

Emerging Trends and Voices in Maxine Hong Kingston Criticism:

*The Woman Warrior* and *China Men* in Recent Scholarship

in Mainland China

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A dissertation submitted to the

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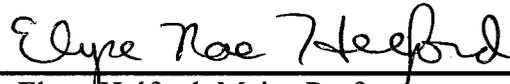
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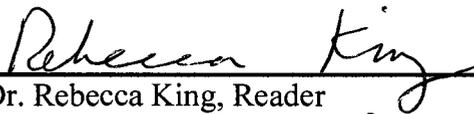
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This work is dedicated to my mom and family in China.  
Without their sacrifices, I could never have accomplished my doctoral degree  
in the U.S.

## Acknowledgements

The first course I took during my doctoral study in the U.S. in the fall term of 2005, taught by Dr. Elyce Helford, was devoted to contemporary women writers. Maxine Hong Kingston's (Tang Tingting 汤亭亭) *The Woman Warrior* (hereafter, *WW*) was on the reading list. Reading this work sparked my interest in the study of Chinese American literature, especially in those texts by women writers. As I continued my doctoral study, my attention and research was often drawn into this area whenever I had a free choice of topics. Altogether, I wrote four papers devoted to an examination of Maxine Hong Kingston. All of them were presented at various conferences, and one of them which I wrote for Dr. Helford's Contemporary Women Writers class won the Wolfe graduate writing award.

In my course Bibliography and Research, I did comprehensive primary and secondary bibliographies on Kingston's work and reviewed the English language dissertations published on her writing in the U.S. I was also able to write one of my preliminary exam essays on Chinese American literature more generally. What I noticed throughout these several years of work was that there seemed to be nothing in the recognized journals or literary critical works by any Chinese scholar residing and working in mainland China on Kingston. This set me to wonder just what had been done on Kingston by scholars in mainland China, and this curiosity put me on the path culminating in the present work that analyzes the reception and interpretation of Kingston's works by current mainland Chinese women scholars of American literature. In what follows, I will be breaking new ground.

I would like to begin by thanking all the professors from the English Department at Middle Tennessee State University who have taught me, nurtured me, guided me, and influenced me. I especially want to express my appreciation to Dr. Marion Hollings, who was Director of the Graduate Program in English when I began my doctoral work. She particularly gave me a great deal of encouragement and guidance through my preliminary examinations. Dr. Kevin Donovan, who is the current Director of the Graduate Program, has assisted me in many ways in the journey to complete my degree. Dr. Tom Strawman, our Department Chair, has given me immeasurable support over the years while I pursued my degree and taught in the department.

My dissertation committee, composed of Drs. Elyce Helford, Rebecca King, and Allen Hibbard, has inspired me and guided me through the research and composition of this dissertation, and I am indebted and very grateful to them. My dissertation committee chair, Dr. Helford, read my first draft of this work and provided extensive comments and suggestions in the margin of each page, and she gave me a final summary of her suggestions in writing which detailed all the major issues that I needed to address, expand or delete. In our meetings, she offered me so much encouragement, enlightenment, and energy that I was filled with confidence that I could accomplish the project I set for myself. I still remember the time when we sat around a table in Starbucks for the whole afternoon, spreading all of our books and draft sheets on the table. We discussed some of our common concerns while drinking coffee and tea. The aroma of the coffee and tea, mingled with the dim light, sparked in us both novel thoughts and delightful moments of excitement. Dr. Helford has guided me and led me in this dissertation with invaluable

suggestions and inspiration. For her, there are no adequate ways to express my admiration and respect.

Dr. King and Dr. Hibbard are two of my professors whom I highly respect. I took classes from both of them in my doctoral study. Not only have they taught me in their respective disciplines, but they have also influenced me to become a good writer, a critical thinker, and a serious scholar. Under Dr. King's direction, I wrote the paper entitled "‘I Have Woven a Wreath of Rhymes Wherewith to Crown Your Honoured Name’: Mother and Daughter in Christina Rossetti's Literary Works," and I was very pleased when this essay won the Wolfe graduate writing award. Dr. Hibbard's class, Reading Postmodernism, equipped me with a sufficient understanding of postmodernism to use it in my critique of Kingston. Actually, it was one of the questions which Dr. Hibbard asked me in my oral preliminary exams that triggered me to write my dissertation as an exploration of the scholarly voices focusing on Kingston in mainland China. My thanks to both Dr. Hibbard and Dr. King are beyond my words.

I also would like to express my sincere appreciation to the four scholars in mainland China whose work is the focus of this dissertation. They have provided me great vision and novel perspectives in understanding Kingston. I especially want to thank Chen Xiaohui who accepted my request to interview her, sent me her biography, and responded patiently to my questions about why and how she developed an immense interest in Kingston. Without these scholars' books and assistance, my dissertation would be impossible.

Last but not least, my sincere gratitude goes to my professor, mentor, and friend, Dr. Gladys “Hap” Bryant from Belmont University, who has helped me in one way or the other throughout the years of my graduate study in the U.S. I took three graduate courses from her when she taught in Zhengzhou University, my home university in China. It is she who encouraged me to leave my teaching position as Associate Professor of English in Zhengzhou University to come to the U.S. to further my education. It is also she who would lift me up and talk me through my frustrations when I was about to give up or collapse due to the stress and fatigue of graduate studies over my years in the U.S. She is a special friend and also a life-long teacher.

There is a famous saying in Chinese: “One day teacher, forever father.” Such feelings of gratitude to all my teachers will be buried deeply in my heart forever.

## Abstract

Emerging Trends and Voices in Maxine Hong Kingston Criticism:

*The Woman Warrior* and *China Men* in Recent Scholarship

in Mainland China

This dissertation is an analysis and comparative study of the reception and interpretations of Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men* in the work of four current mainland women scholars of American literature publishing in Chinese: Shi Pingping 石平萍, Lu Wei 陆薇, XueYufeng 薛玉凤, and Chen Xiaohui 陈晓晖. I first consider how these scholars have been influenced by both Chinese and Western scholarship, which critical theories have informed their work, and the extent of their familiarity with Western criticism of Kingston. Next, I uncover several ways in which these scholars offer corrections to readings of Kingston done by American interpreters including the association of Kingston with Western feminism, the omission of the significance of Orientalism to Kingston's narrative constructions, and misreadings arising from confusions over Kingston's use of Chinese sources. I offer my judgments about how these scholars as a whole, and individually, contribute to American and Chinese American scholarship on Kingston, either constructively or correctively.

The third move I make in the study is to identify the unique readings these scholars offer of Kingston's work that are not found in American critical scholarship on the works studied. I pay attention to their use of Chinese critical concepts embedded in Chinese culture in approaching an American writer. I analyze the presence of recurring pattern difficulties in Chinese literary scholarship identified by Sau-ling Cynthia Wong.

The patterns I focus on are: essentializing Chinese and American cultures and consciousness; repetitiveness in interpretation, source use and even phrases; mutual citation of each other's work by Chinese scholars; and finally, the extent to which mainland Chinese scholars possess a critical knowledge of the Chinese sources upon which Kingston draws. I conclude that the pattern deficiencies noted by Wong in the work of Chinese scholars of American and Chinese American literature, and Kingston specifically, are moderating. I demonstrate that scholarship on Kingston is maturing in mainland China and that scholars there do make important contributions which shed light on the global dialogue about Chinese American literature and Kingston studies specifically.

## Preliminary Considerations and Conventions

For readers who have no experience with Chinese names and words, I have included an elementary pronunciation guide that may be of some help. It is based on the *Hanyu Pinyin* system of romanization of Chinese characters that I have used. Among the four Chinese scholars I study, three of them write exclusively in Chinese; only Shi Pingping has written one of her books in English and the other in Chinese. None of these Chinese works have been translated and published in English. Therefore, throughout the work, in the case of quotes from the Chinese materials under study, the reader may assume that quotes from the Chinese scholars under study are my translations unless indicated otherwise. I did not indicate “my translation” in each instance because this seemed somewhat distracting. Sometimes, in the case of an important or controversial position taken by a Chinese author, I first provide the quote in Chinese and then follow with my translation. I hope this will benefit readers familiar with Chinese. When I include key Chinese terms, phrases, and concepts used by the writers under study, I provide the *Hanyu Pinyin* romanization in parentheses in the text; then I alphabetize these terms by *pinyin* and give the Chinese characters in the “Glossary of Names and Terms.” Whenever I interrupt the text with Chinese characters, it is always in order to make a point of emphasis. I do not italicize Chinese personal names, and I include them in the “Glossary of Names and Terms” alphabetically. I have chosen to use simplified characters throughout this work, following the style of the scholars under study.

In the case of titles of books and essays, I translate these and use the English title in the text. I have indexed these titles according to the translation in the text, providing

the *pinyin* and Chinese characters in the “Glossary of Titles with *Pinyin* Romanization.”

In this glossary the convention will be as follows: “*She*” *Writings in Contemporary Chinese American Literature (Dangdai meiguo huaren wenxue zhong de “ta” xiezu: dui Tang Tingting, Tan Enmei, Yan Geling)* 《当代美国华人文学中的“她”写作》. The “Glossary of Titles with *Pinyin* Romanization” will list some works first published in English but also available in Chinese. I include them as an aid to Chinese readers who would benefit from knowing the Chinese characters.

In the case of Chinese books in the Works Cited pages, I follow MLA style, alphabetizing authors with Chinese last names by *pinyin*, followed by Chinese characters. For Chinese book titles in the Works Cited section, I alphabetize by my English translation of the title, and then follow with the Chinese title, indicating a book by 《》. In the case of essays or articles, I follow MLA style but include the *pinyin* within the parentheses immediately after the English title. I utilize the accepted scholarly convention for capitalization of the *pinyin* titles of Chinese texts, using upper case for the first letter of the title, except for names of persons.

In the case of Chinese names, I have decided not to force standardization either in the English or Chinese convention. Instead, I use the manner preferred by the writer. The Chinese scholars under study will be referred to in the Chinese manner, surname first, then given name (i.e., Shi Pingping, Xue Yufeng, Chen Xiaohui, Lu Wei). I follow Lin Jian’s preference to write and publish under her English name as Jennie Wang. Chinese American scholars are cited by their preferred names because there is no uniform pattern among them (e.g., King-Kok Cheung, Frank Chin, Yan Gao, Shirley Geok-lin Lim, Sau-

ling Cynthia Wong, Elaine Kim). One other convention regarding names needs to be mentioned. In Chinese, it is typical (although not universal) for a person to have a two-character first name. There are good reasons to separate the two characters with a hyphen, as in King-Kok Cheung, Sau-ling Wong, or Geok-Lin Lim; however, it is more common and preferable in mainland China not to use the hyphen. The two characters in the first name are often joined and used to convey a significant meaning. The practice in American scholarship is to be consistent, with a vast majority of scholars opting not to hyphenate. So, I follow the preference of the scholars themselves when it is known; otherwise I have joined the first name without a hyphen (e.g., Shi Pingping, Xue Yufeng, Chen Xiaohui). My own name, for example, is Li Qingjun 李庆军; however, in order to avoid confusion in the U.S., I deliberately put my name into the American style as Qingjun Li. The “Glossary of Names and Terms” will provide the Chinese characters for Chinese names given in the text.

I have followed all the conventions of MLA citation on sources quoted in Chinese and used by the scholars under study; however, I must admit that it is still the case in Chinese scholarship that the citation of sources is sometimes neither as thorough nor consistent as one is accustomed to in scholarly writing in the U.S. For example, Chinese scholars sometimes fail to list publishers, dates, journal volume numbers, and/or pagination for articles and essays contained in anthologies or journals. Accordingly, such information was often inaccessible to me when preparing my “Works Cited” and “Selected Works by the Authors under Study” materials. All of this is further complicated by the fact that the writers under study use a dizzying mix of English and

Chinese. They use both English versions and Chinese translations of Kingston's works. Sometimes they rely on the English version themselves, but when writing in Chinese, they do their own translations rather than using the standard translations I mention in Chapter I. At other points, they will write in English but make their own translation of the Chinese version of Kingston or some other writers. For American readers of this study, both the availability and language of the Chinese versions of Kingston's work may pose difficulties. To make the writing as consistent as possible, I have indicated when a scholar is using a Chinese rather than an English version of Kingston's work. The Chinese versions have different pagination than the English ones available to American scholars, and the English printings of Kingston's works in China often have different pagination than English printings in the U.S.

On the matter of direct quotes, a few other procedural conventions that I have adopted should be mentioned. Although I use *Hanyu Pinyin* romanization throughout the study, there are times when I use direct quotes and do not correct a different romanization, such as Wade-Giles. I simply retain the romanization used in the quote. In direct quotes of Chinese writers, I do not alter the English of the scholars under study unless there is a specific grammatical or typographical error. In the case of such errors, I use "sic"; however, in those cases in which the English is simply rough or awkward, I make no revision of the wording in the quote. If the issue at stake is important, I do provide clarifying comments after the quote, in which I offer what I think the scholar means. Finally, the reader will notice that throughout the study I include a number of content footnotes. This is because I am transplanting Chinese scholarship into the soil of

American literary studies. The footnotes contain information and explanations of Chinese history, literature, folklore, legends, and cultural allusions. They are intended to fertilize the soil of American critical scholarship so that the works of the Chinese scholars under study can also grow and thrive in the future.

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Chapter I: Every Word is a Pearl, and Every Book is Wonderful 字字珠玑, 本本精彩

Zhang Ziqing has authored a reflection on one mainland Chinese scholar's encounter with Chinese American poets and novelists on a personal level in his "A Chinese Encounters Chinese American Literature."<sup>1</sup> While this is an inspirational piece, it was never intended by Zhang to be a critical examination of Maxine Hong Kingston or any other Chinese American writer, nor to set right any misreadings of Chinese American works by Western scholars traceable to an inadequate understanding of the nuances and profundity of Chinese culture. He focuses on how Westerners look at China. My study reverses Zhang's interest; its focus is on how Chinese look at Westerners, specifically, how they look at the Chinese American writer Maxine Hong Kingston.

The only self-conscious scholarly attempt to address Kingston's reception in China has been represented by a few unpublished and informal talks and one article, all done by Sau-ling Cynthia Wong (Huang Xiuling).<sup>2</sup> One of the things that Wong

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<sup>1</sup>Zhang Ziqing is Professor in the Institute of Foreign Literature, Nanjing University and Guest Research Fellow at the Chinese American Literature Research Center of BFSU. He is a member of the Standing Committee of American Literature Research Society of China, the China Writers' Association, and the Chinese Association of Comparative Literature. His chief works include *Two Sides of the Globe: Contemporary Chinese and American Literatures and Their Comparison* in collaboration with Chen Liao and Michael True (1993), and *A History of 20th Century American Poetry* (1995). He also edited the first series of Chinese American literature used in China in collaboration with Jeff Twitchell (1998), the second series of Chinese American literature also working with Twitchell (2000–2004), the book *Cultural Meetings: American Writers, Scholars and Artists in China* together with David Evans and Jan Evans (2003), and the nonfiction series "How Westerners Look at China" (2006) (Zhang 119).

<sup>2</sup> I give these now in chronological order: "Maxine Hong Kingston in a Global Frame: Reception, Institutional Mediation, and World Literature," which appeared in the *Journal Asian American Literature Association of Japan* in 2005; "Maxine Hong

observed about her study of mainland Chinese scholarship on Kingston prior to 2004 was a certain repetitiveness of approaches to and statements about *WW* and other Kingston texts. She observes, “But I hasten to add that this is not meant to be a derogatory statement. Repetitiveness and mutual citation are signs that a critical practice has evolved, implemented by an interacting community of scholars/teachers” (“Global Frame” 23-24). While I agree with Wong that there is a certain mutual citation and repetitiveness of emphasis before 2004, I have discovered through my study that since that time a greater diversity in Kingston criticism in mainland China has prospered by leaps and bounds as this present analysis of four mainland Chinese women scholars will show. Of course, Wong anticipated that this would occur as indeed it has.

One of the mainland Chinese scholars under study,<sup>3</sup> Shi Pingping 石平萍, says, “Studies of Chinese/Asian American literature in mainland China and Taiwan . . . appeared much later than in America. Compared with Taiwan—let alone America—in mainland China, works in this field are scant and unsystematic, and no study of book length has been published” (*Mother-Daughter* 8, f.1). Actually, the first book length study reflecting on Chinese scholars’ interpretations of Western writers was Wei Jingyi’s

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Kingston in China,” a talk given to the forum “American Literary Studies in Asia: Perspectives from China, Korea and Taiwan” sponsored by the Program in American Studies and Department of English, Stanford University in 2006; and “Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* in a Global Frame,” a lecture delivered at University of California, Berkeley, in July 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Throughout this study I will refer to the four women scholars under study as “mainland Chinese scholars” rather than “Sinophone” scholars as Sau-ling Cynthia Wong does in the papers mentioned in the previous footnote. I choose this way of referring to them because “Sinophone” scholars might suggest any scholar writing in Chinese no matter where they reside. My focus is limited to mainland China female scholars writing on Kingston.

*Chinese Stories in Western Context*, published in 2002. This work was followed by two books published in 2004: Zhang Longhai's *Identity and History: Reading Chinese American Literature* and Shi's *The Mother-Daughter Relationship and the Politics of Gender and Race: A Study of Chinese American Women's Writings*. Prior to these works, only a small handful of articles addressed this group of American ethnic writers. Moreover, mainland Chinese scholars who were interested in American literature, Chinese American writers, and Kingston specifically, worked primarily on Kingston's texts translated into Chinese and had to depend almost exclusively on American sources for secondary interpretations. However, Shi and three other recent writers under study, XueYufeng 薛玉凤, Lu Wei 陆薇, and Chen Xiaohui 陈晓晖, have now published significant original readings of Kingston's major writings, especially on *WW* and *China Men* (hereafter, *CM*).

In large measure, the texts used by China's scholars were Kingston's *WW* and *CM* in translation. *WW* was translated into Chinese by Li Jianbo and Liu Chengyi, with some revisions by Zhang Ziqing for Lijiang Press in Guilin in 1998.<sup>4</sup> *CM* was translated by Xiao Suozhang for Yilin Press in Nanjing in 2000. As we shall see, the contemporary Chinese women scholars under study provide important alternative interpretations of American literature, some of which American scholars and teachers may find interesting,

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<sup>4</sup> Speaking of these earliest attempts at translating Chinese American literature into Chinese, Zhang Ziqing writes, "We had no knowledge of buying the copyrights from an author before China joined the International Copyright Organization. I invited a translator to translate *The Joy Luck Club* and *The Kitchen God's Wife*, but to my regret, his labor was lost because of publication delays following China's membership in the Organization. It was a bitter lesson for us. So we bought the copyright for Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and *Tripmaster Monkey*, and got them published in the Lijiang Publishing House in 1998" ("Chinese Encounters" 119).

provocative, and controversial. For their part, they often believe that they are offering correctives to problematic readings in American literary criticism. Indeed, Shi observes, “It must be pointed out that misreadings abound in relevant white criticisms [of Kingston], motivated by a desire to appropriate and co-opt texts by women of color for mainstream discourse” (*Mother-Daughter* 16). Accordingly, she states the aim of her book specifically in this way: “[T]his book sees it necessary to avoid certain pitfalls in relevant existing criticisms authored by critics from the Asian/Chinese American community and China, scant and unsystematic as they are” (17). Shi’s point of view is echoed as well by each of the other scholars who are the subjects of this study. One unifying interest that Chinese scholars of Chinese American literature have is their preoccupation with the image of the Chinese in mainstream American culture and in the narrative techniques used by Chinese American writers, including Kingston specifically.

The four scholars on whom I focus are female Chinese literary critics who have written very recent studies of Maxine Hong Kingston’s *WW* and *CM* and who have Kingston as a major interest. They all have published book-length studies related to Kingston. They approach Kingston and her work from the angle of cultural criticism, post-colonialism and new historicism. Their strengths, deriving from growing up in Chinese culture, endow them with novel ideas and vision in analyzing and interpreting Kingston’s works, which are themselves heavily embedded in Chinese culture and tradition. Each of the four female scholars studied is a rising expert in the field of American Literature and Comparative Literature in mainland China. The major works

that form the focus for the study are very recent, having all been published from 2004 to 2007.

Three of the four scholars under study, Shi, Xue, and Lu, are associated in various ways with the Chinese American Literature Research Center established in January 2003 in the School of English of Beijing Foreign Studies University (hereafter, BFSU). The Chinese American Literature Research Center at BFSU is dedicated to furthering the study of Chinese American writers in China's colleges and universities. The Center has substantial resources at its disposal. It lists among its bibliographies the following:

一、华裔美国文学研究原著书目

First, Original (Primary) Chinese American Literature Bibliography

二、华裔美国文学研究英文参考书目

Second, English Language Bibliography for Chinese American Literature Research

三、华裔美国文学研究中文参考书目

Third, Chinese Language Bibliography for Chinese American Literature Research

四、华裔美国文学研究论文欣赏

Fourth, Critical Papers for Chinese American Literature Research

五、华裔美国文学研究博士、硕士论文目录

Fifth, Index of Theses and Dissertations for Chinese American Literature Research

六、新出华裔美国文学研究及批评专著介绍

Sixth, Introduction to Newly Published Books on Chinese American Literature Research and Criticism

七、新出美国华裔创作作品介绍

Seventh, Introduction to Newly Published Works by Chinese American Writers

A number of works on Chinese American literature originally written in English are available at this Center in Chinese versions, and the Center has an active program of translation supporting this initiative. The Center has hosted visiting scholars and Chinese American authors such as Maxine Hong Kingston, Gish Jen (Ren Bilian), Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, and Russell Leong (Liang Zhiying).

The Center is directed by Wu Bing 吴冰, arguably China's preeminent professor on Chinese American writers.<sup>5</sup> As dissertation supervisor for Shi and Xue and colleague of Lu, Wu Bing has undoubtedly exerted a great deal of influence on the emerging scholarship focused on Chinese American writers by rising scholars on the mainland. Several of her basic emphases are well known, and she summarizes them herself in remarks made in the Preface to Xue Yufeng's book, *The Cultural Study of Chinese American Literature*. Wu says:

In addition to its literary values, reading research on Chinese American literature can also help us gain an overall understanding of what indeed the U.S. is like. Prior to the 1930s and 1940s, American history books and other writings either never mention Chinese Americans, contain only a few words or fragments, or distort and defame (*niuqu chouhua*) them. (qtd. in Xue 2)

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<sup>5</sup> Wu graduated with a B.A. in English from the Western Language Department of Beijing University in 1958 and taught at Lanzhou University from 1959-1972. In 1976, she moved to what was then known as Beijing Foreign Language Institute, now known as BFSU. She was a Fulbright Visiting Scholar in the Department of English at Harvard University. Her research focuses on American novels, Chinese American literature, English Stylistics, and English writing and interpretation.

Wu also believes that Chinese American literature reflects in its style and contents the undeniable contribution of the Chinese towards the prosperity of the U.S., claiming, “Some Chinese American literature recovers the true face of American history” (2). Wu reminds the mainland scholars she helps train that most Chinese American writers belong to the second, third, fourth, or even fifth and sixth generations of Chinese in the U.S. Since they received their education from white American mainstream culture, they often use different perspectives from Chinese writers on the mainland to reevaluate the traditional core values and behaviors of the older generations of Chinese Americans. She concludes:

It is true that inevitably there are some Orientalist tendencies or viewpoints that bring about an Orientalist reading. But as the descendants of Yan and Huang,<sup>6</sup> the blood of the Chinese still flows in their veins. The influence and impact of Chinese traditional culture reflected in their works are often the things rooted deeply in their own beings as Chinese. Often they see very clearly and uncover objectively the fine character as well as the deep rooted bad habits (*liegenxing* 劣根性) of the Chinese nation. (8)

Wu’s sentiments seem to agree with those of Wang Lingzhi, who says, “Chinese Americans are being looked at under a ‘dual glare (*shuangchong ningshi*),’ and hence they are ‘restricted on two sides (*shuangchong zaizhi*)’” (“Misplacement” qtd. in Xue

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<sup>6</sup>“Yan and Huang” stands for the two Emperors Yan Di 炎帝 and Huang Di 黄帝 of ancient Chinese legend, who are said to be the earliest ancestors of the Chinese nation. All Chinese, whether they live in the mainland, Taiwan, Hong Kong, or Macao, regard themselves as the descendants of Yan and Huang (*Yanhuang zisun*). In 2006, a 106-meter statue of Emperors Yan and Huang was built to these “founding fathers” of China in my own hometown of Zhengzhou, Henan Province.

147). Wang is saying that Chinese Americans have pressures from both sides: American Orientalist racism on one hand and the expectations of their Chinese culture on the other.

Since this study is the first of its kind to explore the interpretations of Kingston's *WW* and *CM* by current mainland Chinese women scholars, an overview of my procedure will be helpful. I begin by simply noting that the scholars I am studying have given a great deal more attention to *WW* than to *CM*. This fact is reflected in the chapters which follow. While every chapter has materials that can be applied to both *WW* and *CM*, the principal chapters devoted to *CM* are only Chapters VII and VIII, which reflect the actual interests and writing of the four mainland scholars under study. I also take this opportunity to mention that I am well aware that "China men" is not standard English; however, I believe Kingston deliberately uses this epithet to recognize the contribution of Chinese men in American immigrant history, and I follow her usage. Shi Pingping holds the same viewpoint, which I elaborate in the body of the later text. Accordingly, I have chosen to continue using this term in the context of Kingston's work. Chapters III, IV, V and VI are more directly related to *WW*. Having said this, the study as a whole unfolds in the following way. In Chapter I, I make clear the focus of the project and then present each of the mainland Chinese scholars under study. In Chapter II, "The Twists and Turns of Chinese Americans and Their Literature 华裔文学沧桑之变," I offer an account of two important factors constituting the background from which the Chinese scholars approach Chinese American literature in general and Kingston specifically. First, I cover Xue Yufeng's taxonomy for understanding Chinese Americans and their formation of identity. Her work on this subject is relevant to how it is that the scholars under study

assess the identity of Chinese American across generations, a theme underlying significantly any reading of Kingston's two works, *WW* and *CM*. Second, I explain how the scholars under study position Kingston in the history of Chinese American literature specifically. Here I follow rather closely the work of Lu Wei and her designation of Kingston as belonging to the group of writers she calls those "Searching for Their Roots."

Chapter III, "The Double Charm of Blending Imagination and Narrative 双重魅力," focuses on the distinctive efforts to understand the literary method and approach to writing taken by Kingston according to three of the mainland Chinese scholars under study. I give special attention to these interpretive categorizations of Kingston's style: Chen Xiaohui's theory of "double charmed (*shuangchong meili*)" writing; Xue Yufeng's model of "deliberate misreading (*wu du* 误读)"; and Lu Wei's label of Kingston's works as "anti-narration (*duikang xushi*)." In the course of explaining their models for approaching Kingston's literary craft, I uncover and explain their criticisms of a number of American and Chinese American interpreters whom they feel have misunderstood Kingston's method. In Chapter IV, "Male-Female in One Body 雌雄同体," I describe and analyze the mainland scholars' readings of Kingston's writings on gender. I show how all of the scholars have deep reservations about the way Kingston's *WW* and *CM* were characterized by American feminist writers and the extent to which critics have believed her to be dependent on Western feminism in the shaping of her narratives related to gender. I explain just what concerns the Chinese scholars and give an account of their criticisms of specific Western and American interpretations of Kingston's gender

writings in these two works, showing also points of commensurability and even agreement when these come into view. I introduce Chen Xiaohui's appropriation of the Chinese hidden tradition of "women's writing (*nushu*)" as an interpretive tool for approaching Kingston's views on gender. In the course of this investigation, I evaluate the different approaches of the Chinese scholars under study, especially Shi Pingping's critical concept of gendered personhood as a dialectical whole (*maodun de tongyiti*) and Chen's direct application of the Chinese notion of *guaiwu* (怪物), a term used for a being who is both man and woman in one body. In this chapter, I also express my reservations about how some of the Chinese scholars interpret Western feminism, arguing that their views tend to generalize from a very limited view of feminism in the U.S. and what implications follow for their positions from a more nuanced reading of Western feminism.

Chapter V, "Mother-Daughter Relationship 母女关系," looks closely at Lu Wei's thesis that Kingston's treatment of mother-daughter relations is both an exploration of identity and also a substantial political critique of American Orientalism by a woman writer, taking particular note of the significance of Lu's distinction between "mother" and "Brave Orchid" in reading *WW* and her use of the work of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha. I also give attention to the different approach taken by Xue Yufeng to the politics of mother-daughter relations in Kingston. I bring to the surface the care with which the mainland Chinese women scholars approach the works of notable Chinese American critics of Kingston such as Frank Chin (Zhao Jianxiu) and Benjamin Tong (Tang Jinrong), including the mainland analysts' points of agreement and disagreement with American critics.

In Chapter VI, “A Group of Ghosts Dancing Chaotically 群‘鬼’乱舞,” I begin by showing how Lu Wei and Xue Yufeng both take the position that the literary trope of ghosts (*gui* 鬼) has been widely misunderstood in Western critical scholarship on Kingston, especially in the neglect of its role in the critique of American Orientalism. I clarify Xue’s construction of the use of “ghost” in Chinese literature and culture and how she uses this background to enable her readings of the experiences with No Name Woman’s ghost, Hua Mulan’s (花木兰) experiences on White Tiger Mountain (*Baihu shan*) and in her “ghost marriage (*guiqin*),” and Brave Orchid’s battles with ghosts.

Although I frequently mention some of Kingston’s narratives taken from *CM* are in other chapters of my work, Chapter VII, “Rectifying the Name of China Men 给金山英雄正名,” is devoted to Shi’s view that *CM* is an intentional “counter history” in American literature and culture specifically designed to “correct the name” of Chinese men who lived and worked in America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. I uncover how the mainland Chinese scholars want to take Kingston’s writing as both intimately personal and critically political. I begin with Shi’s thesis that *WW* and *CM*, originally entitled *Gold Mountain Women* and *Gold Mountain Heroes* respectively, are works “derived from the same origin (*yimai xiangcheng* 一脉相承),” and thus should be read intertextually. This thereby gives a new reading of *CM*. Ultimately I show how all four scholars under study see *CM* as a critique of American Orientalism by considering their readings of the narratives of the *CM* characters Tang Ao and Lo Bun Sun, but I advance reservations about how Chen interprets writings of female utopias by Western writers and how Shi’s cultural critique of the fate of Chinese men in 19<sup>th</sup> century America may have embedded

within it a devaluation of the feminine, thereby unintentionally failing to recognize the inseparability of gender and political analysis.

Chapter VIII, “Silence of the China Men 沉默无声,” begins with a careful exposition of Chen Xiaohui’s typology for reading Kingston’s use of the literary trope of silence and gaining of voice in *CM*. Chen ties each character of *CM*’s level of heroism to their speech and silence. She maintains that *CM* should be read by seeing Bak Goong in “The Great Grandfather of the Sandalwood Mountains” as standing for the generation that may be characterized through the concepts of “speaking (*shuohua* 说话) as rebellion”; San Goong’s (San Gong) and Si Goong’s (Si Gong) generation of “silencing (*xiao sheng*)”; Ah Goong’s generation of “speechlessness (*shi yu*)”; Shaosha’s and Ben Shu’s “babbling (*zhan wang*)” generation; and finally, the Brother in Vietnam’s generation of “whispering under one’s breath (*gu nong*).” I interrogate the extent to which Chen’s typology may be only labeling and ask just how it represents an interpretive analysis. In an effort to make the focus on voice versus silence more robust, I call attention to how feminist theory by writers in what Shi calls “the third world of the first world” can be of assistance in exploring more fully what Kingston is doing in writing about the challenges of moving from silence to voice.

Finally, Chapter IX, “Recovering the True Face 还原本来面目,” provides my conclusions about the main objectives of the study: what, if anything, is unique in the approaches and readings of Kingston that are offered by mainland Chinese scholars; what do these scholars as a whole, or individually, contribute to American and Chinese American scholarship on Kingston, either constructively or correctively; and what

tensions and similarities between the four mainland Chinese scholars are uncovered in this study.

Based on the structure I have outlined, it is clear that this study is not to be confused with one which focuses merely on Kingston's use of Chinese sources in her writing. In fact, there are several works that examine Kingston's use of Chinese folktales and traditions. I agree that Kingston's adoption and inclusion of Chinese sources in her writings have been controversial and have also ignited heated discussion in Kingston criticism in the West, but both American and Chinese American critics have studied this subject. Among these we should include Frank Chin's *Aiiiiieee!* and the dissertation done by Gao Yan at Emory University in 1993, entitled "A Metaphorical Strategy: An Interpretation of Maxine Hong Kingston's 'Ghost Stories.'" This dissertation was later published as *The Art of Parody: Maxine Hong Kingston's Use of Chinese Sources*. As a dissertation, Gao's work is the first full-length study of Maxine Hong Kingston's three main prose works, and it focuses exclusively on her employment of Chinese sources. Grounded in a cross-cultural perspective, Gao's study examines the function of Kingston's reconstruction of Chinese myths (including folklore, legends, poetry, and novel episodes) in her thematic frame and traces the development of her metaphorical strategy in her three major works.

Other dissertations on Kingston's use of Chinese sources include Zhou Qingmin's dissertation, "Chinese Culture as Pre-text/pretext: A Study of the Treatment of Chinese Sources by Ezra Pound, Pearl Buck and Selected Contemporary Chinese-American Writers," written for George Washington University in 1996. There is also a dissertation

claiming that Kingston strongly rejects China and her heritage as a second generation Chinese American. Authored by Liu Hong, this work is entitled “Representing the ‘Other’: Images of China and the Chinese in the Works of Jade Snow Wong, Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan.” Finally, I mention Amy Ling’s “Chinese American Women Writers: The Tradition behind Maxine Hong Kingston,” which is in *Maxine Hong Kingston’s The Woman Warrior: A Casebook*; however, this study is not directly focused on Kingston’s use of Chinese sources. It is concerned with the wide range of readings and interpretations of Kingston offered by scholars in mainland China. Of course, they themselves do often give attention to the Chinese sources Kingston uses and how she weaves them into her texts. This feature of Kingston’s work will not be out of the bounds of the study; however, the project is about a good deal more than this aspect of her work.

My focus is on the distinctive approaches that mainland Chinese scholars bring to Kingston, and just how their readings are similar to and differ from those made by American and even Chinese American critics of Kingston’s two works *WW* and *CM*. Ultimately, the study is designed to bring mainland Chinese women scholar’s interpretations of Kingston into the consciousness of literary criticism in America. The approach I am taking is different not only from an exclusive focus on how Kingston uses her Chinese sources, but also from that of Chen Liao, who argues that the works of Chinese American writers should actually be considered as Chinese literature by diaspora writers (Zhang, “Chinese Encounters” 121). I am taking Kingston specifically as an American writer, not particularly as a Chinese writer in the diaspora, and the scholars I

focus on in this study adopt the same approach. For each of the scholars under study, as also for myself, Kingston is a striking focus of study because, as is expressed in Chinese, “字字珠玑, 本本精彩 Every word is a pearl, and every book is wonderful.”

Chapter II: The Twists and Turns of Chinese Americans and Their Literature  
 华裔文学沧桑之变

Literature is that masterful activity of human beings by which we respond to the multi-layered fact of our interrelationship with each other, the cultures we create and which shape us, and the temporal context of our lives. In this chapter, I give attention to the ways in which Chinese Americans have been twisted and turned by their lives in the American context and how they have used literature to express, cope with and overcome forces that might otherwise destroy them. I consider the Chinese American experience and the development of Chinese American literature which informs the readings of Kingston's *WW* and *CM* offered by the mainland Chinese scholars under study. These mainland Chinese scholars often note the importance of the interpreter's grasp of the cultural context in which Kingston finds herself as a Chinese American writer.

In 2007, Xue Yufeng<sup>1</sup> published *The Cultural Study of Chinese American Literature* in Chinese through the People's Literature Press of Beijing as an adaptation of her dissertation, "'The Third Space': The Continuity and Discontinuity of the Chinese Traditional Family Culture and Chinese Cultural Identity in Chinatown." Xue's dissertation covered the period of Chinese presence in the U.S. from the early Chinese bachelors who worked on the American railroads and in the gold mines to the subsequent

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<sup>1</sup> Xue is Associate Professor of English in the School of Foreign Languages and Director of the Research Center of Foreign Literature at Henan University. She also holds an appointment as Visiting Researcher in the Chinese American Literature Research Center of BFSU, as does Shi. Xue received her B.A. and M.A. degrees in English from Henan University. She received her doctoral degree in literature from BFSU in 2004. In 2006, she went to the University of California, Los Angeles, as a Visiting Scholar for one year. Her study and research there focused on Chinese American literature, working with King-Kok Cheung (Zhang Jingyu), Russell Leong, and Jinqi Ling.

generations of American Born Chinese (ABC) whom she felt became cultural hybrids and whom she calls “Banana Person (*xiangjiao ren*).”<sup>2</sup>

Xue employs cultural theory to create a typology for understanding Chinese Americans and their formation of identity. She places Kingston in the category of Chinese Americans who are “Searching for Their Roots and Asking about Their Ancestry (*xungen wenzu*).” But understanding the location of Kingston among Chinese Americans generationally in terms of the formation of their identity is only one part of the background information an interpreter and cross cultural literature scholar needs when approaching her work. The second part of this chapter is devoted to how mainland Chinese interpreters position Kingston in the development of Chinese American writing as a type of American literature. Lu Wei<sup>3</sup> holds that in order to provide critical readings of Kingston that make sense of her work, it is necessary to know just where Kingston stands with respect to the ways in which Chinese American writers before and after her have understood their use of writing to engage their experience in the world and as

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<sup>2</sup> “Banana Person” refers to a Chinese descendent who is born and grows up in the U.S., commonly known as an American Born Chinese (ABC). Except for some intermarriage, most of these ABCs are Chinese in appearance: yellow skin, and black eyes and hair; however, these persons speak English, drink Coca-Cola, and receive their education within American mainstream culture. To the mind of Chinese immigrants, these persons, like bananas, are yellow outside but white inside.

<sup>3</sup> Lu Wei is Associate Dean of the College of Foreign Languages of Beijing Language and Culture University, where she is Professor in the Department of English and supervisor of graduate students. Lu received her B.A. in English from Wuhan University in 1983, her M.A. in English from Capital Normal University in 1986, and her Ph.D. in Comparative and World Literature from the Research Institute of Comparative Literature at Beijing Language and Culture University. Her research interest focuses especially on Western literary theory, and she was a Visiting Scholar at Columbia University in Comparative Literature and Asian American Literature.

Chinese in America. Relative to her place in the evolution of Chinese American literature, Lu places Kingston in “The Stage of Prosperous Development (*pengbo fazhang*)” from the 1970s until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (25).<sup>4</sup>

As a mainland Chinese writer looking at American culture, Lu suggests that Chinese Americans were driven forward by the combined forces of the repeal of the Chinese immigration laws, the Civil Rights movement, and the Women’s Liberation movement. She argues that these movements awakened in Kingston a sense of cultural identity and a self-consciousness and that Kingston used her writing as a kind of literary archaeology to “salvage (*gou chen*)” her Chinese American past (29).<sup>5</sup> Kingston is equipped with compassion for her Chinese roots, affection for Chinese culture, and a strong desire to create for herself an identity and subjectivity as a daughter growing up in an immigrant family in Stockton, California.

With respect to understanding Chinese Americans and their formation of identity Wu Bing claims that Xue Yufeng’s 2007 *The Cultural Study of Chinese American*

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<sup>4</sup> Jennie Wang puts this even more strongly. She believes that the creation of a distinct Chinese American identity really took shape only in the 1970s in America, and that the rise of writing by Chinese Americans was part of this national movement. She traces this shift in American sensibilities to the change in American political policy toward China symbolized by Richard Nixon’s visit to China and China’s entry into the United Nations in 1971. It was also this period in which many universities began to establish programs in Asian Studies and Chinese Studies (28).

<sup>5</sup> “*Gouchen*,” or what I have translated as “salvage,” literally means “to hook something that has sunk to the bottom of the ocean.” This vivid analogy reminds me of Adrienne Rich’s famous poem “Diving into the Wreck.” Kingston and Rich are both avant-gardes in the Civil Rights Movement, and they are prominent feminist writers in the postmodern period. Like Rich’s diver, Kingston plunges into Chinese immigrant history in order to correct the wrongs, stereotypes, and distortions made of Chinese women and men in American mainstream society.

*Literature* displays a much broader vision and deeper understanding of Chinese Americans than did her 2004 dissertation, she is referring to the substantial gains that Xue made during her 2006 study in the U.S. Wu remarks, “. . . she [Xue] made full use of all of her opportunities to learn about American society. Through personal experience, reflection, comparison, and contrast, she has reached a deeper understanding of Chinese culture and American culture” (qtd. in Xue 2). Xue’s analysis of Kingston’s writing employs a cultural studies method since Kingston’s works *WW* and *CM* are closely connected to the challenges faced by Chinese Americans in creating a sense of self and identity in the American cultural context. Therefore, it is very important to have an understanding of Xue’s position on the process of identity formation among Chinese Americans because it will enrich the discourse on identity politics in American scholarship by taking into account the perspective of a Chinese scholar like Xue who grew up and is rooted in China.

Xue makes use of the work of Wang Lingzhi’s (a.k.a., L. Ling-chi Wang) “Roots and the Changing Identity of the Chinese in the United States.” She generally agrees with Wang that there are five types of identity formation found among Chinese Americans: 1) “Falling Leaves Returning to the Roots (*luoye guigen*)” refers to those Chinese Americans who will eventually return to their home country. This type is characteristic of the Chinese immigrants prior to 1949. 2) “Cutting the Grass and Pulling Up the Roots (*zhancao chugen*)” is typical of a small number of Chinese Americans born before World War II who tried to get rid of their traditional culture and completely assimilate into American ways. 3) “Falling to the Ground and Taking Root (*luodi*

*shenggen*)” describes those who wanted to return to China, but for whom the founding of the People’s Republic of China and the beginning of the Cold War put an end to the dream of returning home. 4) “Searching for Their Roots and Asking about Their Ancestry (*xungen wenzu*)” is characteristic of the group of Chinese Americans who, after the 1960s and 1970s, began to develop a national pride in and consciousness of their Chinese heritage. Xue puts Kingston in this category. 5) “The Racial Group Who Have Lost Their Roots (*shigen qunzu*)” is indicative of some overseas students and intellectuals who choose to abandon their own national cultural identity and come to embrace American society because of their dissatisfaction with the political situation in China (Xue 11).

The generational immigrant group to which Kingston belongs was neither fully accepted by their ancestral culture nor by the mainstream culture in which they were living. Their black hair and yellow skin determined that they could not blend into American society. Yet their involvement in American education and culture made it difficult for them to be completely Chinese in a traditional sense. Showing her grasp of American literature in general, Xue Yufeng makes use of W.E.B. Du Bois’ notion of “two-ness” to describe how Kingston’s generation was caught in between two cultures, and how many Chinese American writers were tortured by the two-ness that he describes (148). Du Bois speaks from his identity as an African American and voices his pain caused by that role. In *The Souls of Black Folk*, he remarks, “The Negro ever feels his two-ness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings . . . two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being

torn asunder” (898). Xue believes this to be an accurate characterization of Chinese Americans such as Kingston as well even though Chinese were never enslaved as were African Americans. Of course, Xue is not unique in recognizing the sense of two-ness Chinese Americans feel. Amy Tan (Tan Enmei), a well-known Chinese American woman writer, says, “Both Chinese Americans and their descendants have ‘two faces’: Chinese face and American face” (288). Being a Chinese American, Tan feels inner stress and pain similar to that experienced by an African American. The simple reason is that both feel marginalized and excluded from the mainstream white world. Zora Neale Hurston writes about this. Alice Walker presents this same dualness, and Toni Morrison likewise reflects on this sense of two-ness.<sup>6</sup>

Xue’s point is that, although Kingston was born in the U.S., received an American education, and wanted to become American, she was placed in the margins of society because of her “Chinese otherness.” Caught between the conflicts of two cultures, Kingston and others of her generation were beaten black and blue, and they began to ask, “What on earth am I?” At this point, writers such as Kingston began to absorb nutrition from their parents’ culture. Xue claims that among some members of Kingston’s generation the two cultures of America and China came to co-exist peacefully and formed what Xue, following post-colonial theory, calls a culture of “hybridity” (127). She believes this hybridity is an important characteristic informing the writing of most Chinese American women writers such as Kingston, who regard themselves as “marginal people (*bianyuan ren*)” (35).

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<sup>6</sup> I am referring to Hurston’s *Dust Tracks on a Road*, Walker’s *The Color Purple*, and Morrison’s *Sula*.

Xue explains her interpretation of the cultural hybridity that characterizes

Kingston in the following compassionate manner:

华裔美国文学本身就是文化杂交的产物，它们出自华人后裔之手，写的是华人的历史与现实生活，字里行间，流淌着浓浓的中国意识，渗透着浓厚的中国民族情结，镌刻着中国传统文化在华人身上的绵绵记忆。

Chinese American literature itself is the product of cultural hybridity. It comes from the hands of the descendants of Chinese, who write about the history and reality of the life of Chinese, and between the lines flows a rich Chinese consciousness, fraught with deep Chinese national affections, molded by the constant memories and marks of Chinese cultural tradition in Chinese people. (135)

Xue holds that descendants of Chinese immigrants in their life and consciousness have to undergo the pains brought by living with two different languages and cultures which cannot be reduced to a single culture. Hence, this results in the splitting of their personalities. She claims that the “little girl”<sup>7</sup> in *WW* fully experiences “the embarrassment (*ganga*)” of being caught between two cultures. Kingston herself seems to confirm Xue’s understanding when she writes, “Chinese Americans, when you try to understand what things in you are Chinese, how do you separate what is peculiar to

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<sup>7</sup> I use Xue’s expression here in quotes in order to note that the mainland Chinese scholars under study have different readings of the various voices in *WW*.

childhood, to poverty, insanities, one family, your mother who marked your growing with stories, from what is Chinese?" (*WW* 5- 6).

I certainly appreciate and value Xue's use of cultural criticism. Du Bois' notion of "two-ness" and Xue's concept of "cultural hybridity" are both on target with respect to Kingston. Appreciating authorial identity in this way is fundamental to an understanding of Kingston's writing. Even so, the cultural critic must always be careful not to essentialize the cultures interacting in a "hybrid person." Cultures, like individuals, are fluid and complicated. When Xue speaks of "Chinese consciousness" and deep "national affections" as a mainland Chinese scholar, she might be aware of the layers of Chinese culture; however, in giving it a role in the analysis of Kingston's writing, we should not oversimplify its constructions of matters such as gender, mother-daughter roles, and political and social critique by assuming that there is a single monolithic view which Kingston decided to accept or reject. In the quote from *WW* above, Kingston shows clearly that she understands the confusion that one might experience as a writer in reflecting on inner realities, whether they come from culture or some other life event, but even she may be essentializing "Chineseness" in a way that is not true to what we know about cultures.

Xue feels that the dynamic of self-formation identified by Wang Lingzhi that most nearly applies to Kingston is that of "Searching for Their Roots and Asking about Their Ancestry (*xungen wenzu*)."<sup>1</sup> She emphasizes that most Chinese Americans' self-image is traceable to their identification with Chinese American culture, which is the root of their self-adherence, "the root of history, the root of race, and the root of family" (148).

But Xue believes that the “two-ness” that generates cultural hybridity arises when Kingston and the other Chinese American writers experience close contact with American Orientalist attitudes, according to which Chinese Americans are seen as passive, manipulative, sexist and patriarchal, relying on sentiment instead of reason, mysterious and incomprehensible, and backward looking.

Xue makes explicit use of Edward Said’s work *Orientalism*, in which he analyzes the set of prejudices and conceptions that have characterized Western mainstream social ideology toward the East. Said says that, regarding “Westerners and Easterners, the former is dominant (*tongzhi*) and the latter is being dominated (*bei tongzhi*)” (qtd. in Xue 36). Xue claims that the mind of the “little girl”<sup>8</sup> in *WW* is filled with Orientalist conceptions about China expressed in her disposition toward her mother, whom she thinks of as constantly trying to manipulate her by telling a lot of lies (*feihua lianpian*) and being enigmatic and mysterious (*shenmi muoce*) (115). But the “little girl” does not realize at first that the silence of Chinese Americans, their enigma and mystery, are caused by the policy of America’s treatment of Chinese persons and not their “Chineseness.” Chinese in American society used their silence to protect their real identities (Xue 118).

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<sup>8</sup> Who the “little girl” is in *WW* is a subject of interpretation. I am quoting Xue and allowing her use of this term to stand. We will see that who are “mother,” “the narrator,” “Kingston,” and other characters in *WW* will vary according to the reading given by the various Chinese scholars. I have not standardized or forced a single reading on all of them. So, I do not offer a unified definition for each of these characters and roles. Often, as we shall see, the interpretation offered by the scholar under study depends upon whom they take the character to be.

On one hand, Chinese Americans are in conflict with Orientalism, and on the other, they compromise with it. Xue argues that in the face of the sort of Orientalism that dominates mainstream ideology in American society, Chinese American writers find themselves in the predicament of “society controlling freedom / people being controlled (*ziyou de zhuti/shou zhipai de chenmin*).” Because mainstream American culture thinks in an Orientalist way, the Chinese writers encounter prejudice and resistance (122).

Jennie Wang calls the Orientalism to which Xue is referring an “iron curtain (*tiemu*).”<sup>9</sup> She says it consists of language and images in television shows, movies, missionary preaching, popular regional consciousness, media and the press. This curtain accounts for mainstream American hostility, prejudice, and ignorance of Chinese culture and people found in America and is displayed by American literary critics of Kingston’s work. Wang says, “The China discourse in American Orientalism remains ahistorical—unenlightened, immune to the social, economic, and political changes and progress taking place rapidly and dramatically at home and abroad” (Jennie Wang 3). Alluding to this

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<sup>9</sup> Since 2004, Jennie Wang (Lin Jian) has been Professor of English and Comparative Literature and Co-director of the Center for the Study of Chinese World Literatures at the prestigious Fudan University in Shanghai. In 2007, Wang published *The Iron Curtain of Language: Maxine Hong Kingston and American Orientalism* in English through Fudan University Press. Although born in China and now teaching in China, Wang received her collegiate and graduate education in the U.S., taking the B.A. from San Francisco State University in 1983, the M.A in English from Stanford University in 1984, and the Ph.D. in English from the State University of New York at Buffalo in 1992. She taught Expository Writing at Harvard University from 1992-93 before joining the faculty of English at the University of Northern Iowa in 1993 to teach twentieth-century American Literature. She remained there for over ten years until returning to Shanghai at the invitation of Fudan University in 2004. I put Wang outside the group of scholars who are the main focus of this study because she received her training in the U.S. and lived there for such a long period. Her training and experience diverge from the educational and professional patterns of the four scholars on whom I am concentrating.

impact which Xue and Wang are identifying, Sheng-mei Ma has called American Orientalism “the Deathly Embrace.” In fact, commenting on Ma’s conclusions about the effects of Orientalism, Wang says:

Maybe it is a vain effort to reach out to an audience that is schooled in the Cold War language, the biblical language, the colonial English language, the Euro-centric theoretical language, the insensitive, dehumanized, jargon-ridden, high-tech language, the colonizers’ language, the gender-split language, the self-abusive language, not to mention the official language in the media. (4)

The Orientalism that Ma calls “the Deathly Embrace” is what Wang names an “iron curtain.” This “iron curtain” results from discrimination. Like a Great Wall, it prohibits Chinese Americans from interacting with the mainstream white world.

On the other hand, regardless of the inferior position in which Chinese American writers are placed by mainstream American culture, Xue also sees an advantage that accompanies these writers. By standing on American soil, they can make use of the American viewpoint and rationality to examine China and Chinese culture, to talk about the stories of China. They can also criticize American culture from the view of Chinese tradition. Just as Belle Yang says, “As an Asian American my world is wider and broader. I am 100% Chinese, but also 100% American. I can examine American culture from the perspective of Chinese, but I can also criticize Chinese culture from the angle of the American. So I have a multifaceted perspective from which to look at things” (qtd. in Xue 131).

Xue claims that Chinese American writers such as Kingston are both 100% Chinese and 100% American. She holds that Kingston's *WW* offers a "type of global hybrid person (*quanqiuren zajiao wenhua moshi*)" (134). At the beginning of *WW*, the "little girl" thinks that she is looking at the world from within a gourd (33). Her view is limited. As Kingston claims, "At first I saw only water so clear it magnified the fibers in the walls of the gourd. On the surface, I saw only my own round reflection" (22). After a series of painful experiences and meditations, she tries to go beyond a view that is purely Eastern or purely Western. Instead, she is striving for a new globalized viewpoint. Kingston writes, "I learn to make my mind large, as the universe is large, so that there is room for paradoxes" (29). This means descendants of Chinese must jump out of what Xue calls "the dual whirlpool (*shuangchong xuanwo*)" of Western cultural chauvinism and Chinese nationalism so as to gain a broader vision to face the cultural challenges of the future in a genuine way. They belong to the global culture, not merely to Chinese or American culture.

Xue's position is in contrast to that of Wei Jingyi who rejects cultural hybridity as a resolution to intercultural encounters (Wei 135-36). Wei joins Frank Chin in being deeply suspicious of any formulation of hybridity that does not glorify Chinese culture. Moreover, Zhang Hailong supports Wei by saying that "double identities lead to confusion and possibly the death of the subject" (117). Xue has turned away from these positions and interprets the merit of Kingston's project of cultural hybridity as a way of preventing the dilution of "Chinese-ness."

Xue makes use of Marcus Hansen's theory that "[t]hings that the sons of immigrants hope to forget are those that the grandsons of immigrants hope to remember" (qtd. in 136). She believes that tracking down the history of one's family to search for the roots of culture has become an important theme in Kingston's works in a way that is consistent with Hansen's understanding. In *CM*, Kingston describes the desire of one of her male ancestors to return to China after staying in the Gold Mountain for years, and a similar wish is expressed in *WW*:

I'd like to go to China if I can get a visa...; it's not the Great Wall I want to see but my ancestral village.... I want to talk to Cantonese.... I want to discern what it is that makes people go West and turn into Americans. I want to compare China, a country I made up, with that country which is really out there. (87)

Xue does not believe that it is Kingston's intention to depict only conflicts, for example, between mother and daughter, between white ghost and other ghosts, and between genders; rather she thinks Kingston is making efforts to move from conflict to the blending of cultures. Xue reminds us that in the last chapter of *WW* Kingston recalls her childhood, how she learned English, gradually accepted Chinese and American cultures, and became a mature Chinese American woman. In the final part of her book, Kingston tells the story of the renowned woman poet Cai Yan (Cai Wenji), who lived in the latter part of the Eastern Han dynasty (*Dong Han*, 25-220 CE), in order to portray her as an alien in a foreign culture. At the age of twenty, Cai Yan was captured by the head of the Southern Mongols. She lived with the barbarian and bore his children for twelve

years, but she never forgot her cultural identity as a Han Chinese person. In her alienation and isolation, she took up her pen to write her experiences. Her stories spread among the Han, making her an immortal poet. For Kingston, Cai Yan's story parallels the humiliating life she led in her childhood as an alien in white American society, but it also presents the possibility of blending two cultures as Cai Yan did. Xue comments, "Kingston used the story of Cai Yan to signify the predicament of Chinese Americans living in the tension of two cultures" (202). The story of Cai Yan living peacefully with the barbarians also encourages the "little girl" to survive in the two different cultures.

When searching for Chinese models to help her think about how to form her identity, Xue believes that Kingston's choice of Cai Yan is very significant. In China, almost ninety-seven percent of the population belongs to the Han ethnic group. Historically, while there have been regional differences among the Han, the experience of a hybrid identity such as one reads in Kingston is not a challenge faced by the Chinese Han, nor is it a theme explored by the great writers of Chinese literary history. Han writers do not struggle with "two-ness," nor do they feel the embarrassment (*ganga*) of being caught between cultures. While China was often ruled by foreign powers, including the Mongols (Yuan Dynasty) and the Manchus (the Qing Dynasty), those in these ethnic groups, while minorities, enjoyed positions of power and control. As such, they occupied the position of colonizers, or certainly occupiers. Such a position is very different from that of Kingston, whom Xue places in the category of "Searching for Their Roots and Asking about Their Ancestry (*xungen wenzu*)." This category of self-reflection is not found in the characters created in traditional Chinese literature except in

very few instances such as Cai Yan. Cai Yan has identity struggles that are analogous to those faced by Kingston, so she is the best representative of this sort of hybrid identity in traditional Chinese literary history.<sup>10</sup>

Xue, working as a cultural studies critic, positions Kingston's literary work within a typology of identity formation among Chinese Americans as member of the group "Searching for Their Roots and Asking about Their Ancestry (*xungen wenzu*)." In her work *Moving toward a Cultural Study of Chinese American Literature*, Lu Wei takes a similar approach in the chapter entitled "The Origin and Development of the Study of Chinese American Literature."<sup>11</sup> She shifts her attention to explore how identity and cultural interaction found expression in Chinese American literature itself. The term "Chinese American literature" is an ambiguous one in English. It can hardly distinguish

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<sup>10</sup> Since the founding of the new China in 1949, efforts have been made to preserve the ethnic consciousness of China's minorities. But many of these have been controversial. Some minorities feel that they are forced to assimilate into Han culture and lose their identity. In general, there are at least three different Chinese ethnic minorities currently expressing their identity quest through literature. There are the writers of the Uyghur minority, the Tibetan minority, and those within the Southwestern China minorities such as the Yi and Miao. In 1985, the Chinese Ethnic Writers Association was established, and it sponsors national conferences and offers awards for ethnic writing. Yet, in March of 2008, ChinaCSR.com reported that the Chinese Minority Writers Association was ordered to suspend its activities for six months in order to remedy political problems caused by writers such as the Tibetan poet Oser. For a recent study of Chinese minority poets in Southwest China, see Dayton 2006.

<sup>11</sup> This work, following a common pattern in Chinese scholarly publication, incorporates several articles Lu published previously elsewhere, including: "Mother and Other: The Strategy of Anti-Narration in *The Woman Warrior*," and "The Reconstruction of the Theme of the Disappearance of Words in the *Joy Luck Club*," both first published in the *Journal of Sichuan Foreign Language Institute*; "Words beyond Dualism: Reading Chinese American Female Writer Fae Myenne Ng's Novel *Bone*," published in *Studies of Foreign Literature*; and "Imitation, Obscurity, and Hybridity: Postcolonial Readings from *M. Butterfly* to *Madame Butterfly*," in *Foreign Literature*.

between the literary works by Chinese American writers who were born, brought up, and educated in the United States and those in China. But the term is very clear in China as Chinese scholars call the former *huayi meiguo zuopin* (华裔美国作品), and the latter *meiguo huaren zuopin* (美国华人作品) no matter whether they write in Chinese or English (Zhang, "Encounters" 119).

Lu is interested in how literature helped Chinese Americans manage the great challenges they faced. Accordingly, she wants to position Kingston in the history of Chinese American literature with respect to those writers who preceded her, those who are her critics, and those who have written in genres different from the ones she employs. For Lu, it is very important that critics of Kingston understand the American historical context in which her Chinese American writing has been created. Lu cautions mainland Chinese readers and scholars alike that failure to learn about the American context will lead to misinterpretation and misappropriation of Kingston's place in the evolution of Chinese American literature.

In *Moving toward a Cultural Study of Chinese American Literature*, Lu provides an analysis of literary and cultural study of Chinese American literature from the 1940s to 1990s, relying heavily on the perspective of post-colonialism (1). There are two principal threads uniting this book. The first thread is Lu's effort to elaborate how the U.S. is a new type of imperialist country which went through two eras of colonialism and post-colonialism. Lu argues that the U.S.'s treatment of its minorities is both racist and Orientalist, and she considers such practices to be a form of colonialism. The second thread organizing the book is Lu's use of post-colonial theory provided by Edward Said

and Homi K. Bhabha to offer an in-depth analysis of how racism and Orientalism create spiritual scars (*jingshen chuangshang*) for Chinese Americans. Lu's application of this method makes use of data drawn from writings about society, history and law, and appropriates nonempirical approaches from philosophy, psychology and psychoanalysis. As regards Kingston, her principal objective is to reveal those strategies of rebellion apparent in Kingston's writing that are employed by minorities against mainstream cultural hegemony in the U.S.

The book seeks to prove that, although minority groups do not face overt racism in the current U.S. pluralistic society, they still cannot escape new colonialist practices that, while invisible, are difficult to control. Lu calls this metaphorically "the glass ceiling (*boli tianhua ban*)" (3). She believes that, in Kingston's era, the kind of "cultural diversity" described by Bhabha was used merely for decoration in the mainstream culture of the U.S.; it was not truly a promotion of respect for cultural difference. Lu observes:

If a minority wants to walk out of this unspeakable (*nanyan de*) dilemma, first they have to keep an objective and calm view of social reality.

Second, they cannot be blindly pessimistic, thinking that colonialism and racism are as Said claimed in his *Orientalism* that the colonists execute power against the colonized in only one direction. Third, the minority cannot totally rely on strategies of rebellion that have as their nature deconstruction and mere language provided by post-colonialism. (2)

In her survey of the development of Chinese American literature, Lu is writing as a mainland Chinese scholar directing her attention to the literary engagement of a culture

with which she has little direct lived experience. Nevertheless, she draws judiciously on selected scholars to establish a set of developmental stages in order to give an account of the role of literature in the Chinese American experience. Lu's work is an important contribution to the understanding of how mainland Chinese scholars see the development of Chinese American literature.

Prior to the publication of Lu's *Moving toward a Cultural Study of Chinese American Literature* in 2007, the most influential work in China on the history of Chinese American literature was that of Zhang Aiping. Zhang held that Chinese American literature can be divided into three periods: "The Excavating and Sorting Out Period," "The Introducing and Assessing Period," and "The Period of Theoretical Study" (Lu 19). Lu builds on Zhang's work and makes the categorization much more detailed. She offers the following periodization of the development of Chinese American literature in an effort to show how literature is effective in helping Chinese Americans negotiate their experiences: "The Stage of Quietly Arising (*qiaoran qibu*)," "The Stage of Prosperous Development (*pengbo fazhan*)," and "The Stage of Multifaceted Criticism and Theoretical Construction (*duoyuan zouxiang de piping yu lilunjiangou*)."<sup>12</sup> In what follows, I set out Lu's three stages of Chinese American literary development as a demonstration of how a mainland Chinese scholar characterizes this evolution.

The first stage Lu identifies is "The Stage of Quietly Arising." Lu holds that the development and prosperity of Chinese American literature is a result of the forces of

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<sup>12</sup> We can also contrast Lu's account of the development of Chinese American literature with that of Zhang Ziqing in his "A Chinese Encounters Chinese American Literature." Lu develops her own categories and writes an account which has distinctive elements.

several social movements such as the reform of U.S. immigration law, the American Civil Rights movement, the Women's Liberation movement, and the Student Movement in the 1960s. She says, "However, we cannot say that Chinese American literature appeared in the late 1960s because as an undercurrent, Chinese American literature had been existing before it surfaced into the attention of mainstream American society. The only thing is that the exploration, sorting out, and theorizing of this literary genre did not happen until the late 1960s" (19). Following Zhang Aiping somewhat, Lu reminds us that Chinese American literature can be traced back to the period of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This is the period when a large number of Asian immigrants, including Chinese laborers, arrived in the U.S.. At that time, the U.S.-Mexican war had just ended and gold had been discovered in California. Among the immigrants of this period, the Chinese were most numerous. Most of the Chinese immigrants supplied the cheap labor that Americans both needed and were reluctant to perform. The Chinese were contract labor (*qiyue laogong*). They mainly assisted in gold prospecting and railway construction.

Chinese American literature in this period from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the 1950s was merely an "undercurrent (*anliu*)" in the culture. This is because, in Lu's opinion, "apart from oral tradition, story, and poems, very little written work was passed down" (20). Lu reminds us that early immigrants received very little education in the U.S. at this time, and writing in English was virtually impossible for them. In fact, since few of them knew English upon their arrival in the U.S., Lu says what we have in terms of immigrant class writing consists of works written in Chinese, not in English. For example, there were Chinese poems carved on the walls in the rooms of Angel Island

immigration center. These poems were later translated by Chinese American scholars such as Him Mark Lai (Mai Liqian), Genny Lim (Lin Xiaoqin) and Judy Yung (Yang Bifang). Lu claims that this collection of poems, published in 1991 and called *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910-1940*, demonstrates that one of the important characteristics of the writing during this earliest period of Chinese American literature is its autobiographical style (21).

One author Lu associates with this period is Yung Wing (Rong Hong) and his “My Life in China and America” (1909).<sup>13</sup> Lu thinks of this work as an autobiography which describes exotic scenes from the East in order to please Western readers, displaying exactly the sort of Orientalism that Edward Said criticizes. What Lu finds striking is that Rong’s work is representative of a kind of “self-Orientalism (*ziwo dongfanghua*)” (20). Rong interprets his own life and past in an Orientalist way.

Although Rong’s works are interesting, Lu considers the most influential writers in this period to be two sisters who were of European Asian descent. The older sister’s penname is Sui Sin Far (Shui Xianhua); the young sister used Onoto Watanna, a Japanese name, as her penname. Sui’s collection of short stories was entitled *Mrs. Spring*

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<sup>13</sup> Rong Hong (a.k.a. Yung Wing) was the first Chinese person to graduate from an American university, finishing what was then Yale College in 1854. He was born in Zhuhai in Guangdong Province in 1828 and came to the U.S. after studying in the missionary school of Robert Morrison. During the years the Qing government allowed “the Chinese Educational Mission,” Rong arranged for about 120 Chinese students to come to the U.S. to study in the sciences and engineering areas. He acted as translator for missionaries working with Hong Xiuquan (1815-1864) “God’s Chinese Son,” and the leader of the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864) and Heavenly Kingdom (*Taiping tianguo*). He eventually lost favor with the Qing and was forced to flee to Hong Kong in 1898. Although a naturalized American citizen for over 50 years, when he petitioned to return to the U.S. he was denied. Eventually, American friends helped him sneak back into the U.S., where he remained until his death in poverty in Hartford, Connecticut in 1912.

*Fragrance* (1912). This volume is regarded by Lu as a “pioneering work (*kaishan zhi zuo*)” of Chinese American literature. Lu observes, “By using extraordinary powers of observation and prediction, Sui raises the universal questions of human nature, women and children, and the contradictions between the ‘two worlds’ of race and culture” (Lu 21). From the perspective of a Chinese woman writer, Sui courageously unveils the two major questions of human rights and women’s rights, confronting minority women who lived at the bottom of American society. At the same time, Lu observes that most of the Chinese American works written during this period were by authors of the upper and well educated class such as Sui, so literature in this case could not well represent the vast numbers of Chinese labor immigrants.

Lu also assigns several works written in a self-praising style to this stage, such as Pardee Lowe’s (Liu Yichang) *Father and Glorious Son* (1943); Lin Yutang’s, *Chinatown Family* (1948); Jade Snow Wong’s (Huang Yuxue), *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (1950); as well as Chin Yang Lee’s (Li Jinyang), *Flower Drum Song* (1957). Lu defends authors writing in this manner on the following basis.

由于美国对华政策和移民政策对移民的歧视，以及白人主流文学作品中对华人的刻画带有很强的种族主义色彩，因此一些华裔美国作家创作的重要目的就是正面宣传自己，纠正被扭曲的形象，对自己的文化进行说明、解释工作，让主流社会了解、理解和接受华裔美国人。 Due to the discriminatory policies of the U.S. toward Chinese immigrants, and also because of the strongly racist tone that appears in the works about Chinese by white writers, some Chinese American writers intended to

present themselves in a positive way in order to correct the distorted image presented in white writing and to explain their own culture so that mainstream U.S. society could learn about, understand, and accept Chinese Americans. (21)

According to Lu, there are two main reasons for the success of the autobiographical works of this stage. First, the Chinese Exclusion Act enacted in 1882 was finally abolished in 1943. So the families of early Chinese immigrants, especially the “bachelors” who came to the U.S., were finally able to come to America and reunite with their husbands and fathers. Second, during World War II, the Chinese and the U.S. were allies for the first time, which improved the ties between the two countries. Both the attitude of the American government as well as the cultural milieu changed for Chinese American writers (22). This was manifested in the great success of Jade Snow Wong’s work. Her *Fifth Chinese Daughter* advocated a mutual understanding between Chinese and American cultures and a promotion of the outstanding cultural traditions of China. Wong’s book was even selected as a high school literature textbook in the state of California. Lu realizes that this novel has been severely criticized by the Chinese American scholar Frank Chin; nevertheless she holds that Jade Snow Wong exerted an important influence on later Chinese American writers such as Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan. She reminds her readers that Kingston has called Jade Snow Wong the “mother of Chinese American literature (*huayi meiguo wenxue zhi mu*)” (23).

According to Lu, a second wave of Chinese American literature during “The Stage of Quietly Arising” occurred in the 1960s. Virginia Lee (Li Jinlan) and Betty Lee

Sung (Songli Ruifang) inherited the tradition of the use of autobiographical style and published respectively two works that expressed the experience of hardship faced by Chinese Americans: *The House That Tai Ming Built* (1963) and *Mountain of Gold* (1967). These two works were anthologized in *Aiiieeee! An Anthology of Asian American Writers* (1974) edited by Frank Chin and others, as two of the ten most important works written before *Aiiieeee!* was published.

Lu claims, however, that during this second wave of “The Stage of Quietly Arising,” the appearance of the Chinese American novel was the most important event. In 1961, Louis Chu (Lei Tingzhao) published a novel that described the social life of immigrant Chinese bachelors in New York’s Chinatown: *Eat a Bowl of Tea*. Lu labels this work “the first Chinese American novel set in the background of Chinese families” (24). Borrowing the words of Jeffery Paul Chan, Lu says *Eat a Bowl of Tea* for the first time “truthfully and genuinely depicts the experience of Chinese Americans from the angle of a Chinese American instead of a Chinese or an Americanized Chinese” (qtd. in Lu 24). The Korean American critic Elaine Kim says, “This novel is considered as the cornerstone of Chinese American literary tradition” (155). In 1989, *Eat a Bowl of Tea* was adapted into a movie by Columbia Productions, making it the second Chinese American literary work, after *Flower Drum Song*, to be brought to the screen and widely accepted by American audiences. Of the immense influence of this book, Lu says:

它对唐人街“单身汉”的生活状况、二次大战后美对华政策的变化对在美华裔生活的影响、男性被阉割、女性被商品化的生活细节都第一次进行了客观的描述。

It provides an objective description of the life situation of the “bachelors” in Chinatown, the influence on Chinese Americans’ lives of the change of American policy toward the Chinese after World War II, and the emasculation of Chinese males and the commercialization of Chinese women. (24)

The second stage in Lu’s categorization is “The Stage of Prosperous Development.” This stage of the development of Chinese American literature stretches from the 1970s until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The first significant literary wave during “The Stage of Prosperous Development” was driven by the combined forces of the repeal of the Chinese immigration laws, the Civil Rights movement, and the Women’s Liberation movement. Lu observes:

这些运动大大唤醒了美国少数族裔的文化身份和自身权利意识，同时也促使受过良好教育的移民后代将先辈们的难以言说的经历诉诸文学创作，打破华裔美国人多年的沉寂，大喊一声“啊咿”！

All these movements awakened in Chinese Americans a sense of cultural identity and a self-consciousness of their rights as an American minority group. At the same time, the immigrants who received a good education were encouraged and inspired to put the unspeakable experiences of their ancestors into their literary creations, breaking the many years of silence for Chinese Americans. They shouted loudly, “Aieeeeeee!”. (25)

Another reason behind the rise of the use of literature by Chinese Americans of this period is that since the 1960s, the third world colonized countries were active in

launching an upsurge of liberation movements for independence and self-identity.

According to Lu, in the larger social environment present in America during this period, Chinese American literature turned into an expression of vibrant development and moved toward maturity and prosperity. This period is marked by a group of writers who began to excavate and sort out Chinese American literary materials in oral and written form which had been hidden, compiling them in literary collections (26).

Lu identifies several milestone collections of Chinese American literature which made it possible for writers to bring Chinese American literature into full view and to enable it to prosper. For instance, in 1971 the Asian American Research Center in UCLA compiled *Roots: An Asian American Reader* and Kai-yu Hsu's (Xu Jieyu) and Helen Palubinskas' *Asian-American Authors* in 1972. Then, Frank Chin, Jeffrey Chan (Chen Yaoguang), Shawn Hsu Wong (Xu Zhongxiong), and Laoson Fusao Inada co-edited *Aiiieeee! An Anthology of Asian American Writers* (1974). These four scholars also co-edited another significant collection, entitled *The Big Aiiieeee! An Anthology of Chinese American Literature* in 1991. Lu holds that these collections brought the buried Chinese American literary consciousness into the daylight, and these editors "established their own declaration (*dizao liao ziji de xuanyan*)" of Chinese American identity. She sees these works as a much needed written expression of Chinese American identity and independence. Of *Aiiieeee!* Frank Chin writes:

被美国文学创作长时间无视并强力排斥在外的华裔美国文学一直在受着伤害，它悲伤、愤怒、诅咒。彷徨。这本书就是华裔美国人的一声呐喊，而且，它还不仅是一声呐喊、呼号或哀嚎，这是五十年来积

郁在我们心中所有声音。

Chinese American literature which has been neglected for a long time by American literary scholarship and excluded from American literature has been suffering for years; it underwent grief, indignation, curses, and vacillation. This book symbolizes a major cry of Chinese Americans. It is not only a cry, a calling out and a sorrowful scream, but it is also the expression of all of the voices that had been pent up in our chests for fifty years. (27)

In addition to these significant collections, Chinese American writers also published a number of important literary monographs in “The Stage of Prosperous Development.” Among these works, women writers form a vibrant force that attracted attention. Their works were particularly noticed by readers and the circle of academic literary scholars in American mainstream society. These women writers not only gave attention to their own suffering, but they also provided a description filled with understanding and compassion toward male immigrants.

In Lu’s account, beginning in the 1970s, some Chinese American writers initiated what she calls a kind of literary archaeology to “salvage (*gouchen*)” their Chinese American past. One of the principal authors Lu believes to have launched out into the past to bring forward those things which had sunk almost into oblivion is Kingston. Lu calls *WW* an “autobiographical novel (*zhuanji ti xiaoshuo*).” She considers this work “a milestone (*lichengbei*)” in Chinese American literature and says it pushed Chinese American literature to new heights by breaking conventions and utilizing a narrative style

between modernism and post-modernism. Of Kingston's use of the salvaged past of Chinese American consciousness and experience, Lu claims that Kingston intentionally diverts (*nuoyong*) and bravely revives the mythology, legends and historical stories of Chinese culture. She says the characters and stories used by Kingston are full of symbolic meanings designed to offer a severe attack on the systems of race, gender, and class division in traditional Chinese feudalist society and in America. Lu praises Kingston's work saying that her books have enabled Chinese American literature to enter into the mainstream of American culture as "serious literary writing (*yansu de wenxue zuopin*)" for the first time (29). Lu's high view of Kingston's work partially explains why she considers Kingston to be a significant Chinese American writer who should be studied in mainland China.

Lu also discusses the canonization of Kingston's work. An argument can be made that before the recognition of *WW*, the only presence of Chinese women in an anthology of American literature was the rather thoroughly Orientalist image of an "Oriental Wife" in Ezra Pound's "The River-Merchant's Wife: A Letter" (1915).<sup>14</sup> Jennie Wang believes this poem did much to create the idea of an Oriental wife and Oriental love in the Western literary imagination (95). Robert Kern called this poem the quintessential Chinese poem in English creating in the American mind the image of

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<sup>14</sup> This was a poem Pound translated from a Japanese version of a Chinese poem written by Li Bai (701-762) who wrote during the Tang dynasty. The original Chinese title of the poem is "*Chang Gan Xing*" or "the Chang Gan Tune." In the poem the speaker never identifies her husband as a merchant or calls herself the "River-Merchant's Wife." In this work, the poet assumes a married woman's voice, lamenting the sorrow of her husband's long departure from home, recollecting her innocent love and desire for her husband since her teenage years.

China as a world of exquisite sensibility, elaborate courtesy, and self-sacrificing love. Wang finds views such as Kern's entirely objectionable. She points out that the poem does more than create a world of innocence. She says, "It is a feudal world, where wives still wear chastity belts, while husbands travel abroad. It is a backward, stagnant, deserted world, where desirable women are left unprotected by heartless China men, who are identified as profit-minded merchants" (96). It is just this kind of image that the inclusion of Kingston's writing in the canon of American literature began to subvert and replace.

Kingston is associated with a group of Chinese American writers of the 1970s who are undergoing a shift from "accommodation (*luodi shenggen*)" to "ethnic pride and consciousness (*xungen wenzu*)." Lu Wei's metaphor that Kingston is "salvaging history" is amplified and explained by this shift. Kingston's salvaging of her history is the fuel that empowers her through the shift toward gaining her consciousness and identity. The literary trope most employed by these writers is the reconstruction of their family histories and villages in China; however, what Wang calls the "ethnic pride and consciousness" movement of Chinese American writers is not a nostalgic longing for the old country and its Confucian feudalistic old culture. Wang says:

Kingston's *China Men*, written during this period and published in 1980, is "avant-garde" in this movement. The book reached a wide audience and encouraged a generation of writers to follow her [Kingston's] success to recover lost history and rewrite the history of Chinese Americans. (29)

In Lu's view, the ultimate effect of Kingston's salvaging effort is the rewriting of American Orientalism and a reinventing of the idea of what it means to be a Chinese American. As a cultural hybrid, she is carrying on these processes simultaneously.

Unlike the mainland Chinese scholars under study who probably have little access to the needed sources, Jennie Wang has made a deliberate effort to determine what Kingston knew about China, its culture, and literature before and during the period in which she wrote *WW* and *CM*. Wang found several interesting things:

1. Kingston's parents always had in the house Chinese newspapers that circulated within the Chinese immigrant communities in California.
2. Kingston was aware of an English translation of a short story written by the Chinese woman writer Ding Lin and entitled "A Girl in the Xia Village," which is closely related to the No Name Woman narrative in *WW*.
3. While exploring Kingston's lyricism in the narrative structure of *CM*, she reread the original text of Cai Yan's "Eighteen Laments Sung to a Hujia (*hujia shiba pai*) and found it strikingly similar. (5)

In contrast to Wang, Lu is very careful to follow the development of Kingston's contribution to the history of Chinese American literature. From a female Chinese literature scholar's perspective and by using historical facts, Lu interprets Kingston's accomplishment in *CM* in this way: "[Kingston] provides an objective and ruthless exposé of the history of Chinese American males, which was rarely known in the U.S." (30). Of course, we may question whether Lu is correct in saying that this work is an "objective" writing of the history of Chinese American males, but we may at least agree

that Kingston is continuing to reach down into the sea of the Chinese American past to salvage truths about Chinese males' experiences that otherwise would have been lost. On this issue of "objectivity," Lu is quite aware of Kingston's "deliberate diverting" of the past in *CM* and not merely in *WW*. She says "from the perspective of a woman, Kingston uses her pen to construct for her reader the Chinese American male's heroic and masculine image" (30). It seems that a better word choice for Lu would have been to say that, in *CM*, Kingston intends to provide a "truthful" account of Chinese immigrant males' experiences, instead of saying that it is an "objective" one.

Lu is aware that Kingston is not the only Chinese American writer of importance during "The Stage of Prosperous Development." She also realizes that not all Chinese American writers were using literature to salvage truth from the past in the same way. In fact, some of these writers were very critical of the literary strategies employed by Kingston. A male Chinese writer who also has great influence in Chinese American literature and who has been one of Kingston's most persistent critics is Frank Chin. Lu observes:

虽然汤、赵两人都为华裔美国为学的兴起、发展和繁荣起到了拓荒与奠基的作用，但与汤亭亭不同的是，赵健秀在种族主义的美国社会中披荆斩棘所要重建的是华裔美国男性的英雄传统，以及华裔美国男性的合法地位。

Although Kingston and Chin both were pioneers and established the foundation for the emergence, development, and prosperity of Chinese American literature, Chin differs from Kingston in making great effort to

reconstruct the heroic tradition of China men and their legal standing in American racist society. (31)

Chin wants to break the stereotypes of Chinese men depicted in American mainstream literature and by some Chinese American writers. Lu thinks that Chin tries to correct the demonic image of the feminization (*nuxinghua*), the neutering (*wuxinghua*), and the gender generalization (*fanxinghua*) of China men by some Chinese American writers. He accuses Kingston of all these errors. Chin wants to restore the masculinity of men as seen in classical Chinese literary works such as *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and *Journey to the West*. Lu seems much less comfortable with the fact that in addition to protesting American racism in his work, Frank Chin also violently attacks Jade Snow Wong. He criticizes Amy Tan and David Henry Hwang (Huang Zhelun) as well, accusing them of “self-orientalizing (*ziwo dongfanghua*)” and “twisting Chinese culture and deliberately catering to the interests of white people (*niuqu zhongguo wenhua, keyi yinghe bairen de quwei*).” Lu observes that due to Chin’s unrestrained critical style (*fangdang buji de chuangzuo fengge*), he may be characterized as a “Chinatown Cowboy (*huabu niuzai*)” and a “Godfather of Chinatown (*tangren jie jiaofu*)” (31-32).

After Maxine Hong Kingston and Frank Chin, there are a number of other Chinese American writers whom Lu assigns to “The Stage of Prosperous Development.” In Lu’s view, if we say that prior to the 1960s American society represented the American dream of a great melting pot (*da ronglu*) of assimilation, then after the 60s American society, expressed in a society of races, exhibited the new configuration of a

cultural mosaic (*wenhua masaike*) or salad bowl (*selai wan*) of plural coexistence. She comments:

“大熔炉”的确曾经是美国人的一个美丽梦想。无论出身于什么家族、什么阶级、什么性别、什么年龄、什么国家，任何人到了美国社会这个大熔炉中，只要认同美国主流社会的文化与价值观念，努力工作，都可以融化在这个熔炉之中，重塑自我，骄傲地成为“典型的美国人”。但遗憾的是事实证明，在一个以种族为基本社会形态的国家中，这只能是一个乌托邦式的神话。

The “melting pot” used to be a beautiful dream for all Americans. No matter what race, age, gender, or class one was from, he/she could be melted together once he/she identified with American social culture and core values such as hard work. He/She could be remolded and proudly become a “typical American.”<sup>15</sup> The pity is that, in a country with its principal social formation based on race, this ideal could be only a utopian legend. (33)

In the era when pluralism was being promoted actively in American culture, the works of several Chinese American writers were well received. Lu mentions a number of such significant Chinese American works. Amy Tan’s *The Joy Luck Club* was greatly acclaimed in 1989, then moved to the movie screen, and made a great splash in the U.S.

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<sup>15</sup> Lu is making an allusion to Gish Jen’s book *Typical American*.

in 1993.<sup>16</sup> With regard to the differences between the success of Kingston and that of Tan, Lu writes, “[T]he American literary critics always compare them to the relationship of African American writers Toni Morrison and Alice Walker: Kingston, like Morrison, is more suited for academic study, whereas Tan, similar to Walker, is more well received by ordinary American readers and therefore has more commercial value” (Lu 34).

As for the influential Chinese American writers after the 1980s, Lu includes Gish Jen’s *Typical American*, *Mona’s Promised Land*, and *Who’s Irish?* as well as *The Love Wife* (2003), as examples which deal with the issues of searching for cultural identity and family relationships (35). Other writers and works classified in “The Stage of Prosperous Development” are Gus Lee’s (Li Jianshun) *China Boy* (1981) and *Honor and Duty* (1994); David Wong Louis’ (Lei Zhuwei) *Pangs of Love* (1992) and *The Barbarians are Coming* (2000); Fae Myenne Ng’s (Wu Huiming) *Bone* (1993); and Mei Ng’s (Wu Kuangqin) *Eating Chinese Meals Naked* (1998). Lu says that both of the Ngs’ books adopt a stream of consciousness style as a means to uncover the rich, yet complicated, inner world of Chinese Americans between generations, genders, and siblings (35).

The dramatic play in Chinese American literature also developed in “The Stage of Prosperous Development,” and Lu identifies David Henry Hwang as the most outstanding Chinese American playwright of this period. Hwang won the OBIE award

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<sup>16</sup> Others of Amy Tan’s works also cannot be neglected, and they are *The Kitchen God’s Wife* (1991), *A Hundred Secret Senses* (1995), *The Bonesitter’s Daughter* (2001), and a collection of essays entitled *The Opposition of Fate: A Book of Musings* (2003). In 2005, she published *Saving Fish from Drowning*.

(Ao Bi Jiang)<sup>17</sup> for Off-Broadway Plays with *F.O.B.*, his first play. Later, he published *The Dance and the Railroad* (1981) and won the CNE Gold Eagle Award. In this same year, he published *Family Devotions* and these three plays form “a Chinese American trilogy (*huamei san buqu*).”<sup>18</sup>

The third stage of the development of Chinese American literature as identified by Lu is “The Stage of Multifaceted Criticism and Theoretical Construction.” It stretches from the 1980s until the present and there is overlapping between this period and “The Stage of Prosperous Development.” Lu reminds us that in literary history it is often very difficult to draw a clear-cut time line between periods. Still, one of the conspicuous representations of this period is that well-known critics of Chinese American literature established the field of their own study and became full-fledged leading figures (*lingzun renwu*) in the analysis of Chinese American literature. Among these critics Lu includes Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, Amy Ling (Lin Yingmin), Shirley Geok-lin Lim (Lin Yuling), King-Kok Cheung, Elaine Kim (Jin Huijing), and Frank Chin.

Since the mid-1990s, the theoretical study of Chinese American and Asian American literature has matured, according to Lu. Critical coverage has become wider

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<sup>17</sup> The OBIE is an annual award bestowed by *The Village Voice* newspaper to theater artists and groups in New York City and is also known as the Off-Broadway Theater Award. As the Tony Awards cover Broadway productions, the Obies cover off-Broadway and off-off-Broadway productions.

<sup>18</sup> The most successful and representative of Hwang’s works, according to Lu, is his *M. Butterfly* (1988). It played on Broadway, was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize, and won the Drama Desk Award, Outer Critics Award, John Cassner Award, and Tony Award (36). Hwang became the first Chinese American playwright to win such a major award. After *M. Butterfly*, Hwang wrote *Golden Child* in 1997 and was nominated for another Tony Award and the OBIE award.

and the depth of analysis more far-reaching. She provides a list of prominent dissertations on Chinese American literature done in the U.S. from 1996 to 2003, taking special note of those by Lisa Luo (Lowe), *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (1996) and David Li (Li Leiwei), *Imagining Nation: Asian American Literature and Cultural Identity* (1998). Lu also takes note of the journals devoted to Asian American issues, many of which are Chinese American in focus: *Amerasia Journal*, *Asian America: Journal of Culture and Arts*; *Multi-Ethnic Literature of the U.S. (MELUS)*; and the *Journal of Asian American Studies* (40).

Lu also comments on the development of Chinese American literature which is beyond American borders and has drawn wide attention in Asia and Europe. For example, in 1997, King-Kok Cheung published *An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature* in which she mentions a number of students from Italy, Poland, France, and Spain who came to the U.S. especially to study Asian American Literature. The first book of criticism of Chinese American literature in Europe was published in Germany in 1987 by Karin Meiseenburg under the title *The Writings on the Wall*.

The study of Chinese American literature in Asia is also covered by Lu. In Taiwan, the European and American Research Institute in the Central Academy of Research has held several symposia on Chinese American literature, gathering scholars and publishing papers from the conferences. So far, there are three highly recognized collections of published papers from these conferences: *Cultural Identity and Chinese American Literature* (1993), another volume by the same name in 1994, and *Reappearing Politics and Chinese American Literature* (1996). Lu writes that the highest level of

Chinese American scholarship in Asia is represented by two works done by Shan Dexing: *Inscripting and Reappearing: Chinese American Literature and Culture* (2000) and *“Opening up the Frontier and Reclaiming the Land”: Chinese American Literature and Culture* (2006) (41).

In mainland China, the study of American literature has about a hundred year history, but Lu claims that the focus on Chinese American literature is a new area of study which has just arisen since 1997. She mentions that in 2002, the School of English at BFSU established the first “Research Center” for Chinese American literature in China and also created the first Chinese website for this literature, designed to issue the most recent developments and information about research in this field for mainland China scholars. The creation of this center symbolizes the initial systemization of the study of Chinese American literature on the mainland. Moreover, in 2002, scholars from Nanjing University edited a work entitled *New History of American Literature*. Lu notes an always important development for academics working in various areas in mainland China, saying:

over the recent years, the study of Chinese American literature and Asian American literature has been brought to the agendas of national academic conferences. For example, in October 2000, the first National Symposium for Chinese American Comparative Literature and Cultural Study was held at Beijing University. In April 2001, the Tenth Annual All-China American Literature Study Conference was held in Luoyang at the People’s Liberation Army Foreign Language Institute. (42)

There are a number of other recent activities related to the study of Chinese American literature in mainland China. In October 2001, the English Department of Beijing University and the English Department of State University of New York, Albany, co-sponsored an International Symposium for Chinese American Comparative Literature and Culture in Beijing. In August 2002, the Annual National American Literature Conference was held at Nanjing University, and in November 2003, Sichuan University sponsored a special topic discussion for the Annual Conference on American Literature: "American Minority Literature Seminar." Lu attaches special significance to the fact that in May 2006 BFSU hosted the 21<sup>st</sup> Century International Conference for Asian American Literature. This conference attracted a large number of scholars from America, Europe, Asia, Taiwan, China and other regions. Lu estimates that about 100 papers on the topic of Chinese American writing have been published in various Chinese language journals devoted to foreign literature in mainland China since the late 1990s (42).

Lu states that special attention should be given to several important translations of Chinese American works from English into Chinese, many of which have been published by Yiling Press. In 2003, Cheng Aimin in Nanjing Normal University edited the first collection of papers devoted to Chinese American literature in China entitled *The Study of Chinese American Literature. An Anthology of Chinese American Literature*, the first college-level textbook on Chinese American literature, was edited by Professor Yingguo Xu of Tianjian University of Science and Engineering and published in 2004. Lu says that very soon another book, edited by Wu Bing, will be published by Beijing Foreign Studies University, entitled *A Study of Chinese American Writers*. Lu reports that, in the

English Departments of many foreign language institutes or universities, courses in Chinese American literature have been offered for graduate students working for the master's and doctoral degrees. A number of scholars have applied for research grants from the central government or from their provincial governments in order to carry out research on Chinese American writers. The continuing systematic and academic study of Chinese American literature in mainland China will no doubt promote the vibrant development of this branch of American literature, and hopefully this present study will also serve to facilitate discussion both in China and in the U.S.

We can wonder whether Lu's taxonomy really explains Kingston's work and provides us with a critical focus, or simply creates labels for authors of Chinese American works in the previous decades. Lu locates Kingston within "The Stage of Prosperous Development," when Chinese American writing came into full view of American literary critics and expressed a voice of ethnic identity and confidence. Kingston was noteworthy during this period because she "salvaged (*gouchen*)" her Chinese American past through a kind of literary archeology, drawing on the traditions of Chinese writing. In the process, Kingston confronted the Orientalism that not only characterized American culture, but also influenced what works by Chinese American authors were included in the canon of American literature. In Lu's judgment, Kingston corrected the stereotypes of American Orientalism with regard to both Chinese women and men. Still, Lu's categories may be too neat, failing to recognize the ways that Kingston has one foot in one stage and another in a different one. For example, Lu puts Kingston in the "The Stage of Prosperous Development" of Chinese American literary

history, and although this makes sense, Kingston is also doing critical and theoretical work as well. So Kingston may belong in more than one of Lu's categories. Kingston certainly engaged in criticism in her writing, criticism of Orientalism and of her own complicity with and resistance to it. Kingston's appropriation of folklore and recreation of history in *WW* and *CM* are theoretically informed activities even if an argument can be made for the position that she did not pursue them as a self-conscious attempt to apply a theory. As for extending the stage of "Multifaceted Criticism and Theoretical Construction," it is just such an effort to which this present study belongs.

### Chapter III: The Double Charm of Blending Imagination and Narrative 双重魅力

Kingston's literary method has kindled many discussions in American academia and scholarship. What are then the voices from the scholars in mainland China saying about Kingston's method? Do they identify with what American critics conclude or do they present novel view points? By means of an interrogation of the distinctive points of view displayed by mainland Chinese scholars, their criticisms of American and Chinese American interpreters of Kingston's writing, and their application of Chinese literary tradition to the study of Kingston's works, this chapter focuses on positioning the Chinese scholars' discussion of Kingston's literary method, with the intention to bridge the discourse between the East and the West. In the concluding remarks to her work *"She" Writings in Contemporary Chinese American Literature: Multifaceted Analysis of Maxine Hong Kingston, Amy Tan, and Yan Geling*<sup>1</sup>, Chen Xiaohui articulates that Kingston, as a Chinese woman writer, displays an attitude and style for expressing Chinese imagination that is very significant.<sup>2</sup> She believes specifically that Chinese

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<sup>1</sup> Yan Geling was born in Shanghai in 1958 and served in the People's Liberation Army during the Cultural Revolution. She was both a dancer and actress, and her first novel was published in 1985. Her early works, with which Chen Xiaohui is most familiar, include novels such as *The Banquet Bug* (published as *The Uninvited* in the UK) and *The Lost Daughter of Happiness*, as well as a story collection entitled *White Snake and Other Stories*. In recent years, several of Yan's works have been adapted for film, including *Xiu Xiu: The Sent-Down Girl*, the screenplay for which was co-written by China's famous director Ang Lee. She has also worked with the well-known director Chen Kaige on a film biography of Mei Lanfang, the Peking opera star. Yan holds a bachelor's degree in literature from Wuhan University and a Master's in Fine Arts in Fiction Writing from Columbia College, Chicago. To date, she has published more than 20 books, and she has won 30 literary and film awards.

<sup>2</sup> Chen Xiaohui received her B.A. in Chinese Language and Literature from China National Huqiao University in 1997 and her M.A. in Contemporary and Current

American women's literature led by Kingston received attention from American mainstream critics because of the "double charm (*shuangchong meili*)" of blending imagination and storytelling. Chen claims that these double charms contribute to the Chinese imaginative world she created in her works. Clearly, "double charm" is not a technical term for a literary method, but Chen uses it to refer to the unrestricted use of imagination that is blended with the talk-stories Kingston heard as a child. Just to what extent imaginative and spontaneous creativity is the explanation behind Kingston's narrative is indeterminable. I doubt even Kingston could say with any degree of certainty. In fact, there is much about Kingston's writing that invites a very different reading. As we shall see, the craft behind Kingston's *Mulan*, the story of Tang Ao, and many other narratives in her texts suggests careful deliberation and well thought out re-readings of received traditions. So while Chen's notion is inviting at one level, its value as an illumination of Kingston's method may be quite limited.

Chen holds that Kingston's purpose in writing is to enter American mainstream literature. In her works, the cultural ingredients which manifest the characteristics of Chinese nationalism do not emphasize so much a sense of alienation as they become tools to express her identity as a Chinese American. While Kingston's writing is still an engagement with the fundamental realities of American society, Chen feels it carries the heavy color of mystery.

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Chinese Literature focusing on World Chinese Literature in 2000. Following the completion of her M.A., she went immediately to work on her Ph. D. at Fujian Normal University. In 2003, she completed her Ph. D. in Contemporary and Current Chinese Literature, focusing on Overseas Chinese Literature.

Chen recognizes that the world Kingston charms into being by blending Chinese mythology and her American reality has a distance from its original appearance in Chinese literary history.<sup>3</sup> She says the writing itself becomes a membrane or diaphragm (*gemo*) between the original Chinese stories and American culture (187). I suggest that Chen's description of Kingston's writing as a porous substance can be connected to the position that Xue Yufeng also valorizes when she speaks of Kingston inventing characters that are cultural hybrids who blend cultures in their lives. The use of the Chinese term "gemo" or membrane is suggestive of an organic and transparent, even permeable, boundary and taking it in this way connects the writing as membrane with the author as hybrid.<sup>4</sup>

This analysis of writing cultural hybridity as a literary method leads to the examination of Gish Jen's position that Chinese American authors are writing on the margins. In responding to the criticism directed against Kingston by Frank Chin that Kingston's literary craft distorts the image of Hua Mulan, Jen says that his criticism is an

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<sup>3</sup>During my study, I was fortunate to reach Chen, and we talked by phone and exchanged e-mails. Such close contact helped me understand her work. She is a young scholar but has great passion for Kingston's writing. Chen told me in a letter, As for the women writers, from Yan Geling to Maxine Hong Kingston, the writers marked by being women as their commonality have both distinctive characteristics and immense differences; however, there is a certain internal connection among them. I think we should eliminate this dynamic literature from its rigid frame of inborn national and racial identity and place it in a wider, simpler, and more appropriate background. On such a basis we need to construct the external and unifying features characterized by women's writing and then endeavor to restore its richness woven by history and individuality. ("Research Questions")

<sup>4</sup>Both Chen and Xue take a very different position from that of Wei Jingyi whom we have already seen rejects the notion of cultural hybridity as a helpful one in negotiating intercultural encounters (Wei 135-36).

expression of the marginal minority group's fear of the American mainstream world. Jen claims that minorities such as the Chinese feel they live in the margins, feel watched and besieged, so they pursue more vigorously the accuracy of their ethnic accounts (qtd. in Chen 188). It is Jen's suggestion that the marginalized feel besieged and even fearful that gives me pause to consider the motivation behind Kingston's hybridity and the writing that comes from it. In Kingston's case, Jen's position seems to have some critical force. Just taking *WW* as an example, Kingston makes extensive use of the trope of "ghosts." As we shall see later, the most distressing ghosts are "white" and come in all shapes and roles. They are everywhere Kingston turns, watching and besieging her. Her writing is the sword she uses to fend them off and banish them. Even so, we do well to remember Lu Wei's insistence that Kingston and others of her generation are writing from an overflow of ethnic pride and racial consciousness. These motivations should not be overlooked, and Kingston's sensibilities must not be reduced to fear of the mainstream. Chen Xiaohui writes, "If there is a firm emphasis on holding on to an unblurred primitive and unchanging status of the Chinese original, that is a demand that cannot be realized as far as Chinese American literature is concerned" (187). In this case, then, if Chen were to appropriate Lu Wei's view that Kingston was "searching for her roots and asking about her ancestry" by reaching into the sea of her Chinese past and hooking something in a sort of literary salvage (*gouchen*), then she would say that what Kingston actually brings up is not a replica of the past, not an original, but rather something on which she works a "double charm" of imaginative narrative.

Chen is distinctive among those scholars under study because she is very well acquainted with Chinese literature, which was her doctoral specialty. Swimming like a fish (*ryu de shui*) and collating extensively (*pangzheng boyin*) in the ocean of Chinese literature whenever interpreting Kingston, she often presents unique analyses and draws interesting connections between Kingston's writing and Chinese literary figures, stories, and traditions. This kind of literary practice is not possible for those who do not have breadth and depth of knowledge in Chinese literature even if they are Chinese nationals.

Accordingly, she is very interested in clarifying to critics not familiar with Chinese literary practice, even those Chinese Americans such as Frank Chin, that Kingston's method is not only in the "double charm" style, but also that she adopts the tradition which is often used in ancient Chinese literature of intentionally misplacing plots (*qingjie cuozhi*). This practice was employed by Kingston in order to make a Western-style interpretation that may roughly be called postmodern while nevertheless using an Eastern style of narration. As a fifth-generation descendant of Chinese Americans growing up in Chinatown culture, Kingston stands within a family that has been settled in American society for almost a century. This cultural system includes the preservation and development of its own traditions and culture, and the transmission of the Chinese experience. It is my position that Chen would definitely agree with Xue's view that Kingston stands within that identity formation group "Searching for Their Roots and Asking about Their Ancestry (*xungen wenzhu*)" (123). Just as in *WW*, Kingston reaches into the past of Chinese folklore and the experiences of women in her family's lineage, using both imagination and actual event. The retelling of her family's

male history in *CM* does not ignore the history of Chinese American immigrants but reinvents it. Kingston pulls up elements of the Chinese cultural past and creates a blended writing that acts as a membrane between the original Chinese story and American immigrant history. I agree with Chen and Xue that this kind of writing is an important development that empowers not only Kingston but also others in the group of those Chinese Americans Searching for Their Roots and Asking about Their Ancestry.

Chen cautions the readers of *WW* and *CM* that Kingston's knowledge of China comes basically from the historical accounts of her family, and secondarily, from the media and books that she read. She also makes a point to remind American critics that in Kingston's hometown, going to sea for male immigrants was a custom developed over a long period. Accordingly, "the local social culture has already been somewhat derailed from indigenous (*bentu*) Chinese social culture. Therefore, this may explain why Kingston's accuracy and purity in terms of transmitting Chinese elements is always viewed as shaky (*nianie buju*)" (178). The result is a sort of free-reined account in Kingston's writing. Chen concludes that, although Kingston is in love with Chinese mythology, she does not think this mythology is the embodiment of Chinese cultural identity:

文本的主题意义可以弃之不顾，因为她实际并不需要这些中国故事的确定性。她有自己的身份构建的目的和途径。在她的作品中，中国故事的灵活性被大大加强，以至于有人认为她对中国文本的使用过于“随意”。但她本人却把这看作一种故事漂移的自然现象。

The essential meaning of the original version can be abandoned because she does not really need the certainty of correspondence with the Chinese stories. She has her own purpose and means for constructing her own identity. In her works, the flexibility of Chinese stories has been greatly maximized. Consequently, some people think that her adoption of the original versions of Chinese culture is too loose; however, she views this liberty as the natural phenomena of the flow of stories. (Chen, “She” 178)

It is not that Kingston is unfamiliar with Chinese masterpieces so that she confuses names and places; on the contrary, Chen acknowledges that Kingston is widely read in both Chinese classical masterpieces and contemporary Chinese literature. What marks her literary method is that Kingston works her “double charm” in the space between general learning (*yibanxing liaojie*) and an in-depth penetration (*shenru gusui de tongtou*) of the literary works on which Kingston’s freedom of recomposition and reimagination of Chinese mythology expresses itself. Chen manifests her viewpoint, emphasizing that “在汤亭亭的作品中，中国故事只是一种桥梁，让人物从某种原始的虚幻梦境走向真正的，不容回避的社会。 In Kingston’s works, Chinese stories are only a bridge which allows the characters to walk toward the truthful unavoidable social reality from a sort of primitive illusion” (179).

Chen offers as an example of Kingston’s use of the Chinese practice of “displaced plots” a passage taken from *Tripmaster Monkey* (hereafter, *TM*). It is abundantly clear that an American critic or reader or anyone who does not possess knowledge of Chinese

culture and literary works will make little sense of Kingston's written membrane (*gemo*) between Chinese and American cultures.

In the passage, Kingston alludes to the 108 heroes in the masterpiece *Water Margin* (a.k.a., *Outlaws of the Marsh*), which is one of the four classical novels in Chinese literary history.<sup>5</sup> Within the passage, Kingston shifts from references to *Water Margin* to allusions to the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* by introducing Guan Goong (Guan Yu)<sup>6</sup>, Liu Bei, and Zhang Fei into the narrative. The background of and reason for this shift will be missed by a reader who is unfamiliar with Chinese folklore. Guan Gong lost Liu Bei's wife to the enemy in a battle. In the ancient story, Liu Bei is a king of Shu, one of the three kingdoms, and Guan Gong felt so sorry for losing his wife, that he went to the enemy warlord Cao Cao's palace to persuade him to release her. Knowing this flow of the story is helpful in understanding the ultimate point Kingston is making: history is constituted by complex events and multiple heroes. But during the course of the narrative, Kingston alludes first to Yue Fei, then to women warriors such as Liang Hongyu, Hua Mulan, and the female heroes of the Yang family in the Song dynasty. Kingston blends in the characters from *Water Margin*, including mistresses, a female tiger, the green snake, the wife of Guan Gong, the White Bone demon (*baigujing*) and the Monkey King (Sun Wukong) taken from *Journey to the West*.

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<sup>5</sup> The other classical novels are *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *Journey to the West*, and *Dream of the Red Chamber* (a.k.a., *The Story of the Stone*).

<sup>6</sup> Guan Yu, often referred to as Guan Gong or Guan Goong (Lord Guan), was a brave General serving under the warlord Liu Bei during the Three Kingdoms era of Chinese history (184-280). He played a significant role in helping Liu Bei to establish his Kingdom of Shu. He is respected as the epitome of loyalty and righteousness and often worshipped in the temples in Southern China.

Chen's point is well made in attesting that Kingston employs many scenarios characterized by "displaced plots," which are popular ingredients in ancient Chinese literature. This single passage is a melting pot or tangled knot. It surely represents that "double charmed" blend of the ancient Chinese masterpieces and great historical figures Chen characterizes as Kingston's method. Any reader who comes to this passage with no background in Chinese literature will be totally lost and have no idea that Kingston is really talking about how Whitman refuses any appellation associated with being Chinese, detests the stereotypical attitudes of white Americans, and rebels against his family in Chinatown and against Chinese tradition. Chen writes, "If it was not read from the context, or the relevant Chinese story, no reader could guess that the disorder Kingston is creating is actually a microcosm of the famous scene of 'making great chaos in the Heavenly Palace (*danao tiangong*)' by the Monkey King in *Journey to the West*" (179-80).

As a young Chinese scholar who has not been greatly influenced by the voices of American critics of Kingston, Chen interprets Kingston's appropriation of many myths and literary allusions in her writing in terms of the Chinese literary convention of "displaced plots." She asserts that Kingston's intention in following such a convention is "to add an explicit elaborative tone to her Chinese American literature: to make a Western-styled embellishment of an Eastern posture of expression and explanation" (179). Chen's association of Kingston with the Chinese literary method of "displaced plots" invites a contrast with the predominate interpretations drawn in American criticism of Kingston's method. Most American critics associate Kingston's method with the

characteristics of postmodern literary works. For instance, Elliott Shapiro, in his “Authentic Watermelon: Maxine Hong Kingston’s American Novel,” claims that Kingston’s writing manifests postmodern features. He comments that *WW* and *CM* are works “divided into thematically related narratives; [but] they make radical leaps in time and space in China, Hawaii, and across America” (5). Linda Hutcheon also categorizes Kingston as a postmodern writer because “it has been black and feminist theory and practice that has been particular in this postmodernist refocusing on historicity, both formally (largely through parodic intertextuality) and thematically” (257). Hutcheon’s postmodern concept of “the presence of the past” explains why Kingston tends to include so many literary allusions from Chinese history and folklore. Hutcheon holds that the adoption of the postmodern literary method as “the presence of the past” is not a “nostalgic return” but a “critical revisiting” (244). As we can see, a Chinese scholar, like Chen, reaches toward the literary criticism and method with which she is most familiar to characterize Kingston’s writing, whereas American critics like Shapiro and Hutcheon associate Kingston with a postmodern method, and both might be right. We can connect cultural criticism to this divergent reading of Kingston’s method. The characterizations of Kingston’s writing as use of “displaced plots” or as postmodern strategy is not so much a reflection of an intentional employment of a single method by Kingston, but a lens through which to analyze her work for a readership shaped by a particular culture.

Xue Yufeng makes use of an approach diverging from both Chen and the American critics who see Kingston writing as fundamentally postmodern in method, although her reading complements rather than contradicts these interpretations. She

begins by stating that Kingston's depiction of Chinese culture has undergone an artistic processing and transformation that culminates in the author's "deliberate misreading (*wu du* 误读)" of Chinese culture (195). Xue's choice of this expression *wu du* is full of potential meaning. I would like to extend her view and draw out the significance of this expression by noticing how it functions as a homophone in Chinese.

*Wu du* can mean "misreading" as in Xue's use and intention, but it can also mean "not poisonous (*wu du* 无毒)." While the sounds are the same, the Chinese characters are different. *Wu du* can also mean "five poisons (*wu du* 五毒)." There is also the homophone *wu du* (无度) meaning "unlimited," and finally, there is *wu du* (巫毒) used for "sorcerer." If we think of these various permutations for applying the multiple meaning of this expression to Kingston, new understandings may reveal themselves. While we can say that all of Kingston's readings are misreadings (*wu du* 误读) for some readers, her narratives will not be poisonous (*wu du* 无毒) at all. They will be harmless (*wu du* 无毒), and indeed, perhaps healing and constructive. The manner in which Kingston's work with Chinese historical sources, together with her engagement of American culture in forming her own sense of self-identity, tells the stories of her family and community as a kind of soocerery (*wu du* 巫毒), an intelligent blending to create something similar to what Chen calls a "double charm." Such skill makes the writing capable of almost limitless interpretation (*wu du* 无度).

However, for some interpreters of her work, Kingston's writings in *WW* and *CM* were like five poisons (*wu du* 五毒). Here we might think of Frank Chin and Benjamin

Tong among others. As Chinese American critics of Kingston, they consider her work to be toxic to the image of Chinese Americans and to the presentation of Chinese culture in general. Actually, in writing about their interpretations of Kingston, Lu Wei says their criticisms are manifested in the controversy over “who is truly entitled to speak on behalf of Chinese Americans?” (116) Once again, Lu shows how a scholar based in China can nonetheless pay attention to American literary criticism. Frank Chin in his “This is not an Autobiography,” written as a response to *WW*, reproaches what he called “the hypocrisy of Kingston’s story” (116). He calls for a voice other than that of Kingston, one which could “truly represent Chinese Americans.” Agreeing with Chin, Tong charges that Kingston merely caters to her white readers and simply makes up an erotic mask to entertain her readers (117). Tong criticizes Kingston for not representing the interest of Chinese people, saying that instead she characterizes Chinese people as a whole as superstitious, eccentric, mysterious, actually making use of images of Chinese that are well established in American literature.

Lu is quite self-consciously putting Kingston’s writing into the frame of Western literary criticism, and in so doing she is trying to provide an antidote to those who think of Kingston’s work as a five-fold toxin (*wu du* 五毒) to the image of Chinese Americans in American literature. In her chapter “Orientalism and the Politics of Resistance,” she shows that Kingston’s work is indeed capable of unlimited interpretations (*wu du* 无度). She argues that Kingston’s literary strategy is one of post-colonial resistance and that

such an approach forms the main thread of what she calls Kingston's method of "anti-narration (*fan xushi*)."<sup>7</sup>

In developing her reading, Lu makes use of Edward Said's theory of Orientalism as the main frame to deconstruct the phenomenon of Orientalism as it is seen specifically in *WW*. Although Said's criticisms of Orientalism are directed toward the conduct of the West toward Islamic and Arabic cultures, nevertheless Lu holds that his description of Orientalism is very well suited for understanding Kingston's views toward her mother (115-16). Lu argues that in *WW*, Kingston's method is to construct her main characters in such a way as to achieve the goal of "righting wrongs by writing wrongs (*yong shuxie cuowu lai jiuzheng bugong*)." By "writing wrongs," Lu means that Kingston is deliberately putting her mother into the Orientalist image of a Chinese woman in order to correct its stereotypical ideology toward Chinese people. By portraying Brave Orchid as an anti-orientalist image of a Chinese woman, Lu thinks Kingston is righting the wrong assumptions embedded in Orientalism.<sup>8</sup>

Lu holds that Kingston writes a wrong in her use of "mother" and Brave Orchid. Lu insists that in *WW*, the "mother" is not equivalent to "Brave Orchid." Kingston has the mother belittle the daughter and support Chinese patriarchal ideology. Kingston is deliberately writing wrong by "using skillful packaging and pretending to mould and overturn the general readers' consciousness" (114). Neither is the daughter equivalent to

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<sup>7</sup> In addition to Kingston's *WW*, Lu also examines Amy Tan's *Joy Luck Club*, and Fay Myenne Ng's *Bone* and offers an intertextual reading of each of these works.

<sup>8</sup> We can compare this approach taken by Liu Wei with that of David Leiwei Li (1992).

Kingston. Lu's argument is that the attitude of the daughter (who grew up in the West) toward her "mother" (who represents Chinese culture) is a good example of how Western society excluded (*paichi*) nonwestern culture and viewed it as "the "Other (*tazhe*)" by moving race into the center of its Orientalism. Just as the Western countries make efforts to demonstrate their cultural hegemony over the nonwestern cultures, "mother" in Kingston's *WW* exhibits similarly the hegemonic suppression of the East by the West. The "mother" is written to represent the enigmatic and disgusting Chinese culture found in Orientalism.

The identity of the voices in *WW* is important to many critical issues in the interpretation of the text. We have already seen that Xue complicates the identity of "narrator," "little girl," and Kingston. Lu holds that the distinction between "mother" and Brave Orchid is crucial to understanding Kingston's ambivalence toward her life as a Chinese American girl, the Orientalism in American culture, and the image she creates in Brave Orchid. The Chinese scholars under study do not agree on the identities behind the voices in *WW*, and indeed one way of following out their interpretations so that they can be analyzed is to take note of the fact that they share no fixed reading of these voices. Moreover, I have not insisted on a position on how to take these voices in advance because doing so depends in large measure on what the interpreter believes Kingston is doing in writing them as she does. Lu argues that Kingston is deliberately writing "mother" and the Chinese culture to which she gives voice as an Orientalist would. As a result, Kingston is writing "mother" "wrongly" in order to criticize the Orientalism in which American readers and critics are soaked.

I admit that Lu makes a very good point in distinguishing the roles of the mother and Brave Orchid; however, I cannot totally agree with her interpretation of “mother.” My reading is that the real Orientalist image of women in *WW* is not in the character of “mother,” or Brave Orchid, but in Moon Orchid. “Mother” is only partially Orientalist. While she functions as a wife and raises the children at home, she also steps into the public sphere of work with her husband. She undertakes to educate her children by telling talk-stories, even if education is often considered to be the father’s role. Brave Orchid is created by Kingston completely as an ideal hero image. Every line is soaked with Kingston’s intention to fashion female heroes in *WW*. Brave Orchid is capable, brave, courageous, and educated. She has her own career. She is assertive and full of ideas and dreams. She is brave against the ghosts, and she gives Moon Orchid ideas of how to confront her husband and stand up for herself against him and his poor treatment of her. By every means, Kingston makes her as the new female image as advocated by Mao Zedong, the founder of the People’s Republic of China, who emphasized the emancipation of women from the conventional Confucian ideology. She is analogous to Ah Goong and Bak Goong, who are the heroic China men, and who are set against typical Orientalist thinking about China men. In contrast, it is Moon Orchid who is scripted as the quintessential traditional Chinese woman as constructed by Orientalism. She lacks initiative, wisdom, and determination. She is weak, fragile, and dependent. She collapses easily and cannot handle complicated situations as Brave Orchid can. In all these ways, she is a paradigm of the Orientalist image of a Chinese woman.

Jennie Wang also holds that the identity of the voices of *WW* cannot be unlocked if one overlooks Kingston's dramatic dispute with Orientalism. Orientalism is an entire web of language, belief, and interests. But Wang reminds us that Said differentiated between European and American Orientalism principally in that European Orientalism was constructed from texts, scholarship, and distant contact. American Orientalism, instead, built itself up around an actual population of Chinese, how they came to the U.S., the social and economic conditions of their lives in America, and America's own history of slavery and racial bigotry (18). Such clarification is very important for readers to understand Orientalism within the specific context of Kingston's writing.

Although Lu is a mainland Chinese scholar, her familiarity with Said's work is well demonstrated in her writings. She reads him in English, but in her own writing and for her Chinese audience, she translates him into Chinese. She is aware that there might be objections to her use of Said's theory of Orientalism as an interpretive frame for Kingston's writing about mother and daughter in *WW*:

Such an overarching theory of cultures seems to have nothing to do with the mother-daughter relationship; however, if we put the behavior of individuals under this mode for understanding political and public behavior, then Orientalism does not exist only on the level of global politics, but also it can be found in a special way in the conflicts between this Chinese American mother and daughter in their daily lives. (116)

Lu's point is that we should not be surprised that Western interpreters, including Chinese American critics, reproach the main heroine of the book, whom they mistake as

“mother,” when actually the heroine is Brave Orchid. Using the ignorance and misunderstanding of “mother,” who represents Chinese culture in an Orientalist image, Lu believes that Kingston establishes a subjective self-critical narrative, deliberately making “mother” the prototypical Chinese woman of Orientalism.

In contrast to the “mother” narratives in *WW*, Lu holds that the Brave Orchid narratives are anti-Orientalist and that these narratives demonstrate Kingston’s post-colonialist strategy of resistance against Orientalism (114). Jennie Wang agrees, observing that the most heroic of the Gold Mountain women, for whom the book was originally named, is Kingston’s image of her mother, “Brave Orchid--an archetype of the Chinese-American immigrant woman, whose feet walk the sky, and whose back bears the burden of an extended family of ‘fifty’ or ‘a hundred’ family members in the old country” (78). Wang thinks that this kind of effort at displacing Orientalism is necessary because even literary critics of Kingston still fall victim to some of the prevailing stereotypes, whether consciously or unconsciously. These include:

- 1) Thinking of China as feminine, passive, not rational.
- 2) Seeing the West (i.e., the U.S.) as the savior of China, teaching the Chinese culture, learning, technology, and faith.
- 3) Believing that Chinese women, specifically, must learn about their rights and individual worth from feminists in America, and that they cannot realize this on their own. (3)

Lu reminds us that Kingston herself never said her book is a factual work about Chinese culture. She is well aware that Kingston is writing what Chen calls a “double

charm” blending of imagination and narrative and that she is deliberately misreading (*wu du* 误读) in Xue’s terms, her culture, her past, and her mother. She specifically targets the criticisms of Kingston’s writing made by Chin and Tong, challenging them by saying that their positions on Kingston’s work resulted from an assumption on their part that the author’s intention was to create a plot full of truthfulness and accuracy. Lu writes:

We have to remember a fact. When Kingston published *The Woman Warrior*, she intended it as a novel; a fictitious story. This in itself explains why her book is in opposition both to Chinese cultural tradition and to the genre of novel. But her publisher talked her into making this book an “autobiography” because he believed the book would have better market value. This is why many readers mistake Kingston as the main heroine of the book. The result is that some critics identify Kingston as the daughter in the book. But they did not notice that this daughter is actually an American who is filled with the ideology of Eurocentricism.

(117)

Lu’s point of view is clear. The daughter in *WW* incorporates her own ideology, one greatly influenced by Orientalism, into the narration; consequently, the daughter is constructed by Kingston to misrepresent Chinese culture.

In *WW*, the daughter is made to rebel completely against Chinese culture and to think of it as a dangerous force. Accordingly, identifying the daughter as the heroine of the novel, as Chin and Tong do, has made some interpreters feel the work is not truthful, and as a result Kingston’s work has been criticized as “betraying national culture (*chumai*

*ben minzu wenhua*)." In accordance with Lu, if we regard Kingston as a novelist and her work as a book of fiction, then the singular cultural voice exhibited in her work would not be thought of as a resistance to her cultural heritage, but as a pursuit which goes beyond mere cultural authenticity. Lu concludes that Kingston's Chinese American critics undoubtedly "陷入了对民族文化本真性和纯洁性虚幻的追求之中。这种追求事实上不过是现代性对原初或本源所进行的海市蜃楼或刻舟求剑般的追求。fall into the illusionary (*xuhuan*) pursuit of the authenticity and purity of the national culture. Such a pursuit is in fact seeking after a mere mirage (*hai shi shen lou*), just as modernity futilely pursues originality (*benyuan*)" (118).

Although she pays a great deal of attention to Kingston's "writing wrong" in order to "right wrongs," Lu makes the explicit point that the best model for understanding Kingston's literary method is that of translation between languages. This move is significant because Lu herself knows what it is to move between languages. She sometimes writes in English and other times in Chinese. She sometimes uses Chinese translations of Kingston's work, sometimes the original English text, and sometimes she back translates from a Chinese version of Kingston's work into English. These practices provide her with a ready analogy for understanding Kingston's work as a translation of cultures.

To describe her interpretation of Kingston's literary method in *WW* and *CM*, Lu draws heavily on the work of Homi Bhabha and the metaphor of translation. In "How Newness Enters the World: Postmodern Space, Post Colonial Times and the Trials of Cultural Translation," Bhabha uses the concepts of time and space to interpret the

question of cultural translation. Lu emphasizes Bhabha's point that in the process of translation the original language is the past which has vanished (*ye yi shiqu*), and the transference of meaning from the past suggests an indefinite responsibility for the present and future. The process of translation is both one of erasing the authority of the original (*qu quanweihua*) and "adding the strength of the individual self's interpretation" (Bhabha 119). The function of translation is to express transparently something that has already existed; however, "the original source (*benyuan*)" is actually brought forward into the present by means of the translation. In Lu's view, one of the merits of Bhabha's deconstruction of translation is that it fundamentally rejects Hegel's theory that history decides everything about the future. Lu agrees with Walter Benjamin that in the process of translation not only is the translated text incomplete, but also the original text is rendered incomplete.

Kingston's writing expresses a strategy of resistance, reconceived of as a kind of deconstructive translation of two cultures or a portrayal of the Chinese American self as a living translation. In Kingston's "writing as translation," some content "is gained (*zengyi*)," and the gap between her Chinese culture and her American context is "supplemented (*tianbu*)" (Lu 119).<sup>9</sup> Lu also makes use of Jacques Derrida's position that in every translation the so-called original source is scattered and fragmented in itself; thus its features cannot be defined, so it is impossible to re-present the original source by means of a translation. This understanding sheds light on Kingston's use of Chinese sources. Kingston's "translation" of the Hua Mulan story is not a retelling of some

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<sup>9</sup> Lu is following Derrida's point in his "De Tours de Babel."

absolute and fixed original account, as Chin and Tong seem to believe it should be. Rather the Mulan ballad (*Mulan shi*) has a long history in Chinese literature and has gone through many iterations and changes. There is no single, authoritative, original Mulan.<sup>10</sup> Derrida's view is that the thing defined and the thing which can be defined can never be identical. There are always cracks (*liefeng*) and skidding (*huadong*) between them. Lu writes of Kingston's method, "In this sense, the translation of any language and culture is the process of 'negotiation' between two sides. In the process of translation, there is not only the loss of original meaning but also the additional supplement deriving from the translator and readers" (119). So translation has become the process of constantly changing meaning.

Bhabha contributes other insights to Lu's theory of Kingston's method. He holds that in the process of executing a translation, an element of uncertainty is introduced in the expression that we take as complete, and at the same time the authority of the original meaning is deconstructed and the possibility of liberation is opened (Bhabha 212-36). In Lu's hands, these ideas are applied in a creative way. She says that Kingston is translating not merely her Chinese culture and American context, but is herself a living translation in her writing and her concept of self-identity.

Bhabha's, Benjamin's and Derrida's ideas about translation, especially cultural translation, explicitly throw light on the authenticity of natural culture and the originality of Chinese American literature. Kingston's borrowing of traditional Chinese culture is no doubt in its essence a

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<sup>10</sup> See Li, "The Many Faces of Mulan" for a detailed discussion.

writer's cultural translation of her own national culture while living in another language and culture. Her recreating and shifting of her own national culture is in reality the process of adding more content and supplementing. (Lu 120)

In her interpretation of Kingston's literary method as a form of translation, Lu, working independently and in mainland China, is offering a reading that is superficially similar to that of Martha Cutter's *Lost in Translation: Contemporary Ethnic American Writing and the Politics of Language Diversity*. However, Cutter's attention is directly on bilingualism and uses of multiple languages by ethnic American writers. Cutter holds that the focus on translation offers hope in our postmodern culture for a new condition in which creatively fused languages renovate the communications of the dominant society and create new kinds of identity for multicultural individuals. In contrast, Lu is thinking about Kingston's writing on the analogy of translation, as a sort of translation of values, culture, and identity, rather than as a phenomenon of multiple languages.

Lu's understanding of Kingston's method may be also compared with that of Jennie Wang. Wang calls the style of *WW* and *CM* a "Postmodern Chaotic Arabesque," borrowing from the work of John Barth. In fact, she thinks that the immediate predecessor of *WW* is Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse* (1969). In Wang's view this places Kingston in the mainstream American postmodern literary movement of the 1970s, and she argues that placing Kingston here demonstrates that American postmodern fiction is not exclusively a Euro-centric white male school of writing (14). Barth writes in frame tales in which the first-person narrator assumes the voice of an intriguing, erotic and

mysterious storyteller. This sequence of short stories forms a set of interlocking pieces. Wang says that Kingston follows this frame tale literary structure by arranging eighteen fictional essays in *CM*. Moreover, just as Barth mixes fantasy, reality and myth, fabrication, and the orientalizing of Greek myths and classical legends of the East and West, Wang argues that Kingston does the same thing with Chinese sources.<sup>11</sup> This genre “beautifully identifies” the style of Kingston. Wang follows Barth and reminds us that the term “arabesque” refers to the style of design and ornament associated especially with the classic *Arabian Nights*, which contains frame tales, tales within tales composed of fables, anecdotes, didactic tales, parables, fairy tales, and legends (57). But Wang is not claiming that Kingston was directly influenced by Barth or that she was making any explicit attempt to follow his style.

Lu seems unaware of Barth’s literary style and makes no reference to it, even if she does think of Kingston’s work as postmodern. She says that Kingston’s orientalizing of her mother and Chinese culture is a method of her artistic creation. In her recreation and appropriation, the originality and authenticity of the national culture has lost their authority as something fixed and unchangeable. Since the original source cannot be guaranteed as complete and self-sufficient, no literary critic can or should require literature to have an unshakeable original truthfulness. Relying closely on Bhabha’s theory, Lu concludes:

汤亭亭对民族文化的再创造从空间上增补、丰富了民族文化的内涵，

从时间上又对民族文化从过去到现在再到未来的发展进行了延续。对

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<sup>11</sup> We can contrast Wang’s idea of Kingston’s work as an arabesque with that of “historiographical metafiction” set out by Kate Chiwen Liu (1993).

民族文化在异质文化中有目的改写实际上打开了民族文化的封闭系统，使静止、固定的文化系统开始进入流动的循环。

Kingston's recreation of the dignity of the national culture broadly supplements and enriches the internal meaning of Chinese culture, and with respect to time she provides continuity for the development of Chinese culture from the past, to the present, and to the future. Her deliberate revision of the national culture [of China] from within a foreign culture actually opens the closed system and makes the static and fixed cultural system [of China] enter the cycle of fluidity. (120)

As Bhabha remarks, "Culture gains its meaning while it contacts and collides with the Other and it comes into being and definition in mutuality with the other culture" (175).

When Chinese national culture is overlapping, inter-weaving, and struggling with American mainstream culture, the identification of self and its reidentification with its Chinese roots is a difficult task faced by all Chinese Americans. Translation, as Lu understands it, is an activity not unlike Chen's "double charm" blending of imagination and narrative. Actually, the result in Kingston's works is exactly what Xue calls *wu du* (无度), meaning "indefinite limit," open to multifaceted interpretations and free from boundaries set on imagination.

As is seen from the above discussion, the Chinese mainland scholars in my study use their own unique angles to contribute to the literary critical understanding of Kingston's work, defending it against charges by some Chinese American writers represented by Chin. Lu adopts the theory of translation developed by Homi Bhabha to

defend Kingston. While Xue speaks of Kingston's "deliberate misreadings," Chen utilizes her strengths in Chinese literature to employ the idea of "double charm" to suggest how Kingston's work blends imagination and narrative history. Although I do not find Chen's concept of "double charm" to be very helpful in interpreting Kingston's writing method, its value lies in its novelty as an approach to Kingston scholarship in American academia.

Lu Wei's strategy of conceiving of Kingston's method as a kind of translation seems quite constructive. Kingston is not merely moving Chinese folklore into English as a new target language; rather she is translating herself through her writing. Her writing is no wooden literalism as it seems Chin would like it to be, and sometimes it is a deliberate misreading of one side or another. In this regard, Xue is quite right. I do not believe that Kingston has a formalized or fixed set of Orientalist characteristics of the Chinese that she uses to intentionally misread "mother." Yet, she is well acquainted with American Orientalism. She lives in the midst of it, reads it in the newspapers, and sees it on the television. I prefer to think of "mother," Moon Orchid, and Brave Orchid all three as translated characters. Kingston's quest is to determine the translation through which she will live, or perhaps more accurately, to determine which translation she will speak and write about.

#### Chapter IV: Male-Female in One Body 雌雄同体

When discussing Kingston's writing related to gender, especially as it is expressed in the Mulan character, all of the mainland Chinese scholars under study have deep reservations about the way Kingston's *WW* and *CM* are characterized by critics in the U.S. With respect to *WW* specifically, they all argue that Kingston has been misclassified as a feminist, or more precisely, as having drawn on, or depended on, Western feminist writers in the construction of her writing; however, they all recognize that Kingston is representing women in a very different way than is common in both Western and traditional Chinese culture. Xue Yufeng directs our attention to the position of women in traditional Chinese culture in this way:

In *WW*, Kingston exposes thoroughly how Chinese patriarchal society favored males and belittled females. She lists several discriminatory characterizations against women, such as girls are "maggots in the rice," it is "useless to raise girls," "raising girls is not as good as raising geese." Since language is the carrier of culture, these terms that devalue females are the evidence for how Chinese patriarchal culture used linguistic hegemony (*huayu baquan*) to oppress women. (62)

Xue is quick to notice that *WW* is not the only one of Kingston's works to highlight the methods of male domination among Chinese Americans. In *CM*, the mother of Shao Ge writes a letter to him and urges him to sell his three daughters, so he can

return home to China and take care of her until her death (63).<sup>1</sup> Although Shao Ge, who lives in the U.S., favors his sons, he also treats his daughters well and sees to it that they receive the same education as the boys (63). This suggests that Chinese who live in a foreign country might alter their old customs and traditions.

The critical discussion of the extent to which Kingston depends on Western feminism has been extensive.<sup>2</sup> Jennie Wang believes that white American critics misinterpret Kingston's intention in speaking about women's strengths as a feminist in the traditional Western sense. She argues that what Kingston is celebrating is Chinese femininity, its heroism, wisdom, and caring. To project gender conflicts onto the ethnic Other means displacing domestic gender troubles abroad, and it overlooks what Kingston so ably demonstrates. Wang says that in contrast to the American writers trying to construct a new feminism, such as Edith Wharton, Kate Chopin, Sylvia Plath and the like,

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<sup>1</sup> Remarkably, this request is not unusual for a Chinese mother to make of her son. Confucian filial piety required that parents come before one's spouse or one's children. Indeed, *The Twenty-Four Filial Exemplars* by Guo Jujing (1260-1368) has stood for generations as one of the principal folk documents on filial piety. Although the collection was not part of the Confucian canon, it was widely used from the Yuan dynasty until its suppression during the Great Cultural Revolution as part of its campaign against "the Four Olds." Interestingly, in the 1990s, new editions of *The Twenty-Four Filial Exemplars* came flowing back into Chinese bookstores once again, along with the *Classic for Girls* and the *Three Character Classic* which applied to boys. Individual tales in *Twenty-Four Filial Exemplars* are known to most Chinese.

<sup>2</sup> See King-Kok Cheung, "The Woman Warrior versus the Chinaman Pacific"; Elaine Kim, "Such Opposite Creatures"; Shirley Geok-lin Lim, "Feminist and Ethnic Literary Theories in Asian American Literature"; Sau-ling Cynthia Wong and Jeffrey J. Santa Ana, "Gender and Sexuality in Asian American Literature," and Jeong Young Sook's *Daughtering: Asian American Women's Literature in Maxine Hong Kingston, Nellie Wong, and Ronyoung Kim*.

Kingston was raised in a different mother tongue, with different myths and role models. Emphasizing the heroic tradition of Chinese women, Kingston, like an “angel and apostle of the coming revelation” of the new millennium, ushered into the canon of American literature a full array of new female models—immigrant mothers of women warriors, ghost-chasers and bare-foot doctors, wives in command of their husbands in-arms, returned daughters kidnapped by barbarians, and redeemed wives who sing for barbarian soldiers in battlefields—the Golden Mountain women. (131)

Wang is following mainland Chinese scholars in arguing that as a Chinese woman writer Kingston uses images and narratives that have something to offer America or the West as replacement or exchange models.

The Chinese scholars working on Kingston’s retelling of the Mulan ballad as an example of her views on gender draw attention back to her use of Chinese literature and culture. In fact, Chen Xiaohui’s chapter “Hua Mulan as Male-Female in One Body (*cixiong tongti*)” is completely dedicated to the interpretation of Kingston’s Mulan. Similarly, Shi Pingping<sup>3</sup>, in *A Contemporary Study of Ethnic American Women Writers*, uses the expression “two natures in one body (*shuangxing tongti*)” to analyze Hua Mulan.

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<sup>3</sup> Shi is an Associate Professor of English at China People’s Liberation Army Foreign Language Institute (PLAFLI) and holds an appointment as Visiting Researcher at the Chinese American Literature Research Center (CALRC) of BFSU. Shi received both her B.A. and M.A. in English from PLAFLI in 1995 and 1998, respectively. In 2003, she received her Ph. D. in English at BFSU. She has published two books, over ten articles, and six translated books. She also co-edited seven textbooks and undertook one prestigious grant project from the Henan Social Science Planning Program.

Shi begins her interpretive work on Kingston's *WW* in *The Mother-Daughter Relationship and the Politics of Gender and Race* by setting out some of the basic preconceptions of her study and holds that any adequate reading of the works of Chinese American women writers must be premised on the fact that they address themselves directly to affirming both their racial and gender identities. Shi says, "Like other women writers of color, these writers are aware that they are both a member of a racial minority and a female who should fight simultaneously against racial and gender inequalities. Therefore, racism and sexism are central concerns in their writings" (17). Chinese American women writers are reacting against the misogyny they meet from three patriarchal cultures: traditional Chinese, Chinese American, and modern mainstream American.

Shi considers how *WW* was received and categorized by white critics as a feminist work. She targets specifically Sara Blackburn's review written for *Ms.* and Diane Johnson's review in *The New York Review of Books*. She is bothered by these interpretations that matter-of-factly associate Kingston with feminism because "for quite a long time, feminist theorizing about the mother-daughter relationship as well as many other subjects has been dominated by white middle-class women who regard themselves as spokespersons for all women irrespective of race, class, and sexual orientation" (*Mother-Daughter* 218). Shi is critical of what she takes as the Western feminist aim to generate theories deemed as universal, objective, and applicable regardless of one's ethnic or socio-historical context. Shi rejects this ahistorical view of feminism and

gender. What she finds attractive in Kingston's work is that Kingston actually poses serious challenges to such universalistic formulations.

Shi believes Kingston's self-expressive writing is designed to move the experiences of Chinese American women from the margins to the center and says that in so doing Kingston "opens white feminists' eyes to the diversity and difference in women," challenging and transforming hegemonic Eurocentric feminist ahistorical theorization (218). Jennie Wang seems to agree entirely with Shi. Wang writes:

In English Studies, however, feminist criticism remains ahistorical, especially on the subject of the Chinese women and Chinese tradition; literary critics still use the language of the Cold War and the language of American Orientalism. Both are dead languages that have lost touch with historical reality and historical movements. (83)<sup>4</sup>

Shi and Wang insist that Kingston's position on gender is grounded in her Chinese culture and not in Western feminism. They characterize feminism as having a white upper- and middle-class women's agenda. The white Western feminism they criticize generally ignores oppression based on ethnic and racial background. The models for femininity proposed in such white feminism devalue motherhood, family, and domesticity.

The view that Kingston's feminism and Western feminism are so deeply different may come from an oversimplification of Western feminism by Shi and Wang. Already in the late 1970s when Kingston was writing *WW* and *CM*, there was a growing feminist

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<sup>4</sup> Wang is specifically critical of Diane Simmons, *Maxine Hong Kingston* and Kay Ann Johnson, *Women, the Family, and Peasant Revolution in China*.

consciousness rooted in the African American community. This awakening consciousness is represented by writings such as Alice Walker's "Womanism," and Gloria Jean Watkins' (pen name, bell hooks) *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (1981) and *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (1989). Walker and hooks point out that black women experience a different and more intense kind of oppression from that of white women and that there are alternative models for womanhood in the black community. These writers represent a sort of Western feminism that was much different from the feminism Shi and Wang characterize in their books.

I offer other explanations for Shi's and Wang's universalization of one version of white feminism. First, it is possible that Shi and other Chinese scholars under study simply have a limited familiarity with the diversity and richness of feminism in the U.S., especially through the 1970s to 1990s. I think this is certainly possible in Shi's case. All of her education was received in mainland China, and many of the sources associated with Black feminism and third-world feminism were not readily available to her. Yet she associates Chinese American writers with women writers of color who are deeply aware that racial and ethnic contexts are relevant to gender identity and equality. Wang, however, took all of her education in the U.S., and she has had substantial exposure to such feminist writing. It therefore seems unrealistic to attribute her universalization of Western feminism to any limitation of accessibility to diverse feminist writers. On the other hand, Wang and Shi may actually be intent on responding to particular interpreters of Kingston, such as Blackburn and Johnson, who, as feminists, may arguably represent

the sort of white feminism that Wang and Shi find problematic. Their problem lies in taking these interpreters as representative of all feminists in the West, which manifests the lack of a nuanced understanding of the complete picture of Western feminism in 1970s.

Shi extends her analysis of feminism to Chinese American male reviewers Jeffery Paul Chan and Benjamin Tong, who also associate *WW* with feminism and rely upon this categorization to buttress their criticisms of the work as utterly alienated from Chinese sensibilities. Commenting on the major differences between Anglo-American and Chinese American critics, as well as between female and male interpreters, Shi says, “Although guilty of pushing their androcentric Asian American nationalist agenda at the sacrifice of Asian American feminist concerns, the Chinese American male critics are certainly right in condemning the condescension of cultural colonialism implicit in white feminists’ critical acclaim of Kingston’s work” (*Mother-Daughter* 58). Nevertheless, Shi says that the reviews of Blackburn and Johnson display an underlying belief in a feminist universal that actually serves to cancel the specificity of ethnic womanhood. By associating Kingston with white feminism, Blackburn and Johnson are condescending because they assume that the challenges and tasks of womanhood in all cultures are exactly those experienced by white, urban, middle-class women.

There is a drawn-out debate over Kingston’s associations with feminism that reflects the tensions between feminism and cultural nationalism in Chinese American discourse. Shi refers readers to Frank Chin’s “Introduction” and “Come All Ye Asian American Writers of the Real and the Fake,” both in *The Big Aiiieeee!*:

All in all, the androcentric cultural nationalism undertaken by the *Aiiieeeee!* group, essential as it is, nevertheless ignores the experience of the doubly oppressed Asian/Chinese American women in terms of gender and race and functions to silence them. In this context, no one can fail to see the political significance of Chinese American women writers' unrelenting efforts in creating female-centered narratives. (12-13)

She believes that Chin especially displays misogynistic tendencies in his writing, portraying female characters as cheap, stupid tramps or malicious, cruel, promiscuous, castrating women.<sup>5</sup> Chen is also interested in the argument between the Chinese American women writers represented by Kingston and the male writers headed by Frank Chin. She is fascinated by the question of whether this argument is derived from the war between patriarchy and matriarchy rooted in Chinese society or in the conflict between the guardians of Chinese cultural tradition and the reformers who try to modify it ("Research Materials").

Shi speaks of Chin's group as the "Cultural Nationalists" and says this camp has "the tendency of a male-centered ideology (*nanxing zhongxin de sixing qingxiang*)" (*Contemporary Ethnic* 29). She thinks that while their criticisms cannot be totally denied, they miss the point (*you shi pianpo*). Roughly there are three misunderstandings that characterize their readings according to Shi. First, Chinese traditional culture does have the aspect of gender bias and male superiority over women, and this is what Kingston

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<sup>5</sup> Here Shi is following the work of Elaine Kim, "Such Opposite Creatures"; Sau-ling Cynthia Wong and Jeffrey Santa Ana, "Gender and Sexuality in Asian American Literature"; and Mary E. Yong, *Mules and Dragons: Popular Cultural Images in the Selected Writings of African-American and Chinese-American Women Writers*, 96-104.

cannot accept. Second, as we have seen, Shi does not believe Kingston can be lumped together with white feminists in general. Shi holds that white feminists only care about gender bias, but Kingston also is indignant about racial and class oppression. It is clear in this approach that Shi has in mind only the white feminists whom she is directly analyzing, but we must pull back from her generalization that their positions are representative of Western feminism in its entirety. Shi says of *WW* that it is actually a “woman’s book” (*nushu*) which also opposes racial discrimination and class oppression and that Kingston can be viewed as an ethnic feminist (*youse renzhong nuxing zhuyi zhe*). In this, Shi seems to be on target. Kingston observes that she hopes her readers can “interpret *The Woman Warrior* from the perspective of women’s liberation, the third world, and the search for one’s roots” (Kingston, “Cultural Mis-readings” 65).

In her own work on mother-daughter relationships in Kingston’s *WW*, Shi returns to her position that the theories and interpretations of white feminist American critics about Chinese American women writers’ discussions of gender and mother-daughter relationships are constructed out of their privileged white middle-class lives and that any application of these theories to Kingston’s writing “should reflect the omissions, blanks, and biases in them” (*Mother-Daughter* 18). She thereby aligns herself with Shirley Geok-lin Lim’s view on Kingston’s connection to feminism in “Asians in Anglo-American Feminism.” Lim takes the position that “we should read ‘colorless’ feminism, feminist theory that ignores the place of cultural and racial differences in women, as an

expression of Anglo-American-centric colonialist theory” (Lim, “Asians” 249).<sup>6</sup>

Following Lim, Shi attaches great importance to the study of cultural distinctions present in the texts of Chinese American women writers.<sup>7</sup> This approach is the way Shi constructs her view that the feminism found in Kingston constitutes a challenge to and transformation of white feminism found in the U.S. and Europe.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to her approval of Lim’s criticism of readings associating Kingston with feminism, Shi also draws on the work of the Japanese scholar Tomo Hattori.<sup>9</sup> Shi has been influenced by Hattori’s position that Orientalism has displayed itself in Lim’s extensive use of the French feminist critic Julia Kristeva, especially in her interpretations of Japanese American writers. Shi adapts Hattori’s criticism in her analysis of Lim’s

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<sup>6</sup> Wang Jianhui’s dissertation on sexual politics in Kingston’s work also draws on Lim to make this point.

<sup>7</sup> However, it is worth noting that Shi feels that even Lim sometimes falls into the “theoretical trap” of employing Western colonialist feminism. By aligning herself with other critics, including the Japanese scholar Tomo Hattori, who holds that Orientalism has tainted Lim’s extensive use of the French feminist critic Julia Kristeva in her interpretations of Japanese American writers, Shi believes that Lim falls prey to the Orientalism within Eurocentric feminist theories (19-20).

<sup>8</sup> In *Mother-Daughter* (19), Shi bases her criticisms of Lim and of white scholars who employ Western feminism to understand and interpret Chinese American women writers largely on the work done by Julia Kristeva, *About Chinese Women*; Rey Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity: The Politics of Reading between West and East*, 3-33; Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms*, 136-89; and Tomo Hattori’s, “Psycholinguistic Orientalism in Criticism of *The Woman Warrior* and *Obasan*,” 119-38.

<sup>9</sup> Other influences on Shi’s criticisms of white scholars who employ Western feminism to understand and interpret Chinese American women writers include Rey Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity: The Politics of Reading between West and East*, esp. 3-33; and Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms*, esp. 136-89.

work on Kingston's gender writing. She takes the position that Lim, in employing Eurocentric feminist theories, unguardedly falls prey to the Orientalism within them. As we have seen in Chapter III, Lu Wei reads Kingston's writings on mother-daughter and feminine identity as an intentional expression of resistance directed against American Orientalism. Shi agrees with Lu that the sort of feminine identity found in Chinese American women writers constitutes a challenge to and transformation of the Western feminism found in the U.S. and Europe (20).

When Shi objects to Eurocentric feminist theories or Western feminism, she takes two works as most representative of this method of interpretation: Adrienne Rich's *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* and Nancy Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Drawing on these sources, Shi reconstructs the sort of feminism that she associates with Anglo-European critics and believes it is misapplied when analyzing Kingston's writings. She argues that family structure in that kind of feminism is white, urban, and middle-class, and that the family is a nuclear one where a working father supports the family while a nurturing mother takes care of the children and housework. According to Shi, both Rich and Chodorow characterize women as confined to domestic responsibilities of nurturing husband and children and doing household chores. As they understand it, these roles become oppressive and destructive of self-identity, and women must break free of them or inhabit them differently than has been traditionally done in the West. Shi, on the other hand, argues that this normative Anglo-American household is never a part of Kingston's frame of reference for family and gender and that it is called into question by Kingston's

narratives. What makes Kingston distinctive is that in the writings about her immigrant family, both parents work for the sake of their individual identities and familial survival within a racist society (*Mother-Daughter* 219). Shi explains that in Kingston's writings on gender, there are no distinct divisions between family and work, private and public, and the individual self and the female gender role. Employment for Kingston's Chinese mother, for example, is an extension of her family obligations, as opposed to the path of personal fulfillment and individual autonomy as it was understood by white feminists such as Rich and Chodorow. In fact, Shi calls attention to an important shift that Kingston documents in the mother-daughter relationship so important for feminine self-development: Chinese daughters recognize in their mothers' work competence, strength, and a self-determining identity. Chinese American girls develop a certain respect for their mothers as active women and see them as empowered and empowering (221). Kingston's mother, written as Brave Orchid rather than "mother," is a classic example of this difference between Kingston's portrayal of women's challenges and those described in Rich and Chodorow.

Shi associates Kingston closely with Amy Tan and Fay Myenne Ng, who are also well-known Chinese American women writers, and she argues these writers all share the view that race (i.e. Chineseness in this case) is central to each of their literary reconstructions of gender and its expression in roles such as mother-daughter (227-28). Kingston's specific reconstructions stress women's agency and self-determination, woman-to-woman connections and empowerment. Shi emphasizes that one of the most basic reasons why American critics misread Kingston's writings on women and gender is

that Kingston voices her protest against androcentric attitudes and dominance, whether it is expressed through cultural nationalism or patriarchal/masculine oppression. In this sense, Kingston, Tan, and Ng possess a degree of solidarity and sisterhood with white feminists in what Amy Ling calls an “alliance in Outsiderhood” (“I’m Here” 739). Ling uses this characterization in a commentary she wrote on Ellen Messer-Davidow’s “The Philosophical Bases of Feminist Literary Criticism.”

Like Ling, Shi praises Messer-Davidow’s essay and associates it with the sort of feminism that it is appropriate to attribute to Kingston. Specifically, she means the kind of feminism designed to move beyond Orientalist and Western class-based theory. Messer-Davidow calls for a feminist perspective that brings together the personal and cultural, subjective and objective, replacing dichotomies with a more dynamic understanding of how gender identity is formed. Messer-Davidow describes a method for identifying and exploring sex/gender in human expression. First, she recommends a process that she calls *particularization*, by which the theorist specifies individual voices from which statements and images of gender identity originate. Instead of assuming that society is uniform in its approach to gender, individual variables are valued and not neglected. Second, gender study requires *contextualization* that examines the culture in which the representation of a gender actually occurs. The relevant question here is: What cultural work does a particular representation do in its historical situation? *Metaphorical congruence* is the third component of Messer-Davidow’s approach to analyzing gender. Looking for metaphorical congruence consists of identifying repetition of metaphors found across disciplinary discourses and in media representations, thereby revealing the

operation of devices so grounded in the culture as to be taken as a kind of tacit “common sense” or unexamined assumption that can be counted on to move an argument or to persuade in deciding a social policy. Finally, *influence* in gender analysis is the tracing of the circulation of ideas related to sex/gender as they show up in literature and culture. Shi believes that approaching Kingston’s literary efforts using Messer-Davidow’s method of analysis will yield fuller readings than those which are uncritically driven by Orientalist elements in much of Western feminism (*Mother-Daughter* 229-30).

In contrast to Shi’s criticism of American scholars who she feels overly rely on Western feminism, Chen Xiaohui goes directly to work interpreting Kingston’s gender portrayals in *WW*. In her chapter, “Hua Mulan, Male and Female in One Body: Reading Kingston’s Feminist Dream Ideal from Hua Mulan in *WW* 雌雄同体的花木兰: 从女勇士中的花木兰看汤亭亭的女权主义梦境,” Chen writes that “Kingston imagined the genuine history of women in her heart, after experiencing the inequality of men and women caused by culture and the close interdependence of culture and tradition” (35). Chen says that Kingston’s writing of Hua Mulan and her war stories is an imaginative incorporation of feminist themes; however, her labeling of Kingston’s views as feminist is not based on a reference to Western feminist writings at all. As a mainland Chinese scholar whose specialty is Chinese literature, Chen’s attention is on Kingston’s very different sort of feminism that Shi also believes to be in stark contrast to that of Rich and Chodorow. Although Chen makes no mention of Messer-Davidow’s method, the way she proceeds has some connections with the approach Messer-Davidow recommends for gender study.

Chen begins her reading of Kingston's writing in *WW* by contextualizing the narrative of Hua Mulan. In so doing, she takes the position that Kingston's source for her understanding of gender is Chinese, not Western feminism. Writing about the controversy over whether Kingston really has in mind the Chinese folklore figure of Hua Mulan and how she might have blended and transplanted it, Chen quotes Kingston's remarks in the Chinese translation of *WW*:

You saw in my play "The Woman Warrior" adapted from *WW* and *CM*, that I combined Hua Mulan and Yue Fei. I know these two stories are very different; however, I deliberately put these two stories together and I knew I must do so, because I want to show the power of women, to elevate the power of women to be equal to men's power. If a woman knows men have heroic stories, then she must borrow the abilities and ideals of men. In this way, she can become stronger and more powerful.

This is why I combined the stories of men and women. (《女勇士》195)

Explicitly and without any hesitation, Chen offers the reading that Kingston has combined male and female in her own identity in *WW* and Hua Mulan. Chen is aware of the controversy between Kingston and Frank Chin over whether Kingston distorted the Mulan tale, but Chen is also very much aware that since the time of the Tang, the story of Mulan has been retold again and again.<sup>10</sup> Chen admits that the story is radically altered by Kingston, but she points to a difference between "rewriting (*gaixie*)" and

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<sup>10</sup> I provide an account of how the story of Mulan has evolved through Chinese literary history in my paper "The Many Faces of Mulan: 1500 Years of the History of the Woman Warrior in China."

“recomposition (*zaizao*)” (37). According to Chen, Kingston’s *Hua Mulan* is a product of rewriting, not recomposition. Chen believes that in Kingston’s mother’s (i.e., Brave Orchid’s) talk-stories she tells the story of strong women and that Kingston is drawing on her mother’s talk-stories in ways that many Chinese daughters would know very well. Chen holds that Kingston is taking advantage of what Chinese call the “hidden tradition (*yinxing*)” of Chinese women.

Chen brings to our critical attention several examples of this “hidden tradition,” reminding us that Kingston’s construction of *Hua Mulan* is but one illustration of the kind of feminism that has shaped Kingston’s writing. She says that Kingston also takes advantage of the symbolism of feminism represented in the Chinese revolutionary classic movie *The Red Detachment of Women* (36). This work is both a novel and a ballet that premiered in 1964 and was performed in China throughout the 1970s. The novel is based on the Special Company of the Independent Division of the Chinese Red Army. This Company was made up only of women, over 100 in number. The women were known for their battles against injustice and loyalty to the New China. Kingston also refers to many other stories in the “hidden tradition” of women in China’s history and legend in addition to that of *Hua Mulan* and *The Red Detachment of Women*, such as the female generals of the Yang family (*Yangmen nujiang*), Liang Hongyu, Qin Liangyu, Nie Yinniang, and Wu Zetian (38).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The Yang family’s female generals refer to the widows, sisters, and even maid servants of the Yang family who bravely took the men’s places on the battlefield when the men lost their lives one after another during the Song dynasty (960-1279). Liang Hongyu was the wife of a mighty general in the Song dynasty and helped devise the plan of battle and bravely fought beside her husband. Qin Liangyu, equipped with the skills of

An even more radical view than Chen's idea that Kingston was drawing on *The Red Detachment of Women* is that of Rey Chow, who holds that the feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s in the U.S. actually made use of the Chinese Communist practice of encouraging peasants, especially women, to speak up and tell their grievances against an oppressive patriarchal and land owner system (*Writing* 18). Chow's position that American feminist writers turned to China, rather than to their own historical context or Anglo-European sources, is surely arguable. Nevertheless, both Chen and Chow might be right about the sources from which Kingston draws her strong feminine images. We know that Kingston's family was in a Chinatown community and that Chinese newspapers and magazines were available to her since she mentions reading them. They told about the New China of the Revolution and the new place of women in that political shift.

In Kingston's context the purpose of a mother's retelling of this "hidden tradition" about women is to encourage young women to stand up bravely and strategically to oppression born of strong power and violence. Chinese mothers like to tell about heroic women and encourage their daughters to fight against the strong and unjust forces that are imposed on them. Chen holds that this kind of history provides a different historical construction for women from that which men's history can provide for them (37). In introducing the "hidden tradition" passed between mothers and daughters in Chinese history, Chen reminds us that Chinese literature often makes a distinction between

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horse archery and martial arts, took over her husband's post as commander of forces in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) and led the army into battle. Nie Yinniang was a legendary figure in the Tang dynasty (618-907) who became famous as the "flying sword woman." Wu Zetian was the only woman in China's history who became Empress.

literature for women and that for men, as well as some literature and language that is unique to women and cannot even be understood by men. Here I am referring to *nushu* 女书, which literally means “women’s writing.” This writing was until recently a script known only to women and kept secret from men. It is a script for carrying “hidden tradition.” *Nushu* is transmitted through a sworn sisterhood (*jiebai zimei* 结拜姊妹) and has been used for centuries. The most common use of *Nushu* is in the cloth bound book given by other women to a new bride on her wedding day. It expresses the hopes, intimacy, caring, and admonitions between women. In the touching novel entitled *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*, written in English in 2005 by Lisa See, two sisters, Lily and Snow Flower, use *nushu* as an intimate form of communication best summed up in this quote: “My writing is soaked with the tears of my heart / An invisible rebellion that no man can see” (71). Such “hidden traditions” as these between women, sworn sisters, and mothers and daughters form the background for Kingston’s double charmed rewriting of *Mulan*. But we need not think only of the actual written language of *nushu* that was known to relatively few women. Actually, Chen means something much more general and is not referring to *nushu* in this sense. She means the tradition of women’s writing that is virtually unknown to Western scholars: the “hidden tradition” of protest and grievance authored by women in Chinese history. Dorothy Ko has documented a substantial amount of this kind of women’s writing in seventeenth-century Confucian China. It consists of writing produced in poetry clubs, or in the form of annotations and literary criticism, as well as letters and stories written by educated women. Ko writes:

Poets, teachers, artists, writers, and readers, whether wives, daughters or widows, taught each other about the vicissitudes of life through their writings. By transmitting a literate women's culture across generations, they effectively transcended the inner chambers . . . . Even maids and concubines and female entertainers occasionally participated in these networks. (79)

According to Chen, in telling the Hua Mulan story, Kingston is following the lineage of her mother's talk-stories as "hidden tradition." Whether Chen is right about her explanation of Kingston's intentions, she is certainly doing novel work not found among other Chinese, Chinese American, or American interpreters of Kingston. Support for Chen's reading may be gathered from the simple fact that the original title of *WW* was "Chinese Women Heroes."

On the other hand, it may seem that the story of "No Name Woman" would create difficulties for Chen's reading since Kingston's mother tells her to keep her aunt's story quiet and not to tell it; however, we must notice that it is the "mother" who offers this instruction, and not Brave Orchid. Kingston's "mother" is consistently the voice for American Orientalism, and it is Brave Orchid who speaks for the "hidden tradition." The "I" who retells No Name Woman's story creates an account of a Chinese female hero in the "hidden tradition." In *WW*, Kingston gives praise to her mother as the immediate source or this inspiration:

At last I saw that I too had been in the presence of great power, my mother talking-story. After I grew up, I heard the chant of Fa Mu Lan, the girl

who took her father's place in battle. Instantly, I remembered that as a child I had followed my mother about the house, the two of us singing about how Fa Mu Lan fought gloriously and returned alive from war to settle in the village. I had forgotten this chant that was once mine, given me by my mother, who may not have known its power to remind. She said I would grow up a wife and slave, but she taught me the story of the woman warrior, Fa Mu Lan. I would have to grow up a woman warrior. (19-20)

The ancient story and the contemporary story are the two ends of an entire women's history. Chen believes that in narrating the story of Hua Mulan, the author deliberately uses the first person "I," and she intends to set up a bridge between Hua Mulan and the "I/Me":

Then she [Kingston] can transverse in this realistic world through this bridge that links the traditional Chinese heroic legendary story and a Chinese American immigrant daughter (the "I"). It recreates the history of the woman warrior which is a melding together of time and space. Therefore, in order to complete the construction of the historical identity of a woman with the characteristic of a unique national [Chinese] "I," it is also realizing the expectation of the mother toward "I" as a parental expectation. (38)

For Chen, Mulan is not merely male and female in one body, but she is the living ideal of a blending of the Chinese and American cultures in "I."

In a manner very similar to Chen, Shi Pingping describes Mulan by the expression “*maodun de tongyiti* (矛盾的统一体),” which means both a contradictory and unifying whole, “a dialectal whole” (*Contemporary Ethnic* 21). Shi also employs this same expression for how Kingston’s mother encourages her to be a woman warrior. Kingston says, “[My mother] says, ‘I will become a wife and slave when I grow up, but she also teaches me to sing the songs about the woman warrior Hua Mulan, saying that I will become a woman warrior when I grow up’ (《女勇士》24). Kingston is impatient with this and thinks her mother confuses her. She tells her mom that she does not know whether what she is saying is true or not.

Shi says that in Mulan the imaginary “I’s” experience is totally different from the Hua Mulan of Chinese legends. It blends the carving of Yue Fei’s mother, the act of righting the wrongs in Heaven’s name as expressed in the *Outlaws of the Marsh*, Robin Hood’s act of robbing the rich to help the poor, the tradition of practicing *gongfu* for revenge exemplified in the Wuxia novels (*Wuxia xiaoshuo*) fraught with martial arts and adventure, and the plots and elements of spirits and ghosts in folklore legends. This “I” is a woman warrior who represents families and fellow villagers waging battle against oppression and injustice.

Xue Yufeng reminds us that the story of Hua Mulan replacing her father to join the army is very well known in Chinese families, and she notices that it is also a part of the cultural understanding of Chinese American families as well. Xue’s description of Kingston’s writing style as “deliberate misreading (*wu du* 误读)” guides her interpretation of the Mulan story in *WW* (197). In *WW*, Kingston writes passionately

about how her mother's talk-story functions in her life: "Night after night my mother would talk-story until we fell asleep. I couldn't tell where the stories left off and the dreams began, her voice the voice of the heroines in my sleep" (19). Here Xue translates "heroines" as "女英雄" which is literally "female heroine," and equivalent to "woman warrior." The legend of Mulan is blended and woven together with facts, realities, and dreams. It is the transformation of Chinese culture, but also it is symbolic of American reality (197). In Kingston's version, Xue mentions that Hua Mulan goes to White Tiger Mountain (*Baihu shan*) at the age of seven and learns the Daoist arts for 15 years, and only when she is full of these skills and abilities, does she come down from the mountain. She forms her own army, kills the corrupt officials, punishes the evil officers, robs the wealthy in order to give to the poor. She takes revenge for the injustices inflicted on her own people.

When she interprets Kingston's rewriting of the Mulan figure, Chen Xiaohui refers specifically to the way Kingston has blended the Chinese *wuxia* genre (martial arts) mentioned by Xue, in which the image of the heroic woman is of "neutral gender (*zhongxing* 中性)." For example, the sword warriors adopt the taboo not to talk about love. Swordswomen have turned away from romance and love between man and woman. Their image is different from that of the traditional woman because they possess a neutral gender that the ordinary woman does not. Moving away from the idea that Mulan is a "neutral gendered" being, Chen says that Kingston's Mulan is based on the combination of the male and female types, and that Mulan is not merely a woman but a "*guaiwu* (怪物)," which is a being with both a male and female nature existing in one body (*cixiong*

*tongti guaiwu* 雌雄同体怪物).<sup>12</sup> In this expression of the male-female composite being, I have left *guaiwu* untranslated on purpose. Chen is trying to capture something in her reading of Kingston that does not easily translate into English. Usually, this expression would be rendered into English as “monster.” Obviously, this does not convey the meaning of Chen’s use of *guaiwu* here. She is trying to describe a being that is a combination of male and female.<sup>13</sup> In Chen’s reading, Kingston represents Mulan as a *guaiwu*, whose neutral nature (*zhongxing*) tells the truth of the hidden tradition of women.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Although she shows no knowledge of Chen’s use of the Chinese concept of *guaiwu* and its implications, nevertheless, Wang Jianhui’s dissertation, *Sexual Politics in the Works of Chinese American Women Writers: Sui Sin Far, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Amy Tan* does offer a brief analysis and critique of the practice of male-female oppositions and explores the possibility of gender/race deconstruction in Asian American literature.

<sup>13</sup> Constantine Tung has made use of the belief in China that there is a long standing emphasis on harmony and the tradition of *yin* 阴 and *yang* 阳. She holds that in this philosophical tradition, gender relationships lack the conflict and strife that we find in the West. A man and a woman are complementary. But again, this theory, while promising, is targeted more toward gender relationships than gender identity. That is, there is also the tradition which sees each individual as both *yin* and *yang*. Although neither Chen nor Shi use this sort of language specifically, it seems compatible with their readings of Mulan.

<sup>14</sup> In my view, a close analogue to Chen’s take on Kingston’s accomplishment is Adrienne Rich’s “Diving into the Wreck.” Rich’s poem is an extended metaphor. It encompasses several layers of meanings. The diver plunges into ocean to explore the true face of the wreck and to discover important knowledge of the past. By the time she reaches the drowned ship, she has become a new kind of creature, both a “mermaid” and the “merman,” both male and female, “I am she: I am he” (55). Likewise, in “The Stranger,” Rich claims, “I am the androgyne/I am the living mind you fail to describe/in dead language” (53). For Rich, the dead language is that of patriarchy and its oppression of the feminine. For Kingston, it is patriarchy and Orientalism. Like Rich, Kingston is writing about the androgyne, but in this case, her name is Mulan, and Mulan is the “I” of Kingston.

Like Chen, Shi Pingping also thinks of Kingston's writing of Mulan as bringing together male and female in one body. Shi says that the imaginary "I" of Mulan is "two natures in the same body (*shuangxing tongti* 双性同体)," a dialectical whole of male and female (*maodun de tongyin*). Mulan is a person who possesses both male and female dispositions, and who can walk freely in both the public and private spheres. It can be said that this is Kingston's ideal woman. Shi puts the matter in this way.

在“我”的幻想里，不光是男女两性和谐共处、阴阳合一，亚洲、非洲和美洲的文化同宗同源、相互融合，来自不同阶级、种族、文化的人们地位平等，没有高低贵贱之分....

In the imaginary "I," not only does the harmony of male and female co-exist, *yin* and *yang* unite, but also the cultures of Asia, Africa and America derive from the same source and mutually assimilate. People from different classes, races and culture are all equal, and should have no separation into rich and poor, or superior and inferior. (*Contemporary Ethnic* 22)

In analyzing the positions of Shi and Chen, it seems to me that Shi emphasizes the harmony of male and female, the balance of *yin* and *yang* whereas Chen speaks of a composite being that is the combination of male and female. Chen's notion is that Kingston's ideal is for a being which is neither male nor female but something new: a new kind of gendering of the human being or even moving beyond gender categories entirely. This is why *guaiwu* is lost in translation! Nevertheless, the image of which Shi

is speaking is Kingston's ideal in which people from different cultures and classes can live together in harmony, and it represents a major thread which goes through all of *WW*.

Among the Chinese scholars under study, only Chen offers a close reading of Kingston's *Mulan* in an effort to interpret just how this new type of dynamic person comes into being. Chen identifies four rites of passage that *Mulan* undergoes in her transformation to become both male and female in one body. These are leaving home (*lijia*); learning the sword (*xuejian*); giving birth (*shengyu*); and rebelling (*zaofan*):

In addition to the phase of giving birth, which is a complete female feature, leaving home and rebelling in Chinese culture both present male features in a traditional sense. The phase of *xuejian* is the point where the two genders are intertwined and both developed. (Chen 43)

*Lijia* and *zaofan* are both points at which *Mulan* challenges her own feminine gender limits. As she negotiates these passages, she makes a breakthrough into the traditional male sphere. Leaving home, no matter whether under the customs of traditional Chinese culture or Western families prior to feminism, is understood as movement away from the patriarchal boundaries set for women. It draws into itself masculinity. In China specifically, women were restrained from leaving home unless they entered into a religious life. Otherwise, they were expected to stay either with their parents or their husband. The moral currency that funded such a practice was Confucianism, which created and transmitted this mode of life for generations through its texts and teachers. *The Nuerjing, the Classic for Girls* taught all Chinese women the three obeys and the four virtues:

Girls have three on whom to depend,  
 All their lives they must expect, ---  
 While at home to follow father, who a husband will select,  
 With her husband live in concord from the day that she is wed,  
 And her son's directions follow if her husband should be dead.  
 There are four important virtues  
 Which a maiden should possess.  
 I will one by one rehearse them that your minds they may impress.  
 First of all a woman's virtues  
 Is a chaste and honest heart,  
 Of which modesty and goodness and decorum form a part.  
 If in motion, or it resting, a becoming way is chief;  
 You should guard against an error as you guard against a thief.  
 .....  
 Of the virtues of a woman,  
 Conversation is the third.  
 By your friends 'tis often better to be seen than to be heard,  
 .....  
 Fourth, the duties of a woman,  
 You should never dare to shirk.  
 Know that drawing and embroidering is not all of woman's work,

You should labor at your spinning all the time you have to spare,

And the flavorings for cooking you should constantly prepare. (70-72)

As we see from the *Classic for Girls*, there would be no way to fulfill the expectations of a Chinese girl if she left home and family to find her own individual destiny or self-identity. Fulfillment of the three obeys and the four virtues are all tied to domesticity.

In fact, even in the traditional story of Hua Mulan, she never left home or asserted herself against her restriction to the family home. She spins and weaves, rather than concentrating on the martial arts (*gongfu*). Only when her father cannot go to war does she leave home. She replaces her father to accomplish a patriotic task mandated by the government. In the meanwhile, it is also her means of showing filial piety. In the traditional versions of Mulan, leaving home is not her own choice; instead, she is led or driven by the situation itself. She is passive. Her desire is to protect her family and her father. “Therefore,” Chen concludes, “she deserves the appellation ‘exemplar of filial piety (*xiaoshun*),’ a mark which exonerates her from leaving home” (46).

In contrast, Mulan in *WW* does not hide her feminine identity even though hers was a culture that expected such conduct of women. Chen calls attention to the fact that there are two experiences of leaving home for Mulan in the way Kingston tells the story. The first time is going into White Tiger Mountain to learn *gongfu*. The second one is to go to war in the place of her father. There is a difference between these two experiences. In the first one, Mulan does not conceal her gender and her two masters regard her as a girl. They even teach her how to cope with menstruation. The second time, she leaves home by pretending to be a man, just like the character in the ancient *Mulan Ballad*. She

goes to war as a male soldier, but upon her return, her family and the villagers honor her as a female hero, not as a man. Only in war and for the convenience of battle does she hide her gender.

Of course, Chinese culture is not the only one to lay the four passages Chen identifies down in front of women who would reach forward beyond themselves into a new form of being. Although Chen does not make any connection with American literary texts, examples of works that link well in one way or another with her analysis of Mulan's transformation of her identity through the four passages of leaving home (*lijia*); learning the sword (*xuejian*); giving birth (*shengyu*); and rebelling (*zaofan*) may appear in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* and Toni Morrison's *Sula*. While the protagonists in these novels, whether Edna, the narrator "Jane," Carrie, or Sula, do not go through all the passages Mulan does, they do all leave or are trying to leave home (as a symbol of constriction of their freedom) in order build for themselves new life choices and new identities.

While it might not strain our interpretive readings to see Chen's points with regard to Mulan, we might be much less prepared for her interpretations of No Name Woman. In Chen's view, No Name Woman is never able to leave home (*lijia*). She lives first with her family and then with her husband's family, but once she exerts herself, she is sent back to the home she has left. She is even driven out of her parents' home to live in the pig sty. Yet she realizes that even the pig sty belongs to man, and she is left with no choice but to kill herself as a desperate expression of leaving home (Chen 43).

Chen also applies her model of the four passages to reading the other women's stories in *WW*. Whereas No Name Woman is attached to male family homes from beginning to end, Brave Orchid leaves her husband's family to go to study medicine. During this period of life she fights with the ghosts that lie in wait for her. Chen believes Brave Orchid, like Mulan, is courageous and determined to empower herself. Yet Moon Orchid has never left home even if her husband has already made a new family in the U.S. Chen describes her situation with a very well known Chinese expression. She says that Moon Orchid is "waiting for the rabbit under the tree (*shou zhu dai tu*)." This is a reference to a Chinese parable used to refer to someone who just sits around and waits for something to happen without taking any action. Moon Orchid only sits in China while her identity and self-worth decay around her, for she continues living in the empty space abandoned by man.

Chen does not go quite so far as Jennie Wang does, but it is easy to see the connection between the two critics' viewpoints. Wang expresses her view in this way:

Kingston's mother, Brave Orchid, escaping the Japanese invasion in China, was brave to come to America by herself before the change of the laws; and her sister, Moon Orchid, a parody of the "River-Merchant's Wife,"<sup>15</sup> was a victim of such separation, and she eventually came after many years of separation from her husband. (107)

Actually, the theme of women left behind evoked by the "River-Merchant's Wife" is not insignificant for understanding Kingston. It may be associated with Moon Orchid.

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<sup>15</sup> See above, p. 42n.

Moreover, had Kingston's mother kept waiting for her husband to come back to China, the Hong's would never have had a family and children in America or in China.

According to Wang, "The living presence of her mother, her stories and life experience, contradict the quiet, bashful, and passive voice of the River Merchant's Wife, the only representation of Chinese women in the canon of American literature that she was given to study in school as an English major" (107-08).

As for the eldest daughter of Brave Orchid, she encounters discrimination in Chinese American society. She thinks that once she becomes an American, she could get rid of this fate. So she imagines that she could be like Mulan, taking up guns and rifles and making her life complete (Chen, "She" 47). But once she left home, she found the white mainstream society expressed the same discrimination against her as her traditional Chinese Chinatown home had done. Chen writes,

However, she is not regretful for leaving home because once she leaves she can identify the enemy and strive to defeat it. Only by leaving the male-centered home can she gain her own confidence and talk about her own ambitions as an individual. Before this, she is only a 'maggot in the rice' as viewed by male patriarchy. (48)

In the period of learning the sword (*xuejian*), Mulan realizes her goal of self-development, even so far as to be able to save her fellow countrymen. In *WW*, the warrior possesses a rebellious spirit, reflecting her nature. In the period of giving birth and rebelling, the woman warrior's life is greatly enriched. Not only does she defeat an army but she also gives birth to a son. Giving birth is the climax of the ideal of Mulan in

Kingston's retelling. It is in the image of a giving birth that the metaphor of male and female in one body emerges to complete realization (51).

In the period of rebelling, the woman warrior is "a traditional man." She makes herself up as a man and has her back carved with the family's feuds and nation's hatred as Kingston borrows the story of the male hero Yue Fei in the Song dynasty. She organizes an army, and Kingston's inspiration is not Mulan's battles against marauding bandits in the time of the Three Kingdoms of China's past, but another revolution entirely. Chen provides her observation in this way:

Here we see a miniature of history [of China]: the army in the difficult journey, the emperor inside the distant palace, the time when the people are stricken by poverty and hunger, and the field which is uncultivated through years of drought. Such imaginative fantasy makes us see all the signs of the Chinese proletariat revolution: the Long March, the Red Flag, the "glorious songs," the rigid discipline, the governors' disregard for the pain and suffering of their people, the incessant crop failures which force the peasants to join the Communist army, as well as the "red sea" which symbolizes *The Red Detachment of Women* who, after being emancipated from the oppressing landlords, enforce judgment upon them. All of this is not accidental, but an aspiration for the revolution characterized by violence. These things represent the extreme embodiment of feminism.

(52)

Chen is directing us to a very important phenomenon: how Kingston's portrayal of Mulan is associated with feminist ideas of rebellion, by referring back to the movie *The Red Detachment of Women*. She employs the Marxist viewpoint that women are "an oppressed class" and then calls attention to the class uprising in the form of a peasant's revolution which appears in Kingston's telling of the Mulan story. This becomes an integral part of Kingston's dream ideal of feminism because Kingston's feminism and Western feminism are both sympathetic to the view that women represent an oppressed class. Chen conveys her idea that Kingston's Mulan is not a thorough-going exemplar of Western feminism because she manifests in her femininity the desire to be a good wife and a caring mother. Yet Mulan is also an activist and revolutionary dedicated to the overthrow of the oppression of women patterned on the female soldiers of the Red Detachment. Here Chen is offering too reductive a view of Western feminism without citing any particular critics. She seems to assume that Western feminism was always of the second-wave sort, liberating women from the household and even motherhood. But there are many other versions of feminism in which being a mother and wife are valued. It is not only in the Chinese tradition of woman warriors that we find a strong woman who is also a mother and wife but also in the work of some Western feminists, such as Alice Walker in her book *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens* (1983).

In the beginning of Kingston's representation of the process of Mulan's giving birth, Chen says, "the idea of feminism has been set aside. This is because in *WW* the elaboration on women's giving birth is contradictory to the ideology of feminism. In *WW*, being pregnant and delivering a boy, Mulan faces no obstacles, does not regret or

complain” (Chen 54-55). When the child is born, Mulan cuts the cord and ties it to her army’s flagpole. This is an expression of pride. It is a declaration of her identity as a woman, while hanging the cord on the flag comes from the Chinese tradition of keeping the cord after birth. At this point, Kingston has transformed from a feminist to a person who respects and values the mother-child relationship delivered to her by the Chinese tradition, even as she goes forward as a warrior (55). By writing Mulan in this way, Kingston offers a complicated account of feminine identity that cannot be easily harmonized with some schools of white Western feminism.

According to Chen, Kingston makes a significant and very Chinese distinction between her feminism and that of Western feminists. This distinction may be seen by contrasting representations of Mulan and Joan of Arc. Unlike the virginal Joan of Arc in the Western tradition, whose strength lies in her sexual chastity, marriage and childbirth make Mulan stronger than she was, revealing a value embedded in Chinese culture.

Shi Pingping agrees with Chen on this point by saying:

The woman warrior possesses not only the male’s spirit of bravery and brotherhood, doing the things traditionally done by men such as revenge and righting wrongs in the name of Heaven; but she also has the disposition of a female who is beautiful in appearance and is gentle.

While participating in battle and fighting outside, she never forgets the traditional responsibilities of a woman. These two aspects do not conflict with each other; but complement each other. (*Contemporary Ethnic* 22)

In my view, while Kingston's *Mulan* is a woman warrior in the context of valuing motherhood, being a wife, and being a filial daughter, models of this sort are not completely absent from Western feminist writing. Chen and Shi, however, are claiming that Kingston did not draw on these Western models but looked to Chinese tradition because she is rooted in that culture.

As the Chinese version of *WW* puts it, "Getting married, giving birth to a child, makes a woman warrior stronger" (《女勇士》 57). While not denying that *Mulan* still exhibits an inclination to conform to the expectations of males, Chen observes, "Just like the so-called male and female in one body of *Mulan*, the combination of gender features the true face that has been recovered—that is, it is the embodiment of gender identity that has been reconstructed within a new historical situation and environment" ("She" 55). The feminist *guaiwu* is what Chen calls "the dream ideal" of Kingston's best wishes for women. *Mulan* embodies both halves of a male and female binary. She gives birth like a traditional woman, but she rebels and forms her own army, and she leaves home and learns the sword. So she melds together in her person qualities associated with both genders.

The reading of *Mulan* as a new type of being who brings both genders together can be seen in the background of Jennie Wang's interpretation of the words carved on *Mulan*'s back. Her analysis takes this incident in a way that the Chinese scholars under study never consider:

These words are the "Scarlet Letters" of American national disgrace. It is the history of Chinese immigration in this country, the economic

exploitation and racial oppression the Chinese immigrants have suffered—the “sacrifice” that they wish their children to “avenge” and “report” to the world. Kingston bears these “scarlet letters” not on the sensual bosom of a New Eve, advocating sexual revolution, but on the horseback<sup>16</sup> of a woman warrior—the Chinese Hua Mulan, fighting for Civil Rights, Women’s Rights, and Peace. (166)

Instead of contrasting Mulan with the New Eve as Wang does, Chen prefers the interpretive metaphor of *guaiwu*, representing Mulan as both male and female in one body. This interpretation is compatible with the other readings discussed in this chapter, and it conforms well to Homi Bhabha’s position on gender dualism: “identity is never a transcendental thing, but the product of an ever moving process difficult to essentialize” (51).

The Chinese scholars under study all view the Mulan narrative as the most revealing account of Kingston’s view of gender in *WW*. Their readings of Kingston’s project in that narrative vary only slightly. While Shi speaks of Mulan as a dialectical whole by focusing on the woman warrior’s binary nature, Chen relies on the Chinese concept of *guaiwu* to try to capture how genders are gathered in Mulan. We cannot think of Kingston’s gender construction in the abstract. If we do, we will be distracted by whether one side or the other of the binary dominates, and Kingston’s contribution to gender analysis will evaporate, or as I said above, *guaiwu* will be lost in translation. Instead of abstraction, Kingston writes a character who acts and interacts as this new type

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<sup>16</sup> Though Wang says “horseback” in the quote, she must mean “back” of the woman warrior, in order to put this in parallel with “bosom” of the New Eve.

of gendered being. Is Mulan portrayed as a model of feminism? None of the mainland Chinese scholars look to Western feminism as the source for Kingston's construction. Shi argues that Kingston does not draw on feminism for her image of Mulan probably because Shi understands feminism narrowly, focusing on white feminists rather than the feminists of color. Shi's position relies on being able to show that there are not Western feminists who would embrace a model such as Mulan, especially her return to motherhood and filial devotion. This line of argument appears to succeed only because Shi focuses on a limited range of feminist critics (e.g., Blackburn, Rich, and Chodorow).

Chen's approach may actually be more creative. Like Shi, Chen insists that Kingston's sources for her Mulan gender model of *guaiwu* is the "hidden tradition" of women's writing and tradition in patriarchal Chinese culture. Additionally, Chen attests that for the particulars of her Mulan character Kingston is depends on *The Red Detachment of Women*, a text available and well known in the Chinatown where Kingston lived. So Chen argues for the Chinese origination of Kingston's gender views without any direct engagement of Western feminist writers of any type. Such an argument needs rigorous support because it neglects to consider Kingston's environment in California where she was surrounded by a widely diverse group of feminists and feminist ideologies. Yet the transmission of the "hidden tradition" of women is surely a known phenomenon which may have exerted a great influence on Kingston, but whether this is an adequate explanation of Kingston's views is arguable.

## Chapter V: Mother-Daughter Relationship 母女关系

As an American-born Chinese daughter of immigrant parents to the U.S., Maxine Hong Kingston faced numerous difficulties balancing the cultures that influenced her, especially as she formed her self-identity as a Chinese American woman. One of the major conflicts relevant to her identity formation was her relationship with her mother. Mother-daughter relationships (*munu guanxi* 母女关系) are frequently confusing in every culture and every period of time, “but when mother and daughter are literally ‘worlds apart,’ separated not only by the time gap but also by a wide cultural gap, then the subject is yet more complicated” (J. Chan 66). It is not surprising, then, that feminist literary criticism has paid close attention to maternal discourse, or the representation of motherhood from the mother’s point of view. In literary works with maternal characters in the Western literary tradition, mothers have tended to be silent and depicted only from their children’s points of view; however, maternal characters who speak up are increasing in number and many of them come from non-white ethnic authors such as Kingston (Sugiyama).

Lu Wei writes, “As for women, the process of getting rid of the influence of ‘mother’ seems to be longer and more difficult than for men” (121). If Lu is right, then perhaps both the richness and tension between mother and daughter for immigrants may be more intense than for those nurtured in their home cultures because such tension is related closely to the challenges of cultural interaction. The Chinese American critic Amy Ling says, “The alienation of minorities is not just a consequence of exclusion from the mainstream culture, but also it results from the severe criticism of their parents”

(*Between Worlds* 123). Mothers are often used in immigrant families by fathers and husbands to control daughters and transmit to them the culture of patriarchy. That is to say that “the rigid representation of motherhood is the strict demand of males” (H. Liu, *Walking Out* 199). Lu Wei holds that this is also the strict demand (*keqiu*) of the cultural hegemony of the mainstream culture directed toward ethnic minority women. The destructiveness of this demand is invisible but of immense importance. The reason why Kingston identifies with Western culture is to win her independence as a subject. Her action might seem contradictory: in order to protest against her mother, who has set up for her a good example of being a strong woman, she even pays the cost of identifying with her enemy (121). Kingston must wage a struggle with Chinese traditional culture including patriarchy, patrilineality, and patrilocality. She has to get over the traditional ideology of Confucius and Mencius used to support the oppression of women and the three obeys and four virtues which are still rooted in Chinese American society. Lu Wei presents a clear point that as a young female Chinese American writer Kingston makes “mother” a “target of attack as well as an axis to open up a psychological space” (121).

However, having said all of this, Jennie Wang claims that scholars who take *WW* as an example of a female’s rebellion against her Chinese parentage seriously misunderstand it. As illustration of this error, she calls attention to the titles of reviews on Kingston, such as “Rebellious Chinese Girl Rejects Ancient Heritage,” “The Ghosts of Yesterday’s China are Captured by a Woman Who Has Never Been There,” and “A

Chinese Girl Comes to America.”<sup>1</sup> Wang also reminds us that *WW* is dedicated to Kingston’s father and mother, which would have been quite a curious thing to do if Kingston had actually felt that her mother was the oppressive “mother” of *WW*.

With the mother-daughter relationship functioning in a very important position, it is perhaps surprising that Shi Pingping mentions only one Chinese-language essay available prior to 2004 to mainland Chinese scholars dealing with the theme of mother-daughter relationship in Kingston’s *WW*, and it is Lu Wei’s important article “Mother/Other: The Counter-Narrative Strategy in *The Woman Warrior*” (*Mother-Daughter* 8). Shi intends to remedy the lack of treatment of the subject of mother-daughter relations among Chinese scholars of American literature. She devotes Chapter Three of her *The Mother-Daughter Relationship and the Politics of Gender and Race* to Kingston’s treatment of this subject. Xue Yuefeng also looks at Kingston’s writings on mother-daughter interactions. So, we are in a position to ask: what do mainland Chinese women scholars say about this subject? In what ways, if any, is it different from the analysis provided by American and Chinese American scholars?

Lu substantially expanded and reworked her essay on “Mother/Other” in her chapter “Orientalism and the Politics of Resistance” and published it in her 2007 work *Moving toward a Cultural Study of Chinese American Literature*. In this chapter, she interprets Kingston’s writing on mother-daughter relationships as a strategy of resistance

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<sup>1</sup>Clippings of these reviews from *The New York Book Review*, *Columbia Dispatch*, *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Peninsular Herald*, *Anchorage Daily News*, *Chattanooga News-Free Press* exist in the archive collection of Kingston’s manuscripts in the Bankroft Library, University of California, Berkeley (see Wang, *Iron Curtain* 49, f.23).

to post-colonialism, holding that Kingston is using a technique of anti-narration in *WW* (113). Looking at Lu's position is worthwhile and will add to the multiple voices in the American discourse of Kingston's mother-daughter relationship by taking a glimpse of a mainland Chinese scholar's viewpoint as our starting point.

As a reminder of Lu's approach to the mother-daughter writing in Kingston already foreshadowed in Chapter III of my study, it will be remembered that Lu argues that in *WW* Kingston's way of characterizing her main characters is designed to achieve the goal of "righting wrongs by writing wrongs." Lu claims Kingston is deliberately describing "mother" as an Orientalist would in order to correct its deeply flawed views about China, Chinese women, and Chinese mothers and daughters. In this sense, Lu's position on Kingston's writing strategy is somewhat different from the interpretation of the American writer Yu Su-lin in *Fantasizing the Oriental Other*.

Whereas Lu thinks of Kingston's construction of "mother" as a deliberate use of Orientalism, Yu holds that Kingston relies on the Oriental other in order to construct her own self-identity, distorting Chinese culture in the process; however, his ideas must also be considered alongside the Brave Orchid narratives. Lu shows how Kingston writes the wrong of Orientalism by not making the "mother" equivalent to "Brave Orchid." Kingston consistently has the mother belittle the daughter and support Chinese patriarchal ideology. In this way, Kingston is deliberately "writing wrong" by "using skillful packaging and pretending" to mould and overturn the general readers' consciousness (Lu 114). Lu seems to be on the right track; however, few if any, American scholars make this distinction between "mother" and "Brave Orchid." For

example, Sidonne Smith holds that “[i]t is Brave Orchid’s voice, commanding, as Kingston notes, ‘great power’ that continually reiterates the discourses of the community in maxims, talk-story, legends, family histories” (58).

Chinese American critics such as Frank Chin and Benjamin Tong even reproach the character they take as the main heroine of the book, whom they also mistake as the “mother.” Likewise, Katherine Fong’s “To Maxine Hong Kingston: A Letter” follows Chin and Tong in this problematic reading. Fong denies Kingston’s “autobiography” as “representative” of Chinese American women’s experience. She criticizes Kingston for exaggerating the cliché that female children were unwanted in Chinese families (e.g., “maggots in the rice”; “raise boys for your old age, girls for someone else’s”). Fong writes in her work:

Having had a very warm, generous, and loving father, I am insulted when non-Chinese read *The Woman Warrior* and *Fifth Chinese Daughter* and then jump to the conclusion that all Chinese fathers have been authoritarian assholes . . . . The praises from white reviewers have given excessive weight and “legitimacy” to your [Kingston’s] story as the “true representation”—the history—of all Chinese and Chinese-Americans. In fact, while your book is enjoyable fiction, it is not the story of us all. In the final analysis, Maxine, my greatest criticism is directed at those who believe it. (68-69)

While not making it entirely clear whether she agrees in all respects with Fong, Jennie Wang certainly leaves no doubt that she assents to Fong’s final position that it is really

the insensitivity and Orientalism of American reviewers that led to the belief that Kingston's story is true of all Chinese American women, and mother-daughter relationships (33).

For Lu, however, all this criticism from Chin, Tong, Fong, and even Wang's agreement with it is a grave mistake because *Brave Orchid* should not be understood as equivalent to Kingston's mother, and it is *Brave Orchid*, not "mother," who is the heroine of the book. Lu believes that by using Orientalist images of "mother" to represent Chinese culture Kingston establishes a subjective self-critical narrative, by making her "mother" the prototypical Chinese woman of Orientalism. In the eyes of the daughter, "her mother represents an enigmatic and disgusting Chinese culture" (Lu 116). So, "mother" in Kingston is constructed in such a way that she represents, gives voice to, and defends the barbarism, patriarchy, exoticism, and mystery to be found in Chinese culture by the Orientalist mind of white mainstream culture. In contrast to "mother" narratives in *WW*, however, the *Brave Orchid* narratives are anti-Orientalist. In Lu's view, these narratives demonstrate Kingston's post-colonialist strategy of resistance against Orientalism, but they do so by drawing on the distinctive Chinese tradition.

Lu's position is an attempt to offer a correction to white American and Chinese American interpretations of Kingston's writing on mother-daughter relations. Her point is surely directed at Chin, Tong, Fong and others because it explains the approach Kingston is taking in such a way as to blunt their entire criticism. She suggests that what these critics find to be in opposition to Chinese cultural tradition is actually written into the work for a purpose and a quite intentional one. But Lu's correction is meant to be

more far-reaching in its implications than its representation of the “mother” character alone. For example, she does not think that Kingston is the heroine of *WW* either, or at least she is certainly not the only heroine or principal one. No Name Woman and Brave Orchid as constructed in the text are also heroines. Moreover, Lu says that some white American critics identify Kingston as the daughter in the book, but they do not notice that this daughter is actually an American who is filled with the ideology of Eurocentricism and soaked in Orientalism (117). Nor do they realize that the daughter is “an unreliable narrator,” a fact that is often seen in the novel. The daughter incorporates her own Eurocentric ideology into the narration and often gets Chinese culture wrong. Lu remarks explicitly, “The daughter completely rebels against Asian culture and thinks of it as a dangerous force. The identification of the daughter as the heroine of the novel is very likely to make an interpreter feel the work is not truthful, and as a result Kingston’s work was criticized for betraying national culture (i.e., Chinese culture)” (117-18).

The daughter in *WW* has triggered multifaceted interpretations. In addition to the stories featuring the daughter and Brave Orchid, there are some narratives in *WW* that are connected to the mother-daughter dynamic in Kingston’s writing, and these are often neglected by critical scholarship. For example, Jennie Wang reminds us of the story “Yue Fei’s Mother Carves the Letters” which Kingston blends into the Mulan tale by a deliberate misreading (i.e., Xue’s idea of *wu du* 误读). Actually, in Chinese literary history, this story is passed down as much in praise of his mother, as of Yue Fei’s own valor and loyalty. This fact does not come onto the horizon of American interpreters who are unfamiliar with the traditional story. In the old account, Yue Fei was a war hero, a

Marshall in the Song Dynasty period. Under the reign of Song Gaozong (r. 1127-1163), Yue Fei wanted to go to battle against the Jin invaders, but he worried about leaving his aging mother. She encouraged him to go, and before he left, she asked him to kneel down and bare his back. Using a needle and ink, she carved the four characters 精忠报国 (*jingzhong baoguo*), meaning “devote your loyalty to the service of your country.” Now, in the “White Tigers” chapter of *WW*, the narrator “I” takes the place of the male warrior Yue Fei, has different words carved on her back, and has both parents involved—the mother washes her back and the father brushes the words in ink (*WW* 34). But the point Wang wants to make may be drawn from what Chen Xiaohui calls the “hidden tradition” of the story. The sacrifice of Yue Fei’s mother does not end by sending her son off to battle. As the story continues, Yue Fei was so successful on the battlefield that the leader of the Jin army tried to force his mother to write a letter to him asking him to return home. In the ancient story, to counteract this plot, Yue Fei’s mother committed suicide, thus freeing Yue Fei of any filial duty to her that might require him to return home. Wang concludes that Kingston is writing the story of Mulan with the entirety of the narrative of Yue Fei and his mother in mind (157). Even though the authentic version of the Yue Fei story has been altered by Kingston, her intention in using this story is still apparent. Kingston characterizes the mother as making a sacrifice to send her daughter to do battle against injustice because she wants her daughter to be heroic like Yue Fei. Also she wants to free her daughter as Yue Fei’s mother did. Mirroring Yue Fei’s story and incorporating some of its fragments actually bring layers of positive meaning as well as highlight the mother-daughter relationship.

Even the No Name Woman tale arises out of the mother-daughter relationship. Lu believes that in order to keep distance from her mother and from Chinese culture, Kingston uses the sensitive topic of sex as the tool to set apart the closeness between mother and the daughter. In No Name Woman's story, Kingston's narrator is a young woman who is becoming sexually aware. The young woman lacks sexual knowledge and experience, but she is curious and filled with imaginative wonderings and perplexity about it. Her mother tells the aunt's story to try to give the daughter a warning. As Kingston writes, mother tells daughter, "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" (*WW* 9). Mother uses fear and shame to discipline her daughter into obedience just as the villagers had tried to inflict the same on No Name Woman. However, Kingston changes the story into her intuitive understanding (*ganxing shi de lijie*) of the mother's talk-story.

Lu holds that Kingston purposely recasts her aunt's story in order to resist Chinese patriarchy and sexual repression. She challenges the image of ideal feminine behavior that requires of women that they assume the responsibility for maintaining family honor and remaining silent if their challenge to male demands would be disruptive. She makes use of the fact that in the mother's talk-story the aunt never reveals the father of the child, nor the circumstances under which she becomes pregnant. Kingston exploits this silence to suggest several possible explanations for her aunt's pregnancy such as that she could have been a victim of rape, a partner who obediently kept silent, that she freely pursued her own sexual desires, or maybe that she innocently attracted a lover by her

simple beauty. The point is that “[t]he dutiful mother tells the story to her daughter as a cautionary tale, but the rebellious daughter calls this aunt ‘my forerunner’ and admires her for defying conventions, breaking taboos, and being her own person, regardless of the cost” (A. Ling, *Between Worlds* 125). Kingston uses her writing to turn a victim into a victor, one with character and courage. Smith comments, “Instead of imagining her aunt as one of ‘the heavy, deep-rooted women’ who ‘were to maintain the past against the flood, safe for returning’ (*WW* 9), and thus as victim, she imagines her as a woman attuned to ‘a secret voice, a separate attentiveness’ (13), truly transgressive and subversive” (61). No Name Woman refuses to be controlled by others. Even when she commits suicide, she throws herself in the community well as an act of defiance. Her death in the well serves as a lasting reminder to the villagers about how they had treated a woman who walked beyond the community taboos.

In the 1970s, when she was writing *WW*, Kingston was teaching high school in Hawaii. In the English curriculum, Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* was a major text in her syllabus. She told Paula Rabinowitz in an interview, “When I was writing ‘No Name Woman,’ I was thinking about Nathaniel Hawthorne and *The Scarlet Letter* as a discussion of the Puritan part of America, and of China and a woman’s place” (182). Jennie Wang gives attention to the possible relationships between Hawthorne and Kingston. She writes, “The punishment of no-name woman recalls a familiar scene in the American novel—Hester Prynne in the market place. The scenes of violence against women in an old village of China make the exotic familiar and the familiar exotic” (111). Wang thinks that the implications of Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* in *WW* still escape

the attention of American critics. However, it seems to me that Wang may be overlooking Elliott Shapiro's "Authentic Watermelon: Maxine Hong Kingston's American Novel." Actually, Shapiro interprets Kingston's characterization of the aunt's action as mirroring the fact that Hester Prynne refuses to reveal Dimmesdale's name in *The Scarlet Letter*. Nevertheless, the juxtaposition of the cowardly New England minister and the Chinese no-name man produces a most sinister male image, something that Wang says would be a culture shock to Chinese readers unfamiliar with Hawthorne's novel. Wang feels there are several reasons why Kingston's representation of male behavior appears to be strange and unbelievable to Chinese sensibilities. First, in Chinese culture, there is limited opportunity for privacy, so it is unthinkable that a daughter from a respectable and well-to-do family such as Kingston's could have had a love affair or be raped by a man who lived in the same village but would not be identified by the villagers. Second, Wang says that the village raid portrayed in the narrative is not a common practice or custom in China. She claims that in China there is not a desire to punish the disgraced family by public exposure of sexual scandal. This is more to the taste of an American audience, one familiar with Puritan scarlet letters. She believes that Kingston got her ideas of village raids and mob violence from reading about the Cultural Revolution in the Chinese newspapers available to her. In fact, Kingston does mention in "Shaman" that *The San Francisco Gold Mountain News* was a major newspaper circulating in Chinese communities in California. Wang's study of the articles in the paper from 1966 to 1972 reveals frequent reports of mob violence, especially in Canton, the area from which Kingston's parents came.

Once again, Wang's points about the infrequency of village raids and the inability in China to keep secret sexual activity are arguable. But, even so, it is important to keep in mind Kingston's understanding of who her readers are. Writing as a mainland Chinese scholar, Lu offers a quite different account of No Name Woman than that of Wang.

The story of No Name Woman is a very ordinary story in China. When she was young, she fell in love with a man and gave birth to an illegitimate son. Because her behavior went against the moral values of the family and neighbors, she ultimately jumped into the well and drowned herself together with her newborn baby. Her mother told Kingston this story to warn her against doing such humiliating things. But Kingston's understanding of the story is very different. She gives free rein to her imagination about her aunt's behavior and she is unrestrained with regard to the portrayal of sex in her story. (122)

We do remember that while Wang considers the story of No Name Woman to be rooted principally in Kingston's reading of *The Scarlet Letter* and her construction of stories she read in the Chinese newspapers of the 1970s, Wang spent over twenty years in the U.S. from the time of her first entrance into college until 2004. In contrast, Lu, who never lived in the U.S., claims that the account is "a very ordinary story in China." This allows us to see clearly that a critic is greatly influenced by the cultural and literary traditions available where she resides when forming her interpretation regarding Kingston. This is why, in my view, Wang and Shapiro take a very different viewpoint from Lu in critiquing No Name Woman. Wang holds, as Shapiro does, that the source for No Name Woman is

*The Scarlet Letter* whereas Lu claims that the scene described is typical in China, so she does not look to an American source narrative.

Following the theory she has developed from Homi Bhabha, Lu reads Kingston's writing of "No Name Woman" as a translation and insists that the original facts of the story as of less significance than the resulting "translation." In the eyes of Kingston's mother, the behavior of the aunt violates the traditional communal structure and goes against the moral order for women. Her purpose is to give a moral to her daughter who is coming-of-age and to warn her not to repeat such a disgrace. But Lu says that Kingston "translates" the actions of the aunt, making them instead a symbol of enthusiasm, freedom, and identity. When Kingston tells the story, she "adds content" just as Jacques Derrida theorizes (see Chapter III). Lu observes, "It is apparent that the different understanding she has of the story compared to her mother and Chinese readers is caused by the fact that she thinks of Westerners as her implied readers (*yinhan de duzhe*)" (123). This goes back to Kingston's point that *WW* is an American book, not a Chinese book. On the surface, it may seem that Kingston is belittling her aunt and her Chinese culture, but Lu holds that

[t]he author by means of this unreliable narrator displays the artistic and fictional character of her work and the author's deliberate use of artistic irony (*yishu fanfeng* 艺术反讽). The irony is that the retelling of the No Name Woman is just like a fun-house mirror (*hahajing* 哈哈镜). What it reflects is a distorted image and shadow, but it is more thought-provoking.

It is incorrect and even absurd to identify a fun-house image with a truthful representation of the original reality. (123)

Such a reading conforms well to Lu's theory that Kingston's writing should be read as a translation that "adds content" and "supplements gaps" (119). The story of *No Name Woman* casts "mother" and Chinese culture in an Orientalist manner. But Kingston's writing of *No Name Woman*'s possible reasons for her pregnancy and her plunge in the well holds up a fun-house mirror to the mother's story and in doing so offers a criticism of Orientalist constructions of China.

Shi Pingping, likewise, recognizes that Kingston's depiction of mother-daughter relationships is complex and multi-layered; however, she does not take the same approach as Lu. She does not make an overt separation between "mother" and "Brave Orchid." Shi holds that Kingston's mother is both a representative of the traditional Chinese cultural system of patriarchy, and also a living challenge to it as *Brave Orchid* (*Contemporary Ethnic* 20). The mother's response is, in Shi's view, both a contradictory and unifying whole. She believes that the mother and *Brave Orchid* are in a dialectical relationship (*bianzheng guanxi*). Shi is also well aware that this relationship can be approached both as a political/cultural commentary and as a backdrop against which Kingston plays out her quest for self-identity.<sup>2</sup>

She elaborates on this dialectical relationship between the mother and *Brave Orchid* as a context for the mother-daughter relationship in the longest of the chapters in

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<sup>2</sup> For overview discussions of these different ways of approaching mother-daughter in Kingston see my "The Talking Mother and the Writing Daughter in *The Woman Warrior*," Jianhui Wang's *Sexual Politics*, and Enjoo Woo's, *Cultural Conditioning and Mother/Daughter Conflicts in the Development of Identity and Voice*.

her *The Mother-Daughter Relationship and the Politics of Gender and Race*. As was shown in the Introduction to this study, Shi leaves no doubt that her intention is to bring to the surface, criticize and correct a number of mistakes she believes to have been made by both American and Chinese American critics approaching Kingston's writing on the mother-daughter relationship in *WW*. In her focus on the readings of Kingston's writings on mother-daughter relationships, Shi separates herself from Western critics. She states, "The desire to co-opt and appropriate texts by and about women of color prompts white feminist critics, more often than not, to pose fatally reductive and simplistic readings of the mother-daughter relations in *The Woman Warrior*" (*Mother-Daughter* 59).

In responding to Western critics of Kingston, Shi analyzes Suzanne Juhasz's study of *WW* and *CM* in the article "Narrative Technique and Female Identity." Juhasz's work heavily depends on Nancy Chodorow's feminist theory, and while Shi finds Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* to be a powerful piece of psychological writing, as discussed before, she nevertheless finds Chodorow's construction of Western feminism problematic. Shi extends her attack of Chodorow over to Juhasz's reading of Kingston saying, that it

...amounts to no more than a literary twin of Chodorow's psychological masterpiece. She seems fully oblivious to the fact that the mother and daughter in the book [*WW*] are located in a real and social world completely different from Chodorow's first-world nuclear family. (60)

Shi develops her distinction of Kingston's family situation, set as it is in the first-world, from that Chodorow and Juhasz describe. Shi reminds us that the daughter-narrator's

search for self in relation to her mother/father takes place also in the hostile environment of white American culture, with its racism and its unbearable pressure of acculturation and assimilation. Shi holds that these cultural dimensions of ethnicity and race are ignored by Juhasz in her eagerness to impose Chodorow's framework on *WW* (61). She comments, "More broadly, the mother-daughter relationship in *WW*—as well as the father-daughter relationship in *CM*—is situated not only in Chinese and American patriarchal cultures but also in the third world of the first world, that is, the marginalized and impoverishing Chinatown in Stockton, California" (61). Shi's use of "the third world of the first world" is a very powerful concept. Actually, it alludes to Shi's recognition of a certain sort of third world feminism of which she seems to be aware. She associates Chinese American authors with women writers of color, but she seems not to clearly carry over this awareness when she writes of Western feminism. When doing so, she tends to generalize and universalize the white feminist writers, although the effect on her analysis may be somewhat less than Chen's similar mistake as noted in the previous chapter.

Meanwhile, Shi is also intent on making clear that the process of talk-story is a part of the Chinese context in which Kingston's writing of mother-daughter relations must be given attention by critics because in Chinese culture values and models of behavior are transmitted to children and reinforced in an unobtrusive yet effective way in this manner. In taking this position, Shi argues that Chodorow's analysis is seriously inaccurate when dealing with Chinese women. "It is the denigration of the mother's values, culture, and authority that results in Kingston's alienation, contrary to Nancy

Chodorow's belief in mother-daughter over-identification" as the source for daughter estrangement from her mother. Shi concludes that Kingston's re-identification with her mother and community "takes place only after the daughter has begun to examine her assimilation critically and obtain a better understanding of Chinese culture and tradition" (66).

But what Shi does not do is to consider the impact of Orientalism on Kingston's reading, as we have seen with Lu Wei's writings on the mother-daughter relationship. In fact, Shi says that mainland Chinese scholars cannot overlook the ways in which gender politics are intertwined with cultural nationalism in the U.S., and that Chinese Americans have undergone a form of "internal colonialism" within American territory, including political discrimination, economic exploitation, and forced silence (61). Shi does not follow Lu's reading of Kingston's characterization of "mother" either as an anti-narrative to criticize Orientalism, or as a kind of "writing wrong." Shi appears to have little doubt that Kingston has herself internalized colonialist understandings of "mother," Chinese culture, and Chinese American life (9). She follows Xue Yufeng's characterization of Kingston's generation of Chinese American writers as "cultural hybrids," filled with the "two-ness" of Du Bois. By implication this means to her that Kingston has internalized, consciously and unconsciously, colonialist views.

Shi is critical of other American feminist interpretations of Kingston than those of Juhasz and Chodorow, but from a different point of view. She acknowledges that some white feminists do indeed try to contextualize their analyses of Kingston more carefully than does Juhasz, but they fail because they do so in a one-sided way. For example, Shi

posits that Bonnie Braendlin puts Kingston's work in a context, but it is exclusively the space of America of the early to mid-seventies. Shi focuses on Braendlin's reading of *WW*'s view of the relationship between mother and daughter as "antagonistic and obstructive to female development" that became particularly acute during and after the 1970s (Braendlin 111). This antagonism was intense because, according to Braendlin, the women's movement since the 1960s "defined subjectivity in masculine terms that privileged independence, self-sufficiency, and autonomy at the expense of traditional 'feminine' relational values of nurturing and caring." The values were "embodied in an ideology of motherhood defined and dominated for years by patriarchal males" (112). Thus, Braendlin maintains, the daughters of the liberation movement viewed these values and practices as outdated restrictions foisted upon them by their retrograde mothers. These values and practices were the enslaving ideologies of wife/motherhood. The daughters of the liberation movement defined themselves in ways formerly allowed only to men. They wanted to move out of the home and into the workplace to climb the ladder of success. Shi is critical of Braendlin's view that Kingston is part of the movement dedicated to freeing women from the "enslaving ideologies of wife/motherhood" (*Mother-Daughter* 62). She thinks that Kingston is not trying to set aside motherhood for liberation as Braendlin thinks, but that she actually focuses on *Brave Orchid* as a strong, and even heroic, mother.

Shi also associates Braendlin's approach to Kingston's work with that of Thomas J. Ferraro's "Changing the Rituals: Courageous Daughtering and the Mystique of *The Woman Warrior*." Ferraro identifies Kingston's work as "a product of the Berkeley

1970s focused on women's issues" (155-56). In Shi's view, Ferraro, perhaps more directly than Braendlin, moves away from the context of Kingston's Chinese womanhood and Chinese family, and this systematically misleads him in interpreting Kingston's work (63). According to Shi, this is in no place more evident than in the following assessment by Ferraro:

Berkeley in Kingston's time was a center of emergent second-wave feminism. Although Kingston acknowledges few influences, surely she was tutored in the critique of patriarchy, generated in the late 1960s and early 1970s by theorists such as Shula Smith Firestone, Kate Millet, and Susan Brownmiller. She probably became familiar as well with first efforts to create what Gerda Lerner, Adrienne Rich, and Susan Griffin, and others call "a woman-centered analysis." (Ferraro 157-58)

Shi's objection to the analyses of Braendlin and Ferraro is not just that she feels they have neglected other American contexts, such as the Civil Rights Movement and the anti-Vietnam War campaigns that were both red hot at Berkeley in the 1970s, but it is more fundamentally of a different sort. Shi rehearses the concerns she voiced in her interpretations of Kingston's *Mulan* and wonders how they can ignore the influence on Kingston of her *Chinese* parents and her *Chinese* American community (*Mother-Daughter* 64). Shi does not agree that this is merely an objection a Chinese scholar should have, but insists that indeed any scholar seeking to have the fullest reading of a text ought to give attention to the cultural context of the writer. As a mainland Chinese scholar of American literature, Shi aligns herself with Patricia Hill Collins's assessment

that Juhasz, Braendlin, and Ferraro “merely [add] racial ethnic women’s experiences to preexisting feminist theories, without considering how these experiences challenge those theories” (Collins 48). Shi’s position is that in interpreting Kingston’s work, the formation of gender consciousness, mother-daughter relationships, and self-identity must not be approached by taking gender, race, class or nation separately. Instead, the critic must situate interpretation at the intersection of Chinese racial identity and Chinese womanhood, a position very close to Collins’s theory of intersectionality. Accordingly, Shi claims:

Kingston’s estrangement from and eventual re-identification with her mother occurs as a result of the journey she undertakes as she is immersed in Chinese, Chinese American, and mainstream American culture. Even the talk-stories that Kingston receives and uses in her literary craft come from a Chinese woman who . . . feels the need to preserve her family and Chinese tradition against the encroaching dominant culture of Western ‘ghosts’ in America. Brave Orchid’s talk-storying is an indispensable part of motherwork full of power and identity in her Chinese culture.<sup>3</sup> (*Mother-Daughter* 65)

In contrast to Shi, Xue Yufeng believes that the conflict between mother and daughter in *WW* is actually the external demonstration of the tension between Chinese and American culture. The daughter faces the challenge of appropriating the Chinese tradition delivered to her through her mother’s talk-stories while also feeling the need to

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<sup>3</sup> A detailed exposition of the Chinese tradition of talk-story is in Qingyun Wu, “A Chinese Reader’s Response to Maxine Hong Kingston’s *China Men*.”

assert herself against that tradition and shape a new understanding influenced by her experience as an American woman. Although the “little girl” grew up with her mother’s talk-stories, she, after all, has only a partial knowledge of Chinese culture. Like Shi but unlike Lu, Xue develops no reading according to which Kingston is understood to be writing “mother” in an Orientalist way. Instead, she states:

像众多第二代华裔美国人一样，她排斥甚至厌恶中国传统文化习俗，认为华人满口谎言、隔街说话、走路姿势不雅、重男轻女、神秘兮兮。其实母女间的冲突大多起因于两种文化本身之间的差异。

Like many second generation Chinese Americans, she rejects and even hates the traditional Chinese cultural customs. She thought the Chinese were always lying, talking loudly, walking in a disgraceful manner, favoring boys over girls, and behaving mysteriously. Actually the conflict between mother and daughter mostly derives from the difference in cultures. (200-01)

For example, when she was young, the mother cut the daughter’s tongue. In the understanding of the “little girl,” this was to make her keep silent; it was torture and destroyed her very nature as a woman. But the mother said she had just the opposite intention. Xue is taking *WW*’s “mother” at face value and paying precise attention to what Kingston is writing. For example, in the tongue cutting incident, Kingston has the mother say, “I cut it so that you would not be tongue-tied. Your tongue would be able to move in any language. You will be able to speak languages that are completely different from one another. You will be able to pronounce anything” (*WW* 164).

Xue believes that instead of writing an Orientalist view of Chinese culture and Chinese mother-daughter relationships as Lu maintains, Kingston is simply presenting the Chinese American culture of Chinatown as she interprets it. It will be remembered that Xue encourages interpreters to pay attention to the author's "deliberate misreading (*wu du* 误读)." But this misreading for Xue is Kingston's deliberate redefinition of Chinese culture in ways she thinks significant. Kingston may write *No Name Woman's* story and intentionally misread it, but in doing so she is creating models of cultural hybridity and not primarily criticizing Orientalism or suggesting that Chinese culture was not actually filled with No Name Women in its cultural past. In fact, Wendy Ho explains that "[i]n the Chinese community, the valuable work of preserving family and culture was linked physically and symbolically with women. If women stepped out of the restricted boundaries of their assigned roles, they had the power to cause significant social disruption or destruction" (124). Accordingly, what makes the voice Xue calls the "little girl" detest her tradition is the traditional Chinese Confucian ideology of paying too much attention to men while belittling women, and not the American Orientalism in the culture. The discriminatory phrases such as "raising a daughter is not as good as raising a goose," and "it is futile to raise a girl" stimulate her rebellion and make her become an "outlaw knot-maker (*feifa dajiezhe*)." Xue reminds us that the "little girl's" three year silence in the kindergarten is unforgettable for her. Later, she found that many Chinese American girls were silent just like her, and that "the silence had to do with being a Chinese girl" (Kingston, *WW* 166).

Xue says that Kingston's act of writing itself marks the reconciliation of mother and daughter because "the beginning is hers, the ending is mine" (Kingston, *WW* 206). In this sense, *WW* is the product of the cooperation of mother and daughter. The ghost stories of the mother compel "me" to leave home to search for "a place where there is no ghost." But it is just because of these ghost stories that "I" was brought back home, no matter whether willing or unwilling, and that "I" could not deny that "I" am Chinese. Inside "my" blood vessels flows my mother's blood. As Kingston writes in *WW*, "I am really a dragon as she is a dragon, both of us born in Dragon years" (109). The reconciliation and cooperation of mother and daughter symbolize the mutual understanding between two generations and two cultural value systems and represent the emergence of the kind of cultural hybridity that Xue believes to belong to Kingston and the Chinese American women writers of her generation. It signifies that the two different cultures within Chinese American communities ultimately move from conflict to blending. The journey of the "little girl's" growth is actually her process of blending two cultures, recreating her self-identity (Xue 203).

While the three mainland Chinese scholars covered in this chapter share certain similar views in their interpretations of the mother-daughter relationship in Kingston, they have substantial differences as well. In Lu's view, Kingston has crafted "mother" and *Brave Orchid* differently. "Mother" is constructed to reflect the ideology of American Orientalism, and *Brave Orchid* is written as a corrective and critique of this viewpoint. This is what Lu means when she says Kingston is "writing wrong to right wrongs." In contrast, Shi sees mother and *Brave Orchid* as one and the same figure, who

exist dialectically in multiple layers. I have used the Chinese expression *bianzheng guanxi* to capture Shi's meaning. Seeing Kingston's construction of mother in this way is the basis from which Shi makes criticisms of Juhasz, Chodorow and Braendlin. She believes these American critics misunderstand Kingston's sources and motivations, thinking of her as dependent on Western feminism for her construction of the warrior mother, *Brave Orchid*. Instead, Shi holds that Kingston uses Chinese culture and her Chinese context to write the complicated and dialectical relationship between mother and daughter.

Xue, however, walks away from the views of both Lu and Shi. She takes Kingston's mother and daughter mostly at face value and as reasonable reflections of tensions between mothers who still have both feet in Chinese culture and daughters who have one foot in America. In contrast to Lu, Xue fixes our attention on the role which traditional Chinese culture plays in the mother-daughter relationship and not on Kingston's criticism of American Orientalism. She seems not to distinguish traditional Chinese patriarchal culture from either how Americans perceive it or how the "little girl" does. In distinction from Shi, Xue is less concerned to resolve the divergent positions taken about the source of Kingston's feminist emphases. In fact, while we may certainly notice these divergent emphases, they most likely reflect the complicated and intertwined dynamics present in women writers of color such as Kingston. However, none of these approaches are mutually exclusive, and they all can contribute to an expansive reading of Kingston on mother-daughter relationships.

## Chapter VI: A Group of Ghosts Dancing Chaotically 群“鬼”乱舞

Today in the canyons along the Yellow River (*Huang he*) known as the Loess Plateau (*huangtu gaoyuan*), stretching across Shaanxi and Shanxi provinces, the rural folk custom known as “ghost marriage (*minghun* 冥婚)” continues to be practiced. To guarantee an unmarried deceased son’s contentment in the ghost world of the afterlife, some grieving parents will search for a dead woman to be his bride, and once her corpse is obtained, they will bury the pair together as a married couple in order that the son’s afterlife will be a happy one. Of course, in China buying or selling corpses is illegal, but these transactions continue as private affairs that fellow villagers or townspeople will not report. Guo Yuhua, a sociology professor at Qinghua University in Beijing and expert on folk traditions in China, reminds us that the *minghun* custom is rooted not merely in the sympathy for the dead, but also the dread and fear of a deceased child who may seek vengeance on parents or villagers who ignore their loneliness, are themes that are often transmitted in the ghost stories of China. The practice is done for females who die without husbands as well, since a woman is still not thought of as belonging to her birth parents’ lineage, but must find a place in a husband’s. A woman who dies unmarried has no place (Yardley A1). It is in the context of a culture with such practices based on beliefs in ghosts that Kingston creates her writings.

Kingston’s use of ghosts (*gui* 鬼) in her writing poses a number of problems for interpreters and Chinese scholars, such as Lu Wei and Xue Yufeng, who both argue that Kingston’s employment of the literary trope of ghosts has often been misunderstood by American critics. The cause of this misreading by American scholars is not that America

has no ghosts. In fact, there are many ghosts in American folklore and culture. All the immigrants to North America, as well as the native inhabitants, are from cultures with ancient notions of ghosts and spirits. Among American ghost tales are the frightening depictions of Edgar Allan Poe, Washington Irving's *Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, Henry David Thoreau's portrayals of indignant European souls lying under the rails, and Toni Morrison's description of a little ghost who gains revenge for his mother after eighteen years in the 1987 Pulitzer Prize winning book *Beloved*. Indeed, Morrison's work is dedicated to 60 million deceased slaves.

But Xue says that the 5,000 years of Chinese civilization has given to ghost talk and ghost stories a unique centrality and that it is these tales, and not American ghost stories, that form the background to Kingston's work. China has had a preoccupation with ghosts throughout its recorded history, and traditions and practices about ghosts are documented in ancient texts. Xue holds that Chinese literature has a special affection for ghosts, beginning with the discussion of their actions in "Dubo taking revenge (*Dubo baoyuan*)" in the "Explaining Ghosts (*ming gui* 明鬼)" chapter of the classical Chinese philosophical text, the *Mozi*. After the writing of this chapter by the great Chinese philosopher Mo Di (470-391 BCE), the lexical terms for different kinds of ghosts became very rich (Xue 194). Much later, in the Ming dynasty, the popular writer Pu Songling (1640-1715) was very fond of and good at talking about ghosts. In his masterpiece *Supernatural Tales from a Chinese Studio* (1740), he pushes the ancient Chinese cultural understanding of ghosts to its summit. Xue writes, "*Supernatural Tales from a Chinese Studio* is definitely a world in which the ghosts perform. In it the female fox ghosts are

all young and beautiful, kind, and warm-hearted. They leave a very deep impression on the reader” (194). *Journey to the West* (1590s), one of the four Chinese classical novels by Wu Cheng'en, is also fraught with ghosts. What is different in this work is that the author more often presents his ghosts as monstrous in appearance and viciously evil than does Pu Songling. Having this long cultural association with ghosts in China, it is not surprising, then, that residents of the Chinese diaspora who settled down in Chinatowns in the U.S. brought their ghost traditions with them. In fact, “this naturally became a cultural sign which clung onto Chinese American literature” (Xue 192).

By way of illustrating the extent to which reference to ghosts continues to be present in Chinese culture, in her chapter “The Meaning of ‘Ghost,’” Xue reminds us that there are a number of uses for “ghost” in Chinese according to the contemporary Chinese dictionary. For example, the following expressions all contain *gui*: “slob, or disgusting person (*taoyan gui* 讨厌鬼),” “coward (*danxiao gui* 胆小鬼),” “ghostly crafty brain (*gui tou gui nao* 鬼头鬼脑),” “act sneakily (*gui gui sui sui* 鬼鬼祟祟),” “mischievous trickster (*daogui* 捣鬼),” “sly hearted (*xinli you gui* 心里有鬼),” “eerie weather (*gui tianqi* 鬼天气),” “haunted place (*gui difang* 鬼地方),” “fabricated lies (*guihua* 鬼话),” “wicked ideas (*guidianzi* 鬼点子).” All of these expressions carry a kind of negative meaning using the character 鬼; however, it is worthwhile to notice that in oral Chinese *gui* sometimes also carries a positive meaning. For example, “*jiling gui* 机灵鬼” means “quick minded, agile,” and the term of endearment for a precious child is “Little Ghost (*xiao gui* 小鬼),” meaning one who is very bright and a somewhat mischievous. Brave

Orchid calls Kingston “Ho Chi Kuei” (i.e., *xiao gui*) in her dialect. Kingston, puzzled by what is meant, lists thirteen possibilities, but gets a fairly good sense of it from what members of the Chinese American community say to her: “‘Well, Ho Chi Kuei,’ they say, ‘what silliness have you been up to now?’ ‘That’s a Ho Chi Kuei for you,’ they say, no matter what we’ve done . . . . The river-pirate great-uncle called even my middle brother Ho Chi Kuei, and he seemed to like him best” (*WW* 237-38).<sup>1</sup> It is this term of endearment (i.e., *xiaogui*) that Kingston uses for the infant child of No Name Woman. Kingston says of No Name Woman’s situation: “A child with no descent line would not soften her life but only trail after her, ghostlike, begging her to give it purpose . . . . Full of milk, the little ghost slept” (*WW* 17).<sup>2</sup>

In addition to these diversified expressions which contains *gui* 鬼, there are some Chinese expressions and terms which also utilize *gui* as a special reference. *Guizi* (鬼子) has become a proper noun in contemporary Chinese language and is often rendered into English as “demon.” It is commonly used as an appellation of resentment for foreigners who invaded China. For example, Chinese wishing to use a term of abuse for Westerners or just wanting to refer to Western imperialists will call them “foreign devils (*yong guizi* 洋鬼子).” But after the Anti-Japanese War (a.k.a. World War II in the West) and the

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<sup>1</sup> Consider that the Chinese translation for the title of the American movie *Home Alone* about the misadventures of Kevin, the little boy played by Macaulay Culkin who is forgotten and left at home by himself when his family goes on a Christmas vacation, is *Xiaogui Dang Jia* 《小鬼当家》. This is literally, “Little Ghost Manages the House.”

<sup>2</sup> Likewise, the romantic movie *Ghost* with Demi Moore and Patrick Swayze has the Chinese title, *Renguiqing Wei Liao* 《人鬼情未了》, which may be translated literally as “Love between Person and Ghost.” In these cases, we can see the positive meaning of the word “ghost.”

atrocities inflicted on the Chinese by the Japanese, the appellation is most often heard directed toward Japanese either as “foreign devils from the East (*dongyong guizi* 东洋鬼子), or the common expression of bitterness, “Japanese devils (*Riben guizi* 日本鬼子). In these expressions, *gui* is taken not as “ghost” but as devil or demon, an appropriation of the long history of Buddhist and Daoist teachings about the “ghost soldiers (*gui bing* 鬼兵)” who serve the gods of the Hells by inflicting punishment and torture.

Xue notes that since the subtitle of *WW* is “a Childhood among Ghosts,” it is essential to develop a thorough understanding of the interpretation of the meaning of “ghost” from both Chinese and Chinese American cultural perspective. Kingston inherits the descriptions and depictions of ghosts from her forefathers, and she uses ghosts to maximize her portrayals and to clarify her own themes. What is more important is that Kingston’s utilization of ghosts as a trope in both its depth and breadth is unprecedented in American literature (195). It deserves our careful and thorough study to determine what ghosts mean in Kingston’s works.

Of course, an appreciation of the need to interpret Kingston’s use of ghosts in her writings was recognized early on by scholars in America. Some studies of ghosts in *WW* include Gayle Sato’s “Ghosts as Chinese-American Constructs in Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior*” (1991), Ruth Jenkins’ “Authorizing Female Voice and Experience: Ghosts and Spirits in Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior*, Allende’s *The House of the Spirits*” (1994), and Ken-fang Lee’s “Cultural Translation and the Exorcist: A Reading of Kingston’s and Tan’s ‘Ghost Stories’” (2004). Works treating the use of ghosts in both *WW* and *CM* include Gao Yan’s 1993 dissertation, *A Metaphorical*

*Strategy: An Interpretation of Maxine Hong Kingston's "Ghost Stories" and Walter Lim's "Under Eastern Eyes: Ghosts and Cultural Haunting in Maxine Hong Kingston's The Woman Warrior and China Men (2004)." These articles and dissertations explore in depth and breadth how ghosts function in Kingston's literary creations. However, Jennie Wang draws our attention to how deep the cultural misreadings among American critics run when their characteristic interpretation of the subtitle of *Woman Warrior* is that Kingston is referring to her past, or to the Chinese as ghosts (17). This is not what Kingston means at all. When she is speaking of a childhood among ghosts, she means Americans, whom Chinese know as "white ghosts (*bai gui* 白鬼)."<sup>3</sup>*

Xue, however, says that in *WW* "ghost" is used by Kingston to refer both to Chinese traditional culture and white mainstream American culture. It is a multifaceted appellation. Its reference is both abstract and concrete. This great diversity of the application of "ghost" in *WW* is captured by Xue in her invented Chinese four-character idiom: *qungui luanwu* 群“鬼”乱舞. This idiom may be translated as "a group of ghosts dancing chaotically." Xue is inventing this four character idiom deliberately by altering the very popular saying "*qunmo luanwu* 群魔乱舞," which means "a group of monsters dancing chaotically."

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<sup>3</sup>Jennie Wang states rather bluntly that cultural misreadings are not always innocent. They are rarely free from cultural hegemony and are sometimes reflections of widespread community consensus on a set of shared values, ideas, and assumptions about the Chinese, even if it is an Orientalist set. She believes that in American literature writers tend to be drawn to the depiction of the cultural Other as a scapegoat, full of vices, or foolish, and thus writers about the Chinese are too restrained by their own economic, political, and gender interests to be able to describe the full humanity of the "Chinese." This is why she holds that American Orientalism is a decadent language that must be emptied of its content and the interpreters must bracket its presuppositions if the writing is to be understood (22-23).

Xue emphasizes especially that Kingston uses the meaning of “ghost” to unveil the pains, perplexities, hopes, and anticipations of Chinese people within the background of white American and Chinese American cultures (193). It reveals the hardships faced by Chinese Americans in searching for their place in the culture. *WW* blends real life in which Chinese were discriminated against, suppressed, and in poverty with the stories embedded in Chinese traditional culture stories of ghosts and sages, Daoists and the Robin Hood figures of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. Kingston uses the symbol of ghosts to elaborate not only the dual cultural identity of Chinese Americans, and their depression, loss, anger, and sense of displacement in living on the margins of the culture, but also she demonstrates the difficult journey of negotiating the two cultures of the Chinese and the American walking from conflict to blending (Xue 200). Xue skillfully brings forward uses of ghosts in *WW* that often go underdeveloped. Specifically, she gives attention to depictions of No Name Woman’s ghost and Hua Mulan as “ghost bride.”

Among the numerous ghosts in *WW*, the ghost of No Name Woman clings to the author continuously and exerts great influence on her thinking. Gayle Sato says: “That the ghost of No Name Woman will play a central role in the writing of *Woman Warrior* and the locating of Chinese America is explicitly stated by Kingston in the first chapter, where she claims the aunt as ‘my forerunner’ and reveals her desire for connections” (195). Kingston writes:

My aunt haunts me—her ghost drawn to me because now, after fifty years of neglect, I alone devote pages of paper to her, though not origami-ed into

houses and clothes. I do not think she always means me well. I am telling on her, and she was a spite suicide, drowning herself in the drinking water. The Chinese are always very frightened of the drowned one, whose weeping ghost, wet hair hanging and skin bloated, waits silently by the water to pull down a substitute. (*WW* 16)

Kingston is making an offering of words to her aunt's ghost, like those offerings of spirit money, paper suits, and paper houses burned at the gravesite by a loving family.

Xue Yufeng focuses on the beginning of the chapter when Kingston's mother demands, "You must not tell anyone what I am about to tell" (3). Kingston listens both to her mother's talk-story and to the ghost of No Name Woman, and then she writes what Chen Xiaohui calls a *nushu* story that can only be told by women and for women, not appropriate for men (Xue 37).<sup>4</sup> Kingston, by treading on the field designated exclusively for women, discovers the "hidden tradition" about women and therefore "salvages" what her female ancestors underwent physically, emotionally, and psychologically. In writing what No Name Woman's ghost tells her, Kingston uses language as a tool to deconstruct the traditional ideology of male supremacy and female inferiority that was built up over thousands of years of Chinese history. Xue says the words of the ghost of her aunt allow Kingston to "overturn (*dianfu*) patriarchally-centered discourse (*nanquan zhongxin*

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<sup>4</sup> Jennie Wang notes that "Since the publication of *WW*, in Kingston's wake, scholars who went to China to conduct historical research of Chinese women warriors, such as Christina Kelly Gilmartin, have recognized the unique achievement of women's liberation in modern China; and those who turned to Chinese classical literature have discovered a rich and fascinating tradition of women's writing (*nushu*)" (79). She mentions specifically two books by Christina K. Gilmartin, *Engendering the Chinese Revolution: Radical Women, Communist Politics, and Mass Movement in the 1920s* and *Engendering China: Women, Culture, and the State*.

*huayu*) and take revenge for her female ancestors, such as her aunt, who died because of their suppression and oppression in traditional patriarchal society” (196). No Name Woman offers herself as a sacrifice, and thereby becomes a ghost who may speak her story to Kingston on behalf of all women. Xue writes, “The present ‘I,’ after receiving an American individualist style of education, thinks that the aunt is a woman warrior who is brave enough to rebel against fate and tradition” (196). Such an interpretation resonates with the theme of *WW* and, in a way, strengthens the belief that the work is not only filled with tales of warriors but also with ghosts. No Name Woman, who used to be despised and neglected as a social outcast, becomes both a ghost and a genuine woman warrior in Kingston’s re-creation.

Xue offers an interesting and distinctive reading that once Kingston writes this story of her aunt, as told to her by her aunt’s ghost, from that point onward, her aunt is no longer a lonely wild drowning ghost (*yansi gui* 淹死鬼) any more. Her aunt is made “to change from a ghost into a god (*you gui bianzuo shen* 由鬼变作神)” (197). By writing what can be considered a memorial offering for her aunt, Kingston accomplishes a task seemingly requested by her aunt’s ghost, and at the same, she takes revenge for this forgotten and wronged woman. Kingston is creating a “deliberate misreading (*wu du* 误读)” by means of a kind of literary sorcery (*wu du* 巫毒) to turn a ghost into a god.

Turning heroes into gods has a long and venerable tradition in China. In associating herself with the literature that performs this transformation, Kingston’s writing is like a potion that is not poisonous (*wu du* 无毒). Many of the figures mentioned by Kingston in her writings began as humans, but became benevolent gods in

China. They have temples erected to them and are venerated for their heroism and impact on history and justice. These include figures such as Hua Mulan, Cai Wenji, Yue Fei, Guan Gong, Kongzi, and Han Zhongli. These popular heroes, heroines, sages, and humanized gods have profound influence among Chinese people and culture. By the same token, they also have great impact on Kingston and her writing. Kingston's characterization of Brave Orchard is idealized to the degree that she is almost portrayed as a goddess who can do everything, from the conquering of the Sitting Ghost to the mastery of the confrontation of Moon Orchard's unfaithful husband. Xue's reading parallels that of Sato: "Brave Orchid stands between Fa Mu Lan, who is totally empowered but not human, and Moon Orchid, who is human but helpless" (206).

Chen's argument that the ghost of No Name Woman is one that American interpreters often misread is supported by the absence of any analysis of No Name Woman's change from a ghost to a god in American criticism of *WW*. Xue also considers Mulan as ghost, while no American critic notices that she may be so conceived. She calls attention to the careful method of writing Kingston uses by first noticing the way in which Kingston makes use of the color "white (*bai*)," which, like "ghost," has many meanings in *WW*, including "death." In China, white is associated with death and not with purity as in American culture. But Xue observes that the principal meaning of "white" in the Mulan story is to refer to "whites" as in "Americans." In this, she means to notice something overlooked even by some critics in the West who do pay attention to Kingston's use of color. For example, Sato insists Kingston is very intentional in her use of the color white in her tale about Mulan:

The mountain of “white” tigers is misleadingly yet aptly named. White could mean the absence of imagination—if Casper is our limited idea of a ghost or if we read Fa Mu Lan’s story as fantasy in the superficial sense of ‘daydream.’ If, on the other hand, we cultivate illusion, or imaginative depth perception, then we can actually inhabit a “fantasy” like that of Fa Mu Lan and a white world reveals its colors, the full spectrum of colors. (Sato 202-03)

In none of this does Sato mention what Xue believes is most important, and directly understood by a Chinese reader: white means America, the West, white people and their culture.

In Kingston’s version, Hua Mulan goes to White Tiger Mountain at the age of seven, which is defined as “leaving home (*lijia*)” by Xue Yufeng. The significance of Mulan’s leaving home we have already seen in Chen Xiaohui’s interpretations in Chapter IV in this study. On White Tiger Mountain, Mulan learns the craft of Daoist immortals for 15 years, and she becomes full of skills and martial arts abilities (*gongfu*). Only then does she come down from the mountain. She forms her own army, kills the corrupt officials, punishes the evil officers, and robs the wealthy in order to give to the poor. She takes revenge for her own people.

According to Xue, the “white color (*baise* 白色), such as white snow (*baixue*), white tiger (*baihu*), white bearded old man (*baihuzi laoren*) on White Tiger Mountain, clearly and explicitly symbolize the American white people” (197). In taking this approach, Xue is touching an aspect which many Western scholars neglect to notice. Xue

is calling attention to Kingston's use of "white" rather than "gold." America, as is well known from Kingston's *CM* and numerous other Chinese American writings, was known as the Gold Mountain. The Chinese belief was that America was a land of plenty and riches filled with gold. Kingston's great grandfather and grandfather came to the Gold Mountain, but Kingston, writing with her family's past informing her, sets Mulan's site of transformation not on the Gold Mountain, but on White Tiger Mountain, a place where everywhere she turns there is "white." Since Xue is "inside the gourd" as a Chinese scholar, she can see this symbolism. She stresses that in Kingston's narrative, "I" undergoes painstaking hardships to develop skills (*xiulian*) on White Tiger Mountain. For Xue, this refers to the Chinese Americans' struggle (*zhengzha*), vacillation (*panghuang*), depression (*kumen*), and desire for success (*dui chenggong de kewang*) within American "white" culture. Kingston, as a Chinese American, struggles like Mulan on White Tiger Mountain in trial and puzzlement; however, this struggle enables her to develop great skills, and because of this she becomes a woman warrior, using words to right injustice and to create her own hybrid identity.

Equally compelling to Xue is another use of the symbol of ghosts in the Mulan narrative of *WW*. Kingston makes Hua Mulan change into a ghost while she is away from home and on White Tiger Mountain immersed in the "white" culture there. Kingston even makes Mulan have a "ghost marriage (*guiqin* 鬼亲)." When Mulan misses her family on White Tiger Mountain, her Daoist teachers bring near a divination gourd, and when Mulan looks in it, she reports seeing the following:

My whole family was visiting friends on the other side of the river. Everybody had on good clothes and was exchanging cakes. It was a wedding. My mother was talking to the hosts: “Thank you for taking our daughter. Wherever she is, she must be happy now. She will certainly come back if she is alive, and if she is a spirit, you have given her a descent line. We are so grateful.” (*WW* 31)

As we noticed in the beginning of this chapter, ghost marriage is a Chinese cultural custom in which people hold a wedding ceremony for one who died without a spouse. In Kingston’s account of *Mulan*, since she has been away from home for fifteen years, her family did not know whether she was alive or dead. So, Xue says they hold a ghost marriage and the marriage itself is used to “summon her soul (*zhaohun*).” Here Xue demonstrates her knowledge of Daoist religious rituals. The soul summoning ritual is typically associated in Daoism with bringing back the ghost spirit of a loved one in order to offer it blessings, food, or the resources they need to go into the heavens. In the ritual, something the wandering ghost spirit loves or desires is used as the primary focus to attract the soul to return to a specific place. In Kingston’s retelling of *Mulan*, the village on the other side of the river that she knew as a child is the place, and the persons she loves that draw her back are her parents and her childhood sweetheart, who will become her husband (Xue 197). *Mulan* is able to see and participate in the wedding, in a way similar to other Chinese literary works when ghost souls peer back into the world of the living from the Home Gazing Terrace (*jiating guanwang tai*) on which they stand before either reincarnating or going on to the heavens.

Xue is quite unique in her knowledge and interpretation of the ghost marriage of Mulan and her soul summoning. To build on and extend her reading, I want to notice that instead of setting Mulan's experience in the ghost world Daoist hells and having her gaze back into the world, Kingston places Mulan on White Tiger Mountain, which Xue reminds us is the place of Mulan's transformation. It is in this "white" place, symbolic of America, that Mulan changes from a girl to a woman warrior, and where she is empowered to conquer injustice.

Xue's suggestive frame for the Mulan narrative helps us see features in Kingston's Mulan that often go unnoticed.<sup>5</sup> Kingston tells her reader that as Chinese girls when they grew up they were supposed to become "heroines, swordswomen" and not just "wives or slaves" (*WW* 19). The story of Mulan is originally one of the stories told by her mother, but it ultimately becomes Kingston's own story. Here the legend is blended and woven together with facts, realities, and dreams for her own identity (Xue 197). The "deliberate misreading (*wu du* 误读)" of Mulan is the transformation of Mulan from "little girl" to insubstantial ghost who is becoming a god in the white world to substantial reality as a woman warrior who is celebrated in Kingston's story of Mulan. When she is ready for her life as a Chinese American woman, Kingston imagines herself as Mulan and describes her departure to face injustice in the following way:

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<sup>5</sup> Incidentally, there are many connections between the ghost marriage of Mulan and the great Ming Dynasty love story of Du Liniang and Liu Mengmei, written by Tang Xianzu (1550-1616) and entitled *The Peony Pavilion*, which is also known in Chinese as *Return of the Soul*. See Li, "Sentence and Solas in *The Peony Pavilion*," and "Dying for Love in *The Peony Pavilion* and *Romeo and Juliet*."

A white horse stepped into the courtyard where I was polishing my armor. Though the gates were locked tight, through the moon door it came--a knightly white horse. It wore a saddle and bridle with red, gold, and black tassels dancing. The saddle was just my size with tigers and dragons [*yin* and *yang*] tooled in swirls. The white horse pawed the ground for me to go. On the hooves of its near forefoot and hind foot was the ideograph “to fly.” (*WW* 35)

Xue concludes that Kingston cannot become a female swordsman (*nu jianke*), a heroic woman warrior (*nu yingxiong*) in reality, but through language she feels she can become a “woman warrior of words (*yuyan de nu yingxiong*)” (197). Considering Kingston as a warrior of words may remind us of bell hook’s statement: “Awareness of the need to speak, to give voice to the varied dimensions of our lives, is one way women of color begin the process of education for critical consciousness” (13). Disregarding whether Xue overstates Kingston’s case or not, we can conclude without any exaggeration that Kingston certainly thinks of *Brave Orchid* as a woman warrior in action, and she believes such a path is open to her as well. It is often the case that women of color cannot be women warriors in reality due to the patriarchal environment they are confined to, but language can empower them. The voice that hooks develops as a black feminist echoes very well the pursuits of ethnic women:

Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life, that makes new life and growth

possible. It is that act of speech, of ‘talking back,’ that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject—the liberated voice. (9)

Words, as well as the articulation of voice, are important to equip women with power and strength to fight for their identity; however, it is necessary sometimes for women to stand up, step forward physically, and prove their capability. The story of Brave Orchid summoning and catching ghosts is in contrast with the legend of Mulan’s removing villainy so as to establish the good. The third chapter in *WW* in the Chinese version is entitled “Countryside Doctor (*xiangcun yisheng*)” rather than “Shaman” as in the English version. In fact, “Countryside Doctor” was the original title of the chapter. Xue believes the choice of title by Kingston is significant and that the Chinese title is preferable because the chapter is really about Brave Orchid, who is a doctor in the rural area. Kingston’s real mother, Zhou Yonglan, was not an ordinary common Chinese woman; she used the money that Kingston’s father sent to attend university and take a degree in medicine. Later on she became a midwife. It is easy to see that the Chinese name Yonglan is only a slightly different sound for Mulan and is meant to be related to it. The last character from both names is *lan* (兰), meaning “orchid.” Xue says, “The name itself implies that Kingston’s mother is another version of Mulan, and is one of the ‘woman warriors’ in the book” (198). While all this is true, Xue may be making too much of it. The English title “Shaman” also has an appropriate reference to Brave Orchid and she deserves that appellation judging from what she does, and especially how she triumphs over the Sitting Ghost.

Xue does not make the distinction between “mother” and “Brave Orchid” that is so very important to Lu Wei’s position as developed in Chapter V as the focus of her claim that Kingston is intentionally framing “mother” in an Orientalist manner in order to critique it by contrasting this colonialist conception of Chinese women with Brave Orchid. As we have seen in the discussion of mother-daughter relationships in Kingston, in contrast to Lu’s position, Xue contends that the tension between Kingston and her mother is a reflection of Kingston’s attempt at constructing her identity as a Chinese American, at once resisting Orientalist preconceptions and finding her own appropriation of her Chinese identity. Xue makes an explicit identification of “mother” and “Brave Orchid”:

The mother is the key sower of Chinese traditional culture, at the same time she is the protector of this culture. From the first sentence in the book we can see that Kingston’s mother is the accomplice (*tongmou*) of Chinese patriarchal culture represented by the father. However, judging by what Kingston’s mother does, she is not a traditional female image who sticks to the Three Obeys and Four Virtues (*sancong side*). Everything she does, such as going to college, medical school, catching the ghost in the dormitory, going to the U.S. to reunite with her husband, breaking the father’s ban against talking, as well as later on encouraging Moon Orchid to come to the U.S. to look for her husband and find justice, all of this signifies that Kingston’s mother is, just like Hua Mulan, an exceptional woman (*nu zhong haojie*) and role model for her daughter. (198)

Kingston records the much admired Brave Orchid's victory over the forces of her past and the traditional pressures that threaten to smother her by writing the story of the sitting ghost of great weight. Kingston retells this story with obvious appreciation for her mother's capability and accomplishments. She summarizes Brave Orchid's skills of conquering ghosts in this way: "My mother could contend against the hairy beasts whether flesh or ghost because she could eat them, and she could not-eat them on days when good people fast . . . . She was a capable exorcist" (*WW* 92).

*WW* is filled with all kinds of Chinese ghosts, such as "Sitting Ghost (*qiangtou gui* 墙头鬼)," "Body Crushing Ghost (*yashen gui* 压身鬼)," "Talking Nonsense Ghost (*huche gui* 胡扯鬼)," "Hungry Ghost (*e'si gui* 饿死鬼)," "Sweeping Ghost (*saozhou gui* 扫帚鬼)," "Drowning Ghost (*yansi gui* 淹死鬼)," and the like. The spirit that Brave Orchid must confront is a Sitting Ghost, and she tells it, "When morning comes, only one of us will control this room, Ghost, and that one will be me" (*WW* 70). In the traditions of shamanism, sitting ghosts press down on the shaman like a heavy weight and paralyze her until she is smothered.

Brave Orchid feels this pressure on her like a boulder, and unless she can muster her own strength, she will surely die. Kingston's account of the Country Doctor shows that she clearly admires Brave Orchid's courage, perseverance, and bravery. She honors the many ghosts that Brave Orchid has conquered: "Medical science does not seal the earth, whose nether creatures seep out, hair by hair, disguised like the smoke that dispels them. She had apparently won against the one ghost, but ghost forms are various and many" (*WW* 83). Kingston says that her mother could be a dragon: "During danger she

fanned out her dragon claws and riffled her red sequin scales and unfolded her coiling green stripes. Danger was a good time for showing off. Like the dragons living in temple eaves, my mother looked down on plain people who were lonely and afraid” (67).

Likewise, the “I” thinks of herself in the same way, showing that she believes some of her strengths come from her mother. She says to her mother that the dragon is “my totem, your totem” (67). After the separation of Kingston’s father and mother for many years, her mother reunites with her father, and gives birth to “I” and several brothers and sisters. The narrator is “I,” and the “I” in the mother’s ghost stories grew up, filled with fear and scared of these ghosts (Xue 195). “I” was born in the U.S. and grew up in the Chinese community in the U.S.; therefore, “I’s” knowledge of China and dealing with ghosts was totally gained through Brave Orchid’s talk-story.

Xue holds that the narrator grew from childhood inhabiting her mother’s ghost stories and was deeply influenced by traditional Chinese culture and therefore forms her own outlook and personal values. Xue believes “Ghost” in *WW* not only refers to Chinese ghosts, but also “white ghosts,” that is, the American ghosts the narrator must face in daily life. All Americans are “ghosts” and they are characterized according to color, into White Ghosts (*bai gui* 白鬼) and Black Ghosts (*hei gui* 黑鬼), and according to their jobs, such as Gas Company Ghost (*meiqi gui* 煤气鬼), Salesperson Ghost (*tuixiao gui* 推销鬼), Medicine Delivery Ghost (*songyao gui* 送药鬼), Taxi Ghosts (*dishi gui* 的士鬼), Bus Ghosts (*gongche gui* 公车鬼), Police Ghosts (*jingcha gui* 警察鬼), Shooting Ghosts (*kaiqiang gui* 开枪鬼), Tree Trimming Ghosts (*jianshu gui* 剪树鬼), Meter-reader Ghosts (*cha dianbiao gui* 查电表鬼), Five-and-Dime Ghosts (*mai*

*zahuo gui* 卖杂货鬼) (198). So the U.S. is really a ghost country (*gui guojia*). Kingston says that in her mother's eyes all the children were born among foreign ghosts, received foreign ghosts' education, and so became somewhat like foreign ghosts. Kingston writes, "Once upon a time the world was so thick with ghosts I could hardly breathe; I could hardly walk, limping my way around the white ghosts and their cars" (*WW* 97). All these American ghosts are not just names; they form the symbol of American culture for Kingston. Xue opines that Kingston's use of ghosts from the perspective of an innocent "little girl" displays the sense of alienation (*mosheng gan*), depression (*yayi gan*), and insecurity (*bu anquan gan*) of the Chinese Americans who were oppressed by American cultural discrimination (199).

At such narrative moments, the novel *China Men* likewise seems to fold analogically on itself in its reliance on ghosts. The male voices the narrator hears beyond the grave, the visions spun within it, seem like images for her historical quest; the discovery of the footprints, the traces of words the grandfathers have left behind, are all evidence of the ghosts returning across the gaps in history. Such moments join both Kingston's grandfathers' and her own historic quest. Thus, *CM* is not an elegiac mourning for loss of meaning nor the ironic exposure of such loss. Rather it is filled with delight and laughter at the ingeniousness of connections which hold things both apart and together as the ghosts of the past speak to the present (Slowik 86). Although Kingston faces the obstacle that discontinuity exists between her time and her male ancestors' age, the insistent voices rising from the ghosts of her deceased great grandfathers never cease. Their pleadings propel Kingston to connect the fragments of stories in *CM* as she has also

done for the No Name Woman. She writes the stories to comfort the restless ghosts of the past. These stories, as Linda Hutcheon says, are not “a nostalgic return but a critical revisiting” (244).

Xue says that in *WW* the mother who clings to traditional Chinese culture hopes that her daughter can inherit that culture. So, she continuously infuses the stories and notions of ghosts into the daughter and tries to make the “little girl” believe that she lives in a foreign world that is filled with ghosts (Xue 199). What is different about this foreign world filled with ghosts is that it is the White Ghosts who make people “hardly breathe” and “hardly walk,” while the “little girl” discovers that the Black Ghosts are “eye-opened” and “full of laughter.”

Xue says the term “eye-opened” is an implicit metaphor. In the U.S., Black people and Asians all belong to the category of an “ethnic group,” and they were all oppressed and marginalized by the White racists. Therefore, between them there arises naturally a cultural commonality. They are both sympathetic and empathetic to each other and this explains why Black persons appear friendly to the “little girl,” but the White Ghosts are not “eye-opened,” because in the eyes of the whites, the “little girl” does not exist. So, she has to limp her way around the White Ghosts and their cars so that she will not be destroyed.

Xue believes that Kingston’s use of ghosts refers to the White Americans’ racial hegemony and cultural chauvinism and that in the view of White Americans, only white mainstream culture is valued. They discriminate against, or are sometimes simply oblivious to, the cultural traditions of minorities. It can be seen here that “American

Ghosts” not only denote American people, but also they symbolize Kingston’s protest against racial discrimination. Xue explains that Kingston means to emphasize that black is friendly, even though in Chinese culture black is often associated with the color of funerals. When the “little girl” begins elementary school, she covers all her school paintings with black paint. Kingston refers to these paintings which look perplexing and eccentric to her teachers yet promising and delightful to herself as “so black and full of possibilities” (165). Commenting on Kingston’s sentiment, Xue draws the conclusion that both blacks and Chinese Americans belong to marginalized minorities and are tormented and harassed by the white American ghosts.

Taken as a whole, Xue’s reading is filled with generalizations about racial relations in America and attributes to Kingston an understanding that lacks the nuance that the narrator of *WW* possesses as is indicated by the fact that it is the “little girl” whose lack of experience and naivety is moved toward the view that all blacks are friendly. While it is true that Kingston is aware of the discrimination against both the black and Chinese minorities, this does not mean that she accepts the fantasy that all minorities live harmoniously together, accept each other, are friendly to one another, or are full of possibilities.

If “Chinese Ghosts” constitute the basic elements of the community, culture, and people of Chinatown with which the “little girl” identifies, then the “American Ghosts” no doubt refer to the American community outside of Chinatown (Xue 200). All kinds of American communities, whether large or small, play important roles in the “little girl’s” cultural identification. Just as “ghost” in Chinese culture has the dual meanings of the

positive and derogatory, the ghosts in *WW* are also dialectical. But Kingston admits in an interview that she has learned that “writing does not make ghosts go away. I wanted to record, to find the words for, the ‘ghosts,’ which are only visions .... I want to give them a substance that goes beyond me” (Lee 116). Nonetheless, while writing does not make ghosts go away for Kingston, it empowers her to cope with them by naming them and calling attention to them in American society. So, in this sense, Kingston’s writing about ghosts is certainly valuable.

## Chapter VII: Rectifying the Name of China Men<sup>1</sup> 给金山英雄正名

A combination of circumstances, some economic, some political, and some individual, drew tens of thousands of Chinese (almost exclusively males) to the American West beginning soon after the discovery of gold in California in 1848. They were first welcomed because of their contributions to American labor, but as time passed, white workers and many other residents in the American towns of the West saw them as economic threats with a strange and alien lifestyle and culture.<sup>2</sup> About this change in fortunes, Jonathan Spence remarks in his *The Chan's Great Continent*, “As the Chinese fanned out from San Francisco into new kinds of work in the mines and on the railroads, they moved from being objects of amusing curiosity into targets of sarcasm, economic discrimination, legal harassment, and outright violence, sometimes ending in murder by lynch mobs” (125). During the late 1870s, the Workingmen’s Party of California even campaigned on the slogan “The Chinese Must Go.” At the national level, this hostile attitude, mixed with a heavy dose of prejudice and ignorance, culminated with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 (Abraham). Indeed, Jennie Wang believes that the Exclusion Act could never have been approved except for the forces of Orientalist distortion: “The Negroization of Chinese men provided the cultural basis for their [Chinese Americans] victimization” (22).

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<sup>1</sup> As I mention in Chapter I, I realize that “China men” is not Standard English; however, since the use of this expression is Kingston’s deliberate choice as a way of recognizing the identity and the contribution of Chinese men in American immigrant history, I have chosen to continue using this term in the present work.

<sup>2</sup> Some non-literary sources that are helpful in reconstructing the background to the writings of the authors that I consider in this paper include Wu, *Yellow Peril* 1982; Cassel 2002; and Chang 2003.

China men were often feminized by Americans and conceived of as a group who lacked masculinity, were unable to be responsible husbands and fathers, and were obsessed with opium use. The stereotypical American view of China men was voiced by Mark Twain when he was writing as a reporter for the *Enterprise*, the newspaper of Virginia City. He writes:

At ten o'clock at night the Chinaman may be seen in all his glory. In every little cooper-up dingy cavern of a hut, faint with the odor of burning josh-lights and with nothing to see the gloom by save the sickly, guttering tallow candle, were two or three yellow, long-tailed vagabonds, coiled up on a sort of short truckle-bed, smoking opium, motionless and with their lusterless eyes turned inward from excess of satisfaction—or rather the recent smoker looks thus, immediately after having passed the pipe to his neighbor—for opium-smoking is a comfortless operation, and requires constant attention...John<sup>3</sup> likes it, though; it soothes him; he takes about two dozen whiffs, and then rolls over to dream, Heaven only knows what; for we could not imagine by looking at the soggy creature. Possibly in his visions he travels far away from the gross world and his regular washing, and feasts on succulent rats and birds' nests in Paradise.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> “Chinaman John” was a common racial epithet used in the 1800s, roughly analogous to “Sambo” used of African Americans.

<sup>4</sup> This passage is cited by Twain himself from the *Enterprise* in his book *Roughing It* (1872), Chapter LIV.

No ideals, no ambition, no vitality, and no motivation! Such was the image of Chinese man often constructed by white Americans.

About one hundred years later, in 1977, Maxine Hong Kingston published *China Men (CM)* and offered a very different view of Chinese males in America. *CM* was highly acclaimed, being nominated for the 1980 Pulitzer Prize, and winning the American Book Award and the National Critics Circle Award. Shi Pingping believes that Kingston wrote *CM* to respond to the cultural misreadings that she felt were expressed by those who were critical of *WW (Contemporary Ethnic 30)*. But Shi's timing may be somewhat off because *CM* was written about the same time as *WW* and its publication was delayed. Kingston originally planned to entitle the work *Gold Mountain Heroes* (Huntley 115). Although she set aside this title because she felt it would reinforce the negative stereotype of China men as obsessed with making money, she never abandoned her effort to portray China men of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as heroes.

According to Shi Pingping, Kingston's reconstruction of history in *CM* has the intention of debunking the feminized image of China men as depicted by the mainstream culture as these men accepted their lot and never protested their treatment. *CM* is a book filled with hard working China men in the U.S. In fact, even the title of the work "China Men" was invented by Kingston in response to the derogative appellation "Chinaman" used by white Americans. The title has the significance of a pun (37). On one hand, it points to the racial discrimination and inhumane treatment received by China men; on the other hand, it suggests Kingston's intention to "rectify the name (*zhengming*) of China men." In her use of the concept of "rectification" Shi is drawing on a very important

socio-political practice that is seldom, if ever, applied in literary criticism in the history of the Western literature. The “rectification of names” is a Confucian moral, social, and political undertaking of the ruler. It had its origin in the teachings of Confucius himself, who was once asked what he would do first if he became a ruler. He replied that he would rectify names (*Analects* 13.3). What happens in the rectification of names is that things in actual reality are made to accord with the meanings of their names. For example, each person has a social role that is given a name (e.g., ruler, father, mother, and son) and the meaning of the name includes truths about the person who has the name, as well as the responsibilities and duties of the named role. According to Chinese tradition, when one is called by a name, one should “rectify” or “correct” one’s conduct to exhibit the meaning, responsibilities, and duties that go with the name. So, Kingston is imaginatively constructing the China men in her novel as they *ought to be* in order to instantiate what it means to be a “China man.” As Shi puts it, “他们不是来自劣等民族的‘中国佬’,而是富有阳刚气概、对美国做出巨大贡献的‘中国男人’。They [the men in *CM*] are not ‘Chinamen’ who are from an inferior race, but ‘China Men’ who are filled with masculinity and have made extraordinary contributions to the U.S.” (*Contemporary Ethnic* 37).

In this connection, Shi calls attention to the title page of *CM* where Kingston put a stamp in four conspicuous Chinese characters 金山勇士 (*Jinshan yongshi*): “Gold Mountain Heroes.” The Chinese practice of using a stamp or chop has an important meaning which is often missed by Western interpreters. This practice exhibits Kingston’s intention to sing a song and pay respect to her male ancestors, and this is why

Shi wants to respond to the criticisms of Frank Chin and Jeffery Paul Chan in their essay “Racist Love.” Chin and Chan accused Kingston of emasculating Chinese American men in *WW*. In her interpretation of this clash between Chin, Chan and Kingston, Shi responds:

The message Kingston tries to convey in *China Men* is consistent with the position of Frank Chin and other Chinese cultural nationalists who seek to overthrow the stereotypical image of China men and reconstruct the Chinese as an ethnic group; however, there are two big differences. Firstly, while manifesting the politics of race, Kingston also expresses her own consciousness of feminism. For her, politics of race is not in contradiction with politics of gender. Secondly, Kingston does not approve of the tendency to resort to violence hidden in the tradition of heroism advocated by Chin and others. (37)

It seems that the traditions of heroism that Chin and Chan insist on in their nationalist fervor are no less culturally shaped and no more universal than are those found in the West. For example, the work of Joseph Campbell in his *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* is an effort to identify basic structural components of hero narratives including the Call to Adventure, the Crossing of the Sea, the Road of Trials, the Apotheosis of the Hero, the Mastery of Two Worlds, and the Return. To my knowledge, no one has used Campbell’s hero cycle to interpret the stories and structure of Kingston’s *CM*. The distinctive portrayals of her “Gold Mountain Heroes” by Kingston do not fit either the preconceptions of Chin and Chan, or those of Campbell. Her approach may not fit well

into Campbell's hero cycle, because one may argue that his is constructed on a Western Orientalist foundation that is sexist when viewed from Kingston's Chinese American perspective. Her construction is different from that desired by Chin and Chan because the men in her account find nonviolent avenues to heroism, as they recreate themselves in the U.S.

In service to her goal of presenting Chinese American males as heroes, Kingston employs literary techniques similar to those used in *WW*. She weaves traditional Chinese myth, along with the recollections of her family members, historical facts, and her own imaginative creations into her narratives about China men. Jennie Wang calls *China Men* "a Chinese *Ulysses*," and she expresses great displeasure that after its publication the work was "marginalized under the category of Ethnic Literature." She writes:

*China Men* is still excluded in the study of American postmodern fiction; and no scholarship examines this American classic in the novelistic tradition of *Ulysses* or *Moby Dick*, *Huckleberry Finn* or *Go Down, Moses*. Mainstream Kingston critics, while they recognize *China Men* as a text that 'destablizes' the Western conception of gender and genre, still treat Kingston's writing as ethnic, exotic, and alien. (204)

Unlike *WW* which Shi calls "a woman's book (*nushu*)," Lu Wei characterizes *CM* as a "man's book," but she is careful to note the sort of man's book it is. It is a man's book written from the perspective of a woman. "Kingston uses her pen to construct for her reader the male heroic tradition and heroic image with a woman's eye (*nuxing yanzhong de nanxing yingxiong chuantong he yingxiong xingxiang* 女性眼中的男性英雄

传统和英雄形象)” (Lu 30). The original image for every character is taken from Kingston’s family and the Chinese laborers of American’s past. Shi believes that Kingston’s intention is to reconstruct the masculinity of China men, overthrowing and deconstructing the imposition of emasculation onto them by American culture (*Contemporary Ethnic* 31). She thinks Kingston also poetically and epically portrays the extraordinary contributions of China men to American society, demonstrating that the Chinese community and individuals should enjoy the same rights as white Americans.

In her essay on *China Men* in the literary journal *MELUS*, Linda Ching Sledge observes that “*China Men* is neither novel nor history but represents a transmutation of ‘oral history’ into cultural literary epic” (4). Kingston has in mind a very specific goal in writing this work and E.D. Huntley expresses it well: “In writing *China Men*, Kingston portrays her ancestors as heroic characters rather than as victims; . . . she rehabilitates the image of China men, transforming them from nameless coolies to American pioneers whose lives are worthy to be enshrined in American history” (115).<sup>5</sup>

By recreating the history of China men’s contributions to the development of American society, Kingston is extending the project she begins in *WW*. The Chinese scholars under study connect *WW* and *CM* in important ways. Lu Wei says that *CM* echoes (*yao xiang huying*) the themes of *The Woman Warrior* (30). Commenting on the artistic style of *CM*, Shi says, that it “derives from the same origin (*yimai xiangcheng*)”

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<sup>5</sup> Kingston’s efforts can be contrasted with the writings about China men by Twain and Bret Harte. The fact that these three authors have composed more narratives about American China men than anyone else invites a comparative study of their depictions and the important roles each author’s writings play in the shaping of American sensibilities about the Chinese. See Li, “Heroes of the Common Life in *China Men*.”

as *WW*.<sup>6</sup> She calls the narrative structure of *CM* postmodern and fragmented, and she says that Kingston is audacious in her revision of Chinese literary classics. For example, Chapter One is a revision and transplant of the Chinese novel *Flowers in the Mirror*. In the “Great-Grandfather in Honolulu” chapter of *CM*, the “ghost partner” is what Xue Yufeng calls a “deliberate misreading (*wudu* 误读)” of material from Pu Songling’s *Supernatural Tales from a Chinese Studio*. Moreover, Shi reminds us that the section “On Death” in that chapter revises the legend of Du Zichun taken from the massive Chinese literary historical fiction work of over 500 volumes edited by Li Fang in about 978 entitled, *Extensive Records of the Taiping Era*. Parts of Kingston’s misreadings are also taken from *Stories to Caution the World* by Feng Menglong, which was published in 1627 (Shi, *Contemporary Ethnic* 37).

It seems, then, that none of the mainland Chinese scholars under study mistake Kingston’s writing for “real” history, paralleling in their views the position taken by Wu Qingyun.<sup>7</sup> Wu writes:

Baba in *China Men* does three fantastic things when taking the qualifying test for the last Imperial Examination: one is his putting fireflies in a jar to get light for reading; the other two are his hanging his pigtail to the beam

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<sup>6</sup> Shi Pingping’s position here may be compared with that of Maureen Sabine. Sabine makes a case for the intertextual nature of the narratives between *WW* and *CM*. She holds that interpreters must consider that the two works were largely written together, even if they were published separately.

<sup>7</sup> Wu Qingyun is a Chinese American professor and Director of the Chinese Studies Center at California State University, Los Angeles.

and jabbing an awl into his thigh to get rid of sleepiness one night. These three tales are anecdotes associated with real historical figures. So, no Chinese reader will believe that Baba in *China Men* actually does those three things even though the narrator relates them directly as though they were biographical data. (87)

A Chinese reader can accept Baba as an imaginary ancestral archetype of Chinese nationality, but without knowing the above mentioned tales so familiar to the Chinese, American readers might mistakenly take *China Men* to be an effort to write a real family history.

Chen Xiaohui expands on this difference between history and historical recreation observing that “one of the objectives of Kingston’s *CM* is to transcend the historical record of Chinese immigrants controlled by whites and point out that China men were the pioneers and founders of modern society in North America, and that the China men, who helped to construct the railroad, are heroes” (156). To make clear the heroism of the China men in *CM*, Kingston uses the red-faced Guan Goong and praises the wisdom, bravery, contribution, and sacrificial spirit of these men. Ah Goong, Kingston’s grandfather of Sierra Nevada, spends some of his hard earned money to attend theater performances in Chinatown, watching plays about Guan Goong, and his favorite was *The Oath of the Peach Garden* in which the three warriors Liu Bei (161-223), Guan Goong (d. 219), and Zhang Fei (d. 221) became sworn brothers in a ceremony amid peach blossom trees and represent unmistakably heroic images in Chinese culture.

Chen holds that Kingston is trying to explain how American white racists are the murderers of Chinese heroes. To some degree what they did was even more ruthless and horrible than what an actual killer does. They robbed the China men of their speech, even while they lived, because they had to bury their bitterness and miserable tears without saying any word since it would be answered only with greater wrath. She suggests that Kingston is counting down the crimes committed by American white racists who turned China men into wandering ghosts while they were still alive. They were condemned to wander like ghosts with no place to rest, but this called forth their heroism. Chen believes that Kingston realized that in the times when racists were in control, the majestic voice of Guan Goong “could not echo in any place except an imaginary opera stage in the wilderness of the American West” (“She” 156).<sup>8</sup> It could be said that Guan Goong’s voice was hidden and buried in the depths of the hearts of the China men. It could find no outward expression. They were not able to find the kind of life-and-death brotherhood Chinese readers know to have been reported of Guan Goong.<sup>9</sup> Instead, they were forced to establish their own new world in the U.S. which was full of hostility toward them. They were isolated and pushed to the margins of any meaningful hybrid community with Americans. They could do nothing but wait in the reality of speechless silence for the changing of their fate (156). Therefore, the tradition of speaking gradually

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<sup>8</sup> Julia Lisella considers Kingston’s *CM* to be a novel about work and class, labor and racism. It is a hybrid text combining these political objectives with biography.

<sup>9</sup> Guan Yu, Liu Bei, and Zhang Fei, according to *Records of Three Kingdoms*, were friends who were “as close as brothers.” They slept on the same bed and treated each other like brothers. Guan Yu and Zhang Fei protected Liu Bei from danger regardless of how perilous the situation.

transformed into that of silence. Not until the first generation of railroad workers passed away did they change this tradition of speechlessness, which carried in itself the entire injustice of their treatment.

The point is that all of the Chinese scholars under study realize that it is not Kingston's intention to write a completely accurate and objective history of China men in the 1800s in America in any sort of critical sense. She is composing vivid images and pictures of China men, unraveling and re-weaving fact, stereotype, and imagination in their resulting portrayals. Even though there was an actual Bak Goong (Gong), Ah Goong (Gong), and Tom Hong, *China Men* is no more an attempt to write a strictly accurate biography of these men than is *The Woman Warrior* Kingston's literal autobiography. Speaking of her treatment of her father in *CM*, Kingston once told Timothy Pfaff:

I have a father character who comes up in various guises throughout the book. He is really only one character, but I call him different things, like "the legal father," "the illegal father," "the father from China" and "the American father." In the course of the book, I have him coming into this country in five different ways. I'm very proud of that. (Pfaff 25)

Kingston's remarks about the invention of her father encourage readers to notice other recreations of characters and the meanings behind them.

All of the Chinese scholars under study emphasize Kingston's rewriting of the *Flowers in the Mirror* story of Tang Ao as one of the best examples of Kingston's revisionist history. This is also one point at which they connect her writing in *CM* to *WW*

in what Shi Pingping calls “deriving from the same origin.” Kingston is deliberately misreading (*wudu* 误读) the classical story in all the ways this characterization may be taken as discussed in Chapter III of this study. *Flowers in the Mirror* is a fantasy novel written by the Qing dynasty author Li Ruzhen (1763-1830) but set in the Tang Dynasty period of the reign of the Empress Wu Zetian (r. 690-705).<sup>10</sup> Kingston did not read *Flowers in the Mirror* in Chinese, but she read the English translation done in 1965 by Lin Taiyi. Jennie Wang says, “An examination of Lin Tai-Yi’s English translation reveals numerous borrowings in Kingston’s writing, including Kingston’s naming” (295). What was most influential for Kingston was Li Ruzhen’s unique vision of gender identities and gender transformation. But Wang says there is one major difference between *Flowers in the Mirror* and *China Men*: “What lacks in Kingston is Li’s optimism in dreams, which is replaced by a cynical, postmodern skepticism, and a tragic vision” (199). This may be true. After all, it does seem that Kingston has intentionally structured *CM* around eighteen sections, roughly designed to call to mind Cai Yen’s “Eighteen Laments Sung to a Hujia.” These laments were written in the style of Qu Yuan’s (340-278 BCE) poems, especially *Li Sao*, which is the title of one of *CM*’s chapters.

In Li Ruzhen’s original story of Tang Ao, Empress Wu demands that all of the flowers on the earth be in bloom by the next morning. The flower-spirits fear her and follow her orders, but are then punished by the gods for doing so. Their punishment is to live on earth, and they will not be allowed to return to heaven until their penance is

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<sup>10</sup> Jennie Wang thinks that Kingston found Li Ruzhen’s work fascinating because Li lived in Lingnan, Canton (Guangdong); his fictitious Tang Ao came from there, and Kingston’s family was from the same area. Moreover, Tang Ao was a ready-made “father from China” who had left on a search for a utopia (197).

complete. Since Tang Ao is the father of the incarnation of the Fairy of a Hundred Flowers, Empress Wu suspects him of having had a part in plotting a rebellion against her and so she takes away his high scholarly rank. In response, he decides to go overseas with his brother-in-law, Merchant Lin Zhiyang. Tang Ao finds twelve of the incarnated flower-spirits during his journey and helps them all with the difficulties that they are having. Doing so enables him to become an immortal, and he disappears into the mountain of Penglai (*Penglai shan*). In Daoist legend, Penglai is the abode of the immortals and the Queen Mother of the West where there is no pain and no winter; there are rice bowls and wine glasses that never become empty; there are magical fruits such as mystical peaches that can heal any disease, grant immortality, and even raise the dead. During his journeys, Tang Ao travels to the Country of Gentlemen, the Country of Women, the Country of Intestineless People, the Country of Sexless People, and the Country of Two-faced People, as well as many other places. In the second half of the book, Tang Ao's daughter goes to Penglai to look for him after his disappearance. The story concludes when the incarnated flower-spirits take part in the "Imperial Examinations for Women," and along with their husbands and brothers, they rise up and overthrow Empress Wu.

Shi shows that Kingston retells *Flowers in the Mirror* so that Tang Ao comes to an all-woman state while searching for the Gold Mountain of bliss and wealth, just as the people of southern China thought America to be in the 1800s. Xue Yufeng notes that one function of the story of Tang Ao is to offer Kingston's criticism of the practice of showing favor to males and belittling females in traditional Chinese society:

但是在这个故事的结尾，作者着意强调，这个女儿国“地点在北美，”并且这是一本汤亭亭追述家族男性祖先与男性成员的历史与故事的书，因此，唐敖的惨痛经历是一把双刃剑。一方面，作者借此为中国女性复仇；另一方面，作者在暗示早期华人移民男子在美国造到的“阉割”。

However, in the end of the story, the author deliberately emphasizes that this women's kingdom is actually in North America, and this [CM] is a book of history and stories in which Kingston traces the male ancestors and relatives in her family. Therefore, the miserable experience of Tang Ao is a double-edged sword. On one hand, the author uses this story to take revenge for Chinese women; and on the other hand, the author is implying that the early Chinese male immigrants were “emasculated (*yange* 阉割)” in the U.S. (53)

On this point, Xue is in complete agreement with Chinese American literary scholar King-Kok Cheung who writes, “I cannot but see this legend as double-edged, pointing not only to the mortification of China men in the new world but also to the subjugation of women both in old China and in America.” (236).

In addition, Xue holds that Tang Ao is an emblem for the Chinese immigrants searching for gold. Tang Ao has some special similarities with Kingston's father. Shi reminds us that Kingston's father Tang Side was from Xinhui, Guangdong province, and that he was a traditional and learned Confucian teacher and widely read in the “Four

Books and the Five Classics (*Si Shu Wu Jing*).”<sup>11</sup> Like Tang Ao, he was well educated. It is at this point that both Shi and Xue notice that Kingston chooses Tang Ao rather than the merchant Lin Zhishang as in the original story in order to stress to her readers that the early Chinese immigrants in the U.S. were not coolies; neither were they peasants, poor, and illiterate. On the contrary, they were well-educated tradesmen and teachers who tended to have the wealth to pay their own voyage fare to the U.S. In order to fulfill their wonderful dream of the Gold Mountain, China men came all the way from southern China to the U.S.; however, as soon as they arrived at the Gold Mountain, they were forced to live like prisoners and even handcuffed. Xue holds that Tang Ao’s miserable experience was not different from that of the early Chinese laborers in the U.S.

In the woman’s kingdom, Tang Ao experiences biological and psychological torture. He is forced to accept the rules and conventions of the woman’s kingdom. The Gold Mountain of his dreams tragically becomes a prison. The desire for survival makes him submissive, and he is forced to lead a life of exile. In order to survive, he has to do what others were unwilling to do. He had to do the work of women, washing dishes and clothes. Tang Ao, as written by Kingston, represents the prejudice against China men held by most Americans who thought men from China were suitable only for “feminine professions” such as laundry and cooking (Xue 54). Xue submits that by using the Tang Ao story, Kingston powerfully attacks the racial discrimination present in American

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<sup>11</sup> The “Four Books and the Five Classics” refer to the classical Confucian texts used in the imperial examination system for all Chinese scholars. The “Four Books” are the *Analects (Lunyu)*, *Doctrine of the Mean (Zhongyong)*, the *Mencius (Mengzi)*, and *Great Learning (Daxue)*. The “Five Classics” are the *Book of Changes (Yijing)*, the *Book of Odes (Shijing)*, the *Classic of Rites (Liji)*, the *Classic of History (Shujing)*, the *Spring and Autumn Annals (Chunqiu)*.

society and by practicing “deliberate misreading (*wudu* 误读),” she “rights wrongs” for her Chinese ancestors and rectifies the name of China men.

After probing into the original story of Tang Ao, which is artistically borrowed and deliberately placed as the beginning chapter in *CM* by Kingston, we can clearly understand why she chose a story which may perplex the reader who has no background knowledge of Chinese literature. Kingston’s use of Tang Ao’s story is really meant to generate the question: “Why is this China man being treated in this way?” In the background is Kingston’s keen sense of America’s most fundamental values of the Bill of Rights and the right of all persons to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The whole narrative is no doubt an expression of indignation over the inconsistency between American ideals and the treatment of China men. Read in this way, Xue holds that the story is not about gender at all, or surely not *only* about gender lessons, but a thorough in-depth political and social critique. But Xue may overlook the critique of sexism that is also present in Kingston’s appropriation of Tang Ao’s story. She is also undercutting the concept of “pink collar” work and the association of domesticity only with females.

Shi agrees with Xue that Tang Ao’s experience in the all-women’s state (*nu’er guo*) implies that he, like all the other China men he represents, was emasculated in the U.S. She means specifically that after the Pacific railroad was completed there was one wave after another, expelling China men. As Lu Wei reminds us, these China men were even chased by white policemen and found no place to find relief. Many of them had to hide themselves in restaurants, laundries, and barber shops. Some took to professions which white men were unwilling to do, such as laundries (30). Moreover, the Expulsion

Act and the law against interracial marriage forced many Chinese laborers to remain bachelors, which Shi says was tantamount to emasculation, since they had no wives with whom to have sex. She believes that the dual forces of racism and Orientalism kept spreading and promoting the stereotypical image of China men seen in Fu Manchu and Charlie Chan, which implied that China men were either demonically sinister, effeminate or homosexual (*Contemporary Ethnic* 32). Similarly, the depictions of Mark Twain and Bret Harte portrayed China men as opium addicts and perpetuated the negative stereotypes of China men in the eyes of white Americans.

This argument pursued by Shi and Xue calls for further analysis. In choosing to refer to the plight of China men in the U.S. described in Kingston's Tang Ao by the term "emasculatation," Shi and Xue may unintentionally be demonizing the feminine and representing a view associated with misogyny. We can bring this implication of their interpretation out of the shadows into the light if we recall that Kingston's Mulan is a blended gender figure. Seen only from one side, this means that she includes masculine actions and possesses such sentiments deep within her being, but approached from the other side, she also possesses feminine traits. Shi's and Xue's readings of Kingston, and maybe even Kingston's narrative itself, expresses patriarchal norms according to which a man's worth is demonstrated by procreation through a woman's body. Additionally, there is more than an implied devaluation of the feminine in Shi's and Xue's reading. Whenever Tang Ao appears feminine, this is deplored and regarded as humiliating emasculation. This is why Shi and Xue use the term. But its use betrays a chauvinism that valorizes the male and considers the feminine of less value. When writers or

interpreters devalue the feminine, they devalue women. Shi and Xue seem to privilege the male and may not actually be aware of this implication of their reading because of their own cultural context. A more neutral interpretation might make use of the concept of “disenfranchisement” instead of emasculation, since the way Shi and Xue use “emasculation” reflects culturally embedded understandings of gender.

By comparison, demonstrating her deep background in Chinese literature, Chen Xiaohui offers a reading of the Tang Ao story which, while not fundamentally at odds with those of Shi, Lu and Xue, nevertheless brings into sharp relief some elements that they leave unexplored. Chen returns to the story of the women’s state that emphasizes the marginalization of China men, comparing it, as do Shi and Xue, to the Chinese imaginative literary work *Flowers in the Mirror*. She claims, “The major reason that *Flowers in the Mirror* resonates with Western feminist culture is that the ‘women’s state,’ the ‘women’s utopia (*funu wutuobang*),’ is one in which women dominate men” (151). In making this judgment, Chen is revealing her limited acquaintance with Western feminism. Feminist utopias in Western literature tend to instantiate gender equality, portray gender separatism, or suggest societies only having women, but they do not reverse gender roles to place women in the position of dominating or oppressing men as Chen suggests. Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Herland* (1915) is a story of an isolated all-female society. In Mary Gentle’s *Golden Witchbreed* (1984), gender can be chosen, and this is done later in life. Gender has no bearing on social roles. In *My Own Utopia* (1961) by Elizabeth Mann Borghese, gender exists but is dependent upon age rather than sex — genderless children mature into women, some of whom eventually become men. If, as

some critics claim, *Flowers in the Mirror* portrays a women's utopia as a place in which women dominate men, we can draw the conclusion that such a vision is more reflective of conceptions in Chinese culture than it is of some major Western literary feminist utopias.

Nevertheless, Chen believes that the story of the women's state at the beginning of *CM* diverges somewhat from the feminist ideology that Kingston usually insists on. She reveals this difference by paying attention to how Kingston has worked with her Chinese source story. Although some American scholars realize that Kingston is rewriting classical Chinese legends and narratives, they might still overlook some layers of her work. For example, in "The Rhetoric of Intertextuality," Lance Weldy analyzes how Tang Ao's story reflects the gender displacement experienced by Chinese American male immigrants. But he does not go into the shift from satirical humor to utter seriousness that Kingston creates. We can contrast his view with the reading given by Chen. She reminds us that in the original story of *Flowers in the Mirror*, it is the merchant Lin Zhiyang who is forced to become a concubine for the emperor of the women's state and not Tang Ao. Lin is a merchant who does not abide by the rigid Confucian rituals and conventions. The treatment he receives in the "imperial harem" or residence of the emperor's concubines (*hou gong*) of the women's state is not viewed as a great humiliation for a man's masculinity from Lin's individual viewpoint. Chen stresses that in the original story, Lin Zhiyang's treatment is a comedy that satirizes in an intelligent way, in the period in which feudal patriarchy dominates, the Chinese ideology that men are superior to women. In this way, Chen's grasp of Chinese literature helps us

see something that Shi and Xue may have overlooked and which may be the root of my concerns over their use of the language of emasculation noted earlier. Chen has shown that originally the story was not meant to devalue women but actually to satirize and critique that practice. If she is right, then Shi and Xue seem to have misread the purpose of the story and perhaps Kingston's adaptation of it.

Kingston changes the protagonist in her story of women's state from Lin Zhiyang to Tang Ao. The biggest difference between these characters is that Tang Ao is an intellectual, whose cultural background is close to Confucianism, and indeed his image is very similar to Kingston's own father's in *CM*. Tang Ao came abroad after he failed in the Confucian Imperial Examination system. Moreover, “唐敖的女性化过程也不像林志样那样笑料迭出，反而被罩上了一层悲凉苍茫的色彩 The process of Tang Ao's feminization is not written with the humor that gives shape to that of Lin Zhiyang; instead, that process is shrouded by a color of desolation and isolation” (Chen, “She” 152). Chen does not make it clear to what end Kingston makes the shift. We may infer that Kingston intends to underscore the serious impact of the treatment of China men in America. Chen's reading, however, seems to be free of the shadow of patriarchy and misogyny that seemingly unintentionally underlies the interpretations offered by Shi and Xue.

Chen holds that the most important difference between the original and Kingston's retelling of the story is not the general tone of the literary account itself. Rather, the really significant point, according to Chen, is that:

[u]nlike Lin Zhiyang, Tang Ao does not change merely in outward appearance; after having his ears pierced, his feet bound, and wearing facial make-up powders, Tang Ao's consciousness of identity is shattered. They force him to wash his feet with his own foot binding cloths. Those cloths are like beautiful satin which extend in length. He feels embarrassed by this because these clothes are just like the underwear of women. Because the shape of his feet has changed when he walks, his *derriere* swings left and right, and his shoulders sway front and back. "He is really beautiful," all the people who are eating remark. When he bends to put the dishes on the women's table, they keep on complimenting his tiny feet. (152)

Chen points out here that through the erasure of all the socially constructed referents of the masculine body, Tang Ao's psychological being also transforms. He does not acknowledge his own masculinity. He is alienated from it and begins to look for an identity that is more appropriate for him under the scrutiny of others. Chen does not call this emasculation. Instead, she seems to think of the transformation as being comparable to Mulan's losing that part of her blended being that was associated with the masculine. Nevertheless, this is a very sobering transformation. It is the precise one that Kingston believes happened to many China men who suffered redefinition in American society. At the same time, it also indicates the history of the immigration of Chinese males in *CM* as the process of these men adapting to such redefinition. In this process, there is psychological change. The cultural protests of Chinese Americans represent a resistance

against white people putting on them a “facial mask (*lianpu*).” They oppose the imposition of this stereotypical image and object to the fact that the mainstream culture never considers China as a culture with its own richness and independence; however, Chen believes that in her “women’s state” story of Tang Ao, Kingston implies that the standard white and Orientalist account of China men and Chinese history was distorted (*cuangai*). Tragically, from Kingston’s point of view, this revision penetrated into the psyche of Chinese immigrant men. It gradually developed from “facial masking (*lianpu hua*) into psychological transformation (*xinli bianyi*)” (Chen 152). It is clear that the feminization of China men in Chen’s viewpoint is the responsibility of American society. It first put a mask on them, but as time went on, this stereotypical mask forced on them changed their very consciousness, which was not a small crime but a severe one. China men did not bring this self-doubt about their masculinity to America with them. Of course, Chen is right about this, but she fails to comment on the fact that the Chinese culture that produced the men Kingston is writing about, as well as the American culture that refines them, is one of patriarchy and male dominance, where female children often are not even given names but only called by their birth order number (i.e., “number one daughter” *da nuer*, etc). Chinese men growing up in such a culture surely came to the U.S. with overwhelming confidence and self-assurance that made this gender transformation all the more undesirable for them.

Kingston uses another narrative besides that of Tang Ao to call attention to the emotional deconstruction of the psyches of China men. She recreates a story of Lo Bun Sun’s wandering to various places. She says that in her childhood her mother told her

this story about Imperial China, but her mother never clarified the national identity of Lo Bun Sun. So, Kingston thought he was Chinese until she read Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Chen Xiaohui makes an interesting point by saying that in reality the story in *CM* may be derived from the frame of Robinson Crusoe, but it is still a fable about the history of Chinese immigrants. At the beginning of the story in *CM*, in order to emphasize the implications of this fable, Kingston spells the name "Robinson" as Lo Bun Sun in accordance with her parents' Guangdong (Cantonese) dialect. At the same time, Kingston provides a study of what these three Chinese characters represent. *Lo* sounds like *Lao* 劳 which means "labor, hard working" and it refers to the sort of person who will work even without need for an overseer; however, *Lo* also has the sound of *Luo* 裸, meaning "nakedness, the naked animal." In addition, *Lo*'s pronunciation also sounds like *Luo* 骡 or "mule" which is a genderless animal that works diligently (a beast of burden). *Bun* is the same name of the uncle who returned to China. *Sun* is like *Shen* 身 as in "body." It sounds like the English "son" and Chinese *sun* as in *sunzi* (孙子, grandson); besides, *sun* 孙 also is close to "new" in Cantonese pronunciation. So, "Lo Bun Sun" is an appellation for a mule, symbolizing a person who works tirelessly, labors diligently by himself with no help at all. Chen observes that no matter whether he is a son or grandson, Lo Bun Sun represents the several past generations of Kingston's male ancestors (148-49). The interpretation of Robinson's identity manifests clearly Kingston's panoramic construction of the history of the entirety of China men's immigration to the Gold Mountain, and such history was represented by her family's four generations of males. Chen, likewise, writes that China men who were brought to an exotic country as coolies

formed an early immigrant society which had no females; therefore, in the eyes of white persons, they were viewed as persons of gender ambiguity (*xingbie mohu*) (149). In order to work hard and earn bread for their distant families, Kingston mentions several times that China men sent money home for as long as 20 years. Even if they did not see their family during this time, they labored industriously and strenuously as Lo Bun Sun, like genderless beasts of burden.

In contrast, Xue Yufeng insists that Kingston chooses this name specifically to reveal how the China men were regarded by white Americans. The heavy price that the Chinese ancestors paid also included the deprivation of sex. They were far away from their wives and their children, so they were just like a group of genderless mules, and this recalls Xue's preference for language of emasculation to describe the plight of China men. Due to the Chinese Exclusion Act and the opposition to Americans marrying Chinese, their right to marry was denied. As a result, they could not produce their next generation (54).

Under the name "Lo Bun Sun," four generations of China men are blended together, and each individual has a similar experience of searching for his self-chosen cultural identity between the U.S. and China. Chen articulates this idea in the following way:

From [her] great-grandfather's insistence on pursuing the essence of Chinese culture and his despair toward American culture, to [her] grandfather's and father's unfailing pursuit of the essence of American culture for immigrants who were nurtured by the essence of Chinese

culture, and finally reaching the pure American cultural essence represented by the son's generation resulting in the inevitable, thorough and complete loss of Chinese cultural essence. (149)

Chen's essentializing of American and Chinese cultures thus underlies her reading of Kingston's project in *CM*. I have already discussed the problems inherent in such constructions, and we may doubt whether the use of the category of "Chinese-ness" is necessary for getting at Kingston's views.

Instead of offering an extended reading of the crisis of self-identity faced by China men in the U.S., Shi Pingping turns her interpretation of *CM* toward Kingston's reworking of the history of Chinese immigration. She makes use of her knowledge of Western literary critical methods by claiming that the best way to approach Kingston's work in *CM* is through resources made available by the New Historicists, and she says that Kingston's endeavor to construct the history of her family and her ethnic group can be viewed as what the New Historicist critics call "a counter history (*fan lishi*)" (*Contemporary Ethnic* 34). Such a claim creates a useful angle from which to interpret Kingston's characterization of China men. Shi holds that Kingston not only writes "a counter history" of Tang Ao and Lo Bun Sun, but also of the men in her own family.

The New Historicist claims that there is no real, objectively true, single version of history. The unity and consistency of history is something imaginatively constructed. Furthermore, history is actually filled with cracks and discontinuities. Accordingly, Shi posits that Kingston has picked up events and people that had been pushed to the margins and brings them into a new history. She says that, prior to the 1970s, American official

history centered around white men, and there was almost no sign of Chinese immigrants and their descendants. The accomplishments of Chinese railroad workers were forgotten and snuffed out. Therefore, the stories about Chinese American men mainly existed only in the memories of their families, in talk-stories, or in sparse documents. In this way the lives of these men were sent into the abyss of history. Shi says that although Kingston is not a historian, she writes a “counter history” of Chinese male immigrants, and in so doing, she recovers and revises those aspects that have been hidden and distorted (35). Shi claims that Kingston utilizes her literary art as a platform from which to challenge mainstream society. What she calls into question is the view that China men lack masculinity, and that the ethnically Chinese as a group are forever an “Other” or outside racial minority who have failed to make any noteworthy contribution to the building of this country.<sup>12</sup>

We may think of Kingston’s “deliberate misreading (*wudu* 误读, Xue Yufeng)” of history or “double charmed” narrative (Chen, “She” Xiaohui) as roughly equivalent to

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<sup>12</sup> This position does not seem entirely incompatible with that of Linda Sledge. Sledge argues that *CM* imitates the principal formal characteristics and functions of an epic. She holds that it is episodic in structure, intermingles supernatural beings with historical persons, and tells the exploits of wandering sojourner-heroes on whose actions depend the fate of a new nation. Sledge holds that Kingston tells a set of exemplary tales about how the men in her story win arduous epic tests of their manhood. Great Grandfather Bak Goong of Hawaii (who hacks a farm out of the wilderness) and Grandfather Ah Goong of California (who moves mountains and hews by his bare hands) are prototypes of the hero. Bak Goong finds ways to thwart the plantation bosses and makes fools of his enemies. He returns to China to die in peace, having endured challenges and proven his manhood. Ah Goong sacrifices his mind and health to defy earthquake and fire, and when he faithfully tells the truth about the Gold Mountain’s difficulties, he is ridiculed. Even if Baba is emasculated in a succession of unsuccessful male roles, eventually he becomes a hero for the family that respects him even though they do not understand him. Sledge’s article is helpful in understanding *China Men* as the portrayal of heroes of China.

Shi's interpretation of *CM* as "counter history." Despite the attention Kingston gives to her great-grandfather and grandfather, *CM* is a work that belongs to Kingston's father as much as *WW* belongs to her mother. As she begins her creation of Baba's story, Kingston describes many challenges Baba meets with frustration and active opposition on a scale very comparable to that about which Ah Song writes in his letters. When Baba comes to America, there is no sugar plantation or railroad on which to work and prove his physical prowess, and there is an absence of the pioneering spirit that had been present with his father and grandfather. There is no more Gold Rush. There is only the hard struggle of ordinary life in a culture in which China men are seen as outsiders, or even worse, as threats.

Kingston's *CM* father comes from China with his books as an educated and learned man, but he is forced to spend years doing laundry, singing the laundry song:

Years pass and I let drop but one homesick tear.

A laundry lamp burns at midnight.

The laundry business is low, you say,

Washing out blood that stinks like brass--

Only a Chinaman can debase himself so.

But who else wants to do it? Do you want it?

Ask for the Chinaman. Ask the Chinaman. (63)

This song shows how "Baba" experiences a loss of self-worth. He comes to know what it feels like to be devalued. Baba faces all the prejudices and discrimination that his father and grandfather knew. Yet, because of the new realities in America, after the completion

of the railroads and the ending of the gold rush, he does not have the satisfaction of taking in deep breaths of the sandalwood mountains, felling a giant redwood, witnessing the driving of the golden spike, or celebrating a victory over the white demons to win better wages. He comes face to face with the rawest forms of racism in American society.

As Kingston begins to weave the Chinese knot of her father's story, she picks up strand after strand soaked in frustrating set-backs; however, Kingston is composing each strand so that the result will be a hero of the Gold Mountain, not a cowering victim. She describes how hard Baba works in a gambling house owned by one of the prominent China men in Chinatown. In this job, he is told that "being arrested is part of the job" (CM 244). The low pay and horrid working conditions in the gambling house are no better than those his father and grandfather had known at the hands of the white demons. Kingston writes, "He worked twelve hours a day, no holidays . . . . Even on New Year's, no day off. He couldn't come home until two in the morning . . . . He got paid almost nothing. He was a slave" (244). Baba's years of service in a gambling house, as Kingston depicts them, create in us much more sympathy than the more widely known version of China men in the gambling house as told by Bret Harte. As Jennie Wang claims, "To a mainstream American audience, the Chinese as real people never exist, and they do not have an attractive or proper name in the American language other than the 'ghosts,' 'the heathen Chinees,' or 'the dragon lady'" (17). The "heathen Chinees" as a coolie stereotype of Chinese males is a reference to Bret Harte's poem, "Plain Language from Truthful James" (a.k.a. "The Heathen Chinees"), first published in the *Overland*

*Monthly* in 1870.<sup>13</sup> Wang acknowledges that Harte may have intended the poem as a satire, but she says, “Bret Harte’s readers, predominantly a white readership, chose to ignore Harte’s social criticism and the negative character of the white gambler Bill Nye” and strongly reacted negatively to Ah Sin, the heathen Chinese (21).

Harte’s “Plain Language from Truthful James” is perhaps the most famous of all American 19<sup>th</sup> century works about China men. It is a poem set in a Chinese gambling house. “Plain Language” was one of several poems Harte wrote about the tough gold-mining camps in which he lived during the 1850s and 1860s. In the heart of the poem, Truthful James makes it clear that he and his friend Bill Nye have been cheating in order to fleece Ah Sin at cards, but in Harte’s satire, the final straw comes when Ah Sin wins the game by being able to cheat better than the white miners can. Harte’s concluding lines nonetheless express an ongoing stereotype of the Chinese: “Which is why I remark, / And my language is plain, / That for tricks that are vain, / The heathen Chinee is peculiar— / Which the same I am free to maintain” (“Plain Language”). This poem had a dramatic effect in reinforcing negative stereotypes of China men. It was widely reprinted in newspapers throughout the West and was followed by two musical versions and even a “Heathen Chinee Songster” (Fenn 45-46). The popularity of the poem surprised Harte, and it was unclear how he responded to the way in which it was interpreted by the reading public. In fact, there is an ambivalence embedded in the text. Harte may have

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<sup>13</sup> A long list of works perpetuating the Orientalist myth of the Chinese coolie are explored in Wu’s *The Yellow Peril*; Darrell Hamamoto, *Monitored Peril: Asian-Americans and the Politics of TV Representation* (1994); Robert G. Lee, *Orientalism: Asian-Americans in Popular Culture* (1999); and Gina Marchetti, *Romance and the ‘Yellow Peril’: Race, Sex, and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction* (1993).

meant the poem as a criticism of the greed of the white miners, who were swift to take offense at other races who might emulate their own deceitful ways; however, the vast majority of readers thought it suggested both that China men were diabolical and conniving, and that all of them were hopeless gambling addicts.

In contrast, Kingston's retelling of Baba's work in the gambling house suggests that some China men found this occupation as a last resort, that it was brutal and long work, and that not all of them were gamblers. Even though Baba is the poet of a gambling house, he does not gamble. Neither did his father or grandfather gamble. According to Kingston, each of her heroes believes gambling to be a way of weakness and not suitable for any competent and able person, and she thereby reveals a different way of being a China man than that shown by Harte.

In the chapter "The American Father," Kingston describes the father she had known as a child in Stockton, California. With so many trials heaped on him by "the white demons," it is no wonder that his daughter's most painful memory is how he became a "disheartened man" after the closing of the gambling house. Countless China men lost their confidence and sense of purpose under the oppression, racism, and meaningless employment they experienced. Of her own father's depression and sense of futility, Kingston writes, "He was always home. He sat in his chair and stared, or he sat on the floor and stared. He stopped showing the boys the few kung fu moves he knew. He suddenly turned angry and quiet . . . stopped shaving, and sat in his T-shirt from morning to night" (*CM* 248-49). Had Kingston concluded her father's story here, she would be rewriting only despair; however, she goes further to depict how Baba rises out of his low

ebb of depression and finds meaningful work and renewed self-confidence by opening a new laundry and becoming a Gold Mountain Hero.

In her comments on Kingston's writing about China men as heroes, Jennie Wang's observations about *CM* support those of Shi:

To write on the subject itself is difficult, pioneer work, an impossible project for any writer who writes in the language of American English. The "iron curtain" of language in American Orientalism dictates the literary laws and controls the rules of the game in the representation of the Chinese as a race. The book was originally entitled *The Gold Mountain Heroes—Chinese pioneers in the American West . . . .* "Chinamen" comes from the white men's language, even though Kingston split the word into "China Men," the heroic connotation is obviously lost in the title. (195)

Naturally, Wang does not literally mean that it is impossible for a writer to talk about the subject of Gold Mountain Heroes using English. If this were true, even Kingston would have to write in Chinese. What she means is that the metaphors, analogies, background images, tropes, and terms of American and Western literature do not lend themselves to presenting the China men who came in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and stayed to find a place in America. In order to step behind this "iron curtain" of Orientalism, American and Western literary archetypes, Kingston has to reach across to China and pull its fundamental literary characters and themes into her recreation of the story of China men. In this way, Kingston pulled back the "iron curtain" of American Orientalism.

Chapter VIII: Silence of the China Men 沉默无声

Chen Xiaohui sets up her interpretation of *CM* according to the way she believes Kingston structures the interplay between silence and the crisis facing the China men heroes. She thinks of the central figures in this way: Bak Goong in “The Great Grandfather of the Sandalwood Mountains” stands for the generation that may be characterized as “speaking (*shuohua*)” as a form of rebellion; San Goong’s (San Gong) and Si Goong’s (Si Gong) comprise the generation of “silencing (*xiaosheng*)”; Ah Goong’s generation is that of “speechlessness (*shiyu*)”; while Shaosha’s 少傻 (i.e., “young foolish”) and Ben Shu’s (a.k.a. Bin Shu, “Ben 笨” has the same meaning as “Sha 傻” in “Shaosha”) is the “babbling (*zhanwang*)” generation; and finally, the Brother in Vietnam’s generation is that of “whispering under one’s breath (*gunong*)” (153-56). In thus organizing a critical study of *CM*, Chen connects both Kingston’s political critique of the racism of American society and the theme that China men felt emasculated by associating silence with feminization, as in traditional Chinese patriarchy.

Chen Xiaohui finds a great deal of significance in the fact that the chapter “The Great Grandfather of Honolulu” mentions that Bak Goong protests against the regulation forbidding China men from speaking on the sugar cane plantation in Hawaii. At first, he thinks this regulation was unbelievable and even absurd. But after the whipping by a white overseer, he realizes that this is an evil act depriving China men of their ideas and cultural traditions. So he begins to adopt various ways to rebel against the ban. In Chen’s terms, Bak Goong belongs to the generation of those China men who used speech as rebellion. She says, “He even used his cough to replace speaking, changing his battle

against this enforced silence into an announcement of this plague. His cough became a hidden language used to express his indignation toward his white overseers” (153). The cost to Bak Goong for changing language from sound into coughing is severe, the injury to his lungs—the wound and incompleteness of a certain part of his body. The message here is that the loss of the sound of voicing one’s opinion, if it continues, will result in a permanent disability. Eventually, Bak Gong comes to understand that in the struggle with white racists, going by the rules in America is more beneficial for gaining his rights. At first, Bak Goong does not want to lower his head or acquiesce to the white overseers, but gradually he realizes that sometimes he must compromise in order to survive. By doing this, he follows the way suggested by the popular Chinese proverb: “Living under someone’s roof, one has to lower one’s head (*zhu zai wuyan xia qi neng bu ditou* 住在屋檐下企能不低头).” However, Chen does not pause to take note of the significance of this decision in the context of the history of American racial consciousness, where “going along to get along” is a form of racial compliance which has been associated with being an “Uncle Tom.” This is not the interpretation Chen means for us to draw, but leaving it unaddressed invites some measure of misunderstanding.

Actually, Chen’s reading goes in a different direction. The strong desire to speak his mind and stand up for himself is the concrete embodiment of Bak Goong’s generation. They use Chinese language and tell stories to convey their Chinese identity. Chen reminds us that these first Chinese immigrants who are homesick shout out their words to the great earth (*dadi*). They cry out oaths with passion: “I’m going home” or “I’m about to go home,” calling to “the China underneath them (*didixia de Zhongguo*).” Thus they

establish a “custom (*xisu*)” which belongs specifically to the Chinese laborers on the cane plantations. They shout loudly and protest that the right to speak for China men cannot be forbidden. Chen concludes that the China men of this generation in the Hawaiian Islands won their own cultural right through speaking loudly, providing them protection both spiritually and politically (155).

While not making any specific reference to Chen’s use of the silence metaphor for interpreting *CM*, Shi Pingping comments on Kingston’s connection of the two stories of Du Zichun and Mo Yi, demonstrating that both revolve around the theme of breaking silence. She thinks these two stories continue and extend Kingston’s stress on the importance of breaking silence in the “Great-Grandfather in Honolulu” chapter. Shi believes Kingston uses these two narratives to point out that a great price must be paid for breaking silence. In one, the bird breaks the silence and in the other the death of the character’s son is the occasion of breaking silence, but in both cases a death results from the act of speaking (*Contemporary Ethnic* 38). Kingston’s references require that the reader remember the traditional stories. For example, in the story of Du Zichun, he is given riches by a Daoist immortal and uses them to make his family happy. After about two years, at an appointed time, he meets the immortal on Cloud Terrace Peak.<sup>1</sup> There, the immortal gives him pills and an elixir of immortality and tells him that in order for the potion to be effective he must keep silent, no matter what assaults he faces. Later, a number of demons tempt him while the Daoist immortal is away, with each new challenger demanding that he speak. Finally, he is dragged to the hells where Yama, the

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<sup>1</sup> Cloud Terrace Peak is the Northernmost peak of the Daoist sacred mountain named Huashan, located about three hours from the center of the city of Xi’an.

Lord of the hells, demands that he speak, and when Du does not, he is tortured. When Du continues to refuse to speak, the Lord of the hells orders the ghost soldiers to torture him more and more. He receives no mercy. He is forced to swallow molten bronze; he is boiled in a cauldron; he is ground into jam in a mill; he is forced to climb the mountain of knives. Yet, he never speaks. Finally, the Lord of the hells decides to send him back to this world as a woman. Afterward, she (he) marries and has a son, but because she (he) will not talk to her (his) husband, the man kills the son, and only then does Du cry out “No!” Just then, Du finds himself standing again in the presence of the immortal, and he realizes it was all a dream testing him as both a man and woman. But the immortal says that because Du spoke, the elixir could not work, and he is doomed to live only an earthbound life (Minford and Lau 1067-72). Chen Xiaohui interprets Kingston’s allusion to Du’s story in the following way:

作为男性，正如中国传统对理想男性的要求那样，他战胜了“快乐、痛苦、愤怒、恐惧和邪念”，但是作为女性，他终于为了对孩子的爱而破坏了不能说话的契约，长生不老的法术被人类繁衍自身的欲望终结了，使得整个看似不可企及的崇高理想变成讽刺性的悖论。

As a man, just as Chinese tradition expects for the ideal man, he defeats happiness, sorrows, indignation, fear, and evil thoughts, but as a woman, he ultimately breaks the contract of not speaking, out of love for children. The magic craft (*fashu* 法术) of gaining immortality therefore is smashed by the human desire for procreation. This seemingly unreachable ideal becomes an ironic absurdity. (150)

The destruction of the dream for human immortality reflects the simple fact that humans cannot transcend their affection for their family and descendants. It seems that Chen means that gaining immortality by defeating all human desires as Du Zichun had done is not achievable. Just as Du did, Bak Goong breaks his silence for the love of his family as well.

Writing on Bak Goong, Xue Yufeng takes an approach that is different from that of Chen and Shi. Xue places Kingston's great-grandfather in the immigrant group that must be interpreted through what she calls the "sojourner theory (*luju xing lilun*)" (23). By this, Xue means that this generation planned to make money, return to China, buy a home and land, and enjoy their lives there and not in America. But once they arrived, they found that the U.S. was not the paradise the missionaries said it would be: "It was not full of gold for everyone. It was a place filled with racial discrimination and bias" (Xue 23). Xue stresses that in traditional Chinese culture, family is always a force which attracts the sojourner back home. Leaving home and saying goodbye to their country would be regarded as the last resort for this generation of China men. Therefore, Bak Goong and his generation become what Xue calls "falling leaves returning to the root" (See Chapter II). They possess the lifelong desire to return home. In *CM*, Kingston's great-grandfather, grandfather, and Ben Shu are drawn to the Gold Mountain, but finally they return to their Chinese home. They show themselves to be thoroughly Chinese, because even if some China men could not return when they were alive, they still wished their bodies to be returned to China in death. "Chinese people believe that if one is not buried in his home country after death, then the soul wanders and is restless forever"

(Lin, *Chinatown* 7).<sup>2</sup> As Xue says, “All kinds of associations and societies in Chinatown were responsible for returning Chinese bodies or ashes for burial in the homeland” (49). In *CM*, a large number of Chinese people who worked together in railroad construction with the grandfather in Nevada die from explosion, snowfall, and labor. Before drawing their last breath, these men break their silence by saying, “Don’t leave me in the snow, move my body home, burn it and put my ashes in the container. When you leave the mountain, please bring my ashes with you” (*CM* 138).

China men could keep silence under the pressure of their oppression, but their traditional values did drive them to break that silence, whether motivated by the desire to procreate and continue their families, or the “falling leaves” wanting to return to their roots. Du Zichun wants immortality and could defeat his worldly desires, but his love for his child breaks down his ambition for immortality and he began speaking. In a similar way, the generation of Kingston’s great-grandfather would break silence to express its human passion to return home. Seen in this light, Kingston’s deliberate telling of Bak Goong’s rebellion against the prohibition to speak reveals just how the men of his generation continued to value their homes, families, and country.

Chen says that the custom of speaking that characterized Bak Goong’s generation was unable to continue for his descendants in the Gold Mountain. She reads Kingston’s narratives of her grandfather and father telling the history of Chinese immigrant men as one of “progressive silencing (*xiaosheng*).” Like Bak Goong, Ah Goong endures the humiliation and racism of the bosses who try to make him feel as though he is only a

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<sup>2</sup>This topic is discussed thoroughly in Fae Myenne Ng’s *Bone*.

coolie, but he never loses his sense of identity and pride in self. He is determined to leave an imprint on America. One unmistakable example of Ah Goong's pride in his work, and his sense of participation in the expansion of the American frontier, is his involvement in a labor strike against the "white demon (*bai gui*)" railroad bosses protesting against low wages, terrible working conditions, and long hours. Kingston tells us what he thought in a simple statement: "No China men, no railroad" (*CM* 140). He begins as though he is a part of the "speaking" generation, but becomes progressively silent.

Yet, the two generations of Kingston's father and grandfather rarely speak rebelliously as did Bak Goong and his generation. According to Chen, "[t]he story of 'A Few Americans' characterizes this silencing as of two kinds. These are either speaking no words at all so that even the China men's spirit and soul (*guihun*) cannot speak, or speaking continuously as in pages of nonsense (*fenghua lianpian*)" (155). Chen takes an incident in the story of San Goong as representative of the first kind of silencing in which China men lost their speech. In this account, San Goong sees the spirit of his recently deceased brother Si Goong. He tries his best to ask Si Goong questions, but Si Goong refuses to make any reply. His spirit just wanders around the stable. Day after day, he does not leave, nor does he speak any word. Si Goong once participates in building the railroad in America; perhaps this is why he learned to keep silent. This construction worker's role weaves the traditional strength of men with that of modern machines, but the work is grinding down each man. Even though "The Grandfather in the Nevada Mountains" once holds up his penis to the whole mountain in order to express his desire

for conquering nature, such primitive desires were soon worn out and diminished by the hard work. After the railroad was completed, all the Chinese construction workers fell instantly into silence because at the time of the completion of the railroad, the absolutely unbridled (*siwu jidan*) wave of Chinese expulsion (*paihua langchao*) started. Chen's view is that collective and historical silence became the characteristic feature of Chinese immigrants in the era of the execution of the Chinese Expulsion Act (*paihua fa'an*). After the bustling scene of the railway construction was over, the symptom of speechlessness (*shiyu zheng*) completely enveloped (*longzhao*) the entire Chinese immigrant group of men (155). Chen holds that Kingston uses the literary motif of speechlessness to portray the effects of the Chinese Exclusion Act and thereby offers a political critique of its dehumanizing consequences. William Wu agrees and his study of the master narrative of the Yellow Peril explains well the American sensibility that devalued China men and exerted an influence on Kingston. Wu's point is that the myth of the Yellow Peril found its way into American Orientalist views and triggered the Exclusion Act, as well as dangerous and damaging influences on American foreign policy toward the Chinese to the present day. Even Christian pastors and leaders were influenced by the myth.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Chen makes an insightful and explicit comment on how

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<sup>3</sup> Christian ministers often supported the Chinese Exclusion Act. The classic example is that of Willard Farrell who wrote, "That the banners of Christianity and Christian civilization may be advanced throughout the remotest confines of the Chinese Empire by never ceasing missionary work upon Chinese soil itself, may well be our prayer and our faith. But that these people should be invited to our shores in countless thousands in the hope and expectation of Christianization here, is a proposition too horrible to the physical, moral and religious well-being of our own people to be thought of."

the Chinese construction workers of the railroad's concluding days were treated by the white Americans:

At the ceremony celebrating the completion of the railroad, the white Americans used grandiose and flowery language to describe the way the railroad left a glorious mark on 'human history'; however, China men were expelled from the railway they built and the very cities which would become prosperous because of the railroad they constructed. They were pushed out of all the places occupied by white racists. On the desolate path of their flight, speaking became unimportant, and their deaths at the hands of the white racists and the atrocities they experienced in their expulsion smashed their imagined dreams completely into nothingness.

(155-56)

Thus, the journey of Kingston's grandfather Ah Goong was one of speechless walking and never replying to what he heard. He was one of the China men who "Banded the nation North and South, East and West, with crisscrossing steel," with years of sweat in the railroad construction. He should have received acclaim, praise, and accolades because he was a binding and building ancestor in the U.S. (*CM* 146). Instead, Ah Goong has to run for his life in great horror and fear. As Kingston describes it, "Explosion followed him. He heard screams and went on, saw flames outlining black window and doors, and went on. He ran in the opposite direction from gunshots and the yell--*eeha awah*—the cowboys made when they herded cattle and sang their savage songs" (148). Fleeing in terror, hiding, and eluding bandits were the "reward" China men

received for constructing the railroad. Kingston writes with indignation concerning such atrocity: “In China bandits did not normally kill people, the booty was the main thing, but here the demons killed for fun and hate. They tied pigtailed horses and dragged chinamen” (*CM* 146). Such a chaotic and fearful situation explains how China men were driven into the circumstances of silence and speechlessness.

Chen says that when the tradition of silence went to its extreme form, it evolved in the second generation of China men from speechlessness into “delirium (*zhanwang*)” (156). The difference Kingston makes between the ancestors who were railroad workers and miners and the next generation of China men is that this later generation came to recognize their political identity. The son of San Goong, named Shaosha 少傻, becomes indisputably an American citizen, and he even serves in the army in World War II. He does not suffer racial discrimination from whites as his own father had to face. He does not have to live in speechlessness and aimless roaming in the spacious frontiers of North America. He has a standard American lifestyle and is a successful immigrant who is admired as “a model minority” (157); however, one day he suddenly becomes insane. Kingston reveals the reason for why he lost touch with reality. He has a guilty conscience about how he has failed to care for his mother in distant China. He buys houses, cars, and various kinds of modern furniture for himself, but when his mother dies, he realizes that he has not fulfilled his filial responsibilities as a son. While Chen believes his delirium was a direct result of his deeply embedded Chinese cultural values rather than a result of his denial of his Chinese values, she does not offer any extended analysis. In Kingston’s telling of his story, some anti-Communist propaganda he hears in America

brings him a lot of worries and concerns for his home country. He is shattered under such moral concerns. So, he starts to babble and mumble, addressing himself to the air.

Chen notices that Kingston weaves the images of voice and silence more tightly into the fabric of *CM* by means of the device of ghosts, which she uses with skill in *WW* (See Chapter VI of this study). In *CM*, the ghost of Shaosha's mother crosses the ocean to find him in the U.S. She asks him every day and night to pay the moral debts of filiality he owes to her as his mother. According to Chen's interpretation,

他的谵妄实际上是在驱遣心底的负罪感，说服自己放弃传统的儿子的义务，弥补华人移民男性对于抛弃原有的家庭责任、追随西方生活的价值失衡。His [Shaosha's] delirium was actually driving away the sense of guilt in the bottom of his heart and persuading himself into abandoning his traditional responsibility as a son so as to compensate the imbalance of values rising from the male Chinese immigrants neglecting their filial responsibility and pursuing a Western lifestyle. (157)

The multiple conflicts of passion, culture, tradition, and morality of this generation impress themselves through the pull of assimilation, capitalism, and promise, causing great stresses under which individuals could not hold up. Shaosha's resistance against these conflicts is very weak: "[T]herefore his self-babbling had a conspicuous feature: that is, its uselessness—the babbling neither changed his own spiritual status nor enabled him to be understood by others" (157). Kingston draws on her understanding of the Chinese beliefs about managing ghosts as she tells that Shaosha tries to use Chinese incantations (i.e., "Chinese language of witchcraft *Zhongguo yuyan wushu*") to drive

away his mother's ghost. He shouts at her imaginary wandering soul, "Go, home! Go back to China!" (*CM* 176). Chen believes that Shaosha does this to eliminate his sense of guilt, but his mother's ghost clings to him until he ceases ordering her to leave and resorts to begging her to do so. But his language has no effect. Ultimately, he has to decide to convert his language into action:

"Stop it, mother," he said to the air, "I cannot stand it anymore." Days and nights passed but her soul still clung to him. In the end, he drove his car to the bank, and rushed to the travel agency. His mother ran after him in the street and hurt him with her words. "Look, Mother," he showed the money and documents to her as he said the words; now he sounded much happier. "I'll take you home myself. You'll be able to rest. I'll go with you. Escort you. We're going home. I'm going home. I'm going home at last, just as you asked . . . Here's a ticket. See all the money I spent on the ticket, Mother? We're going home together." He had bought an ocean liner ticket for one, so it was evident that he knew she was a ghost. (*CM* 178)

When Shaosha finally returns home to China and comes to his mother's grave, fulfilling his filial responsibilities by making offerings, he emphasizes that his travel expenses were much more than the money he should have mailed to his mother had he been sending her money when she was alive. As a result of this ritual action of returning home and making his filial offerings, the balance of morality is restored and his delirium disappears. Chen argues that such an account seems superstitious and fictitious to many

readers, but from this seemingly absurd story we can get a glimpse of how Chinese immigrant men were distorted psychologically in the U.S. for being unable to follow the popular Chinese practices of filial piety and love for family.

“Ben 笨” has a very similar meaning to “Sha 傻 (foolish)” in “Shaosha.” Ben Shu has a lunatic nature (*fengdian xing*). Ben Shu’s irrational speech is the evidence Kingston uses in order to reveal his lunacy. Actually, just as Shaosha is set off-center by his mother, so is Ben Shu. Chen believes that he loses touch with reality because of something his mother says in the historical context of America’s anti-communist hysteria of that time. Kingston has Ben’s mother say, “The barbarians think that Communists and Chinese are the same” (*CM* 193). When every other China man tries to avoid the topic of his relationship with China, Ben Shu instead continues talking about China all day long. He talks about Chairman Mao and the glory of “the Long March.” Chen observes that instead of saying that Ben Shu himself loses his senses, we had better say that it is the Chinese people surrounding him who use the term “insane (*fengdian*)” to “restrain (*jingu*)” his voice so that he would not bring trouble to the entire Chinese community. His babbling, although sometimes exhibiting an extraordinary display of language, becomes meaningless nonsense (Chen, “She” 159).

Chen also believes that Kingston is using Ben Shu to represent the type of China man who had already entered the depths of American culture, whose self-awareness was already awakening, and who had made endeavors to establish and expand his self-value and worth. Although they tried to occupy a little space in the American cultural sphere, the ideology which was embedded in their social lives and the racism they faced made

this desire impossible to fulfill. In fact, according to Chen, the lunatic words said by Ben Shu hold out a dream like the early American pilgrims had, one of a beautiful world which accepts all persons founded on an egalitarian political order. Kingston writes the following:

“Actually these aren’t dreams or plans,” Uncle Bun said. “I’m making predictions about ineluctabilities. This Beautiful Nation, this Gold Mountain, this America will end as we know it. There will be one nation, and it will be a world nation. A united planet. Not just Russian Communism. Not just Chinese Communism. World Communism.” (*CM* 193)

As Kingston’s representative of a generation, Ben Shu’s words unveil the desire and dream of Chinese immigrants in the U.S. These immigrants carried their idealistic visions and ambitions with them to the foreign land that they fantasized and dreamed about. They thought it was a land where the equality of human beings existed; they assumed that it was a country where money and wealth were gained according to the labor and conscientiousness put forward. Actually, it was not! They had ideas and ambitions, yet the “Beautiful Nation” (“America” is *Meiguo*, or “Beautiful Country”) allowed no room for such “dangerous ideas” to grow.

After the failure of his self-performance, Ben Shu decides to go back to China. What surprises him is that the actual China has very little similarity to the world communism he dreamed of in the U.S. He was dreaming of a pure agricultural society which encompassed all the customs and traditions of simplicity and naturalness. He finds

a different China and loses his sense of the political vision of a great China and world communism, but Chen thinks that his soul finally calmed down after he underwent some disillusionment. Nevertheless, she observes, “Just as Shaosha found his redemption after going home to make offerings to his mother, Ben Shu received protection from the Chinese agricultural tradition. So, his delirium was also healed” (160). Given Ben Shu’s journey, we might wonder whether a man whose roots are in agricultural society can actually adapt to an industrialized one. Ben Shu grows up in a social system where the relationship between people is deeply embedded in agriculture. When he is placed in the circumstance where human relationships are rooted in the intense complexity of race and inequality found in an industrialized and urbanized context, he feels sick and ill. Only by returning to his indigenous land can his illness be healed.

We can reflect on Chen’s comparison of the two characters Shaosha and Ben Shu. Their names suggest they are both lunatics, but actually if you look at what they did, they were not lunatics at all. Chen points out that each found their own treatment and healing. Shaosha returns to China to his mother’s grave to find salvation; Ben Shu returns to China’s rural heritage and is healed. Both return to China and that land is the place of their healing; in fact, China *is* their healing. Their home country is still the best medicine. What we should notice here is that Kingston, in writing about China, is also doing a form of healing for herself as well. China is healing her, too. Through writing about China she finds her own identity. She does not use American stories, but China’s stories. She finds reconciliation with her mother, her past, her self, and her family.

We may think that this desire for the type of healing China offers is dead in contemporary Chinese American experience. However, just consider Jennie Wang, who says explicitly that she believes she can write something in China that she cannot write in the U.S., where she feels pressure to be silent under what she understands as the American Orientalist control over publication in American literature. She feels that her return to China pulled back the “iron curtain” of American Orientalism and she was able to publish her work and regain her voice, but Wang’s sentiments cannot be made into the oversimplified view that China is the solution to all difficulties. China remains a real and not ideal world, where there is patriarchy, sexism, ethnic discrimination, and economic and class stress as well.

Chen interprets the movement in *CM* from speaking as rebellion in Bak Goong to silence and speechless in Ah Goong and Baba to delirious babbling in Shaosha and Ben Shu. She holds that Kingston finally comes to China men heroes who have learned to speak, but it is only a kind of talking to oneself. The descendants of the Chinese immigrants who learned to speak grew up out of the tradition of speechlessness of their forefathers. So, their language was not learned from their forefathers. Instead, they learned to speak from American society, but Chen does not consider how assimilated speech results in a depoliticized reality. Chen holds that their talking cannot reconstruct the tradition of the Chinese community’s speech; they just participate “in the great noise of American society” (160). “The Brother in Vietnam” chapter of *CM* defines this new language tradition of Chinese immigrants as “murmuring their complaints” against what they witnessed in American society “under their breath (*gunong*).” Chen thinks of this as

a sort of weak self-centered criticism—since there is no person to talk back, there is also no audience to hear except oneself. She also holds that aside from the fact that *gunong* is done with sensible awareness, there is no substantial difference between it and *zhanwang* (160). In the army, the brother complains about everything, but unlike his great-grandfather, he is obsessed with talking, and never listens. This suggests that he understands that his talking will not get a response. He just talks to himself as a means to vent his frustrations. He has no idea that others will hear him and offer help. In American culture, he learns to speak his mind without any reservation, but he never seeks to really listen sincerely. Chen concludes that his behavior reveals his isolation from both Chinese and U.S. cultures (160).

In addition to the fact that the younger brother in Vietnam feels perplexed about his identity during his time spent in Asia, he is also disturbed by the political context. He does not attach great importance to being Chinese. Chen believes this is largely explicable because the 1960s and 1970s were the peak era of American individualism. It was also the time when the cloud of the Cold War greatly effected people's sense of peaceful security:

The younger brother was swept up into this cultural wave, which was larger than any racial conflict he might have felt. He was at a great loss as to what to do, so he stopped up his ears. He walked out of the noisy dispute of culture in order to pursue the peacefulness of his soul. This rich but simple withdrawing from chaos ended with his discharge from the army and return home. When his parents emphasized to him “You came

back home” they were expressing their dream for a peaceful, beautiful, and stable America as their own home. The genuine meaning of “Going home” for the brother in Vietnam is the ending of war and the coming of peace, no matter whether on the battlefield or in the culture. This is the meaning of “home.” (Chen 161)

Shi Pingping believes that the brother in Vietnam should be linked with the section in *CM* called “Li Sao: Grieving Sons.” *Li Sao* is a poem whose English title may be translated as “Sorrow at Parting.” The poem is attributed to the pre-Qin writer Qu Yuan (340-278 BCE). Qu Yuan was a political figure who promoted peace by remonstrating with his ruler, just as Bak Goong had done, but he was expelled from his own home kingdom and forced into silence. Later, upon learning of the capture of his country's capital by the state of Qin, he committed ritual suicide in the Miluo river to protest the political corruption and violent imperialism that destroyed his homeland. Shi thinks that Kingston emphasizes Qu Yuan's role by calling him “Qu Ping 屈平,” associating the character “平” (Harmony, Peace) with the surname Qu. In this way, Kingston intends to link her brother, who is against the Vietnam War, to Qu Yuan. She means her brother “is sober-minded although all others are drunk,” standing against war in his day (38).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> In the Qu Yuan legend, the villagers race in their boats desperately trying to save him when he jumps into the river, but they are unsuccessful. In order to keep fish and evil spirits away from his body, they beat drums, splash the water with their paddles, and throw rice into the water to distract the fish away from his body. Later, the spirit of Qu Yuan appears before his friends and tells them that he died because of a river dragon. He asks his friends to wrap their *zongzi* (sticky rice) into three-cornered packages to ward off the dragon. Down to the present day, people still eat *zongzi* and participate in dragon boat

Although Chen does not connect the tale of Qu Yuan with the brother in Vietnam as Shi does, she draws a contrast between Kingston's treatment of Qu Yuan in *CM* and the account of Cai Yan in *WW*. Cai Yan, like Qu Yuan, lives in exile, having been taken prisoner by a conquering warlord. In Chen's view, what is different in *WW* is that the story of Cai Yan becomes a general message for Chinese female immigrants. In the land of her exile, when Cai Yan stops crying and gains her voice by beginning to sing in her homeland's tribal language she overcomes the crisis of her identity, and makes herself a member of the mainstream society in the faraway place. Chen believes that Kingston, echoing Cai Yan's predicament, categorizes the evolution of Chinese women as a history of entering and assimilating into American mainstream society (150), whereas in the legend in the "Li Sao" chapter in *CM*, Kingston likens her own male descendants to Qu Yuan, who was expelled from his kingdom but still felt attached to his own land. Chen says, "汤婷婷则把自己的男性祖辈与被驱离却魂系故土的屈原认同, 将男性移民的演化视作一种更为被动和艰难的历程 Kingston views the evolution of male immigrants as a more difficult and passive experience [than that of women]" (151).

Chen concludes with an arguable interpretation that reveals her own culturally derived values as a Chinese woman scholar. She says that in the Chinese tradition, men are the "be-all of society (*shehui huo li*)." Accordingly, compared with women, Chen believes that men have more fully developed collective and individual consciousnesses. Therefore, she holds that it is difficult for men to accept the kind of marginalized status they experienced in American mainstream society. So "only through their collective

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races to commemorate Qu Yuan's sacrifice on Duan Wu, the fifth day of the fifth month in the Chinese calendar.

efforts together at certain historical periods could the sense of marginalization slowly fade, the assimilation of China men into America be fulfilled, and can Qu Yuan be resurrected” (Chen 151). Chen reflects on the ending of *CM* in the following way:

The Golden Mountain which belongs to the fourth generation of Chinese immigrants actually does not exist. Looking back from the new perspective of the history of Chinese immigrants, no matter whether it is done with imagination and figurative speech, or with silence as self-protection, or lunatic language, all these views are reflections of the historicity of Chinese immigration regarding their speech and talk. On the journey from China, to the Gold Mountain, to the U.S. “Gold Mountain,” this beautiful image is distant and unknowable just like the fairy mountain over the sea [Penglai shan]. The Chinese immigrants who were floating between the two sides of the ocean never arrived at a real Gold Mountain. Each time when they passed through this image and came to the real coast, they always looked around for the enticing Gold Mountain. This made their journey endless. But when the Chinese Americans settled down in the U.S. and did not move anymore, the journey came to an end. It became a period of history which deserves both praise and tears. In the end, what people could see was a completely new home. It belongs to the descendants of Yan and Huang who strived so hard to survive in this piece of land that was filled with thorns. (162)

Reading *CM* as a frame-tale narrative of voice and silence, as Chen and Shi suggest, opens many layers of the text. Understanding the journey of China men in the U.S. is certainly one of these, perhaps even the principal intention of Kingston. Voice and silence connect *CM* and *WW* in interesting ways and open the narratives as accounts of self-discovery, gender analysis, and racial insight. Still, we should not think there is some necessary typology of sequence from speaking as rebellion, to silence, to speechlessness, to babbling, to whispering that characterizes the construction of identity and finding one's place in community as a rigid application of Chen's taxonomy might suggest. Cai Yan finds her fulfillment even in a land of exile by finding her originating voice of home and root. But Qu Yuan, even though morally upright and admired by those near him, ends his own life. Whether he does this in despair over the fall of his dear kingdom, just as he knew it would happen, or because he wants to leave an everlasting act that will remind every generation of the perils of turning a deaf ear to the voice of justice, we cannot be sure. What we can be confident in believing is that Qu Yuan adopted his way to express his protest, a way of breaking silence. As bell hooks observes:

When we dare to speak in a liberatory voice, we threaten even those who may initially claim to want our words. In the act of overcoming our fear of speech, of being seen as threatening, in the process of learning to speak as subjects, we participate in the global struggle to end domination. When we end our silence, when we speak in a liberated voice, our words connect us with anyone, anywhere who lives in silence. (18)

Awareness of the need to speak, to give voice to the many layers of their lives, is one way women and men of color begin the process of self-creation and critical consciousness, and it represents, for Kingston, the rectification of the name of China men (and women). Kingston thus explores the process of coming to one's voice through the experiences the China men of her family had in their struggle overcoming silence.

## Chapter IX: Recovering the True Face 还原本来面目

In what follows, I provide my concluding observations about the main objectives of the study. I consider what is unique in the approach and readings of Kingston that is offered by mainland Chinese scholars, and where and how these distinctions reveal themselves. I summarize my views on how these scholars as a whole, and individually, contribute to American and Chinese American scholarship on Kingston, either constructively or correctively. Finally, I comment on the tensions and similarities between the four mainland Chinese scholars covered in this study that I have identified, and I make an assessment of what their work tells us about the directions of mainland Chinese scholarship on Chinese American literature in general, and criticism of Kingston specifically.

Do the mainland Chinese scholars writing on Kingston contribute any unique or novel approaches to the study of *WW* and *CM*? In order to deal with this question, I want to recapitulate some of the points made earlier and offer conclusions about how I assess the distinctiveness of the Chinese scholars under study. An important factor in determining just what the mainland scholars offer to American literary criticism on Kingston is the extent to which they are familiar with American scholarship, and what responses and applications they make of it. As I have shown, Shi Pingping, Xue Yufeng and Lu Wei have made use of the critical bibliographical resources at Beijing Foreign Studies University's Chinese American Literature Research Center to access critical scholarship on Kingston in the U.S. and the West. Many of these are authored by the most prominent of American and Chinese American scholars on Kingston's work.

Among these three scholars, Xue and Lu have lived, taught and studied in the U.S. They used their time in the U.S. to great advantage, associating with important commentators and authors in the field of Chinese American literature. While all three of these scholars publish mostly in Chinese, Shi's work on mother-daughter relationships was written in English with substantial sections devoted to Kingston. In this sense, these three scholars contrast rather dramatically with Chen Xiaohui, who makes only sparse use of Western scholarship on Kingston and writes exclusively in Chinese from the standpoint of Chinese literature rather than American. In contrast, Shi, Xue, and Lu make use of Western criticism to inform their work, and they often make specific criticisms of Kingston's American interpreters whereas Chen does not. Chen tends to offer novel interpretations from the point of view of a scholar who works in Chinese language, reads Kingston in Chinese, and sees *WW* and *CM* through the lens of China's great literary traditions.

One objection that the mainland scholars share in common when approaching American interpreters is the tendency of American and Chinese American critics to identify Kingston's work with Western or American feminism, or to think of her as dependent on feminism. They emphasize that the source of Kingston's gender views are Chinese culture and values. Her female heroes are all structured in a Chinese tradition and context as sword warriors who do not ignore their filiality, femininity, or responsibility as mothers or even the desire to be a mother. For example, Mulan leaves home, displaying opportunities that American women writers of an earlier era present as perplexing and tormenting to their characters such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman's

protagonist in *The Yellow Wallpaper*. Mulan also returns home by following Chinese tradition and attends to her parents, in contrast to Kate Chopin's Edna and Theodore Dreiser's Carrie. While Mulan is a swordswoman, she also gives birth to a child. Brave Orchid, another woman warrior, has a career, stands up for herself, and helps support the family, but she also finds fulfillment as a mother and is thereby held up as a model of femininity and womanhood.

The mainland writers deny that the model for Brave Orchid is taken from Western feminism. Chen even insists that Kingston structures Brave Orchid's narrative from what she knows about *The Red Detachment of Women*. When Kingston writes on the female heroine Cai Yan, she tells that Cai Yan was forced to leave her home, but although living in an alien culture, she continues to hold the Chinese root in her heart. Cai Yan does not see herself as a helpless victim; instead she keeps the fire of desire to return to her home burning in her heart. It is inextinguishable. Finally, she returns home triumphantly. The Chinese ideology of *jin xiao*, meaning to fulfill one's filial obligations to one's parents, is something Cai Yan and Mulan both embrace dearly. The female identity constructed by the mainland scholars' reading of Kingston is thus in dramatic contrast to the one they associate with feminist works, such as Adrienne Rich's *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, Nancy Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*, and Suzanne Juhasz's work on narrative technique and female identity. There are, however, other portrayals of femininity with close associations to the way Kingston writes her Mulan and Brave Orchid characters, and they need to be analyzed before concluding that Chinese culture is the exclusive

source for her narratives of woman warriors. For example, I have mentioned bell hooks specifically, the American feminist woman writer of color.

All of the scholars under study have deep reservations about American critics' classification of Kingston as a feminist in the Western sense, yet they all agree that Kingston is proposing strong female figures expressing their full personhood as humans, who resist the oppression of males and cultural stereotypes of women. Each of the Chinese scholars in her own way calls attention to the fact that she feels that American feminist interpreters of Kingston's work neglect to take into consideration that she was raised "in a different mother tongue." They point out that Kingston is from a culture that has multi-layered models for understanding femininity and womanhood. The key female figures Kingston brings into her writing are persons who combine both masculinity and femininity into their own identity; however, even though the four Chinese women scholars in this study feel that Kingston must be classified as a Chinese feminist, not a Western one, they do not adopt the same approach in reaching their conclusions, and I discussed two of these at length.

One approach I considered was that of Chen Xiaohui. She builds her interpretation of Kingston's female figures on a close reading of *Mulan* in *WW*, drawing heavily from materials with which she is most familiar: China's "hidden tradition (*yinxing*)" of women and of "women's writings (*nushu* 女书)." Chen's intention is to show that Kingston's feminism is a thoroughgoing Chinese composition and is not principally drawn from Western feminist sources. She calls attention to Kingston's allusions to *The Red Detachment of Women*. I have associated her with Rey Chow, who

holds that the feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s in the U.S. actually made use of the Chinese Communist practice of encouraging peasants, especially women, to speak up and tell their grievances against an oppressive patriarchal system.

The second of the two approaches I described at length was that of Shi Pingping. Unlike Chen, Shi makes a direct assault on Western feminist interpreters. In her *The Mother-Daughter Relationship and the Politics of Gender and Race: A Study of Chinese American Women's Writings*, Shi is particularly critical of scholars who use the appellation of "feminist" in referring to Kingston, including the prominent and persuasive feminist writers Rich and Chodorow. She takes the position that Kingston's ethnic and cultural context is totally overlooked by white American feminist critics who base their work on a universal image of femininity. Shi thinks there is no such universal representation of what it means to be a woman; there are only cultural and particular ones. She believes that Kingston's description of femininity is embedded in the cultural context of China and is overlooked by any reading according to which Kingston is writing only some version of Western feminism. Kingston's female heroines (e.g., Brave Orchid) are not the sort of women who need the kind of "liberation" defined by Western feminist writers. They do not need Western feminism to save them. The heroines of Kingston's writing are not from the gendered environment with which Western feminists are struggling, but from what Kingston knew about the place of women during the period of *The Red Detachment of Women*. Accordingly, Shi claims that Kingston and other female Chinese American writers are more properly understood if they are thought of as an "alliance in Outsiderhood."

Likewise, Shi's objections to the analyses of Bonnie Braendlin and Thomas Ferraro, who emphasize Kingston as a product of Berkeley's 1970s "second wave feminism," are not just that she feels they have neglected other American contexts, such as the Civil Rights Movement and the anti-Vietnam War campaigns but that they ignore the influence on Kingston of her *Chinese* parents and her *Chinese* American community. On the other hand, Shi is critical of what she calls the "Aiiieeeee!" group, composed almost exclusively of Chinese American male writers represented by Frank Chin. They have attacked Kingston's writing style as false and misleading and rejected her portrayal of characters of both genders. Shi holds that the writers in this group ignore and minimize the dual oppression of Chinese women by gender and race.

Whether the definitive sources of Kingston's portrayal of gender lie exclusively in Chinese culture is a question that requires more exploration of the tensions between American second-wave feminism and "third world feminism in the first world" than these writers have done. The scholars under study often display a too narrow view of Western feminism. While we can approve of their attempt to demonstrate the Chinese sources for Kingston's views of gender identity and mother-daughter relationships, they tend to associate Western feminism exclusively with interests of white middle-class feminist writers and their agenda. To be sure, Shi clearly knows that feminism in the West is much more diverse than this, because she identifies Chinese American women writers with the group of "women of color," who insist on including race, ethnic and cultural contexts in any account of gender identity and role. Yet, while attentive to Kingston's use of Chinese culture, none of the Chinese scholars probe American feminist writers of

color during the 70s and 80s. The danger, then, is that they tend to essentialize feminism in a very restricted way in their critical work, and the study of the influences of women writers of color on Kingston is left largely underdeveloped.

Chen's interpretation of Mulan as "male and female in one body (*guaiwu*)" and Shi's reading of Mulan as "a dialectical whole of male and female (*maodun de tongyin*)," possessing two natures in the same body (*chuangxing tongti*), raise questions of comparison with American writers who explore androgyny such as Adrienne Rich. These are, however, not treated by the mainland Chinese scholars. Chen's close reading of Mulan calling attention to her "four passages" of leaving home (*lijia*), learning the sword (*xuejian*), giving birth (*shengyu*), and rebelling (*zaofan*) provide in Chen's view a panorama of a woman becoming a *guaiwu*, which is a fruitful image of gender symbiosis. Unfortunately, Chen makes no attempt to compare her reading of Kingston's work to other important American narratives about women stepping out of their role boundaries to find their own authentic identities, such as Edna in *The Awakening*.

Although the Chinese scholars in this study prefer to associate Kingston's writings related to gender with Chinese culture, even with the modern *The Red Detachment of Women*, they also recognize the function of Kingston's work as a gender critique in its American context. Lu Wei says Kingston's writing on mother-daughter relationships is a post-colonial strategy of resistance "righting wrongs by writing wrongs." Lu's analysis stands against two prevailing views of Kingston's mother-daughter narratives in American criticism. One view holds that Kingston's "mother" is an accurate depiction of Chinese women and mothers, and the other is that Kingston has

become so Americanized that she unconsciously sees her mother through the eyes of Orientalism, as do other Americans. Lu supports her case against these misreadings by calling attention to how Kingston has “mother” tell No Name Woman’s story as a warning and shameful family episode. In doing so, “mother” acts in character as an Orientalist stereotype of a Chinese woman, but the “young daughter” completely overturns the mother’s account and remakes it a “righting of wrongs.”

The Chinese scholars I have considered argue that Kingston’s identity as a woman who is also Chinese American has been overlooked by American feminist interpreters in another way. Xue Yufeng believes that Du Bois’s “two-ness” is an appropriate description for Kingston as a writer and that she cannot be understood without an appreciation for her unique position. Xue speaks of Kingston as one of the “marginal people (*bianyaren*)” who are located on the edges precisely because they are “cultural hybrids.” She thinks that Kingston’s cultural hybridity is an intense struggle for her because she is engaged in the tasks of forming her identity as a Chinese woman in the midst of American Orientalism. Not only is Kingston’s hybridity important to Xue, but she is careful to associate Kingston with the group of Chinese who are “Searching for Their Roots and Asking about Their Ancestry (*xungen wenzu*).”

Lu Wei also thinks it is very important to position Kingston in the history of the development of Chinese American literature in order to understand how her work may be compared to those who preceded her, criticized her, and followed her. Lu is guided in her quest to position Kingston in the history of Chinese American literary development not by any U.S. scholar of American literature or Chinese American scholar, but by Zhang

Ziqing, the Distinguished Professor of Foreign Literature at Nanjing University, who oversaw and edited the Chinese translations of *WW* and *CM*. Lu associates Kingston with the generation of Chinese American writers who performed a sort of literary archeology to “salvage (*gouchen*)” their heritage in both China and the U.S. The kind of salvage Lu speaks of led me into the domain of the interpretations of Kingston’s literary method made by the mainland scholars.

Like American critics in general, none of the scholars under study interprets Kingston’s writing in *WW* and *CM* to be a pure autobiography or authentic biographies of the women and men in her family. Lu is very much aware that Kingston “intentionally diverts (*nuoyang*)” Chinese legends and traditions, as well as the narratives of her own family members. The Chinese mainland scholars in my study use their own unique angles to contribute to the literary critical understanding of Kingston’s work, defending it against charges by some Chinese American writers such as Frank Chin. Just as Lu adopts the theory of translation developed by Homi Bhabha to defend Kingston, Xue speaks of Kingston’s “deliberate misreadings,” and Chen utilizes the idea of “double charm” to suggest how Kingston’s work blends imagination and narrative history although I have noted earlier that this particular concept does not seem to guide us substantively in understanding Kingston’s literary method.

Chen’s characterization may be understood as a valorization of Kingston’s “charming” writing, but also it can be taken as a comment on Kingston’s ability to take the raw materials of her family’s talk-stories and her Chinese culture and work a “charm” on them to create writing that blends her own imagination with her past by consistently

“misplacing plots (*qingjie cuozhi*).” Understood in this way, Chen’s position is not incompatible with Lu’s notion that Kingston “intentionally diverted” her past through a form of “anti-narration (*duikang xushi*).” Yet, I do not take any of these critical concepts to be as complex or fruitful in my view as is Xue’s assessment of Kingston’s work as a “deliberate misreading (*wu du* 误读).” I have taken liberties with Xue’s term *wu du* to unpack several other meanings of the near homonyms in Chinese for this concept: *wu du* 误读, *wu du* 无毒 “not poisonous,” *wu du* 五毒 “five poisons,” and *wu du* 巫毒 used for “sorcerer.” Although most of Kingston’s readings of her past are understood as misreadings, the medicine she is offering to Chinese Americans, and indeed to all those reading her texts, is sometimes harmless and at other times poisonous. No matter the effect on the readers, her works stand as a tribute to her skill in creating a sort of “double charmed” sorcery. This sort of reading thus approaches Kingston’s literary style through Chinese conceptions that differ considerably from Lu’s association of Kingston and her writing with the analogy of “translation,” borrowing as she does from Bhabha’s work.

The question of how Orientalism reveals itself in Kingston’s writing is also answered differently by each writer under study. None of the four women scholars about whom I have written are as critical of American Orientalism as is Jennie Wang, who spent most of her professional life up to 2004 in the U.S., and published her first book in China under the title *The Iron Curtain of Language: Maxine Hong Kingston and American Orientalism*. Nevertheless, Xue and Lu are certainly aware of how “the Deathly Embrace” of American Orientalism complicates reading Kingston at many levels. We cannot say that the mainland Chinese scholars under study are unique in noticing the

impact of American Orientalism on Chinese American identity and the writings of white American critics of Kingston. American writer Sheng-mei Ma published his work on this subject in 2000, at least three years before any of the scholars in this study put forward any attempt to understand the degree to which Kingston's work reflects, uses, criticizes, or represents Orientalism. Ma's work came a mere two years after Kingston's *WW* was translated into Chinese and the same year as *CM*'s translation. At this time, Shi and Xue were still working on their Ph.D.s in Beijing, and Lu had just returned from a year's service as a visiting scholar at Columbia.

While the scholars in this study agree that both *WW* and *CM* cannot be viably understood unless a critic takes into consideration the role of American Orientalism, they diverge on how one should interpret her use of it and its impact upon her. Lu thinks that Kingston deliberately writes "mother" in *WW* within an Orientalist frame, but that she does so only to subvert this construction by means of her depiction of Brave Orchid. In this sense, Kingston is "writing wrong" in order to "right wrongs." It will be remembered that, while I agree that Kingston is "writing wrong" to "right wrongs," I suggest that the way in which Moon Orchid is portrayed is more nearly in the Orientalist image than is "mother" in *WW*. It is Moon Orchid who best represents the Orientalist contrast to Brave Orchid and not "mother." Unlike Lu, Xue thinks that the "little girl" in *WW* is steeped in Orientalist ideas, not as an attempt to criticize Orientalism, but to mirror it. She believes Kingston herself to have been influenced personally by Orientalism in the period of *WW*'s writing.

All these Chinese scholars interpret Kingston as a political critic. Not only is this evident in what they say about the Orientalism Kingston is trying to counter in both *WW* and *CM*, but also this critique may be seen in how they read Kingston's use of ghosts in *WW* and silence in *CM*. While many American interpreters see Kingston as a political critic, the approaches taken by Xue and Chen are unique. Xue offers a perspective on *Mulan* that is left largely underexplored by American critics: *Mulan* as ghost. She reads Kingston's narrative about *Mulan*'s training on White Tiger Mountain (*Baihu shan*) in such a way that the mountain is interpreted as America, and *Mulan*, as the "I" of the text, is a spirit being who becomes filled with power because of the time she spends on White Tiger mountain. Likewise, Xue believes that Kingston writes a criticism of the culture that subverts her aunt's name, turning her into a No Name Woman. The aunt is a wild drowning ghost (*yansi gui* 淹死鬼), and Kingston transforms her from a ghost into a god (*you gui bianzuo shen* 由鬼变作神). In this way, again, Kingston is interpreted in terms of Chinese belief. Turning ghosts into gods is an ancient tradition in China and can be seen in thousands of local temples and ancestor halls throughout the country. The ghost of this spirit aunt speaks across the ages to Kingston, just as do those ghosts of the generations of China men who experienced great hardship in her great-grandfather's and grandfather's day. This line of interpretation brings forward a perspective which seems unknown to American critics and therefore left unformed. In both *WW* and *CM*, ghosts also denote the Americans who oppress China men and drive the "little girl" of *WW* into perplexity and uncertainty. Xue says that writing does not make Kingston's ghosts go

away, but it becomes her way to bind the ghosts and control them, and in the meantime to offer peace and rest to the ghosts.

Chen does not overlook Kingston's use of ghosts in *CM*, but rather offers a close reading of the literary moves that Kingston makes in that work, as she does with her interpretation of the four passages of Mulan's transformation into a *guaiwu* in *WW*. This time, she offers a reading about how silence is used to mark off the political generations of Kingston's male ancestors: Great-grandfather's is "speaking (*shuohua*)" as a form of rebellion; Grandfather's is that of "silencing (*xiaosheng*) and speechlessness (*shiyu*);" while father's is the "babbling (*zhanwang*)" generation; and finally, the Brother in Vietnam's is that of "whispering under one's breath (*gunong*)."

Perhaps it is not surprising that scholars of Kingston such as those under study feel the need to say, as does Lu, that *CM* is a "man's book," but it is crucial to note that she means it is a man's book written as a political critique with a "woman's eye." Lu leaves the implications of this distinction between a "man's book" with a "woman's eye" relatively unexplored. It is Wang who actually calls attention to the literary structure of the text which is designed to imitate the "Eighteen Laments" of Cai Yan, the motif of an exiled woman living in a foreign land characteristic of ancient Chinese lore written as a series of tales. The "foreign land" of *CM* is, of course, America, but just what we should gain from Wang's claim that Kingston has appropriated a legend about a woman to tell her male family tales is inadequately explored.

Nevertheless, Xue and Shi both argue vigorously that what Lu calls Kingston's "translation" of *Flowers in the Mirror*, misplacing its plots and deliberately misreading it

to create the Tang Ao character, is as important to *CM* as are *Mulan* and *No Name Woman* to *WW*. These scholars hold that the role reversal that Tang Ao undergoes highlights the evil that the oppression of women represents (a feminist point), but it also has a political message regarding Chinese ethnicity. Tang Ao is a stand-in for the China men who come to the U.S. and are emasculated there. Xue calls this two-fold meaning of the Tang Ao narrative the double-edged sword of *CM*. Chen likewise makes a significant comment on the political force of *CM* by focusing on the title of the work *Flowers in the Mirror* from which the Tang Ao story is taken. She says that if one is in front of a funhouse mirror, where the image can be seen, then its absurdity will be obvious. This is like the Chinese Americans and Chinese nationals who observed what happened to China men in the U.S. and witnessed the distortions of China men. As Chen says, if one stands on the other side of the mirror, as did the American oppressors, then no warping seems to be taking place and those on that side of the mirror are not bothered at all. It is striking that, although she has never been to the U.S., Chen nonetheless feels the tragedy of China men in America through Kingston's work. She notes that the social oppression and restrictions on China men formed a sort of "facial masking (*lianpu hua*)" that turned into "psychological transformation (*xinli bianyi*)." They were turned into beings represented by the Chinese pronunciation of "Robinson" (Crusoe), which is close to the sound of Lo Bun Sun, meaning beast of burden. All of this was the twisted image of the China men deliberately portrayed by Kingston and identified by the mainland scholars.

I now want to make some observations based on my study comparing my assessment of mainland Chinese scholars work with that done by Sau-ling Cynthia Wong

in 2005 in her presentation, “Maxine Hong Kingston in a Global Frame: Reception, Institutional Mediation, and World Literature.” Wong observed three troubling patterns present in Chinese authors writing on Kingston: repetitiveness in interpretation, source use and phrases; overreliance on mutual citation of each other’s work by Chinese scholars; and finally, that only a handful of mainland Chinese scholars examined the Chinese sources upon which Kingston draws. This final pattern puzzles Wong. She asks rhetorically, “After all isn’t Chinese cultural knowledge their forte?” (25). Wong also says that Chinese critics, in contrast with Asian American critics, do not deconstruct the notion of Chinese-Western cultural differences and tend to take this construction in its more simplistic and essentialist forms. This does indeed often seem so throughout my study, especially with regard to the mainland scholars’ understandings of feminism and ethnicity in America. I have also criticized the way Xue and Chen essentialize Chinese and American cultures in ways that may detract from their analyses.

The situation now seems to me to be quite different than the one Wong described in 2005. While Shi’s *Mother-Daughter* and Chen’s “*She*” *Writings in Contemporary Chinese Literature* were both published in 2004, neither may have been available to Wong. Lu’s and Xue’s works were not published until 2007. Wong seemed not to be aware of the writings of the four scholars of this study. She does not cite any of them. Nevertheless, I found that there is still a substantial repetition among the four scholars I studied, especially among the three educated at Beijing’s Foreign Studies University. They rely on similar arguments, sources, and interpretations. Nonetheless, this repetitiveness is diminishing as mainland scholars begin to work more deeply in areas of

their own interest, such as Shi's book on *Mother-Daughter* and Chen's "*She*" *Writings*. Mainland scholars are boldly putting forward their own interpretations, moving away from the kind of mutual citation that concerned Wong. Two of Wong's assessments of Chinese scholarship on Kingston seem no longer to hold. There is a much more robust examination of the Chinese sources Kingston uses than seems to have been the case when Wong wrote in 2005. This is true of all four scholars in the study. Giving attention to Chinese sources is most prevalent in the work of Chen, who studies Kingston as an expert in Chinese literature.

Chen admits that she had to depend on second-hand, or even third-and fourth-hand materials to "patch up" her own understanding. As a scholar, Chen realizes that the effect of such limitation is inevitably to cause both the loss and possible distortion of the kind of authenticity in her writing that she would otherwise have when working on Chinese literature. This admission by Chen confirms Sau-ling Cynthia Wong's remarks in her keynote lecture to the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Forum of "Asian American Literature in a Global Frame." Wong comments:

in comparison to Sinophone criticism on Chinese American literature from Taiwan, where many practitioners are U.S. trained or have easy access to U.S. sources, citations of English-language sources from the U.S. are relatively rare in Sinophone criticism on Chinese American literature from the mainland.... The relative paucity of English-language sources in the articles and books that I read can partly be attributed to problems of access to American bibliographical resources. ("Global Frame" 24)

While Wong notes that most students who study Kingston in China are located in schools of foreign language (i.e., mainly English majors), such as Xue, Shi, and Lu in this study, she also is surprised to notice that some are from Chinese departments. In my study, this would be true of Chen. As for Kingston's works, Chen depends on the Chinese translations of Kingston's *WW* and *CM* in her study. At the time she wrote her dissertation, Chen had a copy of *Conversations with American Writers*, which is also available in Chinese.<sup>1</sup> In this book there is a complete interview with Kingston, which is very valuable to Chen. Chen told me that at the time when she wrote her dissertation in 2002-2003, articles in Chinese about Kingston were very rare, consisting mostly of some scattered fragments and paragraphs.

Thus, what is notable here, and about Chen's work in general, is that she is heavily dependent on Chinese language sources and their interpretations of American and Chinese American culture. Never having studied or traveled in the U.S. herself and lacking adequate confidence in her ability in English, Chen writes in Chinese and works with Chinese sources exclusively. Unlike the three scholars under study whose training is closely associated with BFSU, and who are able to work directly with American Literature in English, Shi even composing one of her scholarly works in English, Chen's background is in Chinese language and literature. This situation means that Chen brings some highly distinctive and creative readings to her interpretations of Kingston, but also

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<sup>1</sup> Chen is referring to Charles Ruas' collection of interviews entitled *Conversations with American Writers* published by Knopf Press in 1985. Ruas was born in Tianjin, China. He lived and taught in China.

that there are important gaps in her understandings such as those I mentioned with respect to third world feminist writers on silence and gaining voice.

Wong takes the position that Chinese scholars tend to essentialize Chinese-Western cultural differences and do not deconstruct this understanding; however, Xue, Lu, and Shi all attack American Orientalism, appropriate the work of Bhabha, Said, and Derrida, and use new and complicated conceptions to read Kingston as an author and her “translation” of cultures as a model for revisiting and living the Chinese American hybrid. Thus it is somewhat puzzling that Xue, Chen and, to a lesser extent, Shi, all continue to speak of the “essence” of Chinese consciousness, Chinese culture, and American consciousness as though there is some identifiable and fixed set of beliefs and sentiments that define what it is to be Chinese and American. They also believe the essence of these cultures to be very different, although it seems that they do not think of the two cultures as incommensurable. Xue considers Kingston a cultural hybrid, and Lu characterizes Kingston’s writing as an act of translation. All in all, we may rightly conclude by noting that the study of American and Chinese American literature, and Kingston specifically, is maturing on mainland China and that scholars working there have important contributions to make that shed light on the global dialogue about Chinese American literature and Kingston studies. My study has sought to build a bridge between scholars in the U.S. and China so that the rising trends and voices from the other side of the ocean, actually from the indigenous culture that Kingston writes about, can be captured, considered, and heard by those working on Kingston’s writing in the U.S.

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### A Quick Guide to Pronunciation

Taken from Terry Kleeman and Tracy Barrett, *The Ancient Chinese World*

(Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005)

|      |                           |        |                        |
|------|---------------------------|--------|------------------------|
| ai   | the y in fry              | hai    | is pronounced hi       |
| an   | the on in on              | fan    | is pronounced fahn     |
| ang  | the ong in gong           | fang   | is pronounced fahng    |
| ao   | the ow in cow             | gao    | is pronounced gaow     |
| c    | the ts in fits            | cao    | is pronounced tsaow    |
| e    | the oo in foot            | se     | is pronounced suh      |
| ei   | the ay in bay             | fei    | is pronounced fay      |
| en   | the un in fun             | men    | is pronounced muhn     |
| eng  | the ung in fungus         | meng   | is pronounced muhng    |
| er   | the are in are            | mu'er  | is pronounced moo-er   |
| g    | the g in girl             | gao    | is pronounced haow     |
| i    | the ee in glee            | qi     | is pronounced chee     |
| ia   | the ca in caveat          | shi    | is pronounced shur     |
| iang | ee, plus the yang in yang | xia    | is pronounced sheeah   |
| ie   | ee, plus the yeah in yeah | chiang | is pronounced cheeahng |
| in   | the ee in been            | qie    | is pronounced cheeyeh  |
| iu   | ee, plus the ow in blow   | xin    | is pronounced sheen    |
| o    | the aw in awful           | jiu    | is pronounced jeeoh    |
| ou   | oh                        | mo     | is pronounced mwho     |

|      |                           |       |                      |
|------|---------------------------|-------|----------------------|
| q    | the ch in child           | qin   | is pronounced cheen  |
| u    | the ew in few             | yu    | is pronounced yew    |
| u    | the oo in boo             | gu    | is pronounced goo    |
| ua   | the wa in water           | hua   | is pronounced hwah   |
| uan  | the wan in wander         | huan  | is pronounced hwahn  |
| uan  | oo, plus the en in men    | quan  | is pronounced chooen |
| uang | the wan in wander plus ng | huang | is pronounced hwahng |
| ue   | oo, plus the e in went    | que   | is pronounced chooeh |
| un   | the won in won            | sun   | is pronounced swun   |
| uo   | the awe in awful          | guo   | is pronounced gwoh   |
| x    | the sh in should          | xing  | is pronounced shing  |
| yuan | oo, plus the en in went   | yuan  | is pronounced yuwen  |
| z    | the ds in yards           | zeng  | is pronounced dzeng  |
| zh   | the j in juice            | zhou  | is pronounced jo     |

Glossary of Titles with *Pinyin* Romanization

*Aiiieeee! An Anthology of Asian American Writers (Aiyi! meiguo yayi zuo jia wenji)*

《啊咿 美国亚裔作家文集》.

*Amerasia Journal (Yamei zazhi)* 《亚美杂志》.

*An Anthology of Chinese American Literature (Meiguo huayi wenxue xuandu)* 《美国华裔文学选读》.

*An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature (Duo zuyi jian de yayi meiguo wenxue dao dou)* 《多族裔间的亚裔美国文学导读》.

*Analects (Lunyu)* 《论语》.

*Asian America: Journal of Culture and Arts (Yayi meiguo: wenhua yu yishu zazhi)* 《亚裔美国：文化与艺术杂志》.

*Ballad of Gold Mountain: History of Female Chinese Americans (Meiguo huayi funu shi)* 《美国华裔妇女史》.

*The Barbarians are Coming (Yemanren laile)* 《野蛮人来了》.

*Beloved (Chonger)* 《宠儿》.

“Bibliography of Chinese American Literature Secondary Sources in Chinese (*Huayi meiguo wenxue zhongwen cankao shumu*)” “华裔美国文学中文参考书目.”

*The Big Aiiieeee! An Anthology of Chinese American Literature (Da'ayi! Huayi riye Meiguo wenxue xuan du)* 《大啊咿! 华裔、日裔美国文学选读》.

*Bone (Gu)* 《骨》.

*The Bonesetter's Daughter (Jiegushi de nuer)* 《接骨师的女儿》.

*Book of Changes (Yijing)* 《易经》.

*Book of Odes (Shijing)* 《诗经》.

*China Boy (Zhi na zai)* 《支那崽》.

*China Men (Zhongguo lao)* 《中国佬》.

*Chinatown Family (Tangrenjie jiating)* 《唐人街家庭》.

*Chinese Stories in Western Context (Xifang yujing de zhongguo gushi)* 《西方语境的中国故事》.

*City of Women (Funu cheng)* 《妇女城》.

*Classic for Girls (Nuerjing)* 《女儿经》.

*Classic of History (Shujing)* 《书经》.

*Classic of Rites (Liji)* 《礼记》.

*Contemporary Foreign Literature (Dangdai waiguo wenxue)* 《当代外国文学》.

*Cultural Identity and Chinese American Literature (Wenhua shuxing yu huayi meiguo wenxue)* 《文化属性与华裔美国文学》.

*The Cultural Study of Chinese American Literature (Meiguo huayi wenxue zhi wenhua yan jiu)* 《美国华裔文学之文化研究》.

*The Dance and the Railroad (Wudao yu tielu)* 《舞蹈与铁路》.

*Doctrine of the Mean (Zhongyong)* 《中庸》.

*Dream of the Red Chamber (Hong Lou Meng)* 《红楼梦》 a.k.a., *The Story of the Stone*.

*Eat a Bowl of Tea (Chi wan cha)* 《吃碗茶》.

*Eating Chinese Meals Naked (Luoti chi zhongcan)* 《裸体吃中餐》.

“Eighteen Laments Sung to a Hujia (*Hujia shiba pai*)” “胡笳十八拍.”

*Extensive Records of the Taiping Era (Taiping guangji)* 《太平广记》.

*F.O.B. (Gangxiachuan de ren)* 《刚下船的人》.

*Family Devotions (Zhongshi yu jiating)* 《忠实于家庭》.

*Father and Glorious Son (Hufu huzi)* 《虎父虎子》.

*Female Eunuch (Nu taijian)* 《女太监》.

*Fifth Chinese Daughter (Huanu a wu)* 《花女阿五》.

*Flower Drum Song (Huagu ge)* 《花谷歌》.

*Flowers in the Mirror (Jing hua yuan)* 《镜花缘》.

*Foreign Literature (Waiguo wenxue)* 《外国文学》.

*Four Books and the Five Classics (Si Shu Wu Jing)* 《四书五经》.

*Ghost (Renguiqing Wei Liao)* 《人鬼情未了》.

*Great Learning (Daxue)* 《大学》.

*A History of 20th Century American Poetry (Ershi shiji meiguo shige shi)* 《二十世纪美国诗歌史》.

*Home Alone (Xiaogui Dang Jia)* 《小鬼当家》.

*Honor and Duty (Rongyu yu zheren)* 《荣誉与责任》.

*The House That Tai Ming Built (Taiming jianzao de fangwu)* 《太明建造的房屋》.

*A Hundred Secret Senses (Yibai zhong shenmi de ganjue)* 《一百种神秘的感觉》.

*Identity and History: Reading Chinese American Literature (Shenfen yu lishi: meiguo huayi wenxue xuandu)* 《身份与历史：美国华裔文学选读》.

*Imagining Nation: Asian American Literature and Cultural Identity (Xiangxiang guojia: yayi meiguo wenxue yu wenhua rentong)* 《想像国家：亚裔美国文学与文化认同》.

*Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics (Yimin fa'an: yayi meiguo wenhua de zhengzhi)* 《移民法案：亚裔美国文化的政治》.

*Inscripting and Reappearing: Chinese American Literature and Culture (Mingke yu zaixian: huayi meiguo wenxue yu wenhua lunji)* 《铭刻与再现：华裔美国文学与文化论集》.

*The Iron Curtain of Language: Maxine Hong Kingston and American Orientalism (Yuyan de tiemu: Tang Tingting yu meiguo de dongfang zhuyi)* 《语言的铁幕：汤亭亭与美国的东方主义》.

*Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910-1940 (Ailun shiji)* 《埃伦诗集 1910-1940》.

*Journal of Asian American Studies (Yamei yanjiu zazhi)* 《亚美研究杂志》.

*Journal of Sichuan Foreign Language Institute (Sichuan waiyu xueyuan xuebao)* 《四川外语学院学报》.

*Journey to the West (Xi You Ji)* 《西游记》.

“The Literary Practice of Breaking through Traditional Boundaries of Speech: Criticism of Male Stories in *China Man* and *Typical American Man* (*Tupo chuantong huayu jieyu de wenxue shijian: Zhongguo Lao he Dianxing de Meiguoren zhong de nanxing gushi piping*” “突破传统话语界域的文学实践：《中国佬》和《典型的美国人》中的男性故事批评.”

*The Love Wife (Ai qi)* 《爱妻》.

*M. Butterfly (Hudie jun)* 《蝴蝶君》.

*Memoir of Visiting Los Angeles (Luoshaji fang xue ji)* 《洛杉矶访学记》.

*Mencius (Mengzi)* 《孟子》.

*Mona's Promised Land (Mona de xiwang zhi xiang)* 《莫纳的希望之乡》.

*The Mother-Daughter Relationship and the Politics of Gender and Race: A Study of Chinese American Women's Writings (Mu nu guanxi he xingbie zhongzu zhi zhengzhi: meiguo huayi nuxing zuopin yanjiu)* 《母女关系和性别种族之政治：美国华裔女姓作品研究》.

*Mountain of Gold (Jinshan)* 《金山》.

*Moving toward a Cultural Study of Chinese American Literature (Zouxiang wenhua yanjiu de huayi meiguo wenxue)* 《走向文化研究的华裔美国文学》.

*Mozi* 《墨子》.

*Mrs. Spring Fragrance (Chunxiang taitai)* 《春香太太》.

*Mulan Balad (Mulan shi)* 《木兰诗》.

*Multi-Ethnic Literature of the U.S. (MELUS) (Meiguo duo zuyi wenxue)* 《美国多族裔文学》.

*New History of American Literature (Xinbian meiguo wenxue shi)* 《新编美国文学史》.

*The Oath of the Peach Garden (Taoyuan san jieyi)* 《桃园三结义》.

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*Records of Three Kingdoms (Sanguo zhi)* 《三国志》.

*The Red Detachment of Women (Hongse nianzi jun)* 《红色娘子军》.

*Return of the Soul (Huanhun ji)* 《还魂记》.

*Romance of the Three Kingdoms (Sanguo Yanyi)* 《三国演义》.

*Roots: An Asian American Reader (Gen: meiguo yayi du ben)* 《根：美国亚裔读本》.

*Saving Fish from Drowning (Zhengjiu kuaiyao yansi de yu)* 《拯救快要淹死的鱼》.

*"She" Writings in Contemporary Chinese American Literature: Multifaceted Analysis of Maxine Hong Kingston, Amy Tan, and Yan Geling (Dangdai meiguo huaren wenxue zhong de ta xiezu: dui Tang Tingting, Tan Enmei, Yan Geling deng huaren nu zuojia de duomian fenxi)* 《当代美国华人文学中的“她”写作：对汤亭亭、谭恩美、严歌苓等华人女作家的多面分析》。

*Snow Flower and the Secret Fan (Xuehua yu shenmi de shanzi)* 《雪花与神秘的扇子》。

*Spring and Autumn Annals (Chunqiu)* 《春秋》。

*Stories to Caution the World (Xingshi Hengyan)* 《醒世恒言》。

*The Story of the Stone (Shitou ji)* 《石头记》 a.k.a., *Dream of the Red Chamber*.

*Studies of Foreign Literature (Waiguo wenxue yanjiu)* 《外国文学研究》。

*The Study of Chinese American Literature (Meiguo huaiyi wenxue yanjiu)* 《美国华裔文学研究》。

*A Study of Chinese American Writers (Huayi meiguo zuojia yanjiu)* 《华裔美国作家研究》。

*A Study of Contemporary Ethnic American Women Writers (Dangdai meiguo shoshu zuyi nu zuojia yanjiu)* 《当代美国少数族裔女作家研究》。

*Three Character Classic (Sanzijing)* 《三字经》。

*Twenty-Four Filial Exemplars (Ershisi xiao)* 《二十四孝》。

*Typical American (Dianxing de meiguoren)* 《典型的美国人》。

*Water Margin (Shui Hu Zhuan)* 《水浒传》 a.k.a., *Outlaws of the Marsh*.

*Who's Irish? (Shuishi aierlan ren)* 《谁是爱尔兰人?》.

*The Woman Warrior (Nu yong shi)* 《女勇士》.

*The Writings on the Wall (Xie zai qiang shang de zuopin)* 《写在墙上的作品》.

## Glossary of Names and Terms

|                               |                                      |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Ah Goong (Gong) 阿公            | <i>bu anquan gan</i> 不安全感            |
| <i>anliu</i> 暗流               | Cai Wenji 蔡文姬                        |
| Ao Bi Jiang 奥比奖               | Cai Yan 蔡琰                           |
| <i>bai</i> 白                  | Cao Cao 曹操                           |
| <i>bai gui</i> 白鬼             | <i>cha dianbiao gui</i> 查电表鬼         |
| <i>baigujing</i> 白骨精          | <i>Chang Gan Xing</i> 长干行            |
| <i>baihu</i> 白虎               | Chen Xiaohui 陈晓晖                     |
| <i>Baihu shan</i> 白虎山         | Chen Yaoguang 陈耀光                    |
| <i>baihuzi laoren</i> 白胡子老人   | Cheng Aimin 程爱民                      |
| <i>baixue</i> 白雪              | <i>chenmo</i> 沉默                     |
| Bak Goong (Gong) 八公           | <i>chumai ben minzu wenhua</i> 出卖本民族 |
| <i>bei tongzhi</i> 被统治        | 文化                                   |
| <i>bentu</i> 本土               | <i>cixiong tongti</i> 雌雄同体           |
| <i>benyuan</i> 本源             | <i>cuangai</i> 篡改                    |
| <i>bianyuan ren</i> 边缘人       | <i>dadi</i> 大地                       |
| <i>bianzheng guanxi</i> 辩证关系  | <i>danao tiangong</i> 大闹天宫           |
| Bing Xin 冰心                   | <i>da ronglu</i> 大熔炉                 |
| <i>boli tianhua ban</i> 玻璃天花板 | <i>danxiao gui</i> 胆小鬼               |

- daogui* 捣鬼
- dianfu* 颠覆
- didixia de Zhongguo* 地底下的中国
- dishi gui* 的士鬼
- dizao liao ziji de xuanyan*  
缔造了自己的宣言
- Dong Han* 东汉
- dongyong guizi* 东洋鬼子
- Dubo baoyuan* 杜伯报冤
- Du Liniang* 杜丽娘
- Du Zichun* 杜子春
- Duan Wu* 端午
- dui chenggong de kewang* 对成功的渴望
- duikang xushi* 对抗叙事
- duoyuan zouxiang de piping yu*  
*lilunjiangou*  
多元走向的批评与理论建构
- e'si gui* 饿死鬼
- fashu* 法术
- fan lishi* 反历史
- fansi wenxue* 反思文学
- fanxinghua* 泛性化
- fan xushi* 反叙事
- fangdang buji de chuanguozuo fengge*  
放荡不羁的创作风格
- feifa dajiezhe* 非法打结者
- feihua lianpian* 废话连篇
- Feng Menglong* 冯梦龙
- fengdian* 疯癫
- fengdian xing* 疯癫性
- fenghua lianpian* 疯话连篇
- funu wutuobang* 妇女乌托邦
- gaixie* 改写
- ganga* 尴尬
- ganxing shi de lijie* 感性式的理解
- gemo* 隔膜
- gongche gui* 公车鬼
- gongfu* 功夫

- gouchen* 钩沉
- guaiwu* 怪物
- Guan Gong 关公 a.k.a.Guan Yu 关羽
- Guangdong 广东
- gui* 鬼
- gui bing* 鬼兵
- guidianzi* 鬼点子
- gui difang* 鬼地方
- gui gui sui sui* 鬼鬼祟祟
- gui guojia* 鬼国家
- guihua* 鬼话
- guihun* 鬼魂
- guiqin* 鬼亲
- gui tianqi* 鬼天气
- gui tou gui nao* 鬼头鬼脑
- guizi* 鬼子
- gunong* 咕哝
- hahajing* 哈哈镜
- hai shi shen lou* 海市蜃楼
- Han Zhongli 汗钟离
- hei gui* 黑鬼
- Henan sheng gaodeng xuexiao*
- qingnian gudan jiaoshi*
- 河南省高等学校青年骨干教师
- Henan sheng xueshu jishu dai tou ren*
- 河南省学术技术带头人
- Hong Xiuquan 洪秀全
- hou gong* 后宫
- huabu niuzai* 华埠牛仔
- huadong* 滑动
- huamei san buqu* 华美三部曲
- Hua Mulan 花木兰
- Huang Di 黄帝
- Huang he 黄河
- huangtu gaoyuan* 黄土高原
- Huang Xiuling 黄秀玲
- Huang Yuxue 黄玉雪
- Huang Zhelun 黄哲伦
- huayi meiguo zuopin* 华裔美国作品

|                                   |                       |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>huayu baquan</i> 话语霸权          | <i>lan</i> 兰          |
| <i>huche gui</i> 胡扯鬼              | Lei Tingzhao 雷庭招      |
| <i>jiling gui</i> 机灵鬼             | Lei Zhuwei 雷祖威        |
| <i>jiating guanwang tai</i> 家庭观望台 | Li Bai 李白             |
| <i>jianshu gui</i> 剪树鬼            | Li Fang 李昉            |
| Jin 金                             | <i>lijia</i> 离家       |
| <i>jingu</i> 禁锢                   | Li Jianshun 李健孙       |
| Jin Huijing 金惠经                   | Li Jinlan 李进兰         |
| Jinqi Ling 凌津奇                    | Li Jinyang 黎锦扬        |
| <i>Jinshan yongshi</i> 金山勇士       | Li Leiwei 李磊伟         |
| <i>jin xiao</i> 尽孝                | Li Ruzhen 李汝珍         |
| <i>jingcha gui</i> 警察鬼            | Liang Hongyu 梁红玉      |
| <i>jingshen chuangshang</i> 精神创伤  | Liang Zhiying 梁志英     |
| <i>jingzhong baoguo</i> 精忠报国      | <i>lianpu</i> 脸谱      |
| <i>kaiqiang gui</i> 开枪鬼           | <i>lianpu hua</i> 脸谱化 |
| <i>kaishan zhi zuo</i> 开山之作       | <i>lichengbei</i> 里程碑 |
| <i>keqiu</i> 苛求                   | Lin Jian 林澗           |
| Kongzi 孔子                         | Lin Taiyi 林太乙         |
| <i>kumen</i> 苦闷                   | Lin Xiaoqin 林小琴       |

- Lin Yingmin 林英敏 *maodun de tongyiti* 矛盾的统一体
- Lin Yuling 林玉玲 *meiguo* 美国
- Lin Yutang 林语堂 *meiguo huaren zuopin* 美国华人作品
- Lin Zhiyang 林志洋 *meiqi gui* 煤气鬼
- Ling Huping 令狐萍 *ming gui* 明鬼
- lingzun renwu* 领军人物 *minghun* 冥婚
- Liu Bei 刘备 *Mo Di* 魔笛
- Liu Denghan 刘登翰 *mosheng gan* 陌生感
- Liu Mengmei 柳梦梅 *munu guanxi* 母女关系
- Liu Yichang 刘裔昌 *nanie buju* 拿捏不住
- Lo Bun Sun 罗宾孙 *nanquan zhongxin huayu* 男权中心话  
语
- longzhao* 笼罩 *nanxing zhongxin de sixing qingxiang*  
男性中心的思想倾向
- Lu Wei 陆薇 *nanyan de* 难言的
- luju xing lilun* 旅居性理论 *Nie Yinni* 聂隐娘
- luodi shenggen* 落地生根 *niuqu chouhua* 扭曲丑化
- luoye guigen* 落叶归根 *nu'er guo* 女儿国
- Ma Sheng-mei 马生妹 *nu jianke* 女剑客
- Mai Liqian 麦礼谦
- mai zahuo gui* 卖杂货鬼

- nushu* 女书
- nuxing yanzhong de nanxing yingxiong*  
*chuantong he yingxiong xingxiang*  
女性眼中的男性英雄传统和英雄形象
- nuxinghua* 女性化
- nu yingxiong* 女英雄
- nu zhong haojie* 女中豪杰
- nuoyong* 挪用
- paichi* 排斥
- paihua fa'an* 排华法案
- paihua langchao* 排华浪潮
- panghuang* 彷徨
- pangzheng boyin* 旁征博引
- peiqian huo* 赔钱货
- pengbo fazhan* 蓬勃发展
- Penglai shan* 蓬莱山
- Pu Songling* 蒲松龄
- qiangtou gui* 墙头鬼
- qiaoran qibu* 悄然起步
- Qin Liangyu* 秦良玉
- qingjie cuozhi* 情节错置
- qiyue laogong* 契约劳工
- qu quanweihua* 去权威化
- Qu Yuan* 屈原
- quanqiuren zajiao wenhua moshi*  
全球人杂交文化模式
- qungui luanwu* 群“鬼”乱舞
- qunmo luanwu* 群魔乱舞
- Ren Bilian* 任璧莲
- Riben guizi* 日本鬼子
- Rong Hong* 容闳
- ryu de shui* 如鱼得水
- San Goong (San Gong)* 三公
- sancong side* 三从四德
- saozhou gui* 扫帚鬼
- selai wan* 色拉碗
- Shaanxi* 陕西
- Shan Dexing* 单德兴
- Shanxi* 山西

- shao zhi* 烧纸
- Shaosha 少傻
- shehui huo li* 社会活力
- shengyu* 生育
- shenmi muoce* 神秘莫测
- shenru gusui de tongtou* 深入骨髓的通透
- Shi Pingping 石平萍
- shigen qunzu* 失根群族
- shiyu* 失语
- shiyu zheng* 失语症
- shou zhu dai tu* 守株待兔
- Shu 蜀
- shuangchong meili* 双重魅力
- shuangchong ningshi* 双重凝视
- shuangchong xuanwo* 双重漩涡
- shuangchong zaizhi* 双重宰制
- shuangxing tongti* 双性同体
- shui xianhua* 水仙花
- shuohua* 说话
- Si Goong (Gong) 四公
- sibian* 思辨
- Si Shu Wu Jing* 四书五经
- siwu jidan* 肆无忌惮
- Song Gaozong 宋高宗
- Songli Ruifang 宋李瑞芳
- songyao gui* 送药鬼
- Sun Wukong 孙悟空
- sunzi* 孙子
- tazhe* 他者
- Taiping tianguo* 太平天国
- Tan Enmei 谭恩美
- Tang Ao 唐敖
- Tang Jinrong 唐锦荣
- tangren jie jiaofu* 唐人街教父
- Tang Seng 唐僧
- Tang Side 汤思德
- Tang Tingting 汤亭亭

- Tang Xianzu 汤显祖
- tianbu* 添补
- tiemu* 铁幕
- taoyan gui* 讨厌鬼
- tongmou* 同谋
- tongzhi* 统治
- tuixiao gui* 推销鬼
- Wang Lingzhi 王灵智
- wenhua masaike* 文化马赛克
- Wu Bing 吴冰
- Wu Cheng'en 吴承恩
- wu du* 五毒, five poisons
- wu du* 巫毒, sorcerer
- wu du* 无度, unlimited
- wu du* 无毒, not poisonous
- wu du* 误读, deliberate misreading
- Wu Huiming 伍惠明
- Wu Kuangqin 伍邗琴
- Wu Zetian 武则天
- Wuxia xiaoshuo* 武侠小说
- wuxinghua* 无性化
- Xi'an 西安
- xiangcun yisheng* 乡村医生
- xiangjiao ren* 香蕉人
- xiao gui* 小鬼
- xiaosheng* 消声
- xiaoshun* 孝顺
- xingbie mohu* 性别模糊
- xinli bianyi* 心里变异
- xinli you gui* 心里有鬼
- xisu* 习俗
- xiulian* 修炼
- xuhuan* 虚幻
- Xu Jieyu 许芥昱
- Xu Zhongxiong 徐忠雄
- Xuanzang 玄奘
- xuejian* 学剑
- XueYufeng 薛玉凤

*xungen wenzu* 寻根问祖

*yashen gui* 压身鬼

*yayi gan* 压抑

Yan Di 炎帝

*yange* 阉割

Yan Geling 严歌苓

*Yanhuang zisun* 炎黄子孙

*yansi gui* 淹死鬼

*yansu de wenxue zuopin* 严肃的文学作品

Yang Bifang 杨碧芳

*yang guizi* 洋鬼子

*Yangmen nujiang* 杨门女将

*yao xiang huying* 遥相呼应

*ye yi shiqu* 也已逝去

*yibanxing liaojie* 一般性了解

*yimai xiangcheng* 一脉相承

*yishu fanfeng* 艺术反讽

*yinhan de duzhe* 隐含的读者

*yinxing* 阴性

Yinglan 英兰

*yong shuxie cuowu lai jiuzheng bugong*

用书写错误来纠正不公

*you gui bianzuo shen* 由鬼变作神

*youse renzhong nuxing zhuyi zhe*

有色人种女性主义者

*yuyan de nu yingxiong* 语言的女英雄

Yue Fei 岳飞

*zaizao* 再造

*zaofan* 造反

*zengyi* 增益

*zhancao chugen* 斩草除根

*zhanwang* 谵妄

Zhang Aiping 张爱平

Zhang Jingyu 张敬钰

Zhang Ziqing 张子清

*zhaohun* 招魂

Zhao Jianxiu 赵建秀

*zhengming* 正名

*zhengzha* 挣扎

*zhongxing* 中性

*Zhongguo yuyan wushu* 中国语言巫术

Zhou Yonglan 周勇兰

*zhu zai wuyan xia qi neng bu ditou*

住在屋檐下企能不低头

*zhuanji ti xiaoshuo* 传记体小说

Zhuhai 珠海

*ziwo dongfanghua* 自我东方化

*ziyou de zhuti/shou zhipei de chenmin*

自由的主题/受支配的臣民

*zongzi* 粽子

Selected Works by the Authors under Study

Arranged by

Author, Type, Date

Chen Xiaohui 陈晓晖

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Lu Wei 陆薇

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