

AMY TAN'S CONTRIBUTION TO FEMALE CHINESE AMERICAN LITERATURE

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Abstract. *The paper explores the profound influence of Amy Tans's writing on first-generation Chinese American women on their descendants, particularly through the transmission of Chinese cultural knowledge and historical narratives. It discusses the significance of these narratives in shaping the creative endeavors of second-generation Chinese American female writers such as Amy Tan, Maxine Hong Kingston, Jade Snow Wong, Fae Myenne Ng, and Gish Jen. It further highlights the evolving thematic elements and stylistic approaches in Chinese American female literature, tracing its trajectory from autobiographical short stories to novel creations with a multicultural perspective. Amy Tan's contributions to this evolution are emphasized, underscoring the ongoing exploration of Chinese American identity and the transformative journey of women within patriarchal and immigrant contexts.*

Keywords: *chinese American women, Amy Tan, Female Chinese, American literature, Literature.*

Introduction:

M. Manjula explored the dimensions of culture from Hofstede's theory in the select novels of Amy Tan. *"Cultural identity consists of language, religion, values, social organizations, etc. Each element plays a significant role in framing the cultural identity because there would be many differences when comparing with two different cultures."* [1] Nomita Loktongbam's thesis focuses on the impact of American society on shaping and molding the Chinese American's identity. He applies the principles of feminism, structuralism and Marxism in the select works of Amy Tan to show *"the writer's attempt to envision a harmonious world where people care for and love one another, despite differences of race, religion, and culture, where humanity plays a prominent role."* [2]

Vidhyavathi analyzed the characters in the works of Amy Tan, to show *"how they resist power represented in family ties, racial discrimination, the economics of poverty, and the ideology of institutionalized religion. They envisage change, attempt to remedy their exploited condition and achieve the success of freedom from subordination through intercultural interaction"* [3]. Durga N argued that *"we can move beyond these backgrounds to form a new identity based on moral convictions and political justice"* [4]. K.P. Kumar proposed four types of mother-daughter relationships in Amy Tan's novels, *"which are departure and peruse attachment and love bewilderment and conflict understanding and reconciliation."* [5]

Gowher Ahmad Naik made a comparative study on diasporic characters portrayed by Zadie Smith and Amy Tan. And wrote that they all *"have suffered from homelessness, belongingness, religious identity, acculturation, immigration, war, up-rootedness, alienation and cultural isolation in the societies of London and America.....Multiculturalism is the amalgamation of various cultures that believe in cooperation and tolerance of cultural values"* [6]. Priyadharshini C.P.C. made a comparative study on Amy Tan and Jhumpa Lahiri and maintained that *"their Asian American identity in their bodacious books bringing to spotlight the sheer truth that, sun will*

surely shine through every dark sky by startling it with its golden grace [7]. Mohineet Kaur Boparai compared Toni Morrison, Amy Tan, and Abdullrazak Gurnah to study “how various characters in these texts move from a position of subalternity to attaining agency. As it comes out, this trajectory is not straight, and the passage to agency is often convoluted and complex [8]”.

Lanurenla focused on the mothers’ stories and thought that *“mothers’ stories from the other side of the world are revealed, unraveling all the misunderstandings and misconceptions between the mother and daughter. Tan’s instrument of bridging the gap between the mother and daughter is the ancestor [9]”*. S. Jenefa Kiruba Mala studied the history of women in America and saw mothers in the way *“bridging the gap between the native land and the adopted land, the individual and the society, from various cultural upheaval, the diasporas in a way is used to spread liberation in the modern era [10]”*. Sushil Mary Mathews studied the social, psychological and emotional conditions as portrayed in the novels of Amy Tan. *“If the women are able to come out victorious it is evident that some strength helps them. It may be society, mothers, sisters or friends” [11]*. He also analyzed the figures of speech and the narrative viewpoint, the characterisation, dialogue and technique of Tan. Nancy Thambi put forward that *“the estrangement and reconciliation not only between the mothers and daughters but also between the East and the West [12]”*.

Gurinder Kaur Singh attempted to examine how ethnicity is retained and perpetuated even after migration to another country. *“The United States has a multi-ethnic social structure in which adaptation and integration have been replaced by multiculturalism and pluralism [13]”*. Camalame K. also explored multiculturalism and traced women’s progress in identifying themselves despite their hardships. *“Multiculturalism brings the globe within our borders and calls for open-mindedness, patience and generosity of spirit from ordinary people. The journey to understanding and accepting others ultimately leads back to understanding one’s self [14]”*. Bhattacharya Baisakhi focused on two kinds of female identity crises: the mother-daughter relationship and the conflicts between the daughters’ mainstream American culture and the traditional ethnic and cultural heritage of the mother. *“For each novel, two fields of study are brought together: psychoanalytic theories of the mother-daughter relationship, and theories of ethnic identity formation [15]*. Ancy Eapen argued the relevance of studying American literature from ethnicity, social history, culture, and gender perspective. He focused on *“the impact of migration and cross-cultural encounters upon the immigrant psyche.” [16]*

Lakshmi Priya A. explained that the current status of Chinese women has risen steadily over the past decade. *“Amy Tan presents a refreshing antidote to the world weariness and uncertainties we face today, contemplating how things happen-in her own life and beyond-but always returning to the question of fate and its opposites: the choices, charms, influences, attitudes, and lucky accidents that shape us all [17].”*

Gayreen Lyngdoh argued that *“the quest for selfhood is not a singular event, but rather, a continuous process which must be negotiated and travelled through, much like a journey [18]”*. Sweta Ravindran analyzed the diasporic experiences of Chinese migrants in the United States of America. She pointed out the influence of the past (history) in the present lives of the Chinese immigrants. *“The Christianity that they converted into after migration does not influence them to forego their ancestral religion. The Chinese imbibe the good qualities of both the religions [19]”*. Tao Du studied from a postcolonial perspective and concluded that *“‘this’ and ‘that’ are never the two rigid and static antitheses but two fluid and interactive antitheses of many theses. Therefore, ‘identity’ is always under construction rather than a fixed attribute of a group [20].”*

Revathi R. thought Talk-stories as a means of transmitting ethnic ancestry, and personal/country history, and an instrumental in constructing identities. *“Amy Tan’s novel’s reify and reinterpret traditional genres by casting them in a variety of modes---realistic, comic, tragic, tragicomic, fantastic, naturalistic, and heroic- that metamorphoses seamlessly into each other in Tan’s signature narrative style [21]”*. Xiaohui Chen illuminated the pluralistic composition of the modern female literature in US. She argued that *“whether it is Chinese literature or female literature, their ultimate goal is consistent with all literature, which is to pursue the common spiritual home of humanity [22].”* Sukhman Kaur Dahiya selected some of the works of Jade Snow Wong, Maxine Hong Kingston, Amy Tan and Gish Jen for analysis and pointed *“these writers have made significant interventions in the discourse of Chinese-American identity and have shown how the problem of the immigrants of the first-generation Chinese-Americans influences the second generation [23].”* Himadri Lahiri also made a comparative study on several Asian American women writers, hoping to build *“a balanced world of equality, a world without margins [24].”*

Neelima V. Dual pointed out, *“The polyvocal feminist text locates women as not just passive speakers, but active participants in translating their struggles in specific gendered dimensions [25].”* Hiu Wing Wong compared the “Talk-stories” in the Fictions of Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan and maintained that *“both writers exemplify talk-story as a form of self-expression and empowerment, their talk-stories function differently as they interact with the mainstream discourse: while Kingston remodels the Chinese talk-story pattern by making it a form of literary art, Tan refashions talk-story as a kind of ‘talking-cure’ as in western psychotherapy, in her fictions and writes in the popular arena [26].”*

Quipping Liu explored Tan’s thoughts about *“human cultures and her questions of the relation between humans and nature, between humans and the spiritual world beyond our ordinary senses or even her views on narrative and aesthetic expressions [27].”* Jianjun Zou thought Tan kept exploring the ethical idea of harmony in her novels. He argued that *“the concept of harmony in Chinese and Western traditional culture is inherited and developed by her novels accompanied with abundant ethical descriptions... which is essential to the coexistence of the world as well as to the peace and development of human society [28].”*

As mentioned above, some of the researches on Amy Tan’ works focus on cultural issues, such as cultural identity, intercultural interaction, multiculturalism, cultural differences and conflicts, cross-cultural crises, and communication, and some focus on such issues as the characters, the relationship, the fate, the struggle of the women.

The evolution of Chinese American female literature

Amy Ling said that *“When I compared the works of Chinese American men and women, I discovered three surprising facts: firstly, there are more female writers; Secondly, female writers write more books; thirdly, the works of female writers are more authentic [29].”* The writings of female Chinese American literature manifest some common features due to the special experiences of the first generation of female immigrants and their influence on their daughters.

Similar to the stages of Chinese American literature, Chinese female American literature also experienced the three stages. Since the first Chinese woman landed in the United States in the 1830s, Chinese women have taken up a substantial proportion of the growing number of Chinese American immigrants. It is worth mentioning that the editors of *“ISLAND Poetry”* interviewed thirty-nine people who were imprisoned on the island at that time, among them there were eight

women. A female interviewee recalled that she used to write poetry and cry, but she didn't write any poetry on the wall.' This means that female writing began when Chinese women entered the United States though they might not be preserved in publications.

The first work in the history of Chinese American literature was written by a female writer, Edith Maude Eaton, whose first short novel collection *Mr. Spring Fragrance* was published in 1912. After the pioneering work of *Mr. Spring Fragrance* (1912) of Edith Maude Eaton, the middle of the 20th century began to witness a rise in Chinese American female writing in English with the features of diaspora literature. Jade Snow Wong, author of *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (1950); Diana Chang, author of *Frontiers of Love* (1956), Betty Lee Sung, author of *Mountain of Gold* (1967). Later, Maxine Hong Kingston won the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1976 for *The Woman Warrior: Memoir of a Childhood among Ghosts*. Bette Bao Lord's *Spring Moon* (1981) became an international bestseller and an American Book Award nominee. From the late 1980s to the early 1990s, Chinese American female novels began to enter a period of prosperity, with a rapid increase in the number of writers and works. A group of new generation Chinese American female novelists, represented by Amy Tan, Gish Jen, and Fae Myenne NG, had a significant influence on American literature. The leading novels in this period are Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991), Gish Jen's *Typical American* (1991), and *Mona in the Promised Land* (1996) *Who's Irish* (1999) *Love Wife* (2005). Currently, active and acclaimed Chinese American authors are Gish Jen, Jean Kwok, Shirley Geok-lin Lim, Sandra Tsing Loh, and Shawn Wong.

As the precursor of Chinese American literature, Edith Maude Eaton (1865-1914), with the pen name Sui Sin Far (水仙花 in Chinese), was known for writing about Chinese people in North America and the Chinese American experience. She was born in England, the second child to an English father and a Chinese mother. She was the first Chinese American author to publish fiction in English. In 1896, she worked as a journalist for *Gall's News Letter* in Kingston, Jamaica, for about six months, and began to publish some articles under her Chinese pen name. She wrote journalistic articles about the local Chinese community in some journals from 1890. Later, she moved to San Francisco, Los Angeles then in Seattle, before going to the East Coast to work in Boston. While working as a legal secretary she continued to write. Although her appearance and manners would have allowed her to take a kind of easy life as an Englishwoman, she asserted her Chinese heritage. After 1896, she wrote articles about life as a Chinese woman in white America. Over the ensuing years, Eaton wrote several short stories and newspaper articles while working on her first fiction collection. Published in June 1912, *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* was a collection that included some linked short stories marketed as a novel, which was not until in 1990s well received by readers and critics. Many academics cite Sui Sin Far/Edith Eaton as one of the first North American writers of Chinese ancestry. For this reason, there has been recent interest in Sui Sin Far's works and their revival. Therefore, she is not only a worthy pioneer of Chinese American literature, but also a pioneer of Chinese American female literature.

Diana Chang was also one of the important writers in the history of Chinese American literature, known for her first novel *The Frontiers of Love* published in 1956. "*She is considered to be the first American-born Chinese to publish a novel in the United States. Her work has more recently been read regarding postmodernity and hybridity* [30]."

Jade Snow Wong was a Chinese American ceramic artist and author of two memoirs. She was given the English name Constance, also known as Connie Wong Ong. Jade Snow Wong's

Fifth Chinese Daughter (1950), is the first autobiography in English. The book describes her troubles balancing her identity as an Asian American woman and her Chinese Traditions. Wong was born on January 21, 1922 and raised in San Francisco. She was the fifth daughter of an immigrant family which grew to have nine children. She was raised with the traditional beliefs and customs of Chinese culture which her family and her elders imposed upon her. Jade Snow Wong meticulously portrays the clothing, food, housing, and transportation in Chinatown in the novel, which critics call “self-orientalism”. But she ultimately wrote how the descendants of a Chinatown broke free from the distinct ethnic imprint given by her cultural community and eventually grew up as a model of ethnic minorities recognized by mainstream society. Her second volume, *No Chinese Stranger*, was published in 1975. The book describes her trip across Asia during her speaking tour and visits to the People’s Republic of China.

Fifth Chinese Daughter was Greatly appreciated by Maxine Hong Kingston as “*the Mother of Chinese American literature*” (Bloom 1997, 16), Jade Snow Wong depicts a perfect example of the qualities of traditional Chinese and American individuality and tries to deal with the two cultures harmoniously without damaging either one. (Green 261) Jade Snow Wong’s autobiographical novel *Fifth Chinese Daughter* was written in the third person, describing her troubles seeking self-identity in a prejudiced society with a bilingual and dual culture background. It is about a daughter who rebelled against her father's economic constraints and ultimately completed her life design and ideal realization by her efforts. The plot developed around the problems and conflicts that early Chinese families often faced. The murmurous conflicts between tradition and status quo, conservatism and innovation, family norms, and personal choices in Chinese families provided rich sources for creating themes in Chinese American literature. The story in the novel *Fifth Chinese Daughter* indicates that in the position of women, the pressure from traditional Chinese culture becomes more apparent. In contrast, the individual freedom offered by the external world becomes more important and indispensable.

In her second volume, *No Chinese Stranger*, she expressed gratitude towards her parents for ending her with Chinese ethnicity and traditional knowledge. She stated that it was precisely because her parents asked her to learn to be Chinese in her family that she could truly feel the sense of 'I am not a stranger' when she returned to China decades later. This recognition of Chinese traditions has appeared in the works of many Chinese American women. This involves a question of how to preserve oneself.

From Edith Maude Eaton, and Diana Chang to Jade Snow Wong and other female Chinese American writers, they paved the way for the appearance of a most remarkable and controversial writer, Maxine Hong Kinston, who astonished the literary world with her several novels. Chinese scholar Zhao Yiheng said, "The sudden rise of Chinese American novels started from Maxing Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior (1976)*. It is cited as an autobiographical feminist work and a model work of Chinese American women's writing, specifically focusing on the history of Chinese women itself.”

Woman Warrior is divided into five distinct parts: No Name Woman, White Tigers, Shaman, At the Western Palace, and A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe. The stories are loosely woven together in what she calls a “mother book - a book that eventually reconciles mother and daughter. The book blends autobiography with old Chinese folktales. It describes several women in the family: an anonymous aunt, mother, and aunt, and a legendary Chinese heroine Hua Mulan. In this novel, Kingston explores the issue of women's “identity” in Chinese tradition. The tragedies

of the anonymous woman and the Moon Orchid are due to being deprived of their family-recognized identities. At the end of "No-Name Woman", Kingston reflects on the importance of her mother's story. She concludes that the real lesson is not how No-Name Woman died but why she was forgotten. *"The specific genre of The Woman Warrior has been disputed due to Kingston's blend of perspectives, specifically traditional Chinese folktale and memoir. With this mixture, Kingston tries to provide her audience with the cultural, familial, and personal context needed to understand her unique position as a first-generation Chinese-American woman [31]."*

China Men (1980) is a collection of "stories" as a sequel to *The Woman Warrior*, focusing on the history of the men in Kingston's family. The collection becomes what A. Robert Lee calls a "narrative genealogy" of Chinese settlement in the United States. *"She mixes the known history of her family with hypothetical imaginings and with the legal history of Chinese America. Her book presents a picture of the United States still changing in its reciprocal influence with China [32]."* The main characters in the book include Kingston's great-grandfather Bak Goong, who worked on the sugar plantations in Hawaii; her grandfather Ah Goong, who worked for the railroad construction companies; her father BaBa, a gambling house owner and laundryman; and her unnamed brother, who receives no honor for fighting for the US in Vietnam. Under the name "LoBunsun", these four generations of men are integrated, each of whom has a similar experience of finding their true cultural selves between China and the United States.

In *Tripmaster Monkey*, Maxine Hong Kingston portrays a Chinese American youth named Wittman Ah Sing. This young man lived in the most confused era of American society--- the 1960s, when the Vietnam War occurred. He was cynical and conflicted with the people around him. The author specifically linked this character to the indulgent character of a monkey king, Sun Wukong from the Chinese epic novel *Journey to the West*. This character is fundamentally different from the typical Chinese image in the eyes of Americans. He is neither dedicated to hard work nor indifferent and devoid of emotions. He seems to be in an emotional turmoil of confrontation, rebellion, doubt, and anger. His personality is extremely consistent with the rhythm of American society at that time. He goes to a party mainly attended by followers of the Beatnik movement. *"On the closing night of the play, Wittman gives a monologue that establishes he has accepted his ancestry and culture [33]."* Through this character, Kingston calmly gave a small satire to the stereotype of Chinese people in traditional American culture.

There is an important feature in Maxine Hong Kingston's novels, that is, the combination of novels, autobiographies, and myths. The main material of the two works, "Chinese Man" and "Woman Warrior", comes from the stories the author heard from her mother during her childhood. In these two autobiographical novels, the author takes the life and destiny of her family and other Chinese people as the main theme and integrates many Chinese cultural traditions, folk traditions, customs, myths, and legends through storytelling [34].

Although Kingston is fond of the Chinese mythological system, she does not consider it a cultural identity symbol. Kingston enjoys purposefully reconstructing various Chinese legends. In other words, in Kingston's view, the Chinese text she used in her writing originally lacked fixed and forever elements, so it was completely interchangeable with Western texts. She thinks that as long as it is helpful for the writing itself, the meaning of the text can be disregarded because she does not require the certainty of these Chinese stories. She has her purpose and approach to identity building. In her works, Chinese stories are explained with great flexibility, which She considers a natural phenomenon of story drift.

Playwright and novelist Frank Chin has severely criticized Kingston's *Woman Warrior*, stating that Kingston deliberately tarnished the authenticity of Chinese tradition by altering traditional stories and myths to appeal to white sensitivities [35]. Chin has accused Kingston of “*liberally adapting traditional stories to collude with white racist stereotypes and to invent a ‘fake’ Chinese-American culture that is more palatable to the mainstream*” [36]. Several female Asian scholars have also criticized Kingston's work. Shirley Geok-lin Lim, stated that Kingston’s “representations of patriarchal, abusive Chinese history were playing to a desire to look at Asians as an inferior spectacle [37].”

Despite all these controversial comments and remarks on Maxine Hong Kingston and her works, she undeniably influences later female writers, including Gish Jen, Bette Bao Lord, Pick Shirley Geok-lin Lim, Jean Kwok and Amy Tan.

Gish Jen (1955-) is a second-generation Chinese American. Her parents emigrated from China in the 1940s. Her works include five novels: *Typical American*, *Mona in the Promised Land*, *The Love Wife*, *World and Town*, and *The Resisters*. She has also written two collections of short fiction, *Who's Irish?*, and *Thank You, Mr. Nixon*. With a light, witty and ironic touch, the novel *Typical American* portrays the struggle of Chinese immigrants in pursuing the “American Dream”, exploring the transformation and construction of dual cultural identities of Chinese Americans as well as conflicts and reconciliations of dual values, questioning the definition of “typical Americans” in the “melting pot” model, and subverting the prejudice of mainstream American society towards the essence of ethnicity. Gish Jen is different from the stereotypical Chinese American writers who mainly focus on the difficult experiences of the first generation of immigrants, Chinese myths and legends, conflicts caused by Chinese and American cultures, and characters’ struggles to find and maintain the identity of ethnic minorities. In contrast, the characters she created are quite different from the stereotype that mainstream white society had imposed on Asian Americans: engaging in manual labor, being cunning and foolish, bowing to white superiors to flatter, and being rude and independent towards his wife women [38].

Bette Bao Lord is a Chinese-born American writer and civic activist for human rights and democracy. Lord is married to Winston Lord, former U.S. Ambassador to China. In 1973, She and her husband had a visit with her family in the PRC, a visit which inspired Bette to write *Spring Moon* (1981), which spans the times from the time before the revolution in China to Nixon's visit, was an international bestseller and American Book Award nominee for a best first novel. President Clinton in 1998 presented her with the first Eleanor Roosevelt Award for Human Rights and hailed her as “*someone who writes so powerfully about the past and is working so effectively to shape the future.*” [39]

Pick Shirley Geok-lin Lim (1944-) is an American poetry, fiction, and criticism writer. She was the first woman and the first Asian person to be awarded the Commonwealth Poetry Prize for her first poetry collection, *Crossing the Peninsula and Other Poems* (1980). In 1997, she received the American Book Award for her memoir, *Among the White Moon Faces* [40].

Jean Kwok is the award-winning, New York Times and international bestselling Chinese American author of the novels *Girl in Translation*, *Mambo in Chinatown*, and *Searching for Sylvie Lee*. When Kwok was five years old, her family emigrated from Hong Kong to Brooklyn, New York. She worked in a Chinatown clothing factory for much of her childhood. Kwok's debut novel *Girl in Translation* was published in May 2010 and became a New York Times and international bestseller. It has been published in 18 countries and translated into 16 languages. Kwok drew upon

her personal experience to write this novel about an exceptionally bright young girl who leads a double life in an exclusive private school and a Chinatown sweatshop. She moved to the Netherlands and with her family.

Amy Tan, one of the most outstanding female writers in contemporary America, is an influential author of Chinese heritage. Up to now, she has published six novels, including *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991), *The Hundred Secret Senses* (1995), *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (2001), *Saving Fish From Drowning* (2005), *The Valley of Amazement* (2013), two children's literature works, namely, *The Moon Lady* (1992) and *The Chinese Samese Cat* (1994), and two collections of prose essays, *The Opposite of Fate: A Book of Musings* (2003) and *Where The Past Begins: A Writer's Memoir* (2017).

The Joy Luck Club describes a small group of American-Chinese women who have been getting together regularly to play traditional Chinese mahjong games for decades while sharing their decades-long stories. In this storytelling way, the novel demonstrates the typical generation gaps and cultural conflicts between mother and daughter, which come to reconciliation by mothers' sharing their experiences and their mothers' stories to pass on life wisdom to daughters, and by daughters' seeking root and link in Chinese traditions. Both the stories and the narrative strategies are astonishing, and that is why it hit great success at its debut publication.

Her second novel, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, is also about the relationship of daughter and mother. Still, its substantial part is Winnie's unfortunate childhood and torture by a devilish husband with the background of the Japanese aggression against China, together with her mother's stories and her romantic love episodes. The daughter Pearl suffers from multiple sclerosis and bad communication with her mum. After the mother told her daughter about her past, naturally the daughter told her mum about her disease. Together they have the hope of conquering the disease. Besides the mother and daughter relationship, the relationship between Winnie and Helen, with Guand Auntie Du, and even with other females are worth studying. In some sense, it is a feminist novel, depicting their awakening of feminism along with their question about fate and hope.

Her third novel *The Bonesetter's Daughter* begins with Ruth as a stepmother to her boyfriend Art Kamen's two teenage daughters, Dory and Fia. Ruth confronts challenges to understand her mother and her strange behavior. She loves her mother but she resents her mother for denouncing her at her young age. Her mother has forced her to obey the strict rules of Chinese society and she does not want to follow her mother's traditional Chinese values, which leads to cultural clashes in their relationship. With the help of Art, Ruth knows about what her mother and grandmother experienced by reading her mother's manuscript. Eventually, Ruth accepted her mother Luling's apology and forgave her mother. She also knew her grandmother's name on her mother's last day alive. By repairing the memory of her maternal family history, Ruth gets relieved and completes confirmation of her cultural identity.

Tan in *The Hundred Secret Senses*, spins out the theme of sisterly bond. It can also be regarded as a novel of contrast about two sisters, two cultures, two lives, and two centuries linked by loyalties and betrayals, love and loss, and life and death. At the heart, the novel illustrates the complex and uneasy relationship between American-born Olivia and her much older Chinese-born half-sister Kwan, who comes to America at twelve. In a sense, they are variants of the mother-daughter relationship. The clashes and conflicts between them, just like the mother-daughter relationship in Amy Tan's other novels, resulted from cultural differences and growing-up experiences. Despite these clashes, Kwan always keeps true and faithful love and hope for Olivia.

Finally, Olivia's misunderstanding and dislike of Kwan led to trust, love, and gratitude in their trip to China and Kwan's stories. At the same time, she got a clearer cognition of her cultural identity [41].

Amy Tan and Kingston both are the second generation of American Chinese born in the 1940s and 1950s respectively and grew up in the United States. They share the common experiences of the second generation of Chinese American women, but in reality, their shared experiences can still be more finely divided into urban Chinese communities and rural Chinese communities, as well as Chinese living in the eastern United States and Chinese living in the western United States. In an interview, Kingston pointed out that Amy Tan describes young intellectuals in the city, while she writes about people in the countryside. Their personal life experiences are also different. Amy Tan's family was originally in Shanghai, while Kingston's family was in the rural Province of Guangdong province.

Amy Tan has a special interest in the subtle relationship between women. She describes the interaction between mother and daughter, sisters, and female members of the family and close friends, and shows women's feelings and destiny through these relationships. Unlike Kingston, Amy Tan rarely touches on the social situation of Chinese Americans and women in white society. The narrative strategies in Amy Tan's novels are diverse. To a certain extent, these narrative strategies strengthen the literariness of her works and enrich their connotation. Most of Amy Tan's novels employ the first-person retrospective narration. This technique enables readers to indulge deeply into the text and feel the same with the protagonist.

Conclusion

All in all, the resilience, diligence, and spirit of struggle of the first generation of Chinese American women greatly influenced their descendants. They often told their children Chinese historical stories and mythological legends, planting some Chinese cultural knowledge seeds in the hearts of Chinese descendants who will grow up in the American cultural background. Although these perceptions may be hazy and shallow, the stories narrated by these mothers ignite a lifelong starlight for Chinese Americans to pursue their ultimate selves and ethnic roots.

Among the second-generation Chinese American female writers are Maxine Hong Kingston, Jade Snow Wong, Fae Myenne Ng, Amy Tan, and Gish Jen. For them, the historical circumstances of their parents, especially their mothers, are an inexhaustible source of creativity, in this regard. Chinese American female literature portrays many female characters with increasingly hazy memories of the old homeland and hopeful pursuits of the New World in America. Although Chinese American women showed their great concern with Chinese history as men, they emphasised examining the changes in the historical roles of Chinese women. Many Chinese American women have personally experienced the transformation of women's status in Chinese families, and they deeply remember the efforts they made to break away from the shackles of patriarchy. In addition, for many new immigrant women, the pressure from the environment is equally oppressive. They have to face a strange world and adapt themselves to a more suitable way of living in this strange world. This kind of historical oppression began a hundred years ago when Chinese women first set foot on the land of the United States.

However, across the 20th century, both the thematic elements and the style of artistic writing of Chinese American female writers have changed with the mainstream literary tendencies and historical and social environment. Generally speaking, Chinese American female literature

has evolved from realistic autobiographical short stories to novel creations with a multicultural perspective. To this, Amy Tan, makes a great contribution.

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