you are'.⁵² 'Obasan' functions as a polite way to address an elder female relative, to show respect, as 'aunt' does in Chinese. Aunts and obasans are often seen to be as important as mothers, equally strong and with the potential to be woman warriors too. In *Obasan*, Naomi's Aunt Emily is described as a 'word warrior'.⁵³ Kadohata's narrator in *The Floating World* says of her grandmother: 'my grandmother has always been my tormentor'.⁵⁴ The narrator displays matrophobic tendencies towards her grandmother: 'I want to be the opposite of Obasan. Anything she does, I never will'.⁵⁵ Kadohata's narrator goes further in her matrophobic impulse than any of the other daughters discussed here: she literalises the desire to separate from the maternal (here the extended maternal) that I discussed earlier, by committing matricide. The obasan here possesses maternal power and influence over her (grand)daughter: 'when she got mad she cursed me. "May you grow hair on your nose!" she would say, and I would run to check a mirror'.⁵⁶ Nan Bauer Maglin suggests that one aspect of matrilineal literature is an amazement about the strength of the mother; here, it is the grandmother who is strong, and wields her power over her granddaughter. As I discuss later, Asian American daughters recognise that maternal power is ambivalent: it can easily be transformed into a weapon against them. In *The Floating World*, maternal power does become a weapon against the granddaughter, who eventually commits matricide as a result.

Obasan in *The Floating World* is not the only example of a malevolent aunt-figure. In *The Woman Warrior* Maxine says of her no-name aunt:

My aunt haunts me — her ghost drawn to me because now, after fifty years of neglect, I alone devote pages of paper to her ... I do not think she always means me well. I am telling on her, and she was a spite suicide, drowning herself in the drinking water. The Chinese are always very frightened of the drowned one, whose weeping ghost, wet hair hanging and skin bloated, waits silently by the water to pull down a substitute.⁵⁷

Here, the power of the aunt is linked to the power of the ghost, so the no-name aunt becomes doubly potent. By reading her aunt's suicide as a form of revenge, Maxine gives her aunt power which she wields over her family and the village. Yet, Maxine still recognises the potency is not always benevolent: her aunt does not always mean her well.

The aunt as woman warrior often uses her strength for revenge, which again, like the mother women warriors, locates her as a feminist heroine within the daughter's text. Several aunts, like Fa Mu Lan in 'White Tigers', become female avengers. The woman warrior is, often, like Aunt Emily, a word warrior. Maxine Hong Kingston writes: 'The idioms for revenge are "report a crime" and "report to five families". The reporting is the vengeance — not the beheading, not the gutting, but the words'.⁵⁸ Mothers and aunts alike become word warriors. In *Obasan*, Aunt Emily fights relentlessly for Japanese-American governmental redress for internment during the second world war. Her battle is fought with words — the literal reporting of a crime — because she will not stop talking and asking for redress. It is also through words that Aunt Emily persuades her niece to take up arms and become a female avenger too, by becoming involved in the redress movement. She urges Naomi: 'Write the vision and make it plain'.⁵⁹ In *Itsuka*, the sequel to *Obasan*, Aunt Emily tells Naomi: 'I've had to be a fighter ... there's been a lot to fight about'.⁶⁰ In *Itsuka*, it is the loss of one aunt (Obasan) that spurs another aunt (Aunt Emily) to force Naomi to face her past. When Obasan dies, Aunt Emily sweeps Naomi off to visit her mother's grave in Japan where Naomi experiences the sense of a return to both the maternal and maternal culture when she dreams of her mother: 'I see Mother's face, her eyes gently oblique ... the dream was my final signpost in my steadfast journey toward Mother'.⁶¹ Having reconciled herself with her mother and her mother's fate, Naomi is now able to face her wider cultural history which is so closely linked to her own mother's story. Aunt Emily turns Naomi into a word warrior herself, fighting for governmental redress. It is through both Aunt Emily and Obasan that Naomi comes to the recognition that 'to be without history is to be un-lived crystal'.⁶² Aunt Emily is thus also a feminist model for her niece. Likewise, in *The Woman Warrior*, it is the various mothers and aunties as woman warriors who urge Maxine to become a word warrior. She writes: 'I could make myself a warrior like the swordswoman who drives me'.⁶³ Here it is Fa Mu Lan who exerts pressure on Maxine to take up arms. Later, it is her mother, Brave Orchid:

When we Chinese girls listened to the adults talking-story, we learned that we failed if we grew up to be but wives or slaves. We could be heroines, swordswomen ... my mother told [stories] that followed swordswomen through woods and palaces for years ... [my mother] taught me the song of the warrior woman, Fa Mu Lan. I would have to grow up a warrior woman.⁶⁴

Later, Maxine's mother goes further in urging her daughter to become a word warrior by incising her frenum, 'so that you would not be tongue-tied'.⁶⁵ Thus, all the maternal figures — aunts and mothers — in *The Woman Warrior* join to urge Maxine to become a woman warrior herself. Fa Mu Lan, the no-name aunt, Brave Orchid, and even her weakest aunt, Moon Orchid, unite to urge Maxine into battle. Moon Orchid offers symbolic strength when she gives Maxine a series of paper effigies of warriors, including, significantly, a warrior poet and an effigy of Fa Mu Lan herself. Moon Orchid tells her niece: '... this is Fa Mu Lan ... she was a woman warrior, and really existed'.⁶⁶

As in *The Woman Warrior*, one silent aunt (no-name aunt or Obasan) and one very verbal maternal presence (Fa Mu Lan, Brave Orchid or Aunt Emily) together lead the daughter towards an acceptance of the mother culture and the accompanying strength that this acceptance brings. In Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, the aunts are also word warriors, but until the daughters, in the words of Naomi 'attend that speech',⁶⁷ acceptance of the mother culture does not take place. It is the aunts who initiate both a return to the mother (Suyuan Woo) and the mother culture (Chinese) here, by sending Jing-Mei Woo back to China to reaffirm the matrilineal connection, telling her lost sisters about their mother. In *The Kitchen God's Wife*, too, it is an aunt-figure, Aunt Helen or Hulan, who initiates the renewed closeness between mother and daughter and the reestablishment of the matrilineage through Winnie Louie's confessions of her past life. Aunt Helen tells Pearl: '... you had a secret, your mother had a secret. I said I was going to die so you would both tell each other your secrets ... and now you are closer, mother and daughter'.⁶⁸ Helen, Pearl's aunt, therefore gives her the strength to confess to her mother and this in turn strengthens the mother-daughter relationship, so that here, again, the aunt's role is to bring mother and daughter together, as it also was in *Obasan*.

Joy Kogawa's novel, *Obasan*, tells the story of the central Japanese Canadian female character, Naomi, who as a child was relocated with her family during the Second World War. Naomi's story is also the tale of how her own mother died at

Nagasaki. The novel charts Naomi's struggle to come to terms with a past that continues to haunt her present. There are multiple maternal presences in *Obasan*, Aunt Emily, Obasan and Naomi's mother, of whom only Aunt Emily can be seen as a fully speaking subject. Obasan's *issei* status (a first generation immigrant) in part explains her taciturnity and almost precarious presence in the text. The silence is also the curse of her family history of persecution and extermination. Naomi's biological mother is both presence and absence, she is described in the text as 'a fragile presence'.⁶⁹ She has therefore literally been silenced by her story. Each mother-figure has an individual story within the wider cultural narrative of the Japanese genocide in the Second World War and the Japanese Canadian relocation policy at the same time. Naomi's mother was killed at Nagasaki and Obasan was interned in Canada so the stories of these two mothers are also the histories of Naomi's ethnic group. Naomi's daughterly search for subjectivity and journey towards the affirmation of matrilineal connection with Obasan, Aunt Emily and her real mother is linked to her gradual education in and understanding of her cultural and ethnic history. She is aided in this by one of the maternal presences in the text, Aunt Emily, who is the cultural custodian in the text. It is Aunt Emily who enables Naomi to hear the language of both her *nisei* mother and *issei obasan*. Aunt Emily is founder of the movement for governmental redress for Japanese Canadians and it is her insistence on Naomi's engagement with her history that forces a confrontation with the cultural narratives of persecution. Naomi's education in Japanese Canadian history is also a journey towards self-discovery in which she learns that it her history and that of her mothers that makes her the person that she is now.

The constitution of the matrilineage and thus of maternal subjectivity is charted in the text through a maternal movement from silence to speech. The silence has been engendered by the mother's mutilation at Nagasaki. Her subsequent plea 'Do not tell' to the other mother-figures produces a silence only broken by Naomi's awakening desire to learn of her and her mothers' past. The inability to speak of Nagasaki can only be broken by Naomi's recognition of the weight — and thus value — of inherited cultural chronicles.

We learn that at one time, crucially pre-Nagasaki, the matrilineage was strong: '[e]ach night, from the very beginning before I could talk, there were the same stories, the voices of my mother or my father or Obasan or Grandma Kato, soft through the filter of my sleepiness, carrying me away to a shadowy ancestry'.⁷⁰ The matrilineage is

broken by Nagasaki and Naomi's later pleas for maternal stories are refused: "Please tell me about Mother," I would say as a child to Obasan. I was consumed by the question. Devoured alive. But Obasan gave me no answers. I did not have, I never have had, the key to the vault of her thoughts'.⁷¹

It is only after her uncle's death that Emily gives Naomi that key: a package of letters and papers about Japanese Canadian history, crucially including her mother's diary. This diary stresses matrilineal connection: "Dearest Nesan" her entries begin. The sight of the word "Nesan" cuts into me with a peculiar sensation of pain and tenderness. It means "older sister" and was what Aunt Emily always called Mother. Grandma Kato also called Mother "Nesan" from time to time, especially if she was talking to Aunt Emily'.⁷² This interconnectedness between her female ancestors awakens Naomi to the existence and importance of the matrilineage: 'the book feels heavy with voices from the past — a connection to Mother and Grandma Kato I did not know existed'.⁷³ Naomi feels a need to take her place in the matrilineage, which will be enacted textually through reading her aunt's papers: 'I feel a strong urge to put everything aside and read the journal'.⁷⁴

Naomi needs actively to reconstruct the matrilineage as she inherits a fragmented family history. The family has been fragmented physically by the atomic holocaust and the Canadian government's policy of dispersal, which has left the Katos geographically dispersed and diminished by death. Symbolically, the matrilineage needs to be reconstructed by Naomi piecing together the stories that she inherits: 'only fragments relate me to them now, to this young woman, my mother, and me, her infant daughter. Fragments of fragments. Parts of a house. Segments of stories'.⁷⁵

In keeping with Bauer Maglin's recognition of the celebratory aspect of matrilineage, Naomi's awakening sense of matrilineal connection fosters a new belief in the power of her mothers. Symbolically, Emily gives Naomi a Book of Knowledge in which she finds stories of strong, conquering women warriors: 'Could I, I wonder, ever do the things that they do? Could I hide in a wagon of hay and not cry out if I were stabbed by a bayonet?'.⁷⁶

Rich and Chodorow discuss the mother's role in educating her daughter to be a good daughter within patriarchal society. Here, as I discussed earlier, the mother acts in an entirely different way by offering the daughter liberatory narratives of female strength and emancipation. The mother is therefore seen as a source of inspiration and Naomi

learns of the strength of her mothers, and their ability to enable her too: 'Mother, it seems to me, could. So could Grandma Kato or Obasan'.⁷⁷

It is only when Naomi accepts the legacy of her cultural heritage as taught by Aunt Emily that the silence of Obasan and her mother is broken. When the mother speaks, it is through the matrilineage: her story comes to Naomi through letters sent from Grandma Kato to her daughter, Aunt Emily. We learn that the silence imposed by Naomi's mother was a defense strategy against the horrors of Nagasaki: 'the horror would surely die sooner, they felt, if they refused to speak'.⁷⁸ After the mother has spoken, Naomi, as her daughter, speaks too so that both mother's and daughter's stories are told together and intertwine. The daughter reproaches her mother for her silence: 'Silent Mother, you do not speak or write. You do not reach through the night to enter morning, but remain in the voicelessness'.⁷⁹ By concluding her story with her and for her, Naomi recovers her mother from the voicelessness and thus (re)constitutes her subjectivity. Naomi does betray a daughterly anxiety that she won't hear her mother's story or do justice to it. She asks: 'How shall I attend that speech, Mother, how shall I trace that wave?',⁸⁰ demonstrating her yearning towards but also fear of her mother, a kind of matrophobic anxiety. Naomi's daughterly status means that she is forced to confront her mother's separation: 'First you could not, then you chose not to come'.⁸¹ Here we see the ambivalence present in the mother/daughter dyad of the yearning toward and distancing from each other, which is both internally and externally imposed. Naomi goes on to voice the intersubjectivity between her and her mother, through a statement of empathy for her mother: 'Beneath the hiding I am there with you ... Young Mother at Nagasaki, am I not also there?'⁸² Naomi imagines the interconnectedness in terms of a tree and thus literalises the metaphor of the family tree: 'Your leg is a tree trunk and I am branch, vine, butterfly. I am joined to your limbs by right of birth, child of your flesh, leaf of your bough'.⁸³ Naomi imagines her closeness with her mother through an imagined return to infancy. Ultimately, the matrilineage affirms maternal and daughterly subjectivity in the text because it is a form of speech that breaks the silence: 'Gentle Mother, we were lost together in our silences. Our wordlessness was our mutual destruction'.⁸⁴

When Naomi recovers her mother's voice and thus her subjectivity she releases the spell of silence also preventing Obasan from speaking and remembering. The text

closes with Obasan sifting through her collection of long untouched photographs. The matrilineal connection has been recovered.

A matrilineage is constructed even more explicitly in Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*. Mother/daughter relations are emphasised and foregrounded. Each section of the text begins with a mythical parable about the relations between mothers and daughters. These myths are Chinese myths and can be seen to offer versions of mothering and daughtering in the same way as the Western myths discussed earlier. Structurally, the organising framework of the text is the separate narratives of four mothers and four daughters. These narratives are all explicitly concerned with the construction of a matrilineage, and all the sections are either narratives of separation from, or connection to, the mother. Tan thus engages in theoretical debates about the mother/daughter relationship, in ways which seem to suggest the ambivalence that is present in Chodorow's model of the mother/daughter dyad. Jing-Mei Woo's story opens the text and it immediately sets the theme of matrilineage. It is a narrative of both separation from and connection to the mother. Suyuan Woo has died, and Jing-Mei has been asked to take her place at the mah-jong table, which structurally acts as a trope for the matrilineage. However, the matrilineal connection is seen to be threatened in two ways. The mah-jong aunties want Jing-Mei to go to China in order to reconnect with her maternal history by meeting her mother's first children. Jing-Mei's unease represents her ambivalence towards matrilineality and thus threatens the link between her and her mother. In addition, the matrilineage in *The Joy Luck Club* works through 'talking story', the mother reciting tales of her life to her daughter. The dead Suyuan Woo is unable to do this. Because Jing-Mei's story is the framing narrative in the text the pattern is thus set of both a yearning towards, and a resistance (only on the part of the daughters) to the matrilineage.

Following Jing-Mei's narrative are the three narratives of the mothers, Lindo, An-Mei and Ying-Ying. These sections are preoccupied with the threatened disruption of the matrilineal connection, initiated by Jing-Mei's paradigmatic rejection of her maternal history. All the mothers go on to tell stories of the separation from and/or loss of their own mothers: An-Mei's of her mother's banishment from the family home; Lindo of how she was given to another family in marriage and Ying-Ying of the separation from her mother at the festival of the Moon Lady. Lindo cites their collective anxiety: 'I worry that ... she will forget she had a grandmother'.⁸⁵ The mothers'

mournings of the loss of their own mothers strengthens the growing sense of the disappearance of the matrilineage. Ying-Ying says of her daughter: 'we are lost, she and I, unseen and not seeing, unheard and not hearing, unknown by others'.⁸⁶ Even though the loss is actually of the connection between mothers and daughters, the mother's inability to break free from her daughter here is expressed in her continuing identification with her daughter: although her daughter has elected to move away from the mother, the mother sees this as a tragedy for both, they are both lost.

The mothers' narratives of feared or actual loss or separation within the mother/daughter dyad are balanced by the following narratives of their daughters. It is significant within the symbolic construction of the text that Tan has the daughters follow the mothers, which could be seen as a hint of resolution. These daughterly stories articulate four concerns specifically related to the matrilineage. All of the daughters pay homage to the power of their mothers, an aspect of the literature of matrilineage outlined by Nan Bauer earlier. Both Rose and Lena believe their mothers have magical powers. The mothers are celebrated as all-knowing: '... to this day, I believe my mother has the mysterious ability to see things before they happen'.⁸⁷ Often, this power is passed on to the daughter: 'my mother taught me the art of invisible strength'.⁸⁸ However, in the world of mother/daughter relations this recognition of strength cannot be read as a simple celebratory gesture, as Susanna Walters and Marina Heung do.⁸⁹ The daughters recognise that whilst maternal power can be passed on to the daughters, it can as easily be used against them. Waverly Jong's reluctance to tell her mother about her husband-to-be stems from the knowledge of her mother's power; 'my mother knows how to hit a nerve'.⁹⁰ Similarly, the nightmares that Rose Hsu Jordan suffers from as a child stem from her mother's power over her: '... all these things seemed true to me. The power of her words was that strong'.⁹¹ The daughters are slipping here into representing their mothers as witch-mothers, in which the mother is held responsible for repressing the daughter. Indeed, Tan's intervention in debates about mothering is complex. She seems to veer between a celebratory impulse, which does nothing to demystify mothering as an activity, and a far more negative version in which the all-powerful and all-knowing mothers become suffocating and damaging influences upon their daughters. The mothers know the daughters better than anyone else and are repeatedly shown as looking beyond their daughters' representations of their behaviour. Lena's mother tells her husband that she does not like ice cream, for example, and Jing-Mei's mother knew

that her daughter would pick the inferior crab at a feast, because she would have done that herself. So the mothers know the daughters because of the similarities between them.

Despite the recognition of closeness and similarities, the Joy Luck daughters struggle against their mothers and the imposition of a matrilineage. Waverly, for example, is displeased when the hairdresser points out her similarity to her mother. More seriously, Jing-Mei tries to reject the mother/daughter bond: 'I wish I wasn't your daughter',⁹² as Waverly does when her mother demands: 'embarrass you be my daughter?', before breaking the matrilineage herself in retaliation: 'we not concerning this girl'.⁹³ The struggle is enacted in an attempt to escape the stifling and repressing imposition that the mother's influence is perceived to be. Partly this is a result of the mother's situation as mediator of the mother-culture, a cultural inheritance the daughters are not sure that they want. The acceptance of the connection to the mother is also an acceptance of this cultural inheritance and this also problematises the relationship.

The daughters later initiate attempt to reinstate the matrilineal connection. Lena's dream of a daughter saving her mother symbolically enacts this move. After her mother's death, Jing-Mei starts to play the piano, an act that would have pleased her mother. Rose takes the advice from her mother that she has previously rejected and Waverly visits her mother and tells of their shared genealogy. These actions all signal the affirmation of the matrilineage. This acceptance is both a recognition of the intersubjective connection between mother and daughter and an acceptance of the mother culture. This is extended by the following three mothers' narratives, which affirm the reinstated matrilineage through storytelling about shared cultural history and genealogy. This is again symbolically enacted by An-Mei's story of the reconciliation and reunion with her own mother. Ying-Ying articulates both the physical resemblance with her daughter: 'she and I shared the same body' and the intersubjective engagement between them: 'there is a part of her mind that is a part of mine', and then seeks to strengthen the connection between them by storytelling about her/their past: 'and now I must tell her everything about my own past. It is the only way to penetrate her skin and pull her to where she can be saved'.⁹⁴ Matrilineal healing of the rift between mother and daughter, here, as in *The Woman Warrior* and *Obasan*, thus takes place through storytelling. Ferraro describes this impulse to 'talk-story' as the Chinese mothers and

daughters call it, as a 'possible antidote' to the wounds both mothers and daughters have sustained in these texts.⁹⁵

Lindo less explicitly heals the rift between her and her daughter through the episode at the hairdressers in 'Double Face'. As her own and her daughter's similar faces are reflected in the same mirror ('these two faces, I think, so much the same!'), she remembers a similar occasion with her own mother and notes: 'I am seeing myself and my mother' again enforcing the matrilineal connection.⁹⁶

The move towards matrilineage and the recognition of intersubjective dependency is reflected structurally in the last sections: the narrative voice shifts from addressing a third-person to a second-person: the daughter figure. The section titles: 'Double Face', 'Half and Half' and 'Two Kinds' also reflect the coupling in the mother/daughter dyad. The framing narrative, Jing-Mei's return to China, completes the return to maternity. The matrilineage is thus confirmed both in the East and West: Jing-Mei's meeting with her sisters also symbolises the acceptance of culture-as-motherhood too.

The Woman Warrior relates its author's childhood and adulthood and the sometimes bewildering experiences growing up as the daughter of Chinese immigrants in Stockton, California. The young girl wrestles with a range of Chinese myths that are related to her by her mother, as well as coping with the demands that her mother makes of her. In *The Woman Warrior* as in *The Joy Luck Club*, the mother-figure is seen from the daughter's perspective as the point of origin. Brave Orchid's subjectivity dominates the text, as she, the mother, dominates her daughter's subjectivity. Kingston is actually presenting us with an intersubjective arrangement: the daughter's identity partly depends upon that of her mother, but also other women she perceives as foremothers. In this text the mythic mother can also be seen to constitute the maternal presence. The formative foremothers are family members: Brave Orchid, Moon Orchid and Kingston's No Name aunt and also mythical characters: Fa Mu Lan and Ts'ai Yen.

The matrilineal connection with blood relative (fore)mothers also hinges upon the act of storytelling. Kingston's autobiographical text (subtitled 'memoirs') is also the biographical story of her mother and her aunts. This both emphasises the matrilineage and also reinforces the intersubjectivity; the boundaries of the self as written are fluid and shifting, so that, through the stories told, Kingston and her (fore)mothers' subjectivities are not clearly separable. Stories and selves mingle, as Kingston tells us:

'the beginning is hers, the ending mine'⁹⁷ so that as in *Obasan* the daughter contributes to the mother's text and vice versa. The story of selfhood is thus the story of several selves told in more than one voice.

The act of 'talking story', as in *The Joy Luck Club* both informs Kingston of, and locates her within, a matrilineage. It is Brave Orchid who has had the responsibility of telling Kingston the story of her and her sisters' lives. The act of talking story about these women serves to affirm their subjectivity and status. The presentation of each of the women in the text, including Kingston, as participating in an intersubjective engagement with each other can be seen as a feminist move to affirm the subjectivity of women for whom identity has, for one reason or another, been obliterated. Moon Orchid has little subjectivity of her own and is seen in the text living her life echoing the actions of others. By depicting an intersubjective arrangement with her aunt as she does, Kingston thus gives her subjectivity. The same is true of her no name aunt, Kingston names her by telling her story, an act which also constitutes her subjectivity.

Kingston's 'talking story', as in Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, is a feminist act in that she locates the maternal presences in the text within an alternative subjective economy: one that is female-centred. The recognition that women's lives are shaped and affected in formative ways by other women is important: in *The Woman Warrior*, as in *The Kitchen God's Wife*, *Obasan*, and *The Joy Luck Club*, the mother/daughter drama is not displaced by the more important/enduring oedipal spectacle, since that is simply not relevant here. I would suggest that this is because of these writers' alternative locations between differing ideological forces.

The act of storytelling is shared by both mother and daughter. It is Brave Orchid who opens the narration, which then almost imperceptibly passes on to her daughter mid-story, detectible only by a change in address, from 'your aunt' to 'my aunt' and the later omission, on the part of Kingston, of speech marks. The fictions of female selfhood are thus seen to intertwine. It is these fictions as told to the daughter that cause Kingston to imagine herself in relation to the mythical mother-figures of Fa Mu Lan and Ts'ai Yen. As I said earlier, we are able to imagine ourselves only in relation to existing and available forms of female selfhood and motherhood. These women are warrior, singing women, so that as in *Obasan*, the mother offers the daughter emancipatory narratives of womanhood with which to identify, thus paving the way for her daughter to internalise more enabling self-images than are presented to Kingston elsewhere.

In all these texts that I have discussed in detail, matrilineage works in the ways outlined by Nan Bauer: through the mediation of cultural expectations (here, through shared culture, Chinese or Japanese), through the celebration of the mother, through reciting the matrilineage, through the recognition that the mother's and daughter's voices are linked, and also the acknowledgement of the ambiguities present in the relationship. Kingston's text also betrays a preoccupation with the psychological and genealogical connections between herself and her mother. She tells us: 'I am really a Dragon, as she is a Dragon, both of us born in Dragon years. I am practically a first daughter of a first daughter'.⁹⁸ Tan depicts a similar episode when Ying-Ying tells us she and her daughter are both Tigers. In both cases, the links between mother and daughter are reiterated through the metaphor of Chinese birth sign mythology. The daughters in all three texts are thus seen to be orientated (literally) towards the mother, who is seen as the point of origin and the source of subjectivity.

In some ways, Julie Shigekuni's more recent novel, *A Bridge Between Us*, departs from the texts that I have discussed so far, because it focuses almost exclusively on the negative aspects of the mother/daughter relationship. It is a story of four generations of Japanese American women who all live in the same house in San Francisco, bound together not just by physical proximity, but also by matrilineal obligation and the weight of familial tradition. In alternating chapters, the four women relate their life stories and experiences, as well as revealing the secrets and tensions that exist between them and the other women. Head of the family is the malevolent matriarch Reiko, who terrorises her daughter, Rio, and her daughter-in-law, Tomoe, on a daily basis. Her daughter Rio says of her:

Granny was causing trouble even before she was Granny. Long before she became the great-grand-pain-in-the-ass that she's been to Tomoe's children she was Goro's out-of-control grandmother who locked him in the closet to teach him about life. She taught me about life, that's for sure. She is the mother to whom I owe everything, including the \$537 balance remaining on the money I borrowed to have my hysterectomy ten years ago, in addition to another kind of balance I seem never to have possessed at all. She was my mother before she was Goro's grandmother, and now she's Granny to the children. But she was never just plain Reiko. Reiko was always the *princess*, the spoiled daughter of a

rich man who never had to lift a finger. Look where that's gotten her ... Look where it's gotten me.⁹⁹

Rio's attitude towards her mother betrays all of the ambivalence of the mother/daughter dyad, expressing both inextricable ties and a sense of suffocation. Crucially, Reiko's relationship as a mother to Rio works in entirely opposite ways to the manner outlined by Nancy Chodorow. Rather than teaching her to mother, Reiko pays for Rio's hysterectomy.

Reiko's only positive tie is with her granddaughter Nomi, who is both drawn towards and away from the grandmother who wields such power in the house. Rio, Reiko's daughter, is bound to her mother by fear, and although they live in the same house, they have not spoken for years. Tomoe and Nomi provide the connective tissue that ties the household together, the 'bridge' of the novel's title. As the youngest daughter of the house, Nomi feels the weight of matriarchal presence the most strongly, as well as assuming the burden of holding the female members of the family together. When Rio tries to commit suicide, Nomi notes that 'I am to blame'.¹⁰⁰ Shigekuni's novel demonstrates the inextricable yet stifling ties of intimacy and obligation that can bind women to their mothers. One way in which this is achieved is by employing architectural metaphors in order to illustrate the hierarchy of the women within the household: Reiko lives at the top of the house, Rio at the bottom, separated by Tomoe. Like Tan's *The Joy Luck Club, A Bridge Between Us* uses a series of disconnected first-person narratives to relate the stories of the women. As in Tan's novel, this narratorial technique structurally represents the simultaneous isolation and interconnections with the other female family members that these women experience. The novel draws to a climax when the paralysing matrilineal connections between the women are broken by the death of Rio. The novel ends symbolically with Tomoe and Nomi released from the burden of matrilineal and matriarchal control in the house.

All these texts seem to conform, to varying degrees, to a Chodorowian explanation of the mother/daughter relationship. Similarly, Rich's discussion of the mother's role in socialising her daughter and conditioning her in patriarchal values is suggested especially in *Brave Orchid's* treatment of her daughter. However, all these writers seem to conform to these Western theories of motherly and daughterly (inter)subjectivity only in order to then question them. As mediator of the ancestral

culture (Chinese or Japanese) the mother-figure often represents mother-land. This complicates the daughter's dealings with her mother so that the contradictory acts that she engages in chart her desire on one hand to reconcile herself with her mother as the psychological but also the cultural point of origin, and a fear of what cultural impositions accompany this reconciliation. Similarly, the daughter's ambivalence is echoed in the mother's suspicion of the 'new' culture as she sees it manifested in her daughter. In *The Joy Luck Club* for example, the mother is suspicious of the daughter's American gadgets, telephones and Sony Walkmans. Significantly, these Asian American women writers move beyond the terms of Western discourses of the mother/daughter relationship by positing a resolution to the eternal ambivalence in so many of the models discussed earlier. Tan, Kingston and Kogawa all rescue the mother from her relegation to the edges of Western culture by suggesting ways in which the daughter and mother may reconcile their difference. This reconciliation is in part an acknowledgement of the strength of seeing difference as diversity. As Asian American women, these writers are themselves both inside and outside Western culture. Psychoanalytic discourses in particular regard this simultaneous insider/outsider positioning as problematic, because the urge for assimilation on one hand and separation on the other, as seen in the mother/daughter dyad, is regarded as unsatisfactory. Difference in psychoanalytic discourses is the root of all subsequent problems: the girl endlessly desires both a separation from her mother and a penis and the boy rivals the father for mastery of the mother. However, excepting Julie Shigekuni, the Asian American women writers discussed here all regard difference in positive terms: by being both inside and outside of Western culture, or equally inside and outside of the respective Asian culture, one may choose which versions of womanhood to privilege. Clearly, in addition, the different ways in which the maternal can be seen to be present in these texts challenges unitary or reductionist theories of mothering which reduce women to their biology: in several cases the maternal figure as formative influence is not a biological mother. It therefore seems that in several ways Asian American women writers can be regarded as finding new ways of writing the maternal in their work. Mothering is becoming not just a more diverse activity, but in the texts by daughters it is also seen to be altogether more positive.

Notes

- ¹ Marianne Hirsch, 'Mothers and Daughters: A Review Essay', *Signs*, 7.1 (Autumn, 1981), 200-222.
- ² 'Discourse' is a term that is used and understood in different ways, as I discussed in detail in chapter two. The definition I am using here is from Sara Mills and others, *Feminist Readings, Feminists Reading* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), p.240:
'discourse ... [is] used to designate established ways of thinking together with the power structures that support them ... the existence of 'discursive practices' within a society allows for certain subject positions to be taken up. Modes of discourse are established and modified over time and ideas of class, gender, race, individuality, etc. are determined by them. A discourse depends on shared assumptions, so that a culture's ideology is inscribed in its discursive practices ... discourses embody power relations'.
- ³ For a discussion of popular culture's obsession with the mother/daughter nexus, see Susanna Danuta Walters, *Lives Together/Worlds Apart: Mothers and Daughters in Popular Culture* (Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).
- ⁴ For a discussion of the absence of the maternal in Freud's work see Nancy Chodorow, *Femininities, Masculinities, Sexualities: Freud and Beyond* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1994).
- ⁵ Marianne Hirsch, *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), p.2.
- ⁶ Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p.109.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p.122.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p.157.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p.157.
- ¹⁰ Mickey Pearlman, *Mother Puzzles: Daughters and Mothers in Contemporary American Literature* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1989), p.1. Pearlman writes that mother-blame is a 'male/female American national pastime'.
- ¹¹ *The Mother/Daughter Plot*, p.133.
- ¹² *The Reproduction of Mothering*, p.168.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p.167.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.169.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.212.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.180.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.57.
- ¹⁸ *Femininities, Masculinities, Sexualities*, p.112.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.82.
- ²⁰ I am thinking here of the work of feminist theorists like Juliet Mitchell, Jessica Benjamin, Jane Flax and Jean Baker Miller.
- ²¹ *Lives Together/Worlds Apart*, p.4.
- ²² *Ibid.*, p.4.
- ²³ *The Mother/Daughter Plot*, p.29.
- ²⁴ *Lives Together/Worlds Apart*, p.20.
- ²⁵ Maxine Hong Kingston retells the traditional stories of Fa Mu Lan (the 'Ballad of Mulan') and Ts' Ai Yen (from *Hou han Shu* or, History of the Latter Han Dynasty) in her novel *The Woman Warrior*. Fa Mu Lan was a warrior and Ts' Ai Yen was a singing poetess. Both myths are influential in Chinese culture. See Sau-Ling Cynthia Wong's discussion of Kingston's use of these myths: Sau-Ling Cynthia Wong, 'Kingston's Handling of Traditional Chinese Sources', in *Approaches to Teaching Maxine Hong Kingston's "The Woman Warrior"*, ed. by Shirley Goek-lin Lim (New York: MLA, 1991), pp.26-43.
- ²⁶ Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and as Institution* (London: Virago, 1977), p.34.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.218.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.243.
- ²⁹ Marina Heung, 'Mother Text/Daughter Text: Matrilineage in Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*', *Feminist Studies*, 19.3 (Fall, 1993), 597-616.
- ³⁰ Maxine Hong Kingston, 'Personal Statement', in *Approaches to Teaching Maxine Hong Kingston's "The Woman Warrior"*, pp.23-25.

- ³¹ Nan Bauer Maglin, “Don’t forget the bridge that you crossed over on”: The Literature of Matrilineage’, in *The Lost Tradition: Mothers and Daughters in Literature*, ed. by Cathy N. Davidson and E. M. Broner (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1980), p.258.
- ³² Joy Kogawa, *Obasan* (New York: Anchor/Doubleday, 1994), p.60.
- ³³ Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club* (London: Minerva, 1990), p.37.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.34. ‘Pidgin English’ was a term originally coined to describe the language used between Chinese and Europeans.
- ³⁵ ‘Mother Text/Daughter Text’, p.604.
- ³⁶ *Obasan*, p.30.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.283.
- ³⁸ Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* (London: Picador, 1981), p.47.
- ³⁹ Thomas J. Ferraro, *Ethnic Passages: Literary Immigrants in Twentieth Century America* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993).
- ⁴⁰ The Queen of the Western Skies is a parable about a grandmother and a granddaughter. The granddaughter is the Queen of the Western Skies and she teaches both mother and grandmother how to lose hope, but not innocence and how to laugh forever. In short, she teaches female resilience and strength. Both Ts’Ai Yen and Fa Mu Lan, the woman warrior, likewise displayed great female strength. Fa Mu Lan defeated many enemies in battle, pausing only to give birth, and Ts’Ai Yen also fought and gave birth soon after, but her main strength was to emerge singing in the face of her barbarian captors. See my earlier note on Kingston’s use of these myths.
- ⁴¹ As David Leiwei Li makes clear in his illuminating essay on naming in *The Woman Warrior*, although ‘Orchid’ signifies femininity, and is a traditional Chinese name for a woman, ‘Brave Orchid’ would not be an acceptable name in Chinese. ‘Brave’ carries male, warrior significations, the opposite of ‘Orchid’, so that the name means ‘woman, man’. Thus, Brave Orchid is a warrior woman. See David Leiwei Li, ‘The Naming of a Chinese-American “I”: Cross-Cultural Sign/ifications in *The Woman Warrior*’, *Criticism*, 30.4 (Fall, 1988), 497-515 (p.502).
- ⁴² *Ethnic Passages*, p.165.
- ⁴³ *The Woman Warrior*, p.45.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.48.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.26.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.50.
- ⁴⁸ *Obasan*, p.290.
- ⁴⁹ *The Joy Luck Club*, p.39.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.132.
- ⁵¹ Han Suyin, *The Crippled Tree* (London: Lowe and Brydore, 1965), p.416.
- ⁵² Cynthia Kadohata, *The Floating World* (London: Minerva, 1990), p.5.
- ⁵³ *Obasan*, p.39.
- ⁵⁴ *The Floating World*, p.1.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.20.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.1.
- ⁵⁷ *The Woman Warrior*, p.22.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.53.
- ⁵⁹ *Obasan*, p.38.
- ⁶⁰ Joy Kogawa, *Itsuka* (New York: Anchor/Doubleday, 1994), p.63.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.104.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*, p.321.
- ⁶³ *The Woman Warrior*, p.49.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.26.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.148.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.111.
- ⁶⁷ *Obasan*, p.289.
- ⁶⁸ Amy Tan, *The Kitchen God’s Wife* (London: Flamingo, 1992), p.408.
- ⁶⁹ *Obasan*, p.23.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.66.
- ⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.31.

- ⁷² Ibid., p.56.
⁷³ Ibid.
⁷⁴ Ibid.
⁷⁵ Ibid., p.64.
⁷⁶ Ibid., p.87.
⁷⁷ Ibid.
⁷⁸ Ibid., p.282.
⁷⁹ Ibid., p.289.
⁸⁰ Ibid.
⁸¹ Ibid., p.290.
⁸² Ibid.
⁸³ Ibid., p.291.
⁸⁴ Ibid.
⁸⁵ *The Joy Luck Club*, p.49.
⁸⁶ Ibid., p.67.
⁸⁷ Ibid., p.149.
⁸⁸ Ibid., p.89.
⁸⁹ See *Lives Together/Worlds Apart*, pp.180-4; and 'Mother Text/Daughter Text'.
⁹⁰ *The Joy Luck Club*, p.170.
⁹¹ Ibid., p.185.
⁹² Ibid., p.142.
⁹³ Ibid., p.99.
⁹⁴ Ibid., pp.242-252.
⁹⁵ *Ethnic Passages*, p.159.
⁹⁶ *The Joy Luck Club*, p.256.
⁹⁷ *The Woman Warrior*, p.184.
⁹⁸ Ibid., p.101.
⁹⁹ Julie Shigekuni, *A Bridge Between Us* (New York: Anchor, 1995), pp.53-4.
¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p.49.

CHAPTER FOUR

Mother Tongue: Language and Diaspora

In her ground-breaking text, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, the Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa notes; 'Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity — I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself'.¹ Anzaldúa's recognition that the problematics of identity reside at the language/ethnicity interface is mirrored in Asian American writing by women. Although different, many of these explorations of linguistic identity carry common features. These include: a scrutiny of language acquisition and usage, particularly in a multilingual context; a heightened awareness of the languages of colonisation and an accompanying search for a way to decolonise language and for a form of counter-hegemonic enunciation; the recognition that bi- or multi-lingualism is often an uneasy condition; an analysis of the arbitrary relationship between words and their referents as well as a preoccupation with the failure of translation as a faithful process; an analysis of language's role in the creation of imagined communities; a nostalgia towards the 'mother tongue' and these writers' anxiety concerning their own extra-textual positionality and the question of how to write bi-lexically.

While any attempt to write the self, either fictively or auto/biographically, necessarily involves a confrontation with language as the tool of self expression, the most extended explorations of the negotiation between language and identity may be found in those texts with more overt auto/biographical emphases, particularly Meena Alexander's *Fault Lines*, Sara Suleri's *Meatless Days*, Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, Kyoko Mori's *The Dream of Water* and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee*. It is probably not insignificant that four of these five writers are also academics, and thus are possibly most closely engaged with theories of language and subjectivity. Certainly, Suleri's and Alexander's texts frequently traverse the generic divisions between fiction, theory and auto/biography; and this insistence on a more erudite mode of writing serves to emphasise the overall trend I detect towards a theoretically aware and sophisticated exposition of self in these works.

In Asian American letters we also find a preoccupation with linguistic identity in texts other than those texts which straddle the fiction/theory/auto/biography divide. Within the more nebulous category 'personal writings',² we may find several treatises regarding the texture of ethnic lexicons, as well as calls to take up arms against language as a form of cultural hegemony. Furthermore, many solely fictional renditions of and by Asian American women likewise bear anxious traces of the struggle with the vagaries and snares of language. The treacherous path through new linguistic woodlands repeatedly constitutes a major dimension in fictional texts, such as the novels of Amy Tan and Bharati Mukherjee. The little red riding-hoods in these texts are either new ethnic arrivals wrestling with American English, or Asian American daughters negotiating the mysteries — and dangers — of an inherited mother tongue. Indeed, many texts, such as Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, chart language's part in intergenerational conflicts, whereby patterns of filiality may be disrupted by either the non-presence of a common language, or the interposition of a monoglossia. It seems that the question of how to represent, recover and speak both the mother tongue(s) and adoptive tongue(s) confronts many multilingual writers attempting to put pen to paper.

My discussion in this chapter will deal in turn with each of the concerns outlined above, and will also be broadly bifurcated between language's dual function as a vehicle of communication and as a symbol of ethnic and cultural identity. My first three sections, *Language, Culture and the Polity*, *The Languages of Borderlands* and *Translation*, address both functions, as does my section entitled *Nomenclature. Symbolic Ethnicities* deals with the exchange between language and ethnic identity, and my final section, *Writing Polyglottic*, asks how the Asian American woman writer might develop counter-hegemonic strategies to the domination of language, as well as the ways in which she represents linguistic plurality and polyglottism in her work without patronising and stereotyping that language, whilst simultaneously retaining a predominantly monolingual readership.

Language, Culture and the Polity

Language and speech are inherently political acts. New ethnic presences in the United States swiftly learn that English is the language of economic advancement, as Ralph in Gish Jen's *Typical American* realises: 'Talking wrong, he might as well have been a barbarian invader, the town gates were closed'.³ This is a lesson learned, too, by Maxine

Hong Kingston, who, as a young girl, finds that the language of classroom achievement is also English, as she tells her mother: 'The only reason I flunked kindergarten was because you couldn't teach me English'.⁴ The dominance of English as the language of power in the United States resides in its position as the official, public language of the polity. As Jeff Spinner asserts, those unable to speak the public language will constantly find themselves at a political, economic and social disadvantage: 'States must use some language in which to conduct their official business ... When a language (or languages) is picked to be the official language of a state, those whose first language is different from the official language will be at a disadvantage'.⁵

This is a lesson clearly learned by Ralph in *Typical American*. Published in 1992, Jen's novel is both a comedy and a parody of a Chinese American family's struggle to realise the American dream. The central male character, 'Ralph', alias Y. F. Chang, comes to the United States to become an engineer, striving first to become a tenured academic and later a successful businessman. His introduction to the world of employment and business leads him to regard English as a source of power. Although he becomes only partly fluent in English, English words assume a quasi-magical potency for him. In an ironic scene, we witness him surrounding himself with American words as mantras, in whose power he believes, despite his incomprehension of the words themselves: '... he ripped his soft, grey desk blotter in half and wrote in large red letters, ACTUALIZE. What exactly did that mean, again?'⁶ Ralph's recognition that English is the language of success leads him to ensure that for his children, Mona and Callie, English is their first language: 'When Callie turned three they had decided that Mona and Callie would learn English first, and then Chinese. [...] Callie had seemed confused by "outside people" sometimes understanding her and sometimes not'.⁷ Jen highlights the split that Spinner discusses between public and private, official and non-official languages. It is precisely the presence of *outside people*, speaking another language, that problematises the retention of the mother tongue for ethnic groups.

Benedict Anderson's argument about the impact of the advent of printing on language communities will serve to illustrate the point. In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson suggests that the arrival of the printing press engendered the creation of a large speech community, a group of possibly disparate people united by their ability to speak — and read — a common language. This allowed a large group to think of themselves as a community, connected by speech.⁸ In the United States it is English that

serves as the connective element, thus rendering the polity a linguistic in-group, whilst simultaneously alienating those unable to participate in the public speech act. This situation exerts pressure upon private languages and the ethnic groups who speak them. As Spinner notes: 'For a language to thrive it needs a public space that includes the institutions of modern life'.⁹ Likewise, those individuals not conversant with English are constrained to make a language shift to English. Under such circumstances, a child raised in a bi-lingual environment will find herself constantly confused, as Callie does, by the presence of 'outside people'. Such linguistic ambiguity and the accompanying turmoil it produces in the growing child, is repeatedly represented in Asian American women's writing. Language, for example, becomes one of the 'Telling Differences' in Debra Kang Dean's personal essay about her childhood of the same name. Echoing Anderson's argument, Dean marks the most telling difference between her and the 'outside people' by the absence of her lexicon from the public arena of print:

... I was surrounded by models of standard English, in textbooks and through the example of my teachers, on TV, on the radio, in the newspapers and in the few books in our house ... I did listen to the language people spoke. I did notice the easy singsong quality of our speech and the droning speech of the newscasters. Though I was not bookish, I did notice that the language we spoke was an invisible language, for I never saw it in print.¹⁰

Dean's dawning realisation of her linguistic dispossession stems from her engagement with the institutions and structures of the outside world. Language for Dean becomes the primary marker of the boundary between her immediate family group and the 'context of the larger American world'.¹¹ At the point at which Dean's own language becomes a public mark of her identity, in such acute contrast to her public linguistic environment, she initiates the process of rejection of that linguistic identity and its accompanying economic and social disadvantages:

... even people who spoke only pidgin English called it poor English ... and as they entered the public sphere, the judgement cast on their language in relation to Standard English ... reflected their condition. [...] Accepting that implicit judgement because I didn't know how to separate judgements about my

language from myself, at the age of eight I began to correct the bad English. I spoke — and my bad self — with no more guidance than what I heard on TV.¹²

In *The Woman Warrior*, Maxine Hong Kingston, too, as a young girl, discovers that alteration of her language offers her a means of passing into the majority. Kingston undergoes a more acute linguistic catharsis than the character Ralph Chang or Debra Kang Dean. Her entry into a public linguistic sphere literally renders her mute: ‘When I went to kindergarten and had to speak English for the first time, I became silent. A dumbness — a shame — still cracks my voice in two’.¹³ For Kingston, like Dean, the cathartic moment results from the first collision of differing linguistic repertoires: her own, ‘our language of intimacy’ as Amy Tan calls it,¹⁴ and the public demand for English competency. Kingston and Dean are not alone. Two crucial images from Kingston’s statement, those of the cracking of the voice, and the shame associated with public glossal failure, litter Asian American women’s writing. Meena Alexander’s extended discussion of the topic in her chapter ‘Language and Shame’ in her memoir *Fault Lines* is one such example, to which I shall allude in greater detail later. The title of Alexander’s memoir, *Fault Lines*, likewise stresses this theme. Alexander, like Kingston, is silenced in the classroom by the shame of her language inefficacy: ‘for almost a whole year in class I was dumb’.¹⁵ Like Kingston, too, her initiation into this new language is something that she, too, finally accomplishes alone, in secret: ‘I used to hide out to write ... this enforced privacy ... added an aura of something illicit, shameful’.¹⁶ Kingston and Alexander both retire inwards into a private space and then finally re-emerge into a public arena in order to unveil their glossal accomplishments, as Kingston’s proud pronouncement to her mother indicates: ‘I don’t need anyone to pronounce English words for me. I can figure them out to myself’.¹⁷ Images of splintered voices also abound. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s complex text about her experiences as a Korean immigrant in America, *Dictee*, for example, is populated with images of a ‘Cracked tongue’ and a ‘Broken tongue’.¹⁸ Kingston’s own representation of her voice as ‘cracked’ indicates her recognition that English as the public language of achievement is the yardstick against which her own speech is measured. Amy Tan elsewhere indicates her own unease with such judgements, in relation to her mother’s language: ‘I have described it to people as “broken” or “fractured” English ... it has

always bothered me that I can think of no other way to describe it than “broken,” as if it were damaged and needed to be fixed’.¹⁹

Both Kingston’s and Alexander’s representations of their fractured tongues do not gesture solely to their personal levels of linguistic accomplishment. Both writers are acutely aware of the pitfalls and traps concealed in the languages that they speak. For Kingston, any effort at self representation is thwarted by her unease with, and inability to understand, the personal pronoun in both languages. Kingston has grown up being forced to contend with the semantic derogation of women whereby her identity within language locates her as ‘slave’. She writes: ‘There is a Chinese word for the female *I* — which is “slave”. Break the women with their own tongues!’²⁰ Here, the reverberant leitmotif of splintering is also deployed by Kingston to indicate her semantic derogation within an adverse lexical system. In addition to the strain of self-expression within such a hostile linguistic economy, Kingston finds herself unable to use the American personal pronoun as well. She notes: ‘I could not understand “I”. The Chinese “I” has seven strokes, intimacies. How could the American “I”, assuredly wearing a hat like the Chinese, have only three strokes, the middle straight?’²¹ The Chinese female ‘I’ may mean ‘slave’, but the American ‘I’ seems so individual by comparison that Kingston finds herself unable to pronounce it.

This simultaneous discomfort with all the lexicons available is not expressed only by Kingston. In an extended and elegant discussion of her bi-lingualism in her memoir *Meatless Days* about her experiences as a child in Pakistan and as an adult in America, Sara Suleri asserts the impossibility of a comfortable relationship with multilingualism, precisely because, as Kingston learned, one linguistic economy constantly works to undermine the other. I quote Suleri at length:

... to know a couple of different languages is merely a matter of demonstrating the pangs of intimacy that beset our mouths each time we speak. Coming second to me, Urdu opens in my mind a passageway between the sea of possibility and what I cannot say in English: when those waters part, they seem to promise some solidity of surface, but then like speech they glide away to reconfirm the brigandry of utterance. So snatches of discourse heard in the streets seem fraught with robbery, a low-income level making each voice belligerently protest, ‘I need, I need, a different speech!’ Speaking two languages may seem a relative

affluence, but more often it entails the problems of maintaining a second establishment even though your body can be in only one place at a time.²²

Suleri's acknowledgement of both the brigandry of language and her desire for a different speech echo Kingston's own dissatisfaction with the linguistic tools available to her. It is no accident that Suleri deploys geographical metaphors in which to communicate her sense of the problems of multilingualism, because those very tensions are themselves the product of geopolitical phenomena, namely colonialism and its aftermath. For Kingston to some extent, but more so for Suleri and for Meena Alexander too, language functions as a trope for the diaspora condition. For all three, but again predominantly for Suleri and Alexander, a scrutiny of their linguistic circumstances provides a vocabulary in which to offer a critique of colonialism. These two South Asian American writers must face colonialism as a defining aspect of their own existences: their auto/biographical texts deal with the turmoil of post-colonial India and Pakistan respectively, as well as their own trajectories as post-colonial presences in both Britain and the United States. Due to its predominance in the definition of their subjectivities, India features as a primary focus in both Alexander's and Suleri's texts. This geopolitical multi-positionality is reflected in their language: both speak — and discuss — a range of Indian languages as well as English. For both writers, language becomes the very totem of their alterity and subjection as postcolonial subjects, in both India and the United States. Alexander writes that once in America: 'I had to rely wholly on the language I had learnt with such pain, to carry me through the invisible barbed wire of a burden I had not chosen ... I realized the forked power in the tongue I had acquired: English alienated me from what I was born to; it was also the language of intimacy'.²³ The burden of English as the language of colonialism produces the convolved effects of opening doors for Alexander as the language of advancement but also as the language of subjection alienates her from other linguistic and cultural sites. Suleri depicts a similar experience for her mother: 'My mother was ... a guest in her own name, living in a resistant culture that would not tell us its rules'.²⁴ Images of dispossession and homelessness like the one deployed by Suleri here proliferate in these texts to communicate lexical vagrancy. Suleri remarks, for example, of her relationship with Urdu, which is her second language: 'Urdu like a reprimand disturbs my sense of habitation: "Do you ever think you lived on the inside of a space" it tells me with some

scorn'.²⁵ Or Alexander's presentation of her own position always on the outskirts of language: '... I had to learn English ... Now it was not just one language spoken among many, it was the most important and I was an outsider confronting it'.²⁶ The constantly thwarted desire to simultaneously possess and inhabit language, expressed by these writers, results in the search for a project of lexical decolonisation: 'There is a violence in the very language, American English, that we have to face, even as we work to make it ours, decolonize it so that it will express the truth of bodies beaten and banned'.²⁷

The forked tongue of English, but also of Hindi, Chinese, Malayam and Urdu for Kingston, Alexander and Suleri, accentuate the political burdens of language and the urgency of turning those tongues to the purposes of decolonisation. The damage wreaked upon both individuals and ethnic groups by repressive political situations, and language's function in repressive enterprises is, however, most crucially expressed in those texts charting the subjection of Korea to a series of repressive social and political regimes. The Japanese annexation of Korea led to a highly repressive regime, in which the Korean people were forbidden to speak their mother tongue, and each Korean was forced to adopt a Japanese name. This was in addition to the human rights atrocities and the economic sanctions imposed upon the Korean people. The texts which tell this story are Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee*, Ronyoung Kim's *Clay Walls* and Nora Cobb Keller's short piece, 'Mother Tongue'. All offer extensive critiques of the subjugative regime imposed upon Korea by Japan, and, to a lesser extent, with America's collusion in the Japanese control. They also engage with the regulation and control of language, primarily but not only with Japanese, but especially in *Dictee*, also with French and English as colonial-lexical presences in Korea's history. These three texts, like *Fault Lines* and *Meatless Days*, focus equally and sometimes more on the 'mother' country as well as upon the United States, because that location is equally, if not more, the site of defining moments in the writers' own histories.

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee* is a highly complex, multi-generic as well as multilingual exploration of her Korean identity, in Korea as a child and in America as an adult. The title, *Dictee*, indicates Cha's primary concern with the processes of language acquisition, usage and control, and its role in realising political agendas. In fact, Cha's exegesis of her identity is a history of the linguistic subjection of the Korean people, including her mother, and also of her experience of the linguistic opacity of various instruments of the United States polity, including American naturalisation oaths. Cha

offers in turn a critique of the imposed languages of Japanese, French and English. The text opens with a dictation exercise in French, then English. This translative opening illustrates Cha's ongoing project of denaturalising language in order to expose the submerged ideological agendas: the punctuation is rendered literally: 'Open paragraph It was the first day period'.²⁸ Then follows a section headed 'Disease', which continues to introduce Cha's approach. A 'Disease' is a professional woman reciter, but here, perhaps reinforced by the linguistic similarity of her title to 'dis-use', the Disease will only 'mimic the speaking',²⁹ rather than faithfully recite. Having introduced her enterprise of the irreverent scrutiny of language, Cha returns to French, with another dictation exercise. The dual meaning of 'dictate' offers ironic resonances here, highlighting the learning process of the French language, one of the languages of colonialism in Korea, reflecting French Catholic involvement in the country. An adulterated, flawed form of the Catholic catechism follows, continuing the references to Catholicism in Korea, but also extending the interrogation of language as an apparatus of control. The Korean subject's recital of the catechism includes: '*God made me. To conspire in God's tongue ... Into Their Tongue*'.³⁰ This example shows that for the Korean subject continually forced to bend to the wills of others, the forces of control collapse together, becoming a single, repressive presence. In this opening section, Cha has searched through the languages of her history in order to find one which will express her experience, turning first to French, then English. Rejecting both, Cha moves on to tell the story of Japanese occupation in the 'Clio History' and 'Calliope Epic Poetry' sections. She heralds this with untranslated Korean Chinese calligraphic characters. The stark juxtaposition of the calligraphy alongside the narrative of occupation is one way in which Cha posits Korean language as a refuge from the ravages of occupation, as well as possibly indicating a gesture of resistance. It is in these two sections that Cha indicts the suppression of self and nation through language most forcefully. She describes her mother's linguistic subjection at the hands of the Japanese:

Still, you speak the tongue the mandatory language like the others. It is not your own. [...] You are Bi-lingual. You are Tri-lingual. The tongue that is forbidden is your own mother tongue. You speak in the dark. In the secret. The one that is yours. Your own. You speak very softly, you speak in a whisper. In the dark, in secret. Mother tongue is your refuge. It is being home. Being who you are.³¹

Cha later indicts Japanese control even more forcefully: 'Japan has become the sign. The alphabet. The vocabulary'.³² Like Sara Suleri and Meena Alexander, Cha uses the image of a lost home in which to describe the loss or suppression of the mother tongue. Her mother's linguistic subterfuge is emphasised too, however, by the repetition of the words 'dark' and 'secret',³³ so that concomitant with her denunciation of Japanese linguistic sanction is her indication of resistance. Cha uses a halting, almost hesitant style to show the effects of repressive linguistic terrorism. And like Suleri and Alexander, she also uses the metaphor of fragmentation to illustrate the state of being broken because speaking broken, and vice versa: 'Being broken. Speaking broken. Saying broken. Talk broken. Say broken. Broken speech. Pidgon tongue. Broken word. Before speak'.³⁴ In fact, Cha's experimental structural method allows her a further-reaching development of the fracturing metaphor than Kingston, Suleri or Alexander. The text itself, whilst always fragmentary, begins to completely disintegrate. As a result, any attempt at continuous reading necessitates reading only the left-hand pages first, followed by the right-hand pages. [SEE APPENDIX I]. Thus, formal disintegration mirrors the 'broken speech' of the narrator/disease, reiterating the imperative to disrupt the logic of speech.

The text oscillates between demands for speech, and exhortations to silence. In this respect, *Dictee* is very similar to *The Woman Warrior*, another text which makes extended use of a speech/silence dichotomy.³⁵ In *Dictee*, the narrator/disease *may* speak, but only the appropriate language, so that the mother tongue is forced underground, becoming a 'Dead tongue. From disuse'.³⁶ And she is always judged on her language, as this description of the American naturalisation process shows: 'They ask you identity. They comment upon your inability or ability to speak. Whether you are telling the truth or not about your nationality ... They say you look other than you say. As if you didn't know who you were. You say who you are but you begin to doubt'.³⁷ Cha's description of this interrogation process shows how pressure exerted upon her speech begins to erode her sense of self: despite verbal assertions of selfhood and self-knowledge, pressure upon those statements begins to erode that sense of one's own subjectivity.

The spotlight that *Dictee* shines upon the perils of language and linguistic sanctions is relentless. The text constantly stresses the censorship of language: the rules of grammar, the penalties for inappropriate speech, oaths, the strictures of translation. Cha is clearly writing against lexical sanction in every context: 'Not only for you but for all. All of you who are one, who by law tongue tied forbidden of tongue'.³⁸ Yet *Dictee*

is highly arduous, sometimes even impenetrable to read. Whilst producing a sense of linguistic alienation in the reader is almost certainly Cha's intention, it does at times mask — even preclude — her nationalist purpose of condemning Japanese occupation in Korea. An uninformed reader may well find the political message of *Dictee* too submerged. Only at one point, a quoted letter from Korea Americans in Hawaii to President Roosevelt protesting American involvement in Korea, does she offer clear and extended historical background.

Although perhaps less potent than *Dictee*, Ronyoung Kim's *Clay Walls* also deals with the plight of Korean Americans and the Japanese occupation of Korea. It tells the story of a family of early Korean immigrants to Los Angeles in the decade preceding the Second World War, and the story of their children's experiences growing up in the United States. The narrative charts the family's struggles against racism in America, as well as tracking the concurrent political instability in Korea. One of the central characters, Haesu, travels with her family back to Korea to discover a country stifled by Japanese influence. Haesu's education of the extent of her country's submission comes through her involvement with the captain of the ship upon which she travels to Korea. At first, she and her children believe him to be Japanese, but then discover their error: 'Faye whispered. "He's a *wae nom*, isn't he?" using the derogatory term for 'Japanese' reserved for Korean ears. The captain paused at the door. "No." He hesitated before adding, "I am Korean." Haesu could hardly hear him, he spoke so softly, but the words were distinctly in her language'.³⁹ The penalties for speaking Korean in Korea were severe, and Captain Yamamoto's revelation of his Korean identity, by using his mother tongue, has dire consequences for both him and Haesu. This, and subsequent exchanges — are overheard by someone on the ship, and result in Captain Yamamoto's detainment. Haesu herself is questioned before being told to return to America. Kim's use of language, like Cha, to indicate the suffering of the Korean people also leads her to often depict the language as hidden, as this example shows: 'The instructions were printed on the outside of the envelope. Inside, written in Korean and unsigned, was a note'.⁴⁰ Like Cha, too, Kim is aware of the duplicity of language and its role in the annexation of Korea. Haesu's mother says in a telling moment: "In my lifetime I have heard the promises of trust from China and Japan while they helped themselves to our land. Germans and Frenchmen were on our soil digging out our gold. Americans looked the other way when we asked for recognition, and Russia considered us her legitimate spoil

of war”⁴¹ As for Cha, the very words which carry the story of this repression prove stifling for Haesu: ‘The words closed in on Haesu. Her chest ached as she struggled to contain the sound that fought to be released. A silent scream’.⁴²

Nora Cobb Keller’s short piece, ‘Mother Tongue’, describes a young girl’s agony as an enforced prostitute, or ‘comfort woman’ for the Japanese army in Korea. Again, her subjection at the hands of the Japanese is mapped mainly through their control of her speech: ‘The Jungan Lanfu camps trained the women only what they needed to know in order to service the soldiers. Other than that, we were not expected to understand, and were forbidden to speak, any language at all’.⁴³ The penalties for forbidden speech are most sharply brought home in this piece, where the prostitute Akiko, who will not stop talking, is ‘skewered from her vagina to her mouth, like a pig ready for roasting. A lesson, they told the rest of us, warning us into silence’.⁴⁴

Each of the texts examined thus far emphasise to different degrees that speech is an ethnic act, laden with ideological and political significance. For Kingston, Suleri, Alexander, Cha, Kim and Keller, personal experience of the ravages of language and the psychological effects of silencing in relation to both their ancestral country and America render them potent critics of the deployment of language in coercive service to the polity and its institutions. In fact, these writers’ cross-cultural positioning enables them to expose America’s continuing collusion in colonialism. For Alexander, Kingston and Suleri, this may be their continued subjection to the vagaries of racism in the United States. Alexander, for example, describes several racist attacks, both verbal and physical, in America. For the Korean American writers, Cha, Kim and Keller, this is America’s collusion in the annexation of Korea. Furthermore, each writer shows her, or her protagonist’s, additional displacement from language as a woman. For Kingston, her linguistic pigeon-holing as a ‘slave’ in Chinese, as well as her negotiation of repressive Chinese idioms such as ‘Girls are maggots in the rice’, constitutes as much of a contortion into silence as the perils and mysteries of American culture. Likewise, Alexander’s recognition of the ‘canonical burden of British English’ renders ‘English in India a no man’s land ... No woman’s either’.⁴⁵ For Theresa Cha, the Korean woman’s subjection at the hands of the Japanese is juxtaposed with her subjection at the hands of her husband, so that Cha insists that it is also patriarchal culture who stifles her: ‘She yields space and in her speech, the same. Hardly speaks. Hardly at all. The slowness of her speech when she does. He tears her speech’.⁴⁶

Anzaldúa's statement with which I opened this chapter, that until she is able to feel pride in her language she is unable to feel pride in herself, indicates one way in which Asian American women writers seek to overcome both a tradition of silencing and the forms of linguistic terrorism examined so far. This project is to rescue forms of ethnic speech from their derogation as aberrant versions of English, and for a way to legitimise ethnic lexicons.

The Language of Borderlands

In *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Gloria Anzaldúa describes the experience of being caught between two cultures. As a *mestiza* (a woman of mixed ancestry), living on the Texas-Mexico border, Anzaldúa's is an experience of inhabiting what she calls the 'Borderlands', which is the space between two cultures, two (or more) languages, two identities. Anzaldúa's project is the creation of a vocabulary in which to legitimise her language and her experience. She writes: '... for people who live in a country in which English is the reigning tongue but who are not Anglo ... what recourse is left to them but to create their own language? A language which they can connect their identity to?'⁴⁷ Anzaldúa's interest is in Chicana Spanish, and her work as a Chicana advocates a cross-ethnic alliance of women in the United States and beyond to the Americas. However, there is a connection between the way that Anzaldúa conceptualises linguistic identity and the ways in which Asian American women negotiate a linguistic identity as well. Asian American women, too, speak and seek to legitimise the language that Amy Tan calls 'their special language, half in broken English, half in their own Chinese dialect'.⁴⁸ The use and the legitimisation of the language of Borderlands is a form of ethnogenesis. There is an awareness in Asian American letters that the creation of Asian American identities involves the recognition of the existence of Asian American languages: not English, not Chinese, Hindi, Filipino, Japanese or Korean, but Hindi-, Chinese-, Japanese-, Filipino-, and Korean-English. Perhaps the most vociferous declaration of this need is from Chinese American playwright, Frank Chin. Chin's own work is a rage against racism and what he sees as the emasculation of the Asian American through cultural stereotyping. Chin blasts the expectation that ethnic subjects must learn English:

The assumption that ethnic minority writers think in, believe they should write in, or have ambitions toward writing beautiful, correct and well-punctuated English

is an expression of white supremacy. The universality of the belief that correct English is the only language of American truth has made language an instrument of cultural imperialism. [...] Yet, minority writers, specifically Asian American writers, are made to feel morally obligated to write in a language produced by an alien and hostile sensibility.⁴⁹

Chin's objection is precisely against the ethnocentrism of the dominance of English as the language of legitimacy in the United States. His description of the role of ideological state apparatuses in this situation echoes Benedict Anderson's: 'A state of dependency', he writes, 'is encouraged by the teaching of English and the publishing establishment'.⁵⁰ Chin's answer is, like Anzaldúa's, the validation of ethnic lexicons, and the site of this validation is textual. The task of the Asian American writer, he insists, is 'to legitimize the language style, and syntax of their people's experience'.⁵¹ Chin's enterprise may not just offer a method to legitimise ethnic language, as he intends, but it also offers a way to delegitimise English — and English speakers — as a *corps d'élite* in American culture and society. If language serves as a boundary between ethnic groups, then an erosion of that boundary damages the status of a privileged in-group. That is, the creation and validation of a particularly Asian American lexicon, residing as it does on the boundary between Anglo and Asian, English and the ethnic language, damages the notion of supremacy predicated upon the difference between those two ethnolinguistic groups. As B. B. Kheif puts it: 'If boundaries define belonging, if identity itself is anchored in boundaries, then a decreasing emphasis on, or a blurring of, boundaries, would be regarded as a threat to group existence'.⁵² Furthermore, the insistence upon a group identity not defined according to a dualistic paradigm, but instead asserting a new category altogether, fluidises and provisionalises the concept of ethnicity itself. This means that 'Asian American' identity, rather than being conceived as a composite of opposing identities (to think in crude dualisms such as East and West, or occidental and oriental, would be one example), is regarded as an altogether new political and cultural category. Similarly, an Asian American lexicon, whether it comprises Chinese, Japanese, Hindi, Korean or Pilipino as well as American English, would be asserted as a validated linguistic form in itself, rather than a flawed version of English.

However, the problem with Chin's formation is that 'Chin and his coeditors operate on the premise that a true Asian American sensibility is non-Christian,

nonfeminine and nonimmigrant'.⁵³ Chin's definition of Asian American, excluding as it does all female Asian American writers, as well as new ethnics in the United States, clearly problematises his project of linguistic legitimatisation. In effect, Chin's battle against racism leads him to create an equally exclusionary definition. The on-going argument over Frank Chin as the champion of Asian American manhood, and denouncer of Asian American writers is well documented, and need not be amplified here.⁵⁴ However, Chin's call for linguistic validation has been taken up, or at least, coincides with, the project of several Asian American women writers. Maxine Hong Kingston, herself no stranger to Frank Chin's denunciations, certainly in this case shares his views: 'When white demons said "You speak English very well," I muttered, "It's my language too"'.⁵⁵ Like Chin, too, Kingston condemns Anglo stereotypes of Asian American lexicons, as her spokesperson Wittman Ah Sing notes in *Tripmaster Monkey*: 'Peter Sellers, starting with the Ying Tong Goon Show and continuing ... and Warner Oland and Jerry Lewis and Lou Chaney are cutting off our balls linguistically. "Me no likee" ... They depict us with an inability to say "I". They've taken the "I" away from us ...'.⁵⁶ Kingston's perception of the relationship between linguistic repression and repression of the (assertion of) self in this example illustrates the connections between the validation of selfhood and a language in which to inscribe and affirm that validation. Her discussion of linguistic subjugation focuses upon the personal pronoun, as it did in *The Woman Warrior*.⁵⁷ Her insistence that subjectivity resides in language, articulated in both of these texts, underscores her — and others' — awareness of the necessity of linguistic reclamation/rehabilitation. It is no accident that Kingston uses the metaphor of castration in which to indict lexical stereotyping in *Tripmaster Monkey*. She has admitted that the central character, Wittman Ah Sing, bears more than a passing resemblance to Frank Chin.⁵⁸ By using him as the model for her mouthpiece in *Tripmaster Monkey*, Kingston effectively undermines the misogyny of Chin's own call for linguistic battle, and at the same time appropriates that project for Asian American women writers. In addition, the association between Sing and Chin enables Kingston to take a backswipe at those writers solely concerned with Asian American masculinity as well as to emphasise again that for Asian American women, language sets gender as well as ethnic traps.

Two ways in which Asian American women writers insist upon the validity of Borderlands lexicons are the valorising of code-switching as a sophisticated linguistic

skill and an insistence upon the importance of the 'mother tongue' in the formation of self. Code-switching is the ability to shift between available lingual forms according to the social situation; and choices may be made in relation to the function of the interaction or the formality of the situation. Codes are therefore associated with contexts: family, education, employment, and so on. Code-switching and code-mixing are characteristic of ethnic speech.⁵⁹ However, this speech is often denigrated as 'broken English', again gesturing to the assumption that flawless English usage should be the goal for ethnic speakers. In fact, as sociolinguist Janet Holmes makes clear, code-switching and code-mixing are highly refined activities: 'intra-sentential code-switching requires good control of both codes', she writes.⁶⁰ This is an insistence that is reflected in the work of Amy Tan, Maxine Hong Kingston and Bharati Mukherjee. Amy Tan, in particular, has continued to champion the cause of appreciating the complexities of her mother('s) tongue. In a recent essay, 'Mother Tongue', she elaborates this in detail. Tan's discussion of the 'language of intimacy',⁶¹ a language containing Chinese and American words, shows how this is characterised by code-switching. She asserts that this lexicon is 'vivid, direct, full of observation and imagery', and she pits this view against judgements of the same language as 'limited English'.⁶² Her awareness that she needs to use this language in order to write Chinese American experience: 'I began to write stories using all the Englishes I grew up with: the English I spoke to my mother ... the English she used with me, which for lack of a better term might be described as "broken"',⁶³ to represent what she describes as her mother's 'internal language ... neither an English nor a Chinese structure'⁶⁴ is her search for a 'mother tongue' which also validates her own experience.

This is likewise Kingston's endeavour. Her use of 'Chinese American' words in her writing is not just, as I later discuss, an attempt to 'write polyglottic', it is also an emphatic statement of the necessity of representing her and her family's experience in a sympathetic lexicon. Kingston's recognition of her inability to speak Chinese: 'I could not understand any of the Chinese dialects that the interviewer at China airlines tried on me',⁶⁵ and her description of her difficulty learning English: 'when I ... had to speak English for the first time, I became silent',⁶⁶ reinforces her portrayal of her fluency, nevertheless, in Chinese American. Words from this vocabulary litter the text, such as '*Forlaydee, chup-bo, trouble-bossu, day-offu*, Chinese-American words'.⁶⁷ Tan, too, writes partly in Chinese American. The most extended examples are in *The Joy Luck*

Club, where the mothers all speak this 'special language'.⁶⁸ Tan often puns on this, so Rose's mother condemns 'psyche-atricks',⁶⁹ and Lena's work is 'arty-tecky'.⁷⁰ In fact, Tan's Chinese American puns almost always centre upon the language of psychological sickness: 'psyche-atricks' is one example, Hulan's mis-description of Pearl's illness as 'multiple neurosis' in *The Kitchen God's Wife* is another,⁷¹ perhaps emphasising the misapprehension of borderlands language as flawed. Bharati Mukherjee, too, uses language to differentiate diaspora experience and subjectivity from a monocultural and monolingual situatedness. In *Wife*, for example, the central female character Dimple confronts her new life in America through the borderlands language spoken by the South Asian American she meets: 'He spoke in a fast and funny mixture of English and Bengali, and Dimple wondered if in a few months she and Amit too would speak that curious language'.⁷²

However, just as the language of Borderlands works as an affirmatory device, it may also function as a cause or a sign of intergenerational conflict. In 'Mother/Daughter Discourses', I explored the ways in which Tan and Kingston employ language as a trope of intergenerational conflict between mother and daughter. If language is the instrument of intersubjectivity, then the inability to speak — and understand — each other's speech will continue to block maternal-daughterly communication until a way is found past this obstruction. The mother tongue acts as a sign of difference between mother and daughter. I suggested that it was through the constitution of a matrilineal mode that this language barrier was overcome: the act of speaking and listening to one's mother is an affirmative move. Linguistically, this move is accomplished not only by a shift in attitude towards the mother tongue, but also through a change in language use itself.

Kingston, Tan's characters and Tan herself have all charted their sometime hostility towards the mother tongue, as well as their attempts to try to escape it. Frequently the site of repressive representation of women — as slaves, maggots and cowbirds for Kingston, and of demands for daughterly piety in Tan's texts, the daughters' moves to escape Chinese as the language of repression and to turn to English as the language of individualism run parallel to their attempts to free themselves from what they regard as stifling maternal influence. Partly this desire for disassociation from the mother tongue is due to the embarrassment at parental lack of accomplishment in English, as expressed by Tan in relation to her mother: 'I was ashamed of her English'.⁷³

For Kingston, too, her mother's lack of conversancy in English amplifies her humiliation at school: Kingston's own taciturnity causes her teachers to seek parental involvement, only to discover that 'my parents did not understand English'.⁷⁴ The daughter's hostility also results from the mother's attempts to press her language knowledge into service for the mother. Repeatedly, the daughter's humiliation is accentuated by her mother's insistence that she act as translator. As Kingston notes: 'You can't entrust your voice to the Chinese, either; they want to capture your voice for their own use. They want to fix up your tongue to speak for them. "How much less can you sell it for?" we have to say'.⁷⁵ Or Tan's similar experience on the telephone: 'When I was fifteen, she used to have me call people on the phone to pretend I was she in this guise, I was forced to ask for information or even to complain and yell at people who had been rude to her'.⁷⁶ But for both young girls, this maternal pressure paradoxically results in silencing or mangling their speech. Brave Orchid's instructions 'You just translate',⁷⁷ preclude Kingston from doing so effectively, so her speech becomes warped: "'My mothersezttagimmesomecandy," I said to the druggist'.⁷⁸ For Tan the result is that 'I was sitting there red faced and quiet'.⁷⁹

But gradually, the daughter moves away from regarding her mother and her language as negative, from assuming that 'because she expressed them imperfectly her thoughts were imperfect'.⁸⁰ This move is engendered by a recognition on the daughter's part that the mother's language is actually more similar to her own than she had realised. The mother tongue is not actually Chinese, rather the 'language of intimacy' or 'our special language' as it is described by Tan is a mixture of Chinese and American, and this is the language of maternal-daughterly communication. A recognition of this shared lexicon, and the decision to speak — and write — it that I discussed earlier, completes the move towards resolution between mother and daughter in Tan's and Kingston's writing, so that ending her text, Kingston is able to say, 'it translated well'.⁸¹ The gradual relinquishing of the original mother tongue in favour of the 'host' or adoptive tongue is the usual pattern for ethnic groups, according to Holmes: 'Typically, migrants are virtually monolingual in their mother tongue, the children are bi-lingual and their grandchildren are often monolingual in the language of the host country'.⁸² If language, as I suggested earlier, acts as a barrier between groups, then language differences within a family are bound to produce communicative difficulties, if not linguistic estrangement and conflict, as in Tan's and Kingston's examples. In *Japanese Ethnicity: The*

Persistence of Community, for example, Stephen Fugita and David O'Brien illustrate the ways that linguistic differences between *issei* (first generation immigrants) and *sansei* (third generation) damaged a sense of community: 'Although most Sansei grew up knowing their Japanese-speaking grandparents, they could not communicate with them; their parents discouraged the use of Japanese in the household lest they should be handicapped by language problems later in life'.⁸³ Thus, the awareness of economic disadvantages that accompany both the continued retention of the mother tongue and the use of borderlands tongues becomes a detrimental influence upon familial cohesion. The pivotal instance of Brave Orchid's incision of her daughter's frenum illustrates this: taken as a violatory as well as a violent gesture by her daughter, Brave Orchid was ostensibly seeking to ensure her daughter's verbal, and thus economic, fluency: 'Your tongue would be able to move in any language'.⁸⁴ The recognition on Brave Orchid's part that her daughter will need to be equipped with multilingual efficiency demonstrates her multicultural positionality: one language will not suffice. Similarly, it is the awareness of the linkages between economic advancement and linguistic aptitude that cause the mothers discussed to utilise their daughter's linguistic skills when interacting with the arenas of public life.

Language differences between family members often produce a whole series of translative difficulties for the daughter who finds herself oscillating between different linguistic economies. Caught in the chasm between often contradictory linguistic and cultural formations once more engenders problems for the Asian American daughter searching for a linguistic identikit.

Translation

Whilst all the writers and texts discussed thus far are united in their endorsement of linguistic hybridity, an examination of their differing approaches to the subject of translation reveals far more divergent tendencies. The works of many of the writers demonstrate their interest and investment in theories of language. This engagement may be broadly bifurcated into two branches of inquiry. A review of Amy Tan's work, including personal essays and interviews, continues to divulge her subscription to a Sapir-Whorfian view of language. In fact, the fantasy of a transparent language is attendant upon all of Tan's narratives. Other texts which appear to underwrite the

valency of a Sapir-Whorfian approach include Kyoko Mori's *The Dream of Water*, Fae Myenne Ng's *Bone* and Julie Shigekuni's *A Bridge Between Us*.

An alternative approach, headed by Maxine Hong Kingston, conversely articulates a suspicion of the mimetic capabilities of language and speaks to the failure of translation as an equational process, as well as the very process of translation as an instrument of cultural hegemony. Expositions of this conception include works by Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Sara Suleri, Meena Alexander and Joy Kogawa as well as Maxine Hong Kingston. Other writers, like Chuang Hua, resist categorisation as their exegeses vacillate between both views, often in contradictory ways.

Amy Tan's most overt alignment with Sapir-Whorfian notions of language is to be found in her essay 'The Language of Discretion'. She paraphrases: 'language shapes our thinking, channels us along certain patterns embedded in words, syntactic structures and intonation patterns', and quotes Sapir: 'human beings are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of their society'.⁸⁵ Accepting, therefore, a correlation between language and reality, Tan goes on to assert that no two languages are sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. Thus, she argues, 'something enormous is always lost in translation. Something insidious seeps into the gaps'.⁸⁶ Tan might be read here as betraying post-structuralist leanings towards the impossibility of translation as equivalent reproduction. However, Tan's purpose, it seems to me, is rather to focus upon and try to explain that lacuna between disparate lexicons. Tan's fiction works by exploiting both the humour and more serious misunderstandings which result from the gulf between Chinese and English. Her theoretical leanings seem to betray her desire to legitimise her own intratextual investment in this particular attitude towards language acquisition and usage. For example, *The Joy Luck Club* in particular plays upon 'social contexts failing in translation'.⁸⁷ Recurrently, skewed translations or the absence of equational concepts are held responsible for intergenerational misapprehensions. The most extended example is An-Mei Hsu and Rose Hsu's interchange concerning Rose's need (or not) of psychiatry. In the section of the text tellingly entitled 'American Translation', the conversation between Rose and her mother reveals the semantic differences between English and Chinese. Just as An-Mei cannot comprehend her daughter's need for psychiatry, so Rose finds herself unable to translate her mother's diagnosis of her ailment into English:

'A mother is best. A mother knows what is inside you,' she said above the singing voices. 'A psyche-atricks will only make you *hulihudu*, make you see *heimongmong*.'

Back home, I thought about what she had said. And it was true. Lately I had been feeling *hulihudu*. And everything around me seemed to be *heimongmong*. These were words I had never thought about in English terms. I suppose the closest in meaning would be 'confused' and 'dark fog'.

But really, the words mean much more than that. Maybe they can't be easily translated because they refer to a sensation that only Chinese people have.⁸⁸

Compared with Benjamin Whorf's statement that 'If asked to invent forms not already prefigured in the patternment of his language, the speaker is negative in the same manner as if asked to make fried eggs without eggs',⁸⁹ it is clear that Tan echoes the Sapir-Whorfian view that it is not just words, but concepts that fail in translation. Rose is unaware of feeling *hulihudu* and *heimongmong* because she is thinking in English, and there are no equivalent notions. Implicit in this approach is a faith in the capability of language to represent reality, and that language is able to wholly contain certain ideas. This constitutes a kind of cultural essentialism, however. Tan's interest is in constantly mystifying the mothers in her novels, *The Joy Luck Club* and *The Kitchen God's Wife*, and a further example of this is the character Kwan, the Chinese sister in Tan's most recent novel, *The Hundred Secret Senses*. She does this by mystifying and encoding Chinese language and culture, and therefore the enlistment of the Sapir-Whorf thesis, endorsing her assertion of different realities — because different languages — serves her purpose well. Although the Sapir-Whorf thesis has been widely discredited, Tan has continued to adopt this line even in her most recent work. In *The Hundred Secret Senses*, for example, Kwan, the Chinese sister, speaks in Chinese because it represents her reality: 'Kwan switches to Chinese. "I have to tell you this story in Mandarin. It's easier for me to translate this way. Because when this happened, I couldn't speak any English. Of course, I didn't speak Mandarin then only Hakka, and a little bit of Cantonese. But Mandarin lets me think like a Chinese person"'.⁹⁰ In a recent essay, too, Tan has tried to illustrate the ways in which she found that both languages that she speaks, Chinese and English, delimit her experience. She suggests that the influence of

her mother tongue affected her ability to speak in English. When presented with word analogies, Tan found herself unable to make the expected connections between words, because, for her, those linkages were not logical.⁹¹ This problem is also reflected in Kyoko Mori's autobiographical *The Dream of Water*. Published in 1995, this autobiographical text follows Mori's journey back to Japan, the land of her birth and her childhood, in a search for roots and an attempt to come to terms with her mother's suicide thirteen years previously. The Japan that she finds is both home and an unfamiliar place, in terms of culture, landscape as well as language. In Japan, Mori, like Tan, finds herself stranded between different forms of logic:

Because my thoughts involve too much feeling or intuition, not step-by-step logic, it's almost impossible for me to express them in Japanese, a language that encourages, even prizes, vagueness in referring to feelings. In Japanese, one discusses only what is logical and leaves the feelings unsaid, subtly ambiguously implied. [...] But even when I lived in Japan and was speaking Japanese every day, I could never think without referring back to feelings and intuitions. [...] It's no surprise that after thirteen years away, most of my immediate thoughts come to me in English, without proper translation.⁹²

Mori's multilingual positionality, both inside and outside two languages, both enables her to recognise the shortcomings of each and to find her own experience incompletely contained by one lingual system. Mori, like Tan, continually makes her reader aware of this residue outside of (one) language, as the following example demonstrates:

Kofuku means both 'happiness' and 'good fortune.' The Japanese concept of happiness is both unspecific and absolute. It doesn't allow for the gap between the way things turn out (good fortune) and the way one feels about them (happiness), or the way some things turn out well and others do not. You are either *kofuku* or not; there is no room for small dissatisfactions. This is not how I think of happiness or good fortune.⁹³

For both Mori and Tan, if language shapes our reality, then conversancy in two languages engenders different realities, sometimes conflicting, and thus, conflicting

identities within those realities. This is reflected in other texts such as Fae Myenne Ng's *Bone*, a novel, set in San Francisco's Chinatown, about two sisters, Leila's and Nina's, search for their identity as Chinese American daughters. This search involves a confrontation with different languages. Leila notes: 'I have a whole different vocabulary of feeling in English than in Chinese, and not everything can be translated'.⁹⁴ Another example of this can be seen in Chuang Hua's *Crossings*, a text about a Chinese immigrant family's crossing of cultural barriers: 'Dyadya spent the afternoon writing drafts but could not unknot his paralysis to translate and articulate his thoughts in words particularly as his thoughts were in Chinese and his words by necessity had to be in English'.⁹⁵ It seems that the proliferation of a Sapir-Whorfian view of language in Asian American texts might be explained by these writers' use of it as a textual trope for the between worlds condition.

This focus upon linguistic limits is reflected in the work of Theresa Cha and Maxine Hong Kingston, who share an insistence upon the failure of translation and a rejection of an equal correlation between languages. But for both these women, translation becomes a far more suspicious process. In both *Dictee* and *The Woman Warrior*, the female writers' search for a medium for self-articulation is constantly repulsed as her multi- or bi-lingualism stresses her alienation from both/all of her languages. As Nicole Ward Jouve notes: '... doing the splits geographically, linguistically, poses problems for identity'.⁹⁶ Just as each language 'tried on' is able only to partially confine the writing subject, so too is her identity only incompletely born and rendered by that tongue. A notable example is Kingston's suspension between personal pronouns in English and Chinese. The Chinese 'I', written one way is synonymous with 'slave', and has 'seven strokes, intricacies',⁹⁷ and it represents complications and linguistic repression for Kingston. And yet the American alternative, seeming to promise self-assurance, 'assuredly wearing a hat like the Chinese, has only three strokes, the middle so straight', is equally uncomfortable: 'I could not say "I"', thus paradoxically stunting the narrator's self-affirmatory utterance.⁹⁸ In *Dictee*, too, we see the narrator trying on different linguistic guises — those of French Catholicism, Korean, Chinese, Japanese and English, and yet none fit completely, especially those which are imposed, as is indicated by the lack of fluency, halting speech and incomplete syntax in each case. The speaking subject's continual estrangement from her tongue is blamed upon her

enforced multi-lingualism: 'I speak another tongue, a second tongue. This is how distant I am'.⁹⁹

Kingston and Cha share Tan's and Mori's awareness of transcription as a faulty process, but their emphasis underscores semantic slippage and deferral to a greater extent and posits a post-structuralist notion of the self-referentiality of a linguistic economy rather than a correspondence between a language and external reality. *The Woman Warrior* contains many interjections highlighting translative difficulties: 'How impolite ("untraditional" in Chinese) her children were!'¹⁰⁰ The mysteries of translation serve to illustrate both Kingston's complicated place among the tongues she speaks as well as the pervasiveness of semantic ambiguity:

So far I have the following translations for *ho* and *l* or *chi*: 'centipede', 'grub', 'bastard carp', 'chirping insect', 'jujube tree', 'pied wagtail', 'grain sieve', 'casket sacrifice', 'water lily', 'good frying', 'non-eater', 'dustpan-and-broom' (but that's a synonym for 'wife'). Or perhaps I've romanized it wrong and it is *Hao Chi Kuei*, which could mean they are calling us 'Good Foundation Ghosts'.¹⁰¹

Translation in *Dictée*, too, is a hit-and-miss process. Just as the disease will not faithfully interpret but will instead 'mimic ... the speaking',¹⁰² so the instructions to 'Traduire en français'¹⁰³ gesture towards a learner's (incomplete) command of the language and therefore the likelihood of flawed translation. In fact, the epigraph to *Dictée*, by Sappho, emphasises the yearning in all of these texts: 'May I write words more naked than flesh/stronger than bone, more resilient than/sinew, sensitive than nerve',¹⁰⁴ the constantly thwarted desire for a language in which the self may unproblematically reside, another ramification of the between worlds condition. Multiple linguistic situatedness allows these writers a greater insight into the shortcomings of language(s). It also engenders, for Cha and Kingston, an increased awareness of the opacity of language and the ways in which this opacity may serve to mask invidious ideological agendas. Especially in *Dictée*, 'translation is both an apparatus of cultural domination — the names of Korean subjects are forcibly translated into Japanese under Japanese colonialism as well as the means by which the dictation is adulterated, resisted'.¹⁰⁵

If translation serves as an indication of linguistic accomplishment — or not — as is suggested in *Dictee*, then it plays a crucial part in linguistic combat on both macro- and micro-cosmic levels. *Dictee* stresses the role of translation as a dynamic of cultural hegemony. On a micro level, the failure of translation — or to translate — often loses battles for Asian American daughters. In *Bone*, the protagonist Leila notes that she ‘can’t win an argument in Chinese’, precisely because of her own translation difficulties in contrast to her parents’ fluency: ‘What could I say? Using Chinese was my undoing. She has a world of words that were beyond me’.¹⁰⁶ In *The Dream of Water*, too, Mori finds her linguistic abilities inadequate to defend herself: ‘*Wait a minute*, I want to say ... (b)ut I am stuck. I have never learned this kind of adult talk in Japanese. I don’t know how to be indirect about sensitive subjects and still get my points across’.¹⁰⁷ Just as the inability to speak the public, official tongue places the Asian American woman at a disadvantage, so too does the lack of fluency in the reigning tongue in a private arena, as the above examples show. Thus, the Asian language may become the dominant tongue in a different context, as this excerpt from Tan’s *The Hundred Secret Senses* shows: ‘We’ve been in China less than eight hours, and already she’s taking control of my life. We’re on her terrain, and we have to go by her rules, speak her language’.¹⁰⁸

The effects of translation are not wholly negative, however. There are many cases where the writer or a character exploits the liberatory potential in translation. In one humorous case, Lena St. Clair in *The Joy Luck Club*, is swift to exploit the possibilities she discovers when forced to translate for her mother: ‘I often lied when I had to translate for her, the endless forms, instructions, notices from school, telephone calls. [...] When the school sent a notice home about a polio vaccination, I told her the time and place, and added that all students were now required to use metal lunch boxes, since they had discovered old paper bags can carry polio germs’.¹⁰⁹ For the woman writer, translation can offer the possibilities of revision, with the accompanying subversive effects. In *Dictee*, the ‘disease’ doesn’t translate faithfully, but inflects the telling to suit her own purposes, and this is the strategy adopted by several writers. In *The Woman Warrior*, Kingston revises many of the stories and myths she inherits through translation, with several subversive possibilities. Her translation of names and stories are often ways to escape repressive cultural positioning. For example, the singing poetess Ts’Ai Yen, is renamed in order to divorce her story from stifling traditional significations. In traditional versions of the tale, as David Leiwei Li notes, the singing

poetess's name is 'Wen Ji', meaning 'cultured slave'. Kingston has discarded this name by translating it phonetically, to 'Ts' Ai Yen', rather than semantically.¹¹⁰ This removes the semantic content of the word so that the signification 'cultured slave' is no longer present.

In addition, the resources of multi-lingualism may offer a choice of languages in which to represent one's experience. Meena Alexander, for example, discusses her inability to tell certain parts of her life story in English, whereas for Kingston and for the character Libby in *The Hundred Secret Senses*, Chinese is the language of dreams, 'of impossible stories'¹¹¹ and 'the language of our childhood ghosts',¹¹² whereas English is the preferred language of narration. Kingston's own mobilisation of her linguistic resources recognises the opportunities available to her through translation. The ability to translate, indicative as it is of fluency in (at least) two languages, is the mark of success, as is demonstrated by the young Kingston's understanding of 'normality' as the ability to translate: 'Their other children ... were normal and could translate'.¹¹³ In the same vein, the ending of her own recital in *The Woman Warrior* is crowned with linguistic success: 'It translated well'.¹¹⁴

Symbolic Ethnicities

Language, as I hope to have shown, functions as one of the strongest markers of public identity. As I discussed earlier, a change in language use may offer a method of passing into the majority. However, the distinctiveness of one's own ethnic lexicon is not always regarded as negative: the recognition of the strength of language-ethnicity linkages may lead to its maintenance in order to emphasise ethnic identity consciousness. In 'Language and the Mobilisation of Ethnic Identity', J. A. Ross discusses the importance of language as a fence marking ethnic boundaries and he stresses the subjective nature of ethnicity in relation to this: 'Ethnicity', he writes, 'results from a mobilisation around an inter-subjectively shared sense of peoplehood ... ethnicity, in this sense, is a subjective reality rather than an objective characteristic'.¹¹⁵ If this is the case, then, as I suggest above, the defining characteristic of ethnic identity must be maintained in order for that discrete identity to be preserved. And as I earlier indicated that such an erosion may serve the ethnic subject's purpose, likewise language maintenance may also uphold the preservation of a unique ethnic group. Thus, it is through cultural practices like religion, dress, cuisine, but most forcefully, language, that ethnicity is both continued and

stressed. Language, in this way, as Waters stresses in *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America*, may become part of a voluntary or symbolic ethnicity.¹¹⁶

Particularly for later generations, less immediately associated with the ancestral country, culture and language, an exploration of their identity may lead to a decision to go in search of their ancestral roots. This move is a predominant focus in Gish Jen's most recent novel *Mona in the Promised Land*, a comedic exploration of all the facets of ethnic identity, through the exploits of the Chang sisters, who live in upstate New York. The plot follows the central characters, Mona and Callie's individual search for ethnic identities. Mona's journey for ethnic roots goes hopelessly and hilariously awry and she decides to turn Jewish. This involves attending a synagogue, learning Jewish history, eating Jewish food, but most importantly, using Jewish — or Yiddish — words. Callie's own search leads her back to her Chinese roots. Her own emphasis of her ethnic inheritance predominately involves learning Chinese. However, Callie's language is unrecognisable as the *actual* language inherited and spoken by her parents. Although her parents attempt to comfort their daughter as she finds she cannot understand her parents by telling her that her speech is 'real Chinese', the alienation inherent in Callie's move is obvious to them: '... they sense that the language she's learning to speak is not their language at all'.¹¹⁷ The ironies of this are emphasised by Jen when Callie's friend tells her that she 'thinks its great for Callie to be in touch with your ancestry. *Forget your parents*, she says'. Callie responds: "But aren't my parents my ancestors?"¹¹⁸ Callie's symbolic ethnicity is further sent up by Jen when she actually surpasses her parents in Chineseness: Callie has turned

so Chinese that Ralph and Helen think there is something wrong with her. Why does she wear those Chinese padded jackets, for example? They themselves now wear down parkas, much warmer. And cloth shoes! Even in China, they never wore cloth shoes, they always had nice imported leather. And why does she call herself Kailan? So much trouble to find her a nice English name, why does she have to call herself something no one can spell? She says she's proud to be Asian American, that's why she's using her Chinese name. (Her original name, she calls it).¹¹⁹

As this passage indicates, Callie's own symbolic ethnicity is no more 'authentic' than Mona's. Aimee Liu's novel *Face* describes a similar incident when the American-born character Tommy Wah changes his name to 'Tai'. The condemnation of this comes from his friend Henry:

Maibelle, you and I are more Chinese than Tommy. Dad was born in Shanghai, grew up there, Tommy's family's been here three, four generations. But look who's still locked into the ethnic heritage trip. [...] Disneyland and China are both based on fairy tales. It's like all those so-called Afro-Americans running around in dashikis with beads in their hair, expecting everybody to say hallelujah because they've suddenly found their roots.¹²⁰

Henry's criticism of Tai illustrates the point. The further estranged from the ancestral country, the more likely the ethnic subject is to desire a return to imagined ethnic roots. For this reason, it is often American born ethnics like Tommy and Callie who enact the move to emphasise their ethnicity, as Jing-Mei notes in *The Joy Luck Club*: 'It's even becoming fashionable for American-born Chinese to use their Chinese names'.¹²¹ In addition, Henry's use of the analogy of Disneyland emphasises that the symbolic ethnicity move is one of imagined ethnicity, not only because ethnicity is a 'subjective reality' or imagined collectivity, but because any search for ethnic authenticity is destined to fail: even Mona and Callie's Chinese-born parents, Ralph and Helen, did not wear cloth shoes in China.

The desire to emphasise ethnicity may not always be taken by the ethnic subject herself. In many cases, the decision is made by parents anxious to counteract their daughter's Americanisation. Several texts chart the protagonists' experiences of attending language school in order to learn the mother tongue. Maxine Hong Kingston (*The Woman Warrior*) and Jade Snow Wong (*Fifth Chinese Daughter*) describe their experiences of Chinese language school, Yoshiko Uchida (*Desert Exile*) and Monica Sone (*Nisei Daughter*) of Japanese language school, and Geeta Kothari ('Who are You?') of her own failure at Hindi language school. Kothari's experience illustrates the crucial role that language school played in the active ethnogenesis of American-born children, as well as the identity problems it posed: 'In the third grade, my parents discovered that after several years of after-school tutoring, I couldn't/wouldn't speak

Hindi. I had failed as an Indian. [...] At the base of it was a deep mistrust of my understanding of who I was and my connection to a group I didn't even share a language with'.¹²²

In addition, parents may use code-switching and code-mixing in order to remind their children of their ethnic identity. This is a strategy frequently seen in Tan's and Kingston's texts, where the mother often switches to Chinese in order to offer an implicit reminder to her daughter of her ethnicity. For example, when Waverly's mother in *The Joy Luck Club* talks to her about her maternal ancestry, she switches to Chinese.¹²³

Nomenclature

Naming, too, frequently becomes a site for the contestation of ethnic identity. In *Verbal Hygiene*, Deborah Cameron asserts that you are defined by your labels.¹²⁴ The recognition that identity is partly constituted in language has led to an insistence upon the power to self-name, as well as the rejection of inappropriate or repressive labelling. Nowhere is this impulse more evident than in ethnic quarters. A belief that 'changing language is a form of cultural intervention'¹²⁵ has spawned the renouncing of names like 'black' and 'oriental' in favour of self-appointed titles like 'African American' and 'Asian American', followed by an increasing insistence upon nomenclative accuracy which has produced constituent variations like 'Chinese American' and 'Korean American'. The appropriation and use of a term comprising 'American' 'pointedly appropriates the label *American* for the group',¹²⁶ and thus acts as a form of lexical annexation and legitimisation. It would, however, be easy to overestimate the liberatory potential of language change, and to understand lexical change as synonymous with social change. However, the view that societal/cultural ideologies reside in language strengthens the case for the reclamation/decolonisation of language. Even on a symbolic level, a label shift contributes to the project of amelioration because it symbolises the 'principle of parity among the various ethnic groups that make up the US population'.¹²⁷

Debates over the expediency of politically correct appellations, have raged in Asian American letters since the 1960s, especially in academic contexts. Lydia Minatoya's odyssey in search of her identity in *Talking to High Monks in the Snow* leads her to an Asian American women's conference in 1982 at Boston University, which is where she first encounters this debate: "Oriental is a name given to us by Europeans, it

connotes someplace mysterious and forever foreign. It is considered derogatory”¹²⁸. Emerging at the same cultural moment as the publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, the term ‘Asian American’ has increasingly come to replace other terms as the preferred label. Still, however, it was — and continues to be — recognised that ‘Asian American’ is itself a problematic term, conflating as it does disparate ethnic groups into one portmanteau term obscuring geopolitical differences. In fact ‘Asian American’ has predominately been used as a political category, creating a collective identity for activism, for example the creation of Asian American Studies programmes in universities. This has resulted in more geopolitically specific appellations like ‘Chinese-American’ and ‘Japanese-American’. Leading from this, in the early- and mid-eighties, some dissonant voices began to protest the presence of the hyphen connecting ‘Asian’ and ‘American’ or the constituent variations. The objection, that the presence of the hyphen compromises both sides, resulting in a conditional identity, was voiced by Maxine Hong Kingston in 1982: ‘I have been thinking we ought to leave out the hyphen ... the hyphen gives the word on either side equal weight ... which is impossible’.¹²⁹ Kingston’s solution is to dissolve the hyphen, so that ‘Chinese’, for example, becomes an adjective to ‘American’ as noun. The collapse of the hyphen is an indication of a more integrated cultural and ethnic identity. Kingston’s calls for these changes have echoed throughout hers’ and others’ work. In *Tripmaster Monkey*, Wittman Ah Sing asks: ‘Where’s our name that shows that we aren’t from anywhere but America?’¹³⁰ The exclusion of the hyphen is now standard practice. I recently attended a class on Asian American literature where the students were explicitly instructed not to use the hyphen.¹³¹

In actual fact, this aspect of the ‘political correctness’ debate is in some ways a re-run of arguments enacted many years earlier in feminist studies. Although arguments over appellations in Asian American letters may be traced back to the advent of Asian American Studies programmes in the 1960s and 1970s, the more popular and prevalent political correctness movement is largely a late-eighties, early-nineties phenomenon, and is certainly pre-dated by feminist preoccupations with language and labelling in the 1970s. It is, of course, obvious that those groups who have suffered as the result of persecutory labelling, like ethnic groups and women, would be at the forefront of a movement to reject those names. Kingston’s and others’ calls for linguistic change may be situated not just in the ethnic consciousness movements of the 1960s and 1970s, but

also alongside coterminous impulses in feminism. In particular, Dale Spender's *Man Made Language* and Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology* articulate the belief that because language is an instrument of patriarchy, it is necessary to reinvent language. Both Spender and Daly saw the possibilities for the emancipation of women through language: Daly through the creation of a feminist vocabulary, often recovering defunct meanings in order to re-imbue words like 'spinster' with positive connotations. Spender's work is of more pertinence here, as her thesis, although relying heavily on Sapir-Whorfian premises, proposes that because 'naming ... is not a random or neutral process',¹³² then 'those who have the power to name the world are in a position to influence reality'.¹³³ The potency of naming is iterated in many texts, even in those, like Kingston's, which do not appear to subscribe to a Sapir-Whorfian line of argument. In *The Woman Warrior*, people frequently embody the characteristics of their name: Brave Orchid is fearless enough to face ghosts alone; Moon Orchid descends into lunacy.¹³⁴ This adds potency to the view that labels affect our identity: we are defined by our names. Kingston's individual application of Chinese names may be seen to reflect Daly's and Spender's feminist endeavours to reclaim language. Fa Mu Lan and Ts'ai Yen are full names, and as Li notes, the act of giving full names is an 'act of veneration'.¹³⁵ Furthermore, given names in Chinese often signify the social status as well as the gender of the named, as Jade Snow Wong tells us in *Fifth Chinese Daughter*: 'reference to relatives by their correct titles placed them accurately on their side of the family tree and defined their sex and generation without further explanation'.¹³⁶ Kingston both uses and abuses this practice. The 'Orchid' that forms part of the four women's names (Brave Orchid, Moon Orchid, the narrator herself and Fa Mu Lan, whose name translates as 'Sylvan Orchid'), signifies femininity. However, as Li makes clear, 'Orchid' is a traditional Chinese name for women, whereas 'Brave', carrying as it does male/sun/warrior connotations, is an inauthentic Chinese name, and such opposites would not be placed together.¹³⁷ This deviation from traditional linguistic norms is quite deliberate, as it allows Kingston to reflect Brave Orchid's status as a warrior woman through her name: 'brave' signalling 'warrior', and 'orchid' woman, and therefore stressing her connection to Fa Mu Lan. The act of renaming thus re-empowers here (as it also does for Ts'ai Yen), and emphasises female connectedness. Because such revisions depend upon a knowledge of the prototext, the process of naming in *The Woman Warrior* is encoded, reflective of Kingston's insistence upon cultural specificity.

She writes: 'the audience of *The Woman Warrior* is very specific ... there are puns for Chinese speakers only, and I do not point them out for non-Chinese readers'.¹³⁸ The reversal of the power relationship here rests upon Kingston's creation of an alternative linguistic in-group as a means of validating ethnic lexicons. Another example of the validation of ethnic language may be found in *Tripmaster Monkey*. Kingston's latest novel tells the story of hip sixties poet, Wittman Ah Sing's trials and tribulations in San Francisco. The protagonist's name speaks to his identity as Chinese American. 'Wittman Ah Sing', a composite of Chinese and American names, bears traces of another American orator, Walt Whitman. Kingston's appropriation of the name serves to locate her text within an all-American tradition of oratory, whilst simultaneously ethnicising that tradition through the inclusion of her Chinese American text.

William Boelhower asserts the heightened importance of names in ethnic fiction: 'As narrative signs, names are virtual stories. [...] names-become-signs flutter about like ghosts'.¹³⁹ By means of renaming, Kingston seeks to seize that pervasiveness and use for her own ends. Namers, particularly of American appellations, are sourced as authoritative: 'The woman was the giver of American names, a powerful namer'.¹⁴⁰ And Lydia Minatoya notes: 'an unusual name can make them the subject of ridicule'.¹⁴¹ Kingston's project of renaming serves to partly reverse this process, as it does with the Orchid family name, although this is not the case for Minatoya, who finds that despite her Anglo name, she 'remained unalterably alien'.¹⁴²

The sense of linguistic dispossession through naming is expounded in several cases where the ethnic subject has been re-named, and given an Anglo name. Usually for immigration reasons, the name is often randomly chosen: Ralph in *Typical American* was named by a foreign student's office worker. In *The Joy Luck Club*, too, 'Betty St. Clair' was thus named by her husband-to-be upon her entry into the country. This process is sometimes referred to as the giving of 'paper names', where the subject's nomenclative identity resides on paper only. In a recent essay, the Asian American writer Lillian Ho Wan describes having a paper name, as she was told by her mother that her name was a 'name given to your father's father by someone — a clerk in French immigration'.¹⁴³ Her first name, too, was bestowed upon her by an Anglo nurse, and is inaccurate: 'The sound translated to English was wrong'.¹⁴⁴ Lillian Ho Wan's desire for a meaningful name rests upon her knowledge that her entire name has been created almost randomly, and thus reflects neither her identity nor her genealogy: 'I was certain

... I knew my true name still waited to be spoken. One day I would say the word, the sound, and it would fit completely'.¹⁴⁵

Likewise, namelessness erases identity. In *The Woman Warrior*, the no-name woman aunt has no subjectivity and even the story of how she lost her name is submerged, due to her namelessness. In Mukherjee's *Wife*, we are warned: 'to go nameless in New York is a terrible fate'.¹⁴⁶

Writing Polyglottic

In 'The Thieves of Language', Alicia Ostriker argues that women must become the 'thieves of language' and engage in a project of 'revisionist mythmaking' in order to overturn their subjugation.¹⁴⁷ This is one way in which the ethnic woman writer seeks to overturn her dual subjugation. Ostriker writes that 'revisionism in its simplest form consists of hit-and-run attacks on familiar images and the social and literary conventions supporting them'.¹⁴⁸ Kingston, especially, engages in this kind of mugging of her cultural inheritance: the myths of Fa Mu Lan and Ts'ai Yen, for example, have been altered to suit her own purposes.¹⁴⁹ Joy Kogawa, too, appropriates the traditional Japanese story of Momotaro for her own use in her novel, *Obasan*.¹⁵⁰ Many of the women writers I have discussed in this chapter are, in other ways, in Naomi Nakane's words, 'word warriors'.¹⁵¹ In addition to muggings upon myths, these writers attempt in different ways to invest ethnic speech with valency and thus to legitimise the languages of Borderlands by replicating and celebrating the code-switching and code-mixing of their characters. The incorporation of words particular to multiple lingual positioning such as Kingston's and Tan's Chinese American vocabularies add weight to this enterprise.

These women writers' awareness that language is central to their textual identity leads to an exploration of the ways in which they are able to use that language. Tan, for example, writes that 'language is the tool of my trade. And I use them all — all the Englishes I grew up with'.¹⁵² Thus, Tan calls up her bi-lexical resources to the operation of validating ethnic speech. For other women, such as Kingston and Alexander, once-silence has been rejected in favour of a more verbal mode of resistance to the hegemony of language, in the light of Kingston's recognition that 'if you don't talk, you can't have a personality'.¹⁵³

Coded language becomes a means of decolonising language. The privileging of ethnic speech, stories and associations in many texts, such as *Dictee* and *The Woman*

Warrior, is one example. In *Dictée*, textual ellipsis, hedging and narratorial hesitancy are also strategems of resistance. Many of these texts favour polyvocality, privileging different and diverse voices in the text. A suspicion of the ostensible transparency of language masking opacity is cited; for example, Aunt Emily's statement that 'with language like that you can disguise any crime',¹⁵⁴ in *Obasan*, or Kingston's wariness of the laws defining the lives of Chinese Americans in *China Men*. The use of coded language in particular, but also other approaches, accord the woman writer a unique position of authority in her text: she has the power to guide the reader — or not — through her maze of ethnic associations and lexicons. Thus, the writer's role is partly that of glossarist: for the uninformed reader, she acts as a translator/'disease' of the ethnic speech in the text. Once more, this places the Anglo reader in a subordinate position in relation to ethnic speech.

In various ways, multilingualism, whilst recognised as the source of many problems, is more often sourced as positive and a synergistic vision of multilingualism is favoured. There does remain, however, the question of how the ethnic woman writer is to 'write polyglottic' in her text, which is written for a predominantly monolingual readership under the strictures of publishing. The solution is most often the use of italicised interjections in one of the mother tongues. To 'write like an ethnic', Asian American essayist Carol Roh Spaulding suggests, is to use 'italicized language terms sprinkled throughout'.¹⁵⁵ By mirroring borderlands speech through this method, the ethnic woman writer is able to represent both her speech and her enterprise of linguistic reformation, in a lexicon that is her own.

Notes

¹ Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1987), p.59.

² 'Personal writings' are a growing area in Asian American studies. See, for example, Garrett Hongo's edited collection, *Under Western Eyes: Personal Essays from Asian America* (New York: Anchor, 1995), or the collection edited by Asian Women United of California, *Making Waves: An Anthology of Writings by and about Asian-American Women* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991).

³ Gish Jen, *Typical American* (London: Plume, 1992), p.34.

⁴ Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* (London: Picador, 1977), p.180.

⁵ Jeff Spinner, *The Boundaries of Citizenship: Race, Ethnicity and Nationality in the Liberal State* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), p.145.

⁶ *Typical American*, p.113.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.128.

- ⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).
- ⁹ *The Boundaries of Citizenship*, p.149.
- ¹⁰ Deborah Kang Dean, 'Telling Differences' in *Under Western Eyes*, p.60.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ *The Woman Warrior*, p.148.
- ¹⁴ Amy Tan, 'Mother Tongue', in *Under Western Eyes*, p.315.
- ¹⁵ Meena Alexander, *Fault Lines: A Memoir* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1993), p.113.
- ¹⁶ Ibid., p.113.
- ¹⁷ *The Woman Warrior*, p.180.
- ¹⁸ Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictee* (Berkeley: Third Woman Press, 1995), p.75; p.158.
- ¹⁹ 'Mother Tongue', pp.316-7.
- ²⁰ *The Woman Warrior*, p.49.
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² Sara Suleri, *Meatless Days* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p.177.
- ²³ *Fault Lines*, p.116.
- ²⁴ *Meatless Days*, p.163.
- ²⁵ Ibid., p.177.
- ²⁶ *Fault Lines*, p.111.
- ²⁷ Ibid., p.199.
- ²⁸ *Dictee*, p.1.
- ²⁹ Ibid., p.3.
- ³⁰ Ibid., p.17.
- ³¹ Ibid., p.45.
- ³² Ibid., p.32.
- ³³ Ibid., p.45.
- ³⁴ Ibid., p.161.
- ³⁵ For a discussion of speech/silence in *The Woman Warrior* see King-Kok Cheung, *Articulate Silences: Hisaye Yamamoto, Maxine Hong Kingston, Joy Kogawa* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993). My own discussion is limited to those instances where I have felt able to offer additional arguments, or counter-arguments, to those presented by Cheung and others, and to those instances where the discussion of speech and silence in Kingston's text is pertinent to my other arguments.
- ³⁶ *Dictee*, p.133.
- ³⁷ Ibid., p.56.
- ³⁸ Ibid., p.46.
- ³⁹ Ronyoung Kim, *Clay Walls* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994), p.69.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., p.78.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., p.115.
- ⁴² Ibid.
- ⁴³ Nora Cobb Keller, 'Mother Tongue', in *Into the Fire: Asian American Prose*, ed. by Sylvia Watanabe and Carol Bruchac (New York: Greenfield Review Press, 1996), p.4.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., p.8.
- ⁴⁵ *Fault Lines*, p.119; p.126.
- ⁴⁶ *Dictee*, p.104.
- ⁴⁷ *Borderlands/La Frontera*, p.55.
- ⁴⁸ Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club* (London: Minerva, 1990), p.34.
- ⁴⁹ Frank Chin, and others, 'An Introduction to Chinese-American and Japanese-American Literatures', in *Three American Literatures: Essays in Chicano, Native American, and Asian-American Literature for Teachers of American Literature*, ed. by Houston A. Baker, Jr., (New York: MLA, 1982), p.217.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., p.218.
- ⁵¹ Ibid., p.217.
- ⁵² B. B. Kheif, 'Insiders, Outsiders, and Renegades: Towards a Classification of Ethnolinguistic Labels', in *Language and Ethnic Relations*, ed. by Howard Giles and Bernard Saint-Jacques (Oxford: Pergamon, 1979), pp.140-72 (p.159).

- ⁵³ Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, *Reading Asian American Literature: From Necessity to Extravagance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p.8.
- ⁵⁴ See, for example, Sau-ling Cynthia Wong's 'Necessity and Extravagance in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior: Art and the Ethnic Experience*', *Melus*, 15.1 (Spring, 1988), 3-26.
- ⁵⁵ Maxine Hong Kingston, "'How Are You?' 'I am Fine, Thankyou. And You?'" in *The State of the Language*, ed. by Leonard Michaels and Christopher Ricks (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p.154.
- ⁵⁶ Maxine Hong Kingston, *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book* (London: Picador, 1989), p.318.
- ⁵⁷ See *The Woman Warrior*, p.150.
- ⁵⁸ This is according to Amy Ling. See *Between Worlds: Women Writers of Chinese Ancestry* (New York: Pergamon, 1990), p.147.
- ⁵⁹ See Janet Holmes's discussion of code-switching and code-mixing in *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (London: Longman, 1992).
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.52.
- ⁶¹ Amy Tan, 'Mother Tongue', in *Under Western Eyes*, p.315.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*, p.316.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.320.
- ⁶⁵ *The Woman Warrior*, p.183.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.149.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.107.
- ⁶⁸ *The Joy Luck Club*, p.34.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.188.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.243.
- ⁷¹ Amy Tan, *The Kitchen God's Wife* (London: Flamingo, 1992), p.36.
- ⁷² Bharati Mukherjee, *Wife* (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1975), p.51.
- ⁷³ 'Mother Tongue', p.317.
- ⁷⁴ *The Woman Warrior*, p.149.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.152.
- ⁷⁶ 'Mother Tongue', p.317.
- ⁷⁷ *The Woman Warrior*, p.153.
- ⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.154.
- ⁷⁹ 'Mother Tongue', p.317.
- ⁸⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁸¹ *The Woman Warrior*, p.186.
- ⁸² *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, p.57.
- ⁸³ Stephen S. Fugita, and David O'Brien, *Japanese American Ethnicity: the Persistence of Community* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), p.107.
- ⁸⁴ *The Woman Warrior.*, p.148.
- ⁸⁵ Amy Tan, 'The Language of Discretion', in *The State of the Language*, ed. by L. Michaels and C. Ricks (London: Faber, 1990), p.26.
- ⁸⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁸ *The Joy Luck Club*, p.188.
- ⁸⁹ Benjamin Whorf, *Language, Thought and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*, ed. by John B. Carrol (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976), p.256.
- ⁹⁰ Amy Tan, *The Hundred Secret Senses* (London: Flamingo, 1996), p.289.
- ⁹¹ 'Mother Tongue', p.319.
- ⁹² Kyoko Mori, *The Dream of Water* (New York: Ballantine, 1995), p.64.
- ⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.74.
- ⁹⁴ Fae Myenne Ng, *Bone* (New York: Hyperion, 1993), p.18.
- ⁹⁵ Chuang Hua, *Crossings* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1986), p.51.
- ⁹⁶ Nicole Ward Jouve, "'Her legs bestrid the Channel': Writing in two languages", in *Women's Writing: A Challenge to Theory*, ed. by Moira Monteith (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1986), p.34.
- ⁹⁷ *The Woman Warrior*, p.150.
- ⁹⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁹⁹ *Dictee*, p.84.

- ¹⁰⁰ *The Woman Warrior*, p.111.
- ¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.182.
- ¹⁰² *Dictee*, p.3.
- ¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p.8.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, epigraph.
- ¹⁰⁵ Lisa Lowe, 'Unfaithful to the Original; the Subject of *Dictee*', in *Writing Self, Writing Nation; Essays on Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's DICTEE*, ed. by Elaine H. Kim and Norma Alarcón (Berkeley: Third Woman Press, 1994), pp.35-69 (p.42).
- ¹⁰⁶ *Bone*, p.22.
- ¹⁰⁷ *The Dream of Water*, p.89.
- ¹⁰⁸ *The Hundred Secret Senses*, p.168.
- ¹⁰⁹ *The Joy Luck Club*, pp.106-7.
- ¹¹⁰ See David Leiwei Li, 'The Naming of a Chinese-American "I": Cross-Cultural Sign/ifications in *The Woman Warrior*', *Criticism*, 30.4 (Fall, 1988), 497-515.
- ¹¹¹ *The Woman Warrior*, p.82.
- ¹¹² *The Hundred Secret Senses*, p.143.
- ¹¹³ *The Woman Warrior*, p.167.
- ¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.186.
- ¹¹⁵ J. A. Ross, 'Language and the Mobilization of Ethnic Identity', in *Language and Ethnic Relations*, p.8.
- ¹¹⁶ Mary C. Waters, *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).
- ¹¹⁷ Gish Jen, *Mona in the Promised Land* (New York: Knopf, 1996), p.128.
- ¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.129.
- ¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.301.
- ¹²⁰ Aimee E. Liu, *Face* (London: Headline Review, 1994), p.54.
- ¹²¹ *The Joy Luck Club*, p.54.
- ¹²² Geeta Kothari, 'Where Are You From?' in *Under Western Eyes*, p.166.
- ¹²³ *The Joy Luck Club*, p.182.
- ¹²⁴ Deborah Cameron, *Verbal Hygiene* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.144.
- ¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.142.
- ¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.144-5.
- ¹²⁷ *Ibid.*
- ¹²⁸ Lydia Minatoya, *Talking to High Monks in the Snow: An Asian American Odyssey* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), p.58.
- ¹²⁹ Maxine Hong Kingston, 'Cultural Mis-readings by American Reviewers', in *Asian and Western Writers in Dialogue*, ed. by Guy Amirthayagam (London: Macmillan, 1982), p.60.
- ¹³⁰ *Tripmaster Monkey*, p.328.
- ¹³¹ Stephen H. Sumida's 'Asian American Literature' class, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Wednesday, 29 May, 1996.
- ¹³² Dale Spender, *Man Made Language* (London; Pandora, 1981), p.163.
- ¹³³ *Ibid.*
- ¹³⁴ This point was first made by David Leiwei Li, in 'The Naming of a Chinese-American "I"'.
¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.500.
- ¹³⁶ Jade Snow Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1989), p.79.
- ¹³⁷ 'The Naming of a Chinese-American "I"', p.502.
- ¹³⁸ 'Cultural Mis-readings', p.65.
- ¹³⁹ William Boelhower, 'Ethnographic Politics: The Uses of Memory in Ethnic Fiction', in *Memory and Cultural Politics: New Approaches to American Ethnic Literatures*, ed. by Amritjit Singh, Joseph T. Skerrett, Jr., and Robert E. Hogan (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996), p.32.
- ¹⁴⁰ *The Woman Warrior*, p.172.
- ¹⁴¹ *Talking to High Monks*, p.31.
- ¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p.32.
- ¹⁴³ Lillian Ho Wan, 'Silence and the Graverobbers', in *Under Western Eyes*, p.94.
- ¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.95.

- ¹⁴⁶ *Wife*, p.123. Of course, the title of the novel in this context is ironic: Dimple is known by her identity as her husband's subordinate.
- ¹⁴⁷ Alice Ostriker, 'The Thieves of Language', in *The New Feminist Criticism*, ed. by Elaine Showalter (London: Virago, 1982), p.315.
- ¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.318.
- ¹⁴⁹ See Sau-ling Cynthia Wong's discussion: 'Kingston's Handling of Traditional Chinese Sources', in *Approaches to Teaching Maxine Hong Kingston's "The Woman Warrior"*, ed. by Shirley Geok-lin Lim (New York: MLA, 1991), for an overview of Kingston's use of myth.
- ¹⁵⁰ Joy Kogawa, *Obasan* (New York: Anchor, 1994), pp.66-7.
- ¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.39.
- ¹⁵² 'Mother Tongue', p.315.
- ¹⁵³ *The Woman Warrior*, p.162.
- ¹⁵⁴ *Obasan*, p.41.
- ¹⁵⁵ Carol Spaulding Roh, 'Pages from the Notebook of a Eurasian', in *Into the Fire*, p.253.

CHAPTER FIVE

Face-ing/De-Face-ing Racism: Physiognomy as Ethnic Marker

'It has to do with looks, doesn't it? They use "American" interchangeably with "white". The clean-cut all-American look. This hairless body ... is cleaner than most. I bathe, I dress up; all I get is soo mun and sah chun'. — Maxine Hong Kingston, *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book*

'We were made to believe our faces
betrayed us.

Our bodies were loud
with yellow screaming flesh
needing to be silenced'.

— Janice Mirikitani, 'Breaking Silence', *We, The Dangerous*

One recurrent preoccupation, albeit with many variations, in Asian American women's fiction, is the question of a *visible*, embodied racial identity. It is possible to identify a concern with the way that the ethnic subject is 'marked' by her physiognomy in texts from Sui Sin Far's 1911 autobiography to Aimee Liu's 1994 novel, *Face*. These discussions identify a correlation between the body and the individual's psychology; between corporeality and the dynamics of selfhood. This correlation is represented in differing ways, but all the representations assert the primacy of the body-as-text, the body as a dominant signifier of racial identity. As Maibelle Chung tells her brother in Aimee Liu's *Face*:

Aren't you ignoring one fundamental factor? ... Looks! Skin color. Hair. Eyes. Body type. Far as most whites are concerned, Chinese are Chinese — for that matter, any Oriental is Chinese — and blacks are black. No difference where they were born or what language they speak.¹

The discussion of visible racial identity in these texts is contextually specific in that it is a dynamic of cross-cultural engagement. Asian American women writers' interrogation of the relationship between exterior and interior subjectivity relates to their position as liminal ethnic subjects in the United States. However, occasionally this exploration may alternatively relate to their position in Asian countries. This can be seen in the case of Japanese American Lydia Minatoya who finds that her position as an Asian American woman in an Asian country makes her as much as an outsider there as she feels herself to be in America. Likewise, in my discussion of early Eurasian writers' positions vis-à-vis the dominant cultural norms of their environments, I make no distinction between their position as part-Asian in America or part-Caucasian in Asia, because the specific geographical location is not as important as their position as marginal subjects in a cross-cultural environment.

Read together, the corpus of texts discussed in this chapter may function as a record of differing psychological responses to a racist environment. They also chart the history of interaction between Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Filipino Americans and Anglo Americans, their reactions and responses to each other. The experience of the Eurasian sisters Edith and Maude Eaton, is my earliest example. Their experiences as new ethnic subjects in America at the turn of the century were characterised by feelings of exclusion and inferiority in the face of extreme racism, as their autobiographical writings illustrate. Racism is highly durable, however, and later texts also continue to demonstrate both the potency of racist phenomena and the psychological effects of racism upon ethnic subjects.

In constructing links between texts written as much as eighty years apart, I do not intend to homogenise them: as textual responses to racism they illustrate historical, geographical and cultural divergencies which should not be erased. It is important, for example, to recognise that the particular situation of early twentieth century Eurasian women, whose experience was often characterised by an acute sense of ambivalence, was partly produced by late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century anti-miscegenation discourses, the credibility of which had eroded by the time Eurasian writer Aimee Liu published *Face*, in 1994. In suggesting links between these texts I am not assuming the existence of a transhistoric racial/ethnic similarity/sensibility, but rather a shared encounter with racism and its concomitant psychoactive effects. Furthermore, the ways in which these texts work with and against racism actually highlights an historical shift in

the way that 'race' is understood. An historical survey of these texts shows the ways that they are linked to the evolution of discourses of race in America from a biological, pseudo-scientific understanding to a far less stable interpretation. This shift may alternatively be tracked through the way that 'race' is understood as a classificatory term, to its more prevalent current usage as a non-specific signifier of difference. In particular, I want to link my discussion of Asian American women's textual responses to racism, to an understanding of race in relation to physiognomy. I intend to demonstrate that discourses of the 'science' of physiognomy surface in many of these texts, and especially earlier works, although they continue to have a residual influence in some late-twentieth century works, and to suggest why this might be the case.

A Brief History of Physiognomy

Physiognomy, the form of one's features, expression and body, is also understood as the art of supposedly judging character from facial characteristics. As Thomas F. Gossett makes clear, there has long existed a science of physiognomy which attempted to link physiognomic characteristics with racial difference.² As early as 1610, Giovan Della Ponta published *On the Physiognomy of Man*, an analysis focusing on facial characteristics, which read 'facial features as a kind of graphism or writing which in turn is in need of the systematic decoding that physiognomy claimed to provide'.³ In 1684, François Bernier produced a study of the relationship between the face, the body and racial classifications. Bernier is held to have coined the term 'race', so that from its genesis, 'race' as been identified as a form of categorisation associated with physiognomic features.⁴ Indeed, racial classification was, and to some limited extent continues to be, understood in terms of shared prototypic features.⁵ As Gossett goes on to show, theories of physiognomy contributed significantly to the construction of the idea of race, especially in the United States. As ideological scaffolding supporting the building of institutionalised racism like slavery, the science of physiognomy was crucial. For example, in the nineteenth century, the comparative study of crania of African Americans and Caucasian Americans supposedly revealed significant intelligence differences, which in turn functioned to support notions of white racial superiority.⁶ Because the idea of 'race', as Joseph Rothschild notes, '... had no inherent cultural meaning ... predating its use as a device for imposing and enforcing stratification and segmentation', 'race' as a concept has always been racist, because of its role in the

production of prejudice based on the belief of the superiority of races. This kind of essentialist racism produced a tendency to read cultural differences between groups as absolute and inextricably tied to biology.

Clearly, then, the assumption that the face and other physiognomic features may be 'read' as clues to internal characteristics is extensively bound up with biologist theories of race, and, stemming from that, of racial superiority. As Juliana Schiesari notes, 'a working definition of racism can be found precisely in the attempts by the "science" of physiognomy to attribute common behavioural characteristics to shared physical features'.⁷ Because of their recognition that any theory of physiognomic difference works as an ideological apparatus preserving both racial hierarchies and stereotypes, and that racism continues to work in a physiognomic currency, Asian American women writers have often investigated the imagined correlation between physiognomy and behaviour in their work. This is partly because there is a history of using such connections in order to derogate Asians in popular cultural media, as Elaine Kim makes clear in her discussion of images of Asians in Anglo fiction and film.⁸

Asian Americans have been subject to essentialist racism since the mid nineteenth century. Gompers' and Gustadt's 1908 piece, *Meat vs. Rice: American Manhood against Asiatic Coolieism: Which Shall Survive* is an example of one such text.⁹ One of the assertions of the article was that the Chinese were 'without nerves and without digestion'.¹⁰ Another early twentieth century 'explanation' of Chinese 'inferiority' by Henry George stated that '[t]he Chinaman was capable of learning up to a certain point of adolescence ... but unlike the Caucasian he had a limited point of development beyond which it was impossible for him to go'.¹¹ A later example quoted by Elaine Kim from Wallace Irwin's *The Seed of the Sun* in 1921 notes that Asians are 'ridiculously clad, superstition-ridden, dishonest, crafty, cruel ... marginal members of the human race who lack the courage, intelligence, skill, and the will to do anything about the oppressive conditions that surround them'.¹² Unfortunately, as Kim shows, these representations are not specific to the earlier part of the century: Kim cites examples as recent as 1969, as well as this example from the 1980 Charlie Chan film, where he is described as 'wise, smiling, pudgy ... symbol of the sagacity, kindness, and charm of the Chinese people'.¹³ Such racist conclusions about groups of people based on their biology have evolved and produced enduring images and stereotypes of cultural groups. As Schiesari writes:

at its worst [physiognomy] ... proceeded to a highly suspect classification of humanity based upon the assumed behaviour imputed to derive from bodily types. Anatomical difference thus became the pretext for prejudicial moral judgements.¹⁴

As Elaine Kim shows, these early representations of Asian Americans which make assumptions about behaviour based on physiognomic characteristics have continued up to the present day. Thus, Asian American women writers have inherited a tradition of representing Asian Americans encumbered by such images. In 'Ethnic Subject, Ethnic Sign, and the Difficulty of Rehabilitative Representation: Chinatown in Some Works of Chinese American Fiction', Sau-ling Cynthia Wong asks: 'when subject and sign have both been altered by the gaze of white society, how is a Chinese American writer to represent his/her own experiences?'¹⁵ Although Sau-ling Wong's discussion relates to representing Chinatown, several aspects of her argument may be usefully transposed onto a discussion of the rehabilitative representation of the Asian American subject. Wong's analysis in this piece draws upon semiology to explore the process of representing (and misrepresenting) Chinatown. She uses William Boelhower's work on ethnic semiosis¹⁶ to suggest that the 'cultural product' of Chinatown (that is, the dominant cultural image of Chinatown), is created by a process of joint semiosis, in which the gaze of the dominator and the dominated (the white and the ethnic subject respectively) engage in a 'process of mutual constitution' to represent Chinatown.¹⁷ Wong notes (and this is where she differs from Boelhower) that this mutual semiosis/gaze 'hardly implies equal partnership',¹⁸ because the gaze of the ethnic subject is economically and discursively less powerful than that of the white subject. Wong's analysis of this process is useful because it firstly acknowledges that for the ethnic subject *self* representation is not always possible, precisely because the 'gaze of white society dominates', and as she notes 'the "Chinaman" no longer fully owns his experiences'.¹⁹ Once again, the question is one of how exactly to divorce ethnic self-representation from the debilitating images with which it has been saddled? Secondly, Wong argues that because of the potency of the white gaze, the ethnic subject is 'now *marked* ... singled out, blemished'.²⁰ And thirdly, the ramification of the white gaze is that ethnic self representation becomes highly problematic and fraught with near-insurmountable difficulty:

... the Orientalising sign may become so pervasive and invasive as to monopolise all expression. When that happens, the subjectivity of the ethnic subject is in danger of being drained from any effort at self representation.²¹

In opening this discussion I suggested that in the writing of Asian American women there is a concern with the relationship between corporeality and selfhood. This relationship is mediated by the politics of representation. As Wong shows, in the process of joint semiosis, the gaze of the 'dominated' ethnic subject is less potent than that of the 'dominator'. Consequently, the ethnic subject lacks agency to control self representation. Moreover, as the controlling white gaze 'marks' the ethnic subject as ethnic, 'other', the body becomes the dominant signifier. Thus, being caught in the racialising gaze of another constitutes a crisis of self and self representation.

Spec(tac)ular Acts

Sau-ling Wong goes on to suggest that in the gaze of the white voyeur, 'Chinatown means *spectacle*'.²² I would argue that the ethnic subject herself becomes a 'spectacle' because she too becomes an object attracting the sight of the white cultural voyeur. Likewise, representation itself is a 'spectacular act', which can, as Wong warns, all too easily reinforce the ethnic subject as a spectacle.²³ Indeed, the process of mutual gazing/semiosis proposed by Boelhower and elaborated by Wong may also be labelled a spectacular act or exchange, as it also functions as an (unequally) collaborative form of representation in which the racialising (Anglo) gaze produces the ethnic subject as a spectacle of 'otherness'.

We all engage in spectacular acts, especially in reading the face, as Pilar Carrera-Levillain and Jose Miguel Fernandez-Dols have shown.²⁴ The face signifies in two ways. As a *canvas*, it is coloured, it has features: nose, eyes etc., which all function as signs of ethnicity in the way that I begin to describe above, signs supposedly shared by a collective ethnic/racial group or groups. The face also registers individual features; a particularly large nose, green eyes, dimples; and it also registers individual actions and reactions, which we read: a smile may indicate happiness, a frown unhappiness. We constantly use the face to locate individuality, and to find internal responses: the eyes as 'windows to the soul' is a common metaphor. Several Asian American women writers describe the face as a medium of interpersonal communication and response, but show

how this becomes entangled with the racialising gaze whereby individual characteristics, responses and features are erased, or remain unseen, because the ethnic subject's face signifies only otherness, difference, 'yellow screaming flesh' and 'betraying' eyes. In such situations, the possibilities for interpersonal engagements disappear, as the racialising gaze obliterates the identity and signifying canvas of the other. As Sau-ling Wong writes: 'The gaze of cultural voyeurs effectively "disappears" the people: every Chinese in its sight is reduced to a specimen of Otherness devoid of individuality and interiority'.²⁵ Because individual features and responses are not seen, the face becomes face-less, it cannot provide a reading for individuality at the same time. 'Face' is often semantically interchangeable with 'identity'. For example, to recognise a 'face in the crowd' is to find someone whose identity is known. Thus, in the racialising gaze, which fails to acknowledge individual response/nuance, the subjectivity of the individual disappears. The face, the eyes and other physiognomic features visibly signify difference from a culturally normalised ethnic or racial majority; and through the gaze as spectacular act the 'minority' ethnic subject is objectified. Writers like Janice Mirikitani, Lydia Minatoya, Han Suyin, Diana Chang, Fiona Cheong, Marilyn Chin and Aimee Liu depict different ways in which they (in the case of auto/biographical works) or their characters could begin to escape this objectification, and thus pave the way for a possible 'rehabilitative' representation of the Asian American subject.

R. D. Laing has written: 'Self identity ("I" looking at "me") is constituted not only by our looking at ourselves, but also by our looking at others looking at us and our reconstitution of and alteration of these views of others about us'.²⁶ It is this consciousness of the spectacular act that surfaces repeatedly as an anxiety in Asian American texts by women, from early autobiographical works up to recent fiction. The spectacular act here becomes a *specular interaction*, as the ethnic subject finds her self identity produced by, and reflected back to her by another. For example, Japanese American writer Kerri Sakamoto notes that 'walking down the street people glance at me then wince'.²⁷ This negativity is also noted by Korean American woman Haesu to her friend Clara in *Clay Walls*: 'I hate it when everyone stares at me. They look at me as if I were some kind of freak show'.²⁸ Eurasian Sylvia Chen attracts similar attention: 'people never ceased to be curious about her'.²⁹ In her autobiography, Eurasian Winnifred Eaton (Onoto Watanna) writes that people gazed at her 'as if I interested them or they were puzzled to know my nationality'.³⁰ For Eaton, like Haesu, such

spec(tac)ular gazes are unwelcome. She continues: 'I would have given anything to look less foreign, my darkness marked and crushed me'.³¹ It is in the eyes of others that all of these women's 'darkness' marks them. Sylvia Chen tries to avoid this marking by averting her face from the racialising gaze: 'she averted her face as she passed them'.³² This awareness of the gaze is what W.E.B. Du Bois calls 'double consciousness', which is the sense of watching one's self image being produced by another.³³ Eaton's comment that her 'darkness' in the eyes of another crushes her highlights the perils of adopting, however unwittingly, such a negative self image, and the possible consequences of this for the assertion of a positive or 'rehabilitative' self-image.

Anti-Miscegenation Discourses and the Eurasian Subject

It is for Eurasian women that the crisis of selfhood is most entangled with corporeal identity. The Eurasian, a mix of Caucasian and Asian, presents a visibly literalised hybridity, as her racialised identity appears to be embodied in her appearance. The body/face again functions as text. This divided external identity produces an even more conflicting sense of selfhood, as Amy Ling writes: 'Coexisting and unresolvable opposites are daily experiences for bicultural people and particularly for Eurasians ... By which race shall one be known?'³⁴ Ruth Frankenberg notes that "'Chineseness", "Blackness", and "Whiteness" are states of being' in theories of racial superiority, so that 'the "half" or "mixed" person ... does not belong anywhere'.³⁵ Like the better-known figure of the 'tragic mulatta', the Eurasian is often depicted in popular cultural fictions as out of place, stranded between two states of being. Elaine Kim notes that 'the dilemma of the Eurasian ... is unresolvable. He [sic] must either accept life as it is, with its injustices and inequalities, or he must die'.³⁶ The Eurasian, like the mulatto/a, constitutes a threat to essentialist theories of racial superiority precisely because, as Nancy Bentley writes in relation to mulattos in Antebellum fiction: 'the person of mixed black and white parentage stood precisely at the place where nature and culture could come unbound'.³⁷ As Frankenberg asserts, any theory of race predicated upon the assumption that racial differences are absolute and tied to biological belonging will be 'troubled'³⁸ by the miscegenated subject. Nancy Bentley's work on the mulatto identifies a cultural preoccupation with how to classify the American subject who is neither black nor white and the underlying cultural anxiety this causes, which, she argues, is evident in the production of terms to classify the miscegenated subject like 'octoroon' and

‘quadroon’.³⁹ Frankenberg argues that this cultural anxiety is manifested in a discourse against interracial relationships which claims that mixed race children don’t — and can’t — fit in.⁴⁰ It is such cultural anxieties and anti-miscegenation discourses that resulted in the Californian miscegenation laws, referring to Negroes, Mulattos and Mongolians, which were active from 1880 until they were finally declared unconstitutional in 1967 by the United States Supreme Court.⁴¹ Anti-miscegenation arguments circulating at the time of the first of these laws bear testimony to a cultural abhorrence and fear of miscegenation. In a letter to Kentaro Keneko in 1892, anthropologist Herbert Spencer claimed:

... if you mix the constitutions of two widely divergent varieties which have severally become adapted to widely divergent modes of life, you get a constitution which is adapted to the mode of life of neither — a constitution which will not work properly, because it is not fitted for any set of conditions whatever.⁴²

This is an example of what Gossett calls ‘social Darwinism’, which equated ‘race’ with ‘species’, producing an argument implicitly suggesting that miscegenation is also mutation.⁴³

Like the mulatto/a, there are many early twentieth century Anglo cultural fictions written about or against the Eurasian, comparable with mid- and late-nineteenth century texts like Mayne Reid’s *The Quadroon* or H. L. Hosmer’s *Adela the Octoroon*.⁴⁴ These texts also demonstrate the abhorrence of miscegenation articulated in fiction about the mulatto/a, as well as an emphasis on their positions as doubly liminal subjects. Early twentieth century examples include Wallace Irwin’s *The Seed of the Sun*, where the Eurasian character feels that ‘the dragon’s tail of the Orient [is] fastened to the goat’s head of Europe’;⁴⁵ Achmed Abdullah’s ‘A Simple Act of Piety’, in whose Eurasian protagonist’s body, we are told, ‘[t]he Chinese blood in her veins, shrewd, patient, scotched the violence of her passion, her American impulse to clamour loudly for right and justice and fairness’;⁴⁶ and Rex Beach’s *Son of the Gods*,⁴⁷ amongst others. In fiction and autobiography both by and about Eurasians, there is a corresponding preoccupation with the identity of the miscegenated subject, which is linked (in different ways) to corporeality, although it does not result in death. In particular, both the fiction

and the autobiographies of the Eurasian sisters Edith Maude Eaton (pseudonym Sui Sin Far) and Winnifred Eaton (pseudonym Onoto Watanna) betray such a concern. Both sisters were writing between 1899 and 1925, so they were writing at the same time as Anglo writers like Wallace Irwin and Rex Beach, and their work reveals the same preoccupation with miscegenation and its effects that can be seen in their contemporary, Herbert Spencer's 1892 letter. As Amy Ling makes clear in her discussion of the Eaton sisters, the autobiographies of both — Winnifred's *Me: A Book of Remembrance* and Edith's 'Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian'⁴⁸ — engage with the bigotry they both experience as Eurasians.

By the time that *Me* was published in 1915, its author, Winnifred Eaton, had been using the Japanese-sounding pen name, 'Onoto Watanna' for several years. Although she was, like her sister, actually Chinese American, Winnifred chose a Japanese name in order to mask an undesirable identity. *Me* tells the story of Nora Ascouth, Eaton's protagonist and thinly disguised representation of herself, as a young Eurasian woman in the United States. *Me* charts Eaton's dissimulations as a Eurasian at a particularly difficult moment in Chinese American history, when Sinophobia had reached an all-time high. Winnifred decided to publish under a Japanese pseudonym, a more ethnically-compatible identity at the turn of the century, partly because her physical appearance prevented her from passing as white. Yet, a publishing identity obscures physical appearance, so Winnifred's disguise must have served other purposes. In fact, she was partly forced to continue an authorial ruse that she had started much earlier, when she had invented a Japanese ancestry for herself for her entry in *Who's Who*. In contrast to many of her fictional works, *Me* was published anonymously, a textual disguise as effective as her physical passing as Japanese. However, Winnifred filled the text with clues as to her ethnic identity. For example, she explores in detail the desire to pass in *Me*. She describes Nora, her corresponding character, as a 'native of a far distant land'.⁴⁹ The lack of ethnic specificity here is a form of identity evasion. Through Nora, Winnifred extensively explores the psychological anguish of being Eurasian, but in a very indirect way. Nora attempts to deflect the racialising gaze of those 'interested' in her or 'puzzled' to know her nationality: 'People stared at me...but in a different sort of way, as if I interested them or they were puzzled to know my nationality'.⁵⁰ *Me* also shows an awareness of the specular act, as Winnifred notes: 'I would have given anything to look less foreign. My darkness marked and crushed me

...'.⁵¹ It is interesting to note, as Ling does, that *Me* reveals a consciousness of the gendering, as well as the racialising gaze, so that it is clear that Winnifred was conscious of both pressures upon her appearance.

Me's reviewers caught the scent of Winnifred's evasive publishing tactics. As Linda Trinh Moser has pointed out, both the *Chicago Tribune* (21 August, 1915) and *The New York Times Book Review* (22 August, 1915) guessed that the author was Eurasian.⁵² Shortly after, on 10 October, *The New York Times Book Review* declared that Onoto Watanna was *Me*'s author. None of these reviewers detected Winnifred's real identity as Chinese Eurasian, and so we must conclude that her technologies of writerly evasion were successful.

Edith Maude Eaton was much more open about her bi-racial identity. Her pseudonym worked quite the opposite way to Winnifred's: by adopting the name 'Sui Sin Far', Edith actually declared her ethnic identity in order actively to combat and confront racial prejudices. 'Leaves' is a straightforward autobiographical account of Eaton's experiences as a Eurasian in early twentieth-century America. Edith's autobiography, like *Me*, discusses the connection between physiognomy and racism in detail, but she is especially concerned with Eurasian identity:

I meet a half Chinese, half white girl. Her face is plastered with a thick white coat of paint and her eyelids and eyebrows are blackened so that the shape of her eyes and the whole expression of her face is changed. She was born in the east, and at the age of eighteen came West ... It is not difficult, in a land like California, for a half Chinese, half white girl to pass as one of Spanish or Mexican origin. This the poor child does, though she lives in nervous dread of being discovered.⁵³

Edith clearly disapproves of this girl's passing tactics, and rejects technologies of racial disguise as a means of coping with biracial identity in a hostile environment, although she empathises with the psychological feelings that are their motivation. Edith's encounter with her racial double, when she sees another Chinese person for the first time, leads her to 'recoil with a sense of shock'.⁵⁴ Amy Ling's discussion of 'Leaves' demonstrates Edith's double consciousness, whereby racial taunts along physiognomic lines, 'yellow-face, pig-tail ...', produce a negative self image and over-produce a

tendency to blame miscegenation for all her bodily ills: 'she attributes her life-long physical frailty to the social burden of being a Eurasian'.⁵⁵

Later fiction and autobiography by Eurasians continues to illustrate the sense of a conflicting identity produced by miscegenation, which again is often instigated by the racialising and gendering gaze. In Diana Chang's 1956 novel *The Frontiers of Love*, we are told that Sylvia Chen 'was both as American as her own mother, and as Chinese as her father. She could not deny her own ambivalence'.⁵⁶ Like Edith Maude Eaton, Diana Chang is quite open about her Eurasian identity, as the jacket cover of the University of Washington Press edition shows: her photograph advertises this fact and the accompanying biography includes details of her ancestry. [SEE APPENDIX II]. Eurasian identity, and the crisis of self that may result, is the subject of much of Chang's work, but perhaps is most extensively explored in *Frontiers of Love*. This novel relates the experiences of several Eurasian characters living in Shanghai during the Second World War, focusing principally upon the female character Sylvia Chen. It was published in 1956 to critical acclaim, with many contemporary reviews approving of Chang's description of the 'tragic' Eurasian figure of Sylvia Chen. Samantha Ramu Rau, for example, in *The New York Times Book Review*, described Chen as 'a tragically ineffectual figure'.⁵⁷ Yet Chang does not simply subscribe to reproduce the stereotype of the miscegenated subject, but extensively explores the social and historical contingencies of Eurasian identity. Written in 1956, but set in 1945, the context of *Frontiers of Love* is the Second World War, a time of particular intensity and stability for racialised subjects in Euro/American cultural milieu. The novel also asserts its geopolitical specificity as a reason for the confusion of identity experienced by its Eurasian characters:

People were true to nothing in Shanghai; they belonged only to the surface values of both East and West and leaned heavily toward the exoticism of the West. If one did not hold carefully to one's sense of self, one might wake up one morning looking for one's face, so easily lost.⁵⁸

Chang's novel both extensively thematises and literalises the problematics of biracial identity: its setting is biracial, as Shanghai is described explicitly as a 'Eurasian city'.⁵⁹ In *Frontiers of Love* we see Chang interrogating anti-miscegenation ideas as they are

articulated by the novel's Eurasian characters, in the context of Western idea(l)s of beauty, as this example shows:

Poor Paul, Sylvia thought, and that was more accurate. My brother, she thought, seeing him as he had been at six, angelic and so beautiful (part porcelain and part flame) he had been painful to look at. At their best, half-breeds who had Chinese blood in them had fine features, thin skins and eyes that caught the light in a blaze. So much tragedy seemed to lie beneath Paul's physical perfection, his puzzling Chinese-Western looks, which seemed like an optical illusion.⁶⁰

Sylvia's subscription to a stereotypical image of the tragic Eurasian in this passage is subtly undermined by Chang. The viewpoint is that of an observer, Sylvia, and it is this sense of the gaze in this section that highlights Sylvia's acute sense of double consciousness. The 'pain' here is not Paul's, but crucially it is Sylvia's, as she identifies her brother's looks with her own sense of inferiority. Sylvia's ambivalence about her identity is often reflected by others' reaction to her when in public, as this passage shows:

... she averted her face as she passed them ... (people never ceased to be curious about her), a slight girl of twenty, tanned to an even brown by the Shanghai sun. Her eyes were startlingly large, dilated, as her father said ... but her hair was not all black; she walked with all the freedom and impatience of a foreigner, yet in her there was something inescapably oriental.⁶¹

Sylvia's contradictory identity is mirrored by her observer's *projected* reaction to her physiognomy. Once more the viewpoint in this passage is Sylvia's own, and therefore we identify the passer-by's reactions to be projected by Sylvia herself.

In Han Suyin's autobiographical *The Crippled Tree*, published in 1965, we find another example. Like Winnifred Eaton, Han Suyin uses another name for herself within her narrative, in which she describes her childhood experiences as a Eurasian in China, and her own encounters with prejudice. Here, it is her Caucasian mother, rather than an anonymous passer-by, who forces Rosalie (Han Suyin) to confront the racialising gaze:

Look at yourself! You a Chinese. You will never be Chinese, and let me tell you why: the Chinese will not have you! Never, never! They won't accept you. They will call you 'yang kweitse' devil from over the ocean, as they call me. They will call you half-caste and mixed-blood, for that is what you are.⁶²

Once more, the racialising gaze is linked to context, as Rosalie and her mother are both outsiders in China, due to their Caucasian blood. Rosalie's mother suggests that in this Chinese context, it is Rosalie's non-Chineseness, rather than her Chineseness, that is significant. Repeatedly, the failure to signify as either Caucasian or Asian is presented in negative terms, as the Eurasian defines herself as a non-member of either racial group, rather than a member of both. Sylvia Chen notes that she looks 'not even Aryan, but just non-Chinese'.⁶³ Remnants of such anti-miscegenation discourses which suggest that the Eurasian subject will always be out of place, can even be detected in Aimee Liu's 1994 novel about Eurasian Maibelle Chung's identity crisis, *Face*. Maibelle, we are told, 'felt shut out because I didn't look Chinese enough to pass'.⁶⁴ Physiognomy is repeatedly held responsible for a fractured sense of identity. Blood is to blame, as Edith Eaton writes: 'the white blood in our veins fights valiantly for the Chinese half of us'.⁶⁵ Likewise, Maibelle Chung notes that 'if you've got one drop of nonwhite blood you got to consider yourself minor-i-ty'.⁶⁶

Another way in which anti-miscegenation discourses surface in many of these texts is through images of mutation, homelessness and tragedy. Like the mulatto/a, the Eurasian is depicted as a tragic figure: 'Tragic faces of half-breeds, pawns of an undesired fate. Something of wildness, something of sadness, something of intense longing and wistfulness looked from the strange eyes of the breeds'.⁶⁷ In this example, the face and eyes again signal otherness, here a tragic and sad otherness. It is the language of mutation that surfaces in *The Frontiers of Love* as we are told that Sylvia Chen's father 'could hardly bear to pronounce the word "Eurasian"; it was as though his seed had produced mavericks, a mutation'.⁶⁸ In Han Suyin's *The Crippled Tree*, it is Rosalie's father, like Sylvia's father, who regrets producing Eurasian children:

My children would belong nowhere. Always there would be this double load for them, no place they could call their own land, their true home. No house for them in the world. Eurasians, despised by everyone.⁶⁹

As in Anglo portrayals, in Asian American women's texts from the early autobiographies of the Eatons to later twentieth century fiction, the Eurasian is represented as visibly embodying the racial split that reproduces a fractured sense of identity, and this works through the racialising gaze. This bodily split, and its relationship with the gaze, is symbolised by *Face* character Maibelle Chung's self portrait, called *Oriental I*, a 'wall-sized mosaic of one hundred forty-four separate photographs of disconnected body parts'.⁷⁰ This self-portrait expresses the bodily fragmentation all these women experience in the face of the racialising and gendering gaze. As Patricia Waugh observes: 'As a consequence of their social alienation, women experience their body as parts, "objects", rather than integrated wholes'.⁷¹ This is even more the case for the Eurasian subject, who feels herself to be alienated both due to her social and racial identity. In the light of this comment, it is interesting to note that Maibelle's mother, a Caucasian woman represented in the text as possessing a strong self-image, fails to realise that this painting is her daughter's self portrait.

There is a difference between Anglo and Asian American portrayals of the Eurasian's situation, however. Anglo portrayals, as Kim notes, offer no possibility for coming to terms with one's mixed racial ancestry: '[m]ost of the stories about Eurasians end with the death of the protagonist. The only real victory possible ... is mistaken identity'.⁷² This is in marked contrast to Asian American depictions, where even if the option of choosing to pass for one racial identity solely is available, it is rejected: both of the Eaton sisters chose to swap between identities as Asian and Caucasian, thus manipulating their position for their own gain. So for the Eatons, self representation *was* possible, although it remained linked to feelings of inferiority. In *The Crippled Tree*, Rosalie finds a way to come to terms with her identity by accepting the inevitability of self division:

In Rosalie a fragmentation of the total self occurred ... Others born like her of two worlds, who chose not to accept this splitting, fragmentation of monolithic identity into several selves, found themselves later unable to face the contradictions latent in their own beings ... In Rosalie the necessity of knowing mutually contradictory truths without assuming any one of them to be the whole truth, became in childhood the only way to live on, to live and to remain substantial.⁷³

It seems, therefore, that one form of rehabilitative representation of the Eurasian subject's predicament is to develop a strategy for coping with the contradictions of biracial identity: for both the Eatons and Rosalie Chou (Han Suyin) this involves an *acceptance* of those contradictions. It is not surprising that it is not in the representations of Eurasians by Anglo writers, who have a vested interest in preserving racial hierarchies and classifications, where we find such rehabilitative writing, but that it should be the project of Eurasian women themselves, to rescue Eurasian subjectivity from association with anti-miscegenation arguments.

In texts like *The Crippled Tree* and *Frontiers of Love*, the Eurasian's awareness of the inevitability of self division replaces her desire for racial wholeness and her yearning for an unfragmented selfhood, which is denied to her with each engagement with the racialising/gendering gaze. Rosalind Coward notes that: 'looking has become a crucial aspect of sexual relations, not because of any natural impulse, but because it is one of the ways in which domination and subordination are expressed'.⁷⁴ Looking is an aspect of racial, as well as sexual, relations. Frequently, Asian American women are seen in these texts trying to evade the gaze, precisely because it signals subordination within a racial and gender hierarchy, by turning away as Sylvia Chen does: 'she averted her face'.⁷⁵ Yet it is not just the gaze of the voyeur that must be avoided, it is also the reflection of one's body image in a mirror, the act of specularisation. The inability to control self image is often presented through the use of the mirror-as-trope in these texts. In her autobiographical narrative, *Talking to High Monks in the Snow*, Lydia Minatoya tells us that a fellow Asian American woman told her that 'sometimes I catch sight of my reflection in a store window ... and I am shocked to see that I am oriental'.⁷⁶ This woman's encounter with her self image here constitutes as much of a shock to her as it did to Edith Eaton when she saw another Chinese person for the first time. Negative external identity is re-imposed each time, as Maibelle Chung notes, 'I see myself'.⁷⁷

Gendered Responses and the Technologies of Race

For Asian American women in many of these texts, the double consciousness of the racialising gaze is rendered further threatening by the double bind of the awareness of gender as well as racial differences. For these women are not only caught in the

racialising gaze, they are also caught in the gendering gaze. As Teresa de Lauretis writes:

concurrent representation of the female body as the *locus* of sexuality, site of visual pleasure, or lure of the gaze) is so pervasive in our culture ... it necessarily constitutes a starting point for any understanding of ... the construction of social subjects, its presence in all forms of subjectivity.⁷⁸

The recognition of the hegemony of the gaze in our culture owes much to Laura Mulvey's now seminal essay, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'.⁷⁹ Sau-ling Wong's piece, 'Ethnic Subject, Ethnic Sign', to which I alluded at length earlier, draws mainly upon William Boelhower's thesis on ethnic semiosis for its theoretical substructure. But is in the area of film criticism, pioneered by Mulvey in 'Visual Pleasure', where we find the confluence of feminist theories of the fetishisation of female sexuality and the semiotics of representation. It is useful to reiterate two assertions of Mulvey's essay here. Like Wong, she stresses the power of the gaze, but also the compulsiveness: '... curiosity and the wish to look intermingle with a fascination with likeness and recognition: the human face, the human body, the relationship between the human form and its surroundings'.⁸⁰ Therefore, the compulsion to look reinforces the hegemony of the gaze. But it is women who are objects of this gaze: 'women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded, for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*'.⁸¹ Thus, the ethnic subject finds herself prey to objectification as both an ethnic and female spectacle, drawing the gaze of the white/male spectator. This process of objectification can be seen to produce the pressure to conform to dominant definitions of beauty. In Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, it is the bluest eyes and blondest hair, as symbolised by Pecola's doll, that signify the epitome of white Western beauty.⁸² Many Asian American women's texts, too, repeatedly articulate both a yearning for and a recognition of the failure to achieve those standards, as this excerpt from Nellie Wong's poem 'When I Was Growing Up' shows:

I know now that I once longed to be white.
How? you ask.

Let me tell you the ways.

when I was growing up, people told me
I was dark and I believed my own darkness
in the mirror, in my soul, my own narrow vision

when I was growing up, my sisters
with fair skin got praised
for their beauty, and in the dark

I fell further, crushed between high walls

when I was growing up, I read magazines
and saw movies, blonde movie stars, white skin,
sensuous lips and to be elevated, to become
a woman, a desirable woman, I began to wear
imaginary pale skin⁸³

Blue eyes, in particular, often function as a trope for white female privilege and aesthetic superiority. In 'Natives', Fiona Cheong writes: 'I say you have blue eyes. You say for me to tell you what it means.'⁸⁴ In *Skin Deep*, Virginia Harris asserts that blue eyes mean that 'value ... [is] rated on lightness of hue. Blond and blue-eyed Aryan is "preferable"'.⁸⁵ Blue eyes and blonde hair, as the lightest permutations of hair- and eye-colour, signify beauty and privilege as Cheong's own answer shows: 'When the fair-skinned ones told the names I tried to look at them but many of them were blue-eyed and they sat there straight like conquering heroes'.⁸⁶ Or, as Kerri Sakamoto notes: 'they're girls whose complexions are kept creamy and their hair glossy chestnut ... they've never had to wait for anything ... their eyes are translucent colors — blue, green, hazel — and they fix them hard on whoever's at the desk, demanding attention.'⁸⁷ Here, both Cheong and Sakamoto associate power and privilege explicitly with beauty: it is *because* of their blonde hair and blue eyes that the 'fair-skinned ones' appear to have advantage and authority, and blue eyes and blonde hair are read as both assets and weapons. In Janice Mirikitani's poem 'Doreen', the woman in search of Western beauty compensates for the lack of blue eyes by painting 'glittering blue shadow up to her brow'.⁸⁸ She does not, however, manage to harness the power of blue eyes in this way and instead lands up being ridiculed. Virginia Harris calls the cultural practice of assigning value to (lightness of) colour 'colorism'.⁸⁹ 'Colorism' is often used by writers

to signify thematically, and a whole signifying system can be identified based upon the culturally constructed correlation between physiognomic features and personal characteristics. Blue eyes, for example, are not just a trope for beauty, they also suggest innocence, especially when coupled with blonde hair. In 'A Textual Analysis of Facial Description', Françoise Massardier-Kenney discusses some of the cultural/textual significations of physiognomic features. In particular, she notes that the combination of pale skin and rosy cheeks 'is valorized'.⁹⁰ This is in opposition to dark features, which often construct woman, she argues, as a 'seductress'.⁹¹ The valorisation of pale skin can be seen in the extract from Wong's poem. Kenney also asserts that 'large eyes have a positive value'.⁹² This is especially pertinent to a discussion of Asian American women's texts, where the eyes in particular often represent the most extreme difference from white standards of beauty, and, as such, frequently function in Asian American women's texts as an ultimate trope of otherness. As the character Clara responds to Haesu's lament of her difference in *Clay Walls*: "It's these eyes" ... popping hers open as wide as she could'.⁹³ Several scenes describe Asian American women, like Clara, enlarging their eyes and attempting to keep them dilated. In *The Joy Luck Club*, Lena notes that it is her eyes that signal 'Chineseness' to others, and so this is what she tries to change:

Most people didn't know I was half Chinese ... when people first saw me, they thought I looked like my father, English-Irish ... but if they looked really close ... they could see the Chinese parts ... and my eyes, my mother gave me my eyes, no eyelids, as if they were carved on a jack o'lantern with two swift cuts of a short knife. I used to push my eyes in on the sides, to make them rounder. Or I'd open them very wide until I could see the white parts. But when I walked round the house like that, my father asked me why I looked so scared.⁹⁴

Lena's desire to dilate her eyes is echoed by Doreen, in Mirikitani's poem of the same name, who, not satisfied with painting her eyes blue, also 'painted her eyes round'.⁹⁵ Mirikitani ironises this dilating gesture in her poem 'Recipe for Round Eyes'. Here, Mirikitani gives step-by-step instructions for perfect round eyes: how to tape back the eyelids and then to paint the tape black as camouflage. Significantly, her last line reads: 'Do not cry'.⁹⁶ In *We, The Dangerous*, 'Recipe for Round Eyes' is the second section of an equally searing damnation of Western beauty standards, 'Beauty Contest'. In this

poem, the Japanese girl describes how she found herself out in the 'cold', labelled 'Jap and slant eyed girl'.⁹⁷ Perhaps more than other writers, Mirikitani indicts stereotypes of Asian women and the pressure to conform to Western beauty standards. In her poem 'Yes, We Are *Not* Invisible', she lists all the racist assumptions and stereotypes of the Japanese and refutes them. Included is 'No, my peripheral vision is fine'. The racist assumption that her vision is impaired by the shape of her eyes angers Mirikitani, as it also angers Clara in *Clay Walls*: 'I'll bet no one asks you if you can see with your eyes', she says.⁹⁸ Elsewhere, for other women, it is their eyes which are the orientalising sign, as they were for Lena St. Clair in *The Joy Luck Club*. Eurasian Sylvia Chen in *Frontiers of Love* is recognised as part-Chinese because 'her eyes were startlingly large, dilated'.⁹⁹ Likewise, Eurasian Maibelle Chung in *Face* knows that she signifies not-Chinese because of her 'too-wide eyes, the color of jade, and only a vague oriental cast'.¹⁰⁰

Significantly, it is the eyes that repeatedly signal difference from the ethnic or racial 'norm' of one's environment. As Korean, Japanese or Chinese Americans in America, Clara, Haesu, Doreen, Janice Mirikitani and Lena St. Clair all indicate difference predominantly through their eyes. It is, to quote Mirikitani once more, 'our faces [that] betrayed us'.¹⁰¹ As an Eurasian in Shanghai, Sylvia Chen finds that the largeness of her eyes betray her difference, her 'startlingly large' eyes signal difference from her all-Chinese counterparts.¹⁰² She hides her eyes by averting her face as she passes people in an attempt to erase this difference. Similarly, in *Talking to High Monks in the Snow*, Japanese American Lydia Minatoya, on a journey through Asia, finds that she confuses the Nepali people because although she is 'travelling with a face that could belong to a Nepali tribeswoman', she also 'look[s] like an orphan', as her cultural background cannot be 'read' from her face.¹⁰³ In *Face*, Maibelle Chung also finds that her difference is dependent upon context: she continually finds that her physiognomy places her as an outsider to a shifting dominant cultural context. Although half Chinese, she describes herself as 'a tall, pale, redheaded girl, a narrow face with a broad, off-center nose. Too-wide eyes the color of jade and only a vague oriental cast'.¹⁰⁴ In Chinatown, because of her looks, she notes that she always felt 'shut out because I didn't look Chinese enough to pass'.¹⁰⁵ Maibelle yearns to be more Chinese, like the other Chinese girls that she knows:

... the girls I admired most in the world — the Yellow Butterflies — stood out too. Just one grade ahead of me and worlds apart, they had the flawless appearance of porcelain dolls. Pale skin. Flying cheekbones. Diminutive noses. Waist-length hair that hung straight, gleaming like dark cellophane, and those classic almond eyes with their smoothed-down lids, as if carved in a single stroke.¹⁰⁶

Chung's description of these Chinese women is interesting in relation to Kenney's and Harris's discussions of colorism in cultural media that I referred to earlier. The Yellow Butterflies' 'flying cheekbones' and 'almond eyes' both signify difference in the way that I described earlier. As part of the racial majority in Chinatown, they are regarded by Maibelle as 'normal' and privileged, and she envies them for their visible 'Chineseness'. In addition, they have 'diminutive noses', often cited as an orientalisising sign (despite Kenney's assertion that noses carry no 'thematic value'). Maibelle also reads their black, glossy hair as a sign of their beauty and desirability. As Kenney notes, a 'luxuriance of hair' is an 'index of vigorous sexuality'.¹⁰⁷ However, Maibelle's unconscious use of colorism in coding the Yellow Butterflies as beautiful and desirable becomes inverted. Whilst Maibelle is ostensibly demonstrating the Yellow Butterflies' desirable *Chineseness*, she is actually aligning their physiognomy with Western colorist ascriptions of beauty. The Yellow Butterflies are described as having the 'appearance of *porcelain* dolls' and '*pale* skin'.¹⁰⁸ Although 'porcelain' may indicate fragility, it also signifies lightness of hue, as does 'pale' skin, which is valorised in colorist coding. Thinking back to Kerri Sakamoto's description of the white women's beauty: 'their complexions are creamy and their hair glossy chestnut', the similarities are immediately apparent.¹⁰⁹ Maibelle describes the Yellow Butterflies' beauty using the language and metaphors of Western colorism to align their power and attractiveness with that of white women like the ones that Sakamoto described earlier. As a Eurasian, Maibelle finds herself an outsider in Chinatown, her nose too broad, her eyes too wide, her colouring wrong. She hears the Yellow Butterflies 'tittering about my height, my green eyes'.¹¹⁰

In the earlier texts that I have discussed, tactics of disguise are often employed as a means of escaping the racialising gaze, notably through passing by dressing in particular ways. Winnifred Eaton/Onoto Watanna and Edith Eaton/Sui Sin Far also used textual strategies to mask their identities, by adopting pseudonyms. In contrast, in texts

written in the latter part of this century, many of the women who find themselves marked as outsiders by their physiognomy resort to a sliding scale of cosmetic technologies in order to align their appearance with the contextual 'norm'. This move illustrates a shift in the way that 'race' is understood, as well as charting the development of cosmetic technologies. Earlier I noted that 'race' as a term has changed in meaning and this is demonstrated through a reading of Asian American women's texts, where 'race' is seen to be an idea, like 'gender', in flux. In *Consumer Culture*, Celia Lury describes this shift:

from a racism tied to a biological understanding of race in which identity is fixed or naturalised *to* a racism in which race is a cultural category in which racial identity is represented as a matter of style, and is the subject of choice.¹¹¹

The claim that racial difference may be seen as a question of 'aesthetics', rather than a political reality is a contentious one; but it may constitute one attempt at rehabilitative representation. If racial identity can be seen as something to choose to 'wear' — or not — then this would signal a move from an objectified subject devoid of agency to a position whereby self representation was possible. Lury cites Susan Willis's argument that this move *is* possible, and furthermore can be seen in the well documented case of Michael Jackson's self-representation through physical transformation. This constitutes a kind of technology of race, similar to the technologies of gender theorised by Teresa de Lauretis, who notes that 'gender ... both as representation and as self-representation is the product of various technologies ... institutional discourses, epistemologies, and critical practices'.¹¹² The move from regarding 'gender', like 'race' as a biological category to regarding it as a culturally constructed entity, subject to change, is echoed by de Lauretis. Certainly, this possibility is explored in many of the texts discussed here. Thus, Doreen widens her eyes and paints them blue. While in America, Japanese American Lydia Minatoya in *Talking to High Monks in the Snow* gives herself a makeover: 'I asked for a permanent wave. I went to an optician and purchased eyeglasses with lenses rimmed in riotous red'.¹¹³ Minatoya tries to harness what she regards as the desirability and privilege of the Western beauty through her looks: 'I felt bold and free. I thought I looked sultry and slightly dangerous — like an Asian-blooded Brigitte Bardot'.¹¹⁴ Other women resort to more drastic measures. Ironically, Maibelle

Chung in *Face* bumps into one of the Yellow Butterflies years later and finds that she has tried to erase her orientalisng features:

Much later, between years of college, I ran into one of the Yellow Butterflies selling panty hose at Bloomingdale's. She'd had her eyes done, had the lids lifted, folded, and cut until the almond shape was gone and with it her exotic, imperious beauty. Now she looked innocent. Cute. She could pass for American.¹¹⁵

Maibelle correctly reads the Yellow Butterfly's manipulation of colorist coding here. No longer in the environment and context of Chinatown, but in an American context where lightness of hue and wideness of eye is valued, the Butterfly has exchanged 'exotic' significations for the wide-eyed innocence of American beauty. Fiona Cheong's protagonist in 'Natives', who so admired and desired the power of wide blue eyes, dreams of similar cosmetic surgery:

Mama was following me around the floor, nagging at me to let the surgeon cut my eyes, to let him sew the double eyelids before my skin became too old, became soft like smelly wet leaves under trees. Make bigger eyes, she said. You have long eyelashes but people cannot see them because your eyes are too small. Make bigger eyes and you will be pretty.¹¹⁶

In her dream, this woman recognises the correlation between wide eyes and Western standards of beauty but also acknowledges that her eyes as orientalisng sign 'mask' her one 'asset' of beauty: her long eyelashes. Here, the spectacular act reads the shape of her eyes, which mark her as 'oriental', but fails to read her eyelashes as a sign of beauty.

Several writers are more brutal than we have seen so far in their representation, and damnation of these occidentalising gestures. In 'Natives', Cheong writes of the pressure to submit to cosmetic metamorphosis: 'There was illness in our country. The good kind well-meaning surgeons were grafting sanitised European eyelids onto misguided, misinformed Chinese women'.¹¹⁷ This process of 'sanitisation' in order to conform to Western prescriptions of beauty often is seen to result in the erasure of facial features as a mark of individuality. Doreen's cosmetic surgery, where she 'tears the skin

off her face' means that 'no one could remember/ Doreen's face'.¹¹⁸ Similarly, in *Clay Walls*, Clara tries to sanitise her orientalisising features through plastic surgery, we are told she 'peeled her skin, made her eyes and nose bigger'.¹¹⁹ Clara's predicament in *Clay Walls* is perhaps the most searing indictment on this sanitising tendency because her surgery is disastrous. Haesu's daughter Faye later describes seeing Clara after the surgery:

... the veil fell away from her face. I saw her grey complexion. She had meant to have it whitened, but having her skin peeled had left it looking dead. Above her high cheekbones, her eyes bulged as if she were frightened. The operation was to make them larger.¹²⁰

Clara's intention to bleach her skin results in a grey pallor, in colorist terms signalling decay rather than the juvenescent innocence that she intended. Her wide-eyed innocence translates as a frightened look, as Lena's attempts to keep her eyes dilated in *The Joy Luck Club* did too. It is notable that within the text, Clara's disastrous experience serves as a warning against undergoing such surgery, and it is explicitly linked with Clara's Western marriage, as Faye observes: 'Momma had told me that Aunt Clara could not fully close her eyes anymore, not even when she slept. I kissed her cheek through the veil and vowed I would never fall in love with the wrong man'.¹²¹

All these women's attempts to erase the orientalisising sign of their physiognomy are the result of the 'double consciousness' of the spectacular act defining them from the outside. For many of these women, self image seems to reside close to the surface, as is seen here; the pressure to attain standards of occidental attractiveness engenders an acute awareness of the look and one's looks. Maibelle Chung constantly feels 'shut out'¹²² and 'minor-i-ty'¹²³ because of her looks. However, her partner Tai, also Chinese American, rejects her claim that 'Looks! Skin color. Hair. Eyes. Body type' mean that identity predominantly resides at the surface.¹²⁴ He tells her:

Outsider. Insider. Those are roles. Positions you take in your own life, not in the world around you. Don't you see? The real dividing line has nothing to do with the shape of your eyes or face, what language you speak. It's inside you.¹²⁵

Whereas Asian American fiction, poetry and autobiography by women is full of discussions of the relationship between physiognomy and identity, I have not found a corresponding emphasis in texts by and about men.¹²⁶ Tai's response to Maibelle seems quite typical. As *Face* shows, it is the women in the texts who undergo an identity crisis linked to their body image. This may be due to the gendered nature of the gaze. Frequently, this crisis of corporeal identity is described in gendered terms, often referring to the violence of cross-gender, as well as cross-cultural relations. In Marilyn Chin's short story 'Moon', for example, the racialising gaze is seen as, as well as being linked to, an act of gender and racial violence: '... the boys ripped off Moon's dress and took turns pissing all over her round face and belly saying, "So, it's true, it's true that your cunts are really slanted. Slant-eyed cunt!"'¹²⁷ It is notable here that this act produces in Moon herself a racializing gaze and attitude, itself an act of violence if not violation, as her revenge is to go in search of 'blond victims'.¹²⁸

It is in *Face* that the violence and violation of the racialising, as well as gendering, gaze is explored in most detail. *Face* tells the story of Eurasian character Maibelle Chung's search for her identity in New York's Chinatown, where she grew up, and where she finally recollects that she was raped as a child. Maibelle Chung's quest for identity is mapped through her relationship with the racialising gaze and the spectacular act. As a Eurasian, she is both inside and outside of Chinatown physiognomically, and her geographical existence mirrors this; she moves out of Chinatown, but returns repeatedly as a tourist, which renders her an outsider. The novel opens with a discussion of Maibelle's experience growing up in Chinatown psychologically and genealogically as an insider, whilst marked as a foreigner by her appearance. Although Chinatown was familiar to her, shown by her olfactory recognition: she knew the smell 'as well as my name',¹²⁹ her physiognomy places her as a non-member: 'I see myself in these memories as a tall, pale, redheaded girl ... too-wide eyes the color of jade and only a vague oriental cast. Against the rest of the Mott Street crowd I stand out like a vivid flaw in a bolt of jet-black silk'.¹³⁰

Maibelle's relationship with the Chinatown that used to be her home continues to be characterised by ambivalence as she alternatively feels herself to be a member of her environment and then rendered alien by her appearance. Maibelle leaves Chinatown as a child, but retains a psychological connection with it, partly due to her father, who is Chinese, but also because something repeatedly draws her back. She returns as part of a

photographic assignment for a friend, and it is these visits that reawaken her contradictory feelings towards the place where she grew up. She returns in the role of an outsider as a tourist, when she photographs her surroundings: 'It's all different, I tell myself. That souvenir sign "Tourist Welcome", means you now'.¹³¹ She engages in a spectacular act herself through the lens of her camera when she starts photographing her surroundings, but finds herself accidentally embroiled in a demonstration against the kind of racial and cultural voyeurism in which she is involved. Maibelle significantly feels *herself* being watched: 'I can't shake the feeling that I'm being watched' and 'I sense the concealed faces watching',¹³² as if she is identifying with the angry sentiments of the Chinese she herself has returned to photograph. She simultaneously feels herself to be both a spectacle and a spectator in Chinatown. Paradoxically, she raises her camera — the instrument of spectatorship — as a defence against appearing as a spectacle herself, by masking her face: 'I hold my circle of glass to my face as if it could protect me'.¹³³ Maibelle's voyeurism of the Chinatown spectacle means that she herself adopts a racialising gaze when watching other Chinese: 'Suddenly one of the protesters, a man with a ponytail, spins around barking like seal. The roundness of his face, like a plate, registers. I release the shutter'.¹³⁴ It is the man's physiognomy, the *roundness of his face*, that triggers Maibelle's spectatorship at this moment. The man reacts to Maibelle as a foreigner/spectator, not recognising her as part-Chinese and asks her 'Come to the Chinatown zoo, lady?'.¹³⁵ Moments later, Maibelle finds herself taunted by a group of young boys who again fail to see her as part-Chinese, calling her 'Lou fan', which means barbarian/outsider.¹³⁶ Maibelle again defends herself against the gaping boys by using her camera as a weapon, symbolised by the double meaning of shoot, so that she turns from spectacle to spectator: 'I turn quickly, raising the Leica, shoot them once, twice, three times dead on, and start running'.¹³⁷ It is incidents like this, where Maibelle finds herself treated as a foreigner, that cause her to note: 'Living in Chinatown, things happened that made me feel like an outcast'.¹³⁸ Despite her paradoxical attempts to sever links with Chinatown by photographing it, in order to move from spectacle to spectator, Maibelle's preoccupation with Chinatown continues. As the narrative progresses, she starts to remember the childhood she suppressed and it emerges that her confusion over her identity and inability to relinquish Chinatown as a psychological influence upon her result from her suppression of a rape in Chinatown one night when she returned as a fourteen year old to take photographs. The rape is a pivotal moment in Maibelle's

relationship with the racialising gaze and her oscillation between the position of spectator and spectacle. Maibelle, aged fourteen, is distanced from Chinatown both geographically and culturally now she has moved upstate, and has returned as a tourist to 'shoot the storefronts. The ginseng and strangled ducks. The dancing chicken',¹³⁹ all the spectacles to which tourists are attracted when visiting Chinatown. Psychologically, she begins to feel a part of her surroundings once more: 'Chinatown wrapped around me as if I'd never left'.¹⁴⁰ Maibelle's sense of belonging is so strong at this point that she even begins to assimilate her appearance into her environment: 'Even my own reflection — taller, paler, and more out of place than ever — seemed part of the package luring me back, no longer cause to run away'.¹⁴¹ Maibelle's activities as a tourist are separated from her feeling of belonging, and, armed with this new sense of security, she begins to photograph a group of boys, who obligingly pose for her. Their response is then to turn her act of violation back on her by taking her to a deserted building nearby and gang-raping her. One act of colonisation is reciprocated by another, although not equal; it is an act of gender, as well as racial violence, in the way that Marilyn Chin's story described earlier. The whole ordeal is described in a highly racially- and colour-charged way, which repeatedly plays along colorist lines. For example, Maibelle's recognition of the danger her attackers represent is described using colorist coding: 'So much black. Hair, eyes, clothing, sunglasses.'¹⁴² Here, for Maibelle, the black hair and eyes that she lacks, and which mark her attackers as Chinese in the dim light, function textually as a trope for threat and evil intent. Later, during their rape, her assailants taunt her in colorist terms, calling her "'Bai xiangku". White witch'.¹⁴³ It is significant that during the rape itself, Maibelle doesn't look, she 'felt rather than saw them closing in'.¹⁴⁴ She thus refuses to face her attackers and to engage in the exchange of recognition that is part of the spectacular act. After the rape, Maibelle's defiance is to gaze at her attackers, literally facing them down, without looking away: 'I stared into the flame the fat one kept waving at me. I didn't blink. Again and again, until the muscles around my eyes burned with the effort of keeping them wide'.¹⁴⁵ Maibelle's defiance partly works by staring with the wide-eyed look that she knows occidentalises her in the eyes of her all-Chinese rapists. The recognition that her eyes are an occidentalising sign for her attackers allows her to use their racialising gaze as a defence, as she later says: 'I retreated back into my crazy eyes'.¹⁴⁶ Maibelle's punishment and rejection as non-Chinese, a 'white witch', by the Chinatown boys here is linked with gender violence too,

as it was in Chin's story. The episode works through both racial and gender tensions, and both colorist coding and the racialising gaze mark the distance between Maibelle and her attackers. The incident is only later linked to Maibelle through her appearance as only part-Chinese, because 'the girl had red hair, was a teenager. Rumor was, she came from outside'.¹⁴⁷

Tai recognises Maibelle as the victim of the rape because he 'remembered the look on your face'.¹⁴⁸ It is Maibelle's *face* that tells the story of her ordeal. The face is often represented as a text telling one's story. In *The Joy Luck Club*, Ying-Ying says that she 'rubbed out my face over the years washing away my pain'.¹⁴⁹ For Ying-Ying, the pain she has suffered through her life defines her individuality. In an interview, Maxine Hong Kingston said that it was the ability of the face to tell one's story that she found so fascinating in San Francisco's Chinatown: 'The older people were very wrinkled, laugh wrinkles and work wrinkles. The way their eyelids folded and their noses grew, the way their faces showed the hardships and the dignity and the humor ...',¹⁵⁰

Counteracting Stereotypes

The project of rehabilitative representation involves the Asian American women writer in a search for ways to deal with unwanted cultural baggage. Among the most deeply rooted elements of this baggage are stereotypes of Asians, and hence the rehabilitative project necessitates finding ways to escape stereotypical self-images. Counteractive measures are difficult, however, because the process of racist stereotyping is inextricably linked to the preservation of racial hierarchies, as Elaine Kim observes:

Stereotypes of racial minorities are a record of prejudices; they are part of an attempt to justify various attitudes and practices. The function of stereotypes of Asians in Anglo-American literature has been to provide literary rituals through which myths of white racial supremacy might be continually reaffirmed.¹⁵¹

Such stereotypes are highly durable, not only in cultural media, where, as Rothschild suggests, 'stereotypes ... become psychologically useful, and hence highly resistant to correction',¹⁵² but also in the individual consciousness, as Amy Ling notes '[stereotypes are] based on fixed concepts within the perceiver's head'.¹⁵³ Stereotypes make

assumptions about an entire group based on supposedly shared behavioural, cultural and physical characteristics. For example, Jeff Spinner writes that ‘Racists claim that Blacks are lazy, shiftless and cunning; that Jews are miserly and shrewd; and that Arabs are cleverly dishonest. All Arabs, all Jews, and all Blacks, racists claim, have these characteristics’.¹⁵⁴ As I suggested earlier, there is a long history of stereotyping Asian Americans as a so-called group. For example, one of the prejudicial moral judgements cited by Juliana Schiesari earlier was that ‘slant-eyed’ people are ‘duplicitous’.¹⁵⁵ As early as 1911, Anglo literature was (re)producing stereotypes of Asian Americans as ‘slant-eyed’ and ‘duplicitous’. One poem, written in 1911, includes the following example:

A swell young Chink in a jacket pink lounged by the outer door.
His eyes were closed and you’d swear he dozed, but he saw a whole lot
more
Than you or I.¹⁵⁶

Many of these stereotypes depend upon the construction of a link between physiognomy and psychology, as Jessica Hagedorn indicates in her list of examples: ‘The slit-eyed, bucktooth Jap thrusting his bayonet, thirsty for blood. The inscrutable, wily Chinese detective with his taped eyelids and wispy moustache’.¹⁵⁷ These images work through physiognomic features: eyes, teeth, face, eyelids. As I argued earlier, both the face and the eyes function as signifying canvasses registering individual response and nuance. Under the racialising gaze, personal and particular features are not seen. The only features seen are those registering membership of a group. Stereotypes which involve the idea of duplicity and inscrutability suggest the ability to reveal — or to conceal — the face. Indeed, etymologically, ‘duplicity’ signals ‘doubleness’. Amy Tan’s *The Joy Luck Club* reworks this stereotype in order to criticise it. The section entitled ‘Double Face’ both plays out and plays upon the idea of duplicity. ‘Double Face’ refers to the facial likeness between Lindo Jong and her daughter Waverly. It also has ironic resonances of stereotypes of the ‘duplicitous Asian’. The comparison between Lindo and her daughter is made by their hairdresser, Mr. Rory: ‘It’s uncanny how much you two look alike’.¹⁵⁸ The comparison functions simultaneously to evoke the white racialising gaze (Mr. Rory’s) in which individuality is not seen; but it is here

particularised because in this instance, the mother and daughter share genealogical similarities and they *do* look alike: they have the ‘same eyes, the same cheeks, the same chin’.¹⁵⁹ Tan goes on to explore the stereotype of duplicity further. The connection between physiognomy and character is reproduced by Lindo who tells her daughter: ‘you can see your character in your face’.¹⁶⁰ She then describes the way in which the eyes predict one’s life: “‘The eyes are honest, eager,” she said. “They follow me and show respect. They do not look down in shame. They do not resist and turn the opposite way. You will be a good wife, mother, and daughter-in-law””.¹⁶¹ The practice of reading physiognomic characteristics to gauge both personality and the future is likewise discussed: fortune-telling assumes the body is a text, especially palm-reading; however, these kinds of prediction are questioned later when the fortune cookies are seen to be haphazard and paradoxically only predictable in the context of human intervention.

At the end of ‘Double Face’, Tan takes her parody of the duplicity stereotype further. The connection between face and character is reiterated when Lindo says ‘maybe it was my crooked nose that damaged my thinking’.¹⁶² She and her daughter discuss their crooked noses and Waverly notes that their shared noses ‘make us devious’.¹⁶³ Explaining this to her mother she says that ‘we mean what we say, but our intentions are different’.¹⁶⁴ Lindo’s response, ‘People can see this in our face?’ is portentous in the context of the duplicity stereotype.¹⁶⁵ Waverly answers, ‘they just know we’re two-faced’.¹⁶⁶ Two-faced duplicity is seen to be both positive and particular: it is a characteristic shared here by mother and daughter, rather than a whole group.

Throughout the section ‘Double Face’, Lindo produces different faces/looks in response to different audiences and situations, commenting that she uses ‘my American face’ or ‘my Chinese face’ at different points.¹⁶⁷ Significantly, Lindo’s ‘American face’ is the face ‘Americans *think* is Chinese’ (italics mine).¹⁶⁸ Thus, Lindo’s use of duplicity allows her to manipulate the racialising/stereotyping gaze: like Maibelle Chung in *Face*, she produces the face others *expect* to see, confident that they will read her face in the way that she intends. Tan’s manipulation of the duplicity stereotype ends the novel when Jing-Mei and her sisters meet and we are told that they ‘look like our mother. Her same eyes, her same mouth, open in surprise ...’.¹⁶⁹

Tan also engages to some extent with the ‘inscrutable Asian’ stereotype that Hagedorn mentions. Inscrutability functions as a stereotype through physiognomy too.

As duplicity describes the ability to produce different faces, so inscrutability suggests producing an impenetrable face, a face-as-mask. The idea that the face can be masked, so that it cannot be read refers back to the tendency to collapse individual differences in the racialising gaze. The racialising gaze therefore to some extent produces the inscrutability stereotype, because the individual face is not scrutinised. When Lydia Minatoya asks, 'Do we really all look alike? What part of me belongs to me and what parts are just common to my race?', she has highlighted the point.¹⁷⁰ The racialising gaze fails to distinguish between the parts 'common to me' and the parts 'common to my race'. Waverly's concerned question to her mother regarding her trip to China expresses this: 'What if I blend in so well they think I'm one of them?'¹⁷¹ Waverly is conditioned to expect to be conflated with all Chinese — indeed, all Asians — in a Western context, and does not consider how this might change in a different environment. As Sau-Ling Wong notes: 'the gaze of cultural voyeurs effectively 'disappears' the people: every Chinese in its sight is reduced to a specimen of Otherness devoid of individuality and interiority'.¹⁷² What Waverly doesn't consider is the experience that Lydia Minatoya has in Asia. As I argued earlier, difference is partly dependent upon context, it is defined in relation to a contextual 'norm'. Thus, in Asia, Minatoya, although (part-)Asian herself, nevertheless finds herself marked as other, and she is treated neither as a Westerner nor as a Japanese. Waverly's mother Lindo has a similar experience when she returns to China after a forty year absence. Her residence in the United States has marked her face so that, as she says, 'They knew my face was not one hundred percent Chinese'.¹⁷³

In 'Double Face', Amy Tan constructs a complex chain of spectacular acts, involving Lindo Jong, her daughter Waverly and the hairdresser, Mr. Rory. Lindo and her daughter are at the hairdresser's. The gaze starts with Lindo who is watching Waverly who 'is looking at Mr. Rory in the mirror. He is looking at me in the mirror'.¹⁷⁴ In this complex exchange, Lindo is conscious of Waverly's awareness of Mr. Rory's racialising/gendering gaze at Lindo. Here, too, the mirror functions as a trope. Significantly, Waverly is attempting to occidentalise her mother's appearance by having her hair done. As Lindo notes: 'I know her meaning. She is ashamed of my looks. What will her husband's parents and his important lawyer friends think of this backward old Chinese woman?'¹⁷⁵ Waverly's gaze becomes racialising as she anticipates the racialising gazes of those at the wedding and tries to prevent them in advance. Lindo's understanding of her daughter's motivation leads to her adopting a racialising self-gaze,

so that Lindo has a triple consciousness at this point. Mr. Rory's gaze becomes racialising and gendering when he compares the two: 'It's uncanny how much you two look alike!'¹⁷⁶ At this point, Lindo echoes Rosalind Coward's comment about the centrality of the gaze in our society, and its control over the individual: 'Americans ... talk to their reflections. They look at others or themselves only when they think nobody is watching'.¹⁷⁷

Tan's engagement with the popular stereotypes of inscrutability and duplicity stems from her recognition, in common with many other Asian American women writers, that any effort to counterbalance — or reject — the hegemony of racial stereotyping entails revisiting the same territory. For Asian American women, it is not just the trans-gender stereotypes of duplicity and inscrutability with which they must engage, but rather as Amy Ling shows in her discussion of stereotyping, Asian American women are also dogged by gender-specific but equally debilitating racial images. She identifies two enduring images of Asian women, those of the 'Dragon Lady/seductress/exotic' woman, and the 'Shy Lotus Blossom/China Doll' woman.¹⁷⁸ These stereotypes, too, often work through physiognomy, so for example the China Doll has an 'ivory hand' and 'long fingernails'. She suggests that such stereotypes have their roots in Western sailors' early sexual encounters with Chinese women in the days of the first trade between Asia and Europe. The roots of these stereotypes are not as important as their durability, however, as Ling goes on to note that 'whatever their origin, these stereotypes were disseminated and perpetuated through the popular media and continue to distort the way in which Asian women are portrayed and perceived in the Western world'. In her article, 'Lotus Blossoms Don't Bleed: Images of Asian Women', Renée Tajima continues and extends Ling's identification and discussion of the stereotyping of Asian women. She, like Ling, identifies two main stereotypes:

There are two basic types: the Lotus Blossom Baby (a.k.a. China Doll, Geisha Girl, shy Polynesian Beauty), and the Dragon Lady (Fu Manchu's various female relations, prostitutes, devious madames). There is little in between, although experts may differ as to whether Suzie Wong belongs to the race-blind 'hooker with a heart of gold' category, or deserves one all of her own.¹⁷⁹

Tajima observes that these images of Asian women 'have remained consistently simplistic and inaccurate', which once more affirms both the durability and potency of stereotyping. She goes on to delineate the genesis and evolution of these stereotypes in Anglo film, from the 1924 film *Thief of Bagdad* up to the 1985 film *Year of the Dragon*. The pattern of stereotyping in these films matches the development of similar stereotypes in the literary representations that I discussed earlier. For example, elements of the exoticised female stereotype are referred to by both Marilyn Chin in 'Moon' ('Slant-eyed cunt!'), and Kerri Sakamoto, who is asked: 'Is it true about these Oriental women? That there's something different, some special ...?'¹⁸⁰ Tajima asserts the destructive might of these images upon the attempt at rehabilitative representation:

Several generations of Asian women have been raised with racist and sexist celluloid images ... generations of other Americans have also grown up with these images. And their acceptance of the dehumanization implicit in the stereotypes of expendability and invisibility is frightening.¹⁸¹

Perhaps the most lengthy indictment of racist stereotyping can be found towards the end of Maxine Hong Kingston's novel, *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book*, where we are privy to Wittman Ah Sing's treatise on racist stereotyping. Here, Wittman covers, over several pages, all of the preoccupations with physiognomy and racism cited in this chapter, with especial emphasis on the processes involved in stereotyping. Wittman discusses inscrutability ('we're not inscrutable at all'); the emasculation of the Asian male (... two parts of the anatomy that are deficient in orientals. The nose and the penis'); the 'dogeater' stereotype ('I'm warning you, you ask me about food shit, I'll recommend a dog-shit restaurant'); as well as linguistic stereotypes ('They expect us to go into our Charlie Chan Fu Manchu act ... They ... are cutting off our balls linguistically. "Me no likee"').¹⁸² Wittman goes on to discuss filmic (mis)representations of Asians at length, and to point out the inaccuracy of such representations:

A racist movie is always running on some channel. Just the other night, I saw another one that kills off the Chinese guy ... he talks to himself, rubbing his hands together, plotting, 'I will convert a missionary.' Which is racially and religiously very fucked up. Chinese don't convert white people but vice versa.¹⁸³

Wittman's exegesis on racist stereotyping is useful here because it is through Wittman that we see Kingston engaging with and refuting various stereotypes that work, through physiognomy, to categorise Asian American women. In particular, Wittman attacks the exoticised image of the Asian female referred to by Marilyn Chin in her story 'Moon', and answers the question asked of Kerri Sakamoto 'Is it true about these Oriental women ...': "The full line," said Wittman, "is, 'Is it true what they say about Chinese girls' twats?' They think they're sideways, that they slant like eyes".¹⁸⁴ Wittman continues with the connection between physiognomy and stereotyping:

They want to hear me answer something obscene, something bodily. Some disgusting admission about our anatomy. About daikon legs and short waist or long waist, and that the twat goes sideways, slanting like her eyes. They want me to show them the Mongoloidian spot on my ass. They want to measure the length of my ape arms and compare them to negers' arms.¹⁸⁵

In this extract, we begin to see how residual notions of the 'science' of physiognomy still function to tie Asian Americans to debilitating stereotypes, and that such stereotypes are both regressive and retrogressive. Wittman continues his assault on physiognomy later when he says:

I *am* this tall. I didn't get this tall by being experimented on by scientists trying to find the secret of height. They're looking for a time hormone in the pituitary gland; maybe the chronons are up there. Speeding them up (or slowing them down) may fool the body into growing more. They're taking unused time from the brains of cadavers and injecting it into the brains of short little orientals.¹⁸⁶

Wittman's indictment includes attacking the 'bucktooth' image highlighted by Jessica Hagedorn, by describing a doctor, ironically named 'Dr. Angle', who has 'invented a way to straighten buckteeth'. He simultaneously rejects such stereotypical images and asserts his own perfection, by pointing out that, like Dr. Angle, 'I declare my looks-teeth, eyes, nose, profile-perfect.'¹⁸⁷ Wittman describes stereotypes thus: "I think," he tried explaining, "that history being trapped in people means that history is embodied in physical characteristics", thus emphasising the tendency to draw conclusions about

groups of people from assumed shared physiognomy, and he then homes in on the racist tendency to 'read' the body (especially the eyes):

And do you know what part of our bodies they find so mysteriously inscrutable? It's our little eyes. They think they can't see into these little squinny eyes. They think we're sneaky, squinnying at them through spy eyes. They can't see inside here past these slits.¹⁸⁸

For the benefit of the reader or listener guilty of such assumptions, he notes:

Take a good look at these eyes ... it's an American face. Notice as I profile, you can see both my eyes at once. I see more than most people-no bridge that blocks the view between the eyes. I have a wide-angle windshield. Take a good look. These are the type of eyes most preferred for the movies ... these are movie star eyes.¹⁸⁹

Kingston/Wittman's assault on physiognomic racism here is very astute. At the same time as refuting stereotypes about vision, Wittman invites the reader or listener to appraise him in a voyeuristic, quasi-anthropological manner, a move which simultaneously reproduces and condemns such actions. Then Wittman deals with the move by certain Asian American women to resort to cosmetic surgery in order to change their looks:

And that's why you girls are slicing your eyelids open, isn't it? Poor girls. I understand. And you glue on the false eyelashes to give your scant eyes some definition ... I have been requesting my actresses to take off their false eyelashes, to go on bare-face and show what we look like. I promise, they will find a new beauty. But every one of them draw on eyeliner, top and bottom rims, and also up here on the bone to make like deep sockets. Then mascara, then-clamp, clamp. They kink their stubby lashes with this metal pincher that looks like a metal plow. With spirit gum and tape, they glue on a couple of rows per eye of fake-hair falsies. A bulge of fat swells out over the tape-a crease, a fold-allthesame Caucasoid ... Worse than make-up ... is the eye operation ... You girls

shouldn't do that to yourselves. It's supposed to make you more attractive to men, right? Speaking as a man, I don't want to kiss eyes that have been cut and sewn; I'd be thinking Bride of Frankenstein. But I guess you're not trying to attract my type. I can tell when somebody's had her lids done. After she gets her stitches pulled and the puffiness goes down, she doesn't have a fold exactly, it's a scar line across each roundish lid. And her mien has been like lifted. Like she ate something too hot. The jalapeño look. She'll have to meet new guys who will believe she was born like that. She'll draw black lines on top of the scars, and date white guys, who don't care one way or the other single-lid double-lid.¹⁹⁰

Kingston's voice interrupts Wittman's monologue at this point to note that:

Several pioneer showgirls were present who had secretly had that operation done long ago. They were laughing at the girl with the jalapeño expression. They did not admit that all you have to do is leave your eyes alone, and grow old; the lids will naturally develop a nice wrinkle.¹⁹¹

Her irony at this point is searing: paradoxically, folded lids can be achieved naturally by growing old, another move which runs contrary to Western beauty standards.

Kingston's/Wittman's lengthy discussion of the use of cosmetic surgery echoes other female writers' indictments of such practices that I discussed earlier. Wittman's observation that 'I guess you're not trying to attract my type' again refers to Western beauty standards. In addition, as Ronyoung Kim does in *Clay Walls*, Kingston includes a description of the dangers and pitfalls of such surgery as a textual warning against considering such a step. Part of the success of Kingston's extensive indictment of stereotyping is due to her use of Wittman Ah Sing as her spokesperson. His up-beat, off-centre and slightly crazed perspective invigorates the condemnation of stereotyping. In addition, Wittman's narrative stance as purveyor of an eclectic array of cultural snippets enables him to switch between stereotypical representations with a fluidity which adds momentum to his rage against racism.

Rehabilitative Representations?

But it is possible to escape the gaze? Avenues of release are only tentatively journeyed in these texts. Lydia Minatoya suggests that it is when her gaze 'turned outward' to 'the world beyond' the gaze, that she is able to start to answer her question 'Who am I?'¹⁹² Maibelle Chung, too, finds relief from her crisis of identity by turning her gaze outward. She returns to the scene of her rape and photographs it. Once more, the camera provides defence for her and allows her to become the spectator rather than the spectacle: 'the camera offers a removed chamber where I can rest and wait for the glare to subside. The frame controls what I see, lens and shutter give me something to do with my hands'.¹⁹³ Maibelle's photography of the scene of her rape allows her to (re)colonise the episode and it is this process that provides a release. Symbolically, when Maibelle catches the fire escape in the lens of her camera, she sees her escape route, the escape route that she failed to notice on the night of her rape, and this signals her escape from the racialising/gendering gaze. *Face* closes with Maibelle's encounter with her racial double:

The child's eyes are elongated, beautifully carved with the same perfectly smooth, flat lids that I used to admire in the Yellow Butterflies. But that's where the resemblance ends. As I lean close I see this child's eyes are not black or even dark brown. They are flecked with color, radiating like a wheel — slivers of grey, amber, green, but deep in the center as unearthly and hypnotic as a summer pool, they are pure blue.¹⁹⁴

Because Maibelle's gaze, like Lydia Minatoya's, has turned outward, she is able to photograph the child: 'I begin to record what I see'.¹⁹⁵

In *The Joy Luck Club*, Waverly, too, needs to release herself from the tendency to reproduce the racialising gaze before both she and her mother may be released too. At the beginning of 'Double Face', when Lindo and her daughter stare at their similarity in the mirror together, Waverly is 'frowning at herself in the mirror'.¹⁹⁶ By the end of the section, Waverly has accepted the orientalising features that she shares with her mother, and they are able to share a joke about their shared physiognomy together.

Notes

- ¹ Aimee E. Liu, *Face* (London: Headline Review Press, 1995), p.55.
- ² Thomas F. Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (Dallas, TX: Southern Methodist University Press, 1975).
- ³ Juliana Schiesari, 'The Face of Domestication: Physiognomy, gender politics, and humanism's others', in *Women, "Race," and Writing in the Early Modern Period*, ed. by Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker (London: Routledge, 1994), pp.55-70 (p.57).
- ⁴ Maggie Humm, *The Dictionary of Feminist Theory* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), p.182.
- ⁵ See Joseph Rothschild's discussion of race in *Ethnopolitics: A Conceptual Framework* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), p.87.
- ⁶ See Gossett's discussion of nineteenth century anthropology in *Race*, especially pp.73-4.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p.57.
- ⁸ See Elaine Kim, *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and their Social Context* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1982), especially chapter one.
- ⁹ S. Gompers and H. Gustadt, *Meat vs. Rice; American Manhood against Asiatic Coolieism, Which Shall Survive* (San Francisco, 1908), p.30, quoted in *Race: The History of an Idea in America*, p.486.
- ¹⁰ *Race*, p.291.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.290.
- ¹² *Asian American Literature*, p.6.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p.18.
- ¹⁴ 'The Face of Domestication', p.57.
- ¹⁵ Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, 'Ethnic Subject, Ethnic Sign, and the Difficulty of Rehabilitative Representation: Chinatown in Some Works of Chinese American Fiction', in *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 24 (1994), pp.251-262 (p.251).
- ¹⁶ William Boelhower, *Through a Glass Darkly: Ethnic Semiosis in American Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).
- ¹⁷ 'Ethnic Subject, Ethnic Sign', p.251.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.252.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*
- ²¹ *Ibid.*
- ²² *Ibid.*, p.253.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p.254.
- ²⁴ Pilar Carrera-Levillain and Jose-Miguel Fernandez-Dols, 'Neutral Faces in Context: Their Emotional Meaning and their Function', *Journal of Nonverbal Behaviour*, 18.4 (Winter, 1994), 281-301.
- ²⁵ 'Ethnic Subject, Ethnic Sign', p.253.
- ²⁶ H. Phillipson Laing and A. R. Lee, *Interpersonal Perception* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1966), pp.5-6, quoted in Elizabeth W. Bruss, *Autobiographical Acts: The Changing Situation of a Literary Genre* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p.13.
- ²⁷ Kerri Sakamoto, 'Walk-In Closet', in *Charlie Chan Is Dead*, ed. by Jessica Hagedorn (New York: Penguin, 1993), p.407.
- ²⁸ Ronyoung Kim, *Clay Walls: A Novel* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1987), p. 18.
- ²⁹ Diana Chang, *The Frontiers of Love* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994), p.5.
- ³⁰ Winnifred Babcock Reeve Eaton (pseudonym Onoto Watanna), *Me: a Book of Remembrance* (New York: Century, 1915), p.166; reprinted 1997 (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1997).
- ³¹ *Ibid.*
- ³² *The Frontiers of Love*, p.5.
- ³³ See Amy Ling's discussion of the relation between double consciousness and the writings of the Eaton sisters, in *Between Worlds: Women Writers of Chinese Ancestry* (New York: Pergamon, 1990), pp.21-55.
- ³⁴ *Between Worlds*, p.112.
- ³⁵ Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p.95.
- ³⁶ *Asian American Literature*, p.9.

- ³⁷ Nancy Bentley, 'White Slaves: The Mulatto Hero in Antebellum Fiction', in *Subjects and Citizens: Nation, Race, and Gender From Oroonoko To Anita Hill*, ed. by Michael Moon and Cathy Davidson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), p.198.
- ³⁸ I mean to evoke Judith Butler's use of 'trouble' here. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).
- ³⁹ 'White Slaves', p.198.
- ⁴⁰ *White Women, Race Matters*, p.95.
- ⁴¹ See Gossett's discussion of the anti-miscegenation legislation in *Race*.
- ⁴² Quoted in *Race*, p.151.
- ⁴³ Ibid.
- ⁴⁴ Examples quoted by Nancy Bentley. See 'White Slaves', p.215.
- ⁴⁵ Wallace Irwin, *The Seed of the Sun*, p.51, quoted in *Asian American Literature*, p.9.
- ⁴⁶ Achmed Abdullah, 'A Simple Act of Piety', in *The Honourable Gentleman and Other Stories* (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1919), p.219, quoted in *Asian American Literature*, p.9.
- ⁴⁷ Rex Beach, *Son of the Gods* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1929), quoted in *Asian American Literature*, p.9.
- ⁴⁸ Edith Maude Eaton, 'Leaves From the Mental Portfolio of An Eurasian', *The Independent*, 21 January, 1909, quoted in *Between Worlds*, p.183.
- ⁴⁹ *Me*, p.3.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., p.166.
- ⁵¹ Ibid. See Ling's discussion of the Eatons in *Between Worlds*, as above.
- ⁵² 'Afterword', *Me*, p.365.
- ⁵³ *Me*, p.187.
- ⁵⁴ Quoted in *Between Worlds*, p.35.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid.
- ⁵⁶ *The Frontiers of Love*, p.19.
- ⁵⁷ Samantha Ramu Rau, 'The Need to Belong', *The New York Times Book Review*, 23 September, 1956, p.26.
- ⁵⁸ *The Frontiers of Love*, p.87.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid., p.144.
- ⁶¹ Ibid., p.5.
- ⁶² Han Suyin, *The Crippled Tree* (London: Lowe and Brydore, 1965), p.416.
- ⁶³ *The Frontiers of Love*, p.86.
- ⁶⁴ *Face*, p.55.
- ⁶⁵ 'Leaves', p.216.
- ⁶⁶ *Face*, p.55.
- ⁶⁷ Winnifred Eaton (pseudonym Onoto Watanna), *His Royal Nibs* (New York: W. J. Watt, 1925), p.245-6.
- ⁶⁸ *The Frontiers of Love*, p.162.
- ⁶⁹ *The Crippled Tree*, p.290.
- ⁷⁰ *Face*, p.172.
- ⁷¹ Patricia Waugh, *Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern* (London: Routledge, 1989), p.178.
- ⁷² *Asian American Literature*, p.9.
- ⁷³ *The Crippled Tree*, p.369.
- ⁷⁴ Rosalind Coward, *Female Desire: Women's Sexuality Today* (London: Paladin, 1984), p.76.
- ⁷⁵ *The Frontiers of Love*, p.5.
- ⁷⁶ Lydia Minatoya, *Talking to High Monks in the Snow: An Asian American Odyssey* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), p.58.
- ⁷⁷ *Face*, p.1.
- ⁷⁸ Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (London: Macmillan, 1984), p.38.
- ⁷⁹ Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*, 16.3 (Autumn, 1975), 6-18.
- ⁸⁰ Ibid., p.9.
- ⁸¹ Ibid., p.11.
- ⁸² Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (London: Picador, 1990).

- ⁸³ Nellie Wong, 'When I Was Growing Up', in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, ed. by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (New York: Kitchen Table Press, 1981), pp.7-9.
- ⁸⁴ Fiona Cheong, 'Natives', in *Charlie Chan is Dead*, p.76.
- ⁸⁵ Virginia Harris, 'Prison of Color', in *Skin Deep: Women Writing on Color Culture and Identity*, ed. by Elena Featherston (Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1994), p.9.
- ⁸⁶ 'Natives', p.78.
- ⁸⁷ 'Walk-In Closet', p.411.
- ⁸⁸ Janice Mirikitani, 'Doreen', *We, The Dangerous* (London: Virago, 1995), p.110.
- ⁸⁹ 'Prison of Color', p.9.
- ⁹⁰ Françoise Massardier-Kenney, 'Indiana: A Textual Analysis of Facial Description', *The International Fiction Review*, 15.2 (Summer, 1988), 117-23 (p.121).
- ⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.120.
- ⁹² *Ibid.*
- ⁹³ *Clay Walls*, p.18.
- ⁹⁴ Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*, (London: Minerva, 1989), p.104.
- ⁹⁵ *We, The Dangerous*, p.110.
- ⁹⁶ *We, The Dangerous*, p.5.
- ⁹⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁹⁸ *Clay Walls*, p.18.
- ⁹⁹ *The Frontiers of Love*, p.5.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Face*, p.1.
- ¹⁰¹ *We, The Dangerous*, p.57.
- ¹⁰² *The Frontiers of Love*, p.5.
- ¹⁰³ *Talking to High Monks in the Snow*, p.216.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Face*, p.1.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p.55.
- ¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.1.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Indiana*, p.121.
- ¹⁰⁸ *Face*, p.1.
- ¹⁰⁹ 'Walk-In Closet', p.411.
- ¹¹⁰ *Face*, p.2.
- ¹¹¹ Celia Lury, *Consumer Culture* (Cambridge: Polity, 1996), p.165.
- ¹¹² Teresa de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (London: Macmillan, 1987), p.ix.
- ¹¹³ *Talking to High Monks in the Snow*, p.73.
- ¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹⁵ *Face*, p.2.
- ¹¹⁶ 'Natives', p.84.
- ¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.82.
- ¹¹⁸ *We, The Dangerous*, p.112.
- ¹¹⁹ *Clay Walls*, p.128.
- ¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.225.
- ¹²¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹²² *Face*, p.55.
- ¹²³ *Ibid.*
- ¹²⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.226.
- ¹²⁶ One notable exception is David Henry Hwang's unpublished play, *Face Value*, performed off-Broadway. Hwang's drama plays on the idea of face painting, as a way to mask one's identity. A white actor has his face painted yellow in order to play Fu Manchu in a play-within-a-play, and is then killed by two white supremacist professors. Meanwhile, an Asian actor paints his face white in order to get into the theatre unobserved. For a discussion of Hwang's exploration of mistaken racial identity, see William H. Sun and Faye C. Fei, 'Masks or Faces Revisited: A Study of Four Theatrical Works Concerning Cultural Identity', *The Drama Review*, 38.4, (Winter, 1994), 120-33.
- ¹²⁷ Marilyn Chin, 'Moon', in *Charlie Chan Is Dead*, p.89.

- 128 Ibid., p.90.
- 129 *Face*, p.1.
- 130 Ibid.
- 131 Ibid., p.133.
- 132 Ibid., p.133.
- 133 Ibid., p.138.
- 134 Ibid., p.139.
- 135 Ibid.
- 136 Ibid.
- 137 Ibid., p.140.
- 138 Ibid.
- 139 Ibid., p.303.
- 140 Ibid.
- 141 Ibid.
- 142 Ibid., p.306.
- 143 Ibid., p.307.
- 144 Ibid., p.306.
- 145 Ibid., p.308.
- 146 Ibid.
- 147 Ibid., p.329.
- 148 Ibid.
- 149 *The Joy Luck Club*, p.67.
- 150 Maxine Hong Kingston, 'San Francisco's Chinatown: A View from the Other Side of Arnold Genthe's Camera', *American Heritage* (December, 1978), p.38.
- 151 *Asian American Literature*, p.21.
- 152 *Ethnopolitics*, p.63.
- 153 *Between Worlds*, p.10.
- 154 Jeff Spinner, *The Boundaries of Citizenship: Race, Ethnicity and Nationality in the Liberal State* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), p.19.
- 155 Ibid.
- 156 W. R. Gordon, 'Trouble in Chinatown', *British Columbia Magazine* (September, 1911), quoted in Kay Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), p.102.
- 157 *Charlie Chan Is Dead*, p.xxii.
- 158 *The Joy Luck Club*, p.255.
- 159 Ibid., p.265.
- 160 Ibid., p.256.
- 161 Ibid., p.257.
- 162 Ibid., p.265.
- 163 Ibid., p.266.
- 164 Ibid.
- 165 Ibid.
- 166 Ibid.
- 167 Ibid., pp.255-6.
- 168 Ibid., p.255.
- 169 Ibid., p.288.
- 170 *Talking to High Monks in the Snow*, p.58.
- 171 *The Joy Luck Club*, p.253.
- 172 'Ethnic Subject, Ethnic Sign', p.253.
- 173 *The Joy Luck Club*, p.266.
- 174 *The Joy Luck Club*, p.255.
- 175 Ibid., pp.254-5.
- 176 Ibid., p.255.
- 177 Ibid.
- 178 *Between Worlds*, p.11.

- ¹⁷⁹ Renée Tajima, 'Lotus Blossoms Don't Bleed: Images of Asian Women', in *Making Waves: An Anthology of Writing by and about Asian American Women*, ed. by Asian Women United of California (Boston: Beacon, 1989), p.309.
- ¹⁸⁰ 'Walk-In Closet', p.411.
- ¹⁸¹ 'Lotus Blossoms', p.317.
- ¹⁸² *Tripmaster Monkey*, pp.310-329.
- ¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp.320-1.
- ¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.317.
- ¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.328-9.
- ¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.314.
- ¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.312.
- ¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.314.
- ¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.312-3.
- ¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.313.
- ¹⁹² *Talking to High Monks in the Snow*, p.162.
- ¹⁹³ *Face*, p.338.
- ¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.341. Again, this is Cynthia Sau-ling Wong's term.
- ¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁹⁶ *The Joy Luck Club*, p.266.

CHAPTER SIX

Citizenship and National Identity: Cultural Forms and Formations

So far my argument has suggested that to a certain extent, identity is a matter of choice, of chosen identifications. It is not, however, the case that identity is always open to self-construction, but is instead often externally imposed. In this chapter, I will turn my attention to questions of national identity as explored by a group of Japanese American women writers and by Chinese American writer Maxine Hong Kingston. This is only a partial list of those Asian American writers who engage with issues of national identity, and it is by no means the case that this particular facet of identity is *a priori* gender-specific.¹ I have chosen to focus upon these two examples as they illustrate two very different means by which Asian American women writers have sought to interrogate, negotiate, or renegotiate an externally imposed national identity, in Kingston's case for her ancestors, and thus, by implication, for herself too; in the case of the Japanese American women I shall consider, for themselves as second generation Japanese Americans.

'National' identity may be defined in different ways and by utilising different discourses. These may be fictional, historical, auto/biographical or cartographical; however it is necessary to acknowledge that legal discourse is dominant in the definition of national identity, and that the legal discourse of national identity is that of citizenship. Thus, however, much a particular group seeks to claim a particular national identity through cultural productions and practices, until that claimed national identity is legitimated and recognised through citizenship, as the formal means by which the nation recognises its members, that claimed national identity remains provisional.²

'Citizens inhabit the political space of the nation, a space that is, at once, juridically legislated, territorially situated, and culturally embodied'.³ This chapter seeks to view the negotiation of Asian American identity in relation to the institution and condition of citizenship. This analysis proceeds from the assumption that the 'state

matters ... as a source of identity for its citizens', and that by 'establishing boundaries, the state plays a large role in determining identity. American citizenship is established within the boundaries set by the American state'.⁴ Citizenship, as Hill and Hughes have argued, is the medium through which the individual identifies with and is identified by the nation state:

Since the Renaissance, the modern nation state has been the unit of political identification ... where the individual's relationship to that nation is based upon a model of citizenship.⁵

It is thus a formalised means through which the state confers a national identity upon the individual and through which the individual participates in the national state. The liberal ideal of citizenship stresses the equality the state seeks to confer upon its citizens: 'All citizens have the same political rights: to vote, to run for office, to speak freely, to assemble, and so forth'.⁶ As such, citizenship is predicated upon a model of inclusion rather than exclusion and is 'traditionally conceived of in terms of participation'.⁷ In addition, the institution of citizenship demands a reciprocal relationship both between state and subject and between subjects. Thus the state both confers upon and protects the rights of the individual who in turn abides by the rules of citizenship, so it may also be noted that 'citizenship is about how citizens see and treat others — and how they are viewed and treated by others'.⁸

However, as Lisa Lowe and Will Kymlicka have shown, the state of citizenship is often a site of contradiction for racialised Americans.⁹ Kymlicka has argued that citizenship assumes a homogeneous polis and therefore demands that its ethnic members shed their ethnicity in favour of assimilation in order that this may be realised. As Kymlicka notes, 'citizenship cannot perform if it is group-differentiated'.¹⁰ The assimilationist pressure that the institution of citizenship exerts upon its individuals creates problems for racialised Americans' ethnic identities. The erasure of the particularities of ethnic identity and identification often result in a sense of self-negation, as Iris Marion Young has observed:

Self-annihilation is an unreasonable and unjust requirement of citizenship. The fiction, poetry and songs of American cultural minorities brim over with the pain

and loss such demands inflict, documenting how thoroughly assimilationist values violate basic respect for persons.¹¹

Lisa Lowe's work on citizenship and Asian American identity throws this issue into particular relief. Her piece, 'Immigration, Citizenship, Racialization' offers a 'materialist critique of the institution of citizenship' in order 'to name the genealogy of the legal exclusion, disenfranchisement, and restricted enfranchisement of Asian immigrants as a genealogy of the American institution of citizenship'.¹² Lowe's materialist analysis of the links between citizenship and Asian American identity views this relationship through the lens of the 'importance of Asia in the development of Western capitalism globally and the use of Asian labor in the development of capitalist America'.¹³ She suggests that Asian American culture emerges within this conformation as an alternative site and the place where the 'contradictions of immigrant history are read, performed, and critiqued'.¹⁴ In Lowe's analysis minority culture and minority cultural forms emerge as the places where the minority subject speaks, contests, revises and reinvents national versions of history and identity:

Culture is the medium of the *present* — the imagined equivalences and identification through which the individual invents lived relationship with the national collective — but it is simultaneously the site that mediates the *past*, through which history is grasped as difference, as fragments, shocks, and flashes of disjunction. It is through culture that the subject becomes, acts, and speaks itself as 'American.' It is likewise in culture that individuals and collectivities struggle and remember, and, in that difficult remembering, imagine and practice both subject and community differently.¹⁵

Asian American cultural forms are thus posited by Lowe as the site of the emergence of the subject and through which the individual speaks her identity as 'American'. Asian American culture becomes the location of alternative versions of history and identity to national forms precisely because of Asian America's continuing cultural distance from the national spaces and narratives from which it is excluded. As Lowe notes, '... the Asian American, even as citizen, continues to be located outside the cultural and racial boundaries of the nation'.¹⁶ The Asian American *citizen*, then, continues to be culturally

and politically located at the margins of the polity but this position leads to 'cultural products emerging out of the contradictions of immigrant marginality [which] displace the fiction of reconciliation, disrupt the myth of national identity by revealing its gaps and fissures, and intervene in the narrative of national development'.¹⁷ The particular experience of the Asian American citizenry thus reveals the contradictions and provisions of the state of citizenship for racialised subjects and displays the fiction of political homogeneity by revealing that citizenship is in fact a partial institution which treats individuals on a differential and group-specific basis.

The state also imposes identity upon some ethnic individuals through debarment from citizenship, through legislation. Enforced dis-identification from the nation state and thus from national belonging has been the result of a series of legislative moves to label particular groups of Asian immigrants at particular moments in history as 'aliens ineligible for citizenship'. The 'alien ineligible for citizenship' has even less agency for self-definition within the boundaries of the national polity than the racialised citizen. Yet, paradoxically, 'alien' status has, at times in United States history, worked to expose the partiality of citizenship. During the Second World War Japanese Americans were interned as 'enemy aliens' on the basis of their ethnicity, *regardless* of their citizenship status, which highlighted the failure of the assurances that the conferment of citizenship claimed to provide.¹⁸ 'Citizenship' is an oppositional category, in that it works in opposition to the notion of the state 'alien', yet the move to intern Japanese Americans reneged upon the privileges proceeding from this difference. In addition, as Ronald Takaki has shown, even the conferment of citizenship did not always dissolve Asian American difference into the national polity.¹⁹

The history of American treatment of Asian immigrant and of Asian American citizens therefore mirrors the patterns and histories of American national, cultural and legal acceptance and incorporation of Asian Americans into the polity.²⁰ In this piece, I am concerned with the particular history of two groups of Asian Americans: Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans who, at different junctures in American immigration history, suffered especially critical changes in their status as Americans. In each case, at a particular moment, national identity comes to dominate the identity of the individuals in question.

The Japanese Americans narratives I have chosen are a group of texts dealing with the experience of incarceration and relocation to which most Japanese Americans

were subjected following the bombing of Pearl Harbor during the Second World War. These acts of incarceration and relocation demonstrate how the state imposed a national identity upon a particular group of people, against which they had little power of objection. The texts under consideration may be collectively named 'Japanese American internment narratives', as their subject is the experience of internment and relocation, and the effects of this upon Japanese American identity. These texts are all written after the war, at varying degrees of distance from the experience, and they attempt to heal the damage done by that experience. All are autobiographical, and I will read them as deliberate textual reform(ul)ations of Japanese American identity, as a means of coping with the deformation of identity caused by internment.²¹ The autobiographical form functions as a kind of talking cure, as autobiographical discourse offers a way of bearing testimony as well as extending its authority as a discourse of 'truth' to these women's stories. I am thus making two claims for these texts. Firstly, I read them psychoanalytically as examples of a textual talking cure, which, as I go on to show in individual discussions of each text, has varying degrees of success as a panacea for the damage wreaked by the internment experience. Secondly, I also offer these texts as examples of the kind of alternative cultural site through which the subject imagines herself as 'American' in the way outlined by Lisa Lowe, and through which the subject seeks to connect to a national identity through writing despite the limitations imposed upon that project by an externally imposed national identity as a result of internment. Kalí Tal has mapped these two aims as the desire that the text will function as both personally and politically reconstitutive.²² These two aims are sometimes in contradiction, however. In attempting to achieve personal regeneration through writing, these writers often reveal the self negation the experience of internment and dislocation caused. It is difficult to see how the same texts so marked by self negation and erasure would be able, with any degree of success, to assert a viable alternative national identity to those versions of national identity imposed upon these Japanese American women through internment, and I discuss whether this is the case as I examine each text.

The autobiographical internment narratives are not the only retrospective narratives revisiting internment as a defining moment in the formation of Japanese American female identity. I include a discussion of Joy Kogawa's novelistic retelling of the internment story as a way into a discussion of the use of form, genre and discourse as means of claiming national identity. I suggest that Kogawa's use of fiction affords her

a greater freedom in which to revisit, contest and revise the internment and relocation story and that, in contrast, the autobiographical form adopted by the other writers, despite its status as a 'truth-telling' discourse, actually delimits both the narrative and authorising possibilities for those writers.

Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men* tries to claim a national identity in a very different way. She textually revisits the history of Chinese Americans — her history — in an attempt to claim America for her Chinese American ancestors, in a way which will construct a heritage in America for herself too. This involves Kingston in an exploration of the differing ways in which national identity is formulated and engages Kingston with various different discourses, through which identity may be inscribed: history, fiction, biography, cartography and the legal discourse of citizenship are all explored as discourses producing national identity. Kingston recognises that these discourses offer different degrees of legitimated national identity, but seeks to break down the hierarchy in which citizenship is seen to extend the only state-sanctioned and wholly inclusive identity, and in which fictional discourse is only able to confer a limited national identity. Certain discourses carry more epistemological authority than others, but in Kingston's retelling, the discursive boundaries policing this authority are blurred in a way which works to begin to question that epistemological authority.

National Identity and Japanese American Internment Narratives

Japanese Americans have shared with Chinese Americans the experience of white hostility, legislation such as exclusion acts directed towards them and anti-naturalisation laws, but it is the period of the Second World War especially which proved to be the most cataclysmic moment in Japanese American history and which had the most damaging effects upon the development of national identity. As was the case for Chinese Americans, there were also generational differences in the legal and political status and inclusion of Japanese Americans. The *issei*, or first generation, were born in Japan, and as a result of anti-naturalisation laws, were debarred from citizenship, until after the Second World War. This meant the first generation Japanese Americans, like first generation Chinese Americans, remained as 'aliens ineligible for citizenship', on the rim of the national polity. However, for both second generation Chinese Americans and second generation Japanese Americans, or *nisei*, as American-born subjects they were automatically entitled to hold citizenship. This generational divergence in national status

was, for Japanese Americans, thrown into horrible relief during the Second World War, both because first- and second- generation were, and were not, treated differently according to their citizenship status. As a result of the gradual unease with Japanese presence in America after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and in response to increasingly insistent calls for Japanese American containment, President Roosevelt passed Executive Order 9066, effectively interning the majority of the Japanese American population of the United States for the duration of the war. Two thirds of the internees were American citizens, a fact which did not affect their treatment immediately. Thus, citizens and aliens alike were treated as 'enemy aliens'. It was only near the close of the war that the state decided to offer *nisei* men with citizenship the 'privilege' of leaving the camps in order to fight for America, thus differentiating between citizen and non-citizen. This whole experience had a catastrophic effect upon Japanese American identity long after the camps were closed down, and this subject is related in several autobiographies by Japanese American women, including Monica Sone, Yoshiko Uchida, Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and Miné Okubo. Furthermore, such were the devastating consequences of this event and its aftermath, that this history is still revisited in Japanese American women's stories of the search for self identity in such texts as Joy Kogawa's memorable novels, *Obasan* and *Itsuka*. It is these texts that together form the basis of my discussion of the Japanese American cultural response to the experiences of internment and relocation.

The Japanese American experience of internment during the period 1941-1946 uniquely illustrates the failure of the institution of citizenship to extend equal rights and protection to all of its members regardless of individual group memberships.²³ The incarceration of Japanese Americans regardless of their citizenship status demonstrates that the state treated them on the basis of race and ethnic ancestry rather than on the legal basis of political membership. As well as leading to a questioning of the existence of democracy in America, as Elaine Kim has noted, this experience forced many Japanese Americans to consider what racial identity really meant.²⁴ As Amy Iwasaki Mass notes, 'President Roosevelt's decision to incarcerate all Japanese Americans on the West Coast during World War II created an identity crisis'.²⁵ The texts that were written shortly after the war betray the anxieties attendant upon the reformulation of selfhood in the wake of internment and its debilitating consequences, as well as protesting and documenting the internment experience in the context of legal membership and equality in the United States. Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660* (1946),

Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter* (1953), Yoshiko Uchida's *Desert Exile: The Uprooting of a Japanese American Family* (1966) and Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston's *Farewell to Manzanar* (1973), may be read together as cultural productions portraying internment, in different ways, and to different extents, as a pivotal moment in the formation of Japanese American female identity. All four women were child or teenage internees at camps across the west coast. Okubo and Uchida were incarcerated at Tanforan Assembly centre, then Topaz Camp; Sone at Pullayup and then Camp Minidoka and Houston at Manzanar. All the texts are first-person narrative accounts, although Houston's *Farewell to Manzanar* was actually written by her husband, James Houston, after hours of taped conversations with his wife, a fact that I later suggest has important ramifications for how we read her story. Uchida's text includes supplementary photographs and *Citizen 13660* is half comprised of Okubo's own illustrations of camp life. All the texts bear traces of the anxiety accompanying the textual telling or testimony of internment to a possibly hostile readership. These stories, in Priscilla Wald's words, reveal 'their [authors'] uneasy awareness of a larger story controlling their stories'.²⁶ That story changes from the period immediately post-internment when Sone published *Nisei Daughter*, to the 1973 publication of *Farewell to Manzanar* in a significantly more conciliatory climate. Each author, aware that 'she was writing against a competing national version of her tale, namely one accentuating the *necessity* of internment, invokes the authority of her own experience as a counter-tactic. Each stresses the individuality of her story, as Uchida, for example, notes: 'My story is a very personal one, and I speak only for myself'.²⁷ Yet all the women locate their stories within the national and political context of internment and its contravention of citizenship rights. One means by which these writers revise the larger national story of the necessity of internment is by emphasising the *Americanness* of these stories. Some of these texts, Uchida's most notably, reach beyond the boundaries of their own ethnic group story in an attempt to connect their individual experiences with defining, but always somehow just out of reach narratives of national identity.

None of the texts deliver undivided, assimilated subjects.²⁸ Rather, these texts yield versions of self-identity at odds with the nation's conception of 'alien subjects' and contrary to citizenship's requirement of assimilated subjects. However, these women are not divided by loyalty to both the United States and Japan, as the justificatory official discourse defending internment would have us believe, but are instead divided by the

demands upon them to choose between loyalties. The binary demand of the experience of internment was that the Japanese American subject must choose between Japanese and American affiliations. This identification choice was coercively enforced through incarceration on the grounds of 'enemy alien' identity, in so far as Japanese Americans were assumed to have a primary loyalty to Japan which overrode any subsequent loyalty to the United States. However, mid-war the goalposts shifted. Under pressure for new recruits, the government distributed a loyalty questionnaire to all *issei* and *nisei*, forcing them to admit loyalty to *one* country only. The pressure was to express loyalty to the United States, and thereby relinquish political affiliation (via citizenship) to the other country, Japan. The ultimate goal of this move on the part of the state was to create an all-*nisei* combat unit composed of loyal Japanese American citizens. The dilemma thus facing *nisei* and *issei* presented with this questionnaire was whether to claim loyalty to the United States, something they had been doing since the bombing of Pearl Harbor anyway, and thereby to lose their citizenship of Japan, a move that under the current internment conditions, would have effectively rendered them stateless persons. Whether individuals chose American or Japanese identification determined their subsequent externally imposed official identity within the polity. Enemy aliens, those who declined to swear allegiance to the United States, were branded as 'disloyal', and were transferred to disloyalty camps. 'Loyal' *nisei* possessing citizenship were eventually allowed to leave the camps and to return to civilian life, and in the short term, were given the opportunity to further 'prove' their loyalty by fighting for the United States. The crisis of identity that the initial shock of internment brought is followed in each text by the inner turmoil and agony engendered by the loyalty questionnaires later.

Joy Kogawa's semi-autobiographical novels *Obasan* and *Itsuka* may be placed alongside the earlier internment narratives both as a means of connection and as a point of departure. *Obasan* also renders the internment experience through a first-person narrative, but it differs from earlier responses to internment in several important ways. Published in 1981, and thus the most recent internment narrative, *Obasan* recounts the Japanese Canadian experience of World War II through the story of protagonist Naomi Nakane. Canadian treatment of Japanese North Americans differed from American treatment. Japanese Canadians were not interned, but they were still subjected to enforced relocations to the geographical as well as cultural margins of the polity. Thus *Obasan* shares with the earlier texts by Japanese Americans the trauma and delimiting

effects of displacement and dispossession if not of outright incarceration. However, *Obasan* comprises a less continuous narrative than the autobiographical accounts of internment. Its novelistic form is characterised by textual ellipsis, rupture and chronological disjunction in sharp contrast to the often deceptively 'seamless' accounts of the earlier writers. *Itsuka*, the sequel to *Obasan*, bears mention here, although it is less relevant to this particular discussion, as it picks up the redress story, and was published at a point when it had become clear that redress proceedings would take place. It thus serves the same function as the prefaces to the autobiographical Japanese American narratives.

Each story demonstrates in its painful rendering of the damaging period of World War II the struggle with a well-nigh unmanageable history. Indeed, several writers draw comparisons between their own stories and the contemporary concentration camp incarcerations of the Holocaust. These narratives both show and speak of the self-negation which was the result of internment. For Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, for example, the self-erasure internment produced was so total that she was unable to write her own story. It is also evident in the almost complete *issei* (first-generation) silence about internment: an *issei* has yet to write an internment narrative.²⁹ This kind of silence may be a form of cultural coping, as Kalí Tal suggests in her study, *Worlds of Hurt*; the 'disappearance strategy' as she names it, whereby 'a refusal to admit to the existence of a particular kind of trauma', coupled with the difficulties of speaking in spite of official silencing of the internment story, may result in taciturnity on the subject.³⁰ Indeed, the *issei*'s desire to forget about internment after the war is well documented. This erasure of the past is explored extensively in Kogawa's novels, *Obasan* and *Itsuka*. In particular, *Obasan*'s cyclical structure indicates Naomi's unsuccessful struggle to forget the past. *Itsuka* charts this struggle on a wider scale, depicting the *issei* determination to bury a history of which they were ashamed.³¹

Obasan admits the struggle with history through its formal cyclical structure. The earlier autobiographical accounts also indicate this struggle formally, although in different ways. Another coping strategy is the construction of continuous narratives which attempt to dissolve, undermine and deny the particular consequences of internment for self-identification and to absorb the internment experience within a *bildungsroman*-esque developmental autobiographical narrative.³² For Benedict Anderson, a recognition of the discontinuity between past and present provokes a desire

for continuity, evident in the production of narratives of identity.³³ The Japanese American internment autobiographies demonstrate the desire to de-emphasise the rupture internment caused in the process of self-formation through the location of the internment experience within a larger developmental story. However, in the case of *Citizen 13660*, *Desert Exile* and *Obasan*, the rupture caused by internment is marked textually, through omission in *Citizen 13660*, discontinuous narrative in *Obasan*, and through the choice of pictures in *Desert Exile*. This rupture is also figured through a spatial discontinuity. Sau-ling Wong has discussed the theme of mobility as a defining trope of American literature, bespeaking freedom of possibility and the vast openness of the American landscape.³⁴ Against this background, she explores the particular form of immobility caused by internment and the enforced mobility engendered by relocation that preoccupies Japanese American stories of relocation. She suggests that different degrees of enforced/impaired mobility result in narratives about 'undoing', contrary to their apparent conformation to a *bildungsroman*-esque developmental narrative of the self in formation. The 'undoing' is spatial, legal and personal. It is spatial in terms of dispossession, legal in terms of the violation of citizenship rights and this results in the deformation of national identity as well as damaging self-negation.

The urge expressed in these texts has been described by Kali Tal, speaking of Holocaust literature, as 'the urge to bear witness, to carry the tale of horror back to the halls of "normalcy"'.³⁵ She continues: 'Each of these authors articulates the belief that he or she is a storyteller with a mission; their response as survivors is to bear the tale. Each one also affirms the process of storytelling as a personally reconstitutive act, and expresses the hope that it will also be a socially reconstitutive act'.³⁶ This situation equally pertains to the Japanese American autobiographical narratives of internment. Okubo and Uchida, for example, stress the socially reconstitutive function of their writing especially strongly. In contrast, Sone and Houston refrain from making such an overt statement, perhaps because, as their texts state, these two writers have found the writing process more personally reconstitutive. Thus, the revision, deconstruction and reconstruction of personal identity is re-enacted textually in the hope that it may lead to political reconstruction. This hope was realised. During the redress hearings in the 1980s, Okubo's *Citizen 13660*, amongst others, was used as a testimony of the internment story, and Okubo herself was also asked to testify orally.³⁷ This may serve to demonstrate how successfully these Japanese American narratives were in offering

alternative versions of the national story of internment, as well as rejecting dominant versions of national identity in favour of their own reformulated assertions of Americanness.

Viewed within a psychoanalytic framework, these texts emerge as heavily invested in the Freudian idea of a talking cure.³⁸ Each expresses the desire for the storytelling act to be purgative as well as politically useful. In this sense, each text succeeds, although some more obviously or completely than others. Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston has spoken of the complete regeneration and release brought to her through the storytelling act.³⁹ Monica Sone, in contrast, desires that the process of narrating the internment experience will reconcile her problems of identity, but the ending, as I go on to discuss, shows that this is clearly not the case. Distance from the trauma is often necessary in order for the story to emerge. Tal notes that 'Survival literature tends to appear at least a decade after the traumatic experience in question'.⁴⁰ Japanese American narratives vary in distance from the closure of the camps. Sone's *Nisei Daughter* appeared seven years later, whereas Houston's *Farewell to Manzanar* appeared in 1973. This may explain the difference in the rejuvenative effects in writing. Sone clearly wants an early resolution of the problematics of identity she feels as a Japanese American, yet the swift publication of *Nisei Daughter* seems to have been premature. Without the accompanying healing effects of time, her story fails to be personally reconstitutive.

The title of Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660* announces the contradictions of citizenship and the internment experience which form the subject of her text. Although a citizen, Okubo was interned at Tanforan Assembly Center, then Topaz Camp. Her family was given the number 13660. Thus her title places in ironic juxtaposition her two contradictory official identities. The text constitutes a preface and then the autobiographical account written at the time. Okubo's 1983 preface speaks at a distance from internment of forty-one years. This preface looks back at her experience with the benefit of hindsight and she re-evaluates her story within the wider history of World War II. She claims an academic historical interest as the impetus of her autobiographical narrative: 'to see what happens to people when reduced to one status and condition', thus assuming the stance of observer/witness of the period rather than victim.⁴¹ This exterior perspective is reinforced by the later preface, which continues to view the experience from the ostensibly even more detached position of historian. The autobiographical narrative itself is comprised of pages split with Okubo's pictorial

records above, with textual glosses and discussion below the illustrations. [SEE APPENDIX III]. In the preface, Okubo tells us that the illustrations and text were never meant to appear together. The illustrations were originally intended as a picture of camp life for her friends on the outside, but Okubo later widened her projected viewership by planning an exhibition. Therefore, the pictures always had a projected public viewership, and the consciousness of this, causes Okubo to place herself at the margins of her story, preferring to offer a more ostensibly objective record of the period. Okubo herself always appears in the pictures, but as observer, rather than participant. This may betray her desire to be an onlooker rather than victim of the experience, and can be seen as a means of managing her history. Depersonalising internment in this way also offers Okubo a politically effective location from which to speak. Able to claim the authority of witness, she remains sufficiently removed from the story of internment to avoid charges of overt bias. This move on Okubo's part can also thus be regarded as an attempt to obtain an 'objective', culturally legitimated (i.e. *detached*) subject position from which to speak.

It is the relationship between the illustrations and the text which make *Citizen 13660* particularly interesting. The text is usually a brief accompaniment elaborating or explicating the pictures, which span Okubo's late teenager-hood, through internment and culminating in the final picture which depicts Okubo leaving Tanforan. Sometimes the text accompanying the pictures is little more than a brief gloss on the pictures, at other times it is a more extensive exploration of an area of internment. The text becomes sparse at critical times in Okubo's story, when her identity is particularly threatened: at the declaration of war; the move to the camp; the arrival at Topaz; the search for privacy. In addition, at points when her individual female identity is placed in jeopardy, the text also becomes sparse. For example, when female dress changes in the camp and all the women are forced to wear trousers, and when all the women are later forced to wear the same dresses due to clothing shortages. Even more revealing, however, are the instances of pictorial ellipsis which occur at several points in the text. [SEE APPENDIX IV]. These points also correspond to moments of threat to Okubo's identity, and serve to demonstrate the psychoactive effects of internment and its aftermath. It is as if Okubo cannot represent certain aspects of the internment story; her history becomes so unmanageable as to be unrepresentable. These points include the moment when the possibility of internment is raised, then announced, the move to Topaz, the arrival at

Topaz, the description of the Spartan accommodation, the distribution of the loyalty questionnaire, the move to Tule Lake 'disloyalty' centre and finally relocation. Viewed psychoanalytically, these omissions show Okubo's self-negation at certain moments. The channel of self-representation, her pictures, becomes blocked as a symptom of selfhood under stress. This blockage contradicts Okubo's attempt to place herself at a distance from her story: her inability to document certain parts of her story reveal her continuing psychological investment in that history (she does not fill in the pictorial gaps later), and speaks counter to her claim that 'Time mellows the harsh and the grim'.⁴²

Okubo's narrative is firmly located within the context of both personal and social reconstitution. Her impetus was to tell the story to non-witnesses — by implication, non-Japanese Americans. We may therefore assume that Okubo wrote and drew for at least a majority white audience. Her preface further establishes her text within this context by claiming that her work was intended for exhibition. Likewise, Okubo tells her reader that she both testifies at the reparation hearings in 1982 and that *Citizen 13660* was used as evidence at those hearings:

I testified at the hearing in New York City. As *Citizen 13660* had been widely reviewed and was considered an important reference book on the Japanese American evacuation and internment, I presented the commission with a copy of the book in addition to my oral testimony. In my testimony I stressed the need for young people from grade school through college to be educated about the evacuation.⁴³

And later: 'I hope that things can be learned from this tragic episode, for I believe it could happen again'.⁴⁴ These statements, in the preface, frame the narrative. In keeping with Kalí Tal's observation of survivors' needs to tell their stories for reconstitutive purposes, this is the context in which Okubo's telling takes place. Her preface was written during the redress proceedings and at a point when it had become clear that redress would be granted. Thus, *Citizen 13660*'s quest to maintain identity in the face of national and personal erasure is framed by the self-affirming redress proceedings forty years later.

Okubo's narrative comprehensively explores the contradictions of Japanese American citizenship in the light of internment. She constantly emphasises her identity as

a citizen: 'I was an American citizen';⁴⁵ '... generations of Americans did not know that this had ever happened in the United States to other American citizens';⁴⁶ as well as the collapse of politically inscribed difference between citizen and alien that resulted from the government's internment of both citizens and aliens alike, and from the loyalty questionnaire. Okubo masks the personal effect that this had upon her when she discusses its effects in the third, rather than first person:

It brought about a dilemma. Aliens (Issei) would be in a difficult position if they renounced Japanese citizenship and thereby made themselves stateless persons. Many of the Nisei also resented the question because of the assumption that their loyalty might be divided; it was confusing that their loyalty to the United States should be questioned at a moment when the army was asking them to volunteer.⁴⁷

The state's failure to observe national identity differences between citizen and alien is posited by Okubo as the cause of her and others' crisis of self-confidence:

We had not believed at first that evacuation would affect the Nisei, American citizens of Japanese ancestry, but thought perhaps the Issei, Japanese-born mothers and fathers who were denied naturalization by American law, would be interned in case of war between Japan and the United States. It was a real blow when everyone, regardless of citizenship, was ordered to evacuate.⁴⁸

Mid-narrative, mid-internment, however, references to Okubo's citizenship disappear and she is instead defined only by a different externally imposed identity: her relocation number, 13660.

The only point at which Okubo's identity truly emerges is at the very end, with her deceptively simple sentence: 'I was now *free*'.⁴⁹ In sharp contrast to the only occasional 'I' or 'we' throughout, this sentence betrays Okubo's emergence from a period of self-erasure, illustrated textually through her limited ability to claim the use of the first-person pronoun. Although Okubo adopts a distanced stance from her own story, this narrative remains very much the tale of one *nisei*. The *issei* are rarely mentioned, and significantly, Okubo does not pass judgement on the internment of *issei*

as enemy aliens. She is only concerned with the plight of the *nisei*, and the contradictory official identity they held at this time. In fact, none of the autobiographical narratives focus in any real detail upon the story of the *issei*. All the autobiographical writers are *nisei*, and thus are mainly concerned with their situation. This highlights the extraordinary generational split in national identity amongst Japanese Americans at this time. It is only Joy Kogawa, in her fictional renderings of internment in *Obasan* and *Itsuka*, who deals with the *issei* plight and response to internment, and even this is a third-person rendition, attempting to contrast *issei* compliance with their treatment with *nisei* protest at their contradictory status.

If the importance of omission is demonstrated by ellipsis in Okubo's text, then the awareness of her readership dominates Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter*. Like Okubo, Sone opens with a preface appended long after the narrative itself was written. This preface, although not viewing internment from the vantage point of the post-redress condemnation of internment, does focus upon Sone's successful life after internment in the light of forthcoming anticipated redress, and thus from a point when she *seems* to have psychologically overcome the detrimental effects of that period. Sone adopts a more overtly political and emotional stance in her preface, which also functions to frame her story: 'The Nikkeis are telling the nation about 1942, a time when they became prisoners of their own government, without charges, without trials'.⁵⁰ Like Okubo, Sone stresses the fundamental contradiction to the promises of citizenship engendered by group-based incarceration: 'the Court carefully avoided ruling on the basic constitutional issue of curfew and mass incarceration of a particular group of citizens, selected solely on the basis of ancestry'.⁵¹ Sone's narrative seems to desire her reader to turn juror, and condemn the state's actions. She is also acutely conscious of a projected white readership, and throughout the narrative seeks to present an accommodating image of Japanese Americans. She is particularly concerned early in the text to present a harmonious picture of her dual identity as Japanese and American, and discusses aspects of both elements of her identity in relation to food and cultural practices. If anything, she stresses the dominance of her Americanness. For example, when she visits Japan with her family, she views it through the eyes of a foreigner, and desires a return to America: 'This America, where I was born, surrounded by people of different extractions, was still my home'.⁵² Sone takes care to establish a harmonious view of her life in America and her identity as American in a way which conforms to multiculturalist idea(l)s of

assimilation. Although she retains the ethnic 'piquancy' of descriptions of the odd Japanese meal, or celebration, Sone emphasises that this does not interfere with her overriding identification as a 'Yankee'. Her story follows a fairly traditional autobiographical pattern, starting with early childhood, with lots of detail about her family life. The establishment of a relatively uncontradictory sense of a stable Japanese American identity is a means of throwing the events following the bombing of Pearl Harbor into question. Ironically, Sone's response to the news of the bombing unconsciously replicates assumptions about Japanese American identity made by the government which instigated internment in the first place. She feels a sense of contradictory identity for the first time, which mirrors the external conflict between Japan and the United States: '... I found myself shrinking inwardly from my Japanese blood, the blood of an enemy. I knew instinctively that the fact that I was an American by birthright was not going to help me escape the consequences of this unhappy war'.⁵³ Crucially, the conflict that Sone feels is not between Japanese and American loyalties, but between her declared 'instinctual' American identification and the knowledge that she will externally be identified as Japanese, which is of course exactly what happens. Sone, like Okubo, is really only concerned with the situation of the *nisei* citizens. She suggests that while *issei* may remain loyal to Japan, *nisei*'s primary allegiance is to the United States, which she highlights through discussing generational differences between *issei* and *nisei* within her own family:

Henry and I used to criticise Japan's aggressions in China and Manchuria while Father and Mother condemned Great Britain and America's superior attitude towards Asiatics and their interference with Japan's economic growth. During these arguments, we had eyed each other like strangers, parents against children.⁵⁴

Sone shows that loyalty differences did exist between *issei* and *nisei*, alien and citizen, predating Pearl Harbor. Events on the world stage were figured within Sone's family. But, she asserts, her and her brother's loyalty was never in question. Against this backdrop, the elision of any distinction between *issei* aliens and *nisei* citizens is thrown into accentuated focus. Sone reports her investment in the protections and rights afforded her as an American citizen and her certainty that she would escape internment:

‘We were quite sure that our rights as American citizens would not be violated, and we would not be marched out of our homes on the same basis as enemy aliens’.⁵⁵ Her realisation that she is branded with *issei* aliens produces in Sone a crisis of national and personal identity:

My citizenship wasn’t real, after all. Then what was I? I was certainly not a citizen of Japan as my parents were. On second thought, even Father and Mother were more alien residents of the United States than Japanese nationals for they had little tie with their mother country. [...] Of one thing I was sure. The wire fence was real. I no longer had the right to walk out of it. It was because some people had little faith in the ideas and ideals of democracy. They said that after all these were but words and could not possibly insure loyalty.⁵⁶

Sone suggests that the state’s betrayal of the Japanese American polity possessing citizenship was also a betrayal of the institution of citizenship itself, as its actions undermined the assumptions from which the state of citizenship itself proceeds: that citizenship is reciprocal, demanding loyalty in return for protection.

As Sone emerges from the internment experience, she starts to search for ways in which to mend her fractured sense of national and racial identity: ‘Up till then America ... had meant ... a desperate struggle to be just myself. Now that I had shed my past, I hoped that I might come to know another aspect of America which would inject strength into my hyphenated Americanism instead of pulling it apart’.⁵⁷ Sone does seem to be able to partly mend her fractured identity. Yet she continues to experience racism on a regular basis, a fact which continues to highlight an externally imposed identity stressing her difference in the eyes of others from other members of the polity. Her final statement, ‘The Japanese and American parts of me were now blended into one’, asserts the reconciliation of her bifurcated identity, as well as conforming to a traditional *bildungsroman*-esque ending.⁵⁸ Yet, as many critics have noted, this final resolutionary statement seems premature and unconvincing.⁵⁹ Sone’s resolutionary ending seems to signal her *desire* for a reconciliation of her problems of identity, rather than a resolution itself. Sone is clearly addressing a white readership and her premature claims of the resolution of her hyphenated identity may signal an attempt to plead a harmonious existence of Japanese Americans in the United States to a white reader during a

particularly charged moment in American race relations. Sone's learning process in *Nisei Daughter* is that choices of identity are not always available and unlimited. The earlier part of her narrative dealing with her pre-internment years depict her clarifying what is American and Japanese both within and without, and show Sone choosing identifications. Internment brings with it the shock of recognition that identity for racialised Americans may be externally imposed, for Sone as an enemy Japanese, however strange that identity may feel, and that American identity could remain out of reach. This process may be traced through a discernible loss in the narrator's confidence in herself. Early on, Sone's confidence in her ability to choose identifications shines through: 'I was a Yankee', she tells us proudly.⁶⁰ This contrasts sharply with her later professed need to revitalise and replenish her damaged identity. Like Okubo, Sone's dampened self-confidence nearly silences her: 'I was so overcome with self-consciousness I would not bring myself to speak'.⁶¹ Likewise, the style of the text, as Elaine Kim has noted, shifts from exuberance to a subdued and even stilted style later on.⁶² It seems that in the process of writing, Sone has relived the effects of internment upon her identity and this has translated into a noticeable shift in style through the narrative.

Yoshiko Uchida's narrative, *Desert Exile: The Uprooting of a Japanese American Family*, differs from both *Citizen 13660* and *Nisei Daughter* in that there is no framing preface. Instead it is at the end of the autobiographical narrative that we find an 'epilogue', in which Uchida discusses internment experience at a distance and from a wider world viewpoint. This difference may be because *Desert Exile* appeared much later than the two autobiographical accounts discussed so far. Thus, there is no need for a lengthy preface bridging the temporal gap between internment experience and the later publication of writing about that experience. Like Okubo and Sone, Uchida devotes the early part of her story to establishing a relatively concordant picture of her and her family's life in America. Chapters one and two deal with Uchida's life in Berkeley and with the question of her Japanese American identity. Like Sone, Uchida sees no conflict within her hyphenated identity. Like Sone too, she uses cultural activities like eating as a means of expressing this lack of conflict: 'While Keiko and I were still having our toast and steaming cups of cocoa on Sunday mornings, Mama would cook a large pot of rice to be eaten with the food she had prepared the night before'.⁶³ Like Sone as well, Uchida, while acknowledging the Japanese influence upon her life, also stresses the

dominance of her Americanness: 'In spite of the complete blending of Japanese qualities and values into our lives, neither my sister nor I, as children, ever considered ourselves anything other than Americans. At school we saluted the American flag and learned to become good citizens'.⁶⁴ Pearl Harbor is introduced and dealt with in chapter three and as in those texts discussed so far, the careful establishment of a harmonious view of the Uchida family's life in the United States is all the more forcefully shattered by the onset of the moves towards internment. Like Sone, Uchida also emphasises the loyalty of her and other *nisei* to the state, thus by implication questioning the need for internment:

We tried to go on living as normally as possible, behaving as other American citizens. Most *nisei* had never been to Japan. The United States of America was our only country and we were totally loyal to it. Wondering how we could make other Americans understand this, we bought defense bonds, signed up for civilian defense, and cooperated fully with every wartime regulation.⁶⁵

The rise in anti-Japanese sentiment, culminating in internment, is located by Uchida within a wider history of anti-Asian feeling, legislation and exclusions: 'At the time California already had a long history of anti-Asian activity, legitimised by such laws as those restricting immigration and land ownership'.⁶⁶ Uchida's discussion of internment and its meaning is very politically astute and engaged. She cites the history leading up to the events of 1941-1945, quotes senators on the issue and names the amendments to the constitution discussing citizenship and the rights which were flouted. Even more than Sone, she desires a readership which will judge the actions of the United States, and states the case against the government in a clear and detailed way. Like Okubo and Sone, Uchida also emphasises the loss of individual identity which stemmed from internment, telling us that 'from that day on we became Family Number 13453'.⁶⁷ The latter part of the autobiography, chapters four to eight, deal with internment itself, from evacuation through the move to Tanforan Assembly Center, the move to Topaz Camp and the life there. Uchida's tone describing these events is one of cutting, condemning sarcasm, in sharp contrast to Monica Sone's more conciliatory tone, as this example shows: 'I wondered how much the nation's security would have been threatened had the army permitted us to remain in our homes a few more days'.⁶⁸ Like Sone, Uchida also asserts that the state's treatment of Japanese Americans undermined the very institution

of citizenship itself. She observes that Japanese Americans 'realized that the deprivation of the rights of one minority undermined the rights of the majority as well'.⁶⁹ The implication of this, of course, is that the reader should realize this too. In keeping with Uchida's style of close political commentary, the issue of the distribution of the loyalty questionnaires is covered in detail as well.

In line with Kalí Tal's observation of the need for political reconstruction to frame the telling of traumatic stories, Uchida claims this as the impetus of her work, emphasising the responsibilities of memory: 'We must provide them with the cultural memory they lack', she says of the younger generations of Japanese Americans.⁷⁰ But Uchida's narrative does not just aim for political reconstruction; it also deals with the personal effects of internment upon her individuality. Autobiographies usually document the *formative* moments in the life of the teller. *Desert Exile*, like *Nisei Daughter* and *Citizen 13660*, charts the *de-formative* moments of the internment experience and its aftermath upon the individual. This is clearly signalled by Uchida's chosen title for her work, which emphasises the family's relegation to the edges of the polity: *Desert Exile*, and the de-formation of personal, social and familial structures in the subtitle: *The Uprooting of a Japanese-American Family*.

Significantly for Uchida, personal reconstruction does not come through telling, as she stresses in her epilogue: 'If my story has been long in coming, it is not because I did not want to remember our incarceration or to make this interior journey into my earlier self, but because it took so many years for these words to find a home'.⁷¹ By 'home', Uchida means both a context for her telling in a post-redress, conciliatory climate, and also the textual container, the autobiographical form. This form allows Uchida to marry her personal story with political comment for politically reconstructive purposes: 'I wrote it ... for all Americans, with the hope that through knowledge of the past, they will never allow another group of people in America to be sent into a desert exile ever again'.⁷² Personal reconstruction for Uchida also comes through her visit to Japan after the end of the war. Whereas Monica Sone's visit to her ancestral country had stirred within her a recognition of her Americanness, for Uchida the experience makes her turn to her Japaneseness as an alternative to an American identity she desired but was disallowed:

My experience in Japan was as positive and restorative as the evacuation had been negative and depleting. I came home aware of a new dimension of myself as a Japanese American and with new respect and admiration for the culture which made my parents what they were. The circle was complete.⁷³

Uchida's earlier assertion of her desire to be American, and her relatively successful attainment of an American identity contrasts strongly with her adoption of the Japanese side so wholeheartedly at the end of her story. The message is that if Japanese Americans remain outside of the mainstream of American society it is not because of their continuing affiliation with Japan, but because America has rejected them as Americans on a par with other American citizens.

As with *Citizen 13660*, the pictorial accompaniments to the text are often more revealing than the textual content itself. Sau-ling Wong's discussion of the process of 'undoing' in *Desert Exile* highlights this well. She demonstrates that the photographs Uchida chooses to illustrate her story tell a different tale than the text may suggest. They move from pre-immigration photographs, establishing origins, to pictures of Uchida's family and community, group pictures which establish order, community, stability and continuity, to anti-Japanese headlines which mark a shift from internal and subjective viewpoints to an exteriorised and objectified view of the community. These detached and depersonalised records of the internment experience, like those that we find in Okubo's pictures, chart the depersonalising and self-alienating effects of internment upon the individual. Then the pictures shift to represent disintegration through pictures of the camp in stages of dilapidation and also a distant view of Camp Topaz, again showing the distancing and depersonalising effects of internment. Post-internment, we see a return to two final family pictures. Wong reads these as an attempt to affirm regeneration and family togetherness as 'pathetically ineffective'.⁷⁴ So these twin photos seem to be weak attempts at suggesting restoration. Uchida textually asserts the rediscovery of her Japanese identity as restorative, and through these pictures of her family symbolically reflects a return to an original pre-internment time of togetherness, but they fail to address the question of Uchida's continuing existence in America, a country which has robbed her of a politically legitimate national identity. Therefore, this personal reconstitution must be seen as only partial. The version of selfhood offered at

the end of *Desert Exile*, as in *Nisei Daughter*, fails to fulfil its author's desired purpose of personal as well as political change.

Most problematic in both its handling of the internment experience and its aftermath is Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston's *Farewell to Manzanar*. This text was actually written by Houston's husband, James Houston, after hours of taped conversations with his wife.⁷⁵ The mediated nature of the text, then, as Patricia A. Sakurai has noted, problematises assumptions we are able to make about the Japanese American female voice in the text, as well as its negotiation of self-identity.⁷⁶ Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James Houston have disclosed how James Houston turned what was often Jeanne's tearful gibberish into a well-structured narrative. Unlike the other narratives, *Farewell to Manzanar* opens with the events at Pearl Harbor as a catalytic moment. This suggests that what went before this event does not matter in Houston's story. By page thirty-four, the narrative sees Houston at the camp at Manzanar. Thus the internment story is not so much central to the wider story of development, but is embedded within it. The text has a curious relationship with its female subject. At times, it is acutely conscious of Houston's father's story rather than Houston's own tale. For example, the lengthy section in which Houston is interrogated by the FBI is italicised. The debates that take place between Houston's father and her brother regarding the loyalty questionnaire are likewise given extensive textual space. Houston suggests that internment proved an emasculating experience for her father, and uses castration metaphors to describe this effect. Yet she fails to sufficiently explore the effects of internment upon herself, a child internee, and therefore highly impressionable. This may be due to James Houston's mediating influence. It may be that he was drawn to and interested in male versions of the story and therefore inflected the narrative accordingly. However, it also seems to be a part of the self-negation on the part of Jeanne that saturates this text. She repeatedly desires invisibility — 'part of me yearned to be invisible'⁷⁷ — and she also discusses the erosion of individual identity which was the result of internment: 'You cannot deport 110,000 people unless you have stopped seeing individuals'.⁷⁸

The entire narrative, despite James' influence, appears self-deprecating, as Elaine Kim observes: 'the narrator is plagued, both in camp and after release, by the idea that she deserves hatred'.⁷⁹ Later in the story we see Houston's rather pathetic attempts to assimilate as an American girl. At one point she enters a beauty contest, and decides that in order to win this most American of phenomena, she must capitalise upon her exotic,

Asian identity and thus dresses up accordingly. Of course, such a desperate plea to win approval in the eyes of others fails. Overall, the sense of Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston with which we are left is of a flailing subjectivity and a desperate search for individuality. This is in spite of Houston's own assertion that the process of writing was enormously rejuvenative. This can be seen in the focus in the text upon the psychological effects of internment, as we are told: 'Much more than a remembered place it [Manzanar] had become a state of mind'.⁸⁰ Houston is not really concerned with the politically reconstructive function of her telling, although she does analyse the various political facets of the experience in some detail. The text instead represents Jeanne's confrontation with her own unmanageable history, and her subsequent reconciliation with her past. The title, *Farewell to Manzanar*, reflects this, suggesting as it does that the autobiographical process allows her to leave the story behind.

These autobiographical narratives reveal a crisis of the self on both a national and a personal, subjective level. The autobiographical form that each writer adopts as the medium of her story is only partly compatible with the purpose it is adopted to serve. Each uses a very traditional autobiographical form, which conforms to the style of the *bildungsroman*. This paradigm tracks the subject's life from genesis through the formative periods of childhood and early adulthood through to the successes of later life.⁸¹ Such a structure has no room for the sudden rupture of identity to be found in these Japanese American stories, nor to track the *de-formation* rather than the *formation* of the subject. It is this incompatibility which accounts for the tension I detected earlier in these texts between the seamless, continuous narratives that these women want to produce, and the far more fractured, uncertain and discontinuous stories straining to be heard. The autobiographical form may be seen as delimiting these women's stories in terms of their identified goals of personal reconstruction. Yet in terms of political reconstruction, the autobiography proves highly effective. As witness/victim testimonies, these narratives assert the authority of personal experience in a way that renders them potent alternative narratives to the national story of internment. This is highlighted by the role that many of these texts played as documentation in the later redress hearings.

Joy Kogawa's novels about Japanese Canadian relocation, *Obasan* and *Itsuka*, while based upon the author's personal experience, assume a less delimiting genre in which to relate the experience of relocation. The novelistic form of these two texts affords Kogawa a greater freedom to tell her story. In particular, the stories are freed

from a restrictive framework of a *bildungsroman*-style structure, so, as Lisa Lowe has observed, they are able to refuse the premature reconciliation of Asian American particularity and identity that was evident at the end of both *Nisei Daughter* and *Desert Exile*.⁸² Of the two novels, *Obasan* is the most interesting and relevant here. Whereas *Itsuka* picks up the story of the redress movement, *Obasan* deals with the relocation experience itself and its effects upon the individual, and uses a cyclical, rather than chronological and linear narrative structure. *Obasan*'s narrative structure is cyclical. Although the time of the narrative present is the post-relocation life of protagonist Naomi Nakane, the continuing dominance of the past upon Naomi's present is signalled through the repeated returns to her history through her consciousness. Thus, the identity crisis engendered by the Canadian government's treatment of Japanese Canadians emerges as continuing beyond the particular moment of its production. The novel's structure allows the twin aims of personal and political reconstruction to be separated. Naomi Nakane, the central female character, and her elderly female relative, Obasan of the novel's title, together illustrate the debilitating effects of relocation upon individual identity. Both women are depicted as stultified by their histories, unable to free themselves from the memories of relocation. Through Naomi's consciousness and Obasan's reliance upon pictures and other records, the stasis of their current lives in the shadow of relocation is communicated. In contrast, Naomi's other older female relative, Aunt Emily, represents the desire for political reconstruction. Emily is described as a 'word warrior', and works ceaselessly for the redress movement.⁸³ Rather than becoming trapped or controlled by her past, Emily uses it, and the various documents of the time, such as her diary, to attain a recognition of the wrongdoing as well as to claim a Canadian identity. *Itsuka* develops this endeavour more thoroughly, culminating at the end of the text in the announcement that redress will proceed. Both texts, like the Japanese American internment narratives earlier, have an interesting extra-textual relationship with their subjects. Both document the struggle for redress and the struggle to assert an alternative version of the national story of relocation in opposition to official versions. This involves the use of personal narratives, like Aunt Emily's diary, charting relocation. *Obasan* and *Itsuka* were both used in the redress hearings in Canada.⁸⁴ Therefore, both intra-textually and extra-textually, these two novels challenge national versions of the relocation story. It is also arguable that the adoption of a novel form, offering as it does in these cases a more complex formal structure than any of the earlier

narratives, attains a wider critical and lay readership. Both texts have been phenomenally successful, even more so, arguably, than the most successful internment autobiography, *Citizen 13660*.⁸⁵ If the political aim of these texts is their intervention in national versions of their stories, and their assertion of alternative national identities, then the route to that outcome via fiction has proved more successful than via autobiography, due to the wider readerly cultural space that these novels have claimed.

Considered together, these texts document the on-going negotiation of Japanese American female identity by subjects still fractured by the internment and relocation experiences. It is noticeable that cultural reactions and responses to this period are dominated by female texts. There few equivalent texts of note by male authors, with the exceptions of John Okada's complex and haunting novel, *No-No Boy*, and Toshio Mori's lesser-known collection of short stories, *Yokohama, California*.⁸⁶ Neither are autobiographies. Why, then, did this group of women alone put pen to paper in this way? It may be that Japanese American male cultural production dealing with this period was stifled by the widely discussed emasculating effects of internment upon the Japanese American male population. Even Okada's *No-No Boy* documents this through the symbolic castration of *nisei* soldier Kenji's slow amputation of his leg. Despite this, it is questionable whether these women suffered any less in terms of the detrimental effects of internment and relocation upon their female identity. Camp life de-emphasised gender differences: all internees could work, and had equal access to the social life of the community, as well as the same lack of access to educational facilities. However we explain the lack of versions of the internment story by men, it remains the case that in recording the experience of internment and relocation, it is these Japanese American women who have spoken for their cultural group. This is also the case if we turn to consider Chinese American experience and national identity, as it is Maxine Hong Kingston who has spoken for her 'China men' forebears.⁸⁷

Border Subjects and National Identity: Maxine Hong Kingston's 'China Men'

Chinese Americans contributed immeasurably to the economic development of the United States, earliest from their contribution to Western expansion through the construction of the railroad across America, their role in the development of the sugar cane industry to the later twentieth-century growth of Chinese American presence in service industries like laundry work.⁸⁸ It is this history of Chinese American economic

fortunes, spanning the mid-nineteenth to the early-twentieth centuries, that is the focus of Maxine Hong Kingston's novel/memoir/biography/history *China Men*. This critical period of Chinese American consolidation in the United States and the struggle for inclusion into the polity via citizenship is the subject of Kingston's text, which juxtaposes the national history of the Chinese exclusion acts and anti-Asian prejudices, with the international history of immigration, and, later, war in Asia, with the personal, local and subjective histories of the China men in Kingston's narrative. These histories recount the China men's struggles for citizenship and for a subsequent sense of national belonging and identity. *China Men* investigates American cultural exclusivity embedded as it is in concepts of 'the nation' and national identity, as it is manifested in political, legal and social structures. Jeff Spinner writes that 'the nation ... is an organic group of people possessing a unique culture'.⁸⁹ Kingston's project in *China Men* is to expose definitions of the nation as inorganic ideological constructions, and to reveal the racism implicit in such constructions. Definitions of the American nation exclude migrants like Hong Kingston's China men, because as new ethnically liminal presences in a white exclusionist environment, they are defined as non-members of the dominant group, by that group. In *China Men*, fiction, history, biography, cartography and law are all discussed as discourses producing ideas of national identity and nationhood. The text itself is at times fiction, others biography, memoir or history. Kingston's traversing of discursive boundaries is a strategy to reveal the ways in which the authority of such discourses is employed to legitimate and fix images of the nation as an organic in-group. Thus, *China Men* explores what it means to be an 'American', and demonstrates how concepts of 'American', national identity and the American 'nation' signify a particular cultural and geographical terrain, and interrogates 'American' history as a grand — and self-aggrandising — narrative. Kingston's text seeks to challenge ideas of nationhood and national identity through the discourses of citizenship, biography, history and fiction, in a way that attempts to claim both textual and actual territory for her ancestors.

Fiction, Jeff Spinner tells us, is a battleground of identity, both individual and collective, along with other cultural media like state legislature and newspapers.⁹⁰ In addition, the individual's identity is negotiated in relation to the collective idea of 'nation'. In other words, different kinds of narration create the nation, which in turn, defines the individual either as part of that nation or as an outsider. To use Benedict

Anderson's definition, the nation is an *imagined* political community, with *imagined* boundaries and collective traits, and the location of these imaginings are the cultural arenas of literature, history, legislature as well as other textual media. Anderson's argument, elaborated by Homi Bhabha in his essay 'DissemiNation', links nationalism to various nation-making texts, thus attempting to make visible literature's (in addition to other discursive arenas') function as a cultural producer as well as product of nationalist discourses and sentiments.⁹¹ Implicit in this argument is the recognition that the nation is not fixed, but shifting, not organic but inorganic, and that it does not correspond to actual, but rather to conceptual spatial and territorial boundaries. The boundaries of national membership — or more accurately non-membership — are inscribed in citizenship legislature, as well as public, economic and social structures and institutions. It is therefore these legal and institutional sites, as well as other cultural media like literary and historical texts, where fights over identity take place. *China Men* tells the story of the male Chinese immigrants' embattled quest for membership of the nation, to become Americans, citizens of the American state and the accompanying entitlement to ownership of the land. The ascription of national membership within the pages of the text of *China Men* means that the text itself, as a physical entity, claims its place as a nation-making text, revising and re-imagining the community of the American nation to take account of ethnic subjects and diaspora presences like the China men. Bhabha writes that:

counter narratives of the nation ... continually evoke and erase its totalising boundaries — both actual and conceptual — disturb those ideological manoeuvres through which 'imagined communities' are given essentialist identities.⁹²

China Men contests and disrupts the ideological manoeuvres of the nation-state which define Kingston, as well as the China men, as outsiders of the imagined communities of the nation.

China Men embodies inter-textual, intra-textual and extra-textual contestation. It is an example of what Linda Hutcheon calls 'historiographic metafiction'⁹³ in terms of its theoretical and discursive self-awareness and its project of rethinking and questioning the epistemological status of historical, geographical and theoretical discourses, as they

are seen to participate in the production of ideologies of national identity. The problems identifying the discursive status of Kingston's work are well documented.⁹⁴ It is important to recognise that the traversing of discursive categories is quite deliberate. Various described as 'history', 'fiction', 'memoir' or 'biography', *China Men* encapsulates the on-going contest between different kinds of narratives in order to highlight how our attempts to delimit our cultural chronicles and stories produce epistemologically deceptive versions of our realities. Kingston herself has written:

The mainstream culture doesn't know the history of Chinese-Americans, ... so all of a sudden, right in the middle of the stories, plunk — there is an eight-page section of pure history ... there are no characters in it. It really affects the shape of the book and it might look quite clumsy.⁹⁵

Whether 'clumsy' or not, to have 'pure history' embedded in the middle of the stories produces a contestation or confrontation between two different discourses, which 'jars' the reader. The subjective, personal and fictionalised histories of the China men in the text serve to challenge and often to contradict the 'official' version of history to be found in 'The Laws' section. Thus, official and non-official versions of history co-exist in such a way that the 'pure history' sections are exposed as far from 'pure', but are instead simply different ways of telling the same story, equally 'contaminated' by personal biases and viewpoints. The juxtaposition of ostensibly very different genres, history and fiction, one claiming more epistemological authority than the other, therefore uncovers the precarious status of the 'truth claim' of history and the inherent fictionality of historical discourse. In addition, the exposure of history as an ideologically constructed and value-loaded narrative highlights history's role in the production of 'nation' as a 'unisonant',⁹⁶ rooted and legitimate entity through the recitation of a genealogy of origin.

History and fiction are not the only discursive sites of contestation, however. The authority of autobiography is treated with equal mistrust. Once again, the jostle between the traditionally conflicting and very separate discourses of autobiography and fiction is enacted in the text, the fictional versions of the China men's stories again querying the authority of autobiographical 'truth'. Kingston continually emphasises how incomplete and often uncertain her knowledge of her grandfathers' stories is: 'Maybe

that Grandfather's Citizenship Judge was real and legal after all'.⁹⁷ She even questions her biographical subjects for information within the text: 'Did you cut your pigtail to show your support for the public? Or have you always been American?'.⁹⁸ Both autobiography and biography are narratives of genesis. Kingston's deployment of autobiographical discourse to tell the story of the China men's claim to America and to American nationality and citizenship has ironic resonances for the genealogies of origins that she is concerned with questioning.

Kingston has another purpose in throwing the discourses of history, fiction, autobiography and biography into contestation with each other. The strategy of mixing discourses prevents the reader from reading the text in just one way — as history *or* autobiography *or* fiction, and making corresponding assumptions about the referentiality of that discourse. She is counteracting the tendency to read all texts by 'ethnic' or 'minority' writers (whatever the *declared* discursive status of the text) as being in some way representative.⁹⁹ Cross-generic texts like *China Men* resist interpretation as an authoritative version of that ethnic group's story. For example, Kingston tells the story of several 'grandfathers' in her text. Grandfathers become almost generic;¹⁰⁰ there are simply too many to be blood relatives, and each grandfather represents part of the wider Chinese American immigrant story: of the search for gold; of working on the railroad, or on a sugarcane farm, or setting up a laundry. Yet the strategy of presenting these stories as the biographies of her grandfathers allows Kingston to offer them as textual warnings against the conflation of all ethnic or minority subjects as 'other' to a white readership.

The competition between fictional, historical and autobiographical discourses is further complicated by Kingston's use and abuse of myth in her text. *China Men* opens with a story about a man called Tang Ao, who went looking for the Gold Mountain (America), but instead found the Land of Women, where he underwent enforced feminisation through ear-piercing, epilation and footbinding. As Donald C. Goellnicht has pointed out, this myth has been adapted from the nineteenth century Chinese novel *Flowers in the Mirror* by Li Ju-Chen.¹⁰¹ Kingston has altered the myth to suit her own purposes (as she did in *The Woman Warrior*). She highlights the precarious nature of myth-as-history by offering two dates for the mythic story — in AD 694-705 or in AD 441. As 'The Laws' form the structural centre of the text, so here this myth 'On Discovery' constitutes the beginning, signalling to the reader that myth should be accorded equal validity as a legitimate version of the past as history or autobiography or

biography, discourses more commonly supposed to be grounded in 'fact'. Or, to read Kingston's purpose another way: she demonstrates the illegitimacy of all of these discourses as factual retrospectives. Thus, in *China Men* history, autobiography, biography and fiction are all placed on a discursive continuum.

The power of mythical fictions is emphasised in the Lo Bun Sun story. Intended as an auditory pun¹⁰² on *Robinson Crusoe*, this story echoes Defoe's narrative, charting the protagonist's journey to a deserted island, his struggle for survival and eventual establishment of a colony on the island. The purpose of this myth is twofold. Again, the myth is accorded equal weight as more factual narratives in terms of its potency and endurance as an inherited cultural tale. In addition, the Lo Bun Sun story interrogates and contests American myths of origins. The Lo Bun Sun story is a story of colonisation but here is both inverted and subverted, because the subject position of coloniser is here inhabited by a Chinese, rather than a white, British man (Robinson Crusoe). Thus in the story that Kingston relates, the coloured man gets there first. This reflects back on American myths of origins where it is the white man who civilises and colonises, and with regard to Chinese American history, in the myth it is the Chinese rather than the white Americans who arrive first. The use of the Lo Bun Sun story therefore not only highlights the provisionality of narrative, but also becomes part of Kingston's wider project of (re)colonisation, to '(re)claim America'¹⁰³ for her male ancestors. Once again, this revision by a 'minority' writer of a dominant cultural myth of origin serves to disrupt claims by that culture of cultural supremacy and to question such a genealogy of origin. Thus, Kingston's rewriting of both the Tang Ao Chinese myth and the Lo Bun Sun Western myth serve to literally authorise competing versions of history in her text, as well as the Chinese American claim to America.

The way in which territory and territoriality meet textuality, as I discuss above in relation to *China Men*, represents an example of the frontier literary history advocated by Annette Kolodny in her essay 'Letting Go Our Grand Obsessions'.¹⁰⁴ Kolodny's vision of frontier literary history points to the duality of meaning in the word 'authorise'. To write history, she suggests, is to both inscribe ownership and to colonise (as in 'inhabit'). Kolodny emphasises that frontiers — cultural as well as geographical — are created out of contestation of territory (again, cultural as well as geographical territory), or *confrontation*, so that cultural and geographical spaces are only defined in opposition to something: the presence of another culture, territory or interest group.¹⁰⁵ Thus,

Kolodny's model recognises that the frontier is as much human as geographical, and results from human/cultural contestations: 'there always stands at the heart of frontier literature ... a physical terrain that, for at least one group of participants, is newly encountered and is undergoing change because of that encounter'.¹⁰⁶ The frontier, then, is an *imagined* boundary between nation and non-nation, so that a cultural group excluded from national membership would be forced, as is the case with the China men, to inhabit the border between nation and non-nation. Cultural confrontation is enacted both textually and linguistically.¹⁰⁷ I suggest that *China Men* would be one such frontier literary history. The text is a historical, geographical as well as literary palimpsest, which reflects the continually evolving territory of the American West. *China Men* charts the cultural frontier contests between the already resident white Americans and the newly arrived China men, and the ways in which this contestation transmutes and transforms geographical and cultural frontiers. Kolodny suggests that it is human encounters with each other and with the physical environment that create the frontier.¹⁰⁸ *China Men* tells the story of the China men grandfathers' interactions with their new physical environment, the mythologised Gold Mountain. The China men working in the mines and on the railroad transform the physical environment: 'China men banded the nation North and South, East and West, with criss-crossing steel. They were the binding and building ancestors of this place'.¹⁰⁹ Kingston continually suggests that the Chinese American role in the metamorphosis of America accords the China men a right of ownership of the land through her creation of atavistic narratives. As Jeff Spinner makes clear, ancestry, and the evocation of ancestral connection, is one way in which a sense of belonging is asserted.¹¹⁰ Here, Kingston constantly evokes the language of ancestry in order to press her — and her male forebears' — claims to American territory. Repeated references to ancestorship include the chapter titles: 'Grandfather of the Sierra Nevada Mountains'; 'The American Father', 'The Great-Grandfather of the Sandalwood Mountains', all signifying ownership. This refers back to the idea of colonisation of a country, mentioned earlier, the inhabiting of a country signalling ownership. Here this is suggested through the chapter titles, but also more forcefully in particular through the actions of Ah Goong. In a memorable scene, the grandfather of the railroad both urinates off a mountain face and masturbates: "I am fucking the world", he said. The world's vagina was big ... he fucked the world'.¹¹¹ Here, Ah Goong marks his territory in the manner of a tom cat with his urine. In addition, his act of masturbation is both an

attempt to master his environment in a rape-like act, and to again mark his territory, so that the act of masturbation becomes a kind of sexual graffiti. It is almost a literalisation of the interpenetration between a human and his environment that Kolodny described earlier. In this example, Kingston links the language of procreation with possession to intervene in dominant cultural narratives of origins in an ironic parody of the creation myth. Furthermore, the sexual defilement of the landscape in this manner has ironic resonances for notions of national (read racial) purity in the context of the assumed link between nationality and territoriality. In her work on metaphors of experience and history of the frontier, Kolodny charts the growth of frontier metaphors of 'psychosexual dramas of men intent on possessing a virgin continent';¹¹² and the ways in which this 'land — as woman symbolisation'¹¹³ engendered an 'eroticised intimacy with the environment'.¹¹⁴ As Kingston took up myths of colonisation like the *Robinson Crusoe*/Lo Bun Sun story and undermined them, here she engages with these metaphors and fantasies of sexual control over the land. By depicting her characters' re-enactment of the 'psychosexual drama', Kingston appropriates this metaphor for *her* pioneers' experience, while at the same time firmly locating the Asian American creation and experience of the frontier within a dominant psychohistory of the frontier.

Kingston's appropriation of dominant metaphors of the United States frontier is also gendered. Kolodny demonstrates how the metaphor and experience of the frontier has always been different for men and for women. While men, as I discuss above, reacted to the frontier in sexual terms, with images of sexual domination, women responded with Edenic metaphors and images of tending the land. Rather than producing the urge to dominate, encounters with the frontier for women produced the desire to domesticate, as Kolodny writes, to 'domesticate the strangeness of America'.¹¹⁵ This metaphor is also used by Kingston in relation to the China men. At the very beginning of the text, Kingston indicates that she intends to present the China men's experience in America as not only an experience of estrangement, but also of emasculation, through her representation of the story 'On Discovery'.¹¹⁶ The thesis that the immigrant experience is emasculating is continued when Kingston depicts the Asian American immigrants responding to the land in female terms by tending a garden: 'For recreation, because he was a farmer and as an antidote for the sameness of the cane, he planted a garden near the huts ... he ticked off in a chant the cuttings, seeds and bulbs he had brought across the ocean — pomelo, kumquat, which is "golden luck", tangerines,

citron also known as five fingers and Buddha's hand, ginger, bitter melon and other kinds of melon ...'.¹¹⁷ For Bak Goong, the act of tending the land is a literal domestication: the transformation of the land into a more Asian landscape through the flora. Tending a garden thus is a strategy to combat the estrangement accompanying immigration. Kingston also shows how immigration has been emasculating by locating Bak Goong's reaction to the landscape within a female tradition of gardening the frontier. However, the China men's response to the frontier is also allied with the male desire for domination that Kolodny discusses. As Ah-Goong sought to have sex with the land, so Bak Goong and the other sugarcane workers worked the land in sexual terms:

The land was ready to be sown. They bagged the slips in squares of cloth tied over their shoulders. Flinging the seed cane into ditches, Bak Goong wanted to sing like a farmer in an opera. When his bag was empty, he stepped into the furrow and turned the seed cane so the nodes were to the sides, nodes on either side of the stick like an animal's eyes. He filled the trenches and patted the pregnant earth.¹¹⁸

Here again, like Ah-Goong's masturbation, Bak Goong spills seed, impregnates the land and thus becomes a kind of father of the American landscape. Through these metaphors of impregnation, Kingston both echoes a long dominant cultural tradition of responses to the frontier and also again asserts a paternity claim to the land on behalf of her China men forebears. Again, Kingston suggests that living in — and changing — the environment entitles ownership. Kolodny writes that the role the Asian American presence had in the American West was in transforming the agrarian landscape into an 'industrial frontier',¹¹⁹ here illustrated in the stories of Ah Goong, Bak Goong and Bak Sook Goong, and is an example of the physical terrain and cultural landscape changing as a result of the cultural contact between Chinese and Americans. The physical terrain in one case is actually named after those who transformed it: Mokoli'i Island is called 'Chinaman's Hat'; language, in the form of nomenclature, is used as a way of inscribing the claim to territory. Kingston writes: 'It's a tribute to the pioneers to have a living island named after their workhat'.¹²⁰ Kingston seems to suggest that it is the transformation of the land that makes Chinese into Chinese Americans. It is significant that the 'railroad demons' set up a contest between different ethnic groups in building

the railroad, which can be symbolically read as a contest for colonisation: 'Day shifts raced against night shifts, China Men against Welshmen, China men against Irishmen, China Men against Injuns and black demons'.¹²¹ In this quotation, 'Americans' are simply not present in the contest for ownership of the land; rather, new immigrant groups are seen engaged in competition for possession of the land, and, through that, for national belonging.

Kingston ultimately questions whether changing the land and inhabiting the land can lead to a claim to that land. Certainly, she suggests that within an 'American' frame of reference, this is not the case. Like Kolodny, Kingston recognises (although does not approve) that within an 'American' legal discursive system ownership must be circumscribed textually in the form of legal or historical documentation in order to be legitimate. Textual possession both facilitates and engenders physical possession.

In *China Men*, we also see Kingston interrogating the ways in which 'Americanness', as a sign of 'national' belonging, is engendered and inscribed on the battlefields of identity: language, cultural practices and occupations.¹²² Ah Goong mistakenly believes that his part in the creation of the new frontier will make him American: 'Only Americans could have done it ... he was an American for having built the railroad'.¹²³ Some of the other China men believe that American dress, names and pastimes constitute Americanness: they name themselves Ed, Woodrow, Roosevelt and Worldster, go to tea parties and 'looked all the same Americans' in suits.¹²⁴

The need for 'Americanness' as a national identity to be inscribed officially as nationality and citizenship becomes clear to the China men, who are barred from citizenship because of their ethnicity. As 'The Laws' section tells us, 'national origin' upon which the qualification for citizenship is based, did not mean 'country of birth' until 1965, and Chinese Americans were barred from naturalising for many years too. In the China men who yearn to be fully fledged citizens, the confidence men who pose as 'citizenship judges' find easy prey: 'The demon said "I Citizenship judge invite you to be US citizen. Only one bag gold." Ah Goong was thrilled. What an honor'.¹²⁵ The citizenship judges prey on the need for official recognition of Americanness, as one China man notes: 'he was already a part of this new country, but now he had it in writing'.¹²⁶ Of course, Kingston's intention here is ironic: the official circumscription of citizenship that Ah Goong has acquired is worthless. His misplaced faith in the authority of official texts is emphasised: 'If he got kidnapped, Ah Goong planned, he would whip

out his Citizenship paper and show that he was an American'.¹²⁷ The precarious nature of 'official' 'legal' documentation is illustrated when the Hall of Records burned down: 'Citizenship papers burned, Residency certificates, passenger lists, Marriage certificates — every paper a China man wanted for citizenship and legality burned in that fire. An authentic citizen, then, had no more papers than an alien ... every Chinaman was reborn out of that fire a citizen'.¹²⁸ Significantly, the Citizenship Judges/confidence men take advantage of the China men at the point at which the labour on the railroad ceases because of a battle over wages, the moment when the China men feel most insecure in their new country. In addition, once the railroad is finished, the China men are driven out, so the legitimation through transforming the landscape by working on the railroad is lost, and it is at this point that Ah Goong considers returning to China.

For many of the China men, citizenship is defined through contestation. For example, Mad Sao 'proves' his Americanness by fighting in World War Two, on the American side, possibly against Asians. Similarly, Kingston tells us: 'Chinese Americans talk about how when they set foot in China, they realise their Americanness'.¹²⁹ The 'Vietnam Brother' who is given Q Clearance (high-level security clearance) becomes aware of his Americanness: 'the government was certifying that the family was really American, not precariously American but super-American'.¹³⁰ Here, the brother is forced to choose between contesting national allegiances, and he makes his initial choice, America, and receives Q clearance. Kingston ironically notes: 'maybe that Grandfather's Citizenship judge was real and legal after all'.¹³¹ However, the Vietnam brother finally rejects his American allegiance as he realises that he remains loyal to his Chinese identity too.¹³² Uncle Bun comes to the same recognition, implied through his fear of the House Un-American Activities Committee. Here, 'citizenship' or 'subjecthood', meaning 'under the authority or law of a country' or 'in political and legal subjection to a country', whereby that country must reciprocate with obligations to the individual, collapses, becoming 'subject to ...', that is, conditional and provisional, and also 'in subjection to', suggesting subordination and domination. Ultimately, neither the Vietnam brother nor Uncle Bun can meet the demands that the dominant culture places upon them as citizens. By placing Chinese and American allegiances in contestation with each other, Kingston effectively exposes the ironies and pressures the qualifications for citizenship and subjecthood in a country slow to reciprocate with legitimating, if not welcoming, gestures, as illustrated in 'The Laws' section. Near the

end of *China Men*, the conflicting national allegiances are represented symbolically in the Confucius Hall¹³³: ‘Sun Yat Sen’s and Chiang Kai Shek’s pictures were on the stage next to the American and Chinese flags’.¹³⁴

The ironies of citizenship are echoed in Kingston’s father’s experience at the Immigration station on Angel Island. The president of the Self Governing Organisation invites Kingston’s father to join, which will entitle him to vote and protect his immigration interests. The ironies of statesmanship are exposed when the president tells Kingston’s father that he ‘won his office by having been on the island the longest’,¹³⁵ which echoes the Lo Bun Sun story and highlights the irony of the white man’s colonisation. In addition, the association itself is seen in an ironic light, since none of the newly arrived men possess any of the benefits of democratic citizenship: as detainees they are neither free nor franchised, and the Self Governing Organisation does not seem to contribute to the advancement of citizenship for its members. The creation of a micro state on Angel Island betrays the China men’s desire for American citizenship and their need for official ‘belonging’. Significantly, the tale of the China man’s experience on Angel Island, his long detention and repeated interrogation is the story of the ‘legal’ father. Once again, the ironies of legal processes are exposed when juxtaposed with the altogether more congenial narrative of the illegal immigrant father, who is made welcome: ‘Chinatown seemed to be waiting to welcome him’.¹³⁶ Significantly, the heightened sensation of the American land beneath his feet serves to engender in him the feeling of belonging. Terra incognita becomes terra firma: ‘He disciplined his legs to step confidently, as if they belonged where they walked. He felt the concrete through his shoes’.¹³⁷ Physical contact with the ground is again seen to constitute belonging. The earlier cries of the new immigrants to ‘let me land’¹³⁸ take on new significance. Once more, physical contact with the terrain psychologically confirms territoriality. This is in opposition to geographical or cartographical documentation, which, as a means of inscribing territory, is, like historical and legal inscriptions, questioned by Kingston. Benedict Anderson asserts that maps are an instrument of power like legal or historical texts, because as self-protective and self-legitimizing devices, they are used by the state to imagine its domain.¹³⁹ As ‘a form of totalising classification’,¹⁴⁰ Kingston mistrusts maps, and in *China Men* cartographic inscriptions of the world and of reality are highlighted as subjective and also as unreliable:

The villagers unfolded their maps of the known world, which differed: turtles and elephants supported the continents, which were islands on their backs; in other cartographies, the continents were mountains with China the middle mountain, Han Mountain or Tang Mountain or the Wah Republic, a Gold Mountain to its west on some maps and to the east on others.¹⁴¹

Thus, what is 'known' is shown to be precarious and shifting, so that through such cartographic uncertainty Kingston again questions epistemological certainty, here of a cartographic text. Subjective cartographies do not coincide with supposedly more referential maps: Gold Mountain, the mythologised site of Chinese dreams of America cannot be fixed geographically here, as Kingston shows; the Gold Mountain yearned for by the China man 'coming to claim the Gold Mountain, his own country'¹⁴² may not be where expected. Kingston tells us that one of the China men went to 'live in California, which *some say* is the real Gold Mountain anyway' (emphasis mine).¹⁴³ Thus, real and imagined cartographies co-exist alongside real and imagined sites, again rendering problematic assumptions about the referentiality of cartographic texts. It is therefore worth noting that the trajectories created and through them the territories claimed by Kingston for her China men ancestors are the work of someone with 'no map sense'.¹⁴⁴

The *Li Sao* epic elegy, retold by Kingston towards the end of *China Men*, echoes the China men's stories. Ch'u Yuan, 'wronged and exiled',¹⁴⁵ was forced to leave his kingdom and wander for the rest of his life in barbarian lands, where he finally died by drowning. Kingston always intends her retelling of myths to comment on the narrative, and here she uses the *Li Sao* to emphasise how displacement leads to state- and law-sanctioned dispossession. We are told: 'He had to leave the Centre; he roamed in the outer world for the rest of his life, twenty years'.¹⁴⁶ The story of Ch'u Yuan, like the China men's stories, is the diaspora story of the 'ex-centric'. The 'ex-centric', in Hutcheon's definition, is someone who finds him or herself at the margins, and 'ex-centricity' is the state of being at the margin, the border or the edge. The ex-centric is marginal in terms of race, gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality or social role, as defined in opposition to the centre. Once again, definition takes place through contestation, here the challenge to the centre from the border. Again, the process of definition, as in Kolodny's model of frontier evolution, is an *oppositional* paradigm. Hutcheon writes that 'the ex-centric relies on the centre for its definition',¹⁴⁷ as in Kolodny's model the

frontier was the result of the *confrontation* between two interest groups. Kingston's China men are all ex-centrics. In Hutcheon's words, the ex-centric is 'the off-center, ineluctably identified with the center it desires but is denied'.¹⁴⁸ The constant yearning for citizenship by the ex-centric China men marks their desire for centrality.

The China men's ex-centrality results from their diasporic move from China as centric citizens to America where they are in exile. Centrality is thus defined by context, always in relation to something else. The China men become ex-centric in the context of American nationalism, they are non-members and are therefore relegated to the cultural, legal and social margins. *China Men* constitutes a potent challenge to ethnocentrism, as the previously silent, displaced China men's history and validity is reasserted by Kingston. She writes of the China men: 'You say with the few words and the silences: No stories. No past. No China'.¹⁴⁹ The inscription of Chinese American history and thus the shattering of the ex-centric's silence results in a contestation of (but not for) the centre and its historical legitimising texts. The project of claiming America for her ex-centric ancestors involves Kingston in a re-ordering of culture by re-valuing personal and subjective histories in opposition to monolithic history. Thus, in *China Men*, the 'official' text of history inscribed in 'The Laws' section co-exists with the vernacular histories of the China men grand/fathers.¹⁵⁰ The homogenising tendency of frontier literary history described by Kolodny as the 'grand narrative of discovery and progress' is revised in the (literal) face of heterogenising testimonies like those of the China men, with the accompanying attentiveness of the text to the subjectivity of the enunciating presence. However, this does not result in a move on the part of the ex-centric from the margin to the centre, although this desire is displayed by Kingston's father, who 'inked each piece of our own laundry with the word *Centre*',¹⁵¹ as Hutcheon writes: 'it does not invert the valuing of centers into that of peripheries and borders'.¹⁵² Kingston recognises that her father cannot tell her 'how we landed in a country where we are eccentric people'.¹⁵³ Rather, the *presence* of the ex-centric, and the articulation of the ex-centric's perspective, story and history, contests the epistemological status and homogenising tendency of the dominant cultural and physical centre, here, America, and Anglo American perspectives. Thus, dominant versions of history are seen to get it wrong, and America is located geographically both to the east and the west of China, depending on which text you consult. The presence of the ex-centric's perspective engenders the recognition that historical, auto/biographical, cartographic as well as

fictional representations are never value-neutral. The new significance of the ex-centric or marginal perspective accompanies a recognition of the value of heterogeneity, so that 'otherness' is seen in a positive light, while remaining defined in opposition to the centre, as Kingston recognises: 'our dog tags had *O* for religion and *O* for race because neither black nor white ... some kids said *O* was for "Oriental", but I knew it was for "Other" because the Filipinos, the Gypsies, and the Hawaiian boy were *Os*'.¹⁵⁴

By re-interpreting the frontier as 'a specifiable first moment on that liminal borderland between distinct cultures', Kolodny suggests that a previously 'narrow Eurocentric design' is decentered. Thus, Kolodny's vision of a new literary frontier history coincides with the project of challenging centers and revaluing borders. Texts and peoples previously liminal due to their ethnicity, race or gender, become the focus of attention here, because, as Kolodny notes, the frontier is displaced always to the geographical edges. Thus, the edge — geographical, cultural and literary — destabilises the centre as the emphasis shifts. *China Men*, because of its cross-generic texture, forces a questioning of what constitutes not just a literary, but also an historical text. *China Men* thus demonstrates that it is not just the centre which does not hold, but neither do those boundaries between different genres and discourses, so that the official voice of history co-exists alongside the more marginal diasporic voices of the ex-centric China men.

China Men's metafictional self-consciousness betrays Kingston's postmodernist caution regarding the relationship between world and text, as well as between different kinds of textual inscription. Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* and *Itsuka* likewise reveal their author's suspicion of the mimetic capabilities of narrative as they highlight the multifarious and constructed nature of the past as it is available to us. The Japanese American internment narratives and *China Men* are grounded in very different assumptions about the conditions, nature and uses of writing. The Japanese American autobiographical texts attempt to emphasise both the referentiality and veracity of their accounts. In so doing, these writers betray their subscription to an unproblematically liberal humanist correspondence between writing and experience. The Japanese American autobiographies' narrative assaults upon legitimated national versions of their stories and thus their identities is launched from a realist position. As I have argued, Kogawa's and Kingston's renderings of the past through a predominantly fictional discourse allows a more vigorous assault to be launched upon other discourses, as they

are seen to produce versions of national identity delimiting and controlling to cultural marginals like the Japanese Americans and Kingston's China men.

Notes

- ¹ For example, Elaine Kim has discussed the ways in which Japanese American male writers Toshio Mori and John Okada, as well as female writers Shelley Ota and Hisaye Yamamoto, have explored matters of national identity too, but, as always, my analysis here is restricted to those writers who are readily available, and these writers are for different reasons beyond the boundaries of this discussion. See Elaine Kim, *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and their Social Context* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1982), pp.147-56.
- ² A note on terminology is necessary at this point. By 'nation' I understand a group of people forming one society under one government, inhabiting the same territory, and regarding themselves as one group. This corresponds to the 'state', as that organised political community. 'National identity' is one's status in relation to that community, as an insider or as an outsider. 'Citizenship' is the formal route by which an individual becomes a member of the nation, with the accompanying rights and privileges extended to her under that agreement. Citizenship is also reciprocal, so the individual agrees to conform to certain rules in accepting that identity. A 'citizen' is a member of that nation state. I am indebted to both Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995) and Jeff Spinner, *The Boundaries of Citizenship: Race, Ethnicity and Nationality in the Liberal State* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), for these definitions.
- ³ Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), p.2.
- ⁴ *The Boundaries of Citizenship*, p.170.
- ⁵ Tracey Hill and William Hughes, eds., *Contemporary Writing and National Identity* (Bath: Sulis Press, 1995), p.2.
- ⁶ *The Boundaries of Citizenship*, p.39.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p.46.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁹ See Lowe, pp.22-6; see also, *Multicultural Citizenship*.
- ¹⁰ *Multicultural Citizenship*, p.175.
- ¹¹ Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), p.179.
- ¹² *Immigrant Acts*, p.ix. Whilst I wish to acknowledge the influence Lowe's piece has had on my own work, I also want to note our points of departure. Lowe's materialist critique leads to a reluctance to explore the anxieties attendant upon the negotiation of identity as it is in the realm of psychoanalysis; my analysis proceeds from the recognition that in these cultural forms and formations, 'psychoanalytic formulations ... hover as felt presences', as Priscilla Wald notes in *Constituting Americans: Cultural Anxiety and Narrative Form* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), p.3.
- ¹³ *Immigrant Acts*, p.ix.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.x.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.3
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.6.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁸ See Roger Daniels, Sandra C. Taylor and Harry H. L. Kitano, eds., *Japanese Americans: From Relocation to Redress* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986), for a comprehensive overview of the relocation and internment experience.
- ¹⁹ Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New York: Penguin, 1990), p.15; also chapter ten, 'The Watershed of World War II'.
- ²⁰ Lowe's point, *Immigrant Acts*, p.ix.

- ²¹ Stan Yogi has read these texts as attempts to resolve Japanese American identity, an identity — or identities — in flux. See Stan Yogi, 'Japanese American Literature', in *An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature*, ed. by King-Kok Cheung (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.134-7.
- ²² Káli Tal, *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literature of Trauma* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.6.
- ²³ A point reiterated in many of the Japanese American internment narratives.
- ²⁴ See *Asian American Literature*, p.133.
- ²⁵ Amy Iwasaki Mass, 'Psychological Effects of the Camps on Japanese Americans', in *Japanese Americans: From Relocation to Redress*, pp.159-62 (p.159).
- ²⁶ *Constituting Americans*, p.3.
- ²⁷ Yoshiko Uchida, *Desert Exile: The Uprooting of a Japanese-American Family* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), p.153.
- ²⁸ Lowe's point, *Immigrant Acts*, p.48.
- ²⁹ However, historical and sociological work has been undertaken collecting the oral testimonies of those *issei* who experienced internment and relocation.
- ³⁰ *Worlds of Hurt*, p.6. Critical work looking at the idea of a literature of trauma is starting to proliferate. For example, see also, Tim Woods, 'Mending the Skin of Memory: Ethics and History in Contemporary Narratives', *Rethinking History*, 2.3 (December, 1998, forthcoming), and Leona Toker, 'Testimony as Art: Varlam Shalamov's "Condensed Milk"', in *Critical Ethics: Text, Theory and Responsibility*, ed. by Tim Woods and Dominic Rainsford (London: Macmillan, 1998), pp.241-256.
- ³¹ For a more extensive discussion of *Obasan's* cyclical structure, see Helena Grice, 'Reading the Nonverbal: The Indices of Space, Time, Taciturnity and Tactility in Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*', *Melus*, forthcoming.
- ³² *Bildungsroman* is a type of developmental narrative ending in success. It has been discussed as a very prominent form in Asian American literature, particularly manifested as autobiography. See King-Kok Cheung's discussion of the autobiographical in Asian American cultural production in her introduction to *An Interethnic Companion*; and Lisa Lowe's discussions to be found in *Immigrant Acts*.
- ³³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1994), p.204.
- ³⁴ Sau-ling Wong, *Reading Asian American Literature: From Necessity to Extravagance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), p.120.
- ³⁵ *Worlds of Hurt*, p.120.
- ³⁶ Ibid.
- ³⁷ Miné Okubo, *Citizen 13660* (Seattle: Washington University Press, 1983), p.xi.
- ³⁸ See *Worlds of Hurt* for a discussion of this.
- ³⁹ Quoted in *Asian American Literature*, p.88.
- ⁴⁰ *Worlds of Hurt*, p.125.
- ⁴¹ *Citizen 13660*, p.ix.
- ⁴² Ibid.
- ⁴³ Ibid., p.xi.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., p.xii.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., p.ix.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., p.xi.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., p.176.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., p.17.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., p.208.
- ⁵⁰ Monica Sonc, *Nisei Daughter* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979), p.xvi.
- ⁵¹ Ibid.
- ⁵² Ibid., p.108.
- ⁵³ Ibid., p.146.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid., p.148.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid., p.158.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid., pp.177-8.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., p.216.

- ⁵⁸ Ibid., p.238.
- ⁵⁹ See, for example, *Asian American Literature*, p.80; *Immigrant Acts*, pp.48-9.
- ⁶⁰ *Nisei Daughter*, p.18.
- ⁶¹ Ibid., p.131.
- ⁶² *Asian American Literature*, p.80.
- ⁶³ *Desert Exile*, p.32.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid., p.40.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid., p.53.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid., p.59.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid., p.70.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid., p.85.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid., p.147.
- ⁷¹ Ibid., p.154.
- ⁷² Ibid.
- ⁷³ Ibid., p.152.
- ⁷⁴ *Reading Asian American Literature*, p.137.
- ⁷⁵ *Asian American Literature*, p.84.
- ⁷⁶ Patricia A. Sakurai, 'The Politics of Possession: The Negotiation of Identity in *American in Disguise*, *Homebase* and *Farewell to Manzanar*', in *Privileging Positions: The Sites of Asian American Studies*, ed. by Gary Y. Okihiro and others (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1995), pp.157-70 (p.165).
- ⁷⁷ Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston, *Farewell to Manzanar* (San Francisco, CA: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1973), p.137.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid.
- ⁷⁹ *Asian American Literature*, p.86.
- ⁸⁰ Quoted in *Asian American Literature*, p.88.
- ⁸¹ See my note on *bildungsroman* above.
- ⁸² *Immigrant Acts*, p.48.
- ⁸³ Joy Kogawa, *Obasan* (New York: Anchor Books, 1994).
- ⁸⁴ A point made by Scott McFarlane, 'Covering *Obasan* and the Narrative of Internment', in *Privileging Positions*, pp.401-411 (p.402).
- ⁸⁵ *Citizen 13660*, p.xi. For a discussion of the success of *Obasan* and *Itsuka*, see *Reading Asian American Literature*, pp.16-17; see also 'Covering *Obasan*', pp.401-2.
- ⁸⁶ Of the two, Okada's novel is the better-known and the more widely discussed. See, for example, Jinqi Ling, 'Race, Power, and Cultural Politics in John Okada's *No-No Boy*', *American Literature*, 67.2 (June, 1995), 359-381.
- ⁸⁷ Kingston is often viewed as a spokesperson for Chinese Americans, both by Asian American and other critics, particularly in her position as probably the most prominent Asian American writer today.
- ⁸⁸ Takaki notes that in 1867, 90% of the Central Pacific Railroad workforce was comprised of Chinese Americans. In addition at the same time, Chinese labour was contributing significantly to the growth of the sugar cane industry in both Hawaii and on the mainland. By 1853, Chinese labourers constituted 9.2% of the Hawaiian population as a result of this growth. The period after the completion of the railroad coincided with the decline of labour opportunities for Chinese in the sugar cane industry, mainly as a result of the new recruitment of cheaper and less organised ethnic labour groups. Chinese Americans were forced to search for new and different work opportunities. The early part of the twentieth century saw an economic slump, too, which partly engendered the rise in anti-Asian sentiment, also a factor in the Chinese banishment from white labour markets and the subsequent growth of a Chinese economic enclave. This period saw a move on the part of Chinese Americans into the service industries, especially the establishment of Chinese laundries. By 1920, 58% of Chinese were engaged in service industries like laundry work.
- ⁸⁹ *The Boundaries of Citizenship*, p.141.
- ⁹⁰ *The Boundaries of Citizenship*, p.168, for a discussion of the 'battlegrounds' of identity.
- ⁹¹ See Homi Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp.1-6.
- ⁹² Ibid., p.300.

- ⁹³ Linda Hutchcon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1988) pp.5-6.
- ⁹⁴ For discussions of the generic confusion surrounding Kingston's work, see LeiLani Nishime, 'Engendering Genre: Gender and Nationalism in *China Men* and *The Woman Warrior*', *Melus*, 20.1 (Spring, 1995), 67-82; also Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, 'Autobiography as Guided Chinatown Tour? Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and the Chinese-American Autobiographical Controversy', in *Multicultural Autobiography*, ed. by J. R. Payne (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), pp.248-279. For perhaps the most vitriolic discussion of Kingston's use of genre, see Frank Chin, 'This Is Not an Autobiography', *Genre*, 18.2 (1985), 109-30.
- ⁹⁵ Kingston quoted in Timothy Pfaff, 'Talk with Mrs. Kingston', *New York Times Book Review*, 15 June 1980, p.26.
- ⁹⁶ Bhabha's term, 'DissemiNation: time, narrative, and the margins of the modern nation', in *Nation and Narration*, pp.291-322 (p.315).
- ⁹⁷ *China Men*, p.291.
- ⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.18.
- ⁹⁹ See 'Autobiography as Guided Chinatown Tour' for a discussion of the demand for ethnic autobiography to be representative, especially pp.258-9.
- ¹⁰⁰ This is LeiLani Nishime's phrase. The same can be seen in the 'On Fathers' section, an introductory piece discussing the way that 'fathers' look and behave in the same way. In 'Alaska China Men', Kingston writes that 'perhaps any China Man was China Joe' (p.160).
- ¹⁰¹ See Donald C. Goellnicht, 'Tang Ao in America: Male Subject Positions in *China Men*', in *Reading the Literatures of Asian America*, ed. by Shirley Goek-lin Lim and Amy Ling (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1992), pp.191-212. Goellnicht is citing Amy Ling here, see p.207.
- ¹⁰² Again, Nishime's term. See 'Engendering Genre', p.74.
- ¹⁰³ I have taken this phrase from Alfred S. Wang, 'Maxine Hong Kingston's Reclaiming of America: The Birthright of the Chinese-American Male', *South Dakota Review*, 26.1 (1988), 18-29.
- ¹⁰⁴ Annette Kolodny, 'Letting Go Our Grand Obsessions: Notes Toward a New Literary History of the American Frontiers', in *Subjects and Citizens: Nation, Race And Gender From Oroonoko To Anita Hill*, ed. by Michael Moon and Cathy Davidson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), pp.9-26.
- ¹⁰⁵ She cites Howard Lamar and Leonard Thompson's definition of the frontier as 'a territory or zone of *interpenetration between ... previously distinct societies*' (italics mine).
- ¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.13.
- ¹⁰⁷ Therefore, the texts — and the languages that those texts inscribe — *themselves* participate in the confrontation: 'the collisions and negotiations of distinct cultural groups as expressed "en el choque e interaccion" of languages and texts'. So the frontier is the result of dialogic negotiation. Kolodny writes that it is 'a locus of first cultural contact ... my paradigm would thus have us interrogating language — especially as hybridised style, trope, story or structure — for the complex intersections of human encounters and human encounters with the physical environment'. Consequently, frontier literary history as advocated by Kolodny documents the *evolving* frontier, and recognises that the physical and cultural landscape is constantly revised in the (literal) face of new inhabitants and new presences. This is very different from the 'grand narrative of discovery and progress' eschewed by Kolodny, in which 'cultural narratives of frontier battles, discoveries and negotiations' are all conflated into one. Furthermore, the frontier is an *imagined* boundary, inscribed textually, and does not correspond to a fixed external reality; it is a 'factional' rather than factual construction. Kolodny also observes that the frontier has always been identified with personal, as well as, political gain. The original expansion of the American frontier westwards, Kolodny writes, was facilitated by the lure of fertile land in California. It is therefore a territory contested by personal as well as collective presences and interests and the possibilities for colonisation should therefore be seen in the context of personal greed or control as well as of national interests. See 'Letting Go Our Grand Obsessions', p.11.
- ¹⁰⁸ 'Letting Go Our Grand Obsessions', p.11.
- ¹⁰⁹ *China Men*, p.145.
- ¹¹⁰ *The Boundaries of Citizenship*, p.10.
- ¹¹¹ *China Men*, p.132.
- ¹¹² Annette Kolodny, *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), p.xiii.

- ¹¹³ Ibid., p.ix.
- ¹¹⁴ *The Land Before Her*, p.5.
- ¹¹⁵ Ibid., p.37; p.237.
- ¹¹⁶ This is the story of enforced feminisation in the Land of Women; see *China Men*, pp.9-10.
- ¹¹⁷ Ibid., p.106.
- ¹¹⁸ Ibid., p.105.
- ¹¹⁹ 'Letting Go Our Grand Obsessions', p.17.
- ¹²⁰ *China Men*, p.91.
- ¹²¹ Ibid., p.138.
- ¹²² *The Boundaries of Citizenship*, p.10.
- ¹²³ *China Men*, p.144.
- ¹²⁴ Ibid., p.65. It is also significant that here the Chinese immigrant men choose the names of prominent nation-building politicians: Roosevelt and Woodrow, and, in addition, 'Worldster' suggests an international belonging.
- ¹²⁵ Ibid., p.141.
- ¹²⁶ Ibid.
- ¹²⁷ Ibid., p.147.
- ¹²⁸ Ibid., p.149.
- ¹²⁹ Ibid., p.287.
- ¹³⁰ Ibid., p.291.
- ¹³¹ Ibid.
- ¹³² Another example of the way that the Second World War forced Asian Americans to choose between conflicting national allegiances can be found in John Okada, *No-No Boy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976).
- ¹³³ Once again, the name of the hall, 'Confucius Hall', is not insignificant.
- ¹³⁴ *China Men*, p.261.
- ¹³⁵ Ibid., p.55.
- ¹³⁶ Ibid., p.54.
- ¹³⁷ Ibid.
- ¹³⁸ Ibid., p.58.
- ¹³⁹ *Imagined Communities*, p.164.
- ¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p.173.
- ¹⁴¹ *China Men*, p.49.
- ¹⁴² Ibid., p.54.
- ¹⁴³ Ibid., p.74.
- ¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p.198.
- ¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p.251.
- ¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p.250.
- ¹⁴⁷ *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, p.73.
- ¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p.60.
- ¹⁴⁹ *China Men*, p.18.
- ¹⁵⁰ Kingston indicates the official status of 'The Laws' section structurally too: the 'chronology' format she adopts signals a departure from her fictional text.
- ¹⁵¹ Ibid.
- ¹⁵² *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, p.69.
- ¹⁵³ *China Men*, p.18.
- ¹⁵⁴ Ibid., pp.269-70.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Homes and Homecomings

‘A person’s geography is both inward and outward’ — Aimee Liu, *Face*

‘I have been asked the “home” question (when are you going home) periodically for fifteen years now. Leaving aside the subtly racist implications of the question (go home you don’t belong), I am still not satisfied with my response. What is home? The place I was born? Where I grew up? Where my parents live? Where I live and work as an adult? Where I locate my community — my people? Is home a geographical space, an historical space, an emotional, sensory space?’ — Chandra Talpade Mohanty, ‘Defining Genealogies: Feminist Reflections on being South Asian in North America’

In this chapter, I examine the ways in which the intricacies of the formation of identity are bound up with space, place and the idea of ‘home’. In order to do this I make use of the recently emergent critical discourse of space in literature, in which space is often used as a metaphor for the dynamics of identity.¹ In the introduction to *Nisei Daughter*, S. Frank Miyamoto notes: ‘I believe it is illuminating to regard *Nisei Daughter* as a statement of self-identity ... The identity question asks, “Who am I?”, or more specifically, “What is my place in the world?”’² The slippage from ‘Who am I?’ to ‘What is my place in the world?’ is seen in many texts by Asian American women. In her memoir, *Fault Lines*, for example, Meena Alexander asks: ‘Who are we? What selves can we construct to live by? How shall we mark out space?’³ However, space in these works does not just act as a metaphor for identity; it also, as Shirley Ardener notes, ‘defines people and people define space’.⁴ Thus, in the discussion that follows, I explore Asian American women writers’ searches, both in their fictions and autobiographies, for self through place. For example, in Chuang Hua’s autobiographical novel, *Crossings*, a novel about the cultural crossings and wanderings that the central character Fourth Jane makes, she is repeatedly described in relation to the places and spaces that she has inhabited:

She stood in the center of the square carpet of faded reds greens and blues and whites in which she discerned oases and deserts, scorpions and camels, departures, wanderings and homecomings woven inextricably.⁵

Many of the texts I discuss here also have departures, wanderings and homecomings woven into their fabric as a dominant preoccupation in relation to the exploration of identity.

Places and spaces, are charged sites, pregnant with our meanings and associations. As Edward Relph notes: 'There is for virtually everyone a deep association with and consciousness of the places where we were born and grew up, where we live now, or where we have had particularly moving experiences. This association seems to constitute a vital source of both individual and cultural identity and security'.⁶ If places are ideologically charged sites, then the house, in Gaston Bachelard's words, is '... the most powerful psychospacial image'.⁷ The 'house', in this sense, is interchangeable with the concept of 'home'. 'Home' is not just the dwelling place, but also carries nuances of belonging, nurturance and origins. 'Home', as Kathleen Kirby puts it, is 'a walled site of belonging'.⁸ More than 'a three-dimensional structure', it is a 'densely signifying marker in ideology', demonstrated by the myriad of terms to describe the home: as dwelling, homestead, homeplace, habitation, domicile, abode, residence, amongst others.⁹ 'Home', then, carries a heavy ideological weight for the Asian American woman who, in common with other postcolonials, may have undergone a separation from the ancestral homeland. In many texts, the idea of the homeland looms large in the search for identity, whether it is an actual remembered site, or a mythologised location.¹⁰ Two autobiographical texts, Lydia Minatoya's *Talking to High Monks in the Snow* and Kyoko Mori's *The Dream of Water*, as well as the character Maya Li in Andrea Louie's fictional story *Moon Cakes*, chart odysseys in search of identity which involve a journey back to Japan and China respectively, as the ancestral homeland. For other women, the Asian country remains an imagined homeplace, and these include Maxine Hong Kingston, Amy Tan's daughters,¹¹ Mona and Callie in Gish Jen's novels, and the character Nomi in Julie Shigekuni's *A Bridge Between Us*.¹² For Meena Alexander and Sara Suleri, two writers whose memoir work is informed by a post-structuralist strain of postcolonial theory, 'home' can only ever be an imagined place. And finally, for many earlier immigrants and their children, such as autobiography writers Monica Sone, Mary Paik Lee, Yoshiko Uchida, Jeanne

Wakatsuki Houston and Jade Snow Wong, and fictionalists Joy Kogawa, Ronyoung Kim as well as Tan's fictional mothers, the desire to make America their home is repeatedly repulsed by denials of citizenship, internment as enemy aliens and other racist exclusionary practices, even though the respective Asian country has long since been psychologically relinquished as the homeland.

Many of these women become wanderers in search of their identity. Some, like Theresa Hak Kyung Cha and Ronyoung Kim's characters, are in exile. Some, like Chuang Hua's protagonist Fourth Jane most notably, but also Ralph and his family in *Typical American*, Tan's *Joy Luck Club* mothers and Winnie Louie in *The Kitchen God's Wife*, many of Bharati Mukherjee's women (notably Dimple in *Wife*, and Jasmine in the novel of the same name), Sara Suleri and Meena Alexander, are emigrés. The final group are the children, grandchildren and even the great grandchildren of immigrants who have never visited the ancestral homeland, despite its enduring psychological significance in their lives, and for whom America is home: Maxine Hong Kingston, Tan's *Joy Luck Club* daughters and Pearl Louie in *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Naomi in Kogawa's novels, Kyoko Mori, Lydia Minatoya, Monica Sone, Yoshiko Uchida, Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, Mona and Callie in Gish Jen's novels, Aimee Liu's Maibelle, Andrea Louie's Maya, Kadohata's protagonist in *The Floating World* and Jade Snow Wong. For these writers, the homeland is a mythologised location, in the manner described by Patricia Duncker: 'There is always a danger that the Homeland, the remembered, imagined or reconstructed country of origin ... can become an ideal dream, untouched by history, conflict, poverty or corruption'.¹³

In my discussion of the wanderings that many of these women engage in, both geographically and textually, in their pursuit of self-definition, I make a distinction between what I term 'psychologies of exile' and 'narratives of migration'. Home is where you belong, and 'psychology of exile' is used to indicate a state of unbelonging.¹⁴ Many of the women here undergo different kinds of displacement: geographical, social and familial, amongst others, and the search for self is also the search for place and the desire for home. This state of unbelonging is paradigmatically expressed by female emigré Mai-mai Sze in her autobiography, *Echo of a Cry: A Story Which Began in China*:

Fervently we have wanted to belong somewhere at the same time that we have often wanted to run away. We reached out for something, and when by chance grasped it, we often found that it wasn't what we wanted at all. There is one part of us that is always lost and searching. It is an echo of a cry that was a longing for warmth and safety. And through our adolescent fantasies, and however our adult reasoning may disguise it, the search continues.¹⁵

The gradual shift in many texts towards a narrative of migration is indicative of the Asian American woman's reconciliation of her particular displaced/migratory identity or her move towards the recovery of a state of belonging.

Such resolutions are intimately bound up with the notion of ownership, of space and territory. The feeling of belonging is linked to a move towards home ownership in many texts. As Marilyn Chandler makes clear in *Dwelling in the Text*, social and psychological stability is partly engendered through economic security and thus the goal of home ownership, one aspect of the American dream, is a preoccupation in much ethnic fiction.¹⁶ The desire to own and occupy space is likewise linked to the idea of the homeplace as a refuge: for the ethnic writer frequently a refuge from the destructive effects of racism. Using Gaston Bachelard's work on the phenomenology of space, in particular his notion of a spatial inside/outside dialectic, I suggest that several texts may usefully be read as inscribing the desire for a shelter from a hazardous racist environment. In particular, this desire is a feature of many World War Two internment narratives by Japanese Americans, for whom issues of home and homelessness became especially acute.

The house or home has other meanings in relation to Asian American women's writing. Houses often have their own identities created by the events that take place within their walls, and I explore both the house of secrets and the house of ghosts. In addition, several writers employ architectural metaphors in order to describe both woman-to-woman, and generational relationships within the household, so that in fact the house becomes spatially representative of its inhabitants. The house is also often the domain of a dominant family member: the patriarchal places of Chuang Hua's, Jade Snow Wong's and Fiona Cheong's texts, or the ancestral halls of *The Woman Warrior* and in Amy Tan's novels. Or the house may be the realm of maternalism: mothers loom large and even dominate in many houses. Likewise, the house often features as a

domestic space where the Asian American daughter is confined, controlled or exploited. Much is made, too, of gendered zones within the house, the kitchen being only the most prominent example. Gillian Rose has noted that feminism has often made use of a spatial politics,¹⁷ and I explore this in relation to several Asian American women writers' reworking of Virginia Woolf's assertion of the need for a room of one's own.¹⁸ The house may also be the textual container and I finally discuss the position of the ethnic woman writer in the house of fiction. Autobiography has a (large) room here as a favoured way to create a textual home for the self.

Owning Space

In *Dwelling in the Text*, Marilyn Chandler explores the predominance of houses as a cultural preoccupation in America: 'Our literature reiterates with remarkable consistency the centrality of the house in American cultural life and imagination'.¹⁹ Chandler argues that, stemming from its position as a postcolonial country itself, America's cultural production has focused upon the necessity of carving out and claiming territory: 'In a country whose history has been focused for so long on the question of settlement and "development", the issue of how to stake out territory, clear it, cultivate it, and build on it has been of major economic, political and psychological consequence'.²⁰ Thus, part of the process of American self-definition has always been the definition of its space. And dominant nation-making ideologies have apprized the goal of home ownership: 'The American dream still expresses itself in the hope of owning a freestanding single-family dwelling, which to many remains the most significant measure of ... cultural enfranchisement'.²¹ For many ethnic writers in a state of unbelonging, as new immigrants or exiles, the objective of home ownership especially signifies the move towards belonging to, as well as owning a corner in the world. This desire is particularly sharply defined in the novels of Gish Jen, a writer often concerned with ethnics' attempts to 'belong'. This can be seen in the title of her first work, *Typical American*, which charts the Chang family's new immigrant efforts to become 'typical' Americans. Part of this endeavour is home ownership which is regarded as one yardstick by which to measure the success of assimilation. The desire for a home preoccupies Ralph, the central male character, during his first few months in America: 'He missed his home, missed having a place that was home. Home!'²² The second section of the novel, entitled 'The House Holds', deals with Ralph's wife Helen's own desire for a home, rather than

a house, and her attempt to achieve this. She moves from a decision to make herself 'at home' ('... it was time to make herself as at home as she could'²³), to wondering whether such a feat is possible in a strange country ('could this place ever be a home?'²⁴), to the decision to devote all of her energies to the endeavour: 'It was as if, once she'd resigned herself to her new world, something had taken her over — a desire to make it hers'.²⁵ Jen's concern is not solely the new ethnic's yearning to belong, but is also the ethnic woman's role as 'homemaker'. Traditionally a female role, in many ethnic texts, *Typical American* included, it is the women to whom the task falls of home-making, turning the house space from 'a three dimensional structure' into a 'walled site of belonging'. Jen ironises this process, as Helen, the character who most fervently yearns for a home, asks, "A house! What is it? Four walls and a roof!"²⁶ For the Changs, house-hunting becomes a form of tourism, and at the stage that they move from being sight-seers to house-owners, they feel that they have 'arrived': 'When did they realize that a town like this was their destiny ... for some time they would dwell in a house like one of these, with a yard and garage?'²⁷ And later: 'How lucky they were! How many people came to this country and bought a house just like that?'²⁸ Helen rapidly turns homemaker, preoccupied with colour schemes and interior design. The house gradually comes to affirm the position of the people within it: '... could a house give life to a family? A foolish idea. And yet, the house did seem to have filled itself, to have drawn out of the family roomfuls of activity'.²⁹ *Typical American* ends with the Changs comfortably ensconced in their home in America, well on the way to becoming 'typical' Americans. The sequel, *Mona in the Promised Land*, opens with the question, 'Where should they live next?'³⁰ In this novel, Jen ironises the ethnic success story; as the Changs become successful, they move to a desirable residential location in New York: 'Their house is still of the upstanding-citizen type. Remember the Mayflower! it seems to whisper, in dulcet tones'.³¹ If the home is a 'walled site of belonging', then the mansion seems to authenticate the Changs' position as Americans even further.

The internment and relocation experiences of Japanese north Americans during the Second World War threw issues of home and homelessness into particularly sharp relief. As I have already discussed in the preceding chapter, many texts by Japanese Americans, both fictional and autobiographical, about this time, explore the ways that debarment from home ownership rendered them outsiders, and this often resulted in a psychology of exile. Most Japanese Americans were interned by the American

government after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, shipped en masse to camps in deserts and other remote locations where they remained for the duration of the war. They were given next to no warning of this move and consequently had little time to sell or rent their houses. They were allowed to take only two suitcases of belongings with them. The army were ill-prepared for this evacuation, and the camps were ill-equipped and inhospitable. 'Home' became a former stable, unheated, drafty and sparsely furnished. Sanitation provision was communal and inadequate.³² Many women wrote narratives of this time in internment: Yoshiko Uchida's *Desert Exile: The Uprooting of a Japanese-American Family*, Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter*, Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston's *Farewell to Manzanar*, and Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660*. All emphasise their feelings of betrayal, displacement and uprootedness, as Yoshiko Uchida notes: 'I felt degraded, humiliated, and overwhelmed with a longing for home'.³³ All juxtapose their harsh camp surroundings with their (albeit often tenuous) sentiments of belonging they had felt in the homes that they had made in America. Houston writes: 'Remembering her warm apartment in East Los Angeles, the large three rooms above Nishio's Shoe Store, Yuki often wondered what bad karma she had earned to end up in such a place'.³⁴ Despite the inhospitable conditions, many Japanese Americans managed to make homes of their barracks. 'Home' is not just where one belongs, it is also the personalised and lived-in space of a family. Many camp quarters became microcosmic homes in this way: 'It had only been a crude community of stables and barracks but it had been home', 'Our mothers had made homes in the bleak barrack rooms'.³⁵

The internment autobiographies relate harsh tales of displacement and homelessness. But it is Joy Kogawa's fictional rendering of the relocation experience in *Obasan* which most potently juxtaposes the feeling of unbelonging alongside the desire for a home. *Obasan* tells the story of Japanese Canadian internment and relocation through the chronologically jumbled and fractured narration of Japanese Canadian Naomi Nakane. Kogawa's chosen narrative style allows her to closely juxtapose Naomi's memories of the family home in Vancouver with the huts to which she and her family were relocated in Slocan, British Columbia and Lethbridge, Alberta. In particular, she remembers the family home: 'The house in which we live is in Marpole, a comfortable residential district of Vancouver. It is more splendid than any house I have lived in since. It does not bear remembering'.³⁶ For Naomi, as in the camp autobiographies, 'home' signifies a past that must be buried in order to cope with the

present, a nostalgic pre-time that is lost: 'these are the bits of the house I remember. If I linger in the longing, I am drawn into a whirlpool'.³⁷ The house in Vancouver assumes an even more charged significance as it was Naomi's childhood home. In J. Gerald Kennedy's words, the childhood home becomes an 'almost magical site ... associated with indelible, formative experiences'.³⁸ For Naomi, the childhood home bespeaks the maternal, as her memories of home are indelibly intertwined with her recollections of her mother, before she left the family for Japan. The construction of this association is complex, connecting Naomi's experience of the home with the nightly ritual of storytelling, predominantly enacted by her mother: 'My mother's voice is quiet and the telling is a chant. I snuggle into her arms, listening and watching the shadows of the peach tree outside my window'.³⁹ The Japanese folk story of Momotaro acts as the connective tissue, and it is always this story that the young Naomi requests as her bedtime story. Momotaro is a story of exile and homecoming. It is a simple tale: Momotaro is a young boy who is born of a peach, who is reared and nurtured by an old childless couple in their home. When he reaches adulthood, he travels and conquers bandits, returning in glory to his family. Momotaro does not just symbolise the move from exile to return, it also symbolises the crucial distinction between inside and outside of the home, as outlined in Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*. Bachelard suggests that the house as an image contrasts with the outside world it is distinct from: '... between the house and the non-house it is easy to establish all sorts of contradictions'.⁴⁰ He asserts that 'outside and inside form a dialectic of division'.⁴¹ Inside, there is shelter, nurturance and warmth, protection from a hostile environment. Naomi, hearing Momotaro, imagines her own house in this way: 'Inside the house in Vancouver there is confidence and laughter, music and mealtimes, games and storytelling. But outside, even in the backyard, there is an infinitely unpredictable, unknown and often dangerous world'.⁴² Not only does inside provide nurturance and outside represent danger, Bachelard sees these different locations in terms of affirmed or negated subjectivity: '... when confronted with outside and inside, think in terms of being and non-being'.⁴³ As I discussed in my chapter on mothers and daughters, Naomi's selfhood is bound up with her mother and here we can see this interconnectedness working spatially too. The dialectic of inside and outside is most vividly highlighted, Bachelard suggests, when the homestead is contrasted with a snowy

landscape: '... snow, especially, reduces the exterior world to nothing ... [i]t gives a single color to the entire universe'.⁴⁴ He continues:

in the outside world, snow covers all tracks, blurs the road, muffles every sound, conceals all colors. As a result of this universal whiteness, we feel a form of cosmic negation in action. The dreamer of houses knows and senses this, and because of the diminished entity of the outside world, experiences all the qualities of intimacy with increased intensity.⁴⁵

Naomi is a dreamer, and, during the Momotaro story, inhabits a quasi-dreamworld, in which she exhibits a heightened identification with Momotaro. In the Momotaro story, the dialectic of inside and outside is exaggerated in the way Bachelard suggests through a snowy landscape: 'the time comes when Momotaro must go and silence falls like feathers of snow all over the rice-paper hut'.⁴⁶ Naomi's empathy with Momotaro's story is carried beyond the terms of the tale into her later experiences of inside and outside dialectics. She carries this with her when she observes the house to which the family are first relocated in Slocan. But here, unlike Momotaro's and the Vancouver homes, the house does not provide protection from the surrounding environment. Rather, Naomi's description emphasises the house's inability to provide shelter and to be a distinct place from its surroundings:

almost hidden from sight off the path, is a small grey hut with a broken porch camouflaged by shrubbery and trees. The color of the house is that of sand and earth. It seems more like a giant toadstool than a building. The mortar between the logs is crumbling and the porch roof dives down in the middle. [...] From the road, the house is invisible, and the path to it is overgrown with weeds.⁴⁷

The inside/outside dialectic is critical in imagining the home as a protective haven in hostile surroundings. For these people seeking refuge from racism, especially at a time of heightened anti-Japanese American sentiment, the hut in Slocan offers flimsy security, and crucially even fails to keep the outside out: the weeds are invasive.

The inside/outside dialectic dissolves further in the family's next relocation to Lethbridge, Alberta: 'Our hut is at the edge of a field that stretches as far as I can see

and is filled with an army of spartan plants fighting in the wind'.⁴⁸ Here we see the outside threatening to overcome the inside. Naomi emphasises the inadequacy of this house as shelter as well as its inability to become a home: 'One room, one door, two windows', '... uninsulated unbelievable thin-as-a-cotton-dress hovel'.⁴⁹ Naomi's desire for her home and her fear of an inadequate house lead her to fear open space. As Naomi and her family's political situation in Canada becomes increasingly tenuous, so the family's physical space shrinks, until they inhabit this drafty hut. This is coupled with Naomi's growing fear of open space and she registers her awareness of 'a strange empty landscape', which is almost devoid of shelter.⁵⁰ This feeling is carried with her, and she tells us in the preface, at a point chronologically at the end of the narration: 'I hate the staring into the night. The questions thinning into space. The sky swallowing the echoes'.⁵¹

In addition to Momotaro, Naomi uses a European story of a homecoming to highlight her own displacement. This is the story of Goldilocks, and she tells it at the point in her narration when as a child she is being transferred from one site of relocation to another:

In one of Stephen's books, there is a story of a child with long golden ringlets called Goldilocks who one day comes to a quaint house in the woods lived in by a family of bears. Clearly, we are that bear family in this strange house in the middle of the woods. [...] In the morning, will I not find my way out of the forest and back to my room where the picture bird sings above my bed ... No matter how I wish it, we do not go home.⁵²

When Naomi's father returns to the family, Naomi again believes that his homecoming will lead to all their homecomings: 'I am Goldilocks, I am Momotaro. I am leaf in the wind restored to its branch, child of my father come home. The world is safe once more and Chicken Little is wrong. The sky is not falling down after all'.⁵³ But her homecoming, together with that of her mother, does not take place: 'Trains do not carry us home. Ships do not return again'.⁵⁴

Many other texts, too, mark the desire for the house to provide a haven from a hostile place in equally acute ways. As Shirley Ardener notes: 'communities often regard the space closest to that occupied by the family as a relatively secure and predictable

inner world in contrast to the potentially hostile and untrustworthy space outside'.⁵⁵ Bharati Mukherjee's novel *Wife*, is one such example. *Wife* tells Dimple Dasgupta's story, the daughter of middle-class Indian parents who marries Amit Basu, an engineer, and emigrates to the United States. Dimple has high expectations of her life in America, but her experiences are very different. She encounters a world of racism and prejudice, where Amit cannot obtain trained work and she herself is increasingly isolated. Dimple sees her flat as a refuge from New York: 'The air was never free of the sounds of sirens growing louder, or gradually fading. They were reminders of a dangerous world (even the hall was dangerous, she thought, let alone the playground and streets'.⁵⁶ In fact, many of Mukherjee's novels depict the new immigrant woman trapped inside, for fear of what lies beyond the door, with her more recent novel *Jasmine* providing another example.⁵⁷

Inside/outside may be interpreted in another way in relation to Asian American women's writing, and the ethnic woman's ownership of space. Many texts relate the experience of exclusion when debarred from living in certain areas. These texts are mainly early immigrant narratives, including *Desert Exile*, *Clay Walls* and *Quiet Odyssey*, relating to a time when blatant racism to these new immigrant groups was even more openly admissible, particularly through the unofficial enforcement of racist housing policies.⁵⁸ In Mary Paik Lee's *Quiet Odyssey*, for example, it is their house which reflects their position in society: 'We lived in a small one-room shack built in the 1880's. The passing of time had made the lumber shrink, so the wind blew through the cracks in the walls. There was no pretense of making it livable — just four walls, one window, and one door — nothing else'.⁵⁹ Here, as in *Obasan*, the house does not provide adequate shelter and thus lacks the potential to become a home. But it is not just the home *per se* which reflects its occupants' place in society, the location of the homestead likewise functions as an indicator of social, as well as economic, (dis)enfranchisement: 'In those days, Orientals and others were not allowed to live in town with the white people'.⁶⁰ Mary Paik Lee relates her own experiences between 1905 and the Second World War where even though the family elect to place themselves in a subordinate position in relation to their white neighbours, this self-placement is nevertheless rewarded with ostracism: 'Although we found a house on the outskirts of town, the townspeople's attitude towards us was chilling'.⁶¹ Other women encounter a spatial racism even more directly. Haesu, the main female character in Ronyoung Kim's novel

Clay Walls, set in the 1930s, finds herself excluded from most forms of habitation. Barred from citizenship, she and her family are unable to buy a house, and local racist exclusions prohibit her from renting: 'He doesn't want "Orientals"'.⁶² Finally, Haesu is forced to sublet from a sympathetic white neighbour. Yoshiko Uchida recounts a similar experience at the same time: 'It seemed the realtors of the area had drawn an invisible line through the city and agreed among themselves not to rent or sell homes above that line to Asians'.⁶³ Debarment from home ownership engenders feelings of legal disenfranchisement and the desire for home ownership consequently assumes an even greater value. Both Mary Paik Lee and Kim's character Haesu later communicate their awareness of the worth of their position when they finally buy houses: 'The house had five rooms, a bathroom with a real bathtub and toilet, and a gas stove in the kitchen with a hot water tank on the back porch. We had a real house at last, with a big backyard and a fig tree. It was the first time we ever had everything just like the white people did. It really felt good'.⁶⁴

Many ethnic subjects' search for home in America may stretch beyond the domain of the domicile, and 'home' may also signify the locale inhabited by ethnically similar groups of people. One notable example is the significance attached to Chinatowns as home. As K. Scott Wong has made clear, 'Chinatown' is a residential and business space which is framed by outsiders.⁶⁵ It is, therefore, an 'inside' space in terms of inside/outside dialectics. It is also, as Kay Anderson notes, 'a dominant community inferring identity'.⁶⁶ To live within it is to assume its identity, and also to take advantage of the protection it affords as a sympathetic, rather than racist, community in which to live. Two recent novels, Aimee Liu's *Face* and Fae Myenne Ng's *Bone*, are mainly set in the Chinatowns of New York and San Francisco respectively. For both main female characters, Chinatown remains the charged site of childhood long after they leave, a place which they are by turns drawn towards and repelled from. Maibelle Chung notes: 'I would not be able to live in Chinatown again. I understood that now. But I could not escape it either'.⁶⁷ Both novels chart the women's identity crises which stem from events which took place in Chinatown during childhood. For Leila, in *Bone*, this is her sister's suicide and Chinatown remains for both Leila and her sister Nina the site of loss: 'When I suggested Chinatown, Nina said it was too depressing. [...] At Chinatown places, you can only talk about the bare issues'.⁶⁸ And yet, despite this, Chinatown remains home: 'Salmon Alley's always been home'.⁶⁹ In

Face, Mailbelle Chung seeks to escape Chinatown as the site of a childhood rape, but finds herself constantly called back, as her friend Li tells her: 'this your home'.⁷⁰

Exile, Displacement, Migration

Home represents the past. So the quest to recover or discover 'home' is also the search for identity, as Andrew Gurr suggests: 'The need for a sense of home as a base, a source of identity even more than a refuge, has grown powerfully in the last century or so. This sense of home is the goal of all voyages of self discovery'.⁷¹ Thus, the search for 'home' and the pull of 'home' both resonate in several Asian American women's fictions of self discovery. Asian American women both within and without these texts become wanderers and engage in odysseys to Asia in search of their identity.⁷² Lydia Minatoya's *Talking to High Monks in the Snow: An Asian American Odyssey* and Kyoko Mori's *The Dream of Water* are two prominent autobiographical examples, and Andrea Louie's *Moon Cakes* a fictional case. All three women — Minatoya, Mori and Louie's character Maya Li — set out without knowing whether they will find their home. Minatoya:

And so my road meanders. Taking detours, I pause here and there to sample the hospitality of strangers. Wondering, Is this where I belong? But always I return to my road, wanting to find home, before the darkness falls.⁷³

Mori: 'I am taking a trip to Japan for the first time in thirteen years. "A trip" is how I think of it, not "going back" or "returning", which would imply that my destination is a home or a familiar place'.⁷⁴ And later: 'leaving the last city and boarding the train to Kobe, I wondered if my remaining three weeks might still offer some kind of homecoming ... I cannot decide how I feel, lost or at home'.⁷⁵ And finally, in *Moon Cakes*: 'I am not by nature a wanderer, but I feel I have become one. [...] So this is it. I know why I am here. I am looking for what it means to be Chinese ... I am looking for that pull of home'.⁷⁶ For all three, the respective Asian country is a partly mythologised homeland, as all have made America their home (although Mori spent early childhood in Japan). For Maya Li and Minatoya, the Asian country, rather than America, initially seems to hold the key to identity, as their parents' orientation towards it as origin of their own identities has engendered their own psychological attachments.

For Mori, Japan has been an actual home and remains so for her parents. Yet her own problematic relationship with them has prohibited her return earlier. For Mori, as with Maya Li and Minatoya, the Asian country is a site associated with formative experiences and their return catalyses their discovery/recovery of a sense of their multiply situated identity. All find a home of sorts in Asia: as Maya Li notes: 'I do not know when I began to love China, when I began to soak in her landscape like a luxurious, curative balm'.⁷⁷ And Mori, despite her trepidation at returning, realises that 'Kobe will always be ... a place to think of with nostalgia, from far away'.⁷⁸ The discovery of a home in each Asian country is tempered, however, by a recognition of equal rootedness in America, as Minatoya notes: 'in Asia I had found acceptance. But there were things that I wanted in America. Family. Work. To be a citizen once again. Trust and risk, I told myself. And when June came, I went home'.⁷⁹

Perhaps the most memorable wanderer in Asian American fiction by women is the character Fourth Jane in Chuang Hua's autobiographical novel about her search for identity, *Crossings*. *Crossings* tracks Fourth Jane's life in America and in France, as she struggles to find a stable sense of selfhood. The plot structure is sparse, with the only real developments in the text being Jane's affair with a married man and her mother's birthday party. Partly this is so that the plot does not detract from the sense of emptiness and space in the text, which strengthens our sense of Jane's homelessness. The narrative is framed by the crossings that Fourth Jane makes across seas, continents and cultural borders. Amy Ling describes Fourth Jane's cosmos as a 'shifting world',⁸⁰ and this is reflected textually through a spatially disjunctive and chronologically fragmented narrative style. As Amy Ling observes, there are 'seven ocean crossings and four major cultural transitions' and these passages chart Fourth Jane's search for self through place.⁸¹ Fourth Jane's many displacements mark her self-imposed exile from both America and China as sources of selfhood. She describes her sense of needing to find home in both places:

I couldn't live without America. It's a part of me by now. For years I used to think I was dying in America because I could not have China. [...] When it had been possible to return to China while still living in America I loved America and China as two separate but equal realities of my existence. Before the outbreak of

civil war in China I lived for the day when I could bring America with me to China. Selfishly I wanted both my worlds.⁸²

If '... place proves ... a nurturing medium, a source of both thought and identity',⁸³ then the dual ties to America and China engender in Fourth Jane a bifurcation of her identity. For Fourth Jane, a separation of the two realities of her existence is not possible, however, as they are inextricably connected: 'Moments I thought of giving up one for the other, I had such longings to make a rumble in the silence. But both parts equally strong canceled out choice'.⁸⁴ Fourth Jane's intensified awareness of her alienated self is tentatively alleviated, as it is for Mori, Maya Li and Minatoya, through the recognition that 'home' resides as much within her as she resides within it: 'Quite unexpectedly one day it ended when I realized I had it in me and not being able to be there physically no longer mattered. Those wasted years when I denied America because I had lost China. In my mind I expelled myself from both'.⁸⁵ Fourth Jane's recognition of home as an imagined site is not, however, the culmination of her search for identity, as it is in the texts discussed so far. Textually, the fragmented and sequentially disordered narrative disallows any such solution. As Fourth Jane's lover tells her, she remains in exile even after moving to Paris: 'You are an exile in America as you are in exile here',⁸⁶ because Fourth Jane has an exile mentality. Her narrative never changes from this dominant sense of a psychology of exile, and any homecoming is precluded as Fourth Jane remains stultified by her many displacements: 'On certain days moving from one room to another in her apartment was the only displacement she felt capable of undertaking'.⁸⁷

Within Fourth Jane and other women like her, place(s) and displacement have left an indelible mark upon her identity and she is a spatial hybrid. When her lover suggests she return to China, she replies: 'Too late now. Farm house, field, solitary tree, the distant mountains have fused, have become one with the American landscape. I can't separate any more. [...] I belong to both, am both'.⁸⁸ *Crossings* does not, however, offer a synergistic vision of spatial hybridity and the problems and contradictions associated with place and displacement endure. It is partly the sense of the inevitability of the loss of home that blocks a synergistic reconciliation of Fourth Jane's different worlds, who describes it as a state of 'paralysis', '... I lived in no man's land, having also lost America since the loss of one entailed the loss of the other'.⁸⁹ Like Fourth Jane, Kyoko Mori's reconciliation of different places is complicated by the sense of loss

associated with the home-as-past: 'How can I feel comforted by the past when loss is the most constant thing in it?'⁹⁰ Fourth Jane's crisis of the placeless, because multiply placed, self is never fully resolved and the sense of loss of place pervades the whole text. Michael Seidel has defined an exile as '[s]omeone who inhabits one place and remembers or projects the reality of another'.⁹¹ It is precisely this situation which produces in *Crossings* a sense of spatial palimpsest of Fourth Jane's many real and imagined locations. For two other very self-conscious writers of memoir, Sara Suleri and Meena Alexander, not only is the home-as-past inevitably lost, but place as home *only* exists in relation to the interpreting consciousness. Suleri and Alexander share with Fourth Jane this kind of exile psychology. Suleri constantly asserts the existence of 'home' only within the imagination: 'When I teach topics in third world literature, much time is lost in trying to explain that the third world is locatable only as a discourse of convenience. Trying to find it is like pretending that history or home is real and not located precisely where you're sitting'.⁹² Meena Alexander likewise locates 'home' within the imagination: '... the house of memory is fragile; made up in the mind's space'.⁹³ For both these writers, it is the existence of home only as a discourse, and not as an identifiable location, that engenders the loss associated with it: 'In my dreams, I am haunted by thoughts of a homeland I will never find', Alexander tells us.⁹⁴ Suleri recounts the experience of her mental relinquishment of the 'home': 'One morning I awoke to find that ... my mind had completely ejected the names of all the streets in Pakistan, as though to assure that I could not return, or that if I did, it would be returning to a loss'.⁹⁵

Both Suleri and Alexander go further than many writers in their interrogation of the particulars of the ethnic woman writer's search for home. Alexander interestingly posits marriage as the catalyst of displacement: 'But for a woman, marriage makes a gash. It tears you from your original home. Though you may return to give birth, once married you are part and parcel of the husband's household.'⁹⁶ The first severance from home that Alexander describes is irrevocable and can never be recovered. Alexander's own perspective on her search for home is focused upon the desire (which is always thwarted) to recover the original home, which for Alexander is always the realm of the maternal. Although she admits that both maternal and paternal ancestral homesteads define her: '*Nadu* is the Malayalam word for home, for homeland. Tiruvella, where my mother's home, Kuruchiethu House, stands, Kozencheri, where appa's home,

Kannadical House stands together compose my nadu, the dark soil of self',⁹⁷ it is predominantly Tiruvella, the maternal homestead, which functions psychologically for Alexander as the site of selfhood. She writes of her mother's home: '... the rooms of the house are filled with darkness. I am in that house, somewhere in between my parents, hovering as a ghost might. I cannot escape. This is the house of my blood, the whorl of flesh I am'.⁹⁸ And later: 'I think of the Tiruvella house ... [I]t is where I trace my beginning'.⁹⁹ Like Fourth Jane, as Alexander resides imaginatively in these houses, so these houses imaginatively reside within her: 'Those corridors wind through my blood'.¹⁰⁰ Thus, for Alexander, home is associated with the mother. Suleri elaborates this orientation. For her, as for her sister, home is also where the mother is. Her sister tells her: 'A woman can't come home ... home is where your mother is, one; it is where you are mother, two; and in between ... your spirit must become a tiny, concentrated little thing, so that your body feels like a spacious place in which to live'.¹⁰¹ As I discuss in the next section, the inevitability of the loss of home is tied up with the loss of the maternal, as the ineluctable psychological severance from the maternal which is part of the bid for self identity on the part of the daughter.¹⁰² Thus the psychological orientation towards the mother mirrors the psychological as well as physical orientation towards home as the site of the maternal. *Fault Lines* is considerably more explicit than *Meatless Days* in its confessed search for self. As Alexander tells us in the first few pages, she is both 'writing in search of a homeland' and writing about 'the difficulty of living in space'.¹⁰³ Alexander's search is for her identity through an imaginative exploration of space. As J. Gerald Kennedy notes, '... place enters importantly into the day-to-day construction of the self'.¹⁰⁴ Alexander envisages her textual construction of her identity as a stitching together of all the places where she has lived:

Place names litter ... Allahabad, Tiruvella, Kozencheri, Pune, Dubai, London, New York, Minneapolis, Saint Paul, New Delhi, Trivandum. Sometimes I think I could lift these scraps of space and much as an indigent dressmaker, cut them into shape. Stitch my days into a patchwork garment fit to wear.¹⁰⁵

And yet Alexander, like Fourth Jane, is both more and less than the sum of her spatial parts. 'Home' will never be a single place, and therefore will never exist outside of her desiring imagination: '... this Other who I am ... has no home. [...] History is

maquillage. No homeland here'.¹⁰⁶ Alexander sees the home-as-past as imaginative, and therefore the home — as history — cannot be externally located.

Alexander's experiences, like Suleri's, in common with many other Asian American women's experiences, mean that as postcolonial women, the world and space cannot be taken for granted, and the memory of colonialism highlights the charged nature of space as territory to be colonised, owned, exploited. 'After all', Alexander writes, 'for such as we are the territories are not free. The world is not open. That endless space, the emptiness of the American sublime is worse than a lie'.¹⁰⁷ Exilic identity reflects this through the yearning to return and colonise space. Writers like Alexander, Suleri, and Bharati Mukherjee emphasise that the ownership of space cannot be taken for granted. Even for upper-class emigrés like Chuang Hua (Fourth Jane as she calls herself in *Crossings*) and Mai-mai Sze in *Echo of a Cry*, women who have actively chosen an exilic life,¹⁰⁸ rootlessness is a burden. It is only those women who choose to travel in search of the home of their identity, and find it, like Lydia Minatoya, Kyoko Mori and Maya Li, who are able to transmute their journeys into narratives of migration, in which they are able to emphasise the more positive side of diasporic identity, whereby one may have the best of both worlds.¹⁰⁹

Domestic Spaces and Ghostly Places

The house of ghosts is recurrent in ethnic fiction. One may think of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* or Ana Castillo's *So Far From God*, for example. Ghosts, both literal, and figurative, also inhabit many houses in Asian American women's writing, where both the house of ghosts and the house of secrets feature. In this sense, houses assume the identities of the activities which have taken place within them. The house is a charged space, haunted by the spectres of familial crimes most notably in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and also in Fiona Cheong's *The Scent of the Gods*. Both texts relate the tale of fallen women and shameful pregnancies. Houses in Kingston's fiction always reflect their occupants. In *The Woman Warrior*, the house which forms the location of Kingston's aunt's shameful pregnancy reflects the weight of familial ancestry both inside: 'we stood together in the middle of our house, in the family hall with the pictures and the tables of the ancestors around us', and outside: 'At that time the house had only two wings. When the men came back, we would build two more to enclose our courtyard and a third one to begin a second courtyard'.¹¹⁰ The villagers'

discovery of and reaction to the no name aunt's unmarried pregnancy is charted in spatial terms. They break into the family home and search through the home for the aunt's room: 'the villagers pushed through both wings, even your grandparents' rooms, to find your aunt's, which was also mine until the men returned. From this room a new wing for one of the younger families would grow'.¹¹¹ Spatially, until this point the aunt's position within the house was amongst the family, so the villagers' invasion of the Hong homestead affects all of the family: they trample through *everyone's* rooms. The villagers destroy much of the internal structure of the house, literalising the image of the 'broken house', as Kingston notes: 'The villagers came to show my aunt and her lover-in-hiding a broken house'.¹¹² Both the no name aunt's self-inflicted and imposed punishments are also meted out in spatial ways. Once the secret is out (-side the house), the aunt is relegated to an 'outcast' table: 'My aunt must have lived in the same house as my parents and eaten at an outcast table'.¹¹³ The aunt's crime is described by Kingston spatially: '... my aunt crossed boundaries not delineated in space',¹¹⁴ describing social rules using spatial metaphors. The aunt's self-imposed punishment is therefore enacted through the re-observation of spatial rules, and as an outsider now, she must leave the house: 'She ran out into the fields, far enough from the house so that she could no longer hear their voices, and pressed herself against the earth, her land no more'.¹¹⁵ In this extract, the aunt's dispossession is measured spatially — she no longer may claim the right to ancestral land. Then follows a proliferation of descriptions of the aunt, cast out, literally lost in space: 'She was one of the stars, a bright dot in blackness, without home, without a companion, in eternal cold and silence'; 'Flayed, unprotected against space, she felt pain return'; 'Black space opened'.¹¹⁶ The aunt's position as outsider now she has been expelled from her place within the family, is completed by her own placement in a subordinate space: she drowns herself in the family well. Paradoxically, then, the house was rid of her and her secret, only for the memory of her, and the fear of her ghost, to remain on the doorstep.

In Fiona Cheong's novel *The Scent of the Gods*, the ancestral home is patriarchal: 'in Great-Grandfather's house' is a recurrent refrain.¹¹⁷ The story is of eleven-year old Su Yen's struggle to locate the actual and imagined ghosts that haunt her family's house in 1960s Singapore. This house of secrets, like Kingston's, shrouds a shameful pregnancy resulting from rape, of Auntie Daisy, who remains behind closed doors, only fleetingly glimpsed by the young protagonist Su Yen, whose task it is, like it

was for Kingston, to discover and reconstruct her story. In this novel, too, it is the seeping of the secret outside of the family home, that seems to start the destructive chain of events that finally rupture the family. The house of secrets is also common in Amy Tan's fiction. Many of the Joy Luck mothers, notably An-Mei Hsu, as well as Winnie Louie in *The Kitchen God's Wife*, describe childhood, as well as adult, houses with secrets, and often a woman's shame is the secret. The most obvious fallen woman is An-Mei's mother in *The Joy Luck Club*. Apart from this, most of Tan's houses contain familial secrets, and warring family members, especially mothers and daughters, must divulge their secrets in order for reconciliation to be achieved. This is the case in *The Kitchen God's Wife* and also, to a lesser extent, in *The Hundred Secret Senses*.

Ghosts also represent loss. For Kingston, this is not the loss of familial and ancestral dignity, but it is the loss of the maternal. As I asserted earlier in my chapter on mothers and daughters, for Kingston the maternal is represented not just by her biological mother, but also by other mother-figures, of whom No Name Aunt is one. This aunt's relegation from the house is also therefore for Kingston the loss of the maternal. In fact, the house is often the domain of the mother, so her loss is often measured spatially through her absence within the house. This is the case in Kogawa's novel *Obasan*, as well as for An-Mei Hsu in *The Joy Luck Club*, where the mother is described as a 'ghost' because of her absence.¹¹⁸ In *The Joy Luck Club*, *The Woman Warrior* and Julie Shigekuni's recent novel *A Bridge Between Us*, a return home is the return to the mother, as it is her space. This is particularly the case in Shigekuni's novel, where the house becomes a house of mothers and daughters, with the accompanying intergenerational conflicts.

In Shigekuni's novel, the house functions as an architectural metaphor of the family within it, so that it becomes a spatial representation of its occupants. It is, predominantly, a house of women, and each level represents a generational stage of the family. Nomi, the youngest female of the family, writes:

The house where I live with my mother, Grandma Rio and Granny Reiko looks like the Japanese word for gossip. I know this because Granny Reiko showed me how to draw it. First you make the three women: Granny Reiko who is my great-grandmother, and my mother, and below them Grandma Rio. You draw them sitting down, as close together as you can without making them touch. Then you

put the roof over their heads, which Granny Reiko says belongs to her and keeps them inside.¹¹⁹

The story charts the lives of four generations of Japanese American women who all live together, united by familial ties but separated from each other by mother-daughter distances engendered by secrets. The title itself, *A Bridge Between Us*, deploys an architectural metaphor to indicate the obligation which forms a tie between all of the women. Nomi's comparison of the house with the Japanese character for gossip draws upon the traditional connecting tissue between women. Crucially, gossip is the spilling of secrets, but in this house, by and large, secrets are not shared and this blocks maternal-daughterly communication.¹²⁰

The four women's different relationships with each other are also figured spatially. In the familial hierarchy, Granny Reiko is the great-grandmother, Grandma Rio is her daughter, Tomoe her daughter-in-law, and Nomi Tomoe's daughter. In the family house, Granny Reiko occupies the top floor, Tomoe and her daughters the middle floor, and Grandma Rio the bottom floor. This indicates both Grandma Rio's subordinate position within the household, and also the psychological distance between her and her mother: the rest of the household are located between them both, and thus separate them. Granny Reiko's position as dominant matriarch is likewise figured by her physical place at the top of the house.

Significantly, all of the women envisage the properties of the house in different ways, according to their position within it, as well as within the maternal-daughterly hierarchy. Granny Reiko's presence dominates, and she regards the house as a reflection of her own strength as well as her domain: 'This house has survived earthquake, fire, blood, my father's death, I want it to be the house where I too will die'.¹²¹ Tomoe also sees the house as a strength, but a strength in itself, and this marks her desire for the home to be a refuge, as well as her subscription to domestic ideologies in which the woman is a homemaker. She recognises that although identical on the outside, each house has many problems within it: 'I steer the car past rows of houses, colorful boxes stacked up and down the hills, one after another, each one holding another family, each family with its own problems'.¹²² So that although Tomoe desires her house to be a nurturing homestead, she is able to see through this ideology, that it is not just her own family with problems. Both Tomoe and Granny Reiko, for different reasons, have an

interest in preserving the homestead. Grandma Rio and Nomi, by contrast, seek to escape it. Home for Rio has always been the site of maternal domination. She sees the house as repressive and this manifests itself in her dreams. She dreams of the outside with longing: ‘... I began visiting an old part of the country in my sleep, maybe it was Japan ... I found myself wandering’.¹²³ Coupled with the desire to wander, Rio dreams of the emptiness of the house, the home-space as a void, both literally, and metaphorically, as it is not a nurturing space for Rio:

... when I was a child, I dreamed of falling off the earth. I saw myself walking up the hill toward home — that old, blue house where I still live. I’d walk to the top of the hill, climb the sixteen steps that led to the front door, and on the other side would be nothing. I’d fall through the air as if through water. I’d sink lower and deeper, unable to breathe. As a child, the dream came routinely as a nightmare.¹²⁴

Rio’s sense of the home as a void space changes as she grows older, and her inability to escape her mother’s influence leads her to desire an escape from the house, which she increasingly finds to be a stifling environment. This is exacerbated by her husband’s well-meaning attempts to make the house a safe place himself: ‘Tadashi came home with storm windows, which he said he got to shut the draft out of the downstairs part of the house ... I complained that there wasn’t enough air’.¹²⁵ For Rio, whose mother has always been a stifling influence, peril lies within rather than without the house, as Tadashi assumes. The same is true for her granddaughter Nomi, who feels not only the repressive influence of her mother, but also the weight of three generations of dominant mother-figures. Thus, Nomi, like Rio, seeks to escape the house-space. She leaves to escape the weight of maternal influence and notes that ‘I knew I could never return home’.¹²⁶ She likens this weight to a house collapsing, again using an architectural description: ‘My life is a burning house collapsing in on itself. There is too much weight’.¹²⁷ The novel ends with Nomi and Rio both escaping the weight of the collapsing house across a bridge of sorts and the final image is of themselves escaping down a river on a raft, away from the house.

Domestic spaces often prove oppressive for Asian American daughters, because of the onus upon them, as women, to become skilled in house work. Maxine Hong

Kingston, Aimee Liu's character Maibelle and Jade Snow Wong, for example, all feel the weight of maternal pressure to be good daughters with the accompanying home skills. Kingston, for one, rejects this: 'I refused to cook. When I had to wash dishes, I would crack one or two. "Bad girl," my mother yelled, and sometimes that made me gloat rather than cry'.¹²⁸ But domestic spaces within the house are not always associated with repressive maternal control. Frequently, domestic spaces become the sites of maternal-daughterly communication and reconciliation. Brave Orchid's laundry, for example, is the place that the young Kingston chooses as the location for her recitation of two hundred grievances that she has saved for her mother to hear. In Tan's novels, the kitchen is often the location for truthful/private exchange between mother and daughter: Lena and her mother, for example, discuss her relationship with Rich in *The Joy Luck Club*, it is also the place where Jing-Mei and her mother talk honestly and it is the place where Pearl's aunt chooses to unburden herself of family secrets in *The Kitchen God's Wife*. In memories of China, too, women's place is often in the kitchen, as it is for Lindo Jong in *The Joy Luck Club*: '... Huang Taitai hurried me upstairs to the second floor and into the kitchen, which was a place ... for cooks and servants. So I knew my standing'.¹²⁹

The decision to choose the domestic space of the homestead as the location of these tales of self-discovery is one way of subverting the notion of women 'as properly belonging to the domestic sphere'.¹³⁰ The domestic space becomes, in many accounts, the space that is rejected in favour of self-expression: in Tan's texts, *The Woman Warrior*, Jade Snow Wong's *Fifth Chinese Daughter* and Aimee Liu's *Face*, the domicile is deserted by the Asian American daughter unwilling to assume the identity afforded her within that space. White feminists have argued that the house is 'the central site of the oppression of women'.¹³¹ For ethnic women, too, the home is the location of oppression, often rendered doubly so by the inhibitions placed upon her by the fear of a racist world beyond the homestead. This is notably the case for many of Bharati Mukherjee's characters, and even Maxine Hong Kingston must find the strength to leave.

Ethnic Women in the House of Fiction: Narrative Homecomings

Feminism, as Gillian Rose has suggested, has often made use of a spatial politics.¹³² The notions of the woman's need for a room of her own (Woolf), and of women in the house

of fiction (Lorna Sage's use of a Jamesian image), are two prominent examples.¹³³ These images are pertinent to my analysis here as I consider the idea of the ethnic woman's room in the house of fiction. 'Home' may also be understood as both psyche and as the textual container itself.¹³⁴ In this sense, fictions of self-discovery by Asian American women are fictions of homecoming. All of the texts under consideration, whether fictional or autobiographical in emphasis, chart their subjects' search for identity. The autobiography, though, in particular, functions as a home for one's history. Autobiography, as Lloyd S. Kramer has made clear, is thus the attempt by the writer to make a fictional home for the textual self.¹³⁵ In this sense, the autobiography itself bears testimony to the woman writer's emerging sense of her own selfhood: as retrospective narratives, autobiographies chart the process (or may even *be* the process) whereby that textual self has come into being. As Yoshiko Uchida writes of her own work: '... it took so many years for these words to find a home'.¹³⁶ The autobiography itself, then, is often a largely developmental narrative, even in the more experimental and chronologically fragmented accounts like those of Meena Alexander, Sara Suleri and Maxine Hong Kingston. For these writers, '... the blank page symbolises a location of self-birth'.¹³⁷ As 'home' is only ever an imagined place, so the self solely exists textually for many of these women, whose textual constructions of selfhood link identity with the psychological attachment to place. Lydia Minatoya's work, for example, is organised textually around the places where she has lived, each representing a development in her life.¹³⁸ Autobiography, however, must be placed alongside fiction on a generic continuum, and many other texts, whilst not overtly acknowledged as autobiography, nevertheless betray autobiographical emphases.¹³⁹ Chuang Hua's *Crossings*, Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* and Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* are three such examples. J. Gerald Kennedy has argued that: '... a writer's fixation with place may signal the *desire* of autobiography: the longing to reconstruct — albeit in fictive terms — the relation between the authorial self and a world of located experience'.¹⁴⁰ In not only the above texts, but also many others, the heightened significance of and attachment to place bears testimony to an autobiographical impulse: to investigate the role of space and place in the construction of identity.

Space has always been of particular interest to both women and feminist writers, as Margaret R. Higonnet has noted: 'the implications of a *space*, which intertwine physical, social and political territories, offer particularly rich material for feminist

analysis today'.¹⁴¹ Feminist literary theory since the 1970s has busied itself claiming space for woman writers in the house of fiction, from the early work of Elaine Showalter, Tillie Olson and Mary Ellmann onwards. More recent excavations have been concerned to uncover the forgotten work of ethnic women. Most prominent is the work of African American women writers. But in Asian American studies, too, disremembered women writers have been republished.¹⁴² Alongside this has been an explosion of writing activity in the area of Asian American studies, particularly by Asian American women, so that it would not be an exaggeration to claim that Asian American women currently have a rather popular room in the house of fiction. In particular, the spectacular success stories of Maxine Hong Kingston, Amy Tan and Joy Kogawa come to mind.¹⁴³ Hot on their heels, however, come a whole crowd of new writers, many of whom have been discussed in these pages, and who are now enjoying the wider readership initially attracted by Kingston's, Tan's and Kogawa's work. These ethnic writers are the cross-over success stories.¹⁴⁴ This is the first step towards opening the canon, that most exclusive of spaces, and we are already witnessing the appearance of Asian American women writers on school and university curricula.¹⁴⁵ More writers will certainly follow.

Many of the women discussed in this thesis are acutely aware of their place in the house of fiction. Several have bemoaned their tokenist presence on curricula and within the pages of academic works.¹⁴⁶ Both within and without the text, many Asian American women are concerned with defining their own space. As Higgonet asserts, 'the double displacement of subaltern women writers weighs not only on their physical depiction of place but on their general writing strategies. Space becomes a writerly problem'.¹⁴⁷ In *The Woman Warrior*, Kingston writes: 'we belong to the planet now'.¹⁴⁸ Part of a space-claiming project is the appropriation of both fictional and autobiographical forms as the mediums of self-expression. The success of the Asian American woman writer in carving out space has recently led to white readers clamouring at the door of ethnic fiction. One reviewer has written in relation to Tan's work: 'Tan is handing us [the white reader] a key with no price tag and letting us open the brass-bolted door'.¹⁴⁹

That door may be ajar, but it is not yet entirely open. This thesis does not offer a comprehensive survey of Asian American women's writing, partly due to the cultural conditions of dissemination that I outlined in my introduction. Instead, it draws attention to distinctive elements within a range of Asian American women's writing, from early

twentieth-century texts to works published as recently as 1998. These distinctive elements are a preoccupation with issues of identity and identity formation, and as I have shown, involve the writers concerned in a negotiation with current discourses of identity to be found in a wide range of cultural and epistemological locations, including psychoanalysis, literary theory and linguistics. Arnold Krupat has noted: 'Who are you, who are you? Identity questions are everywhere today'.¹⁵⁰ In an age when the United States has witnessed increasing racial tension, from legal battles like the Anita Hill versus Clarence Hill rape trial of 1991, to the O. J. Simpson trial last year, or the racial riots in Los Angeles in the spring of 1992, the question 'What is an American?' has become increasingly critical.

In the foreword to the 1997 anthology *Making More Waves: New Writing by Asian American Women*, Jessica Hagedorn observes the 'growing audience of readers for writing by and about Asian American women'.¹⁵¹ Acknowledging this fact, the editors of *Making More Waves* consciously sought to include pieces of writing which in terms of theme and plot moved beyond the better-known examples of writing by Asian American women, many of which 'moved characters along a linear continuum from Asian immigrant to American citizen to a happy ending suggesting the superiority of the latter over the former'.¹⁵² Instead, they included pieces in which 'multiple identities emerge as irregularities and discontinuities'.¹⁵³ This is one way in which the current generation of Asian American women writers is answering the questions 'Who am I?' and 'What is an American?' Perhaps Renee Tajima-Peña best sums up this shift: 'When I was growing up, identity was always framed in terms of assimilation, "How do people become American?" Today the question is more aptly, "How has America become its people?"'¹⁵⁴

Notes

¹ The literature on space is vast, and growing. I have made use only of the most pertinent to my discussion.

² S. Frank Miyamoto, Introduction, *Nisei Daughter* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979), p.vii.

³ Meena Alexander, *Fault Lines: A Memoir* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1993), p.174.

⁴ Shirley Ardener, ed., *Women and Space: Ground Rules and Social Maps* (Oxford: Berg, 1993), p.3.

⁵ Chuang Hua, *Crossings* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1986), p.187.

⁶ Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Plon, 1976), p.43.

- ⁷ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look At How We Experience Intimate Places* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), p.7.
- ⁸ Kathleen Kirby, *Indifferent Boundaries: Spatial Concepts of Human Subjectivity* (New York: Guildford Press, 1996), p.21.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p.27.
- ¹⁰ Amy Ling discusses the longing for homeland, and the subsequent importance of 'home' in the fictions of Virginia Lee, Hazel Lin and Bette Bao Lord, in detail. I have been unable to trace these texts myself, but Ling's discussion does reflect my own view on later writers. Of particular relevance is Ling's emphasis on the *imagined* nature of home in these fictions, a point reiterated in my own argument. She writes: 'For some people whom time has distanced from their ancestral homeland, memory has become amber-tinted by nostalgia and the landscapes that they paint in this condition reflect more the imagination of the artists than the reality of the land being depicted'. See Amy Ling, *Between Worlds: Women Writers of Chinese Ancestry* (New York: Pergamon, 1990), pp.97-103.
- ¹¹ With the exception of Jing-mei Woo, who travels back to China at the end of the novel.
- ¹² Nomi, too, goes to Japan, but lives as a virtual recluse there, and does not involve herself at all in her surroundings.
- ¹³ Patricia Duncker, *Sisters and Strangers: An Introduction to Contemporary Feminist Fiction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p.221.
- ¹⁴ This term owes much to Jamaican British novelist Joan Riley's novel of the same name, which deals with the state of unbelonging. See Joan Riley, *The Unbelonging* (London: Women's Press, 1985).
- ¹⁵ Mai-mai Sze, *Echo of a Cry: A Story Which Began In China* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1945), p.108.
- ¹⁶ Marilyn R. Chandler, *Dwelling in the Text: Houses in American Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p.1.
- ¹⁷ See Gillian Rose, *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (Cambridge: Polity, 1993), p.26. Rose is referring to Carole Pateman's remark. See Carole Pateman, *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 1989), p.118.
- ¹⁸ See Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Grafton, 1977).
- ¹⁹ *Dwelling in the Text*, p.1.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*
- ²¹ *Ibid.*
- ²² Gish Jen, *Typical American* (London: Plume, 1992), p.33.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p.63.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.66.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.76.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.154.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.135.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.156.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.160.
- ³⁰ Gish Jen, *Mona in the Promised Land* (New York: Knopf, 1996), p.3.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, p.4.
- ³² See *Japanese Americans: From Relocation to Redress*, ed. by Roger Daniels, Sandra C. Taylor and Harry H. L. Kitano (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991).
- ³³ Yoshiko Uchida, *Desert Exile: The Uprooting of a Japanese-American Family* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1987), p.71.
- ³⁴ Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, 'O Furo', in *Into the Fire: Asian American Prose*, ed. by Sylvia Watanabe and Carol Bruchac (New York: Greenfield Review Press, 1996), p.176.
- ³⁵ *Desert Exile*, p.103.
- ³⁶ Joy Kogawa, *Obasan* (New York: Anchor Books, 1994), p.60.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.64.
- ³⁸ J. Gerald Kennedy, *Imagining Paris: Exile, Writing and American Identity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), p.24.
- ³⁹ *Obasan*, p.66.
- ⁴⁰ *The Poetics of Space*, p.40.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.211.

- ⁴² *Obasan*, p.69.
- ⁴³ *The Poetics of Space*, p.212.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.40.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.40-41.
- ⁴⁶ *Obasan*, p.67.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.143.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.230.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.233.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.228.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, preface.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, p.149.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.202.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.225.
- ⁵⁵ *Women and Space*, p.10.
- ⁵⁶ Bharati Mukherjee, *Wife* (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1975), p.120.
- ⁵⁷ See also Mukherjee's more recent novel *Jasmine* (London: Virago, 1991). Patricia Duncker rightly points out that many of Mukherjee's novels deal with women in the state of being enemy aliens, and it is this that produces the feelings of being 'unpersons, unaccepted, unregistered, hunted, hidden on the rim of the black economy'. See *Sisters and Strangers*, pp.245-6.
- ⁵⁸ Although all published in the 1980s and 1990s, all these texts deal with a period spanning the Second World War and shortly afterwards.
- ⁵⁹ Mary Paik Lee, *Quiet Odyssey: A Pioneer Korean-American Woman in America*, ed. by Sucheng Chan (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990), p.15.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.14.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.22.
- ⁶² Ronyoung Kim, *Clay Walls: A Novel* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994), p.121.
- ⁶³ *Desert Exile*, p.4.
- ⁶⁴ *Quiet Odyssey*, p.74.
- ⁶⁵ K. Scott Wong, 'Chinatown: Conflicting Images, Contested Terrain', *Melus*, 20.1 (Spring, 1995), p.14.
- ⁶⁶ Kay Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), p.8.
- ⁶⁷ Aimee Liu, *Face* (London: Headline Review, 1994), p.325.
- ⁶⁸ Fae Myenne Ng, *Bone* (New York: Hyperion, 1993), p.26.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.51.
- ⁷⁰ *Face*, p.230.
- ⁷¹ Andrew Gurr, *Writers in Exile: The Identity of Home in Modern Literature* (Brighton: Harvester, 1981), p.13.
- ⁷² Journeying is a trope which surfaces repeatedly in these texts. This can be seen in the many titles which indicate travels of some kind: *Talking to High Monks in the Snow: An Asian American Odyssey*, *The Floating World*, *Quiet Odyssey*, *Crossings*, all of which are discussed here. Also see *Destination Chungking*, *Journey to Topaz*, *Jericho Road*, *I've Come a Long Way* and *Westward to Chungking*, texts which lie beyond the boundaries of my own discussion, mainly because they are out of print.
- ⁷³ Lydia Minatoya, *Talking to High Monks in the Snow: An Asian American Odyssey* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), p.66.
- ⁷⁴ Kyoko Mori, *The Dream of Water* (New York: Ballantine, 1995), p.9.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.48.
- ⁷⁶ Andrea Louie, *Moon Cakes* (New York: Ballantine, 1995), p.22; p.267.
- ⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.324.
- ⁷⁸ *The Dream of Water*, p.274.
- ⁷⁹ *Talking to High Monks in the Snow*, p.265.
- ⁸⁰ Amy Ling, Introduction, *Crossings*, p.2.
- ⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.3.
- ⁸² *Crossings*, p.122.
- ⁸³ *Imagining Paris*, p.24.
- ⁸⁴ *Crossings*, p.122.

- ⁸⁵ Ibid., p.121.
- ⁸⁶ Ibid.
- ⁸⁷ Ibid., p.116.
- ⁸⁸ Ibid., p.125.
- ⁸⁹ Ibid., p.122.
- ⁹⁰ *The Dream of Water*, p.186.
- ⁹¹ Michael Seidel, *Exile and the Narrative Imagination* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), p.ix.
- ⁹² Sara Suleri, *Meatless Days* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p.20. Suleri's argument here is in line with much postcolonial theory which utilises spatial metaphors to discuss the process of 'othering'. A notable example is Edward Said's *Orientalism*, which asserts that the 'orient' or 'east' is a cultural construction designed to place its inhabitants, cultures and institutions beyond the self-defined space of 'occidental' or 'western' culture.
- ⁹³ *Fault Lines*, p.3.
- ⁹⁴ Ibid., p.27.
- ⁹⁵ *Meatless Days*, p.18.
- ⁹⁶ *Fault Lines*, p.23. This may of course be a specific view/feature of South Asian marriage arrangements.
- ⁹⁷ Ibid.
- ⁹⁸ Ibid., p.30.
- ⁹⁹ Ibid., p.8.
- ¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p.31.
- ¹⁰¹ *Meatless Days*, p.147.
- ¹⁰² See my earlier chapter on mother/daughter discourses for a discussion of the loss of the maternal.
- ¹⁰³ *Fault Lines*, p.4.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Imagining Paris*, p.14.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Fault Lines*, p.30.
- ¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p.193.
- ¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p.199.
- ¹⁰⁸ Or, at least, have elected to continue the exilic lifestyle imposed upon them as children by their parents.
- ¹⁰⁹ I am thinking here of Amy Ling's suggestion in *Between Worlds* that the 'between worlds condition', characteristic of postcolonial writers, may carry positive charges too. See *Between Worlds*, pp.177-179.
- ¹¹⁰ Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* (London: Picador, 1977), p.12. Ghost stories such as the one told by Kingston here, often work through a dialectic of inside and outside.
- ¹¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹¹² Ibid., p.20.
- ¹¹³ Ibid., p.15.
- ¹¹⁴ Ibid., p.15.
- ¹¹⁵ Ibid., p.20.
- ¹¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁷ See Fiona Cheong, *The Scent of the Gods* (New York: Norton, 1991), p.172, for example. Most haunted spaces, both literal and figurative, in Asian American writing by women are patriarchal places. These include Kingston's ancestral home, Cheong's house, the ancestral home in *Crossings*, and Winnie Louie's ancestral home in *The Kitchen God's Wife*. Crucially, all these homes are haunted by the spectres of women who have fallen foul of patriarchal codes of conduct.
- ¹¹⁸ There is an obvious connection with *The Woman Warrior* here.
- ¹¹⁹ Julie Shigekuni, *A Bridge Between Us* (New York: Anchor, 1995), p.33.
- ¹²⁰ This is a point first made in relation to Asian American writing by women by Julie Sze, 'Have You Heard?: Gossip, Silence and Community in *Bone*', *Critical Mass: A Journal of Asian American Criticism*, 2.1 (Winter, 1994), 59-69.
- ¹²¹ *A Bridge Between Us*, p.20.
- ¹²² Ibid., p.67.
- ¹²³ Ibid., p.137.
- ¹²⁴ Ibid., pp.50-51.
- ¹²⁵ Ibid., pp.136-137.

- ¹²⁶ Ibid., p.205.
- ¹²⁷ Ibid., p.227.
- ¹²⁸ *The Woman Warrior*, p.49.
- ¹²⁹ *The Kitchen God's Wife*, p.55.
- ¹³⁰ *Feminism and Geography*, p.35.
- ¹³¹ Michelle Barrett, *Women's Oppression Today: Problems in Marxist Feminist Analysis* (London: Verso, 1980), p.211.
- ¹³² See my earlier note.
- ¹³³ See Lorna Sage, *Women in the House of Fiction: Post-War Women Novelists* (London: Macmillan, 1992).
- ¹³⁴ A point made by Arnold Weinstein. See Arnold Weinstein, *Nobody's Home: Speech, Self and Place in American Fiction from Hawthorne to DeLillo* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p.5.
- ¹³⁵ Lloyd S. Kramer, *Threshold of a New World: Intellectuals and the Exile Experience in Paris, 1830-1848* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), p.28.
- ¹³⁶ *Desert Exile*, p.154.
- ¹³⁷ Margaret R. Higgonet and Joan Templeton, eds., *Reconfigured Spheres: Feminist Explorations of Literary Space* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), p.15.
- ¹³⁸ She begins in America, travels through Asia, and the final section, entitled 'The Journey Home', marks her return to America.
- ¹³⁹ See my earlier discussion of the relationship between genre and identity.
- ¹⁴⁰ *Imagining Paris*, p.23.
- ¹⁴¹ *Reconfigured Spheres*, p.1.
- ¹⁴² Republished Asian American women writers include Chuang Hua, Monica Sone, Diana Chang, Jade Snow Wong, Winnifred Eaton and Miné Okubo.
- ¹⁴³ Cynthia Sau-ling Wong pointed this out to me. See also, Cynthia Sau-ling Wong, 'Sugar Sisterhood: Situating the Amy Tan Phenomenon', in *The Ethnic Canon: Histories, Institutions and Interventions*, ed. by David Palumbo-Liu (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), pp.174-210.
- ¹⁴⁴ Such space-claiming has not been welcomed by all Asian Americanists. Frank Chin, the most vociferous of Asian American critics, has bewailed the success stories of Tan, Kingston, et. al., as 'fakery' and 'racist love'. See Elaine Kim's discussion of Chin's objections in *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1982), pp.178-179.
- ¹⁴⁵ A point first made by Lisa Lowe. See 'Canon, Institutionalization, Identity', in *The Ethnic Canon*, p.52.
- ¹⁴⁶ Notably Maxine Hong Kingston. See 'Cultural Misreadings by American Reviewers', in *Asian and Western Writers in Dialogue*, ed. by Guy Amirthayagam (London: Macmillan, 1992), pp.55-65.
- ¹⁴⁷ *Reconfigured Spheres*, p.12.
- ¹⁴⁸ *The Woman Warrior*, p.99.
- ¹⁴⁹ Elgy Gillespie, 'Amy, Angst, and the Second Novel', *San Francisco Review of Books*, Summer, 1991, pp.33-34 (p.34).
- ¹⁵⁰ Arnold Krupat, *The Turn to the Native: Studies in Criticism and Culture* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), p.88.
- ¹⁵¹ Jessica Hagedorn, 'Foreword', in *Making More Waves: New Writing by Asian American Women*, ed. by Elaine Kim, et. al. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), p.x.
- ¹⁵² Ibid., p.xi.
- ¹⁵³ Ibid., p.xiii.
- ¹⁵⁴ Renee Tajima-Peña, 'Cinemaya', in *Making More Waves*, p.108.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Texts

- Alexander, Meena, *Fault Lines* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1993)
- Asian Women United of California, eds., *Making Waves: An Anthology of Writings by and about Asian-American Women* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991)
- , *Making More Waves: New Writing by Asian American Women* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997)
- Bruchac, Joseph, ed., *Breaking Silence: An Anthology of Contemporary Asian American Poets* (New York: Greenfield Review Press, 1983)
- Cha, Theresa Hak Kyung, *Dictee* (Berkeley, CA: Third Woman Press, 1995)
- Chai, Arlene J., *The Last Time I Saw Mother* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1995)
- Chang, Diana, *Frontiers of Love* (1956; Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994)
- Chang, Jung, *Wild Swans* (London: Flamingo, 1993)
- Chao, Patricia, *Monkey King* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997)
- Cheong, Fiona, *Scent of the Gods* (New York: Norton, 1991)
- Chin, Sara, *Below the Line* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1997)
- Ching, C., A. Kim, and A. Khemeshefsky eds., *Between the Lines: An Anthology by Pacific/Asian Lesbians of Santa Cruz* (Santa Cruz: Dancing Bird Press, 1987)
- Chuang, Hua, *Crossings* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1986)
- Divakaruni, Chitra Banerjee, *Arranged Marriage* (London: Black Swan, 1997)
- , *The Mistress of Spices* (London: Doubleday, 1997)
- Far, Sui Sin (pseud. Edith Maude Eaton), 'Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian', in *The Ethnic American Woman: Problems, Protests, Lifestyles* ed. by Edith Blinksilver (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 1978), 187-189
- Hagedorn, Jessica, *Dogeaters* (New York: Pantheon, 1990)
- , ed., *Charlie Chan is Dead: An Anthology of Contemporary Asian American Fiction* (New York: Penguin, 1993)
- Hahn, Kimiko, *Air Pocket* (New York: Hanging Loose Press, 1989)
- Han, Suyin (pseud. Rosalie Chou), *Destination Chungking* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1942)
- , *A Many Splendoured Thing* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1956)

- , *The Crippled Tree* (New York: Putnam, 1965)
- , ... *And the Rain My Drink* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961)
- , *The Enchantress* (New York: Bantam, 1985)
- , *Winter Love* (London: Virago, 1994)
- Hong, Maria, ed., *Growing Up Asian American* (New York: Avon, 1993)
- Hongo, Garrett, ed., *The Open Boat: poems from asian america* (New York: Anchor, 1993)
- Houston, Jeanne Wakatsuki, and James D. Houston, *Farewell to Manzanar* (San Francisco: Houghton Mifflin, 1973)
- Jen, Gish, *Typical American* (London: Plume, 1992)
- , *Mona in the Promised Land* (New York: Knopf, 1996)
- Kadohata, Cynthia, *The Floating World* (New York: Viking, 1989)
- , *In The Heart of The Valley of Love* (New York: Viking, 1992)
- Kim, Elaine H., and Janice Otani, eds., *With Silk Wings* (Oakland, CA: Asian Women United of California, 1983)
- Kim, Ronyoung, *Clay Walls* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994)
- Kingston, Maxine Hong, *The Woman Warrior* (London: Picador, 1977)
- , *China Men* (London: Picador, 1981)
- , *Tripmaster Monkey* (London: Picador, 1989)
- Kogawa, Joy, *Obasan* (New York: Anchor, 1994)
- , *Itsuka* (New York: Anchor, 1994)
- Kudaka, Geraldine, *Numerous Avalanches at the Point of Intersection* (New York: Greenfield Review Press, 1979)
- , ed., *On a Bed of Rice: An Asian American Erotic Feast* (New York: Anchor, 1995)
- Lau, Evelyn, *Runaway: Diary of a Street Kid* (Victoria: Minerva, 1996)
- , *You Are Not Who You Claim* (Victoria: Porcepic Books, 1990)
- , *Other Women* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996)
- Lee, Marie G., *Necessary Roughness* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996)
- Lee, Mary Paik, *Quiet Odyssey: A Pioneer Korean-American Woman in America*, ed. by S. Chan (Seattle: University of Washington Press: 1990)
- Lee, Sky, *Disappearing Moon Café* (Seattle: Seal Press, 1990)
- Lee, Virginia, 'The House that Tai Ming Built', in *Asian American Authors*, ed. by Kai-yu Hsu and Helen Palubinskas (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), 38-46

- Lim, Genny, *Winter Place* (San Francisco: Kearny Street Workshop, 1989)
- Lim, Shirley Geok-lin and Mayumi Tsutakawa, eds., *The Forbidden Stitch: An Asian American Women's Anthology* (Corvallis, OR: Calyx, 1989)
- Lim, Shirley Geok-lin, *Among the White Moon Faces: An Asian American Memoir of Homelands* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1996)
- Liu, Aimee E., *Face* (London: Headline Review, 1994)
- , *Cloud Mountain* (New York: Warner, 1997)
- Louie, Andrea, *Moon Cakes* (New York: Ballantine, 1995)
- Mah, Adeline Yen, *Falling Leaves: The Story of an Unwanted Chinese Daughter* (New York: Penguin, 1998)
- McCunn, Ruthanne Lum, *Thousand Pieces of Gold* (San Francisco: Design Enterprises of San Francisco, 1981)
- , *Wooden Fish Songs* (New York: Plume, 1995)
- Min, Anchee, *Red Azalea* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1993)
- Minatoya, Lydia, *Talking to High Monks in the Snow: An Asian-American Odyssey* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992)
- Mirikitani, Janice, *We, The Dangerous* (London: Virago, 1995)
- , *Shedding Silence* (Berkeley: Celestial Arts, 1987)
- Mori, Kyoko, *The Dream of Water* (New York: Ballantine, 1995)
- Mori, Toshio, *Yokohama, California* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1949)
- Mukherjee, Bharati, *The Tiger's Daughter* (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1971)
- , *Wife* (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1975)
- , *Jasmine* (London: Virago, 1990)
- , *The Middleman and Other Stories* (London: Virago, 1990)
- , *The Holder of the World* (London: Virago, 1994)
- Ng, Fae Myenne, 'A Red Sweater', *The American Voice*, 4 (1986) 47-58
- , *Bone* (New York: Hyperion, 1993)
- Ng, Mei, *Eating Chinese Food Naked* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1998)
- Nieh, Hualing, *Mulberry and Peach* (Boston: Beacon, 1988)
- Okada, John, *No-No Boy* (Seattle: Washington University Press, 1980)
- Okubo, Miné, *Citizen 13660* (Seattle: Washington University Press, 1983)
- Pai, Margaret K., *The Dreams of Two Yi-Min* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989)

- Sasaki, R. A., *The Loom and Other Stories* (St. Paul: Graywolf Press, 1991)
- See, Lisa, *On Gold Mountain: The One Hundred Year Odyssey of a Chinese-American Family* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995)
- Shigekuni, Julie, *A Bridge Between Us* (New York: Anchor, 1995)
- Sone, Monica, *Nisei Daughter* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979)
- Song, Cathy, *Frameless Windows, Squares of Light* (New York: Norton, 1988)
- Suleri, Sara, *Meatless Days* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989)
- Sze, Mai-mai, *Echo of a Cry: A Story Which Began In China* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1945)
- Tan, Amy, *The Joy Luck Club* (London: Minerva, 1990)
- , *The Kitchen God's Wife* (London: Flamingo, 1992)
- , *The Hundred Secret Senses* (London: Flamingo, 1996)
- Tsukiyama, Gail, *Women of the Silk* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991)
- Uchida, Yoshiko, *Desert Exile: The Uprooting of a Japanese-American Family* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1987)
- Villanueva, Marianne, *Ginseng and Other Tales From Manila* (Corvallis, OR: Calyx, 1991)
- Watanabe, Sylvia, *Talking to the Dead* (New York: Doubleday, 1992)
- Watanabe, S. and Carol Bruchac, eds., *Home To Stay: Asian American Women's Fiction* (New York: Greenfield Review Press, 1990)
- , *Into the Fire: Asian American Prose* (New York: Greenfield Review Press, 1996)
- Watanna, Onoto, *Me, a Book of Rememberance* (1915; Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1997)
- , *His Royal Nibs* (New York: W. J. Watt, 1925)
- White-Parks, Annette, *Sui Sin Far/Edith Maude Eaton: A Literary Biography* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995)
- Wong, Jade Snow, *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1989)
- Wong, Jan, *Red China Blues* (London: Bantam, 1997)
- Wong, Shawn, *Homebase* (New York: Reed Books, 1979)
- , *Asian American Literature: A Brief Introduction and Anthology* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996)
- Yamada, Mitsuye, *Camp Notes and Other Poems* (New York: Kitchen Table, 1982)

- , *Desert Run: Poems and Stories* (New York: Kitchen Table, 1988)
- Yamamoto, Hisaye, *Seventeen Syllables and Other Stories* (New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1988)
- , “*Seventeen Syllables*”, ed. by King-Kok Cheung (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994)
- Yamauchi, Wakako, *Songs My Mother Taught Me: Stories, Plays, and Memoir* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1994)

Secondary Texts

- Abel, Elizabeth, ‘Black Writing, White Reading: Race and the Politics of Feminist Interpretation’, in *Identities*, ed. by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Kwame Anthony Appiah (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 242-270
- Alexander, Meena, *The Shock of Arrival: Reflections on Postcolonial Experience* (Boston: South End Press, 1996)
- Amirthayagam, G., ed., *Asian and Western Writers in Dialogue* (London: Macmillan, 1982)
- Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991)
- Anderson, Kay, *Vancouver’s Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1991)
- Anderson, Linda, *Women and Autobiography in the Twentieth Century: Remembered Futures* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1997)
- Andrews, Geoff, *Citizenship* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1991)
- Anzaldúa, Gloria, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1987)
- Ardener, Shirley, *Women and Space: Ground Rules and Social Maps* (Oxford: Berg, 1993)
- Armitt, Lucie, *Theorising the Fantastic* (London: Edward Arnold, 1996)
- Bachelard, Gaston, *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look At How We Experience Intimate Places* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989)

- Baker, Houston A., Jr., ed., *Three American Literatures: Essays in Chicano, Native American, and Asian-American Literature for Teachers of American Literature* (New York: MLA, 1982)
- Baker, Houston A., Jr., and Patricia Redmond, eds., *Afro-American Literary Study in the 1990s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990)
- Barrett, Michele, *Women's Oppression Today: Problems in Marxist Feminist Analysis* (London: Verso, 1980)
- Benstock, Shari, *The Private Self* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1988)
- , *Textualising the Feminine: On the Limits of Genre* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991)
- Bentley, Nancy, 'White Slaves: The Mulatto Hero in Antebellum Fiction', in *Subjects and Citizens: Nation, Race, and Gender from Oroonoko to Anita Hill*, ed. by Michael Moon and Cathy Davidson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 195-216
- Bergland, Betty Ann, 'Representing Ethnicity in Autobiography: Narratives of Opposition', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 24 (1994), 67-93
- Bhabha, Homi K., ed., *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990)
- , *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994)
- Birch, Eva Lenox, *Black American Women's Writing: A Quilt of Many Colours* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994)
- Boelhower, William, 'The Immigrant Novel as Genre', *Melus*, 8.1 (Spring, 1981), 3-13
- , *Through a Glass Darkly: Ethnic Semiosis in American Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984)
- , 'Ethnographic Politics: The Uses of Memory in Ethnic Fiction', in *Memory and Cultural Politics: New Approaches to American Ethnic Literatures*, ed. by Amritjit Singh, et al (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996), 19-40
- Brodzki, Bella, and Celeste Schenck, eds., *Life/Lines: Theorizing Women's Autobiography* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988)
- Brown, Linda Keller, and Kay Mussell, *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States: The Performance of Group Identity* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984)

- Bruss, Elizabeth W., *Autobiographical Acts: The Changing Situation of a Literary Genre* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976)
- Butler, Judith, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990)
- Cameron, Deborah, *Verbal Hygiene* (London: Routledge, 1995)
- Carr, Helen, ed., *From My Guy to Sci Fi: Genre and Women's Writing in the Postmodern World* (London: Pandora, 1989)
- Carrera-Levillain, Pilar and Jose-Miguel Fernandez-Dols, 'Neutral Faces in Context: Their Emotional Meaning and their Function', *Journal of Nonverbal Behaviour*, 18.4 (Winter, 1994), 281-301
- Cashmore, Ellis, ed., *A Dictionary of Ethnic and Racial Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1996)
- Castillo, Ana, *So Far From God* (New York: Plume, 1994)
- Chan, Jeffery Paul, 'Letters: The Mysterious West', *New York Review of Books*, 28 April, 1977, 41
- , and others, 'An Introduction to Chinese-American and Japanese-American Literatures', in *Three American Literatures: Essays in Chicano, Native American, and Asian-American Literature for Teachers of American Literature*, ed. by Houston A. Baker, Jr. (New York: MLA, 1982), 197-228
- Chandler, Marilyn R., *Dwelling in the Text: Houses in American Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991)
- Cheung, King-Kok, "'Don't Tell": Imposed Silences in *The Color Purple* and *The Woman Warrior*', *PMLA*, 103 (March, 1988), 162-74
- , 'The Woman Warrior versus The Chinaman Pacific: Must a Chinese American Critic Choose Between Feminism and Heroism?', in *Conflicts in Feminism*, ed. by Marianne Hirsch and Evelyn Fox Keller (New York: Routledge, 1990), 234-51
- , *Articulate Silences: Hisaye Yamamoto, Maxine Hong Kingston, Joy Kogawa* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993)
- , ed., *An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996)
- Chin, Frank, and others, *Aiiieeee! An Anthology of Asian-American Writers* (Washington DC: Howard University Press, 1983)
- , 'This Is Not An Autobiography', *Genre*, 18.2 (1985), 109-30

- Chodorow, Nancy, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978)
- , *Femininities, Masculinities, Sexualities: Freud and Beyond* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1994)
- Chua, Chen Lok, 'Two Chinese Versions of the American Dream: The Golden Mountain in Lin Yutang and Maxine Hong Kingston', *Melus*, 8.4 (Winter, 1981), 61-70
- ; Cisneros, Sandra, *The House on Mango Street* (New York: Vintage, 1984)
- Clark, VéVe A., et. al., eds., *Revising the Word and the World: Essays in Feminist Literary Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993)
- Coward, Rosalind, *Female Desire: Women's Sexuality Today* (London: Paladin, 1984)
- Cranny-Francis, Anne, *Feminist Fiction* (Cambridge: Polity, 1990)
- Culler, Jonathan, 'Towards a Theory of Non-Genre Literature', in *Surfiction*, ed. by Raymond Federman (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1981)
- Daly, Mary, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (London: The Women's Press, 1979)
- Daniels, Roger, Sandra C. Taylor and Harry L. Kitano, eds., *Japanese Americans: From Relocation to Redress* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991)
- Davé, Shilpa, 'The Doors to Home and History: Post-colonial Identities in Meena Alexander and Bharati Mukherjee', *Amerasia*, 19.3 (1993), 103-113
- Davidson, Cathy N. and E. M. Broner, eds., *The Lost Tradition: Mothers and Daughters in Literature* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1980)
- Davies, Carole Boyce, *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject* (London: Routledge, 1994)
- Dean, Debra Kang, 'Telling Differences', in *Under Western Eyes: Personal Essays from Asian America*, ed. by Garrett Hongo (New York: Anchor, 1995), 49-70
- De Lauretis, Teresa, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (London: Macmillan, 1984)
- , *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (London: Macmillan, 1987)
- Dearborn, Mary V., *Pocahontas's Daughters: Gender and Ethnicity in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986)

- Derrida, Jacques, 'The Law of Genre', *Glyph 7* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980)
- , *Acts of Literature*, ed. by Derek Attridge (London: Routledge, 1992)
- Dick, Leslie, 'Feminism, Writing, Postmodernism', in *From My Guy to Sci-Fi: Genre and Women's Writing in the Postmodern World*, ed. by Helen Carr (London: Pandora, 1989), 204-214
- Duncker, Patricia, *Sisters and Strangers: An Introduction to Contemporary Feminist Fiction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992)
- DuPlessis, Rachel Blau, *Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985)
- Eakin, Paul, ed., *American Autobiography: Retrospect and Prospect* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991)
- Featherston, Elena, ed., *Skin Deep: Women Writing on Color, Culture and Identity* (Freedom, CA.: The Crossing Press, 1994)
- Felski, Rita, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989)
- Ferraro, Thomas J., *Ethnic Passages: Literary Immigrants in Twentieth Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993)
- Fong, Kathryn, 'Woman's Review of "Woman Warrior"', *San Francisco Journal*, 25 January, 1978, 6
- Fischer, Michael M. J., 'Ethnicity and the Postmodern Arts of Memory', in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. by James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 194-233
- Fisher, Dexter, ed., *The Third Woman: Minority Women Writers of the United States* (Dallas: Houghton Mifflin, 1980)
- Frankenberg, Ruth, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993)
- Fugita, Stephen S., and David O'Brien, *Japanese American Ethnicity: The Persistence of Community* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991)
- Fuss, Diana, 'Fashion and the Homospectatorial Look', in *Identities*, ed. by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Kwame Anthony Appiah (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 90-114

- Gardiner, Judith Kegan, 'On Female Identity and Writing by Women', *Critical Inquiry* 8.2 (Winter, 1981), 347-361
- Gates, Henry Louis, Jr., ed., *"Race," Writing, and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985)
- , *Loose Canons: Notes on the Culture Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992)
- Gates, Henry Louis, Jr., and Kwame Anthony Appiah, eds., *Identities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995)
- Ghymn, Esther Mikyung, *Images of Asian American Women by Asian American Women Writers* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995)
- , ed., *An Asian American Studies Reader* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998)
- Giles, Howard, and Bernard Saint-Jacques, eds., *Language and Ethnic Relations* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1979)
- Gillespie, Elgy, 'Amy, Angst, and the Second Novel', *San Francisco Review of Books*, Summer, 1991, 33-34
- Gilmore, Leigh, *Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Self-Representation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994)
- Gilroy, Paul, 'Diaspora and the Detours of Identity', in *Identity and Difference*, ed. by Kathryn Woodward (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1997), 299-343
- Goellnicht, Donald C., 'Tang Ao in America: Male Subject Positions in *China Men*', in *Reading the Literatures of Asian America*, ed. by Amy Ling and Shirley Geok-lin Lim (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1992), 191-212
- , 'Blurring Boundaries: Asian American Literature as Theory', in *An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature*, ed. by King-kok Cheung (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 338-365
- Gossett, Thomas F., *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1975)
- Grice, Helena, 'Asian American Writing in a European Context: Problems and Paradigms', *Hitting Critical Mass*, 4.1 (Fall, 1996), 11-26
- , 'Reading the Nonverbal: The Indices of Space, Time, Taciturnity and Tactility in Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*', *Melus* (forthcoming)
- , 'Asian American Women's Prose Narratives: Genre and Identity', in *An Asian American Studies Reader*, ed. by Esther Mikyung Ghymn (New York: Peter Lang, 1998)

- , 'Face-ing/De-Face-ing Racism: Physiognomy and Racism in Eur/Amerasian Women's Texts', in *Re/Collecting Early Asian America: Readings in Cultural History*, ed. by Josephine Lee, Yuko Matsukawa and Imogene Lim (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1998)
- , 'Trauma and Memory: Aimee Liu's *Face* and Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*', in *Asian American Ceremonies: Ritual, Rupture, Departure*, ed. by Rocio G. Davis and Sami Ludwig (forthcoming)
- Gurr, Andrew, *Writers in Exile: The Identity of Home in Modern Literature* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1981)
- Gutman, Huck, *As Others Read Us: International Perspectives on American Literature* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991)
- Hagedorn, Jessica, 'Travels in the Combat Zone', in *Lips Unsealed: Confidences from Contemporary Women Writers*, ed. by Lyn Lifshin (Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1990), 119-122
- Hamalian, Leo, 'A MELUS Interview: Diana Chang', *Melus*, 20.4 (Winter, 1995), 29-43
- Harris, Virginia, 'Prison of Color', in *Skin Deep: Women Writing on Color, Culture and Identity*, ed. by Elena Featherston (Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1994), 9-16
- Heung, Marina, 'Mother Text/Daughter Text: Matrilineage in Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*', *Feminist Studies*, 19.3 (Fall, 1993), 597-616.
- Higgonet, Margaret R., and Joan Templeton, eds., *Reconfigured Spheres: Feminist Explorations of Literary Space* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994)
- Hill, Tracey, and William Hughes, eds., *Contemporary Writing and National Identity* (Bath: Sulis Press, 1995)
- Hirsch, Marianne, 'Mothers and Daughters: A Review Essay', *Signs*, 7.1 (Autumn, 1981), 200-222
- , *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989)
- Holmes, Janet, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (London: Longman, 1992)
- Holton, Robert, *Jarring Witnesses: Modern Fiction and the Representations of History* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994)
- Hongo, Garrett, 'Asian American Literature: Questions of Identity', *Amerasia*, 20.3 (1994), 1-8

- , ed., *Under Western Eyes: Personal Essays from Asian America* (New York: Anchor, 1995)
- Humm, Maggie, *The Dictionary of Feminist Theory* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989)
- Hune, Shirley, and others, eds., *Asian Americans: Comparative and Global Perspectives* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1991)
- , 'Rethinking Race: Paradigms and Policy Formation', *Amerasia*, 21.1 & 2 (1995), 29-40
- Hunt, Linda, "I Could Not Figure Out What Was My Village": Gender Vs. Ethnicity in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*', *Melus*, 12.3 (Fall, 1985), 5-12
- Hutcheon, Linda, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1988)
- Jameson, Frederic, 'Postmodern Consumer Society', in *Postmodern Culture*, ed. by Hal Foster (London: Pluto, 1985), 111-125
- Jelinek, Estelle C., ed., *Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980)
- Jouve, Nicole Ward, "Her legs bestrid the Channel": Writing in two languages', in *Women's Writing: A Challenge to Theory*, ed. by Moira Monteith (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1986), 34-53
- Kauffman, Linda S., *American Feminist Thought at Century's End: A Reader* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993)
- Keller, Nora Cobb, 'Mother Tongue', in *Into the Fire: Asian American Prose*, ed. by Sylvia Watanabe and Carol Bruchac (New York: Greenfield Review Press, 1996), 3-10
- Kennedy, J. Gerald, *Imagining Paris: Exile, Writing and American Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993)
- Ketrak, Ketu H., 'South Asian American Literature', in *An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature*, ed. by King-kok Cheung (New York: Cambridge, 1996), 192-218
- Kheif, B. B., 'Insiders, Outsiders, and Renegades: Towards a Classification of Ethnolinguistic Labels', in *Language and Ethnic Relations*, ed. by Howard Giles and Bernard Saint-Jacques (Oxford: Pergamon, 1979), 40-72

- Kim, Elaine H., 'Visions and Fierce Dreams: A Commentary on the Works of Maxine Hong Kingston', *Amerasia*, 8.2 (1981), 145-161
- , *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and their Social Context* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1982)
- , 'Beyond Railroads and Internment: Comments on the Past, Present, and Future of Asian American Studies', in *Privileging Positions: The Sites of Asian American Studies*, ed. by Gary Okihiro, et. al. (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1995), 11-19
- Kim, Elaine H., and Norma Alarcón, eds., *Writing Self, Writing Nation: Essays on Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's DICTEE* (Berkeley: Third Woman Press, 1994)
- Kim, Elaine H., and Chungmoo Choi, eds., *Dangerous Women: Gender and Korean Nationalism* (New York: Routledge, 1998)
- Kingston, Maxine Hong, 'Cultural Misreadings by American Reviewers', in *Asian and Western Writers in Dialogue*, ed. by Guy Amirthayagam (London: Macmillan, 1982), 55-65
- , 'San Francisco's Chinatown: A View from the Other Side of Arnold Genthe's Camera', *American Heritage* (December, 1978), 35-47
- , "'How Are You?' 'I am Fine, Thankyou. And You?'"', in *The State of the Language*, ed. by Leonard Michaels and Christopher Ricks (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 152-157
- , 'Personal Statement', in *Approaches to Teaching Maxine Hong Kingston's "The Woman Warrior"*, ed. by Shirley Geok-lin Lim (New York: MLA, 1991), 23-25
- Kirby, Kathleen, *Indifferent Boundaries: Spatial Concepts of Human Subjectivity* (New York: Guildford Press, 1996)
- Kolodny, Annette, *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975)
- , *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontier, 1630-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984)
- , 'Letting Go Our Grand Obsessions: Notes Toward a New Literary History of the American Frontier', in *Subjects and Citizens: Nation, Race, and Gender from Oroonoko to Anita Hill*, ed. by Michael Moon and Cathy Davidson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 9-26

- Kothari, Geeta, 'Where Are You From?', in *Under Western Eyes: Personal Essays from Asian America*, ed. by Garrett Hongo (New York: Anchor, 1995), 151-174
- Kramer, Lloyd S., *Threshold of a New World: Intellectuals and the Exile Experience in Paris, 1830-1848* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988)
- Krupat, Arnold, *The Turn to the Native: Studies in Criticism and Culture* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996)
- Kymlicka, Will, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995)
- Le Espiritu, Yen, *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1992)
- Lee, Josephine, *Performing Asian America: Race and Ethnicity on the Contemporary Stage* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1997)
- Leè, A. Robert, 'Eat a Bowl of Tea: Asian America in the Novels of Gish Jen, Cynthia Kadohata, Kim Ronyoung, Jessica Hagedorn, and Tran Van Dinh', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 24 (1994), 263-280
- Lejeune, Philippe, *Le Pacte Autobiographique* (Paris: Seuil, 1975)
- Leong, Russell C., 'Lived Theory (notes on the run)', *Amerasia*, 21.1 & 2 (1995), v-x
- Li, David Leiwei, 'The Naming of a Chinese-American "I": Cross-Cultural Significations in *The Woman Warrior*', *Criticism*, 30.4 (Fall, 1988), 497-515
- Lim, Shirley Geok-lin, 'Japanese American Women's Life Stories: Maternity in Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter* and Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*', *Feminist Studies*, 16.2 (Summer, 1990), 289-312
- , ed., *Approaches to Teaching Maxine Hong Kingston's "The Woman Warrior"* (New York: MLA, 1991)
- , 'Hegemony and "Anglo-American Feminism": Living in the Funny House', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 12.2 (Fall, 1993), 279-287
- , 'Feminist and Ethnic Literary Theories in Asian American Literature', *Feminist Studies*, 19.3 (Fall, 1993), 571-595
- , and Amy Ling, eds., *Reading the Literatures of Asian America* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1992)
- Ling, Amy, 'A Rumble in the Silence: Chuang Hua's *Crossings*', *Melus*, 9.3 (Winter, 1982), 29-37

- , *Between Worlds: Women Writers of Chinese Ancestry* (New York: Pergamon, 1990)
- , “‘Emerging Canons’ of Asian American Literature and Art”, in *Asian Americans: Comparative and Global Perspectives*, ed. by Shirley Hune, et. al. (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1991), 191-198
- Ling, Jinqi, ‘Race, Power, and Cultural Politics in John Okada’s *No-No Boy*’, *American Literature*, 67.2 (June, 1995), 359-381
- Lionnet, Françoise, *Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989)
- , *Postcolonial Representations: Women. Literature, Identity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995)
- Lowe, Lisa, ‘Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Marking Asian American Differences’, *Diaspora*, (Spring, 1981), 24-44
- , ‘Canon, Institutionalization, Identity’, in *The Ethnic Canon: Histories, Institutions, and Interventions*, ed. by David Palumbo-Liu (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 48-68
- , ‘Unfaithful to the Original: the Subject of *Dictée*’, in *Writing Self, Writing Nation: Essays on Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s DICTEE*, ed. by Elaine Kim and Norma Alarcón (Berkeley: Third Woman Press, 1994), 35-69
- , *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996)
- Lury, Celia, *Consumer Culture* (Cambridge: Polity, 1996)
- Madsen, Deborah L., ‘(Dis)figuration: The Body as Icon in the Writings of Maxine Hong Kingston’, *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 24 (1994), 237-250
- Maglin, Nan Bauer, “‘Don’t never forget the bridge that you crossed over on’: The Literature of Matrilineage”, in *The Lost Tradition: Mothers and Daughters in Literature*, ed. by Cathy Davidson and E.M. Broner (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1980), 257-267
- Marcus, Jane, ‘Storming the Toolshed’, *Signs*, 7.3 (Spring, 1982), 622-641
- Mariani, Philomena, ed., *Critical Fictions: The Politics of Imaginative Writing* (Seattle, WA: Bay Press, 1991)

- Mass, Amy Iwasaki, 'Psychological Effects of the Camps on Japanese Americans', in *Japanese Americans: From Relocation to Redress*, ed. by Roger Daniels, et. al. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 159-162
- Massardier-Kenney, Françoise, 'Indiana: a Textual Analysis of Facial Description', *International Fiction Review*, 15.2 (Summer, 1988), 117-23
- Matsukawa, Yuko, 'Melus Interview: Gish Jen', *Melus*, 18.4 (Winter, 1993), 111-120
- Mazumbar, Sucheta, 'General Introduction: A Woman-Centred Perspective on Asian American History', in *Making Waves: An Anthology of Writings by and about Asian-American Women*, ed. by Asian Women United of California (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 1-22
- , 'Asian American Studies and Asian Studies: Rethinking Roots', in *Asian Americans: Comparative and Global Perspectives*, ed. by Shirley Hune, and others (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1991), 29-48
- McFarlane, Scott, 'Covering Obasan and the Narrative of Internment', in *Privileging Positions: The Sites of Asian American Studies*, ed. by Gary Okihiro et. al. (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1995), 400-411
- Meese, Elizabeth A., *Crossing the Double-Cross: The Practice of Feminist Criticism* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986)
- Mehta, Gita, *Karma Cola: Marketing the Mystic East* (New York: Vintage, 1979)
- Michaels, Leonard, and Christopher Ricks, eds., *The State of the Language* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980)
- Miller, Lucien, and Hui-chuan Chang, 'Fiction and Autobiography: Spatial Form in *The Golden Cangue* and *The Woman Warrior*', *Tamkang Review*, 15 (1984-5), 75-96
- Mills, Sara, and others, *Feminist Readings, Feminists Reading* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989)
- Miyamoto, S. Frank, Introduction, *Nisei Daughter* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979)
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade, 'Defining Genealogies: Feminist Reflections on Being South Asian in North America', in *Making More Waves: New Writing by Asian American Women*, ed. by Elaine Kim, et. al. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 119-127
- Moi, Toril, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London: Routledge, 1993)

- Monteith, Moira, ed., *Women's Writing: A Challenge to Theory* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1986)
- Moon, Michael, and Cathy N. Davidson, eds., *Subjects and Citizens: Nation, Race, and Gender From Oroonoko to Anita Hill* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995)
- Moraga, Cherrie, and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1981)
- Morante, Linda, 'From Silence to Song: The Triumph of Maxine Hong Kingston', *Frontiers*, 9.2 (1987), 78-82
- Morgan, Janice, and Colette T. Hall, eds., *Gender and Genre in Literature: Redefining Autobiography in Twentieth-Century Women's Fiction* (New York: Garland, 1991)
- Morrison, Toni, 'Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation', in *Black Women Writers: A Critical Evaluation*, ed. by Mari Evans (New York: Anchor/Doubleday, 1984), 339-45
- , *Beloved* (London: Picador, 1987)
- , *The Bluest Eye* (London: Picador, 1990)
- Mulvey, Laura, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*, 16.3 (Autumn, 1975), 6-18
- Munt, Sally R., *Murder by the Book? Feminism and the Crime Novel* (London: Routledge, 1994)
- Nishime, LeiLani, 'Engendering Genre: Gender and Nationalism in *China Men* and *The Woman Warrior*', *Melus*, 28.1 (Spring, 1995), 67-82
- Okihiro, Gary Y., and others, eds., *Privileging Positions: The Sites of Asian American Studies* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1995)
- , 'Theory, Class, and Place', in *Privileging Positions: The Sites of Asian American Studies* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1995), 1-9
- Olney, James, *Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972)
- , ed., *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980)
- Omi, Michael, and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the US: From the 1960's to 1980's* (New York: Routledge, 1986)
- Ono, Kent A., 'Re/signing "Asian American": Rhetorical Problematics of Nation', *Amerasia*, 21.1 & 2 (1995), 67-78

- Osajima, Keith, 'Postmodern Possibilities: Theoretical and Political Directions for Asian American Studies', *Amerasia*, 21.1 & 2 (1995), 79-87
- Ostriker, Alice, 'The Thieves of Language: Women Poets and Revisionist Mythmaking', in *The New Feminist Criticism*, ed. by Elaine Showalter (London: Virago, 1982), 314-338
- Palumbo-Liu, David, 'Theory and the Subject of Asian American Studies', *Amerasia*, 21.1 & 2 (1995), 55-65
- , ed., *The Ethnic Canon: Histories, Institutions and Interventions* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995)
- , 'Model Minority Discourse and the Course of Healing', in *Minority Discourse: Ideological Containment and Utopian/Heterotopian Potentials*, ed. by Abdul JanMohamed (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming)
- Pateman, Carole, *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 1989)
- Payne, James R., ed., *Multicultural Autobiography: American Lives* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992)
- Pearlman, Mickey, *Mother Puzzles: Daughters and Mothers in Contemporary American Literature* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1989)
- Pearlman, Mickey, and Katherine Usher Henderson, 'Amy Tan', in *Inter/View: Talks with America's Writing Women* (Lexington: Kentucky University Press, 1990), 15-22
- Perloff, Marjorie, ed., *Postmodern Genres* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989)
- Perry, Donna, 'Maxine Hong Kingston', in *Backtalk: women writers speak out: interviews* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1993), 172-193
- Pfaff, Timothy, 'Talk with Mrs. Kingston', *New York Times Book Review*, 15 June 1980, 26
- Phillipson Laing, H., and A. R. Lee, *Interpersonal Perception* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1966)
- Rainwater, Catherine and William J. Scheick, eds., *Contemporary American Women Writers: Narrative Strategies* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1985)
- Rau, Samantha Ramu, 'The Need to Belong', *The New York Times Book Review*, 23 September, 1956, 26

- Ray, Sangeeta, 'Memory, Identity, Patriarchy: Projecting a Past in the Memoirs of Sara Suleri and Michael Ondaatje', *mfs*, 39.1 (Spring, 1993), 37-58
- Rayson, Ann, 'Beneath the Mask: Autobiographies of Japanese-American Women', *Melus*, 14.1 (Spring, 1987), 43-57
- Relph, Edward, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Plon, 1976)
- Reed, Ishmael, and others, 'Is Ethnicity Obsolete?', in *The Invention of Ethnicity*, ed. by Werner Sollors (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 226-235
- Rich, Adrienne, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and as Institution* (London: Virago, 1977)
- Riley, Joan, *The Unbelonging* (London: Women's Press, 1985)
- Roh, Carol Spaulding, 'Pages from the Notebook of a Eurasian', in *Into the Fire: Asian American Prose*, ed. by Carol Bruchac and Sylvia Watanabe (New York: Greenfield Review Press, 1996), 247-55
- Rose, Gillian, *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (Cambridge: Polity, 1993)
- Rose, Marilyn Russell, 'Politics into Art: Kogawa's *Obasan* and the Rhetoric of Fiction', *Mosaic*, 21.3 (Spring, 1988), 215-226
- Ross, J. A., 'Language and the Mobilization of Ethnic Identity', in *Language and Ethnic Relations*, ed. by Howard Giles and Bernard Saint-Jacques (Oxford: Pergamon, 1979), 1-14
- Rothschild, Joseph, *Ethnopolitics: A Conceptual Framework* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981)
- Ruoff, A. LaVonne Brown, and Jerry W. Ward, eds., *Redefining American Literary History* (New York: MLA, 1990)
- Rutherford, Anna, ed., *From Commonwealth to Post-Colonial* (Sydney: Dangeroo Press, 1992)
- Sage, Lorna, *Women in the House of Fiction: Post-War Women Novelists* (London: Macmillan, 1992)
- Said, Edward W., *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin, 1991)
- , *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994)
- Sakamoto, Kerri, 'Walk-In Closet', in *Charlie Chan Is Dead*, ed. by Jessica Hagedorn (New York: Penguin, 1993), 407-421

- Sakurai, Patricia A., 'The Politics of Possession: The Negotiation of Identity in *American in Disguise, Homebase and Farewell to Manzanar*', in *Privileging Positions: The Sites of Asian American Studies*, ed. by Gary Okihiro, et. al. (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1995), 157-70
- Schiesari, Juliana, 'The Face of Domestication: Physiognomy, Gender Politics, and Humanism's Others', in *Women, "Race," and Writing in the Early Modern Period*, ed. by Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker (London: Routledge, 1994), 55-70
- Schueller, Malini Johar, 'Theorizing Ethnicity and Subjectivity: Maxine Hong Kingston's *Tripmaster Monkey* and Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*', *Genders*, 15 (Winter, 1992), 72-85
- Sellers, Maxine Schwartz, *Immigrant Women* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1981)
- Seidel, Michael, *Exile and the Narrative Imagination* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986)
- Shah, Sonia, ed., *Dragon Ladies: Asian American Feminists Breathe Fire* (Boston: South End Press, 1997)
- Shilling, Chris, 'The Body and Difference', in *Identity and Difference*, ed. by Kathryn Woodward (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1997), 63-107
- Silvera, Makeda, ed., *The Other Woman: Women of Colour in Contemporary Canadian Literature* (Toronto: Sister Vision Press, 1995)
- Singh, Amritjit, Joseph T. Skerrett, Jr., and Robert E. Hogan, eds., *Memory, Narrative and Identity: New Essays in Ethnic American Literatures* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1994)
- , *Memory and Cultural Politics: New Approaches to American Ethnic Literatures* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996)
- Skeggs, Beverly, ed., *Feminist Cultural Theory: Process and Production* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995)
- Smith, Sidonie, *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987)
- , *Subjectivity, Identity and the Body: Women's Autobiographical Practices in the Twentieth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993)
- Solberg, S. E., 'Sui Sin Far/Edith Eaton: First Chinese-American Fictionalist', *Melus*, 8.1 (Spring, 1981), 27-39

- Sollors, Werner, ed., *The Invention of Ethnicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991)
- , 'Comments', in *Cultural Difference and the Literary Text: Pluralism and the Limits of Authenticity in North American Literatures*, ed. by Winifried Siemerling and Katrin Schwenk (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1996), 151-161
- Spender, Dale, *Man Made Language* (London: Pandora, 1990)
- Spinner, Jeff, *The Boundaries of Citizenship: Race, Ethnicity and Nationality in the Liberal State* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994)
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1988)
- Stanton, Domna C., ed., *The Female Autograph* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987)
- Steedman, Carolyn, *Past Tenses: Essays on Writing, Autobiography and History* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1992)
- Sumida, Stephen H., 'Protest and Accommodation, Self-Satire and Self-Effacement, and Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter*', in *Multicultural Autobiography: American Lives*, ed. by James R. Payne (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 207-247
- , 'Centers Without Margins: Responses to Centrism in Asian American Literature', *American Literature*, 66.4 (December, 1994), 803-15
- Sun, William H., and Faye C. Fei, 'Masks or Faces Revisited: A Study of Four Theatrical Works Concerning Cultural Identity', in *The Drama Review*, 38.4 (Winter, 1994), 120-33
- Sze, Julie, 'Have You Heard? Gossip, Silence and Community in *Bone*', *Critical Mass: A Journal of Asian American Criticism*, 2.1 (Winter, 1994), 59-69
- Tajima, Renee, 'Lotus Blossoms Don't Bleed: Images of Asian Women', in *Making Waves: An Anthology of Writing by and about Asian-American Women*, ed. by Asian Women United of California (Boston: Beacon, 1991), 308-317
- Takagi, Dana Y., *The Retreat From Race: Asian-American Admissions and Racial Politics* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992)
- , 'Postmodernism from the Edge: Asian American Identities', in *Privileging Positions: The Sites of Asian American Studies*, ed. by Gary Okihiro, et. al. (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1995), 37-45

- Takaki, Ronald, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1993)
- , *Strangers From a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New York: Penguin, 1990)
- Tal, Kali, *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literature of Trauma* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996)
- Tan, Amy, 'The Language of Discretion', in *The State of the Language*, ed. by C. Ricks and L. Michaels (London: Faber, 1990), 25-32
- , 'Mother Tongue', in *Under Western Eyes: Personal Essays from Asian America*, ed. by Garrett Hongo (New York: Anchor, 1995), 313-320
- Todorov, Tzvetan, *Genres in Discourse* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990)
- Toker, Leona, 'Testimony as Art: Varlam Shalamov's "Condensed Milk"', in *Critical Ethics: Text, Theory, and Responsibility*, ed. by Dominic Rainsford and Tim Woods (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), 241-256
- Tong, Benjamin, 'Critics of Admirer Sees Dumb Racist', *San Francisco Journal*, 11 May, 1977, 20
- Trinh, T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989)
- TuSmith, Bonnie, 'Literary Tricksterism: Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*', in *Anxious Power, Reading, Writing, and Ambivalence in Narrative by Women*, ed. by Carol J. Singley and Susan Elizabeth Sweeney (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1993), 279-294
- , *All My Relatives: Community in Contemporary Ethnic American Literatures* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993)
- Wald, Priscilla, *Constituting Americans: Cultural Anxiety and Narrative Form* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995)
- Walker, Nancy A., *Feminist Alternatives: Irony and Fantasy in the Contemporary Novel by Women* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1990)
- Walters, Susanna Danuta, *Lives Together/Worlds Apart: Mothers and Daughters in Popular Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992)
- Wan, Lillian Ho, 'Silence and the Graverobbers', in *Under Western Eyes: Personal Essays from Asian America*, ed. by Garrett Hongo (New York: Anchor, 1995), 91-110

- Wang, Alfred S., 'Maxine Hong Kingston's Reclaiming of America: The Birthright of the Chinese American Male', *South Dakota Review*, 26.1 (Spring, 1980), 18-29
- Waters, Mary C., *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990)
- Watson, Julia, and Sidonie Smith, eds., *De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992)
- Waugh, Patricia, *Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern* (London: Routledge, 1989)
- Wei, William, *The Asian American Movement* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1993)
- Weinstein, Arnold, *Nobody's Home: Speech, Self and Place in American Fiction From Hawthorne to DeLillo* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993)
- Whorf, Benjamin, *Language, Thought and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Whorf* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976)
- Woodward, Kathryn, ed., *Identity and Difference* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1997)
- Wong, Nellie, 'When I Was Growing Up', in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, ed. by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press), 7-8
- Wong, Paul, Meera Manvi and Takeo Hirota Wong, 'Asiacentrism and Asian American Studies?', *Amerasia*, 21.1 &2 (1995), 137-147
- Wong, Sau-ling Cynthia, 'Necessity and Extravagance in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*: Art and the Ethnic Experience', *Melus*, 15.1 (Spring, 1988), 3-26
- , 'Kingston's Handling of Traditional Chinese Sources', in *Approaches to Teaching Maxine Hong Kingston's "The Woman Warrior"*, ed. by Shirley Geok-lin Lim (New York: MLA, 1991), 26-36
- , 'Immigrant Autobiography: Some Questions of Definition and Approach', in *American Autobiography: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. by Paul Eakin (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 147-151
- , 'Autobiography as Guided Chinatown Tour? Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and the Chinese American Autobiographical Controversy', in *Multicultural*

- Autobiography: American Lives*, ed. by James R. Payne (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 248-79
- , *Reading Asian American Literature: from Necessity to Extravagance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992)
- , 'Ethnic Subject, Ethnic Sign, and the Difficulty of Rehabilitative Representation in Some Works of Chinese American Fiction', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 24 (1994), 251-62
- , 'Denationalization Reconsidered: Asian American Cultural Criticism at a Theoretical Crossroads', *Amerasia*, 21.1 & 2 (1995), 1-27
- , 'Sugar Sisterhood: Situating the Amy Tan Phenomenon', in *The Ethnic Canon: Histories, Institutions, and Interventions*, ed. by David Palumbo-Liu (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 174-210
- Wong, K. Scott, 'Chinatown: Conflicting Images, Contested Terrain', *Melus*, 20.1 (Spring, 1995), 3-15
- Wong, Shawn, *Homebase* (New York: Reed Books, 1979)
- , *Asian American Literature* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996)
- Woods, Tim, 'Mending the Skin of Memory: Ethics and History in Contemporary Narratives', *Rethinking History* 2.3 (December, 1998), forthcoming
- Woolf, Virginia, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Grafton, 1977)
- Yin, Kathleen Loh Swee, and Kristoffer F. Paulson, 'The Divided Voice of Chinese-American Narration: Jade Snow Wong's *Fifth Chinese Daughter*', *Melus*, 9.1 (Spring, 1982), 53-59
- Yogi, Stan, 'Japanese American Literature', in *An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature*, ed. by King-kok Cheung (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 125-155
- Young, Iris Marion, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995)

APPENDIX I

woman. Never to question. Never to expect but the given. Only the given. She was his wife his possession she belonged to him her husband the man who claimed her and she could not refuse. Perhaps that was how it was. That was how it was then. Perhaps now.

It is the husband who touches. Not as husband. He touches her as he touches all the others. But he touches her with his rank. By his knowledge of his own rank. By the claim of his rank. Gratuity is her body her spirit. Her non-body her non-entity. His privilege possession his claim. Infallible is his ownership. Imbues with mockery at her refusal of him, but her very being that dares to name herself as if she possesses a will. Her own.

One morning. The next morning. It does not matter. So many mornings have passed this way. But this one. Especially. The white mist rising everywhere, constant gathering and dispersing. This is how it fills the screen.

Already there are folds remnant from the previous foldings now leaving a permanent mark. This cloth

112

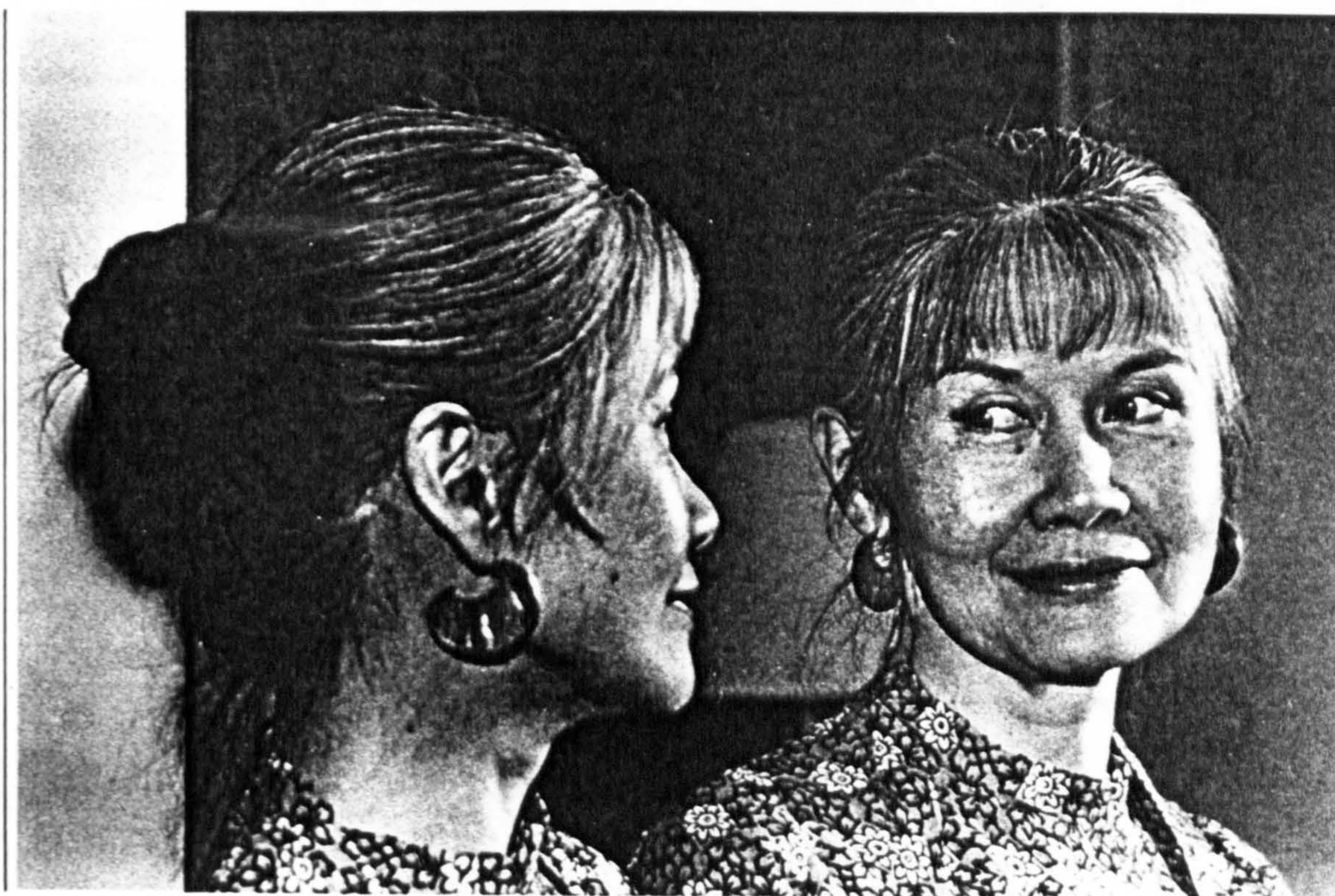
She forgets. She tries to forget. For the moment. For the duration of these moments.

She opens the cloth again. White. Whitest of beige. In the whiteness, subtle hues outlining phoenix from below phoenix from above facing each other in the weave barely appearing. Disappearing into the whiteness.

113

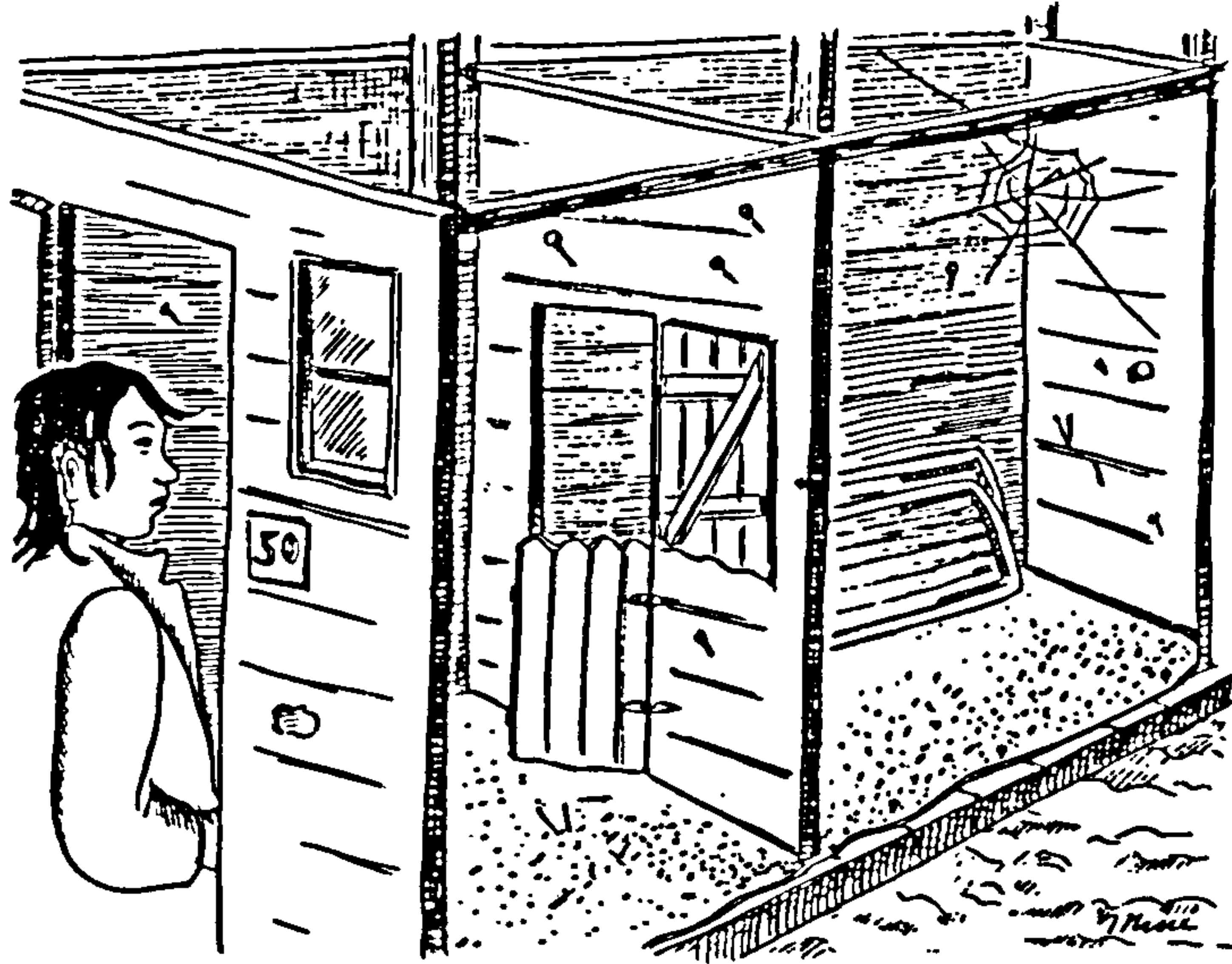
An example of the page layout in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee*, pp.112-113.

APPENDIX II



The Spec(tac)ular Act: Diana Chang's publicity photograph.

APPENDIX III



The guide left us at the door of Stall 50. We walked in and dropped our things inside the entrance. The place was in semidarkness; light barely came through the dirty window on either side of the entrance. A swinging half-door divided the 20 by 9 ft. stall into two rooms. The roof sloped down from a height of twelve feet in the rear room to seven feet in the front room; below the rafters an open space extended the full length of the stable. The rear room had housed the horse and the front room the fodder. Both rooms showed signs of a hurried whitewashing. Spider webs, horse hair, and hay had been whitewashed with the walls. Huge spikes and nails stuck out all over the walls. A two-inch layer of dust covered the floor, but on removing it we discovered that linoleum the color of redwood had been placed over the rough manure-covered boards.

[35]

An example of the split page layout in Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660*, p.35.

APPENDIX IV

thereby made themselves stateless persons. Many of the Nisei also resented the question because of the assumption that their loyalty might be divided; it was confusing that their loyalty to the United States should be questioned at the moment when the army was asking them to volunteer.

The registration form was long and complicated. The questions were difficult to understand and answer. Center-wide meetings were held, and the anti-administration rabble rousers skillfully fanned the misunderstandings.

[176]

An example of pictorial ellipsis in Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660*, p.176.