The Other Speaks: Wayne Wang’s Films in Hollywood Cinema

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In light of some postcolonial conceptions and approaches, this paper mainly reviews Wayne Wang’s films about Chinese-Americans, interrogating the “missing” of Chineseness in Chan Is Missing, decoding the crisis of identity in Dim Sum: A Little Bit of Heart, and questing the cultural connotations of mother-daughter relationships in The Joy Luck Club. In the concluding part, this paper demonstrates that as a profound “insider” of Chinese culture and a poignant observer of American culture, Wayne Wang has indeed audaciously confronted and challenged the stereotypes of Chineseness in Hollywood cinema, distinctively articulated a voice of his own community, and significantly provided an alternative of viewing and knowing about the “Other” in today’s diversified cultural context.

Wang is a rare example of a filmmaker who repeatedly returns to the borderlands, who’s built a career out of themes and formal enactment of cultural dislocation. (1)

Amongst many Chinese-American film makers in Hollywood, Wayne Wang is undoubtedly one of the most thought-provoking, persevering, and prospective directors, who have been painstakingly creating images of community and searching cultural identities of their own in the hegemony of Hollywood discourse. Through reviewing his films, this paper attempts to illustrate the different perspectives between the “insider” and the “outsider” toward Chinese-American community and Chinese culture.

Born in Hong Kong in 1949 and immigrating to the United States when he was very young, Wayne Wang was named after his father’s favorite western film actor John Wayne. In recent years, Wayne Wang’s name has virtually been ranked amongst the most talented and influential Asian-American filmmakers. He has even been considered as one of the most thought-provoking, persevering and prospective directors in Hollywood. Ever since 1970s, Wang has either directed or produced a series of excellent films, which can be roughly divided into two categories. The first category is concerned with themes or issues about either Hong Kong or the United States, including such films as A Man, a Woman, and a Killer (1975), Slam Dance (1987), Life Is Cheap, but Toilet Paper Is Expensive (1989), Blue in the Face(1995), Smoke (1995), Chinese Box (1997), Anywhere but Here (1999), and so on. The second category, aims at depicting the Chinese-American community, which includes Chan Is Missing (1982), Dim Sum Take Out (1988), Dim Sum: A Little Bit of Heart (1985), Eat a Bowl of Tea (1989), and The Joy Luck Club (1993). As this research is mainly concerned with the representations of Chineseness, the focal point of this paper lies in the latter group of film texts.

Chan Is Missing or Chinese Missing?

Being Wayne Wang’s first film about the Chinese-American community, Chan Is Missing (1982) is a small-budgeted independent film, revolving around a journey of questing for the truth. One noteworthy point about this Chinese-American feature film is that it borrows its plot structure from the mystery genre of the much-despised Charlie Chan variety, as largely criticized by cultural scholars in recent years. The plot line of this tale may be summarized as the following: Two taxi drivers loan 2,000
dollars to a mutual friend, Chan Hung, who disappears without a trace. The film follows their investigation through Chinatown, threading their way amongst the hallways, alleys, restaurants, narrow apartments, cocktail lounges, English classes, lawyers’ offices, and senior clubs in this community. Eventually the money turns up, yet because of certain misleading clues, Chan’s whereabouts remain a bigger mystery than ever.

Furthermore, Wayne Wang’s designation of the sequential scenes also proves to be identical with such a sort of “mysteriousness”. While viewing this film, the audience would be constantly shocked by a series of anti-climaxes, which, according to the author’s observation, can virtually be understood as the deliberate depiction of the protagonist Chan Hung’s unwarranted self-assurance and supreme lack of consciousness.

In regard to the application of film techniques, Wang uses locations and spaces to allow the viewer to probe into the emotional lives of his characters. He provides a sense of place in the misty sunlight and hilly streets of San Francisco, the close-standing houses and narrow yards where neighbors can converse across the clotheslines. He frames his characters in private spaces, some of whom tell their own stories with photographs and memos that gradually piece together their eventful past in front of the viewer.

For the reinforcement of environment as a separate character, Wang once responded: “I’ve always seen the environment as basically like a separate character that contains all the people that move through the story, their experience.” (2) In doing so, his narrative evolves through action and stasis, resulting in an understanding of the characters that goes beyond their immediate situation.

Besides, Wang has deliberately employed the camera eye as an invisible narrator. In a way the style of Chan is Missing is presentational; the camera remains static. Each shot is meticulously composed and held for effect. Wang does not attempt to create a continuous flow of action. Rejecting a shot/reverse shot structure, he moves the narrative forward through the accumulation of shots, namely, a montage of alternating interactions and stillness in which people are linked by moments shared as well as moments of solitude or emptiness. Wang’s use of the “empty shot” has several functions. His spaces are collectors of emotion. In the “empty shot” the mind of the protagonist is unveiled. In the words of a character in Chan is Missing, “What’s not there is just as important as what is there.” From another perspective, Wang’s usage of “emptiness” in the empty shots is just like the “blankness” in traditional Chinese painting, and “nothingness” in traditional Chinese philosophy, Taoism in particular. To the greatest extent, both the “blankness” and “nothingness” are endowed with more untold and profound meanings in the Chinese culture.

The serial investigation functions as a central thread for this ingenious tale; through answering the investigators’ questions and talking about the concerned topics, the interviewees have more or less illustrated their living conditions and immediate concerns. In this way, the film provides the audience with entrance into the actual, well-known community fixtures. As Brouwer demonstrates, the “answers” responded to the investigators are “transparently metaphorical, ostensibly about Chan Hung, really about themselves and their recognition about the Chinese American identity.”(3) What turns out to be thought-provoking is that nothing is ever said—the identity raps are funny but they never appear in the film, and become a negative symbol. The older driver, Jo (Wood Moy), meditates in the film’s last words:

The problem with me is that I believe what I see and hear. If I did that with Chan Hung, I’ll know nothing, because everything is so
contradictory. Here’s a picture of Chan Hung, but I still can’t see him.

In this film, it is often suggested that Chan, for one reason or another, has returned to China. He has, therefore, for all purposes, permanently vanished from the Chinese-American community in the U.S., suggesting that the title of the film could very well have been transformed into “Chinese Missing”. The positioning of Chan’s identity can also be inferred from the special usage of language in this film. What the characters speak is apparently pidgin English, a mixture of English and Cantonese, which implicitly defines a realm of community that is neither Chinese nor American, but a sort of “in-between”.

Very significantly, Wayne Wang’s initial impulse in Chan is Missing can be interpreted as an interrogation about the realities earnestly portrayed in early Asian American feature films, and his later films, particularly Dim Sum, Eat a Bowl of Tea, and The Joy Luck Club, go on to question the truthfulness of any cinema that proposes to offer a vision of other worlds.

Re-Defining Cultural Identity in Dim Sum: A Little Bit of Heart

Dim Sum was one of the surprises of last year’s specialist cinema season—a quiet, humorous, and often moving account of a Chinese American family trying to sort out its identity. (4)

Generally recognized as a continuum of his creation of a Chinese-American community in the Hollywood cinema, Wayne Wang’s two Dim Sum films go on with his probe into the life of ordinary people in San Francisco’s Chinatown. Before discussing more details about these two film texts, it is worth noting that the second one Dim Sum: Take Out (1988) merely lasts about 14 minutes and revolves around a group of women in their thirties, who get together to play table games and discuss life in general from their own perspectives. In other words, despite its originality, it appears more like a documentary than a feature in terms of budget, vision, and style. For this reason, this section will mainly concentrate on the first one Dim Sum: A Little Bit of Heart (1985). The leading protagonists of this film include Mrs. Tam (Kim Chew), who is approaching her 60th birthday, and whose husband is dead and whose children have left home, all except for the youngest daughter, Geraldine Tam (Lauren Chew), who says she wants to get married but feels she should stay with her mother. In the opening sequence of this film, Mrs. Tam is given to sadly shaking her head and bemoaning the fact that her daughter is 30 and still single. In addition to that, Mrs. Tam is also frustrated with a dilemma, as according to a fortune-teller’s prediction, her life would very soon come to an end, which has certainly increased her worries about the unmarried daughter.

From the perspective of its plot construction, Dim Sum has very wittily demonstrated its preference for loose structure. In other words, this film is not tightly structured; instead, it puts its focus on the small fragments of life, on tiny “slice of life” conversations among friends and family. In this somehow quiet film, the characters would usually sit and talk about their concerns, but their problems continue to persist like meals and the ritualistic pleasure involved in preparing and eating them. It is not difficult for the viewer to discover that this film is made up of subsidiary events, without the support of a strong central story.

Apart from the plot designation, another stylistic feature is that like Chan Is Missing, Dim Sum is composed of anti-climaxes, which turn out to be very soft and inconsequential. Being totally simple and direct, Wayne Wang’s style achieves its
impact through the rhythmic editing of various images. For the specific strength resulting from this way of editing, Derek Malcolm has observed: “A gentle but poignant film, *Dim Sum* swings between laughter and tears, it displays the vitality of Frank Capra crossed with the graceful stillness of Japanese master Ozu.” (5)

Moreover, what proves to be most impressive for this film is unquestionably the acting, which is so compellingly realistic that the viewer will feel like a neighbor, listening in. Yet as the film is pieced together, image by image and incident by incident, a complete, slightly humorous, slightly poignant view, not only of the characters, but of the Chinese-American immigrant experience, fully materializes.

On the whole, due to its not so heavily plotted structure, this film is virtually permeated with a certain kind of sentimentality and fragility. For this point, Roger Ebert ascribes it to the director’s purposeful usage of the camera eye: “Wang’s camera enters quietly and observes as his characters lead their lives, trying to find a compromise between too much loneliness and too much risk.” (6)

In light of the above analysis about *Dim Sum*’s stylistic features, it will be relatively easy for the viewer to notice that those are indeed identical with the thematic concerns of this film. As mentioned earlier with regard to the plot line, *Dim Sum* unfolds its story around a very traditional mother, Mrs. Tam, and her youngest daughter, Geraldine. While the mother is trying to marry the daughter off before everything is too late, the daughter feels very strongly about her responsibility in caring for the aging mother. Through focusing primarily on the subject of family traditions amongst the San Franciscan Chinese, then, this film endeavors to look at ordinary people and to reveal their slightly less than ordinary lives. In *Dim Sum*, the director has implicitly expressed his thematic concerns, such as the wane of old-fashioned Chinese beliefs, the authenticity of the life of Chinese American community, the generation gap between various generations, and cultural differences.

With regard to the representation of cultural differences, this film has mainly focused on two aspects; one is the mother-daughter relationship, and the other one is the sense of loss in terms of cultural identity. As discussed above, in the mother-daughter relationship, Mrs. Tam has made her utmost efforts to see her daughter settle down and raise a family, yet what the grown-up daughter cares more is how to find her own path in life, and manage to stay with her aging mother for a longer time, taking good care of her. The difference in attitudes between the two provides much of the humor for the film, but there is a greater depth to the emotions as the director seeks to reconcile his slight tale to the greater picture of the wane of old-fashioned Chinese beliefs. Besides, for the mother’s part, Mrs. Tam desperately wants to make the journey back home to her own roots, has managed to do so, and has taken the family along with her. Accordingly, in order to retain her cultural identity, Mrs. Tam speaks almost no English, and though she is attempting to learn, it is only to get American citizenship before she travels to visit her homeland and pay her last respects. Her home remains a place where Chinese is spoken along with some broken English, particularly among her friends who gather to play Mah Jongg. In this sense, language defines her community, preserving and protecting certain traditions and values. It is a space that is neither Chinese nor American, but a world in between.

Apart from the generation gap and cultural differences revealed through the mother-daughter relationship, this film has also displayed some special scenes about the co-existence of different cultures and multiplicity of cultural positioning. For example, the sight of shoes is deliberately presented as an indicator to show the co-existence of different cultures. For this point, Wayne Wang once acknowledged that his favorite image in *Dim Sum* is precisely the sight of the shoes left outside the
living-room door in the Tam household in San Francisco’s Chinatown. They are Western shoes, taken off as the characters enter a home that is still run according to Chinese values by old Mrs. Tam, who retains a strong but quietly concealed will. According to a film review of 1985, after Wayne Wang’s success of Chan Is Missing, his first slice-of-life about Chinese-Americans, Wang was looking for another story, and when he saw some shoes left outside a Chinese home, he knew he had his viewpoint, and only had to create his characters. (7)

In his attempt to re-define the characters’ cultural identity, Dim Sum has manifestly reflected a multiplicity of cultural positioning. Wayne Wang does not hesitate to dwell upon his characters and to allow deeper feelings to surface. The story, for all its lighthearted humor around death, does not ignore its serious side. Wang treats death as a fact of life, contrasting Geraldine’s fears with the real experience of her friend Julia. Very significantly, the film does not become caught in pathos. For Wang, loss is to be accepted and moved through to a new beginning. As a matter of fact, the central dilemma of Mrs. Tam’s impending death is suddenly and fortuitously resolved. Upon her return from a trip to China, she is magically renewed, and very ironically, by the same fortune-teller. In the final scene of the film, when Uncle Tam leaves the mirror he walks through the streets of Chinatown filled with the life of people and music, and also with vitality and hope.

All in all, as Wayne Wang’s second “slice-of-life” film about Chinese-Americans, Dim Sum: A Little Bit of Heart conspicuously differentiates itself from the blockbusters of Hollywood production. Its sentimentality and simplicity, along with its brevity and depth, has gradually achieved affirmation and identification from audiences of different cultural backgrounds. “Dim Sum: A Little Bit of Heart is simply a smaller slice of that movie separated out and focused on more succinctly and in greater depth in a manner that few directors seem able to handle these days, even those in the independent market.” (8)

From the my observation, the vantage point of Wayne Wang in making these films is that he has faithfully provided us with an insider’s representation of his home environment and the neighboring people of his own community, which has undoubtedly guaranteed the authenticity and charm of his depiction. Dim Sum captures a slice of life that seems timeless, yet may never be the same again.

In addition, there are some other factors that account for Wayne Wang’s success as well, for instance, his approach to the material, and his combination of the perspectives of both the insider and the outsider of the Chinese-American community. His characters and situations in this case are drawn from the experience of the people involved, both actors and non-actors. Terrel Seltzer, who wrote the two Dim Sum screenplays for Wang’s films, but is not herself Chinese, describes the experience of constructing a script:

We did a lot of interviews. We talked to Lauren about the cake she gives her mother when the mother’s friends are playing Mah Jongg. “What kinds of things would they say to you?” we asked her. It was out of those conversations that I found lines like, “When are we going to eat your cake, Geraldine? The one that smells so sweet and makes your mama so happy.” I couldn’t make up lines like that. I don’t know the idiom. (9)

Just as Terrel Seltzer herself has acknowledged, being outside the community is indeed an advantage, which has in a way urged her, also encouraged her, to explore deeper into the uniqueness of another culture, to be fully aware of the cultural
differences, and to represent that different community faithfully as what it is. Accordingly, Wayne Wang has effectively integrated the advantages of both an insider’s insightful account, and an outsider’s realistic observation in this film.

Before any further illustration of the cultural connotations in Wang’s later films, it is worth noting that just one year later than Dim Sum: Take Out, the fourth production of this series by Wayne Wang came out, namely, Eat a Bowl of Tea, which is originally a novel by Louis Chu. (10) This novel was firstly published in 1943, and is generally regarded as the first novel written by a Chinese-American writer about the bachelor society in Chinatown.

The film bearing the same name Eat a Bowl of Tea was released in 1989. Wayne Wang has said that the film is a return to “the source of myself”, in which Wang creates a whole community of Chinese characters, most of whom have been living in New York's Chinatown as married bachelors since coming to this country. These men, some of whom have never even seen their own children, appear to have adjusted to this decades-long estrangement from their families with remarkable ease. They write letters stuffed with money to their wives back home, but generally they carry on happily, playing mah-jongg at the club and joking with each other. If there is grief over their plight, it never surfaces.

From various aspects, Eat a Bowl of Tea is filled with those reminiscences of tears and laughter of the early Chinese immigrants. However poignant and touching this film is, the historical period of this story should be dated back to several decades, even one century ago, thus the thematic discussion about this film text would not be so appropriate for today’s diversified cultural context. On the other hand, though, as if to draw a full circle for his Chinese-American community series, Wayne Wang produced the last sequel four years later, that is, The Joy Luck Club, in which he painstakingly went forward with his cultural journey.

Decoding the Cultural Connotations in The Joy Luck Club

The de-centered narrative of The Joy Luck Club is a study in shifting perspective, the liminal quality of uncertainty held in suspension, again, between the cultures of the Chinese past and the American present. (11) Filmmaker Ingmar Bergman once stated: “Of all the human relationships I know, that of mother and daughter is undoubtedly the most mysterious, complicated and charged with emotion.” (12) This is especially true of the four mother-daughter relationships at the core of The Joy Luck Club (1993).

Transcribed from a widely recognized novel by Amy Tan, the film The Joy Luck Club has fully conveyed Wayne Wang’s observations of and reflections on the Chinese and American cultures. It probes into the full scope of female experiences speaking forcefully about generational differences, cross-cultural confusions, the differences between expectations and hope, and the pain caused by misunderstanding and lack of direct communication. The four mothers all lived in feudal China before they immigrated to the United States. The societal role of Chinese women in general was lower than that of the men, and the idea of submission to sexist modes of thought and behavior had occupied their mind. Having immigrated to America many years ago, they still preserve the old Chinese traditions and culture, living with Chinese habits, thoughts, and endeavoring to educate their daughters in traditional Chinese values and virtues. Their common ideal is to let their daughters escape from the fate they themselves had had, and always be happy women, expressed in a soliloquy that occurs
at the beginning as the film unfolds:

In America I will have a daughter just like me. But over there nobody will say her worth is measured by the loudness of her husband’s belch. Over there nobody will look down on her, because I will make her speak only perfect American English. And over there she will always be too full to swallow any sorrow! She will know my meaning…

This quotation virtually comes from a well-known ancient Chinese parable called the “Feathers from a Thousand Li Away”. While sailing to America, Suyuan Woo dreamed of raising a daughter in the plentiful opportunities of the new country. She imagined that her American-born daughter would resemble her in every way, but unlike herself, the daughter would be judged according to her own worth, not by that of a husband. Suyuan’s hope echoes with the other mothers of the Joy Luck Club members. They all desire to live out their hopes through their daughters. However, their daughters, who were born in the U.S. and grew up in the dominant American mainstream culture, always hold a prejudice against them as well as against Chinese culture. They believe that American culture is superior to Chinese culture and the American version is always better. In their eyes, their mothers symbolize ignorance. They feel dissatisfied with their mothers who use toothpicks in public; they feel ashamed of their mothers who open jars to smell the insides in grocery stores and they are angry with their mothers who like to use their daughters to show off. In this condition, what Tan portrays as the traditional Chinese values of filial obedience, criticism-enveloped expressions of love, and the concealment of excessive emotions all clash with the daughters’ “American” ideas about autonomy, free and open speech, and self-esteem. In this film, the conflicts and confrontations caused by cultural differences are sufficiently demonstrated.

Apart from that, what is noteworthy is that in The Joy Luck Club, both mothers and daughters are painstakingly seeking for their cultural identities. However, it is never an easy process. The mothers, though educated to follow Chinese feudalistic principles for females, have realized the necessity to search for social recognition of their cultural identity. Their endeavor is difficult to assert as Chinese Americans in the U.S.. For the daughters’ part, they also have to confront the danger of losing their deserved right, such as spiritual and economical equality. Lindo won her identity through years of work. Here is a celebration of her success:

I remember that day when I finally knew a genuine thought and could follow where it went. That was the day I was a young girl with my face under a red marriage scarf. I promised not to forget myself. How nice it is to be that girl again, to take off my scarf, to see what is underneath and feel the lightness come back into my body!

Such a declaration of strong femininity and sensitivity is the hope of these women and other Chinese American women in the world. Yingying wants to make a big wish to the Moon Lady, but she forgets it. Later when she suddenly recollects her experience, she says, “I remember all these things, and tonight, on the fifteenth day of the eighth moon, I also remember what I asked the Moon Lady so long ago. I wished to be found.”

As the camera moves on, the women in the film have actually begun their efforts to get mutual understandings and mutual benefit. Take Waverly for instance, she plans to travel around China for her honeymoon, though she is still worried about the intimate and overwhelming Chinese cultural contact: “What if I blend in so well they
think I’m one of them! What if they don’t let me come back to the United States?” She is irritated when her mother says that she is more American than Chinese: “When you go to China, you didn’t even need to open you mouth, they already know you are an outsider…. They know you do not belong.” In a sense, Waverly’s attitude towards being Chinese reveals her timidity and shyness to be surrounded by a Chinese environment. Besides Waverly, Jing-mei’s journey to China is also symbolic. Her travel to China assumes the responsibility to realize her mother’s unfulfilled will, to understand hopes her mother is still holding. Her totally new feeling about herself helps to understand her mother’s characteristic and solve the suspicions lingering in her mind. It is a cultural journey for a closer contact and understanding. Obviously, returning to China is just a beginning, which requires further understanding and more Chinese experience for more extensive communication between the two cultures.

Through the continuity and development in the mother-daughter relationship of the two generations, this film inclines to establish a perspective that the two different cultures can communicate with each other. Meanwhile, it provides us a feasible solution (the necessary cultural journey of Jing-mei to China) for the problem that Chinese and other ethnic Americans are faced with, active participation in the cultural striving for equal rights and invitation for understanding from other cultures.

As is noted by the film, the Joy Luck Club is initially a weekly gathering founded by the mother generation to play mahjongg. For these mothers, this club means hope and luck. However, through the mothers’ voices in the Chinese language, we learn about the mysteries and secrets in their hearts. Each woman recounts her happiness and bitterness, and provides us with a close and direct contact with them. It is thought-provoking to decode the cultural hegemony and subservience, the loss and search, the experiences of the mothers and daughters in the novel, so as to learn about the situation of the ethnic groups, who are striving for an appropriate position in the American mainstream culture. The immigrant mothers and American born daughters are undoubtedly two groups of Chinese immigrants in the USA. The focus of their narration moves from individual characterization to the world outlook. The repetition and similarity between the relationships of four pairs of mothers and daughters enrich the symbolic meaning contained in such a significant mother-daughter relationship.

Furthermore, the narration leads the readers from sympathy with the mothers to the understanding of the daughters, from resistance to assimilation, and from confrontation to communication. The film ends on a note of hopeful acceptance. By storytelling and the extended maternal love, the four mothers present their daughters with a vivid and accurate picture of themselves, which therefore serves as a bridge to connect the Joy Luck Club mothers and their daughters. Through this bridge, the American-born daughters come to know the strength of their Chinese mothers and the Chinese culture. They gradually change their prejudices against their mothers and instead show respect to them as well as to Chinese culture. Finally, they even identify themselves with the Chinese culture. In this way, the cultural understanding and blending are finally achieved.

The film *The Joy Luck Club* has implemented an experiment to expose such a context and search a way through. The director Wayne Wang intends to help Chinese cultural elements to be accepted by the American audience with probably both interest and reluctance. Chinese culture will thus hopefully leave its marks upon and contribute to the celebrated diversity of contemporary American culture.
Conclusion: “Articulating a Voice of Our Own”

All in all, from *Chan Is Missing*, *Dim Sum: A Little Bit of Heart*, *Dim Sum: Take Out, Eat a Bowl of Tea*, to *The Joy Luck Club*, each of Wayne Wang’s movies grapples with questions of Chinese-American identity in widely divergent ways, and what remains at the core of Wang’s “slice-of-life” films is virtually a persistent creation of a Chinese-American community in the Hollywood discourse, as well as a poignant interrogation of the political connotation of the label “Asian American”:

In a sense, the label “Asian American” is a political category; the name of a coalition of Americans who have come to realize that their political situation, determined in part by how Asians are seen by outsiders, requires them to act together. (13)

In this light, it is not surprising that Asian American cinema continues to thematize that identity crisis, and that Asian American filmmakers face similar crises when attempting to market their films and themselves. Asian Americans are continually asked to choose either an Asian or an American identity: in cinematic terms, the most successful filmmakers have either submerged their Asian identities to make films about white Americans, or have added Asian “flavor” to Hollywood filmmaking....What they have in common is that they reject the ‘either Asian or American’ dichotomy.

With regard to the significance of such Asian American voices, Tiana Thi very pertinently observed that they provide Hollywood with a vision of the Asian and Asian American experience that rips apart the old images. “Their truth, held up like a crucifix before the Dracula of Hollywood, compels the studious to face the fact that Asian hearts are not so different, that Asian eyes shed tears despite the slant of their eyelids.” (14)

In the course of this research about Chineseness in Hollywood cinema, with regard to the counter-discourse of Hollywood representation, I have also discovered that apart from the features in the Asian-American cinema, there are quite a few “uncompromising and confrontational” documentaries that critically interrogate representations of Asian Americans in the mass media. For instance, in Deborah Gee’s 1987 *Slaying the Dragon*, she analyzes the media’s use of Connie Chung and Dragon Lady stereotype, breaks the silence of Asian America and shatters the model minority myth. Another good example is the Academy Award-winning filmmaker Steven Okazaki’s 1995 *American Sons*. Through a moving examination of how racism shapes the lives of Asian American men, it presents a painful and angry view of American life never before explored in a motion picture or television program. It looks at difficult issues, such as hatred and violence, and examines the deep psychological damage that racism does over generations. It is an intimate and disturbing exploration of how prejudice, bigotry and violence twists and demeans individual lives. Undoubtedly I understand the strength and significance such minority discourse contains, and believe that it will eventually be recognized and celebrated by more people.

Notes


