

Memoirs of a Ghirlhood among Ghosts

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Abstract

Maxine Hong Kingston's memoir, *The Woman Warrior*, delves into the intricacies of Chinese American identity, familial bonds, and the potency of narratives. Kingston explores issues of gender roles, cultural assimilation, and the quest for self-definition while drawing on her personal experiences. *Brave Orchid*, Kingston's mother tells story to her daughter about an aunt on her father's side of the family. While her husband is working in America, this aunt whom Kingston refers to as No Name Woman of Kingston aunt because the family never says her real name becomes pregnant. In *Women Warrior* the Maxine Hong Kingston the author wants to make an history by having here "no name aunt" life real incident which happened in chinese culture.

Introduction

The *Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*, Maxine Hong Kingston's critically acclaimed autobiography, was published in 1975. It recounts her experiences and hardships as a Chinese-American girl flowering in California. The *Woman Warrior's* true genre, however, has generated much debate among reviewers. The book itself is titled "Fiction/Literature" on the back cover, perfectly encapsulating the genre contention, while the front cover proudly announces the novel's win of the National Book Critics Circle Award for Nonfiction. The *Woman Warrior* is described by critic Patricia Blinde as "a collage of genres" and as "at once a novel, an autobiography, a series of essays and poems." However, even though the work makes use of different genre conventions, it also avoids the confines of any one genre.

In her paper "A Guided Chinatown Tour through Autobiography? In Sau-ling Cynthia "The *Woman Warrior* and the Chinese-American, by Maxine Hong Kingston Autobiographical Controversy," a number of academics have criticized *The Woman Warrior* and dismissed it as fiction awkwardly passed off as autobiography. Wong addresses these critiques. For instance, Jeffery Chan charges Kingston of "distributing an obvious fiction for fact," while Benjamin Tong characterizes *The Woman Warrior* as "fiction passing for autobiography." Frank Chin, one of Kingston's most outspoken detractors, takes issue with what

is arguably the most obvious fictionalization in *The Woman Warrior*: Kingston's misrepresentation of the Chinese folktale of Fa Mu Lan. Chin declares that the distortion "is simply a device" and accuses Kingston of distorting the Fa Mu Lan story to fit her own prejudices. *The Woman Warrior* deviates from the conventional autobiography mold. In an interview, Kingston acknowledged that she finds the conventional boundaries in genre to be too restrictive and that she would rather approach it in an unusual way.

No Name Women

My mother warned me, saying, "You have to keep what I am about to tell you to yourself. Your father's sister committed suicide in China. She fit right in with the family. It is as though she had never been born, which is why we say that your father has all brothers."

The beginning line of *The Woman Warrior* established the tone for the majority of the book. Be aware that the author of these words is Brave Orchid, not Kingston; talk-stories by Brave Orchid account for a large portion of the memoir, and it is Kingston's responsibility to interpret them. The ironic and noteworthy part of the memoir is that it starts with the words "Don't tell anyone what I am telling now ." The struggle Kingston faces in "No-Name Woman" and throughout the memoir is to write about the things that are never spoken: the horrors in her mother's Chinese village, the nameless dead aunt, and another aunt, Moon Orchid, who finds it difficult to adjust to life in America. In addition, Kingston's struggle is about reclaiming her voice after being silenced her entire life as a Chinese-American woman. As a result, from the outset, writing a memoir becomes a kind of rebellion because she is genuinely telling everyone. Through her memoir, Kingston shows that she is willing to speak out against those who have hampered her and takes control of the situation.

Kingston learns from her mother that her aunt fled China and joined the family, killing herself and her infant child. The villagers were aware that the child was not biological since the Kingston aunt's husband had left the nation years prior. The woman gave birth in a pigsty on the night of the baby's birth after the villagers raided and destroyed the family home. The next morning, the mother found her sister-in-law and the child obstructing the well. The woman's family chose to act as though she had never existed because of the shame she had brought upon them.

First Generation Chinese American Kingston Owvoice

Kingston's mother is a testament to her dedication to empowering women by providing them with distinctive voices. Despite having spent a considerable amount of time in America, Brave Orchid does not speak English, which leaves her essentially voiceless in her new environment. Nevertheless, Brave Orchid's accomplishments as well as the lives of all the women in *The Woman Warrior* expressed and documented via Kingston. Through her memoir, Kingston elevates Brave Orchid above the anonymous Chinese community in America and discloses her sacrifices. Ironically, though, Kingston's own self-esteem is threatened by this process of speaking out about women's experiences, particularly in her relationship with her mother. For instance, Brave Orchid gets furious when a delivery boy brings prescription medications to the family's laundromat by mistake: She believes that the pharmacy must have deliberately sent the medications to harm her family. Being the oldest child, Brave Orchid makes Kingston demand "reparation candy" from the druggist, a task that Kingston finds awkward. Kingston claims, "You can't trust the Chinese with your voice either; they want to record it for their own purposes. They wish to manipulate your tongue so that it speaks for them. Kingston's embarrassment also comes from her belief that Americans find Chinese to sound "chingchong ugly," akin to "guttural peasant noises."

Maxing Hong Kingston Making History

Earlier Kingston starts to menstruate, her mother told her this story as a warning. Her mother cautions her not to suffer twice. In retrospect, Kingston considers the world she grew up in a “invisible world” of ghosts imported from Chinese culture into the emigrants’ new American homes.

Kingston creates her own fantasies about why her aunt gave in to her forbidden passions because she is unable to inquire about her aunt, who is only referred to as “No-Name Woman”. In one such instance, the rapist commands her aunt, a shy woman, to submit. Her aunt has a slowly developing passion and tries to get a man to notice her by taking great care of her appearance. Kingston denies, for example, that her aunt was a wild, immoral woman. Her fantasies must directly impact her real life. Rather, Kingston recognizes that her aunt’s greatest transgression was defying the expectations of Chinese society and customs by pursuing her own interests. According to Kingston, these customs were believed

Kingston imagines what it was like to be cast out by her aunt’s family. Her aunt gives birth to the baby in a pigsty after becoming lost in the wilderness on her own. Kingston thinks her aunt chooses to end her own life along with that of her child in order to spare the latter from a life devoid of purpose or family. Kingston also points out that the infant was most likely a girl, and as such, would have already been viewed as essentially worthless by society a motif that recurs frequently in *The Woman Warrior*. By the end of the chapter, Kingston has this vision of her aunt as a lonesome, wandering ghost who is pleading with other ghosts for leftovers from the gifts that their devoted relatives have given them.

Since it captures so many of the other meaning in *The Woman Warrior*, “No Name Woman” is one of the more frequently anthologized sections of the book, covering topics such as the ambiguity and complexity of “talk-story,” women’s status in traditional Chinese society, and the difficulties of growing up as a Chinese American. The struggle of Kingston’s aunt, a woman who succumbs to a perilous sexual desire and is subsequently banished by her village, is compared to Kingston’s own struggle, as she tries to make sense of the antiquated practices and traditions in a foreign land that she only knows from her mother.

Kingston uses a variety of conflicts, such as those between the private and public spheres, frivolity and necessity, and the need for society to maintain control over the individual’s right to express themselves, to highlight this struggle. She depicts an oppressive, rigidly structured society in which people were practically unable to have private lives as she imagines what old world China was like. All actions had to be taken to ensure the welfare of the family or village what Kingston refers to as “the Necessary.” In this scenario, Kingston’s aunt stands in for the worst kind of transgressor one whose illegitimate child exposed her private lusts, upending social order and jeopardizing the village’s very survival. Adultery could have been “only a mistake” in prosperous times, according to Kingston.

Maxine personal experience growing up as a Chinese-American split between the permissive American environment and the world of Chinese customs and traditions that surrounded her like “ghosts,” is framed by the story of No-Name Woman. (Note that in the case of Kingston’s mother, the term “ghost” refers to the Americans themselves in the opposite sense.) Kingston faces a particularly challenging given that she is practically forbidden from talking to anyone about it. “You must not tell anyone,” her mother says “Don’t tell anyone what I am telling you” which is a potent, witty way to start a memoir. Kingston must create her own stories and scenarios about her aunt because she is prohibited from discussing the topic and only knows the general details of the story. We are faced with yet another contradiction as a result of this forced fabrication: truth versus fiction. Is Kingston trying to find out the truth about her aunt’s fate, or is she just making things

up to make herself feel better? Is she honoring or undermining her aunt's memory? Throughout the book, the equivocal quality of "talk-story," a synthesis of the real and the fantastic, keeps coming up. In trying to make sense of her own life, how can Kingston distinguish between the characteristics unique to her own family and the universal truths about all Chinese people or, more crucially, between "the movies".

"No-Name Woman" combines rich metaphor, inventive detail, and introspective reflections in its stylistic composition. The "narrative" alternates between Kingston's life and the society her aunt lived in, as well as between the past and the present, fact and fiction. The narrative shifts to Kingston's own quirks regarding her attraction to boys after explaining how important it was for the villagers to eradicate sexual attraction among relatives. The sections of the chapter where Kingston lets her fantasies about her aunt run wild are the most vivid Chinese culture from these talk-stories. She paints a vivid picture of the meticulous way her aunt in Kingston's mind, naturally plucked hairs from her forehead in order to draw in a suitor. She also vividly recalls her aunt's agony, both as a ghost pleading for food scraps and as a mother giving birth. Kingston uses metaphors throughout the chapter, like the round cakes and doorways, to convey the "circle" or "roundness" of Chinese life the notion that all of the villagers are interconnected and accountable for each other's lives. These are some of the most inventive and fascinating stylistic devices used in the story

Chinese-Americans, If you try to understand what things you are in Chinese tradition , how do you separate what is unusual to childhood, to indigence, insanities, one family, your mother who marked your growing with stories, from what is Chinese? What is Chinese tradition and what is the movies .Kingston leaves many questions unanswered to paint Maxine's said that so picture that the reader, forced to experience uncertainty alongside Maxine, cannot ignore it. In this way, Kingston unwaveringly exposes the reader to her "mode of consciousness."

Conclusion

Kingston uses a variety of dichotomies and conflicts, such as those between the private and public spheres, frivolity and necessity, and the need for society to maintain control over the individual's right to express themselves, to highlight this struggle. She depicts an oppressive, rigidly structured society in which people were practically unable to have private lives as she imagines what old world China was like. All actions had to be taken to ensure the welfare of the family or village what Kingston refers to as "the Necessary." In this scenario, Kingston's aunt stands in for the worst kind of transgressor one whose illegitimate child exposed her private lusts, upending social order and jeopardizing the village's very survival. Adultery could have been "only a mistake" in prosperous times, according to Kingston.

Kingston's own experience growing up as a Chinese-American, divided between the world of Chinese customs and traditions that surround her like "ghosts" and her new, permissive American environment, is framed by the story of No-Name Woman. (Note that in the case of Kingston's mother, the term "ghost" refers to the Americans themselves in the opposite sense.) Kingston faces a particularly challenging situation because she is essentially prohibited from discussing it with anyone. Her mother tells her, "You must not tell anyone," which is a potent, witty way to start a memoir. Kingston must make up her own stories and scenarios about her aunt because she is prohibited from discussing the topic and only knows the general details of the story. This coerced creation showcases. "No-Name Woman" combines personal reflections, rich metaphor, and inventive detail. The "narrative" alternates between Kingston's life and the society her aunt lived in, as well as between the past and the present, fact and fiction. The narrative shifts to Kingston's own quirks regarding her attraction to boys after explaining how important it was for the villagers

to eradicate sexual attraction among relatives. The sections of the chapter where Kingston lets her fantasies about her aunt run wild are the most vivid. She paints a vivid picture of the deliberate way that, in Kingston's mind, her aunt removed strands of hair from her forehead in order to draw in a suitor. She also vividly recalls her aunt's agony, both as a ghost pleading for food scraps and as a mother giving birth. Kingston uses metaphors throughout the chapter, like the round cakes and doorways, to convey the "circle" or "roundness" of Chinese life—the notion that all of the villagers are interconnected and accountable for each other's lives. These are some of the most inventive and fascinating stylistic devices used in the chapter.

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