

and Asian American studies literature. Before Maxine Hong Kingston, Amy Tan and, now, Gish Jen were writing (or perhaps even born), Jade Snow Wong gave us a representation of the Chinese American female experience that is at once simple and profound. While she may not have the literary and philosophical sophistication of Hong Kingston, Tan and Jen, she was a keen observer of customs and behavior—and sometimes motivation. Her voice was certainly authentic, while often moving in the acknowledgment and acceptance of contradictions within the Chinese American family and community. She can be just as insightful in her observations on Anglo American culture, the relationship between Chinese and Anglos in America, and white America's ambivalent but ultimately patronizing attitude towards Asian Americans during the pre-War years. Making for especially pleasurable reading is her great sense of humor and irony, which infuses the book throughout.

I don't know if literary critics would consider *Fifth Chinese Daughter* "great literature." But I do think it is great material for ethnic studies and Asian American studies courses. It should be read as a period piece, and should certainly not be held accountable for reflecting Asian American consciousness as we know it in the last quarter century. But for anyone wanting to know more about growing up "American-Chinese" and female in the pre-World War II era, I cannot think of a more valuable work. And as a historian, I can certainly vouch for Jade Snow Wong's memoirs as a credible historical document.

—Evelyn Hu-DeHart  
University of Colorado at Boulder

**Mitsuye Yamada and Sarie Sachie Hylkema, eds. *Sowing Ti Leaves: Writings by Multi-Cultural Women*. (Irvine: Multi-Cultural Women Writers of Orange County, 1990) \$7.95 paper.**

"I was made  
of rainbow ribbons  
streaming from the mouths  
of five different women  
locking hands and singing  
at a midnight supper party."

— Kelli Arakaki-Bond

*Sowing Ti Leaves* gathers together personal narratives, poems, essays, and a scholarly study which were produced during the Multi-Cultural Women Writers (MCWW) of Orange County's nine-year existence. Co-editor Mitsuye Yamada states in her introduction that the writing group was formed to provide a common reference point and a forum for expression. While MCWW's ancestral ties are diverse (Argentinian, Chinese, East

Indian, Hawaiian, Italian, Japanese, Jewish, Lebanese, Okinawan), its members share experiences as women living within the “majority” culture. The writing process is used to enable “minority” women to understand their culture(s) and to proclaim their identities. MCWW provides a space for mutual support, criticism, and growth, and recollections or personal anecdotes shared with the group are often the initial inspiration for the pieces collected here.

Some of the toughest writing speaks of discrimination and disenfranchisement faced by women who wear their “otherness” on their faces or who give away their difference as non-native speakers of English, such as Susana Saldini’s “The Smell of Magic” and Kanwal Yodh’s “A Brown Woman’s Struggles.” An unsentimentalized, nearly matter-of-fact telling only serves to heighten unspoken feelings of injustice in these narratives. Several poems, such as those by Janet Jue, Florinda Mintz, and co-editors Yamada and Hylkema, are presented bilingually. The act of writing, of reappropriating one’s language, is a stay against monolingualism and a stand against silence. In the eighteenth short poem in her translated work, “Casualidad no es una mujer,” Mintz writes:

To go out into the world  
although it seems merciless  
To make silences bleed  
with cries of alarm,  
and agitate the birds of the forest.

“I was confident,” she says in the twentieth and final poem, “and began the monologue.” Finally, three essays contribute a sustained analysis of issues reiterated throughout the collection. Hylkema’s critique of leveling influences in “Victim of Nice” and Yamada’s related piece “The Cult of the ‘Perfect’ Language: Censorship by Class, Gender and Race,” as well as Jaskoski’s more focused study of Owl Woman, retain a cultural integrity and an accessibility rarely found in academic writing.

*Sowing Ti Leaves*, published by the writing group, reveals thoughts and feelings that refuse to be scripted by others. As Yamada states, “The most valuable lesson we have learned is that our experiences are valid and that they are worth sharing . . . .” The wide-ranging writings of these multi-cultural women acknowledge their struggles, explore their diverse backgrounds, and celebrate their faith in the Word so as to inspire compassionate answers for our common future.

— Kate Motoyama  
College of San Mateo