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**A Study on Cultural and Gender
Identity Pursuit in
*The Woman Warrior***

조선대학교 대학원

영 어 영 문 학 과

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킹스턴의 <여전사>에 나타난 문화적 정체성과 젠더
정체성 추구 양상

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이 논문을 영어영문학 석사학위신청 논문으로 제출함

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킹스틴의 <여전사>에 나타난 문화적 정체성과 젠더 정체성 추구 양상

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킹스틴은 현대의 중국계 미국 작가이다. 그녀는 미국 사회에서 배척을 당하였고, 중국계 미국 남성 작가의 인정을 받지 못했다. 이렇게 "이중적으로 소외당한 자"의 신분은 그녀더러 자신의 신분을 사람들에게 밝히는 데 어려움을 느끼게 하였다. 하지만 그녀는 이런 이중적인 위치에 있었기에 미국 사회에서의 젠더 정체성 문제를 연구하게 되었다. 킹스틴은 『여전사』라는 소설에서 젠더 정체성 문제를 다루었는데, 이 책에서 그녀는 미국에 이민간 소수 인종의 여성으로서 자아를 어떻게 구성하는가 하는 문제를 해결할 필요성을 제기하였다.

본 논문은 이 소설에 대한 분석을 통하여 중국계 미국 여성의 생활과 신분 위기를 살펴보았다. 그리고 비교연구와 귀납총결을 통하여 중국계 미국 여성이 어떻게 자아를 구성하는지 중점적으로 분석하였다.

『여전사』에서의 용란과 서술자 킹스틴은 1세대 이민자와 2세대 이민자의 대표자로서 서로 다른 문화적 욕망과 자아를 추구하였다. 용란은 미국 문화를 배척하던 데로부터 점점 받아들였고, 킹스틴은 중국 문화를 배척하던 데로부터 점점 받아들였다. 이렇게 그녀들은 문화에 대한 인식을 바꿈으로써 미국 사회에서 자아를 구성하였다. 이것은 자아를 구성하는 문제의 최종 도경은 문화다원주의라는 것을 설명해준다.

중국의 전통적인 문화는 중국 여성과 중국계 미국 여성에 깊은 상처를 주었다. 그러므로 그녀들은 자아를 구성하기 위하여 반드시 성별에서 있어서 '여성'이라는 주체성을 찾아야 했다. 본 논문은 『여전사』의 서로 다른 세 여성의 주체성에 대한 분석을 통하여 아시아계 미국 여성의 세 단계를 요약하였다. 다시 말해 전통적인 중국 여성, 반항적인 여성, 그리고 남성성과 여성성이 결합된 여성

이렇게 세 단계로 나누었다. 이런 세 단계를 거쳐서야 만 아시아에 여성은 미국 사회의 존중과 인정을 받을 수 있고, 자아를 구성할 수 있다.

Introduction

In the twentieth century, American society has witnessed the changes which inevitably obscure the originally clear boundary between the cultures, ethnics, and races within American society. Since the mid-nineteenth century, a great number of people from all over the world immigrated into the United States, including those from Asian countries, especially from China after the exact time Great Britain forcefully opened China's door. "Pushed out by these powerful forces at home as well as attracted by the discovery of Gold in California, and...by jobs that became available as the American West developed"(Chan 3), the Chinese first immigrated to America. Historically and materially, Asian immigrants have played absolutely crucial roles in building and sustaining the US. However, America always treated Asian immigrants as "foreigner-within,"because the influx of the various ethnic people into American society had been gradually disrupting the U.S. nation-state system. The state worried that "yellow peril" threatens to displace white European immigrants (Lowe 5). Hereupon, through the apparatus of immigration laws and policies, the U.S. defined Asians as culturally and racially "other" when the United States was militarily and economically at war with Asia. Thus, the exclusion and racism against Asian immigrants originates in the idea that Asians are inassimilable others who are absolutely different from European immigrants.

Meanwhile, in the early Anglo-American literature, caricatures of Asians have been part of American popular culture for generations. The popular and standard American image of Asian is like "the powerful-hungry despot, the helpless heathen, the sensuous dragon lady, the comical loyal servant" (Kim 3). Therefore, much of Anglo-Americans

and Asian Americans unconsciously accepted the distorted images.

However, the images of Asian Americans had not been changed a lot until the early 1970s when "four young Californians (Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Hsu Wong) presented a manifesto for a new direction in Asian American literature," through which they wanted to express the "genuine spirit of Asian American history and culture" (Kim 173). Impacted by the Vietnam War and the civil rights movement in the United States, many Asian Americans realized how necessary it is to assert an ethnic identity and to challenge the old stereotypes. They attempted to express the predecessor's experiences of inequality and injustice through their points of view. They also attacked incisively the contradictions of America, claiming their American identity.

Chinese American literature first tried to articulate the real definition and boundary of Asian American literature after 1960s. The representative is Frank Chin, whose *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian-American writers* proclaims that Asian Americans should recover their real identities, free from a racial stereotype that is fixed by American prejudice. However, his ideal of the recovery of real identity seems to be not optimistic. His works are full of themes like death and decadence. His sexism, cynicism and sense of alienation also prevented him from creating protagonists who can overcome devastating effects of racism on Chinese American men. Besides, his definition of self-identity depends on the distinction between Chinese and Chinese American identity. Thus, although he stands on the ethnic origin of mother China, he strives to break from the origin.

In contrast with Chin's argument, for Maxine Hong Kingston, ethnic origin seems to be dissolved and to be absorbed into their new American identity. Influenced by the multicultural circumstance, the pursuit of identity is bound to follow the inevitable

tendency. For the Asian Americans whose culture is rooted in Asia but grows in America, multiplicity of self identity should be their only yet best way to refine and survive their new identity, just like what Maxine Hong Kingston expressed in her work, *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*.

In this work, as the first-generation Asian American, both Moon Orchid and Brave Orchid consciously keep the traditional culture and customs as the second generation, Maxine In this thesis, Maxine¹⁾ refers to the young narrator/protagonist of *The Woman Warrior*, while Kingston refers to the author herself. initially has great desire to leave her Chinese family and hates the Chinese tradition, eager to assimilate into the mainstream American culture. But eventually, she realizes that she cannot discard the Chinese culture, which has been playing an important role in her life, especially, in her spiritual life.

In this study, by comparing their different experiences in America portrayed in *The Woman Warrior*, I intend to answers the two questions. First, how do Chinese Americans forge their cultural identity? Second, how does Maxine forge her identity as a woman? In Chapter One, I want to introduce the writer and the book briefly, the literary criticism of the book and the theory of identity. In Chapter Two, I will analyze the two patterns of cultural identity pursuit of Chinese Americans and theorize the solution to the cultural identity crisis. In Chapter Three, I will analyze the three types of women in *The Woman Warrior*, and discuss the three stages Chinese American woman may go through when pursuing gender identity. According to the analysis, a conclusion will be drawn that the ultimate way to form Chinese Americans' cultural identity is to accept the multidimensional, heterogeneous and complicated identity, and Chinese American woman can gain acceptance and respect only by combining femininity and masculinity.

¹⁾In this thesis, Maxine refers to the young narrator/protagonist of *The Woman Warrior*, while Kingston refers to the author herself.

I. Maxine Hong Kingston and *The Woman Warrior*

A. Introduction to Maxine Hong Kingston and *The Woman Warrior*

Chinese American literature can date back to the mid-nineteenth century when numerous Chinese laborers immigrated to the United States of America to build railroads and work in mines on the west coast. But great development did not happen until the 1970s when a group of Chinese American writers worked their way into the mainstream of American literature. Among the writers, Maxine Hong Kingston has drawn much critical attention. Although she is not a productive writer, she plays an important role in the development of Chinese American literature.

Kingston is born in Stockton, California on 27, October of 1940. Born to Chinese immigrants, Tom Hong and Ying Lan Chew Hong, she is the first of the couple's six children born in the United States. She began to write at the age of nine and she won her first writing award --- a journalism contest at UC Berkeley --- when she was sixteen. In 1976 her first book, *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*, is published by Knopf. In 1980, she was named a "Living Treasure of Hawaii" by the Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii. In 1997, she was awarded the National Humanities Medal by President Bill Clinton and was introduced into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and received an Honorary Doctoral Degree. People

believe it was she who opened the way for a whole generation of Asian American writers to be accepted by the mainstream America.

The book itself also earned great fame. After it was published in 1976, it immediately won the National Book Critics Circle Award for nonfiction and the American Book Award. The New York Times praised the book by comparing it to Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, saying "it is an investigation of soul ... Its sources are dream and memory, myth and desire. Its crises are crises of the heart in exile from roots that bind and terrorize it."²⁾ Two years later, the autobiography also won the Ainsfield-Wolf Race Relations Award, and was regarded as one of the top nonfiction books of the decade. Former president Bill Clinton praised it as "a book that changed forever the face and status of contemporary Asian American literature" (Li, "Can Maxine Hong Kingston Speak?" 44). It was widely taught in American high schools and colleges.

What is then the motivation of this remarkable book? Generally speaking, her works draws upon several sources: the ordeals of the Chinese immigrants who endured exploitation as they labored on American railroads and plantations; the oral tales of mythic heroes and family histories told by her mother; and her own experiences as a first-generation America-born Chinese.

1. Personal Background of *The Woman Warrior*

Identity pursuit is the major theme of *The Woman Warrior*. As a Chinese American woman, how to build her identity, particularly, cultural and gender identity in a host

²⁾Bill Moyers, "Bill Moyers Journal: Maxine Hong Kingston," *Bill Moyers Journal*, May 2007. http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/video_popups/pop_vid_kingston1-1.html.

country is the biggest problem Kingston is eager to solve. As we know, the establishment of the theme is often related to the life experience of the author, and *The Woman Warrior* is no exception. As the first generation of American-born Chinese, Kingston has inevitably to live between two worlds: Chinese culture (mainly existing in her community and family) and American culture (her education in school, etc.). She owes her success to such a living environment.

Kingston's mother's stories are the major sources for the book *The Woman Warrior*. Her mother Brave Orchid was a doctor who used to practice midwifery in China. After she joined her husband in America, she exchanged her professional status for that of a laundrywoman, cleaning maid, tomato picker, and cannery worker. Living in a totally new environment, she always dreamed of going back to China, and she never forgot to educate her children with "talk stories," including myth, legend, family history, and ghost tales. Without environment of real China and Chinese culture, Brave Orchid used stories to instill Chinese tradition into the lives of her American-born children to enrich their imagination of China. Educational as Brave Orchid's storytelling was, it also reiterated patriarchal and misogynistic messages of traditional Chinese culture. Moreover, Brave Orchid did not explain her stories, so that Kingston needed to interpret her mother's stories by her imagination; thereafter, she herself also became a storyteller. In a series of highly acclaimed books she linked those traditional stories to her life in America, blending memory, mediation, and magic to create several books like *The Woman Warrior*, *China Men* (1980), *Tripmaster Monkey* (1989), *To Be the Poet* (2002), and *The Fifth Book of Peace* (2003).

Kingston's father's silence also influenced her a lot in her writing. Her father was a teacher in China before he immigrated to America. In order to make a living, he had to wash windows, manage illegal gambling house and run a laundry. What is worth to

mention is that it is her father who won her mother a visa for America at the gambling table. As Kingston pointed out in an interview, "Everything they did was illegal! And they always told me, 'Don't tell these things!' So I did tell, but I did it in a new and strange kind of way."³⁾ This "new and strange kind of way" aroused various interpretations about her works and a lot of criticism from other Chinese American writers. One of them is whether the book can be categorized as a fiction or nonfiction. It is not that Kingston did not know the boundary between fiction and nonfiction, but that she wanted to "name the unspeakable" lest her parents be deported by the evidence she offered in her books (*The Woman Warrior* 5).

Therefore, she created a new genre that is a mix of reality and imagination. Besides, her father's working life is no less than an epitome of the first group of Chinese American immigrants' miserable experience, which had such a deep impression on Kingston to the extent that it became a great impetus for her to seek the cultural identity in *The Woman Warrior*.

Kingston's living environment also influenced on her writing in various ways. Her hometown, Stockton of California, can be portrayed as "a literary microcosm" supplying knowledge of China to her writing. In this community, people speak Cantonese which provided Kingston with distinctive sounds and rhythms. And in her works, she tries to translate the oral tradition of her community into a written one. Moreover, in this community, most of the population was working-class and unemployed people of mixed races. The "Burglar Ghosts," "Hobo Ghosts" and "Wino Ghosts" crowded young Maxine's childhood memory. She even adopted *Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts* as the subtitle of the book. She herself thanked this experience and insisted that if she had been born in a middle-class suburb, her struggle to be a writer would have been

³⁾ Miel and Dave Weich, "Author Interview: Maxine Hong Kingston after the Fire," *Powell's City of Books*, Dec. 2003. <http://www.powells.com/authors/kingston.html>.

harder.

2. Social Background of *The Woman Warrior*

Vietnam War is a historical event in which the United States was involved at the time when Kingston was writing *The Woman Warrior*. The war in Southeast Asia was, and continued to be of particular interest to Kingston as a member of the Asian American community. At that time, members of the U.S. armed forces who were of Asian descent found themselves in a difficult position because they were fighting an Asian enemy. While to Anglo-Americans, the Chinese Americans and the Vietnamese perhaps did not look different. This event urged Kingston to think about her cultural identity as Chinese American. In her work, *The Woman Warrior*, she also mentioned this event. At the beginning of the chapter "At the Western Palace," Brave Orchid sits in San Francisco airport awaiting her sister's arrival from Hong Kong. When she catches the sight of young men in military uniforms, she cannot help thinking of her son in Vietnam. Those days Kingston has also paid close attention to wars and peace. In 2003, *The Fifth Book of Peace* was published, in which Kingston also refers to the Vietnam War.

In addition to Vietnam War, those years in which *The Woman Warrior* was composed and published was undergoing a rapid change: the feminist movement starting in the early 1960s was put forward further by the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963. This book forced real legislative and social changes in the lives of American women. In this book, Friedan identified the economic, political, cultural and personal pressures that kept women – especially educated middle-class women – out of

the public world for which they had been educated and in the home as wives and mothers. Though these women enjoyed all the material comforts they wanted, many experienced a sense of frustration and disappointment they could not describe. Friedan called this "the problem that has no name" and used the phrase as the title of the opening chapter of her book (Friedan 19). She described the reason for this mysterious problem as "the feminine mystique," a concept of femininity that finds fulfillment in material wealth but denies women the opportunity for self-fulfillment in the public world of work (Madsen 44). In this book and also in her political activity, she called for equality of opportunity for all women. This meant, of course, that women were subjected to new pressures and had new expectations. The methodology to gain rights through feminist terms made a great impact on Kingston's writing in terms of design, and the feminist consciousness to resist the old system played an important role in Kingston's writing the theme of gender identity pursuit. Friedan's writing focused on the decade of the 1950s, the decade of Kingston's teenage years, which paralleled the adolescent life of Maxine in *The Woman Warrior*. Obviously, the writer was greatly influenced by this feminist movement and ready to fight for the rights of women as embodied in *The Woman Warrior*.

B. Critical Reception of *The Woman Warrior*

There have been numerous critical debates on *The Woman Warrior*. The first issue was whether this book should be categorized as fiction or non-fiction. *The Woman Warrior* won the National Book Critics Circle Award for nonfiction, but there were disputes about whether it was valid to call the book nonfiction or autobiography when

there were so many fictional elements in it. For example, Chin suspected the form of Kingston's writing and publicly declared his view in the essay "This is Not an Autobiography."⁴⁾ But King-kok Cheung has pointed out that "the failure to discern her shifting point of view and deliberate fusion of fictive and empirical incidents not only eclipses the author's artistry but obscures the very 'truth' her texts convey" ("Provocative Silence" 17). In fact, this book recorded her personal life experiences, using fictional techniques. It should be a blend of fiction and autobiography. Now, most critics agree that this book is a semi-autobiography. "The unique value of her story recounts the living experience of a Chinese American woman in America. Instead of giving us dates and everyday details, Kingston is more interested in telling us 'the dreams and the fictions of the real (Bonetti 37).

The Woman Warrior was also thought to be a book dealing with the relationship between mothers and daughters and also about the conflict between Chinese and American cultures. In this book were revealed the ideas and values of Chinese traditional women, which are full of mysterious oriental images and legends. Because of this, some Chinese American writers such as Chin accused Kingston of simplifying and misrepresenting the traditional stories in order to make them appeal to an Anglo-American audience. Chin argued:

"People who know nothing about China, about Chinese-Americans, the railroad, the opera and who don't want to know more than they know – know Maxine Hong Kingston an Hwang, and that's all they care to know" (27).

⁴⁾ For Chin, the very form of autobiography is suspect because of its association with Chinese tradition of confession. His rationale is that "all autobiography demonstrates admission of guilt, submission of my self for judgment, for approval by outsiders." More explanation about this idea can be found in Sau-ling Cynthia Wong's essay, "Autobiography as Guided Chinatown Tour?"

Such critics said that Kingston distorted the taste of the original version of Chinese folktales and accused her of lacking genuine knowledge of China, as she put many extraneous and seemingly irrelevant elements together and distorted the "original" truth to cater to western taste. Confronted with all these comments, Kingston claimed, "We have to do more than record myth. The way I keep the old Chinese myths alive is by telling them in a new American way". "I know that what I have to say is what a Chinese American person is thinking. I don't have to go out and make a survey" (Pfaffn 18). The changes of the original story were necessary from her points of view. What she recorded in her stories were experiential truth rather than historical truth. She was not representing Chinese culture or Chinese tradition. Therefore, she should not be blamed for not being loyal to Chinese culture and tradition. In this book, she recorded the mental activities of being a Chinese American girl living in America.

Besides, some critics attacked Kingston for writing about subjects other than the common racial experience of Chinese Americans. Kingston's choice of her own experience and that of her family as her subject in *The Woman Warrior* has been judged by critics as a betrayal of her community and her race. But Kingston has exclaimed, "I don't worry whether my voice is 'our' voice. Even though I have a peculiar voice, I'm able to speak to everyone from my stance of exile, as outsider, and then I can make my way in" (Hoy 50).

Some scholars argued that Kingston shows a strong feminist inclination in the book. As Benjamin Tong pointed out, "it is a fashionably feminist work written with white acceptance in mind" (Cheung, "The Woman Warrior Versus the Chinatown Pacific,"118). As a matter of fact, Kingston never denies the fact that she is a feminist, and also as King-kok Cheung claimed, "When Asian American women seek to expose antifemale

prejudices in their own ethnic community, the men are likely to feel betrayed" (119). Mr. Zhang Ziqing, however, believes that Kingston is a great feminist who not only finds a voice for women who are deprived of the right of speech, but also makes women into the invincible warriors and heroes (96).

C. Theory of Identity

The term "identity" is defined as "the qualities and attitudes you have that make you feel you have your own character and are different from other people" (Longman Dictionary 706). From this definition, one will find that it is in sharp contrast to "other people;" therefore, one has to know the difference between "our own kind" and "the others." In other words, identity is a description of relationship. As Cooley has pointed out in his "Looking-glass self" theory, "A self-idea ... seems to have three principle elements: the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his judgments of that appearance and some sort of self-feeling such as pride or mortification" (Riley 82). Therefore, only when we are placed among others can one tend to find out his identity. As Jan Aart Scholte points out in his article *Globalization and Collective Identities*, the need for recognition – to define oneself (or who one wants to become) and to have that identity acknowledged by others – is a first-order preoccupation in social relations (39-40).

There are different kinds of identity: national identity, social identity, cultural identity, class identity, familial identity, gender identity, sexual identity, etc. In this thesis, emphasis is placed on the analysis of Chinese American women's pursuit of cultural and gender identity in *The Woman Warrior*. Cultural identity is "the identity of a

cultural group or of an individual as far as one is influenced by one's belonging to a cultural group."⁵⁾ That is to say, cultural identity is a person's sense of belonging to a certain group who shares a common culture. The term cultural identity, however, tends to refer to one's nationality. However, it matters when a person was born at one country and lives at another country, that is to say, when one attempts to integrate into more than one culture.

The issue of identity becomes even more complicated if the Chinese American happens to be a woman. Gender identity is "a person's own sense of identification as male or female,"⁶⁾ as manifested in appearance, behavior, and other aspects of a person's life. As Jill Krause claimed, "Gender is one of the most obvious facets of our personal identity" ("Gender Identity in International Relations" 106). In this study, I will mainly discuss women's gender identity from the aspect of social status. In Chinese society, women used to be placed on an inferior status, which was manifested in "three obedience and four virtues."⁷⁾ Influenced by Chinese traditional culture, Chinese American women have also been suffering the unequal attitude in the society dominated by men of two races. Obviously, women have difficulty to form their gender identity if they are not treated as an equal part as men. That is to say, Chinese American women have to assume "masculine" identity to assert their status.

The combination of gender and culture in a single body does not mean that one's identity is indefinable. Kingston fixes her eyes on the issue in her book *The Woman Warrior* and tries to solve it through her own experience and feeling. Of course, it is not hard to understand why she had a strong desire to find out who she was. She was

5) "Cultural Identity." Wikipedia. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_identity.

6) "Gender Identity." Wikipedia. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_identity.

7) 'Through her life, the ideal woman was subject to her father as a child, her husband when married, and her sons when widowed, and she was taught the four "virtues". First, a woman should know her place in the universe and behave in compliance with the natural order of things; second, she should guard her words and not chatter too much or bore others; third, she must be clean and adorn herself to please men; fourth, she should not shirk from her household duties.' The explanation about "three obedience and four virtues" can be found in *Feminism and Socialism in China* by Eliosabeth Croll, quoted in Gary Y. Okihiro's "Recentring Women."

born to a Chinese immigrant family to be brought up to be an American. Her parents consistently tell her that China is their real home, but the education she has received in America motivates her to be an American woman. As a result, Kingston is puzzled about her identity, especially when she, as a woman, struggles to survive in a world dominated by men.

II. Two Patterns of Cultural Identity Pursuit of Chinese Americans

A. The Patterns of the First-Generation Immigrants' Cultural Identity Pursuit

One of the patterns of cultural identity pursuit Kingston illustrates in *The Woman warrior* is the first-generation immigrants' way of forging their identity. In order to find their self in the host country, the first-generation Chinese immigrants tended to conform to Chinese traditions after they settled in America. They kept their Chinese life style and always dreamed of going back to China after they had accumulated enough money on this Promised Land. American culture thus became something they were not willing to accept. However, some of them realized that they had to accept American culture if they wanted to maintain their American life. Therefore, from the preservation of Chinese tradition to acceptance of American culture is the main characteristic of the first pattern of cultural identity pursuit.

Why did the first-generation Chinese immigrants prefer to retain their Chinese identity rather than assimilate to be Americans? First of all, most of the early immigrants went to America in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when they were already adults. It is natural that Chinese culture was part of them, which was

reflected in every aspect of their life both public and private. It was difficult for them to change even when they lived in another country for many years. Secondly, most of the early Chinese immigrants were married men. They left their wives and children back in the home country, hoping that they would return home with honor after years of hard working in America in order to provide a better life for their families. This kind of motivation prevented them from having intention to be part of the host country. The home country was believed to be their final destination.

The last and the most significant reason is that Chinese immigrants encountered all kinds of racism in America. They were discriminated just because of their difference in skin color and appearance. According to the Chinese Exclusion Law passed in 1882, Chinese could neither win land in America, nor could they get American citizenship (Kim 96). When discussing the limitation on Chinese immigration, a Chinese laundryman ever mentioned, "We Chinese are not even allowed to become citizens. If we were allowed, that might be a different story. In that case, I think many of us Chinese would not think so much of going back home" (Kim 98). Thus, Chinese immigrants were not allowed to turn themselves into Americans, their only alternative was to be sojourners.

Kingston captures this pattern of cultural identity pursuit by the early Chinese immigrants through her mother Brave Orchid. Brave Orchid has a strong inclination to preserve Chinese culture, which is tellingly portrayed in her telling stories to her children.⁸⁾ At the very beginning of *The Woman Warrior*, the mother tells her daughter the story of "No Name Woman," who became pregnant during the absence of her

⁸⁾ The same argument can also be found in Qin Hongli's essay, "From Singular Preservation to Bidirectional Amalgamation: on the Cultural Identity Pursuit in *The Woman Warrior*," "从单一的坚守到双向的融合:试论《女勇士》中对身份认同的追寻," which says, "The mother in the book cannot understand English. [...] She would like to preserve her love for China and her relatives as well as her admiration for Chinese culture through her story-telling to her children."

husband, and was raided by the villagers in her bedroom on the day when she was to give birth to her illegitimate child. Being a great disgrace to the family, she was cursed severely, "Aiaa, we're going to die. Death is coming. Death is coming. Look what you've done. You've killed us. Ghost! Dead ghost! Ghost! You've never been born."⁹⁾ No-name aunt's adultery had undoubtedly brought a deadly shame to her parents' family. In order to clean the family's name, the aunt must be punished according to Chinese culture, that is, she must die. That is the only way for other members of the family to live on and to face their neighbors. Even death is not enough for her punishment. In order to get rid of this adulterous woman completely, the family has expunged her name from the family record, and no one is allowed to mention her. But Brave Orchid has broken this rule because she is using the story not only to impart to her daughter this piece of knowledge about Chinese culture which places high of the fame of family rather than individual needs, but also to warn her not to bring shame to the family: "Now that you have started to menstruate, what happened to her could happen to you. Don't humiliate us. You wouldn't like to be forgotten as if you have never been born. The villagers are watchful" (WW 5). "The villagers" here refer to the Chinese immigrants in Chinatown. Even in America, traditional Chinese values prevail. Any violation of the traditional rule on the part of Chinese American children may possibly bring humiliation to the family's fame. Furthermore, mother has warned her daughter not to tell anyone of this aunt, because the mentioning of her name will do her father mysterious harm. She told her daughter that they have "settled among immigrants who had also been their neighbors in the ancestral land", and her family "needed to clean their name, and a wrong word would incite the kinspeople even here" (WW 15-16).

Brave Orchid tells such stories to ensure her children will grow up as true Chinese.

⁹⁾ Maxine Hong Kingston. *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*. 1976. (New York: Vintage International Edition, April 1989), 13-14. Hereafter, all quotations from *The Woman Warrior* will be taken from this edition and will be followed by WW and their page numbers in parenthesis.

In this way, she keeps Chinese customary practices alive in their adopted land. Kingston writes, "Whenever she had to warn us about life, my mother told stories that ran like this one, a story to grow up on. She tested our strength to establish realities. Those in the emigrant generations who could not reassert brute survival died young and far from home. Those of us in the first American generations have had to figure out how the invisible world the emigrants built around our childhoods fit in solid America" (WW 5).

Besides preserving Chinese tradition by telling stories, Brave Orchid's behavior itself reveals that she is an out-and-out traditionalist. As a traditional Chinese woman, she feels it necessary to protect her family and Chinese traditions against the dominant culture of Western "ghosts" in America. She cooks Chinese food, keeps the family secrets, tells the cautionary stories, and keeps traditional Chinese cultural ritual even if her children dislike them. Realizing the importance of preserving their Chinese history, culture, and family, Brave Orchid attempts to pass to the children the essence of Chinese culture. Even though there are oppression and inequality for women within the traditional Chinese family and society, the Chinese mother still attempts to instill in the young daughters the virtues and habits that are considered as ideally feminine in traditional Chinese culture. That is why she tells her daughters the tale of the "No Name Woman."

Brave Orchid is not willing to give up her Chinese identity. It is because she never forgets her "home." Kingston states in *The Woman Warrior*, "whenever my parents said 'home', they suspended America" (WW 99). Her parents' home is definitely China, and they never give up hope of returning to China. However, this longing to go back home actually becomes but a habit. In other words, it is no longer an urgent need from the bottom of heart. After living in America for so many years, Brave Orchid subconsciously began to adopt American culture. That's why when she knew she couldn't return to China, she was not as frustrated as the readers have expected. She told her daughter:

"We're not going back to China for sure now."

...

"We got a letter from the villagers yesterday. They asked if it was all right with us that they took over the land. The last uncles have been killed so your father is the only person left to say it is all right, you see. He has written saying they can have it. So. We have no more China to go home to" (WW 106).

The news should have been a great disappointment to Brave Orchid, who has always dreamed of going back to China some day, but her mind is changing unconsciously: "I don't want go back anyway," she said, "I've gotten used to eating... You should see the ones I meet in the field. They bring back sacks under their clothes to steal grapes and tomatoes from the growers. They come with trucks on Sundays. And they are killing each other in San Francisco. [...] They are Chinese, and Chinese are mischievous. No, I'm too old to keep up with them" (WW 107). Here, Brave Orchid is using "they" to show she is different from other Chinese people in America. We can understand her statement in this way: she no longer identifies herself as Chinese.

Such a change can also be found in Brave Orchid's dressing. "She recently took to wearing shawls and granny glasses, American fashion" (WW 100). Dreaming of going back to China gradually becomes a ritual which has more practical power on her life, and in fact, she begins to accept American life style. In order to keep her identity as a Chinese woman, she sticks to Chinese traditions. Meanwhile, she has no choice but to accept American culture, which is the only way to establish immigrants' cultural identity.

B. The Pattern of the Second-Generation Immigrants' Cultural Identity Pursuit

Different from the first-generation immigrants, the second-generation immigrants follow another pattern to form their identity. They tend to ward off the influence of Chinese culture and are eager to become real Americans. However, when they find it impossible for them to be accepted by American mainstream, they begin to realize the necessity of maintaining Chinese heritage.

Like their predecessors, the second-generation immigrants also encountered racism in American society. The first kind of racism is institutional racism.¹⁰⁾ When racism is built into the institution, it appears to be an act of the collective population, a common practice, which is harder to resist. That is to say, when institutional racism has been indoctrinated into Chinese American to a certain degree, it leads to so-called internalized racism.¹¹⁾ Chinese Americans internalize white superiority, and thus feel themselves to be inferior. What's worse, the internalized racism in turn results in intra-racism – discrimination among Chinese Americans against those with more Chinese characteristics. The American-born Chinese American's critical attitude toward their immigrant parents is typical.

Secondly, the relationship between Chinese Americans and the American mainstream culture can be understood in terms of colonial relationship. Education in American schools makes many second-generation Chinese Americans become "colonial subjects."¹²⁾

10) "Institutional Racism" is defined as the differential access to goods, services, and opportunities of society. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institutional_racism.

11) "Internalized Racism" here means the acceptance by members of stigmatized races of negative messages about their own abilities and intrinsic worth, characterized by their not believing in themselves or others who look like them. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internalized_racism.

In American schools, American culture and values are inculcated. Colonial ideology naturally becomes a pervasive force among Chinese Americans. It is difficult for these colonial subjects to rebel against colonial subjugation because they are taught to believe in American superiority and, therefore, in their own inferiority. As a result, many Chinese Americans youngsters have tried to imitate the colonizers as much as possible in dress, speech, behavior and lifestyle. They often learn to identify themselves with white Americans and to look down upon their parents' native country and culture. They see their family's past as a source of shame, something to be shed. In order to appear completely Euro-American they reject or deny everything Chinese, even though their Chinese features cannot be changed. Homi K. Bhabha refers to such a phenomenon as "mimicry," which constitutes the first stage of their identity seeking – trying to be one hundred percent Americans, but not quite.

Maxine the narrator/protagonist is a representative figure in this sense. Born in a Chinese family, it is not hard to imagine that she keeps some Chineseness from time to time even if she cannot understand it. In Chapter of "White Tigers" in *The Woman Warrior*, we find a striking example. When the girl encountered the old couple in the mountains, they had a conversation as follows:

"Have you eaten rice today, little girl?" they greeted me.

"Yes, I have." I said out of politeness. "Thank you."

("No, I haven't." I would have said in real life, mad at the Chinese for lying so much. "I'm starved. Do you have any cookies? I like chocolate chip

12) The idea about the project of domesticating and civilizing indigenous populations and mimicry are founded on theory of Homi. K. Bhabha's postcolonialism, which can be found in following references, Raman Selden, Peter Widdowson and Peter Brooker, *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory* 5th ed. and Tao Jiajun, "On the Premonition of Theory Transformation: the Building of Homi. K. Bhabha's Postcolonial Subjects," ("论理论转变的征兆：论霍米·巴巴的后殖民主体建构").

cookies.") (WW 21)

The girl could not understand why Chinese people always wondered if they had eaten, but she unconsciously followed this odd Chinese custom and told a "lie." Thinking back on the life of the second-generation immigrants, it is easy to understand their behavior. Born Chinese, and brought up in Chinatown, they cannot completely get rid of the influence of Chinese culture.

Maxine's silence at the early stages of her life is another example. Although born in America, she did not feel like an American at all. "During the first silent year I spoke to no one at school, did not ask before going to the lavatory and flunked kindergarten" (WW 165). She hated her American school, where she didn't talk for three years. She was miserable at school and her black paintings reflected her sadness, despair, and fears. She felt better in a Chinese school that she attended after her regular school. The Chinese school was filled with loud Chinese voices, screams, and yells. Obviously, Maxine, in her early years, identifies herself as Chinese and isolates herself from Americans.

Although greatly influenced by Chinese traditions, the second-generation Chinese Americans inevitably accept a lot of American culture and when facing conflicts caused by the two different cultures, they are more willing to be on the side of American culture. Maxine talks to herself: "To make my waking life American-normal, I turn on the lights before anything untoward makes an appearance. I push the deformed into my dreams, which are in Chinese, the language of impossible stories. Before we can leave our parents, they stuff our heads like the suitcases which they jam-pack with home-made underwear" (WW 87). Apparently, Maxine was embarrassed by the "homemade underwear" packed into her suitcase, although she realized the determined

parental love expressed in that undesirable action. Such embarrassment is a symptom of intra-racial racism prevalent among second-generation Chinese Americans.

Second-generation Chinese Americans believe that the old generation's customs and practices are inscrutable and superstitious. In the last chapter "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe," the episode about "reparation candy" tells the reader clearly this belief. The local druggist mistakenly sent some medicine to the narrator's house, which means a sign of misfortune for traditional Chinese people. Following Chinese tradition, the mother asked young Maxine to demand some "reparation candy" from him. Maxine knew that the druggist would never comprehend her mother's anger about medicine being mistakenly delivered to their house. She felt so embarrassed that she couldn't speak clearly to the druggist.

Maxine feels frustrated and is eager to stay outside of her Chinese world. In order to get out of the hating range, she has no choice but to leave the immigrant community. "When I'm away from here, [...] I don't get sick. I can breathe" (WW 108). However, when she begins her ideal life in the United States, she feels a sense of pity because the imaginative and mythical habits of thought represented by China have been lost.¹³⁾ China is a land of rich and fertile myth; in contrast, American rationalism, which explains an eclipse of the moon scientifically rather than as the "frog swallowing the moon" (WW 169). As she grows up in America, Maxine loses the ability to see spirits. She writes in the last chapter, "Now colors are gentler and fewer; smells are antiseptic. Now when I peek in the basement window where the

¹³⁾ Elaine H. Kim has said in his article, "Chinatown Cowboys and Warrior Women:" "The Chinese American girl must leave the immigrant community 'to get out of hating range,' but it is from this vibrant community, that she has drawn the sustenance of her spirit. It is not the colorless world she seeks refuge in that has taught her to see who the 'enemies' are."

King-kok, Cheung has also pointed out in his essay "Provocative Silence: *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men*", "these stories told by her mother have become very much a part of the narrator's self, thanks to her mother's influence."

villagers say they see a girl dancing like a bottle imp, I can no longer see a spirit in a skirt made of light, but a voiceless girl dancing when she thought no one was looking"(WW 205). In the past she was quite exasperated by Chinese secrecy, but now she comes to realize the charm of this kind of secrecy that American directness does not possess. She comes to be aware that Chinese is the language of dreams and impossible stories, of metaphor and paradox. In America, "Things follow in lines at school. They take stories and teach us to turn them into essays" (WW 201).

Now Maxine, as a mature adult, has the desire to come to terms with her Chinese heritage and her mother. In the space created from distinct and contrasting viewpoints, Maxine continues to "sort out what's just my childhood, just my imagination, just my family, just the village, just movies, just living" (WW 205). Having left home and seen the world differently, she can return to the ambivalent facts and fictions of her life and her mother's. She can make them as raw materials and find creative inspiration without losing her developing sense of a separate self in her split community in which she grew up. The adult narrator seeks a way to return to Chinese culture. She even expresses a longing to be welcome back by the folk of the community through her art:

"The swordswoman and I are not so dissimilar. May my people understand the resemblance soon so that I can return to them. What we have in common are the words at our backs. [...] And I have so many words --- 'chink' words and 'gook' words too--- that they do not fit on my skin" (WW 53).

Kingston's writing suggests that Maxine – now the writer – has finally learned to employ two cultures artfully to write out her inner feeling without being constricted by either. Therefore, she has found her special way to forge her identity. She has left Chinatown; however, she has not given up her ethnic community. The cycle of

departure and return is a new and welcome possibility for Chinese Americans. Finally, Maxine decides to assert an identity that is neither Chinese nor white American, but distinctively Chinese American.

Realizing the inner beauty of Chinese heritage, Maxine also changes her attitude towards her mother. She begins to see her mother as an intelligent, energetic, feisty, and courageous woman who transmits complex messages in difficult social and historical circumstances and willingly acknowledges her affiliation: "I am practically the first daughter of a first daughter" (WW 109). She has come to realize that "her family's apparent disparagement of girls does not reflect the feeling they do have for their own daughters" (Cheung, "Provocative Silence," 97). She senses the point of the duplicity: when her mother calls her ugly, she does not actually mean that her daughter is ugly: "That's what we're supposed to say. That's what Chinese say. We like to say the opposite" (WW 204). This hint of reconciliation is extended to the book's symbolic ending. The adult Maxine informs us that the final story is collaboration between her mother and herself: "Here is a story my mother told me, not when I was young, but recently, when I told her I also talk-story. The beginning is hers, the ending, mine" (WW 206).

The ending story is another Chinese legend, the capture of the second-century Chinese woman poet Ts'ai Yen by the barbarians. Kingston subverts its original moral as she has done with the stories about the "No Name Woman" and the women warrior. "The Chinese version highlights her eventual return to the Han people. Kingston's version, by contrast, emphasizes the interethnic harmony" (Cheung, "Provocative Silence," 94). We see instead a baffled Ts'ai Yen living among the noble savages, receiving gifts from the barbarian chieftain after he impregnates her, and riding on his horse when he charges into villages. One day, she is also struck by the music of

barbarian reed pipes filling the desert that she could not help but to sing.

Then, out of Ts'ai Yen's tent, which was apart from the others, the barbarians heard a woman's voice singing, as if to her babies, a song so high and clear, it matches the flutes. Ts'ai Yen sang about China and her family there. Her words seemed to be Chinese, but the barbarians understood their sadness and anger. Sometimes they thought they could catch barbarian phrases about forever wandering. Her children did not laugh, but eventually sang along when she left her tent to sit by the winter campfires, ringed by barbarians (WW 209).

The poet in exile is no longer lonely; this passage creates a mythic vision, crossing boundaries and transcending differences, towards happiness and wholeness. This final juxtaposition suggests the recognition and acceptance of human diversity, mutual respect, and communal sharing. The book begins with mother's story about "No Name Woman," but ends with Maxine's story of Ts'ai Yen. The daughter gets her mother's power and follows mother's way to speak out their own special feeling and life. Both mother and daughter are Chinese Americans who share a common culture – Chinese American culture. The final reconciliation tells us that it is significant for Chinese Americans to adjust to the new world without being swallowed up by it when modern life seems so divisive.

C. The Ultimate Way to Form Cultural Identity

Under the two patterns of pursuit of cultural identity, both the first-generation and the second-generation immigrants have something in common: they succeed finding their self by combining Chinese with American culture. This is the ultimate way for the Chinese Americans to form their cultural identity.

As mentioned above, the first-generation immigrants would rather keep their Chinese traditions because they always think they are Chinese and dream of returning to China. They live in a foreign country whose culture is different from their own; therefore, they do not feel belonging to this place. But things change when they find they have to live in this country permanently. They feel they have no "home" to go back, and the feeling of having no root forces them to find a new way to establish their self, so they begin to adapt to and accept American culture. Meanwhile, it is impossible for them to desert their Chinese tradition totally. For short, the first-generation immigrants have to identify themselves as Chinese Americans if they want to have a clear identity and a feeling of belongingness.

For the second-generation immigrants, or maybe all Chinese American youngsters, the formation of Chinese American cultural identity seems much harder than their parents. In their daily life outside Chinatown, especially in interaction with their white classmates, Chinese American youngsters are constantly reminded of their status as outsiders --- they are stereotyped and looked down upon. Even to those American-born Chinese Americans whose families have lived for many generations in the United States, they are frequently to feel foreign and alien. Naturally, sense of shame and anger will grow inside them. Such self-hatred may discourage them in their desire to fit into the mainstream society. And some may take use of the anger as a tool to discard their past.

They may begin to realize the impossibility of shedding their background, only to

see that the hope of belonging to the white American culture is only a fantasy. Then they find that they must go back to their Chinese roots and make an effort to establish a connection with their original Chinese culture and to feel proud of such background, if they want to be known and accepted in a multicultural environment. However, racism is still the most formidable hindrance to their endeavor, which anticipates the process of forging the new identity is bound to be complicated. In spite of all that, Chinese Americans have traced back to their origin, where they can post as the stance point to challenge and resist the white dominance in American society. They cherish the glorious part of their ethnic culture and the great contributions their forefathers have made to the development of America. By rejecting the American prevailing ideology which defines them as inferior, Chinese Americans have achieved a cultural identity as part of Chinese and feel proud of it through the reclamation of their Chinese American history and their Chinese roots.

Nevertheless, it is impossible to go back to the Chinese traditions used to be held by their ancestors. As Jill Krause has noted in her article "Gendered Identities in International Relations," our sense of both personal and collective identity is increasingly influenced by a "whole range of factors specific to the immediate social and cultural context in which we carry out our day to day activities" (100). Consequently, Chinese Americans find themselves made into a hybrid creature. They find their new identity as Chinese Americans who embrace the multiple and conflicting aspects of Chinese American culture --- a blended culture in a shrinking world that is itself becoming more and more culturally hybrid.

To sum up, Chinese Americans fit into the following three forms of cultural identity. Some Chinese Americans can be labeled as "traditionalists," which refer to those who adhere to traditional Chinese values and who identify with Chinese culture to the

exclusion of the dominant American culture. Some may be categorized as "assimilationists," which refer to those who adopt WASP (Whit Anglo-Saxon Protestant) values and behavioral norms and identify themselves as Americans to the exclusion of their Chinese background. The third can be named as "biculturalists," who maintain both Chinese and American cultural values and try to fit into the American mainstream.¹⁴⁾ They tend to identify strongly with their ethnic group, and simultaneously tend to adapt to the dominant American culture.

¹⁴⁾ Stanley and derald suein their article, "Chinese-American Personality and Mental Health" divided Asian American people into three types, "traditionalist, marginal man, and Asian American." More arguments can be found in David Leiwei, Li's "Aiiieeee! And the Predicament of Asian American Articulation."

III. Chinese American Women's

Gender Identity Pursuit

A. Dual Oppression Imposed on Chinese American Women

It is more difficult for Chinese American women to consolidate a new gender identity in a multicultural environment, because their gender identity development is complicated by the dual forces of sexism and racism both in Chinese culture and in American culture. That is to say, Chinese American women suffer double oppression. They are the victims of both American hegemonic ideology which devalues them because of their race, and patriarchal ideology which devalues them because of their gender.

In traditional Chinese society, a woman is identified through her role in a patriarchal relationship, in which the standard for judging women is whether or not they are passive, obedient and silent as daughters, wives and mothers. Such devaluation brought about serious problems in Chinese American women's attempt to achieve an independent identity. They have great trouble in gaining access to political power and economic opportunities. What's more, the old feudal ideology seriously influenced their ways of thinking and speaking only to make them fail to create the ways of life that are not dominated by patriarchal ideology.

Meanwhile, as an ethnic minority, Chinese Americans are relegated to inferior status in American society. They are caricatured in American culture as weak, humble and serviceable, which is consistent with "feminine" traits. As ethnic females, Chinese American women are subjected to conflicting gender stereotypes. They are characterized as "exotic, shy, submissive, demure, erotic, and eager to please," on the one hand, or "wily, manipulative, inscrutable, and untrustworthy," on the other (Okiihiro, "Recentring Women," 70). This devaluating image is apt to be confirmed by selective observation of both ethnic and majority individuals. That is to say, when an individual of the majority culture has only superficial contact with minority persons, his observation is not able to go beyond the stereotype. Thus, stereotypes are easily confirmed in his mind. Besides, as a kind of colonial subjects, Chinese American women are more likely to act in passive, deferential ways in their contact with white Americans, because this kind of ways are the expected characteristics of Chinese, and thus confirm racially stereotyped expectations. Under these conditions, Chinese American women are bound both by their own cultural demands and by projections of the majority culture.

B. Three Types of Women in *The Woman Warrior*

1. Victims of Gender Oppression

The first type is obedient to the prejudice against women and becomes victims of gender oppression. Moon Orchid in *The Woman Warrior* is a typical character of this kind. Moon Orchid is weak, passive, timid, and submissive, all of which are the

characteristics of traditional Chinese woman. She accepted an arranged marriage to a man considerably younger than she. After her husband's emigration to America, where he became a brain surgeon and married a young Chinese American woman, Moon Orchid accepted her fate as an abandoned wife in Hong Kong. Depending on money from her husband, she brought up their only daughter by herself, satisfied with being taken care of in the traditional style of the upper class Chinese woman. She blindly obeyed the patriarchal mandate for women to be demure: "For thirty years she had been receiving money from him from America. But she had never told him that she wanted to come to the United States. She waited for him to suggest it. But he never did" (WW 124).

With her sister's help, she arrived in America in her late sixties. When Brave Orchid instigated her to reclaim her husband, she was afraid that he would be angry with her, saying: "He didn't abandon me. He's given me so much money. I've had all the food and clothes and servants I've ever wanted. And he's supported our daughter too, even though she's only a girl. He sent her to college. I can't bother him. I mustn't bother him" (WW 125). Although her sister Brave Orchid devised a plan for their reunion in Los Angeles, Moon Orchid had no capability to negotiate a settlement with him. She only cried. When he looked directly at her, "she shrank from his stare; it silenced her crying"(WW 152). Thus, the plan ended in the husband's just agreeing to buy lunch for her and her sister but not taking her back.

Deeply rooted in Chinese habits, Moon Orchid was unable to adjust to the new world, where even her nephews and nieces were incomprehensible to her. For example, when she praised the children for being smart or pretty, she expected them to say, "Oh, no, you're too kind... I'm stupid. I'm ugly"(WW 134). They would either say thank you or simply agree with her, which left her "[marveling] at their vanity" (WW 134).

Gradually losing her self-identity, she became insane, and her pitiful life finally ended in the California mental asylum. Moon orchid is typical of traditional Chinese women whose happiness and sadness lie in the hands of others.

2. Rebellious Women

In *The Woman Warrior*, Kingston tells us many stories about how oppressed women avenge for their fate. In the first chapter, the no-name aunt was a victim of the traditional patriarchal ideology, but Maxine tries to make her into a victor: the no-name aunt killed herself and her child as she was expected to do, but she did it by jumping into the family's drinking well, polluting the water and getting her revenge.¹⁵⁾ It is not uncommon for "fallen women" to commit suicide after they have brought disgrace to their families or themselves. But in *The Woman Warrior*, the suicide by jumping into the family well is not a punishment, but a rebel against traditional ideology: "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). According to Chinese superstition, a drowned woman will emerge from the water to conduct vengeance on her enemies. This way of killing herself differs significantly from the tragedies of traditional Chinese women. Thus the no-name woman transforms herself from a pure victim to a woman warrior fighting against patriarchal ideology.

In the second chapter, "cowering whimpering women" on "little bound feet" later form a mercenary army of sword women called "witch amazons" (WW 44-45). Those who "blinked weakly ...like pheasants that have been raised in the dark for soft meat",

¹⁵⁾ Wu Xiaoyun has explained the Chinese myth about "well" in her article, "Subversive World and Striving Warrior," ("颠覆的世界, 自强的勇士"): "For Chinese, 'well' stands for drinking water, so it symbolizes headspring of life. She died in the family well on the purpose of not giving water to her family anymore, which is a kind of revenge to her family and her villagers."

those who "could not escape on their little bound feet", those who "would not be good for anything" would be said to have "turned into the band of swords women who were a mercenary army. They did not wear men's clothes... but rode as women in black and red dresses... They killed men and boys" (WW 44-45). Here, those disabled women became real female avengers. Unlike Fa Mu Lan, who is impelled to be a warrior by idealism and disguises herself as a man, these women are self-interested, and identified as female. This is obviously Kingston's hostile response to female humiliation.¹⁶⁾

However, the Maxine herself is the most outstanding figure among the rebellious type. As a girl born into a Chinese immigrant family in America, Maxine has been silenced by the Chinese misogynist culture as well as American racism. Yet it is this girl who has violated a series of cultural injunctions, willing to "name the unspeakable" (WW 6).

The very first sentence of *The Woman Warrior* – "‘You must not tell anyone,’ my mother said, ‘what I am about to tell you’" – displays that this silent girl who has an ugly duckling voice will break silence, and betray her mother's warning by communicating the story of her no-name aunt to the world.¹⁷⁾ No-name aunt was erased from family memory by the taking away of her name and place in society and by the family's silence about her very existence. In creative and subversive ways, Maxine breaks her own silence and thereby vindicates the ancestral women in her family culture, reclaiming their names and their stories for herself and other women in

¹⁶⁾ Sidonie Smith regards the story of "whimpering women" as a "truly subversive ‘story’ of female empowerment" (in contrast to the original and revised tale of Fa Mu Lan): "Wielding unauthorized power, they do not avenge the wrongs of fathers and brothers; they lead daughters against fathers and sons, slaying the source of the phallic order itself. Moreover, they do so, not by masking, but by aggressively revealing their sexual difference" (Cheung, "Provocative Silence," 87).

¹⁷⁾ Leslie W. Rabine also refers to this argument in his essay, "No Lost Paradise: Social Gender and Symbolic Gender in the Writings of Maxine Hong Kingston:"

"By establishing a descent line with this woman, Kingston reaffirms the damage to the true patriarchal descent line and replaces it with a competing, illegitimate line. She adheres to it not just by offering paper to the spirit of her aunt but also by carrying on the aunt's tradition of engaging in the one act that destroys the essence of patriarchal descent: illegitimate birth. She gives birth not only to the aunt who was ‘forgotten as if she had never been born,’ but also to a book that violates the father's law."

America.

Maxine tells us how she has overcome her shyness and silence, and eventually finds her voice and starts to talk in the last chapter of the book. Having accumulated a list of over 200 items about herself, she needed to confess to her mother "so that she would know the true things about me and to stop the pain in my throat"(WW 197). She decides to be brave and let them out, a few a day, but her mother rebuffs her "senseless gabbing every night. I wish you would stop. I don't feel like hearing your craziness" (WW 200). One evening, Maxine's throat burst open, voicing the most difficult items on her list, complaints against her parents and assertions of her own worth:

I want you to tell that hulk, that gorilla-ape, to go away and never bother us again. [...] You think you can give us away to freaks. You better not do that, Mother. [...] I may be ugly and clumsy, but one thing I'm not, I'm not retarded. [...] I can do ghost things even better than ghosts can. Not everybody thinks I'm nothing. I am not going to be a slave or a wife. [...] I can't stand living here anymore. [...] I'm going to get scholarship, and I'm going away [...] (WW 201).

This can be regarded as a declaration of independence not only by Maxine but also by all Chinese American women. As she pours forth this tirade, she finds that the authority she is resisting so furiously is no longer there. This realization frees her, and only after this can she look back and see that she "had been in the presence of great power, my mother talking-story" (WW 19-20). Only then can she acknowledge that she and her mother were both born in the year of the dragon,¹⁸⁾ and that she also talks story like her mother.

By presenting the progress from being buffeted by opposing cultural ideologies to articulating a trail of her own, Kingston set a good metaphor of the growth of Chinese American women's literature. Just like the daughter in the novel who learns to break her own silence in creative, subversive ways and thereby vindicates the ancestral women in her family culture, reclaiming their names and their stories for herself and other women in America, Chinese American women writers have found their unique way of storytelling, creating new images of Chinese American women, and in this way, they rewrite American history and claim America for all Chinese Americans.

3. Androgynous Women

The term "androgynous"¹⁹⁾ is first used by Virginia Woolf in her book *A Room of One's Own*. It signifies having both feminine and masculine characteristics. In *The Woman Warrior*, the legendary Fa Mu Lan and Brave Orchid are two prominent women of this type. Since much has been discussed about femininity earlier, their masculinity will be the main focus here.

In *The Woman Warrior*, Kingston displays to us an exciting and glamorous role for women through the legend of Fa Mu Lan. In order to save her elderly father from conscription and to undo the wrongs done in her village, Fa Mu Lan becomes a woman warrior. Because she accomplishes her deeds out of filial respect, not just for personal glorification, she is an acceptable role model for a woman. However, the careful reader will find that at a certain stage of her life, Fa Mu Lan seems to have a

18) "I am really a dragon, as she is a dragon, both of us born in dragon years. I am practically a first daughter of a first daughter" (WW 109).

19) More explanation about "androgyny" can be found in "Feminist Theories," *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, 5th ed.

hatred for femininity.²⁰⁾ She fights as a woman in the guise of a male warrior, with a bloodthirsty warring spirit. To make herself look like a "powerful, big man" (WW 39), Fa Mu Lan wears armor while she is pregnant. She gives up her child to fight in the wars as a "slim young man" (WW 48). Upon her returning home, she impresses her son not so much as a mother but as a "general he had seen in the parade" (WW 45). It seems that she can articulate and redress her rage and grievances only in this male disguise, and she can win the love and respect of her family and community only as a warrior. For a time, she leads the life of the privileged male sex – the apple of her parents' and her country's eye. But eventually she has to return to a life of servitude as a daughter, wife, and mother.

Similar hatred for femininity can be found in Maxine, who attempts resistance by trying to deny her femaleness, especially by breaking the established codes for female behavior: achieving academic success, behaving clumsily, breaking dishes, refusing to cook. She does not plan ever to have a husband. She gloats when her mother calls her a bad girl. "Isn't a bad girl almost a boy?" (WW 47) To rebel against the traditional idea of the uselessness of girls, Maxine has an inclination to become a boy. When asked what she wants to be when she grows up, she answers "A lumberjack in Oregon", that is, an American and a man. This is not a voluntary choice but a result of social pressures, and it is a way of denying her connection with what is devalued in her society. The attempts to reject her own femaleness imply a kind of self-hatred, which is even more evident in the narrator's physical and psychological abuse of the quiet girl. Although they are in common with the inability to speak aloud in public and participate in American life, Maxine tries to differentiate herself from this girl by claiming her hatred of neatness and pastel colors, her own desire to be tough rather than soft. The actual abuse is clearly an effort to expunge those parts of her

²⁰⁾ Same viewpoint can also be found in Seo Mi Na's thesis, *Cultural Identity and Narrative Strategy in The Woman Warrior and The Joy Luck Club*: "Maxine's denial of Chinese femininity of the woman warrior is embodied in a conflict with her mother who struggles to impart her Chinese feminine identity."

Chinese-female identity that she abhors and to show out her own possibilities in resisting that identity.

Some feminists note that hatred for femininity is actually a stage of feminine identity development when women appropriate patriarchal rhetoric and codes of behavior.²¹⁾ After passing that stage when women gain their own subjective consciousness, they find that the patriarchal structure of society and language appears to be set up to "break women with their own tongues" (WW 47)! Then they feel the necessity of developing a pride in being a woman. Assertion of womanhood thus becomes a heroic act. Fa Mu Lan achieves this goal by secretly having a lover and bearing a child in battle. She is strengthened by her marriage and childbirth. She enjoys the pleasure of getting wild flowers and genuine compliments for her beauty from her husband. She likes the feeling of warming her baby with her breast, seeing the baby's breathing rhythm with hers, and hearing her baby's heart beating like hers.

From this woman warrior, Maxine gets her heroic role model – an exciting and glamorous role for women. The woman warrior, who is independent, and desires to have as much power as men, contrasts with the ideal wife who is passive, obedient and dependent. Fa Mu Lan's revenge is on those who feel women are worthless, on those who restrict women, and especially on those who teach women to see themselves as helpless and worthless. By seeing the story of Fa Mu Lan that a woman can also be of some worth, especially that women can feel a sense of their own worth without sacrificing their feminine traits, the little girl gets some hope – a hope that she too can be valuable to the family and can live a happy life of her own. Therefore, she becomes ambitious and attempts to be a heroic, strong, independent, and freethinking Chinese American woman who breaks through society's conventions.

Brave Orchidis another woman character that takes on the masculine traits. We can

²¹⁾ The idea comes from such references:

Yang Junlei's article "From Power, Gender to Man" ("从权力、性别到整体的人") and Wei Tianzhen's essay, "Feminism in Postmodernism about Literature: Problems and Contradictions" ("后现代语境中的女性主义：问题与矛盾").

even get it from her name. "Bravery" is allegedly a masculine quality, which Taoists designate as "yang" (阳) in Chinese while "Orchid", with its tender floweriness, is a equivalent of femininity, a quality always called as "yin" (阴).²²⁾ After her husband immigrated to America, she takes on more active power in the family and manages total family governance in China. Her bravery, courage and strong will are best portrayed in her fight with the Sitting Ghost, to whom she says, "I do not give in. There is no pain you can inflict that I cannot endure. You're wrong if you think I'm afraid of you... You have no power over a strong woman" (WW 70). Brave Orchid's independence and self-reliance allow her to act the authority of the family when her husband has lost his position as the provider and is becoming increasingly passive. It is her aggressiveness that prevents the dissolution of the family as an economic and cultural unit. Her ability to change traditional role into modern one is apparently appreciated by Maxine. In the portrayal of Brave Orchid, we see a character that is at once a female vanguard of the self-reliant individual and a version of traditional motherhood.

As some feminists point out, traditional gender role is only a cultural construct of the patriarchal society.²³⁾ A woman can literally do anything that a man does. A woman should be able to do anything she wants to do. Only in this way can the patriarchal system be completely subverted and the goal of equality between men and women achieved.

In her interview with Shelly Fisher Fishkin, Kingston speaks of her hope that "when artists write about new characters, we invent new archetypes and they are visions of ways that we can be" (159). The archetype of androgynous characters can be regarded

22) More resources about *yin* and *yang* could be found in this website, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/y/yinyang.htm#top>.

23) Kate Millett's radical feminism writes, "Patriarchy subordinates the female to the male or treats the female as an inferior male, and this power is exerted, directly or indirectly, in civil and domestic life to constrain women." Cited in "Feminist theories" in *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, 5th ed.

as Kingston's vision of what is possible for new women to become. She hopes that these wonderful new images of confident women can help to shape a new reality. In the same talk, Kingston further illustrates her idea, "What we need to do is to be able to imagine the possibility of a powerful, nonviolent, mothering man, and we need to imagine the possibilities of a powerful, nonviolent woman and the possibilities of harmonious communities, and if we can just imagine them, that would be the first step toward building them and becoming them" (160).

As a matter of fact, in the world consistent both of women and men, only if the both get along harmoniously and live dependently, should human being gain the access to live, to proliferate, and to develop, as Kingston describes in *The Woman Warrior*. Seven-year-old Maxine came into a mountain followed by a bird that "looks like the ideograph for 'human.'" In the mountain, she met only an old man and an old woman and lived with them till she was fifteen. In the family, there are no phallocentrism or gender antagonisms. The old man and the old woman, the incarnation of timelessness and nature, changed their forms from time to time, but stayed always as a whole, a state of inseparable harmony.

I saw two people made of fold dancing the earth's dances. They turned so perfectly that together they were the axis of the earth's turning. They were light; they were molten, changing gold --- Chinese lion dancers, African lion dancers in midstep. [...] Then the dancers danced the future --- a machine-future --- in clothes I had never seen before. I am watching the centering pass in moments because suddenly I understand how working and hoeing are dancing; how peasant clothes are golden, as king's clothes are golden; how one of the dancers is always a man and the other a woman

(WW 27).

In the dancing, Maxine saw the process of historical development of the world, changing without ceasing, with brightness and harmony. First of all, the harmony is created by the two components --- both man and woman, both indispensable.

Looking back, we find the movement toward syntheses exist not only in the process of Chinese Americans' cultural identity formation but also in women's gender identity development. They accept those American values they find valuable and useful, but they will never cut themselves off from their Chinese roots. Having oscillated between identification with ostracized, mute, demented Chinese women and with celebrated Chinese heroines, new Chinese American women are to bridge the weak and the strong. This synthesizing process itself is partly Chinese and partly American.

C. Three Stages of Gender Identity Pursuit

Based on the analysis on the three types of women in *The Woman Warrior*, the process of searching for gender identity can be divided into three stages. At the first stage, some Chinese women remain to stick to the traditional Chinese patriarchal ideology even after they immigrate to America. In the book *The Woman Warrior*, no-name aunt and Moon Orchid are good example at this stage. At this stage, they internalize patriarchal assumptions about female nature, accept naively the gender role assigned to them by the patriarchal society and comply with the virtues and habits instilled to them by the elders that are considered ideally feminine in traditional Chinese culture. They try to be good girls, assuming that their female identity is

constituted in the practice of their deference to the patriarchal ideology, by acting as passive, obedient and dependent females whose sole purpose in life is to serve and obey men --- their fathers, their husbands, and their sons.

Fortunately, most women can transcend this stage and realize that it is unfair for them to sacrifice so much without worthy reward. The second type of women in *The Woman Warrior* is at this stage. At the early stage of their life, they have followed traditional rules. They have been silent, reticent, torturing, and submissive. They have focused their energies on fulfilling their obligations as daughter, wife, and mother, but their value has never been recognized. They have endured mistreatment, accusation and hardship, but they have never been rewarded with happiness. Therefore, they decide to break their silence, to empower themselves to stand up and resist the oppression. They begin to rebel --- to deny their connection with what is devalued in society. At this stage, they reject the accommodating postures of femininity, and attempt to achieve their spiritual independence from men. They find it necessary to articulate their own desires. They will not settle for their roles as daughters of their parents, wives of their husbands, mothers of their children. They feel the necessity of a sense of their own worth. They dare to risk being regarded as "bad girls," and brave the fear of feeling lonely and the danger of being isolated.

But it is not until the third stage that women obtain social recognition and win the love and respect of their families and communities. At the third stage, the rebellious women find it necessary to redefine their femininity by attaining some "masculine" characteristics; therefore they can achieve their androgynous ideal to act as a real person, not just as a woman. At this stage, they have integrated the merits of both men and women they have become independent, nurturing, mothering, feminine human beings who can work shoulder to shoulder with men to build the world into a better,

more beautiful, more harmonious one. The women of this type in *The Woman Warrior* have reached this stage and hence become warriors.

Of course, not all women go through all three stages. For example, Moon Orchid stays at the first stage all her life, no-name aunt, in some sense, stops at the second stage; only Maxine and Brave Orchid complete the cycle. The fate of the above-mentioned women is inevitably different; Moon Orchid and no-name aunt become the victims of gender oppression and Maxine and her mother become warriors. Enlightened by this different fate, it is not hard for us to conclude that women have to come to the third stage in order to establish their gender identity, that is, women cannot win acceptance and respect in the society until they add masculine characteristics into their femininity.

Conclusion

Maxine Hong Kingston, as a member of ethnic minority, is devoted to exploring the issue of identity crisis in *The Woman Warrior*, and she manages to find a solution to this problem.

Chinese Americans encountered a crisis of cultural identity as soon as they landed on the Promised Land. In order to find their self, they are in constant search for their cultural identity. As illustrated in *The Woman Warrior*, the search is conducted under two patterns. One is followed by the first-generation immigrants whose attitude changes from total acceptance of Chinese culture and rejection of American culture to combination of Chinese and American culture. The other pattern is followed by the second-generation immigrants whose attitude changes from total acceptance of American culture and rejection of Chinese culture to combination of the two cultures. Through their life experience, both generations of immigrants come to realize that a reconciliation of the two cultures is the ultimate way to establish Chinese Americans' cultural identity, in other words, multiplicity of self is the destination of cultural identity pursuit.

Kingston also touches the issue of gender identity in *The Woman Warrior*. As for Chinese American women, it is not enough for them to merely form their cultural identity; they have to establish their gender identity as well. Women may go through three different stages in seeking their gender identity, namely, the stage of being submissive to the traditional Chinese patriarchal ideology, the stage of rebelling against the traditional Chinese patriarchal ideology and finally the stage of combining

femininity with masculine characteristics. Women who stop at the first and the second stage fail to be an equal part as men. The only way for women to gain acceptance and respect is to add masculine characteristics to their femininity.

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저작물 이용 허락서

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논문제목	한글 : 킹스틴의 <여전사>에 나타난 문화적 정체성과 젠더 정체성 추구 양상				
	영문 : A study on Cultural and Gender Identity Pursuit in <i>The Woman Warrior</i>				

본인이 저작한 위의 저작물에 대하여 다음과 같은 조건 아래 조선대학교가 저작물을 이용할 수 있도록 허락하고 동의합니다.

- 다 음 -

1. 저작물의 DB구축 및 인터넷을 포함한 정보통신망에의 공개를 위한 저작물의 복제, 기억장치에의 저장, 전송 등을 허락함.
2. 위의 목적을 위하여 필요한 범위 내에서의 편집과 형식상의 변경을 허락함. 다만, 저작물의 내용변경은 금지함.
3. 배포·전송된 저작물의 영리적 목적을 위한 복제, 저장, 전송 등은 금지함.
4. 저작물에 대한 이용기간은 5년으로 하고, 기간종료 3개월 이내에 별도의 의사 표시가 없을 경우에는 저작물의 이용기간을 계속 연장함.
5. 해당 저작물의 저작권을 타인에게 양도하거나 출판을 허락을 하였을 경우에는 1개월 이내에 대학에 이를 통보함.
6. 조선대학교는 저작물 이용의 허락 이후 해당 저작물로 인하여 발생하는 타인에 의한 권리 침해에 대하여 일체의 법적 책임을 지지 않음.
7. 소속 대학의 협정기관에 저작물의 제공 및 인터넷 등 정보통신망을 이용한 저작물의 전송·출력을 허락함.

동의여부 : 동의() 반대()

2009년 8월 25일

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