

中国系アメリカ女性作家の文学作品における 食の受容と否認

Foodways Repudiation and Non-Repudiation in Chinese American Women Writers' Literary Works

徐 雪青[※]

Xueqing Xu[※]

要 旨

中国系アメリカ文学、特に中国系アメリカ女性作家による文学は、近年国際的な文学で卓越した地位を得てきた。中国系アメリカ文学に関する論文において中国系アメリカ女性作家たちが大いに注目されている一つの理由は、女性作家たちの作品のほうが男性作家たちの作品よりも、心に訴えるものがあり、印象に強く残るからである。

女性作家たちの作品では、伝統的な神話や伝記を創造的かつ印象的に用いている。マキシム・ホン・キングストンは『ウーマン・ウォリアー』(1976)に描かれている中国の伝説は本物ではなく、単にアメリカの読者を喜ばせるために考案されたものにすぎないとフランク・チンに批判されているが、これら女性作家による作品が主流社会と批判の世界で広く注目を集めたことを認めるべきであろう。

「食」と言う言葉には、食物、料理、食習慣、食文化などが含まれている。本論文の目的は、女性作家たちの作品における「食」への受容や拒否といった心の動きから登場人物のアイデンティティーを探究することにある。本稿では、ジェイド・スノウ・ウォンの『五番街の中国娘』(1945)、マキシム・ホン・キングストンの『ウーマン・ウォリアー』(1976)、エミイ・タンの『ジョイ・ラック・クラブ』(1989)と『キッチン・ゴッズ・ワイフ』(1991)、ギッシュ・ジェンの『ティビカル・アメリカン』(1991)、そしてメイ・グの『イーティング・チャイニーズ・フード・ネイキッド』(1998)について焦点を当てて、文学において「食」がどのように扱われてきたかを分析し、中国系アメリカ人のアイデンティティーである中国との絆を探る。

Food is not simply a way to provide us with nourishment but represents our identity. Certain ethnic groups by consuming certain food express their ethnicity. As the French epicure and gastronome Brillat-Savarin points out: "Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you who you are." Mainstream Americans usually refer to food and foodways⁽¹⁾ ("foodways" in this paper includes items such as food, cuisine, eating habits and food culture.) to distinguish themselves from other ethnic groups. As Doris Witt remarks in *Black*

※日本経済大学経営学部経営学科

(1) The word "foodways" is a quite new word. It is recently being used frequently. Jay A. Anderson, the "pioneer" scholar in this field, defines foodways as "a whole interrelated system of food conceptualization and evaluation, procurement, distribution, preservation, preparation, consumption, and nutrition shared by all members of a particular society." (qtd in Kaplan, 122)

Ann Kaplan, Marjorie Hoover and Willard Moore write "Introduction: On Ethnic Foodways." in *The Taste of American Place: A reader on Regional and Ethnic Foods*. Eds. Shortridge, Barbara G. and James R. Shortridge. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 1998. 122. Ann and others quote the definition of "foodways" from Jay A. Anderson's "Scholarship on Contemporary American Folk Foodways," *Ethnologia Eruopaea* 5 (1971): 57.

Hunger (1999) that: “food can help us make sense of how we come to understand ourselves as individual and collective subjects, and therefore also how we come to ally ourselves with and against prevailing social order.” (Witt, 17)

Food or eating is a means of becoming — not simply in the essence of nourishment but more importantly of what we choose to eat, how we eat, and what we secretly crave but are ashamed to eat in front of others. Chinese food, because it differs from mainstream America’s, is also made into an ethnic sign. In a cultural hegemony, ethnic minority people usually feel themselves to be inferior because of their ancestral culture. This phenomenon is quietly described in Chinese American literary works. This paper aims to examine how Chinese foodways dealt with representative bodies of work, including women writers Jade Snow Wong’s *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (1945), Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* (1976), Amy Tan’s *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), *The Kitchen God’s Wife* (1991), Gish Jen’s *Typical American* (1991) Fae Myenne Ng’s *Bone* (1993) Mei Ng’s *Eating Chinese Food Naked* (1998).

Background of Chinese American Literature

Modeled upon the Civil Rights Movement, particularly the Black Power struggle since the 1960s, the various immigrant groups originating from Asia in the United States such as Chinese American, Japanese American, Korean American and so on started to be united as “Asian Americans”, not as “Orientals” as they used to be called. They formed coalitions to mobilize the community to protest against racism and the marginalization of all minorities in the United States. The ultimate goal was to achieve social justice and equality. Almost simultaneously, literary works by Asian American writers that had been long ignored and forgotten were rediscovered. Asian Americans wanted to explore their ancestral culture and what it meant to them. Among Asian American literatures, Chinese American literature is especially productive and has won a prominent status in the international literary world in recent decades. They have unearthed their ancestral cultural heritages and presented them anew. However, one of the questions that often arises in essays on Chinese American literature touches on the disparity between less attention given to men writers and the vast amount given to their women counterparts. One of the reasons is women writer literary works are more creative and symbolic in the use of traditional sources such as myths and legends. On the other hand, men writers typically use history and racism as motifs in their literary works, themes with which it may be difficult to arouse the readers’ interests widely. Nevertheless, concerning the theme of foodways, the differences in both women writers’ literary works and men writers’ literary works will be investigated.

Analysis of Foodways Repudiation in Chinese Women Writers’ Literary Works

To observe the important roles that Chinese food plays in Chinese American women writers’ literary works, I would like to start the discussion with Jade Snow Wong’s autobiographical work, *Fifth Chinese*

Daughter. The mainstream view of Chinese American literature is inseparable from the political development between China and America. During the period of World War II, China was in an alliance with America. In the context of this favorable environment, Chinese Americans began to be regarded as the “model minority”, and also Chinese American literature won attention. Jade Snow Wong’s autobiographical book *Fifth Chinese Daughter* emerged during this period when the American public was more sympathetic to China and more aware of Chinese Americans than it had ever been. In order to create better understanding of certain culture, foodways may be the easier way to be understood. As a Chinese culture informant, Wong takes the readers on a guided tour of Chinese American society; along the way, various Chinese foodways are exhibited. She takes pains to write about the ritualistic significance of certain meals and folk beliefs about the medicinal properties of certain ingredients. The narrator explains in detail the ordinary food consumed on a daily basis in addition to special food served at different gatherings and festivals, such as the Chinese New Year, the Moon Festival, births, weddings, and funerals. The detailed description of her ethnic food serves to satisfy the curiosity of the mainstream Americans about the lives of a minority people. Wong proclaims: “it was sometimes very lucky to be born a Chinese daughter. The Americans... did not have Moon Festival nor seven-day New Year celebration with delicious accompaniments.” (Wong, 43) Such descriptions allow Wong to enter the literary mainstream and also to express her pride in her Chinese culture. However, her use of the words “sometimes very lucky to be born a Chinese” also indicates that “sometimes” it was not lucky to be born a Chinese. There are two episodes in her work which substantiate this point. One episode is when the dean asks Jade Snow to invite some friends for dinner. Besides the rice, Jade Snow has cooked two dishes — egg foo young and tomato-beef. Her cooking was a great success, and she “found that the girls were perpetually curious about her Chinese background and Chinese ideologies, and for the first time she began to formulate in her mind the constructive and delightful aspects of the Chinese culture to present to non-Chinese.” (Wong, 161) The other episode is when the dean wants to arrange a party for some musicians and Jade Snow is asked to be the cook because the musicians are extremely fond of Chinese food. The whole Wong family participates in making the preparation of the meal. When the party starts the musicians “fitted into the party as modest, good-natured, warm, informal human beings, all deeply interested in Chinese food and the cooks, the Wong sisters.” (Wong, 172) Because everyone is interested in the kitchen preparations, Jade Snow soon loses her shyness in the presence of celebrities and acts naturally. However, that night, we learn, the subject of discussion is only about Chinese food, no talk about music. From the praise she received from her guests she refuses to allow herself to realize that the merits of these “great people” are only based on their curiosity about her ethnic Chinese food. Jade Snow Wong writes about Chinese food in a very simple, artless, direct and meticulous way. (for example, she uses one full page to describe how to cook rice). Bonnie TuSmith explains that Jade Snow Wong simply articulates the white world’s expectations about what Chineseness is or is not, and her autobiography thereby earned a place in Chinese American literary world.” (TuSmith, 48)

Compared to the writing styles of Jade Snow Wong whose detailed and explanatory introduction of

Chinese cuisine appeals to mainstream, American ideals, Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan provide some exotic Chinese food to reinforce the mysterious stereotypes held by the white world, which is repudiated by their antagonists. In *The Woman Warrior*, Kingston gives a description of Chinese eating live monkey brains. Similarly, in Amy Tan's works, she describes the Chinese people killing frogs, owls and so on for food. In *The Joy Luck Club*, she writes: "We lived in San Francisco's Chinatown. Like most of the other Chinese children who played in the back alleys of restaurants and curio shops, I didn't think we were poor. My bowl was always full, three five-course meals every day, beginning with a soup full of mysterious things I didn't want to know the names of." (Tan, 1989: 89-90) Additionally, when the daughter comes to the kitchen to see her mother's cooking, Tan writes: "I know what secret ingredients to put in just by using my nose!" (195) More examples are in her works. There are descriptions of bloody killings of live creatures for food which make the children shiver. In *Bone* (1993), Fae Myenne Ng writes of a mother who kills the children's pet doves and cooks them. "She [Mah] filled our bowls high with little pigeon parts: legs, breasts, and wings... But Mah always sat alone in the kitchen sucking out the sweetness of the lesser parts: the neck, the back, and the head." (Ng, 30-31) She also notes several times how the American-born daughter, Leila, hates the ginseng soup odor cooked by her immigrant mother, who still adheres to the old Chinese rituals. When Leila comes to her mother's Baby Store, "a bitter ginseng odor and a honey suckle balminess" greets her. And when the younger Americanized customers visit the store, they also complain that "the baby cloths have absorbed these old world odors." (20) Similar description of a mother killing a daughter's pet as food in Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*. The daughter Jing-Mei Woo narrates: "When I was eight, I had played with a crab my mother had brought home for my birthday dinner. I had poked it, and jumped back every time its claws reached out. And I determined that the crab and I had come to a great understanding when it finally heaved itself up and walked clear across the counter. But before I could even decide what to name my new pet, my mother had dropped it into a pot of cold water and placed it on the tall stove. I had watched with growing dread, as the water heated up and the pot began to clatter with this crab trying to tap his way out of his own hot soup." (226) More examples show that ethnic food always makes the American-born children feel shame. In Tan's *The Kitchen Gods Wife*, when Winnie tries to teach her daughter, Pearl, how to cook Chinese food, Pearl relies: "It's boring. Too much trouble. I'd rather eat McDonald hamburgers instead." (137) Additionally, in Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* feels disgusted about the food that her mother has cooked. Kingston asserts: "My mother has cooked for us: raccoons, skunks, hawks, city pigeons, wild ducks, wild geese, black-skinned bantams, snakes, garden snails, turtles that crawled about the pantry floor and sometimes escaped under refrigerator or stove, catfish that swam in the bathtub." (Kingston 1989, 90) She repudiates: "I would rather live on plastic." (92) Again, in Mei Ng's *Eating Chinese Food Naked*, Ng describes Ruby Lee, who is often ashamed of the way her family eats in this scene of the Lees cooking crabs in black sauce: "Ruby watched the claws opening and closing, watched her father gather five legs in one hand and then push the shell away from the body. There was a cracking noise as the shell ripped away from the soft insides. The clear jelly heart still pulsed." (Ng, 1998: 41)

The American-born daughters' disgust towards Chinese food often comes from the fact that their ethnic foodways differ from those of the mainstream Americans. According to Wenying Xu, "Food as a nondiscursive norm nevertheless cannot escape ideological and discursive manipulation. The discourse of racial superiority of white often insinuates itself into ethnographical dietary interpretation that confirms the inferiority of nonwhite races." (Xu, 150) Therefore, we can presume the oppression and psychological damage of the minorities suffering from racism in white-dominated America.

Analysis of Foodways Non-Repudiation in Chinese Women Writers' Literary Works

For the American-born generation, in spite of their trying hard to integrate themselves into mainstream America and hating their ethnicity, after all they realize that they never can be the same as the mainstream Americans. They find out that they cannot separate themselves from their Chinese ancestry. As in the description in Fae Myenne Ng's *Bone*,

When Leila learns that her sister Ona has committed suicide, she is paralyzed with shock in the street. It is the familiar old sounds of Chinatown that calm and comfort her: "I heard all the old alley sounds — Old Mr. Lim's cough coming through the wall, Mrs. Lim going for his medicine, and outside, the long foghorn, the rumble of Ernie Chang's Camaro — it must have been way after two. Hearing those old sounds soothed me. They made Salmon Alley comfortable again. I felt cocoon-safe in the sounds, in the homey feeling of time standing still. I remembered the three of us in this room together, giggling and crying and fighting and making up." (129) Also in Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, when Rose Hsu Jordan is in pain over the impending divorce from her American husband, she stays in bed for days and what relieves her is Chinese noodles. Tan describes: "[Rose] stayed in bed for three days, getting up only to go to the bathroom or to heat up another can of chicken noodle soup." (215) To the younger generation of Chinese Americans, it is just those minor details of life in Chinatown, which give them confidence and strength. In Gish Jen's *Typical American* (1991), when the Changs acquire their own first car, they are so happy and the food they want to eat is Chinese. They go to Chinatown and buy "Zongzi," (lotus leaf-wrapped bundles of sticky rice) "Cha Shao" (roast pork) *Jiaozi* (pork dumplings) "More! More! Buy More!"... I ate six! Ten! Eleven!" (132 italics original) The Chinatown life of Chinese Americans is implacably real which leads them to be at peace psychologically as described in Fae Myenne Ng's *Bone*. "In line by dawn, we waited at the butcher's, listening for the slow, churning motor of the trucks. We watched the live fish flushing out of the tanks into the garbage pails. We smelled the honey-brushed *Cha-sui* buns. And when the white laundry truck turned into Wentworth Alley with its puffing trail of feathers, a stench of chicken waste and rotting food filled the alley. Old ladies squeezed in around the truck, reaching into the crates to tug out the plumpest pigeons. (30)

The above examples tell us that food can reflect one's ethnicity, at the same time it also enhances one's feeling of being ethnic. E. N. Anderson remarks in *The Food of China* (1988): "For the Chinese, perhaps more than for any other group, food is a central feature of ethnicity, a basic statement about what one is."

(Anderson, 258-9 italics original) The tendency to self-doubt, self-derogation and self-deconstruction of Chinese American women derives from their double-edge status, the dilemma of the bicultural world, which make them neither Chinese nor American while not totally excluding them from either of those two categories.

Although some exotic food writings have been called “food pornography,”⁽²⁾ We cannot dismiss their importance. These food descriptions are one way in which some Chinese American women writers have chosen to present the conflicts and generation gaps between immigrant mothers and American-born daughters. These food descriptions in Chinese American women writers’ literary works conclude that those of the American-born generation, regardless of their feelings of love or hate, pride or shame, repudiate or non-repudiate in it, cannot completely sever themselves from their Chinese ancestral culture.

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(2) Chinese American women writers’ writings of exotic food are accuse of “food pornography” by Frank Chi, which means to make a living by exploiting the exotic aspects of one’s ethnic “foodways” to survive in mainstream society.