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***Identity And Memory In Maxine Hong Kingston's The  
Woman Warrior***

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## *Dedication*

*I dedicate this work:*

*To my lovely **FATHER** and **MOTHER** who always fit my needs  
and requirements,*

*To my beloved **BROTHER** "Chiboub" who supports me with his  
precious advices and continual support. He is always with me in  
sorrow and happiness, wiping my tears as I cry, and smiling with me  
as I am happy,*

*To all my **BROTHERS** and **SISTERS** .*

*To my **Nieces** and **Nephews**.*

*To all my **FAMILY MEMBERS**.*

*To all who are **DEAR TO ME**.*

*To all my **FRIENDS**.*

*TOUATI SOUHILA.*

*Dedication*

*To my beloved parents whose love strengthens my will*

*To my lovely brother and sisters*

*To my niece, Talia*

*To my aunts and uncles*

*To my dearest, Ameer Hassiba, and Deboucha Sawsen*

*To my soul mate Touati Souhila*

*To all my friends with whom I shared the university life  
with its light and shadows.*

*Bougrari Wassila.*

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## **Abstract**

Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, is the memoirs of a Chinese American girl caught between two cultures, struggling to construct her identity. Through examining several factors such as ethnicity, nationality, immigration, silence, and discursive community, this thesis shows how these aspects influenced the creation of the writer's identity as a Chinese immigrant in America. The intersection of these factors creates an individual identity for all characters. This analysis leads to the conclusion that, within the boundaries of the memoir, it is easier to be a child of Chinese immigrants in the USA than an immigrant yourself. The narrator eventually prospers as a Chinese American woman in the American society, despite the difficulties that she encountered in her life. Using the psychoanalytical theory, in analyzing the theme of constructing identity, this thesis is divided into two main chapters, the former presents a general overview about Asian American literature and ethnic and Chinese autobiography. While, the latter is dedicated to analyze the process of shaping identity and factors related it.

**Key Words:** Woman, Silence, Talk-stories, Immigration, Oppression, Patriarchy, Tradition, Gender, Ethnicity.

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# **General Introduction**

From the moment the first Chinese immigrants entered the United States, around 1840, the Chinese were seen as different from other wealth-seekers. They were supposed to be “sojourners,” only temporary visitors, Ronald Takaki explains<sup>1</sup>. This description, which may seem innocent, indicates a deep animosity towards the Chinese. They were initially invited to America to fill the temporary shortage of employment, but when shortages turned into surplus workers, they were no longer welcome. The mistrust among men of differing appearance, habits and exotic traditions has become discriminatory; Chinese immigrants have been accused of stealing US jobs, and law upon law was constructed to prevent the Chinese from settling in America<sup>2</sup>. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 put a stop to the free flow of Chinese immigration, and as the Chinese community at that point primarily consisted of men, the Chinatowns remained “bachelor societies”<sup>3</sup>. Of course, migrants tried to find opportunities in both law and US borders, but every newly discovered gap was blocked by new legislation. The position of the Chinese in America did not change until the civil rights movement of African Americans in the 1960s that the position of the Chinese in America changed. In 1965, immigration law put an end to immigration control based on the country of origin, and the Chinese finally managed to form families and feel at home.

The turbulent history of the Chinese in America has left its mark on Chinese American literature. Shirley Geok-lin Lim shows that “Asian-American writing, from its earliest expressions [ . . . ], shows a strong concern with its immigrant history”<sup>4</sup>. This theme is present in the writings of all generations Asian Americans, albeit in different forms. Lim sketches a development in Asian American writing, in which early works tend to define Asian Americans in correspondence with the “dominant stereotypes of their racial history.” More

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<sup>1</sup>Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: a History of Asian Americans*, (New York: Penguin, 1989), p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: a History of Asian Americans*, pp. 11-13.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 245.

<sup>4</sup> Shirley Geok-lin Lim, “Twelve Asian American Writers In Search of Self-Definition.” *MELUS* Vol. 13, No. ½, (1986), p. 57.

recent works freely “construct the fiction of a memory that never took place”<sup>5</sup>. By writing without the hypothesis of realism, these writers slowly reduce the expectations of their ethnicity gives rise to, thus can take to full advantage of the possibilities that provide them with their dual backgrounds. A well-known example of the latter is Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*, first published in 1976. In her first appearance, Kingston painted her hero Maxine’s attempts to create a sense of belonging to any of the unknowns. Thus, stripping China of its immigrant parents, or the concrete American world so far incomprehensible outside the family home. *The Woman Warrior* crosses borders in several ways: Kingston blends reality and fiction, memory and myth, and Chinese and American culture in a hybrid tale of maturation.

Maxine Hong Kingston Autobiography, *the Woman warrior* deconstructs the genre of the autobiography and, in doing so, associated Americans ideologies; the author finds an identity by fictionalizing herself.

To portray her masterpiece –*the woman warrior*- Kingston uses a combination between her imagination and talk stories her mom tells to construct her own identity, she was looking for a place of refuge in which she can seek an authentic self to move from a to an independent adult one received identity.

The main research question that this study aims to solve is how Maxine Hong Kingston depicts a young girl’s tough search for self-identity through analyzing the role of different factors in shaping her identity, to what extent did Maxine Hong Kingston succeeded in shaping her own identity? This study will equally deal with the following sub-questions: How did Kingston’s Memoir explored the relationship between memory and identity? What is the role of stories Kingston heard as a child play in her life?

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<sup>5</sup> Shirley Geok-lim Lom, “Twelve Asian American Writers In Search of Self-Definition.”, p. 74.

*The woman warrior* is often praised because of its creative form, Kingston's work embraced as a classic by both instructors and students of University, ranging from Comparative Literature, Sociology, Rhetoric, History, political Science, to ethnic studies.

The identification of the book as an autobiography gives "*the woman warrior*" the appearance of being an actual representation of Asian-American experience in the broader public sphere, thus the creative style of writing helps Western readers lack basic knowledge about Chinese culture and traditions to get clear idea about Chinese heritage brought with the first generation immigrants to USA.

This research can be helpful because it allows readers to better understand psychoanalytical theory in one hand and motivate them to know more about Chinese culture and difficulties faced by Chinese women in imposing themselves within racist and sexism society.

According to Gloria Chun, embraced as a classic by both instructors and students of university departments "ranging from Comparative Literature, Sociology, Anthropology, Rhetoric, History, Political Science, to Ethnic Studies."<sup>6</sup> However, as Sau-ling Cynthia Wong points out, "*The Woman Warrior*, by its very commercial success and its popularity with the literary establishment and the mainstream audience, seems to have become ideologically suspect to some Asian-American critics"<sup>7</sup>. Chun's recognition that Kingston is praised by many is thus not automatically positive. She is only one of the many critics who are extremely displeased by Kingston's success, in particular by the fact that the imaginative *The Woman Warrior* has been published under the label "autobiography." What Chun really objects to is, of course, not that Kingston evades the restrictions of a genre, but that identifying this book as

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<sup>6</sup>Gloria Chun, "The High Note of the Barbarian Reed Pipe: Maxine Hong Kingston." *Journal of Ethnic Studies* Vol. 19, No. 3, (1991), p. 85.

<sup>7</sup>Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, "Necessity and Extravagance in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*: Art and the Ethnic Experience." *MELUS* Vol, 15, No. 1 (1988), p.3.

an autobiography gives “*The Woman Warrior* the appearance of being an actual representation of Asian American experience in the broader public sphere”<sup>8</sup>Chun, also a Chinese American, protests Kingston’s creative style of writing because most Western readers lack basic knowledge about Chinese culture and tradition and will, because *The Woman Warrior* is presented as an Autobiography, easily accept Kingston’s fantastic vision as a representation of the experience of all Chinese-Americans<sup>9</sup>. Because Kingston also shows some of the less-appealing sides of Chinese American life, Chun feels misrepresented.

This dissertation will be broken down into two main chapters ,the first one will be devoted to the socio historical background of the book and the study of “ *Woman Warrior*” as a multicultural literature to give readers a background about Chinese Culture , in addition to an introduction to Chinese American autobiographies since the writer was narrating her own experiences .The second chapter ,the analytical part, will be allotted to a general literary analysis ,in which we shed the light on identity and memory, and how these terms have been explored in the Memoir ,in addition to the interpretation of silence and voice as a helping factors in the way of shaping an identity.

For the reason that the research is going to present an analytical assessment of Maxine Hong Kingston “*woman warrior*” the study will use a Psychoanalytic Approach. In the light of this theory, the study aims broadly at showing how Maxine Hong Kingston uses her text as an effective Paradigm to her social experiences. By casting the light on psychoanalytic features that are very close to this study. It will try to elucidate the psychological variables within Maxine Hong Kingston; the leading character of the story relying on the works of Sigmund Freud including the Unconscious mind, Narcissism, and Defense Mechanisms. This work is trying to reveal the psychological motives that pushed Kingston to his way of

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<sup>8</sup> Gloria Chun, “The High Note of the Barbarian Reed Pipe: Maxine Hong Kingston,” p. 86.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 90.

understanding the notion of successes well as the problems that she was confronting with the society and traditions.

This thesis aims to study Maxine Hong Kingston "*The woman Warrior*" to examine how she depicted Chinese culture, and analyze the writer's character by picking out what factors influenced her identity. Moreover, it investigates, the relationship between memory and identity, and significant role of memory in shaping identity.

# **Chapter One:**

**The Woman Warrior and the Rise of Chinese  
American Autobiography**

## 1. Asian American Literature

Asian- American literature was formulated in the late 1960s. It is defined as works by people of Asian descent who were either born in or who have migrated to North America.<sup>10</sup> It includes Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese, and Philippine American, literature.<sup>11</sup>

In the writings of Asian Americans “*the immigrant experience looms large*” with issues related to “marginality and life on the border (...) biculturalism and language, and decisions about identity.”<sup>12</sup> As a matter of fact, Immigrants from Asia to the United States came in large numbers from the 1850s. The gold rush attracted thousands of people from China, who arrived in California as cheap workers to work in the mining and agricultural industries and complete the intercontinental railway.<sup>13</sup> Thus, their writings are the product of specific historical contexts. Indeed, the largest Asian immigrant group was the Chinese. Hence, the painful Chinese experiences range from the horrors of the wars and revolutions to the control of the Communists.<sup>14</sup>

It is common for Asian American critics to describe the historical development of Asian American literature in ‘periods’ or, alternatively, ‘modes’ and ‘patterns’.<sup>9</sup> These latter alternatives affect the developmental understanding of literature and cultural history, generally understood as the transition from simplicity and naiveté to complexity and evolution like ultimately compatible with both Enlightenment and the national narrative Bildungsroman.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>King-Kog Cheung, *An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature* (Cambridge: University Press, 1997), p.1.

<sup>11</sup>Faten Houioui, “Mapping the Traumatized Subject in Chinese American Literature,” *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)* Vol. 22, No. 5, (May, 2019), p. 119.

<sup>12</sup>E.D Huntley, *Amy Tan a Critical Companion* (U S A: Greenwood Press, 1998), p.19.

<sup>13</sup>Seiwoong Oh, *ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ASIAN-AMERICAN LITERATURE* (New York: Facts of File, 2007), p. ix.

<sup>14</sup>Faten Houioui, “Mapping the Traumatized Subject in Chinese American Literature,” p. 119.

<sup>15</sup>Bella Adams, *Asian American Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2008), p. 7.

Moreover, lot of Asian American writings has been published in the form of autobiography, biography, or Bildungsroman. The intergenerational gaps and cultural differences expressed by the descendants of the immigrant generation have to some extent been provided with the subject of "ethnic" literature. The personal struggle of ethnic / racial minorities to find their identity in the United States, along with the stories of "success" envisaged, was also seen as a "typical minority" speech.

Although many Asians born in the United States have been socially assimilated and culturally assimilated to American culture and are legally American citizens, most of the literary works presented by Asian American writers have been understood within our hierarchical binaries, including Self / Other, First World, Third World, and familiar / alien.<sup>16</sup>

Asian American critics have advanced critical procedures or written about Asian American literature that will ensure critical attention, beyond cultures, over the coming epoch. Prior to Elaine H. Kim's *Asian-American Literature: Introduction to Literature and Social Context* (1982), those hunting for a critical experience in Asian-American literature relied heavily on introductions or anthologies.

By the early 1990s, studies began to emerge, such as, Cynthia Wong's *Reading Asian American Literature: From Necessity to Extravagance* (1993), that studied the role of food, and the subject of a doppelganger as a certain ethnic structure, beside to the themes of movement and mobility. Wong's book was interesting, as it presented a multicultural literary study that reshaped the image, legends and themes, even those resonated with the West, in ways that identified the Asian American identity. The Introduction to this work provides a review of literature as far as most of the curricula and selections include -Asian American

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<sup>16</sup> Youngsuk Chae, *Politicizing Asian American Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 13.

writing. At the present time, they are studied and evaluated wherever American literature is taught.<sup>17</sup>

The most famous of them is *Aiiieeee !, Anthology of Asian-American Writers* (1974), a joint venture of four Asian Americans Frank Chen, Jeffrey Paul Chan, Lawson Fusau Inad, and Shun Hsu Wong.<sup>18</sup> A group of successful and well-acclaimed authors, such as Maxine Hong Kingston, Frank Chen, Henry Hwang and Amy Tan, established the literary scene in the 1970s and 1980s, Chinese-American literature as an independent sub-branch of American literature.

Despite its "discovery" in the 1970s, Chinese-American literature goes back to the early years of Chinese immigration to the United States, with constructions such as "Gold Mountain"<sup>19</sup>.

In 1990 and beyond, Asian American literature, and Chinese-American literature in particular, became increasingly widespread, and new writers began appearing always, and new anthologies were published.<sup>20</sup>

Although the number of Chinese women living in America was small until the 1950s, the early female writers were nonetheless more than men. According to Ling, women were more "original" in their writings, and were basically charged with forming Chinese-American literary traditions with their own distinctive voice. He said: "*Without doubt, the female sex is a liability in any patriarchy, and the ethnic minority female is triply vulnerable: as Chinese in*

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<sup>17</sup> Jan Piliditch, "Transnational Asian American Literature: Sites and Transits by Shirley Geok-lin Lim; John Blair Gamber; Stephen Hong Sohn; Gina Valentino," *Australasian Journal of American Studies* Vol. 25, No. 2, (December, 2007), p. 106.

<sup>18</sup>E.D Huntley, *Maxine Hong Kingston: A Critical Companion* (Westport: Greenwood, 2000), p. 55.

<sup>19</sup> Hom M.K. 1992 (1987). *Songs of Gold Mountain: Cantonese Rhymes from San Francisco Chinatown*. [online]. Berkeley Oxford: University of California Press, composed of poems written in Cantonese by Chinese Migrantworkers.

<sup>20</sup>S Wong, *Reading Asian American Literature: From Necessity to Extravagance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 3.

*an Euro-American world, as a woman in a Chinese man's world, as a Chinese woman in a white man's world.*"<sup>21</sup>

Edith Eaton (1865-1914) published as Sui Sin Far, Winnifred Eaton (1875-1954) as Onoto Watanna. After the Eaton sisters, there were a lot of women who were writing fictional stories about their experiences in both China and the United States. The first authors were not representatives of model Chinese immigrants who belong to the working class and had no time to educate or to write.<sup>22</sup>

This is not to say that Chinese American men would not have not significantly contributed to the tradition. In addition to novels and non-fiction, Chinese American men authors have often specialized in drama. Important male authors are e.g, novelist Louis Chu (1915-1970), playwright, novelist, and critic Frank Chin (1940- ), and playwright Henry Hwang (1957)

What explains the common characteristics in Chinese American works is their cultural situation. Despite their relatively distinguished position, the authors deal with the plight of all oppressed ethnic groups, and describe the difficulties of being a Chinese in the United States, as Mai-Mai Sze put it, "We're cause people, whether we like it or not."<sup>23</sup> Also, a "between-world consciousness" has been a key feature in Chinese American writing from the beginning.<sup>24</sup> Edith Eaton, for example, described her life in 1909 as a precarious between-worlds-position between China and America. She notes:

*After all I have no nationality and am not anxious to claim any. Individuality is more than nationality [...] I give my right hand to the Occidentals and my left hand to the*

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<sup>21</sup>A. Ling, *Between worlds: Women Writers of Chinese Ancestry* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1990), p. 15.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, p.14.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 108-120.

*Orientalists, hoping that between them they will not utterly destroy the insignificant 'connecting link.'*<sup>25</sup>

## **2. Ethnic Autobiography:**

"First, it may be useful to define what ethnic autobiography is: this term refers to immigrant autobiography, exile autobiography, second-generation autobiography, ethnics autobiography, bicultural autobiography, and multicultural autobiography; that is, all life narratives written by ethnic subjects who have migrated to another country or were born by immigrants and who live in a society where they represent minority and have to struggle to combine their cultural heritage with that of the host country.<sup>26</sup> Autobiographies have always been common among immigrants who have found themselves in difficult and confusing situations, feeling the need to express their feelings and tell them about their life experiences. In some ways, autobiographical forms have represented to them a sort of therapy<sup>27</sup>. Moreover, by telling their story, the ethnic subject implicitly claims the right to a voice and self-definition. In fact, historically self-representation of ethnic citizens and oppressed minorities has been rejected; as Michel Foucault argues, it is those in power who can impose the knowledge of oppressed people, that is, the way society defines and represents them. Thus, the autobiography becomes a counter-discourse in which persecuted people "appropriate a colonizer's (or dominant culture's) discursive models, thereby 'transculturating' them into indigenous idioms and producing hybrid forms of collectivized life-narrative"<sup>28</sup>. Therefore, autobiography is also a means of self-affirmation and self-representation in a society whose ethnic knowledge relies on stereotypes, most of which are negative.

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<sup>25</sup> Sui Sin Far 1909, cited in A. Ling, *Between worlds: Women Writers of Chinese Ancestry* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1990), p. 32.

<sup>26</sup> Grazia Michelli, *Asian American (S) wordswomen*, (Universtia degli Studi di Padova, Dipartimento di Studi Linguistici e Letterari 2015\_2016), p. 33

<sup>27</sup> Jerzy Durczak, *Selves between cultures: Contemporary American bicultural autobiography* (Lublin: Unwersyter Marii Curie Skłodowskiej, 1994), p.23.

<sup>28</sup> Sidonie Smith and Watson Julia, *Reading autobiography: A guide for interpreting life narratives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001) p, 185.

In the United States, ethnicity has generated debate and struggle. Fundamentally controversies center on meanings of the word, ethnicity, and the relationships between ethnic and non-ethnic implied by the definitions. Distinctions between race and ethnicity compound the debate. Thus, meanings associated with ethnicity carry a heavy burden, quite beyond that of mere linguistic debate, for they suggest past and present relationships between and among ethnic groups. Ultimately, issues revolve around the meaning of American identity, meanings that tend to fall into four brief propositions: 1) all Americans are ethnic; 2) people of color are ethnics; 3) ethnics are cultural groups, distinct from racial minorities; 4) ethnic groups (whether cultural or racial) must be seen historically and in structures of power. At any given time all definitions might circulate simultaneously; therefore, even the meaning of ethnicity emerges in a contested terrain. Because these meanings have implications for our memory of the past, as well as the possibilities for present and future social relations, these definitions resonate with the politics of cultural representation, and it becomes meaningful to elaborate on them.<sup>29</sup>

Ethnic autobiographies are still on the sidelines of American literary criticism. What Cynthia Sau-ling Wong has asserted for almost two decades is still true: "Just as immigrants are often seen as less than fully American, immigrant autobiography has been customarily assigned to the peripheries of American autobiographical scholarship". Surprisingly, little attention has been paid to this type given the centrality of immigrant experience in American history.<sup>30</sup>

William Boelhower's *Autobiography of Immigrant in the United States: Four Versions of the Italian-American Self* (1982) is the only book length study devoted to the

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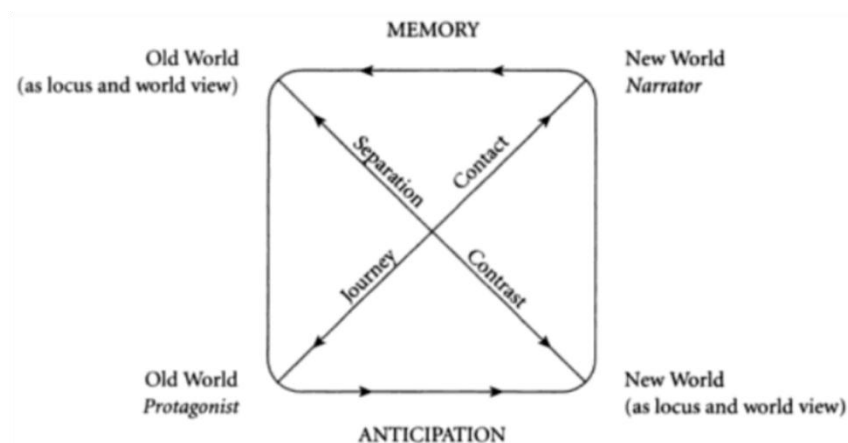
<sup>29</sup>Betty Ann Bergland, "Representing Ethnicity in Autobiography: Narratives of Opposition" *The Yearbook of English Studies*, Vol. 24, Ethnicity and Representation in American Literature, 1994), pp, 67-93.

<sup>30</sup>Sau-Ling Cynthia, "Immigrant autobiography: Some questions of definition and approach," in Sidonie Smith & Julia Watson (eds), *Women autobiography, theory: A reader* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press) pp, 299-315.

autobiography of immigrants that provides a theory capable of describing its features. Boelhower<sup>31</sup> defines a sort of "macrotext" or "single story" that can be found in all biographies of migrants; although he warns, "in no way does the macro-text exhaust the individual variants (the microtext) pertaining to it"<sup>32</sup>. According to this scheme or model, the migrants' experience is described in three stages:

- "anticipation" ("the reality of the old world versus the ideal new world");
- "Contact" ("ideal for the new world vs. the reality of the New World");
- "Contrast" ("Old World vs. New World Reality").

Therefore, starting with the "Dreaming anticipation" phase of the New World, the immigrant journeys from the Old World to the New World; the immigrant faces a series of connections and contradictions that are at the heart of the "transformation" process or, more specifically, the "Americanization". The immigrant then recognizes the gap between the "ideal of the new world" and "the contemporary reality of the new world" and has to balance two cultures ("present and future culture and memory culture") into one model. The central stage is the "dream anticipation" phase, because this is what drives the individual to migrate from the ancient world to a new, mythical world.



<sup>31</sup> William Boelhower, *Immigrant autobiography in the United States: Four versions of the Italian American Self* (Verona: Eshedue Edzioni, 1982), pp. 25-52.

<sup>32</sup> William Boelhower, *Immigrant autobiography in the United States: Four versions of the Italian American Self*, p. 31.

Figure 1: the immigrant autobiographical model.<sup>33</sup>

Wong discovered the limits of this pattern which, she says, cannot be applied to all migrant autobiographies, especially those written by people from the East. First, as Boelhower<sup>34</sup> asserts, the language used in the autobiography selected as examples supports his theory is very scriptural: the New World is referred to as the lost Eden, the Lost Golden Age, the New Jerusalem, or the city on a plateau. As Wong asserts, "These are European-origin fictions. For those coming from the real Orient it would be impossible to think of America as 'a type of fabulous new Orient'". In fact, Boelhower's study concentrates on a restrictive set of European immigrants' Jewish-American tradition. The biography of Chinese American, in this case, deviates significantly from Boelhower's model.

The "anticipation" is very small, the "connection" to the "virtuous rules" of the Americans and its consequences are difficult to portray, and cultural "contrast" is either not drawn or painted more to enlighten Anglo readers instead of drawing a map of America for the hero. Most of the narrative is dedicated to the life of the protagonist before immigration in China.<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore, Wong sees a realistic attitude behind her grandparents' decision to immigrate to America, which is different from the "dream anticipation" that Boelhower referred to. She also believes that Boelhower has played down the importance of the public's role in making the autobiographies of immigrants: often the Chinese-American autobiographies were interested in what Anglo-readers liked to read. As Wong explained "these texts are subtly 'sponsored'; certainly they are not as self-authorized and inward-

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p.35.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p.33.

<sup>35</sup>William Boelhower, *Immigrant autobiography in the United States: Four versions of the Italian American Self*, p. 304.

looking as we would be led to believe by Bellow's theory".<sup>36</sup> Therefore, an autobiography may be something different from the expression of individual negotiation about cultural forces. Finally, a distinction is made between autobiographies of immigrants and second-generation autobiography or American-born autobiographies, because there are significant differences between the first and second generation ethnologies. This is another aspect Boelhower has challenged by bringing together different generations in a consistent model of immigrant experience. Thus, based on Wong's view, we shall also avoid using the term "immigrant autobiographies" to refer to the work analyzed here because it is written by an American-born book and not by immigrants.

The term "immigrant autobiographies" used by Boelhower is not particularly popular among autobiography critics. Most tend to... (Employ the term) 'Ethnic', however, tied even more questions than the term "immigrant." The chief specialist in the field of ethnic literature, Werner Sollors, admits that the tough the term "ethnic" is certainly a better term than, for example, "minority", it is often 'used confusingly'. ... Stating precisely what ethnic literature is might be difficult, since the term "ethnic" has never been satisfactorily defined ... Ethnic literature is not a uniform phenomenon."<sup>37</sup>

However, Durczak believes that there is a common feature in ethnic autobiographies which he calls "bicultural quality"<sup>38</sup> because their heroes are always torn between two cultures; for this reason, he excludes the term "immigrant" and "ethnic" and employs the term "bicultural". "According to Thomas Couser, the term 'bicultural biography' can be applied to those texts that" recount the lives that have arisen in distinct subcultures, but have not ended there. ""<sup>39</sup>. In Durczak's view, interest in ethnic autobiographies increased as a result of

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p.307.

<sup>37</sup>Jerzy Durczak, *Selves between cultures: Contemporary American bicultural autobiography*, p. 19.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

recognition after World War II of immigration as an essential part of American experience, the emphasis given to ethnicity during the 1960s and 1970s.

Ethnic autobiographies offer a people's history of the United States people telling their story, we imagine, with greater justice and accuracy than have been shown in stories told by those in power. They represent collective narratives and histories of struggle and opposition - to slavery, conquest, occupation, discrimination, ongoing racism, and injustice. Because ethnic autobiographies point to the multicultural complexity of the United States, they illuminate the richness and complexity of that culture - the tragedies and injustices as well as the resist.<sup>40</sup>

### **3. Chinese American Autobiography's Origins:**

Norton's American biography discusses only one Chinese American work: *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* (1976) by Maxine Hong Kingston. What is the meaning of tracking the "assets" that led to this work? Kingston acknowledges Jade Snow Wong's *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (1950)<sup>41</sup>, but literary historians were interested in recovering a longer tradition cite "Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian" (1909) by Sui Sin Far née Edith Maude Eaton. According to their view, Sui Sin Far is "the foremother to the women writers of Chinese ancestry."<sup>42</sup>We can, of course, look for more distant origins in history, considering the first book published by a Chinese-American in English, *When I Was a Boy in China* (1887) by Yan Phou Lee, or even "perhaps the oldest book by a Chinese person in the United States", a friendship album prepared by Wu Lan in 1824<sup>43</sup>. We may wonder

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<sup>40</sup> Betty Ann Bergland, *Representing Ethnicity in Autobiography: Narratives of Opposition*, pp. 67-93.

<sup>41</sup> Shirley Geok-lin Lim, "The Tradition of Chinese American Women's Life Stories: Thematics of Race and Gender in Jade Snow Wong's *Fifth Chinese Daughter* and Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*," in *American Women's Autobiography: Fea(s)ts of Memory*, ed. Margo Culley (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), p. 256.

<sup>42</sup> Annette White-Parks, *Sui Sin Far/Edith Maude Eaton: A Literary Biography* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), p. 6.

<sup>43</sup> Karen Sanchez-Eppler, "Copying and Conversion: An 1824 Friendship Album from 'a Chinese Youth,'" *American Quarterly* Vol. 15, No. 4, (2007), pp. 301-39.

what the benefit would be. Certainly, a mere definition of early history reinforces many important ideas - that Chinese-American literature did not suddenly explode into the scene in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, when Chinese immigrants had come to the United States since at least the early nineteenth century and that their descendants had contributed Culture and society since then. In addition, the legacy of the literary heritage can enhance the pride of the long-excluded population as a "yellow peril" and has only recently been observed, albeit problematic, as a typical minority<sup>44</sup>.

Without the distinction of telling one story over another, whereas also admitting that we can never completely suspend the biases of our present age, it would be useful to think of echoes of contemporary Chinese-American autobiographical works and those written during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. In addition to the relatively famous early works of Yan Phou Lee, Yung Wing and Sui Sin Far, we can determine a less-known "lifelet" from Lee Chew, "reminiscences" by Huie Kin, and - if we expand our concepts of what is autobiography"- a number of provisional texts collected in *Chinese-American Voices: From the Gold Rush to the Present* (2006), edited by Judy Young, Gordon H. Chang, and Mark Lai. Taken together, these works are not inherent in the sense that they provide models that directly inflate existing writers. Instead, they are origins in the sense of being early writings whose purposes, desires and cultures are different from subsequent writings. Like many authors today, the early writers often found that the only way to get into mainstream discourse was by positioning themselves as cultural representatives; however some take the opportunity to assert themselves as artists and political agents, while also negotiating new ways to understand China as a nation or Chinese Americans as a group. Others continue to benefit

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<sup>44</sup> K. Scott Wong and Sucheng Chan, eds., *Claiming America: Constructing Chinese American Identities during the Exclusion Era* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), pp.77-82.  
Yuko Kawai, "Stereotyping Asian Americans: The Dialectic of the Model Minority and the Yellow Peril," *HowardJournal of Communications* Vol.16, No. 2, (2005), pp. 109-30.

from public acceptance of the autobiographical genre to achieve different aesthetic and ideological goals.

### 3.1 The Chinese-American Autobiography Predicament

Although more than a hundred years have passed and so much has changed, some of the conditions for literary production and reception of Chinese-American writers are still tenaciously consistent. The most important of which is the market's tendency to interpret their work as autobiography, whether it is meant to be or not. While some writers have certainly succeeded in other types, many are known primarily for writings that are believed to be the most personal. Marilyn Chen is known for *How I Got That Name* (1994), and Amy Tan still has to distinguish herself from the hero of her famous novel *The Joy Luck Club* (1989)<sup>45</sup>. Even Kingston, which continued to publish novels and other poems, is still known as *The Woman Warrior*, a work of the type marketed by the publisher as autobiography, considered to be "*mildly deceptive*."<sup>46</sup>

Complications arise, of course, from the fact that autobiography is a slippery genre. While some agree with the traditional concept of autobiography as non-fiction, usually a "retrospective narrative of a real person in relation to its existence," others understand autobiography as a kind of signal, because the formation of "memory" or "experience" into the language necessarily introduces elements of choice and invention.<sup>47</sup> Certainly, the Chinese American autobiography includes more and more traditional works“.

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<sup>45</sup> Amy Tan, "Required Reading and Other Dangerous Subjects," *Threepenny Review* Vol. 67 (1996), pp. 5 – 9.

<sup>46</sup> Kingston quoted in Youngsuk Chae, *Politicizing Asian American Literature: towards a Critical Multiculturalism* (New York: Routledg, 2008), p.46.

<sup>47</sup>Phillippe Lejeune, " The Autobiographical Pact," in *On Autobiography* , ed. Paul John Eakin and trans. Katherine Leary ( Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press , 1989 ), 4. Frank Kermode, "Memory and Autobiography"*Raritan* Vol. 15, No. 1 (1995 ), p. 36

Is it any surprise that autobiography was and still is the dominant discourse through which the Asian enters the national consciousness," David Shih asks rhetorically<sup>48</sup>. The reason why it is not a surprise has to do with three kinds of desire: the desire for a wider audience seeking to know China through the original, perceived informants; a narrower, often academic, desire to restore what it means to be a Chinese American through these sources The author's desire to participate in cultural dialogues about their identities as well as broad-based themes. Because of the desire for "authentic" knowledge of others, individual narratives are often understood as culturally representative. Maxine Hong Kong believes "someday when a great body of Chinese American writing becomes published and known . . . readers will no longer have to put such a burden on each book that comes out."<sup>49</sup> But for a long time now, this expectation that ethnic writers represented their group was an honor and a burden. On the one hand, such an expectation gives the individual a potentially strong opportunity to intervene on behalf of his / her culture or community. On the other hand, it can limit the freedom of expression of the individual writer. Indeed, his/her association of expectations and desires creates a great dilemma for Chinese-American autobiographers, as well as other ethnically-defined authors.

At one time, it seems that the book has given them the opportunity to intervene, but they face the inevitability of imperative. For each Stuart Hall encourages authors to "constitute... new kinds of subjects," there is Frank Chin waiting to judge their efforts as "real" or "fake."<sup>50</sup> Based on a number of factors, this opportunity / imperative can be experienced as an honor

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<sup>48</sup>David Shih, "The Seduction of Origins: Sui Sin Far and the Race for Tradition," in *Form and Transformation in Asian American Literature*, ed. Zhou Xiaojing and Samina Najmi (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), p. 68.

<sup>49</sup>Maxine Hong Kingston, "Cultural Mis-readings by American Reviewers," in *Asian and American Writers in Dialogue: New Cultural Identities*, ed. Guy Amirthanayagam (London: Macmillan, 1982), 163. For an excellent discussion of this dilemma, see Deborah Woo, "Maxine Hong Kingston: The Ethnic Writer and the Burden of Authenticity," *Amerasia* 16. 1 (1990), pp. 173 – 200.

<sup>50</sup>Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence, 1990), 236–7; Frank Chin, "Come All Ye Asian American Writers of the Real and the Fake," in *The Big Aiiieeee! An Anthology of Chinese American and Japanese American Literature*, ed. Jeffrey Paul Chan et al. (New York: Meridian, 1991), pp 1 – 92.

and a burden, often the same time. Rey Chow raises the intriguing issue that Asian-American writers, who do not see themselves influenced by the dominant American culture around them, should build and stare at images for themselves, and then participate in a healthy narcissism.

In the book "Secrets of Ethnic Abjection," Chow describes the problem as "lost or wounded narcissism". While individuals from the dominant group, according to their reading of Freud, go through a narcissistic phase and usually move after it, Asian Americans do not face narcissism in the first place, as a result of "the lack of proper societal representation, the absence of societal approval." In light of this theory, Asian American autobiographical writing is perhaps not simply a straightforward account about oneself but more a symptomatic attempt to (re)gain access to a trans-individual narcissism – to grope for a 'self-regard' that has not yet existed."<sup>51</sup>

At the same time, the attempt to construct such images is always caught in the trap of coercive mimeticism, another concept of Rey Chow's theory, which Paul Lai described as "the incessant and necessary performing of an ethnic self for a mainstream audience as well as one's ethnic group."<sup>52</sup> At the same time, they are free to communicate with the languages, letters and species they have at their disposal, while they are also bound by the limits of those languages, speeches and species as well as the expectations that their audiences place on them. Regardless, authors continue to write, knowing that silence, too, can be read and poorly read. These tensions together define the favorable and pp. disturbing conditions faced by American authors of ethnic origin.

This impasse is affecting virtually all Chinese-American writers who are trying to address a wide audience of English learners, perhaps starting with Yan Phou Lee, and author of "When I was a Boy in China." This book appeared as part of the "Children of Other Lands

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<sup>51</sup>Rey Chow, "The S: Race, Panic, and Memory of Migration, ed. Meaghan Morris and Brett de Bary (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011), pp. 64–6.

<sup>52</sup>Chow, Rey. "Secrets of Ethnic Abjection," in *Traces 2* Vol. 2, (2001).

Series” published by D. Lothrop This book, for the first time in a century, appealed for their belief in the power of self-writing or "self- culture-writing."<sup>53</sup> It takes both honor and burden to represent his hometown. The public's expectations of his day enabled him to serve as an "ambassador of goodwill," as Elaine Kim explained; but like any ambassador, he should be careful not to stop his audience.<sup>54</sup>With this in mind, Lee subtly exploits the genre of auto ethnography to “intervene in metropolitan modes of understanding,” which was crucial in the mid-1880s.<sup>55</sup>

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which restricts the immigration of most Chinese, already in the United States to apply for naturalized citizenship, initially with a ten-year expiration date. Consequently, Congress was discussing its renewal during the time that Lee's work appeared. With little access to the courts and political remedies, some Chinese Americans have turned to printed culture to make the case "the Chinese must stay”, Lee said.<sup>56</sup>To this end, Lee’s autobiographies simultaneously try to satisfy readers' desire for alienation and to explain that, despite cultural differences, the Chinese deserve homogenous citizenship like any other immigrants.

Publishing “Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian” by Sui Sin Far, on an insight into the nature of the autobiography of a multi-ethnic author. Rey Chow says it is for a different, if not impossible, community for Chinese Americans to find "appropriate cultural" parts of themselves in the dominant American culture. What is the amount of Devi worship that must be for Sui Sin Far, the daughter of a Chinese mother and an English father? Sui Sin

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<sup>53</sup>Paul Lai, “ Autoethnography Otherwise, ” in *Asian Canadian Writing beyond Autoethnography* , ed. Eleanor Ty and Christi Verduy ( Waterloo, ON : Wilfrid Laurier University Press , 2008 ),p 60.

<sup>54</sup>Hertha Wong, *Sending My Heart Back across the Years: Tradition and Innovation in Native American Autobiography* (New York: Oxford University Press , 1992 ), 6. On turn-of-the-century regard for autoethnography, see Dominika Ferens, “Winnifred Eaton/ Onoto Watanna: Establishing Ethnographic Authority,” in Zhou and Najmi, *Form and Transformation* ,p. 43

<sup>55</sup>Elaine Kim, *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), p. 24.

<sup>56</sup>Mary Louise Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone,” *Profession* Vol. 91 (1991), p. 35.

Far's thesis is "grappling with remarkable skill and admiration for self-esteem" that did not exist in the late nineteenth century.<sup>57</sup>

For example, while traveling as a European American in a Midwest city, Sui Sin Far reveals herself on her way through a racist conversation "the Chinese people may have no souls, no expression on their faces, be altogether beyond the pale of civilization, but whatever they are, I want you to understand that I am – I am a Chinese."<sup>58</sup> So, the Chinese and Chinese Americans defend the identity of the group, although Sui Sin Far is sometimes known as a "Chinese" to combat racism, which is only necessary in the context of narrow and dual thinkers who find it difficult to grasp part of the brilliance of the work. Thus, to expand the readers' limited minds David Shih draws our attention to her personal image associated with the original 1909 version of the article that "[a]lthough the name that ostensibly refers to this woman is recognizably Chinese, the woman is not."<sup>59</sup>

Not all writers write for the same reasons, but especially during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, readers expected that authors of ethnic identity not only represent themselves, but also represent their original countries. This expectation results in opportunities and necessities, positive and negative effects. As noted by Sau Ling Cynthia Wong, the metaphor of the term "a phrase applied to early African-American writers, Chinese-American writers 'entered into the house of literature through the door of autobiography,' " even today, "autobiographies predominate Chinese-American writing in English."<sup>60</sup> Many Chinese writers came through the entrance of autobiography, but only because it was one of the few corridors

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<sup>57</sup>Rey Chow, "The Secrets of Ethnic Abjection," p. 64, 66.

<sup>58</sup>Edith Eaton (Sui Sin Far), "Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian," in Edith Eaton (Sui Sin Far), *Mrs. Spring Fragrance and Other Writings*, ed. Amy Ling and Annette White-Parks (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), p. 225.

<sup>59</sup>David Shih, "The Seduction of Origins", p.59.

<sup>60</sup>Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, "Autobiography as Guided Chinatown Tour, Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and the Chinese-American Autobiographical Controversy," in *Maxine Hong Kingston's The Woman Warrior: A Casebook*, ed. Sau-ling Cynthia Wong (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 39.

open to them, and then, after entering, but their work had to meet impossible and contradictory sets of standards.

#### **4. The Chinese American Immigrant Women's Autobiographies**

The autobiographies of immigrant women deserve closer study, because their encounter with America was more multifaceted than those faced by men. The men and women who moved into the new world faced poverty, hunger, loneliness and discrimination, and often the intense struggle was to overcome the language barrier. But even more than men, the Immigration Act changed the relationships of immigrant women with their ancient cultures, particularly the dominant gender concepts that influenced family relations.

In fact, they faced a double educational barrier: they were not born abroad but females. The daughters of immigrant parents had to go through a series of conflicts with their parents, regardless of whether they were born or not born in the United States. Some parents simply feared that higher education "in an unfamiliar way" a woman, ultimately destroy her future chances of marriage and motherhood. The marginalization experienced by the children of immigrant parents was intensified by their conflicts between the definitions of the old world of the roles and duties of women and the possibilities of the new world to become more independent.

Many immigrant girls felt the need to re-summarize the immigrant experiences of their parents, and CV was a way of doing it. By re-listing their process of gradual independence by blending reality and imagination, they tried to resolve the contradictions between their common ethnic heritage and their personal commitment to "feminism" by designing themselves after powerful women in their migrant past. Many of these autobiographies reflect

the need to restore their ethnic background and integrate them into their contemporary American lifestyles.

Among the autobiographies that women deserve a special examination is the one issued by migrant women. The autobiographies of migrant women display, and hence show, a deeper awareness of female identity than the history of American women. But their migratory lives in the United States cannot wipe out their country's past.

Consequently, these women often present themselves as divided points in their self-written careers and in their second language. The "American" woman, which she has now created in the New World, has literally transformed herself into a resolute woman, a woman who claims to have gained the power to raise her voice. American sound is the voice that tells the growth process as an immigrant female.

The traditional roles imposed by the cultures of these former women conflict with perceptions of what their new lives will be. They live in a culture along with a culture that reinforces the patterns of thinking of the ancient state that define women as inferior creatures than being married to an unknown husband whose will is a piece of property. But they also face a culture outside their traditional home circle, which is an extension of their old culture, which they have developed and their previous challenges, to question the ways in which they function as women. This double perspective of female identity makes them feel that they are homeless as they stand on the border crossing between two different cultures and have no real sense of belonging to either.

The autobiography of migrant women in the New World, in this regard, reveals a special thematic structure, a record of a distinctive mental code from which women sought to become full-fledged bi-cultural identities. This dual cultural heritage establishes an American dilemma in the identity and advocacy of women. In selectivity and quality, a limited number

of CVs were selected to represent a certain group of immigrants: middle-class educated women who came in the New World enjoyed an unexpected reputation derived largely from their writing autobiography.

It will also be seen that female migrants share a common motivation not only to separate themselves from male images of women, but also to expose themselves as professional women. These writers identify themselves with American men as a strategy to redefine the ancient world that defines and affirms themselves as liberal intellectual women.

While searching for written literature on the subject, no books were found but only a few articles on autobiographies of immigrant women. Articles on Chinese-American autobiographies focus on specific works. Catherine Leo Sui Yin and Christopher F. Paulson examines the voice of the divided Chinese novel, "*The Fifth Chinese Daughter*," by Jade Snow Wong, "*the fifth daughter of China*," by Gay Snow Wong, "as an extraordinary literary form effectively making it the divided consciousness of dual heritage."<sup>61</sup>

As Lim notes the tradition of Chinese-American women's stories is new and not broad but "it is nonetheless certain and existent." Lim believes that the presence of these texts is remarkable since Chinese women arrived in America later than Chinese men and that they did not know English very often. The first Chinese immigrants were men who worked in gold mines or built-in railroads. In addition, the Chinese Exclusion Act banned many Chinese women from immigrating to America. Even when the Exclusion Act was repealed, other laws prohibit mating between Asians and whites and deprive Asian immigrants of their nationality. "This legislation kept Chinese American women as well as men socially in the underclass, a

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<sup>61</sup> Kathleen LohSwe Yin and Kristoffer F. Paulson, "The Divided Voice of Chinese American Narration: Jade Snow Wong's *Fifth Chinese Daughter*," *Melus: The Journal of The Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of The United State*, 9 (Spring, 1982), p. 59.

position in which writing and publishing were not generally available cultural productions, "Lim explains.<sup>62</sup>

According to Wong, early English life stories were written primarily by first-generation Chinese-American women who received an appropriate education that enabled them to master the language. Unlike African-American slave narratives beginning with the acquisition of literary, Chinese American women's life stories...tend to contain accounts of how the author, contrary to the prevailing gender norms, came to be highly educated and learn English. These women's works were published by mainstream publishing houses as they were considered of interest for the white American audience.

All these autobiographies of migrant women put a multicultural dilemma of female identity. One unusual variable of this style is provided by Pearl Buck. Unlike all other immigrant women who immigrated to the United States, she spent many years in a foreign country first, before eventually returning to her country. The Nobel Prize winner in 1938 was born of American evangelical parents, who spent her life in China and came to the United States several years later. She talks about the same problem in the "My Several Worlds: A Personal Record" that has been seen in these other life records. She feels like a Chinese among Americans. She re-produces herself as a bilingual and artistic interpreter from two cultures, expressing hope over and over again that there is a better understanding between East and West." I grew up in China, in one world and not of it, and belonging to another world and yet not of it"<sup>63</sup>.

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<sup>62</sup> Shirley Geok-lin Lim, *The tradition of Chinese American women's life stories: Thematics of race and gender in Jade Snow Wong's Fifth Chinese daughter and Maxine Hong Kingston's The woman warrior*. In Margo Culley (ed.), *American women's autobiography: Fea(s)ts of memory* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992). pp. 252-267.

<sup>63</sup> Pearl S. Buck, *My Several Worlds: A Personal Record* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1934), p.51.

The fifth Chinese Daughter by Jade Snow Wong, and the Woman Warrior: Memories of Girlhood among Ghosts by Maxine Hong Kingston, reflect the "silence" that the traditional roles played women, while integrating themselves into mainstream American culture. Although, Wong surrenders to Chinese tradition without showing anger or resentment about her gender role during her childhood. She later identifies herself as an artist and began her own pottery business. Her solid autobiography offers a strong vision of a Chinese American woman who can transcend stereotypes of herself as a body: "She could stop searching for that niche that would be hers alone. She had found herself and struck her speed."<sup>64</sup> Kingston, on the other hand, vents its anger at China's attitude toward women as undoubtedly inferior. When a liberated woman leaves her family home, she presents herself as an American woman whose Chinese heritage should only exist in Chinese cultural legends and legends so that she will not have to face them anywhere else in the American present.

*To make my waking life American-normal, I turn on the lights before anything untoward makes an appearance. I push the deformed into my dreams, which are in Chinese, the language of impossible stories. Before we can leave our parents, they stuff our heads like the suit-cases which they jam-pack with homemade underwear.<sup>65</sup>*

The stories of migrant women are necessary "documents" because they present their direct stories of migrants in the New World, their root roots and their planting. They give their side to intercultural dialogue as they refocus one's perspective on the American past from the perspective of migrant women.

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<sup>64</sup>Jade Snow Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (New York: Harper and Row, 1950), p. 246.

<sup>65</sup> Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior : Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghost s*( New York: Vintage Books,1977), p .102.

## 5. The Woman Warrior as a Multicultural Literature

The American multicultural society was already long before the term “multiculturalism” appeared in the 1970s. This term means the welcoming of the differences founded in ethnic values and cultural diversities like language, food, customs, attitudes or cultural heritage. Dissimilar to “Melting Pot” a model of the blending of cultures, that requires ethnic / ethnic minorities or immigrants to agree to the basic and fundamental values of society.

Moreover, multiculturalism has given the greatest respect for the reciprocation to the cultural impacts of ethnic minorities or immigrant groups bring with them to the United States. Though the idea of multiculturalism was widely disseminated in the 1980s through slogans on multiculturalism, the question, how the term was used or first developed stays vague also, questions concerning the political and ideological meanings and the term ‘s implications has been raised consistently.<sup>66</sup> Thus, the discussion of multiculturalism in the broader literature deals with social justice items like humanity, feminism, and liberalism.<sup>67</sup>

“*The Woman Warrior*” by Maxine Hong Kingston, is the best example of multicultural literature which is often classified and studied as such.<sup>68</sup>

Dasenbrock defines multicultural literature as “*works that are explicitly about multicultural societies*” and “*are implicitly multicultural in the sense of inscribing readers from other cultures inside their own textual dynamics.*” He declares that “*explicitly multicultural texts are also implicitly multicultural.*”<sup>69</sup> . Focusing on the implicit cultural

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<sup>66</sup> Youngsuk Chae, *Politicizing Asian American Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 32.

<sup>67</sup> Dolce. C. J, “Multicultural education-some issues,” *Journal of Teacher Education*, 24, 283. (1973).

<sup>68</sup> He, S, Chinese American Literature. In A. Knippling (ed.), *New Immigrant Literatures in the United States: A Sourcebook to Our Multicultural Literary Heritage*, (Westport: Greenwood, 1996) pp. 43-65.

<sup>69</sup> Dasenbrock, R.W. 1987. Intelligibility and Meaningfulness in Multicultural Literature in English. *PMLA* [online], 102 (1), p 10

diversity of *The Woman Warrior*, Dasenbrock's discussion focused on the concept of "ghost" in the text. He declares that, in *The Woman Warrior*, the Chinese use the word ghost in terms of: "foreigner", "a non-Chinese person" and, as "spirit", "a dead person". The specter of "foreign" is a Chinese or Chinese-American concept, a Chinese way of referring to non-Chinese people. while, The second meaning of the ghost corresponds more or less to the American (or Finnish) meaning, in reference to "the soul of the deceased person, who speaks of it as appearing in a visual form, or expressing its existence."<sup>70</sup>

Hence, the word "ghost" is used in *The Woman Warrior* in a slightly larger and different sense than English. When the reader understands the cultural difference between the meanings of the word "ghost", a window opens to a "global vision" that differs from the mainstream in America. Dasenbrock says "to understand the ghost in *The Woman Warrior*. Non-Chinese readers need to understand the Chinese use of the word, which means that we must, momentarily at least, learn to see ourselves as ghosts."<sup>71</sup>

The dual meaning of "ghost" thus realizes the external and internal positions rely just on the individual's perspective, and challenge the readers of non-Chinese Americans Further work in expanding its cultural horizons.<sup>72</sup> That also makes the fact that the *Woman Warrior* is written to two audiences: Chinese Americans who will not face any problem in understanding the meanings, and non-Chinese Americans who will be obliged to make an effort to get the meaning.<sup>73</sup>

Moreover, Dasenbrock's definition of implicit multiculturalism in *The Woman Warrior* may have to be redefined a bit. Instead of recording readers from "other" cultures within their text dynamics, *The Woman Warrior* records readers from many cultures, none of which are

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<sup>70</sup> In dictionaries, the adjective 'multicultural' is defined as "pertaining to a society consisting of varied cultural groups" (*OED*) or "of, being, or designed for a combination of several distinct cultures" (*Longman Dictionary of the English Language*). Thus, 'multicultural' (as opposed to 'bicultural') implies that there are more than two cultures involved

<sup>71</sup> Dasenbrock, R.W. 1987. Intelligibility and Meaningfulness in Multicultural Literature in English. *PMLA* [online], 102 (1), p. 14.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14

"internal" or "external" because the text contains elements familiar to each. Maxine Hong Kingston commented that the target audience of *The Woman Warrior* is at the same time embracing and "very specific": It is written on the one hand to "everyone", and on the other hand, to Chinese Americans. Kingston reveals that the text contains "puns for Chinese speakers only" and "visual pictorials most appreciated by those who write Chinese."<sup>74</sup>

## 6. Kingston's *the Woman Warrior* in Context

Maxine Ting Hung was born in Stockton, California in 1940; she is the eldest of the six surviving children of Tom Hong (researcher, washing man, and housekeeper) and Chew Ling Yan (midwife, nurse and field -hand).<sup>75</sup>

Although she was very calm in her childhood, she failed in kindergarten because she refused to speak loudly in class. Maxine Hong soon showed a talent for writing, and by the age of nine she composed poems in English, her second language after Cantonese.<sup>76</sup>

Furthermore, she earned her Bachelor of Science degree from the University of California at Berkeley in 1962 and a teaching degree in 1965. She lived and worked in both California and Oahu, Hawaii and got married to Earl Kingston, a representative. She has one son, Joseph Lawrence Chung Mei.<sup>77</sup>

During her writing career, Kingston has held many teaching positions at various colleges and universities, thus, since 1990 has been a Distinguished Professor of Counseling at the University of California at Berkeley.<sup>78</sup>

By combining autobiography and fantasy stories with stories, oral history and folk tales, Kingston's writings strongly challenge the idea that Asian Americans have a separate identity

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>75</sup> Amy Ling, *The Heath Anthology of American Literature 2* (D.C. Heath, 1990), p. 2094-95.

<sup>76</sup> Seiwoong Oh, *Encyclopedia of Asian-American Literature* (New York: Facts of File, 2007), p. 152.

<sup>77</sup> Amy Ling, *The Heath Anthology of American Literature 2*, p. 2094-95.

<sup>78</sup> Seiwoong Oh, *ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ASIAN-AMERICAN LITERATURE*, p. 153.

- "ethnic" and "American" - attesting to the harmful effects that such an idea might have on both individual and community level. She has also widely written about "silencing" Chinese and Chinese American women in both countries.<sup>79</sup>

Therefore, Ms. Kingston gave Chinese America its most real, most sensitive, and absolutely the most irresistible voice. Ms. Kingston is not particularly a political writer, but perhaps it would be appropriate to care about many things more important than the fact of being Chinese. Ms. Kingston first gave voice to women, especially Chinese American women, but all women would see their own ideas and struggles against subtle or stark sex discrimination. Subsequently, she gave her voice to the Chinese and all what is one of the richest popular cultures in the world.<sup>80</sup>

By the early 1970s, Kingston was writing short articles that would form "The Woman Warrior," that was widely published in several magazines and newspapers, including the New York Times .Consequently, *Woman Warrior* won numerous awards, including the 1976 National Book Critics Award; Time Magazine named one of the top 10 works of fiction in the decade. In addition to her 1980 book, "China Men," that received a similar honor and won the National Book of Public Stories Award in 1981, a short collection of articles, entitled "Hawaii One Summer", appeared six years later, followed by "Tripmaster Monkey" (1989), in which, Kingston turned from a combination of autobiography and myth that characterized her early work to direct fantasy.

Beside to her turning into direct fictions, Kingston's renewed interest in poetry was clearly detailed in a series of lectures and poems entitled "To Be the Poet" (2002), that

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>80</sup> Susan Evangelista, "Chinese-America's Woman Warrior: Maxine Hong Kingston THE WOMAN WARRIOR by Maxine Hong Kingston; CHINA MEN by Maxine Hong Kingston" *Philippine Studies* Vol. 31, No. 2, (Second Quarter, 1983), p. 244.

contains a selection of new works. She continues writing the latest and the longest of her publications being “The Fifth Book of Peace” (2003).<sup>81</sup>

Kingston’s first book, *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*, won for her the National Book Critics Circle Award for general nonfiction in 1976. She mixes biography, history, and myth, and describes her struggle to shape her identity out of the contrast American and Chinese cultures.<sup>82</sup> She said:

*Chinese-Americans, when you try to understand what things in you are Chinese, how do you separate what is peculiar to childhood, to poverty, in-sanities, one family, your mother who marked your growing with stories, from what is Chinese? What is Chinese tradition and what is the movies?”*(6)

The book, without a plot in the traditional sense, brings up images of Chinese women, real and mythical, because they interact with their culture, the real responds generally in silence, or is silenced, and find the legendary voice that not only speaks for themselves, but also about the dumb others.<sup>83</sup> However, the book is a collection of imagination, reality and memory, a hybrid type of Kingston innovation, through Chinese folk stories and family tales which marked her childhood, and the weird tradition of the old world imposed by her mother but did not explain to them, through Kingston's experiments and imaginary trips and poetic journeys, *The Woman Warrior* details complications and difficulties in Kingston’s development as a woman and as a Chinese American.

Moreover, she protests against prejudice of traditional Chinese culture, which is embodied in hateful statements of women, such as “*it is better to feed the goose than girls*” (45) and in acts such as tying girls' feet and selling slave girls. Indeed, Kingston is so sensitive to American racism and objects to her employer's claim to paint a “*yellow Negro*.” The book manifests the power of stories in the formation of characters and behavior, also shows a

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<sup>81</sup>Seiwoong Oh, *ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ASIAN AMERICAN LITERATURE*, pp. 152-153.

<sup>82</sup> Barbara Wiedemann, *Cyclopedia of World Authors II*, Vol. 3 ed. Frank N. Magill (Salem, 1989), pp. 846-48.

<sup>83</sup> Barbara Wiedemann, *Cyclopedia of World Authors II*, pp. 846-48.

victory to become a former of stories by finding one's voice and embracing his past and self-assertion.<sup>84</sup>

Chapters are presented in blocks against opposing chapters, some gaps are engulfed by the cries of doubt or victory, while others are left to decode by the reader. Kingston breaks time because it distinguishes the usual distinctions between reality and fiction, thus separating her book from traditional biography and chronology.<sup>85</sup>

The first chapter "No Name Woman" relates to a story her mother, Brave Orchid, narrates. It is about Kingston's aunt, who destroyed her family's reputation by having an illegitimate child. On the night of the baby's birth, after the villagers ruined the family compound, she committed suicide by throwing herself and the baby into a well. Kingston imagines her aunt's life: her amenability in marrying a man chosen by her family, her reaction when her husband left for the United States a few days after their marriage, her approval when a villager forced her to have sex, and her acceptance of the villagers' disdain, her denial to mention her child's father, and her last wish to end her life that humiliated her family, that did not mention her name again.

Not only does Kingston tell the story that the aunt could not but retaliate. In Chinese, the ideograph of "revenge" means "reporting a crime."<sup>86</sup>

The Woman Warrior, second chapter "White Tigers" tells a completely different story about Fa Mu Lan, the legendary warrior Women. When she was a child, Kingston felt that girls could not achieve greatness in the male world. "White Tigers" is the story from the

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<sup>84</sup> Amy Ling, *The Heath Anthology of American Literature 2* (D.C. Heath: 1990), pp. 2094-95.

<sup>85</sup> Deborah Homsher, "The Woman Warrior, by Maxine Hong Kingston: A Bridging of Autobiography and Fiction," *The Iowa Review* Vol. 10, Issue. 4, (1979), p. 93.

<sup>86</sup> Barbara Wiedemann, *Cyclopedia of World Authors II*, pp. 846-48.

imagination of her childhood to overcome emotions of inferiority as a female. Such as Fa Mo Lan, imagine herself leaving home at the age seven and lift Martial arts teachers.<sup>87</sup>

This "talk story," echoed over and over again by the praises of Orchid and her girl, told of a girl taken by a magical bird to the mountains. For the purpose of returning to avenge the enemies of her family and her country, she trained herself so as to become strong in self-discipline and magic. These introductory Myths set alongside a woman who is a criminal becoming a victim against another faithful and heroic woman.<sup>88</sup>

After these stories, Kingston jumps to her mother's history in China, In the third chapter "Shamann," she tells the story of Brave Orchid's unusual, medical career as a midwife in China. After the birth of two children in China, Brave Orchid takes the extraordinary step of going to medical school, and then works as a doctor in her home village to become a successful healer later. But, in the end, she abandoned her career to join her husband in the USA. Whereas, she was unable to practice medicine in America, she opened a laundry company in California with her husband.

As the Woman Warrior a progress, Kingston relies less on her mother's novels and more about her own memories and family events and experiences.

Then, in the fourth chapter of her book "At the Western Palace" a story of another aunt, Moon Orchid, a sensitive and a funny old woman, who failed to incorporate in American civilization. Her husband arrived alone to America and became a successful doctor. Nevertheless, after several years of practicing medicine in Los Angeles, he remarried and divorced Moon Orchid, who stayed in Hong Kong wait for him to send her. Brave Orchid determined to help her sister facing this careless man, and plan for her migration to America, but, when Moon Orchid finally faced her husband; he refused her again and rebuke her for

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<sup>87</sup> Gary Carey and James L. Roberts, (Eds), *CliffsNotes™ The Woman Warrior* (New York: Hungry Minds, 1998), p. 9.

<sup>88</sup>Deborah Homsher, "The Woman Warrior, by Maxine Hong Kingston: A Bridging of Autobiography and Fiction," p. 93.

damaging his life and profession. Later on Moon Orchid suffered from a mental illness and finished her days in a mental hospital.

In the last chapter, “A Song for a Barbarian Red Pipe,” Kingston describes her emotional experiences and struggles she felt originated in Chinese family in America during her childhood, she narrates the torture of creating a personal identity, and a voice to show herself to both her parents and society that cannot understand her. Kingston finishes the *Woman Warrior* with the legend of Ts’ ai Yen, an ancient Chinese poetess arrested by a non-Chinese tribe in which she lived between those for twelve years, but could never fully grasp their culture.

Thus, Kingston said indirectly that her mother is like Ts’ ai Yen in that, Brave Orchid pining to return to her Chinese village, she also hints that she sees herself as a foreigner in America, caught among her parents ‘Chinese traditions and American culture that focuses on individuality. Her memoir is similar to the healing song of Ts’ ai Yen, which the barbarians do not understand.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup>Gary Carey and James L. Roberts, (Eds), *CliffsNotes™ The Woman Warrior*, p. 10-11.

# **Chapter Two:**

**The Process of Shaping Identity in Maxine Hong  
Kingston's The Woman Warrior**

## 1. Ghost's Language and the Recreation of Identity

Kingston's *the Woman Warrior* starts with the story "No Name Woman", the narrator's aunt who has become pregnant during starvation time, gave birth to a daughter ...It was a waste enough (6). Moreover, the narrator notices that adultery, perhaps only mistake in good times, becomes a crime when villagers need food (13). In order to No Name Aunt is punished for -action as if she can have a private life, secretly and apart from them and to create a break in the "depth" of the community, the villagers attack house of the family. After leaving, the family cursed the aunt: "*Aiaa, the death is coming. Look what you have done. You've killed us. Ghost! Dead ghost! A ghost! You have never been born.*"(13-14). Here the term "ghost" is used to denote shame and exclusion.

In the end of the narrative, the Aunt commits suicide by throwing herself and the child in well and becomes a real ghost, wandering alone to infinity with any family member ready to remember or worship her. Put a stain on family history, Kingston's aunt is consciously forgotten and silenced. Jennifer Griffiths claims that the aunt's story is like a "*pedagogy of shame*,"<sup>90</sup> that "*instructs young girls to learn about the inherent danger and corruption of their bodies.*"<sup>91</sup>(Griffith 356). As such, the ghost of the no name aunt represents the repression of femininity in a patriarchal society in general and more specifically, the persecution of Chinese American women in the United States.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Sandra Lee Bartkly, *The Pedagogy of Shame. Feminisms and Pedagogies of Everyday Life. Ed.*, (Carmen Luke. London: Routledge, 1996), p. 225.

<sup>91</sup> Griffiths Jennifer Griffiths, "Uncanny Spaces: Trauma, Cultural Memory, and the Female Body in Gayl Jones's *Corregidora* and Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* Studies in the Novel Vol. 38, No.3 (2006): p. 356.

<sup>92</sup> Chia-Sui Lee, "GHOST'S LANGUAGE AND THE RECREATION OF IDENTITY IN TONI MORRISON'S *BELOVED*, MAXINE HONG KINGSTON'S *THE WOMAN WARRIOR* AND JOY KOGAWA'S *OBASAN*," *New Academia: An International Journal of English Language, Literature and Literary Theory* Vol. IV, No. I (Jan, 2015): pp. 138-139.

Moreover, Cheung argues that words can be liberated, but they can be distorted, wound, and while the silence may erase, it can also serve and calms and communicates.<sup>93</sup> Her statement complicates the idea of contradiction between silence and speech. It means that silence is not just an absence of speech; it is a productive means of communication. Isabel Hoving, explores both negative and positive meanings of silence and argues that silence can be considered "*as the inability to make an authoritative use of dominant or even non-dominant discourses,*" or as "*an inarticulated blabbering and madness,*" as well as "*an instrument to find a new voice.*"<sup>94</sup>

In *the Woman Warrior*, by creating loopholes in the closed-door family novels, the Ghost hero of the novel conveys his repeated and strange effects on the hero on the protagonist. It is a paradoxical position. Since no woman's name bears untold and shameful history, family made efforts to block her story. Brave Orchid didn't not only prohibited Maxine's to mention the aunt's name, but also blocked most of the story. However, as much as the family tries to contain the story of the aunt through deprivation, her charms ghost appears in the composition of the transferred novels. Her silence creates ambiguity and holes in the discourse of hegemony, and encourages the protagonist to question the fixed accounts and create new versions of the story." *This haunting silence is precisely what gives wings to the niece's imagination, allowing Maxine to test her own power to talk story and to play with different identities*"<sup>95</sup>. Haunted by the absence of truth, Maxine feels the urgency of perform a morning ritual by rewriting the story of her aunt, and assign" pages of paper to her."(16). Through creating new memories of her aunt, she break the family secret surrounding the disgraceful past and giving voices to women who have been excluded from the prevailing

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<sup>93</sup>Cheung King-kok Cheung, *Articulate Silence: Hisaya Yamamoto, Maxine Hong Kingston, Joy Kogawa*(New York: Cornell UP, 1993), p. 128.

<sup>94</sup>Isabel Hoving, *In Praise of New Travelers: Reading Caribbean Migrant Woman Writers* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2001), p. 23.

<sup>95</sup>Cheung King-kok Cheung, *Articulate Silence: Hisaya Yamamoto, Maxine Hong Kingston, Joy Kogawa*, p. 85.

novels. Being a woman is no longer shameful. Her new version of the story challenges patriarchal and sexual discourses, and calls it a burden Woman's body.

In fact, Maxine recreates her identity by creating a relationship with the ghost of her aunt. In her revised account of the no name aunt story, she imagines the aunt as a revenge ghost and reinstates the activity of "aunt as a forerunner"<sup>96</sup>. She says, "*She (aunt) was a spite suicide, drowning herself in drinking water. The Chinese are always very frightened of the drowned one, whose weeping ghost... waits silently by the water to pull down a substitute.*"(16). By taking the nature of the rebellious ghosts as an inheritance, she has the ability to challenge the limitations of mainstream novels and create a new identity "*a new Chinese American tradition,*" that negotiates two contrasting cultures."<sup>97</sup>

By re-interpretation of the Chinese myth of Ts' ai Yen in the closing story of the "A song for a Barbarian Red Pipe", the author, represents a new language that is open to ethnic harmony. She made it clear that during exile, Ts' ai Yen invents a song that connects her native language and Barbarian music to her children:

*Then, out of Ts'ai Yen tent ... the barbarians heard a woman's voice singing, as if to her babies, a song so high and clear, it matched the flutes...Her words seemed to be Chinese, but the barbarians understood their sadness and anger... She brought her songs back from the savage lands, and one of the three that has been passed down to us is "Eighteen Stanzas for a Barbarian Reed Pipe," a song that Chinese sing to their own instruments. It translated well." (209)*

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<sup>96</sup> Kathleen Borgan, *Cultural Haunting: Ghosts and Ethnicity in Recent American Literature* (Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 1998), p. 138.

<sup>97</sup> Cheung King-kok Cheung, *Articulate Silence: Hisaya Yamamoto, Maxine Hong Kingston, Joy Kogawa*, p. 85.

The song of Ts'ai Yen is a kind of translation between two cultures, an embodiment of the past and the present, ancestral roots and foreign culture. The song refers to the possibility of overriding ghosts silence and reconstruction of societal and cross-cultural identity. As the narrator says, "Here it is a story my mother told me, not when I was young, but recently, when I told her I also talk a story. The beginning is hers, the ending is mine." (206) The novel begins with Brave Orchid's story about a "no name woman" silenced by the family, ending with the story Ts' ai Yen, that, instead of being nameless, "achieves her mortal fame by singing about her exile." <sup>98</sup>

Using her story as a revised story to coincide with her mother, Maxine reaches a symbolic return to her community and re-invents her bi-cultural identity. She says: "*The swordswoman and I are not so dissimilar. May my people understand the resemblance soon so that I can return to them. What we have in common are the words at our backs.*" (53). Take her words and stories that connect her bicultural resources as a weapon, she simulates the legendary swordsman and rebuilds the "*composite self.*" <sup>99</sup>. In short, the silence of the strange ghost does not only serve as her source of imagination, but also leads to a new strategy of narrative that pushes her for a new re-creation of collective identity of Asian American Women. <sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Cheung King-kok Cheung, *Articulate Silence: Hisaya Yamamoto, Maxine Hong Kingston*, p. 95.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p.100.

<sup>100</sup> Chia-Sui Lee, "GHOST'S LANGUAGE AND THE RECREATION OF IDENTITY IN TONIMORRISON'S *BELOVED*, MAXINE HONG KINGSTON'S *THE WOMAN WARRIOR* AND JOY KOGAWA'S *OBASAN*", pp. 144-145.

## 2. The Question of Identity and Innovation of Selfhood

Kingston's first book, *the Woman Warrior*, represents a necessary step in the process of identifying a marginalized and silenced Chinese American identity, and in the seek to legitimize a very popular Asian-American writing's tradition.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, Kingston's "wobbly" memoirs also introduces her immature childhood; that is, by encroachment. The text opens with a violation: "You should not tell anyone," my mother said, "what I want to tell you. (3). In the five sections that make up *the Woman Warrior*, Kingston makes a voice for many "ghosts" and tells - that is, reinventing - the stories she heard or experienced during her childhood. At the heart of every novel, there is a different "ghost" of a woman.<sup>102</sup>

First, The No Name Woman, whom the family punished by forgetting, pursued Maxine; then the legendary warrior Fa Mo Lan, who took the place of her father in the war to save her village. Following the ghost of a woman who suffered and died in silence, this ghost of a strong woman has not subsided in the hope that her revenge will be in the virtual future. This opposing pair finds itself repeated many times in the text to reflect on a gradually smaller scale, the inner struggles of Maxine, her "separate "identity and voice: another aunt, Moon Orchid, the weak, appears in sharp contrast to Maxine's mother Brave Orchid. A quiet Chinese classmate, a crying baby with a "China doll hair cut" (201-2), and a silent reincarnation into the "No Name Woman" turns into Maxine's alternative style.

In fact, Kingston's breaking of silence is a temporary, but ongoing exploration about a question she doesn't have a simple answer to, she will be allowed to present herself as an adult and make her Childhood into something "fixed":

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<sup>101</sup> Cristina Bacchilega, "Feminine voices inscribing Sarraute's Childhood and Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*," *Textual Practice* Vol. 6, No. 1, (1992), p. 101.

<sup>102</sup> Cristina Bacchilega, "Feminine voices inscribing Sarraute's Childhood and Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*," p. 103.

*“Chinese-Americans, when you try to understand how things in you are Chinese, how do you separate what is peculiar to childhood, to poverty, insanities, one family, your mother who marked your growing with stories, from what is Chinese? What is Chinese tradition and what is the movies?”(6)*

This exploration only leads to more questions: *“I continue to sort out what's just my childhood, just my imagination, just my family, just the village, just movies, just living.”(239)*, Kingston point out at the end of her memoirs: *“My mother has given me pictures to dream nightmare- babies that recur.”* (101), in those nightmares, though Kingston's care, the “dream baby” dies. In order to make it live, she have to break violently open the “impossible stories” with that our parents “stuff our heads like suitcases which they jam-pack with home-made underwear.” (102). those stories, pushed back into dreams, speak the rule of silence; tell 'not to tell'. Out of the hole that Kingston makes in silence, that continues to kill "No Name Woman" and her child is a group of gray, swollen ghosts - women and children - who continue to feminize her femininity and childhood and whom Kingston refuses to continue killing, to keep “deliberately forgetting”(18).

Moreover, Kingston's autobiographical fiction is rediscovering and reevaluating, both in thematic and digressive levels, the priority of the mother/daughter relationship in the writers' identity shaping. Thus, Maxine goes through a similar and disturbing process during her childhood in China and America in California. She finds certain words “troublesome”<sup>103</sup>:

*I could not understand T. The Chinese T has seven strokes, intricacies. How could the American T, assuredly wearing a hat like the Chinese, have only three strokes, the middle so straight? Was it out of politeness? That this writer left off strokes the way a Chinese has to write her own name small and crooked? No, it was not politeness; 'T' is a*

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<sup>103</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

*capital and 'you' is lower-case. I stared at the middle line and waited so long for its black center to resolve into tight strokes and dots that I forgot to pronounce it.(193).*

It seems that the struggle in which the young girl finds her silencing "T" is more strict culturally, but we discover that in both ethnic contexts it is erased twice, "buried" in silence because of sex "*There is a Chinese word for the female I — which is "slave". Break the women with their own tongues*" (56), Kingston's cognitive commentary, that does not contradict the Chinese customs of female murder and slavery she heard about, finds further confirmation of the insults her third uncle cries on the table, referring to the young girls "*Eat, maggots*", he said, "*Look at the maggots chew.*" (223). Her identity is equally shaky in the American context, Maxine finds herself forced to 'invent' an 'American-feminine speaking personality, "*And all the time I was having to turn myself American-feminine, or no dates,*" (56), only to be more silenced: "*Normal Chinese women's voices are strong and bossy. We American-Chinese girls had to whisper to make ourselves American-feminine. Apparently we whispered even more softly than the Americans.*"(200). In both worlds, the feminine I speak "in an inaudible voice" (13).<sup>104</sup>

Through this recognition, Kingston is rebuilding a woman, fighting customs, silenced by her culture and, as a result, creating her own voice and identity "*My aunt haunts me-her ghost drawn to me because now, after fifty years of neglect...I alone devote pages of paper to her*" (19). This haunting of Kingston by a no name aunt can be seen from this ancestral multiplier. So, she reveal gender-based criteria for filling a position in the cultural memory between soldiers and women like her aunt: Mao encouraged gifts "*the spirits of outstanding soldiers and workers, no matter whose ancestors they may be*" (19), but her "*aunt remains forever hungry*" if not for Kingston's reclamation of her life and memory (19)<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup>Ibid., p.106.

<sup>105</sup> Ruth Y. Jenkins, "Authorizing Female Voice and Experience: Ghosts and Spirits in Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and Allende's *The House of the Spirits*," *MELUS* Vol. 19, No. 3, (Autumn, 1994), p. 65.

### 3. The Role of Memory in Shaping Identity

Kingston's memoirs illustrates how the historical situation involves the building of a new identity in the nation to which she migrated, and a multiplex relationship with the political and cultural history of the nation she left. In this work, she has revealed how gender, memory and identity are related to dialogue, and how gender and race identities can be affected by personal memory, family memory and ethnic collective memory.

In her autobiography, Kingston rewrites the collective memories of Chinese expatriates and the official memories of the nation-state to restore the post-colonial voice and feminist space. Her writing unveils that women often work as references to generations' memories or collective culture through storytelling. She also contends that women's memories, such as the collective memories of the national state and the ethnic society, are not homogenous, and thus may become sites of power struggle over the fact that women themselves claim, in this case, between mother issuing and daughter inventing stories. Memory always enters into dialogue with the past by suppressing the past to a reflective consciousness and revealing the difference of the past from the present. Memory also exists in relation to language, symbols, events, and social and cultural contexts.

In *the Woman Warrior*, Kingston publishes stories of memory as a mirror to show her identity as a Chinese woman from the second-generation diaspora, as well as rewriting and diversifying US national memories. Kingston holds the concepts of identity building as narrator struggles to find meaning in the minimal spaces between gender and transnational identity.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>106</sup>Milon Franz, "Encountering the Gendered Transnational Identity: A Study of *The Woman Warrior*:Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts,"*International Journal of English and Language, Literature and Humanities* Vol. III, No. VII,(September, 2015), p. 72.

The work focuses on developing an identity in which race and sex play pivotal roles. As the daughter of migrant immigrant parents, her cultural community has been pushed to the margins of society because of their differences in language, customs and appearances. Expatriates build racial, gender and opposition identities, and awareness in the diaspora has a sense of loss and hope as a specific tension. Besides, the identity of Chinese women is particularly indicative of the transnational feminism that criticizes the persecution of gender in China and the Chinese diaspora. The identity of the second generation Chinese American women in the diaspora becomes more complicated, difficult to be constructed and imagined, and slides between identification and mis-identification.

More importantly, Kingston participates in the introduction of the genre “talk-story” into ethnic literature in America; this genre is linked to the local oral traditions of Hawaii where she lived in mid 60s and 70s. Wendy Ho explains that “talk-story” is a pidgin expression designating a “*social or communal oral exchange in which people gather to ‘chew the fat’ or ‘shoot the breeze’ with friends and family*” (28)<sup>107</sup>. In this memoir Kingston “*retells traditional oral stories and/or invents subversive stories to account for the varying social, economic, cultural, and historical circumstances of Chinese women, families and communities in the United States*” (28). But, this fictional autobiography becomes a mental representation of an incomprehensible memory, an emotional misinterpretation of patriarchal type of legends, an emotional misunderstanding of a patriarchal type of woman—a feminist re-appropriation of these legends and legends, a cultural review and a technical distortion of Chinese sources. By recounting these stories, through a process of turbulence and rebirth, the author makes her past usable and understandable to the contemporary American presence, thus creating its American-Chinese identity. But, also shapes a Chinese American literary tradition of detecting the risk of loss and erasure in the process of social infringement.

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<sup>107</sup> Ho, Wendy, *In Her Mother's House: The Politics of Asian-American Mother-Daughter Writing*, (California: AltaMira Press, 1999).

*The Woman Warrior* is composed of five short prose novels that tell the story of the emergence of a second-generation Chinese girl whose name was not mentioned but who represents the author. Kingston explores how the self intersects with ethnic and gender identity within specific geographic and family areas.<sup>108</sup> “*You must not tell anyone what I am about to tell you. In China your father had a sister who killed herself. She jumped into the family well. We say that your father has all brothers because it is as if she had never been born*” (3) the book starts with Maxine’s mother warning her daughter of patriarchal punishment for any kind of gender and sexual transgression. The mother warned Maxine: “*Don’t let your father know that I told you. He denies her. Now that you have started to menstruate, what happened to her could happen to you. Don’t humiliate us. You wouldn’t like to be forgotten as if you had never been born. The villagers are watchful*” (5)

Maxine inherits the post-traumatic memory of her unnamed nation through the stories of her mother. This story is testimony to the power of patriarchal erasure in history - denial of women's sexuality and existence. If a woman goes beyond traditional roles and sexual and sexual norms, she will be punished by surveying her name, body, personality, history and descent from the father. In addition, Maxine's mother acts in contradiction; she reclaims the forgotten memory of the No Name Woman, yet she also promotes parental silencing by warning her daughter not to recapitulate the story or act of female resistance to subjugation. Kingston assimilates that talk stories, like her mother's educational and moral stories, is affected by invention, contradiction, motivation, prejudice, personal and family memory. Through telling the story of No Name Aunt, Kingston also indicates the fact that the wives of overseas Chinese immigrants to America often marry or have relationships that creates a

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<sup>108</sup>Milon Franz, “Encountering the Gendered Transnational Identity: A Study of *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts*,” *International Journal of English and Language, Literature and Humanities* Vol. III, No. VII, p. 73.

threat to patriarchal families that are strategically following male migration as a form of social and economic family maintenance and progress.<sup>109</sup>

*The Woman Warrior* generates tension, writing memory as both archaeological fossils and as a continuous revision or recapitulation. The former form of memory relates to the return (whether physical, cultural or psychological), to the cultural heritage, the past, the home, the mother's archive of stories, the grandparents, the caliphs, and the personal or family history of wrestling with "truth." The latter is about rewriting, revising and reinventing new versions of family, diaspora, sectarian and national memories to identify and then a Chinese generation of diaspora is being constructed.

By telling the story of a "No Name Woman," Kingston could imagine her aunt as an agency woman, which her suicide or death speaks of a silent history within a family and of gender illegality in China and the Chinese diaspora. Kingston provides her aunt with an autobiography and in her death mourning; Kingston gives her aunt a second proper burial. After moving from a family story to a well-known legend, Kingston tells the story of the legendary swordsman Fa Mo Lan (Hua Mulan) in the chapter titled "White Tigers."

Within Chinese kinship, women are devalued from her father and immigrant villagers. Maxine usually hears Chinese Confucian rule that girls are parasites and stalkers from their families: "*Feeding girls is feeding cowbirds*" or "*There is no profit in raising girls. Better to rise geese than girls*"(46). The narrator recalls: "*There is a Chinese word for female I - which is slave - bream Women with their own tongues.*" (47). At one point, she regrets: "*Even now China wraps around my feet*"(48).

Relational, structural and symbolic patriarchalism continues to spread in China and in the Chinese diaspora. If Chinese social standards long for Maxine to "*grow up a wife and slave*", Fa Mu Lan, a gift from her mother, has the "ability to remind" the narrator that she

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<sup>109</sup>Milon Franz, "Encountering the Gendered Transnational Identity: A Study of the Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts," p. 74.

will become "a warrior woman." (20) It is through talk stories of women, Maxine and other girls learn about sexual discrimination and women's resistance.<sup>110</sup>

Kingston, when telling stories and memories of No Name Woman (from her mother version), and Fa Mu Lan (from The Ballad of Mulan and her mother's recent story), she imagines the inner life, emotions, fears, and desires of the two women. The story of a "no name woman" discloses that women's memories can become scenes of power struggles over claims of truth among women themselves, in this case, between the mother's copy and the daughter's creation of the story.

Fa Mu Lan's story manifests that ethnic collective memory transmitted by cultural legends, can be used to declare ethnic and sexual identities. For example, Maxine coincides with Fa Mu Lan in order to demand the heroic American-female role as a woman warrior. However, Kingston's memoirs reveal that ethnic collective memory as it exists in cultural legends or legends must not be transmitted as it is, in its "native" form. For example, she participated in part of the legend YuehFei, the general who engraved the words on his back, and integrated them into her version of Fa Mu Lan. Kingston purposely takes parts of Chinese cultural texts and traditions - such as the stories of Maulan, Yue and the poetess Tai Yin - to restore and invent the novel.

Thus, White Tiger novels and "No Name Woman" embody how Kingston invokes memory as an archaeological dig, constant review, translation and eventual recapitulation to understand the Chinese-American female self.<sup>111</sup>

In the third chapter entitled "Shaman", the mother of Kingston Brave Orchid decided to preserve her name instead of taking her husband after marriage. The ability to name herself, to have her independent identity is further emphasized when arriving in America; Brave Orchid maintains her own name instead of alienating it. By using her gift for talk stories, Kingston

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<sup>110</sup>Ibid., P. 75.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

fights many paradoxes in her life with words instead of the sword. "Shaman" considered as the most pivotal chapter of the novel, because it includes Brave Orchid's personal history, how she got a medical degree from midwifery in China, then migrated to America to join her husband, and raised her children born in America. Thus, the title of the chapter, a commendation to Brave Orchid, refers to the person who acts as an intermediary between the physical and spiritual worlds that usually has healing powers. Brave Orchid is a shaman expelling ghosts, both in the Chinese Midwifery School and in Stockton, California

The next chapter, "At the Western Palace" is listed in the third person and has the moral of Brave Orchid herself and all of her daughters. The chapter focuses on Moon Orchid, the narrator aunt, a silent woman who does not express her wishes and does not demand anything from her husband who "*made her live like a widow*" throughout her life.(178), for, she waited silently without even questioning her new husband's life or trying to change her life. Moon Orchid, who comes to America as an old woman, was unable to acquire her new "home" and control her challenges. She comes to the "Western Palace" but cannot stay there; she cannot replace her former identity as a waiter wife with new authentic new identity. Even though, the "Western Palace" seems a less interesting story to talk about than previous sections, Kingston was enhanced by recalling the battle of Moon Orchid for American absorption.

In the last episode, "A song for A Barbarian Ride Pipe ", Kingston talks further about the difficulties she has encountered as a Chinese-American woman. This chapter links the previously submitted topics of women's silence and helplessness to the voices and strength of women and brings them back to the house where they deal with the silence of Chinese girls growing up in America. The biggest challenge was to learn how to speak English to non-Chinese, while struggling to counter traditional Chinese culture, represented by her mother, that preventing her efforts to fully integrate into American culture.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>112</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

In addition, Kingston was looking for an average location where both cultures can live; while doing so, she invents a new mixed identity between them. Similar to the Knot-maker who had long been in China, she continued to create a complex intricate even after the emperor had banned its manufacture, Kingston was testing the borders her mother, her Chinese and American culture had set up to manipulate her every thought and action. As a result, Kingston realizes that gender, identity and memory are open to dialogue and that gender and ethnic identities can be affected by personal memory, so she tries to rewrite and sabotage both the collective memories of Chinese expatriates in America and the official memories of the nation-state to demand sexual space, identity and post-colonial feminist voice. During this process, Kingston claims that women are the transmitters of generational, cultural or collective memories through stories of everyday.

Kingston tempts to rewrite the memory of the diaspora in China by challenging its nationality and official memory of the United States by referring to its history of gender inequality, racism and the East. She uses memory as a device to challenge and destroy traditional gender ideology; in addition to relationship between memory and storytelling. The writer recognizes also that the process of restoring, and transmitting personal, family and ethnic memories is always divided, negotiated and fruitful, thus, she destabilizes the structures of identity and the formation of society with the production of knowledge.

In *the Woman Warrior*, the warrior Kingston declares that identity is not rational but broken and destabilizing in a conflict in which different memories try to undermine identity with clear gaps and uncertainties. Though, memory, because of its control and contradiction, also provides space and creative freedom to the author, Kingston to play her identity and reissue it in these memoire.

Additionally, by appealing the innovation of memory and biography, Kingston is able to raise knowledge questions about history, cultural production, experience, truth and

psychology, memory, identity, historical narratives, and the production of knowledge are among fictional, realistic and unrealistic stories. Kingston also sees herself influenced by many external powers: the ideology of race, class and sex, American and Chinese cultural knowledge, Social structures, institutions, laws and policies. She explores the pursuit of a unique and special self, a female and her growth experience is Chinese and American.

Kingston caught between two cultures must negotiate the contradictions between her worlds before discovering and distinguishing her individual cultural uniqueness and others in order to find her. Kingston and her hero Maxine's quest for identity actually happens on three levels: nationality, sex, and gender. She had to comfort her otherness first as a woman in patriarchal society; secondly as a member of an ethnic minority in America; and finally as an American speaking English in a "real" Chinese family. Just only through deep confrontation, recognition and validation at all three levels that she discovered her true individuality and her relationship with the community, family and their status.<sup>113</sup>

#### **4. The Woman Warrior and its Discursive Community**

*The Woman Warrior* begins with narrator Maxine telling her mother's wary story about her unnamed aunt. This attempt to recount the story of the no name woman, or to reinterpret it correctly, is Maxine's intention to get out of her collusion with her mother's enforced silence, a conspiracy that lasted twenty years. What makes Maxine feel the need to break the silence? What makes silence suddenly unbearable to her? Before she understands that she has to speak, her silence gives her an emotional peace and a sign of stability. "I enjoyed the silence. At first it did not occur to me i was supposed to talk ... It was when I found out I had to talk that school became a misery, that silence became a misery" (166), Maxine tells her readers.

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<sup>113</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

Furthermore, silence becomes debatable when one sees through the illusion obtained in return for the grant, which can only be made when something strange is introduced in someone's living world has to change his perspective on things. It is because of the new demand from school enables Maxine to see her wrong enjoyment in silence before it. Similarly, she could no longer participate in the silence of her mother when she learned to see things in different ways from her mother. Instead of accepting the No Name Aunt's story for cautionary use, Maxine reads it into different "types" and thus leads to skepticism about caution value of this story. In fact, Kingston's biggest participation in the "No Name Woman" chapter is changing her silence into a "voice." When "silence" is at the end of the story, the "sound" explores the paradoxes within story by detecting innate incompleteness. Therefore, the prevailing dominant economy revolves around silence. The story of a taboo about No Name Woman is particularly strong because people silently circulate it. While everyone knows secretly and they believe they understand the story without staring at its origin or possible ways to interpret it, the story serves as a fantastic center for the village community.

Even though, the villagers intend to keep the aunt away from oblivion, the creation as well as the secret silent recollection made the villagers together. Although, the fact that in appearance, the aunt was punished because she broke the "roundness" of the community of her village (13), and perhaps it would be more correct to say that the "roundness" of society was more conceivable after the violation of the law scapegoat was chosen. As Maxine speculates, her aunt may have been severely punished if the incident had not occurred at a time when her village community was in danger of disorder, that caused by wars, famine and floods, especially from the departure of most of the men of the village to work abroad. It suggests that "[a] adultery, perhaps only a mistake in good times, became a crime when the village needed food." (13) While that following her mother's interpretation of the behavior of

a No Name Woman aunt as presenting the community of her village to a crisis, Maxine points out that the punishment was great because of the villagers' crisis.

Hence, the "use value" of the no name woman's story is understandable. Then why does Brave Orchid need to recount this story when she is no longer in China? As Maxine told us, Brave Orchid is very concerned with the symbol of necessity, she tells only the "useful parts" of the story, "she will not add anything unless it is supported by necessity, a river bank that directs its life" (6). So what is the "use value" or the story of No Name Woman? Why should she like a Chinese "traditional" story in educating her daughter, who was brought up in America and did not go to China?

It is useful to answer these questions in reference to the status of Brave Orchid as a Chinese immigrant in America. Before her husband sent her, Brave Orchid was a doctor, a pregnant woman according to Maxine, a "modem" (76) and a "professional."(77) In fact, Brave Orchid, without doubt was a conservative woman in the village when she was in China. If compared to most women of her age, she was famous for her adventurous spirit and unconventional thinking, that her thinking was acceptable, even favorable, in her society in China, not because she is the "real" or the right / objective, but because she has always been able to "talk" to others in her fantasy. A "*capable exorcist*" (92), which can expel whatever is contrary to her thinking out of her living economy, just as she once spoke about the Setting Ghost "*out of existence*" <sup>114</sup>. Though, after her arrival in America, her authorized role as "Shaman" is at stake. As a woman and an immigrant minority in society, she transforms from a respected doctor into a laundry, when Brave Orchid cannot integrate new ideas and new ways to talk / do things in her living economy, she can only hide her own loss of self-esteem, to recount the warning stories and impose silence on her American daughter.

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<sup>114</sup> Gayle K. Fujita Sato, *The Woman Warrior as a Search for Ghosts. Approaches to Teaching Kingston's The Woman Warrior* (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1991), p. 141.

Consequently, when Brave Orchid asks Maxine not to tell anyone that she has an aunt (15), she tries to share her daughter in her economy and thus strengthen her authority, perhaps not only for her daughter but for her immigrant status in general. First, as a story, she confirmed her position of knowledge; moreover, determined not to leak "voice" of her story, confirm her scenario. In fact, the secret of No Name Woman is not the only secret attempt of Brave Orchid to protect against detection.<sup>115</sup> The world of narrator Maxine is filled with the secrets of immigrants that her parents warns her about revealed to the Americans ironically, she will never know what she will tell her , even if she wants to, because she is never told what these exactly secrets are. (183). The benefit of these secrets lies not in any substance that conceals - if any - but in its content official power serves as a secret to promote Chinese society. For Chinese immigrants, the secrets are that there must be something fundamental behind the Chinese ethnic label, thus raising the Chinese to a "real" situation where Americans are turned into "ghosts." Unable to achieve self-esteem in America, Brave Orchid explains her failure to turn everything American into "ghosts": "*This is a terrible ghost country, where a human being works her life away from.*"(104) Failing to exert control over her children, she accuses her "American children" of being like "ghosts" who have no "*feelings and memory*" (115), and of not being smart enough to "*tell real from false*" (202). At the same time, she projects the "real" onto the life in China: "*Someday, very soon, we're going back home, where there are Han people everywhere. We'll buy furniture then, real tables and chairs. You children will smell flowers for the first time.*"(98)

Ironically, Brave Orchid never makes plans to return to China. As Maxine said, "*My grandmother wrote letters pleading for them [her parents] to come home, and they ignored her.*"(108) The creation of evil secrets and gestures against American "ghosts" as well as the "real" expectations of life in China reflect only the need for self-affirmation of Brave Orchid -

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<sup>115</sup>Lee Hsiu-chuan, "Genre-Crossing: Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and Its Discursive Community," p.91.

her own negotiations with migrant living conditions are hostile. Moving the story of a no name woman from the villagers to Brave Orchid is an example of the shift of "use value" to the story. Actually, Brave Orchid is the story's specialty for personal use; she maintains an imaginary relationship with the story that differs from the relationship between the Chinese villagers and the original story. This shift in "use value" can be understood as employing Brave Orchid for a different kind of look at the same story. Enter their personal needs / experiences in the story, opens the original reading and makes the story important in terms of immigrant status. <sup>116</sup>

As previously stated, Maxine's focus on "use-value "is clear when she talks about her No Name Aunt's story: "*Unless I see her life branching into mine, she gives me no ancestral help*"(8). The release of the Brave Orchid version of the story provides Maxine with an empty space in which she writes down her problems, concerns and desires. Her focus on the gender issue in the story reflects her personal attention to the prevailing sex discrimination in her world of living. Her preoccupation with images of "silence" refers to the horror of her childhood of not being able to speak, a narrative narrated at the end of the book.<sup>117</sup> Her child despite the social consequences and attempt to cross "*boundaries not delineated in space*" (8) - reveals Maxine's desire to become a progressive heroine in violation of the law.

Finally, the aunt's tale reminds us of her community and Maxine's fear of her unwillingness by her family and society. In addition, the misreading of the stories of Fa Mo Lan and Tsai Yen also reveal Maxine's attempt to link the story to her problems. A mix of YueFei's story, the famous hero whose mother inserts words on his back with the story of Fa Mu Lan highlights Maxine's preoccupation with the power of words. Her focus on "cross-border gender risks", as well as her assertion of the femininity of Fa Mu Lan, which she

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<sup>116</sup>Ibid., p.92.

<sup>117</sup> This is obvious in the "*torturing scene*" at the beginning of "*A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe*," in which Maxine forces another silent Chinese girl (her double) to talk. Maxine spells out her own anxiety of not being able to talk when she tells her victim: "*If you don't talk, you can't have a personality*"(180).

highlights by giving her lover and having her baby in battle, is once again due to her interest in marginalized sex. In the story of Tsai Yen, Maxine re-writes the importance of the return of Tsai Yen.<sup>118</sup> to China, in the historical story, salvation is recovered from Tsai Yen when she is returned to China, that is when she is released from her detention in Berber land. However, in the narrator's version of this story, Ts'ai Yen's, "*moment of glory or validation occurs*" when she "*breaks out of silence into songs.*"<sup>119</sup> A song that blocks the communication's gap between the barbaric and the Chinese. Twisting the historical story to its own advantage, Maxine draws the attention of her readers to the artistic function of communicating and verifying her position as a novel by bridging the gap between her Chinese mother and her American life. Here, despite the conflict between mother and daughter in *the Woman Warrior*, Maxine's focus on the "use value" of storytelling makes her a follower of the necessary Brave Orchid code. If Brave Orchid Shaman is capable of drawing a strict line between reality and the world of "ghosts" and never allowing "ghosts" to get caught up in her real world, Maxine must find in her mother a model for expelling evil spirits.

Actually, much of the *Woman Warrior* is devoted to Maxine's quest for certainty. She repeatedly reminds herself that her mother's stories aim to "test" her strength to establish realities."<sup>120</sup> She never ceases to question what is real and what is make-up: "*I continue to sort out what is just my childhood, just my imagination, just my family, just the village, just movies, just living*" (205). Moreover, when she grows up, she feels compelled to leave the house because she wants to see the world" logically ".She "*enjoy[s] the simplicity* " (204) after denying "ghosts", like anything incomprehensible, of her "waking" American life: "*To make my waking life American-normal, I turn on the lights before anything untoward makes*

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<sup>118</sup>Lee, Hsiu-chuan, "Genre-Crossing: Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and Its Discursive Community," p. 93.

<sup>119</sup>Sau-Hng Cynthia Wong, *Cultural and Historical Context. Approaches to Teaching Kingston's The Woman Warrior* (New York: The Modern Language Association, 1991), p. 34.

<sup>120</sup>This is obvious in the "*torturing scene*" at the beginning of "*A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe*," in which Maxine forces another silent Chinese girl (her double) to talk. Maxine spells out her own anxiety of not being able to talk when she tells her victim: "*If you don't talk, you can't have a personality*"(180).

*an appearance. I push the deformed into my dreams, which are in Chinese, the language of impossible stories.*"(87). While Brave Orchid defends herself by condemning everything beyond her will as "American," Maxine classifies everything outside her conceptual logic as "Chinese." Both are looking for excuses for failing to solve the paradoxes of their lives under the slogan "cultural binarism". Neither understands that their conflicts derive not only from the "Chinese" and "American" incompatibility, but from their different positions as subjects in history.<sup>121</sup>

Because of Brave Orchid and the partial position of the Maxine narrator, none of their attempts to establish an economic closure around their lives is doomed to failure. For Brave Orchid, the most obvious failure in her intervention is in her sister-Moon Orchid. In the section "In the Western Palace" Brave Orchid is trying to re-energize her old legend of "*The Four Emperor's Wives*."(150). She insists that Moon Orchid claim her right over her husband who had left her immediately after their marriage in China over thirty years ago, and settled down in America with a new wife. As expected, the whole "show" (150) organized by Brave Orchid to make Moon Orchid meet with her husband is a tragedy. The husband can not only take Moon Orchid home, but Moon Orchid has suffered from paranoia ever since.

Besides, Sau-Ling Wong points out rightly that Brave Orchid is in this case "self-contained" and "*utterly oblivious to her environment.*"<sup>122</sup> Hence, what demonstrates the limitation of her personal vision is her insistence on the correctness of her own reading of the myth/legend. Indeed, Brave Orchid is understandably absorbed in the myth of "the emperor's four wives." Moon Orchid's husband has left her behind and gone overseas; her situation reminds Brave Orchid of her own fearfulness, possibly not only before her husband sent for her from America, but even after she has joined him there. As Maxine observes, "*Brave*

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<sup>121</sup> Lee, Hsiu-chuan, "Genre-Crossing: Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and Its Discursive Community," p. 94.

<sup>122</sup>Sau-Hng Wong, *Cynthia Reading Asian American Literature: From Necessity to Extravagance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p.46.

*Orchid told her children they must help her keep their father from marrying another woman because she didn't think she could take it any better than her sister."*(160).

Brave Orchid's strive "to help" her sister is her worried about her marriage. After her mother, Maxine's appearance of the absolute appears more clearly in the "White Tigers" section. Marilyn Yalom suggests reading Fa Mo Lan's story as Maxine's "*wish fulfillment fantasy designed to counter the image of the victimized aunt*"(110). Whether Maxine takes Fa Mu Lan as her perfect example of warrior is still controversial; however, it is clear that Fa Mu Lan, described in her dream, has an absolute vision and an energizing force, two things Maxine wants in her waking life, hence, the legend begins by crossing Maxine from the symbolic world (95) to her mother's stories into a world of absolute dream. By focusing on the visual experience in this section, the unknown power of the old couple who adopt Maxine in her dream is reflected in the magical watering of one's eyes through which one can see the whole world.

As a matter of fact, Maxine's training is a warrior consisting of exercises that he learned to transcend the linguistic world, which means postponement to an ideological world of image stability. First, she must to create the ideographic words in her body. Later, the actions of albums, bats and tigers are supposed to be copied. After that, she was trained to see "*a dragon whole*" (29) although the dragon is just a creature of human imagination. She concludes her lesson when she is able to "*point at the sky and make a sword appear.*"(33) - an achievement that shows her ability to manipulate images in the world as she wishes.

Whereas, this dream vision is unattainable in the real life of Maxine, the author does not feel that the fairy tale of Fu Mo Lan to be reflected in the idealism. When asked why she did not put the "White Tigers" at the height of her book, Kingston refused the story to be a "*childish myth*" at the beginning of the book because "*it is not the climax*"<sup>123</sup> In fact, there are

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<sup>123</sup> Maxine Hong Kingston, *Cultural Mis-readings by American Reviewers. "Asian and Western Writers in Dialogue: New Cultural Identities*. Ed. Guy Amirthanayagam (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 57.

two reasons for Kingston's to hate the story of Fa Mu Lan; First, it represents a dream of totality while the sense of totality is an illusion. Achieving absolute vision is not only impossible, but looking for the absolute leads to intolerance of differences, which cannot be penetrated exorcism.

Second, Kingston does not like the image of "warrior". Her reaction to her relationship with Fa Mo Lan was "very negative": "*I don't feel that she's me. . . I wish I had not had a metaphor of a warrior person who uses weapons and goes to war.*"<sup>124</sup> This peaceful position is repeated in the commentator Maxine's commentator: "*I mustn't feel bad that I haven't done as well as the swordswoman did; after all, ... I dislike armies.*" (49). Additionally, Maxine says, "*[w]hat fighting and killing I have seen have not been glorious but slum grubby.... Fights are confusing as to who has won.*" [51] Behind all the fighting these is a desire (p. 96) to erase the alien, uncontrollable, the other. It is "confusing as to who has won" because it is always difficult to say whether one can really win the other or temporarily suppress the other and then risk the return of the other side.

Clearly, contrary to her vision of the dream, that Maxine's life is on the verge of fullness, frustration, and unbearable paradoxes. "*My American life is disappointment,*" (45) she told us after recounting Fa Mu Lan. Because of her weakness in her life as both a woman and an ethnic minority, Maxine strives to prove to her parents the benefit of raising girls and confirming their presence before their racist president. The conversation is important to her because she finds that only common thing between her and Fa Mu Lan is "the words" in their backs (53). However, while the lyrics of Fa Mo Lan were carved in her skin and attached to her body, and the words published by Maxine float, slide and subject to the readings of others. Her position is generally less. Always exploratory, her speaking, that affirm her objective position and guide them to the rule of the rhetorical society.

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<sup>124</sup> James R. Aubery, *Woman Warriors and Military Students.* "Approaches to Teaching Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* (New York: The Modern Language Association, 1991), p. 80.

This also explains why Maxine continues to speak. Maxine suffers from the anxiety of losing her voice: "*Insane people were the ones who couldn't explain themselves*" (186). "Moreover, once she opens her mouth and talks, it is hard for her to hold herself back." One of the most prominent examples can be found in the Maxine loop "telling list " Maxine puts a list of more than two hundred facts about her bad thinking and bad behavior to recognize the courage of Orchids to "*stop the pain in her throat.*"(197). Because, all she want to do is control their concerns and concerns through a regulatory list and spoken language.

However, when she begins to speak, the explosion list will quickly face the stunning appearance of Brave Orchid, "*The champion Talker*" (202). Maxine is creating her "telling list" to exaggerate her view of insecurity, but instead the list continues to develop and seems to need to talk more to restore her stability. This episode is gripping because it reminds us of the status of Kingston in real life. Through her deep involvement in the writing in the discursive community based on her book, Kingston could have to spend her time explaining, defending and rewriting the importance of her writings after *The Woman Warrior* publication.<sup>125</sup>

Thus, rewriting the importance of her writings after the publication of *The Woman Warrior*. Due to the fact that a voice leads to more voices, for Kingston, perhaps the only way to escape from the dialogue complications of the voice's world is to force the exile from her own uncertainty. For example, Fa Mo Lan, left her village to accept the private lessons of the mysterious old couple in order to obtain the supernatural power of the warrior. In the face of her husband's journey abroad and the death of her children, Brave Orchid decides to leave her family to become a legal midwife in medical school.

Likewise, Maxine should leave her mother as well as her Chinese community to live "*ghost-free.*"(108) here, negation means freedom from her position in the tension of

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<sup>125</sup> Lee, Hsiu-chuan, "Genre-Crossing: Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and Its Discursive Community," p. 97.

intransigence, as well as absorption in the current economic / conceptual / rhetorical system. That is to say, exile is to give up self-exploration in exchange for temporary illusory stability and integrity, through doing the same thing as the other's desire and manipulate it. If taken at the general level, they classify the person into a single fixed type rather than the invention of the individual type in reading / interpretation. Having no courage required to enter into a discursive society, characterized by this self-imposed exile features in the spirit of flight, and the abandonment of the agency of the individual.

Accordingly, although this type of escape, self-abandonment and self-abstention from society is a way to temporarily resolve one's sense of uncertainty, it is not defended in *The Woman Warrior*. In fact, exile can only be fruitful when it is followed by a return to society, that is, when a person who has returned from exile can bring something new to his or her original society or reshape it in one way or another. Charm Fa Mu Lan will not be counted if she couldn't take revenge from her family and community. After becoming a doctor, Brave Orchid was welcomed as a character expected to make a difference in her life.

Perhaps the most common example is Tsai Yen's story: During her twelve-year exile, she produced songs and poetry that served to bridge the gap in communication between barbarians and Chinese after returning to China. A similar achievement can be expected from narrator Maxine. The aim of her assuming American identity should not be to strengthen the faith of the Brave Orchid with cultural binarism.<sup>126</sup> Instead, it must be presenting a new way of looking at her Chinese descent. From a child who is afraid of the "*size of the world*." (99) and has to keep the continuous and incomprehensible of her perception, Maxine must learn how to make her mind great, "*As the universe is large, so that there is room for paradoxes*" (29).

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<sup>126</sup>Ibid., p. 98.

Moreover, Kingston developed a similar idea in an interview: " *I have learned that writing does not make ghosts go away. I wanted to record, to find words for, the "ghosts". . . They are not concrete; They are beautiful and powerful. But they do not have a solidity that we can pass around from one to another. I wanted to give them a substance that goes beyond me.*"<sup>127</sup>

The attempt to impose silence through writing and speaking, is always a losing fight, it is best to leave individual writings / stories open to different types of reading. Writing / speaking in this sense is not necessarily an emergency effort, one not only emphasizes himself / herself in the intervention of the rhetorical society but also constantly the ground for his/her readers / readers.

## 5. Silence as a Symbol of Female Victimization

As an Asian American feminist, Kingston does not only show the status of the Chinese-American community. As Cheung points out in "Don't tell': Imposed silence in *The Color Purple* and *The Woman Warrior*"<sup>128</sup>, "Women authors and feminist critics have been unusually vocal on the theme of silence" where silence is also used as an "artistic tool", as "imposed invisibility", and as the "reticence enjoyed upon women". *it is the same quotation* Moreover, the theme of silence extends deeper into the work of minority writers.

In fact, in *the Woman Warrior*, Kingston describes the silence of many female characters, from her No-name aunt, who is not mentioned by her family, to her aunt Moon Orchid, whom her husband neglected and has no voice in suffering. In addition, Kingston also describes the tragic life of many other Chinese women in Chinese culture. Silence then is

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<sup>127</sup> Paula Rabinowitz, "Eccentric Memories: A Conversation with Maxine Hong Kingston," *Michigan Quarterly Review* Vol. 26, No. 1, (1987): p. 178.

<sup>128</sup> King Kok Cheung, "Don't Tell': Imposed Silences in *The Color Purple* and *The Woman Warrior*." *PMLA* 103 (1988) pp, 162-174.

associated with the abuse of women, especially with prejudice against females in Chinese culture.

In *the Woman Warrior*, Kingston begins the narrative with the tragedy of No-name woman, an aunt from her father's side, which the family members have grossly forgotten as an insult. The tragic life of No-name woman begins in her marriage; she barely knew her husband before his marriage, because it is a "hurry-up wedding-just to make sure that every young man who went out on the road would responsibly come home" (11). Indeed, her family found her a husband, and her night is the first time she met him. Although she is lucky because he is her age and she is his first wife, she does not enjoy a happy family life. Her husband left for America shortly after marriage so much that she almost forgot what it looked like. Then have an affair, not because of lust, as stated by the narrator: "to be a woman...in starvation time was a waste enough. My aunt could not have been the lone romantic who gave up everything for sex." (14).

Despite the fact that Brave Orchid does not tell how to become the No-name woman aunt pregnant, Kingston invents several copies, one of which is that her aunt comes to adultery on her own initiative because her happiness is elusive after her husband's absence. Nevertheless, in a particular society, the virtue of women is above their lives, and adultery is forbidden. Therefore, the price of that is death and forgetfulness. Kingston supposes, "Some man had commanded her to lie with him and be his secret evil" (14). While, "the other man was not...much different from her husband. They both gave orders: she followed" (14). In the fantasy of Kingston, the aunt is forced to be silent again: "if you tell your family, I'll beat you, I'll kill you" (14). She has not another option but suffering. When her adultery is discovered because she cannot hide her pregnancy, villagers destroy the family's home as punishment for her. The No-name woman did not reveal the name of the man as revenge, but chose to protect her baby's father by her silence: "she kept the man's name to herself throughout her labour

and dying; she did not accuse him that he be punished with her. To save inseminator's name she gave silent birth" (18). That conduct obviously victimizes her. After giving birth in a pigsty, she kills herself and the child by drowning in the family well, though she "would protect this child as she had protected for its father" (21). Kingston writes that "carrying the baby to the well shows loving", because the mother knows that the kid will have no future: "It was probably a girl; there is some hope of forgiveness for boys" (21). Obviously she refers here to prejudice against females in traditional Chinese culture.

The tragedy of the No-name women is caused by the negative influence of traditional Chinese culture, and is the result of a certain period in history because she could not travel with her husband to the United States. Kingston declared clearly, "adultery, perhaps only a mistake during good times, became a crime when the village needed food" (19). Hence, Chinese women are always victims, regardless of whether they are guilty or not.

For more than 50 years, the family of Kingston has been trying to blot out the memory of the No-name woman, "as if she had never been born" (3). The mother of Kingston says again: "Don't let your father know that I told you. He denies her". Furthermore, it is used as a lesson for Little Kingston: "Now that you have started to menstruate, what happened to her could happen to you. Don't humiliate us. You wouldn't like to be forgotten as if you had never been born. *"The villagers are watchful"*(13). That behavior, on the one hand, is to preserve the reputation of Kingston's family among the Chinese- American society, as Kingston states, I have thought that my family, having settled among immigrants who had also been their neighbors in the ancestral land, needed to clean their name, and a wrong word would incite the kins people even here"( 22). Nevertheless, on the other hand, silence in life also involves a deeper meaning, the real and most cruel punishment of human being. Kingston recognized that only later after several years: "they want me to participate in her punishment.

And I have” (22). In fact, the real punishment was not the villagers' quick attack, but the family purposely forgot about her, because family was highly regarded in Chinese culture. As Cheung annotates, “to expunge her name, to delete the memory of her life, is perhaps the cruelest repudiation her kin could devise”<sup>129</sup>. In ancient China, No-name woman is a weak figure, unable to defend herself and her innocent child. Therefore, the helpless woman has only one way to protest – to die. Connolly affirms, “to die proudly when it is no longer possible to live proudly. Death of one’s own free choice, death at the proper time, with a clear head and joyfulness, consummated in the midst of children and witnesses; so that an actual leave taking is possible while he who is leaving is still there. From love of life one ought to desire to die freely, consciously, not accidentally, not suddenly overtaken...”<sup>130</sup> The death of the No-name woman is an insult under pressure, to keep herself integrated. Although silence represents her tragic life as a victim, her silence is also a speechless rebellion against a patriarchal community.

Another victim associated with silence is the aunt of Kingston, the sister of her mother, Moon Orchid. Moon Orchid travels from Hong Kong to America to look for her husband, who left China 30 years ago. Even though he is not a fully responsible husband, as “for thirty years she had been receiving money from him from America” (114), he has no intent of taking her to America, nor even having established a successful career as a doctor in there. On the other hand, Moon Orchid is silent: she has never uncovered her desire to come to the United States, as she “waited for him to suggest it, but he never did” (114). When her sister - Brave Orchid - brings Moon Orchid to see with her husband to claim her rights as a first wife, her husband refuses to recognize her because he is married and has a new family. He speaks English with his new wife, the white Americans are his patients, and as he says, “I’m living

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<sup>129</sup>King Kok Cheung, “‘Don’t Tell’: Imposed Silences in The Color Purple and The Woman Warrior.” p, 164.

<sup>130</sup>William E Connolly, *Identity /Differences: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, (1991), p. 164.

like an American” and he doubts Moon Orchid will “fit into an American household” (114). When they finally meet in the USA thirty years later, he greets her with cold interrogations ““what are you doing here?””, and asks her intention: ““what do you want?”” Moon Orchid shrank from his stare: “it silenced her crying” (138-139). Confronted with his stare, Moon Orchid does not accuse her husband and demands her rights as a wife; Moon Orchid can only “open and shut her mouth without any words coming out” (138). She does not dare to say a word or claim the right as a first wife when confronted with such a husband as that who has “made her a widow” (139). Moon Orchid chokes her cry, just as the child threatened to silence after doing his / her wrong. She becomes crazy in the end.

From the tragic lives of her two aunts, Kingston is aware that a woman is doomed to be victim if she is dependent. Only by making their destiny under their own control can they manage their rights and live in dignity. The No-name woman and Moon Orchid’s misfortunes consist of their blind obedience - they are unable to own themselves. Tracing the root, these tragedies are caused by sexual prejudice and loathing in Chinese culture. As Kingston writes: “Women in old China did not choose” (14). Women live in a patriarchal and hateful culture for women in a position to discriminate and be treated unfairly, as Kingston said, if anything happens or nothing happens, the blame is always on women. Although discrimination no longer exists in official documents, which always refers to men and women on an equal footing, the disregard of women remains in people's minds until today.

# **General Conclusion**

As the thesis shows, *The Woman Warrior* is a quest of identity, and confirms that the construction of identity is a complex process, affected by different factors such as ethnicity, silent, community, and nationality. In fact, Chinese immigrants are so keen on their society that they are silent about anything that may destroy it; subsequently, their children, as Chinese Americans, bear the burden of this silence; like what happened to Kingston when she was a child, she was silent and socially awkward, while struggling to find her personality.

As an immigrant Chinese American girl, Kingston found herself caught between two different cultures; Chinese and American. Playing the role of a key to Chinese culture and customs, her mother Brave Orchid tries to assign identity to her through storytelling, but Maxine refused this identity, through rewriting those stories. However, changing stories increases awareness of aspects of her mother's culture that, forbid her from being part of Chinese society, neither repression of the American individualism, nor the collectivity and patriarchy of the Chinese society offer Maxine an easy way to build her identity. Moreover; both of Maxine and her mother, have dealt in very different ways with the formation of identity. On one hand, Maxine cleverly manages to create her own identity as a Chinese American woman, by reconciling the traditional collective identity of her Chinese mother with the American ideal of individualism. On the other hand, her mother cannot deal with such issues and ends up in a grey area without a clear identity.

In the last section of her book "*A Song For A Barbarian Reed Pipe.*" Kingston recounts about the process of finding her own identity as a second-generation Chinese American woman, instead of following a pre-existing path or letting herself forced by American or Chinese standards.

In general, *The Woman Warrior*, as a whole exemplifies the coming of the writer to know her dual heritage. She chooses to integrate her life story into an individual genre like autobiography. However, Kingston adapt to this type to present her experiences correctly. By

incorporating imagination into her autobiography, Kingston can describe the feeling of living among world with a dual cultural heritage experiences. Similarly, expectations are violated that, should focus on one individual. By giving space to the stories of many women, she succeeded in revealing the frustrating aspects of collective belonging, and meeting her need for belonging at once.

In short, Kingston has succeeded in forming many real Chinese women warrior in the past and the present, her aim is to change the fixed image of Chinese women, improve their social status and rewrite their history. Through writing, Kingston breaks the silence and rewrites the American-Chinese female in a way that goes beyond Chinese patriarchy. Like Ts'ai , her model who learns Barbarian language and makes a new song for her people, Kingston voice and pen considered as weapons in creating new pages in American literature and giving those warriors places in American history.

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## ملخص:

"المرأة المحاربة" هو عنوان لمذكرات ماكسين هونغ كينغستون، فتاة صينية أمريكية نشأت بين ثقافتين، تكافح من أجل بناء هويتها. ومن خلال دراسة عدة عوامل مثل العرق، الجنسية، الهجرة، الصمت، المجتمع المتسلط، بين هذا البحث كيف أثرت هذه الجوانب على خلق هوية الكاتبة كمهاجرة صينية في أمريكا. يؤدي تقاطع هذه العوامل إلى إنشاء هويتها الفردية وكافة المهاجرين. هذا التحليل يؤدي إلى استنتاج أنه ضمن حدود المذكرات، فمن الأسهل أن يكون طفل من المهاجرين الصينيين في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية من المهاجرين أنفسهم. يسرد الراوي في نهاية المطاف كامرأة أمريكية صينية في المجتمع الأمريكي، على الرغم من الصعوبات التي واجهتها في حياتها. باستخدام نظرية التحليل النفسي، في تحليل موضوع بناء الهوية، تم تقسيم البحث إلى فصلين رئيسيين، يقدم الأول لمحة عامة عن الأدب الأمريكي الآسيوي والسيرة الذاتية العرقية والصينية. في حين أن في الفصل الثاني كان لتحليل عملية تشكيل الهوية والعوامل المرتبطة بها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المرأة، الصمت، الرواية، الهجرة، الاضطهاد، البطريك، التقاليد، الجنس، العرق.