PERSONAL NARRATIVES OF NON-BELONGING

Institute for Graduate Studies in Social Sciences
English Literature
Master Thesis

ÖZLEM TUNA

BOĞAZİÇİ UNIVERSITY
2005

Personal Narratives of Non-Belonging

Thesis submitted to the
Institute for Graduate Studies in Social Sciences
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
English Literature

by
Özlem Tuna

Boğaziçi University
2005

ABSTRACT

Personal Narratives of Non-Belonging

by

Özlem Tuna

This thesis is a comparative study of Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation* in the context of their particular concern and problematization of the role of memory and language in the conception of self and reality. With the help of close textual analysis, the specific textual strategies of these two examples of immigrant autobiography make it possible to lay bare the taken for granted capacity of the two cultures between which these writers -who are children of immigrant parents- experience self. My focus of study is the manner in which these writers represent their *own* experience through their unique translation of the two cultures that they are a part of. The act of translation is the act of non-belonging. The difficult position that their simultaneous concern for the impossibility of representing these cultures in their entirety puts them paradoxically provides them with an ever-changing, multi-perspective vision that transcends all other forms of self dictated by both cultures. The capacity of autobiography to make the past and the present coexist is instrumental in enabling the autobiographers with the experience of a self across the boundaries of two cultures.

ÖZET

Ait Olamamanın Otobiyografisi

Özlem Tuna

Bu tez Maxine Hong Kingston'ın *The Woman Warrior ve* Eva Hoffman'ın *Lost in Translation* adlı otobiyografilerinde benliğin ve gerçekliğin oluşumunda hafıza ve dilin rolünün yazarlar tarafından nasıl sorunsallaştırıldığını inceler. Tematik eksende metin çözümleme tekniğinin ağırlık kazandığı bu çalışma gösteriyor ki göçmen otobiyografisine örnek olan bu iki kitapta yazarlar, otobiyografiye özel bazı teknikler sayesinde benliklerinin bilincine vardıkları her iki toplumun da sorgulamadan kabul ettiği değerleri sorgulayarak aynı anda her kültürün de bireysel anlamda bir temsilcisi olmayı ancak kendilerine özgün kültür çevirileri sayesinde her iki kültüre de ait olmamayı başarıyorlar. Bu anlamda kültürlerarası çeviri ait olmamanın zemini, yazarlar da kişisi olmaktadırlar. Kültürlerarası yaşam başlangıçta yazarları zor bir duruma düşürse de sonunda onları her iki kültürün de ayrı ayrı savunduğu benlik ve aidiyet kavramlarını aşmalarını sağlayan, sürekli değişim gösteren ve bir çok perspektifi içinde barındıran bir bakış açısı ile donatmaktadır. Çeviri sayesinde bu kavramlar yeni anlamlar kazanmıştır. Otobiyografinin, geçmiş ve şimdinin diyaloğuna açtığı kapının yazarların kültürlere sınırlarından bakabilen bu perspektifi edinmelerinde önemli bir rolü vardır.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION:

Autobiography is listed under the generic category of "life writing" In this introduction, while first giving the different definitions of it throughout history, (and relate the differences to the historical changes in the perceptions of the self) I will try to observe the difference of it from other examples of the genre (the memoir) and other genres (fiction, biography.) I will then study the status of memory in its relation to truth, identity and representation. In my discussion of representation, I will refer to the "American" macrotext of immigrant autobiography and show how the autobiographical form makes it possible for it to come into being.

The first use of the word autobiography dates back to the second half of the 18th century. The word was then used together with its synonym *self-biography* "with no sign that one use influenced the other. (Folkenflik, 5) Until the 19th century all variants of the genre of self-writing were used in different contexts interchangeably.

But we now know that autobiography is not biography written by the self. In their co-authored book on autobiography *Reading Autobiography*, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson list some of the characteristics that distinguish the two. The most apparent is one of biography being supposedly written by someone external to the "subject"-matter of the text.

This factor can be studied in its relation the concept of temporality adopted by the writer of each. Like an autobiographer, the biographer gives us

an account of the subject's past experience. The past tense of the biography is different from that of biography, though. What we can learn from the biography is -maybe not in the form of a chronological list but still- is s/he did this and that at an x place at an x time.

But an autobiographer can reflect a side of him which the others (like a biographer) may have never been able to see. This advantageous perspective enables the autobiographer relate the events that have made him who he is to the point he ends his narrative. There is also the fact that (writers are misunderstood even when they tell their own story), the personal significance of the narrated events may be missed by the biographer, yielding an end-product that may be far from telling the person whose biography is being written. Nevertheless, this "advantage" is used as an attack on the truth of autobiography and as a definitive distinguishing factor.

Yet, considering the fact that biographies- if not all- are accounts about famous or important people, the information is for most of the part considered "historically objective." Yet again, the information partially coming from the source (the subject of the biography) may invalidate this "historical objectivity." For example, we know that the biographies of most national heroes are full of "exemplary" stories which later have proved to be made up.

This being the case, when we look at the "truth value" of both, the attempt to distinguish fact from fiction would be futile. From this perspective, they are equally "true." But this does not mean they have the same effect on the reader. For example, we read an autobiography,– also having to do with intimacy established between the reader and the narrating I of the autobiography- particularly one written by a person who is still alive, we know

that the process initiated by the writer is going on. We can judge from the text-of course until the point at which the autobiographer ends his account-possible outlines to the rest of the story. Even if we cannot guess it right, because the writer is both the subject and the object of the account, we can witness the dialogue between the narrated I and the narrating I while we are reading. On the other hand, biography invokes a sense of closure limiting the process between the two covers of the book.

When we go back to the definition of the romantic conception of the word (either autobiography or self-biography) we see that it was perceived as "the Confession of the person to himself rather than to the priest." (Folkenflik, 7) The centrality of the "self" can be seen in this quotation I have taken from Robert Folkenflik's *The Culture of Autobiography.* As Folkenflik points out, "such writings building upon eighteenth century empiricism and individualism were encouraged by the Romantic subjectivity" Another encouragement, according to Folkenflik came from the "breakdown of the prestige of genres" (Folkenflik, 8).

Although Folkenflik points to its still existing marginal status among the academia, by the nineteenth century, the autobiographical form –maybe not in the sense it is used today but still as a kind of writing about the self by the self-has gained importance. Yet even until now, a stable and all encompassing definition of autobiography has not come up.

Smith and Watson give a few definitions that have been used by pointing out to their deficiencies. The first is the British poet-critic Stephen Spender's, as "the story of one's life written by himself" But even Spender notes its

inadequacy "to the world that each is to himself." What one writes is not only one's own story.

A more recent definition is the well-known definition by the French theorist Philippe Lejeune. His definition points out to individuality of the autobiographer:

> *We call autobiography the retrospective narrative in prose that someone makes of his own existence when he puts the principal accent upon his life, especially upon the story of his own personality"*(Smith/Watson, 2).

Lejeune seems to have captured the "advantageous perspective" of autobiographical writing. But Smith and Watson dismiss this definition saying "when life is expanded to include how one has become who he or she is at a given moment in an ongoing process of reflection clearly the autobiographical story requires more explaining." (Smith/Watson, 4) I will later argue that idea of personal continuity (as opposed to one stabilized by definition) is one of the two reasons why the writers choose autobiography.

As I have mentioned above the historical circumstances affect the way the self writing the autobiography is perceived. Although the "Enlightened individual" who confesses to himself instead of the priest has been challenged by its postmodern critiques, "autobiography is a term for a particular practice of life narrative that emerged in the Enlightenment and has become canonical in the West" (Smith/Watson, 3). The autobiography celebrates the autonomous individual and the universalizing life story.

"Its theorists have installed this master narrative of the "sovereign self" as an institution of literature and culture, and identified, in the course of the twentieth century, a canon of representative life narratives." (Smith/Watson, 4) This canonization has led to certain variants of the life narrative to be considered as fake autobiography.

One such "variant" is the memoirs. Folkenflik notes that until the twentieth century the word *memoirs* was commonly used to designate "self life writing" " (Folkenflik, 8). It was the kind of autobiographical writing that told the individual's life through one's relationship with other people. But "as Lejeune has observed for France, many memoirs are published by "vanity presses." (Smith/Watson, 161) In contemporary parlance autobiography and memoir are used interchangeably. But the previous marginal status of memoirs can be related to the now famous I.

As Lee Quinby notes, "Whereas autobiography promotes and I that shares with confessional discourse an assumed interiority and an ethical mandate to examine that interiority, memoirs promote an I that is explicitly constituted in the reports of the utterances and proceedings of others" (Quinby, 279). So, because the canonical "I" which had a supposed essential "interiority" to it was the norm, memoirs which promoted a collective I were relegated to an inferior status.

The subtitle of Maxine Hong Kingston's life story is "Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts" Through the medium of memoir Kingston is able to narrate the events of her life, thus giving that life a shape by re-creating self as the heroine of another's story or that is told and retold. *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of Girlhood among Ghosts* is constantly referred to as autobiography.

By referring to it as "memoirs" Kingston might have wanted to escape the canonization of her text under the "individual" monopoly of the genre. In fact, her use of the variant repudiates some of the clichés of autobiography. But since I will not bring a certain definition to autobiography as a whole or analyze the book as an aberration of the standard (she intends it rather as a reaction to the conception that the individual is independent of the society one lives in) when I refer to it as autobiography for brevity's sake, this is to point out to the generic category of "self-life writing"

However at the same time, I will respect her intentions in calling her book a "memoir" and be sensitive to her concern with telling her story in and through the collectivity she is part of, to the extent she wants to be part of it. As we will see, the text functions as an autobiography in the sense that it is a personal history centered on reflections about her self as she attempts to interpret and understand the cultural codes that shape her life.

Moreover, even if Kingston was not intending to be part of the "autobiographical canon," she has by winning an award with her book. In fact, her book has been part of the Chinese canon in its distorted pirate editions. The extended body of critical work (both for and against) on the book is another proof of it. But the popularity of the book (she tells the students who see her refer to *The Woman Warrior* as *the book* forgetting this is not Kingston's only publication) cannot be limited to the popular canon. In her visit to China, the scholars tell her that she is a part of their literary canon.

Among the critics of the genre, one strong opponent of such a conception of the self is Paul John Eakin. In the second chapter to his book entitled *How*

Our Lives Become Stories, Eakin argues that it is definitely not through our isolated selves or perceptions. He begins with a question:

> *Why do we so easily forget that the first person of autobiography is truly plural in its origins and the subsequent formation? Because autobiography promotes the illusion of the self-determination: I write my story, I say who I am I create myself* (Eakin, 43).

As Eakin also points out the myth of autonomy dies hard. Eakin believes that "all identity is relational, and that the definition of autobiography, and its history as well, must be stretched to reflect the kinds of self-writing in which relational identity is characteristically displayed" *(Eakin, 43).* In that sense, Eakin seems to agree with me in calling Maxine's text an autobiography (an extended "kind of self-writing")

In fact, although Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation* can neatly be defined –and is defined- as autobiography Hoffman makes sure we know that she has done away with the perception of the self as an autonomous being, through the continuous presence of the Holocaust past and the "subliminal codes" that hide under the democratizing space of America.

In fact, immigrant writers who experience the arbitrariness of social codes in different cultures together with the effects of them in forming self perceptions are acutely and sometimes bitterly aware of the illusion of the "self-sufficient" "self-made" Enlightenment individual. Kingston is even humiliated for not being able to say I in English. Hoffman cannot say I in English for a long time until she gets a diary as a birthday present.

Eakin says that "we draw on models of identity provided by the cultures we inhabit" (Eakin, 46). Despite this being the case, the two immigrants who are the subjects of this study have different approaches regarding "models." Kingston, as we can understand from the above discussion of memoir, writes her own artistic and personal model into being through the stories of other people. This is no blind belief in models for Kingston, yet her starting point is her models.

On the other hand, although the legacy of the Holocaust follows us like a shadow all throughout the autobiography, Hoffman resists its call to adopt Holocaust models of memory. Hoffman's resistance also covers the blind pursuit of models that are presented to her in the New World too. Even Mary Antin whom she calls her ancestress (but I think only by virtue of their ethnic origin and the similarity of their circumstances) is an "outmoded" anti-model. Hoffman takes Antin as a model; for she teaches Hoffman that the uniqueness of the individual is a myth, which is one more reason for Hoffman to resist this concept.

Another problematic distinction (in addition to the "individual" vs. collective) is between fiction and autobiography. As I have pointed out above in my discussion of biography vs. autobiography, the disputable truth value of autobiography is not any less credible than the celebrated "objective" biography. Smith and Watson argue that although "a life narrative is not a novel...calling life narrative "non-fiction," which is often done, confuses rather than resolves the issue." (Smith/Watson, 4) They point out to the shared features such as plot, dialogue, setting, characterization. And with novel in the first person singular self-referentiality is another shared feature.

In that respect, Paul de Mann (1979) in his essay on autobiography entitled "*Autobiography as De-facement*" argues that at the base of the controversy around autobiography lies the attempt to conceive of it as a separate genre to begin with- separate from novel, poetry, and drama. In fact for de Man, autobiography as a genre is the exemplary case of *prosopopeia*. (de Man, 920). According to de Man, because "each specific instance seems to be an exception to the norm" ...autobiography always looks slightly disreputable and self-indulgent" (de Man, 919).

For de Man the difference between fiction and autobiography is irresolvable, undecidable. Because the writer puts the events into a narrative form, she cannot escape the dictates of coherence in the narrative, for in narrative, the form is the content:

> *We assume the life produces the autobiography as an act produces its consequences, but we cannot suggest, with equal justice, that the autobiographical project may itself produce and determine life and that whatever the writer does is in fact governed by the technical demands of self-portraiture and thus determined, in all its aspects by the sources of its medium* (de Man, 919).

But according to Lejeune, there is a certain pact that ensures the difference. According to Lejeune's "Autobiographical Pact," the convergence of the authorial signature and the narrator is proof of the difference between fiction and autobiography. Lejeune defines the relationship between the author and reader in autobiographical writing with a contract: "What defines autobiography for the one who is reading is above all a contract of identity that is sealed by the

proper name. And this is also true for the one who is writing the text" ((Smith/Watson, 7).

Similarly, Eakin says that autobiographical narrators are expected to "remain faithful to the integrity of their personal memory archives" (Eakin, Touching the World, 28). If what is meant by integrity is the stability of the point of view, (maybe not by Eakin but by other critics), then this essentializes and fixes the self in a certain period in the life story. However, life narrators may present inconsistent or shifting views of themselves. To expect the opposite would betray the spirit of autobiography, for if autobiography is the story of life, life is all about change. And these two writers are almost bombarded with it.

On that note, one of the most important functions of the autobiography for me is to enable a "continuous" dialogue between the earlier stages of the narrated self and the final referent of the "I" of the text. I will point out who might be speaking at a particular point in my analysis of certain part of the autobiographies. Although Lejeune does not trust our judgemental capacities, the reader can understand which "I" is talking. In his discussion of the difference between annals and autobiography, Paul Ricoeur points out to the relationship between form and content in terms of temporality. He says annals only give a chronology of the events whereas narrativized versions of the past do not just list them but also build connections among them. In fact, if autobiography were just listing events in order of appearance, noone would read them. But it is the retrospective vision that gives meaning to the events not as they happen but as they are written. It is the latter perspective reflected on the earlier experience that gives shape to the narrative all.

This points out to a paradox. On the one hand, as de Man argues, because the writer knows the end of the story s/he uses the medium accordingly and formulates a relationship/sequence between the events so as to lead them to the point of their destination which is known to the writer at the point of writing. On the other hand, the name on the cover of the text belongs to a real person, which- at least at the beginning- promises that all the "I's" of the story point to the same person.

As I have pointed above, because autobiography is not a list of events – like annals- but a narrative shaped by the network of events working to construct the writing I, how this I wants to be perceived affects the writer's relation to truth. I don't mean that autobiographies are full of lies. Rather, what I want to say is that the writer of the autobiographical narrative- for it is a narrative at the end of the day- may insert non-real or even fictional elements into the narrative. The way I see it, this is no different than changing the sequence of events, for what decides on the inclusion of the fictional elements is the writer's agenda itself. In any way, we have to take the writer's word for the truth. Whatever the writer presents as the writing self is what we should be taken into consideration.

Maxine Hong Kingston seems to have overcome the futility of this distinction, for she appears as a character in a myth that she recounts. In fact, I think the reason why she does that (as we will see her treatment of the myth is a common practice in China) is to point out to the absence of such a distinction in real life. We usually cannot question the truth value of what the autobiographer says (we don't live with them) But as we see in the case of Kingston (she inserts fictional stories and myths in her text) and Hoffman (the split scenes where she talks to Ewa) the truth we should be seeking should be to understand what effect

the writer is trying to create by incorporating fiction into her text, which has her name on the cover.

What we should do then is to readjust our expectations of the truth told in the self-referential narrative. As Smith and Watson say "autobiographical truth is a different matter; it is an intersubjective exchange between narrator and reader aimed at producing a shared understanding of the meaning of a life." (Smith/Watson, 12) The 1976 National Book for Critics Circle Award for Non-fiction may be a token of her success for extending to the limits of the book. Depending on the reading, it may be her reward for "representing Chinese people in their falsity", by stealing their myths from them with a background in Chinese culture that only a seven year old can have. (The second indication of the award is supported by Maxine's critics who- I think- misread her)

As W.J.T. Mitchell insightfully suggests: 'memory is an intersubjective phenomenon, a practice not only of recollection of a past *by* a subject but of recollection *for* another subject (Mitchell, 193). Memory is a means of "passing on," (we see this function of the mother figures in both autobiographies) of sharing a social past that may have been obscured, in order to activate its potential for reshaping a future of and for other subjects. Thus acts of personal remembering are fundamentally social and collective" (Smith/Watson, 20).

As is the case with all printed narratives, there is the reader's side of the issue. For immigrant autobiography, the truth of the presented material is particularly important due to both the ignorance and the expectations of the readers. Because most immigrant autobiography is a juxtaposition of two cultural systems, the name on the cover is held accountable not only for the truth of the events in one's life but also for a faithful representation of the

immigrant's original culture. However, both the writers I am working on deny such a responsibility. They put emphasis on them it is just *their* experience of the two cultures.

In fact, the critics of Kingston have camped into groups as regards her capacity to take that responsibility. Kingston is not considered qualified for such a task for most of her Chinese critics who judge her for "reducing myths to mere stories" and for "distorting the social repertoire of respectable historical figures." Some of her non-Chinese critics, she says, "are put off by the unfamiliar air of the Chinese elements and find in them a confirmation of notorious Oriental inscrutability" There are still some others who for Kingston "are only too ready to be delighted by the exotic, taking all the fabulous details at face value" (qtd. in Wong, 27).

As an answer to the first accusation, because Kingston does not believe in anyone's (herself included) capacity to represent a people in its entirety, she claims no such responsibility and uses every narrative trick to absolve her from it. As for the ignorance and the readiness to stay shallow, Maxine does not fear dismissal due to "inaccessibility" of her text and says "How dare they call their ignorance our inscrutability?" (qtd. in Wong, 36). This for some readers may mean farewell before hello but for some readers it may be an invitation to transcend this "readiness" and try to learn about the different significations of the text. In that respect, though indirectly, Kingston fulfills her only responsibility as a writer, not to represent the culture but to leave enticing traces for people to follow.

It is not only the readers who broaden their perspectives to make sense of unusual "textual" significations. In the autobiographies I have studied, the

mastery (by *mastery* I mean the awareness of the subliminal codes) of the cultural codes –though not assumed- of the adopted culture gives a broader perspective to the writer. As far as immigrant autobiography is concerned- but of course not limited to it- this awareness brings about the motive to lay bare the arbitrariness of cultural codes in general like the absence of an essential connection between being Chinese and being silent, or being a descendent of the Holocaust generation and bearing the burden of it through exaggerated stories. So the autobiography is not free from an agenda. But at least with the autobiographies that I have studied, if a defect of one culture is reported, it is not single sided due to this awareness. What brings this awareness?

The experience of crisis and dislocation is what brings the recognition. Although Kingston is born and brought up in the US, she knows no other world than that of her parents and the villagers in Chinatown until she starts school, which is an acute experience of dislocation. I will now look at William Boelhower's macrotextual analysis of American immigrant autobiography which he discusses in his article entitled "The Brave New World of Immigrant Autobiography" to explain what brings about crisis

According to Boelhower, "the rhetoric of the American Dream plays out its pragmatic role in the narrative model of immigrant autobiography, and in such a way as to provide for the deconstruction of the identity patterns informing American autobiography, whose typology of the self is in turn ultimately constructed on the utopian foundations, the ideal rhetoric, of American culture" (Boelhower, 6).

Although the intensity of the "dream anticipation" varies with each writer, Boelhower argues that "each writer appeals to the foundations of

American autobiography and culture, that is to say the mythic prehistoric promise they share, and recapitulates this vision du monde as a structural moment in his own narrative mode" (Boelhower, 8).

However, it is not a common response to acknowledge the recognition I mentioned above. Some writers, rather than coming to this awareness may choose the New World culture and go with the mythic aura with particular ease. The recognition itself is not common to all life story writers. For example, Hoffman's ancestress Mary Antin insists on seeing her story as a story of pure success. Moreover, not every writer uses this formula exactly as instructed or outlined by the macrotext. Some like these two autobiographies manipulate this model to form their own.

On that note, the beginning of *Lost in Translation* is an anti-dream anticipation. Although she presents her case in biblical terms, hers is Eve's exile from Heaven rather than the promise of eternal life. Before and during the journey to this Promised Land, she is more preoccupied with the loss of Cracow than the classical enticements of America- what could worse than going to a cultural desert-. It is ironical that in both cases "knowledge" is what makes Exile unbearable. Hoffman knows how dazzling the prospect of America for her father is, but also by her too-good-to-be-true depiction of her father's expectations of America (by means of her teleological point of view, for she sees how her father is lost in the "land of milk and honey") point out to the other side of the coin.

As for Kingston, although she is born in America she is told the stories of the raid of the villagers in China who are desperate enough to marry their daughters by hurry-up weddings to total strangers in hope of a rich husband to

return to them. She is the alive witness of how her father's laundry is taken down by the government (The Urban Renewal Ghosts) Kingston's mother's loneliness for years expecting her husband to call for her also prevents Kingston from losing herself to the dream.

Boelhower points out the composite nature of the new self formed through this second phase. During this phase, the cultural baggage is in fact what leaves them at a crossroads. Both autobiographers are caught between impersonal yet imposing stories. They are both the "structural effect of a determinate collectivity" (Boelhower, 12). Boelhower quotes Marcus E. Ravage

> *To begin with, the alien who comes here from Europe is not the raw material that Americans suppose him to be... He has not sprung out of nowhere... He brings with him... a system of culture and tastes and habits... which has been engendered in him by his race and environment... It's quite overlooked that the adoptive American has always been and will always remain a composite American* (Boelhower, 12).

Boelhower's second phase is where the immigrant juxtaposes the image of the Old World, their old home and the New World, their new home where the composite self comes into existence. However, the New World will only become a serious source of counter-information after the journey, when the protagonist can really assume a dialogical perspective. Only after the immigrant can perceive how the society is organized can he make this comparison. In that

respect, the autobiography or the narrating "I" used in the autobiography becomes very important.

According to Boelhower, "this is evident in the transformation of the protagonist, during which process he, from a metacultural perspective, is forced to confront the utopian Grammar of the New World for what it actually represents. In other words, immigrant autobiography must organize two cultural systems, a culture of the present and the future and a culture of memory, into a single model. Indeed this narrative imperative leads, which is triggered by the utopian moment of anticipation, leads to a systematic comparison and evaluation of the two, and not one cultural grammar" (Boelhower, 12).

As Boelhower in his illuminating reading of immigrant autobiography suggests, "not only does the immigrant come from the "outside" his host culture, he also lives it from "below"... the term adequately describes the distance that separates the rhetoric and the reality. That is the America that each writer experiences is not the same. Besides, they do not give a certain definition of their Americanness. However, both are American in the sense that they live there (maybe they can't sing along the land where our fathers died or mourn the death of Kennedy) and they possess the knowledge of never being able to be anything alone.

Michael Walzer points out "there is no country called America. We all live in the United States of America, and we appropriated the adjective "American" even though we can claim no exclusive title to it....The adjective provides no reliable information about the origins, histories, connections, or cultures of those whom it designates" (Walzer, 186). Likewise, "American" for these people encompasses their ethnic origin but does not necessitate the kind of

natural or organic loyalty which is a feature of most other nationalist. They writers could have escaped the "inwardness" of their nativity. But this would not make them better Americans.

From my reading of the two autobiographies, being American *is making it*. Kingston does it despite America whereas Hoffman makes use of her European origins which are subsumed under the "brother" category of Western. The two concepts of character and circumstance show that this democratizing space does not always mean well. Race and the marginality of the ethnic origin is another determining factor. This is the reason why I chose the autobiographies of writers from two incompatible ethnic origins. Both cases show that it is not only a matter of "character" as Benjamin Franklin propagates. The parents of both writers expect them to stick with their Chinese or Polish-Jewish character and make use of the "promised" circumstance of America to the full. America promises them at first- in fact the Statue of Liberty invites everyone regardless of their "character"- but does not keep it. In fact both writers point out to the impossibility of the promise the illusion of which is kept alive.

The experience of dislocation, then (at least for the two writers in question) is not an experience that paralyzes their identity formation but one which enables it with a metacultural perspective, a new message, and a new relationship with the past. The function of mastery of the codes of the New World is to bring the writers to an awareness that none- including the ones advocated by their culture of origin- is essential and final.

From this moment of revelation onwards, the two writers in question form their new personal cultural map according to which they relocate themselves. The relocation does not take place at a single location like

Boelhower suggests, though. Rather, the coordinates of the composite self is not set. The composite home is I believe the composite self itself.

Their juxtaposition of different temporalities in the body of their texts opens up a future otherwise denied by the stasis of the previous understanding of the past. Because the writer has to unfold the past to make it function in the present, the past becomes active in the process. In the end not only the different I's but also the different now's merge. And in their relativity they mutually define each other as the (per)forming blocks of the self.

CHAPTER I

Long ago in China, knot-makers tied strings into buttons and frogs and rope into bell pulls. There was one knot so complicated that it blinded the knot-maker. Finally an emperor outlawed this cruel knot, and the nobles could not order it anymore. If I lived in China I would have been an out-law knot-maker (WW, 163).

This is how Maxine Hong Kingston, a first generation migrant writer in America, explains her writing strategy in her contemporary pursuit of identity as a woman, as a writer, and as a Chinese-(hyphen) American. In treating each step towards finding the "I" she is trying to establish and assert, Kingston constructs a field of dialectical oppositions none of which she embraces as a whole on its own. Rather, with her quest for self she searches for a "synthesizing center" (Chua, 63). While doing that, she uses Chinese, American, traditional, modern, cultural elements namely to "provide symbolic strategies necessary for coping with such a world, to create languages of paradox or contradiction that might enable us to be "borne across" from our old inadequate or outmoded identities into "new" ones (Verses, 314). But "new" in Kingston's understanding, as she performatively shows us later in the book, does not simply mean embracing the American culture and leaving her Chinese side of the self behind This autobiography is Kingston's story of how she learns -or rather tries to sort out- what it means to be a "self" from her mother and the real/fictional figures she offers.

In Kingston's case, this existence across the boundaries operates both on the individual and the communal level. Her "identity is plural and partial" (IH, 12). The book begins with a cautionary tale told by Maxine's mother. Rather than starting her autobiography with her own first perceptions of the world, Kingston has her anonymous aunt on the very first page. She tells us the story of her No-Name-Aunt. In fact, all throughout the book, we as readers are given details about the writer of this "autobiography" through the stories of other people, who for most of the time are people she has never had direct contact with, including mythical characters.

Kingston uses the mixing of real or mythical characters with her own life story as a narrative strategy throughout her autobiography. And as we will later see, this strategy is instrumental in showing us how her conception of the self is formed by these characters, and their stories in differing proportions. Lee Quinby sees this recognition of selfhood of the other as the "acknowledgement of its own alterity" (Quinby, 306).

The first of them is the story of her paternal aunt. The fact that the telling of this story "coincides" with the starting of her menses points out to the type of behavior she is expected to internalize as a "woman". Her mother tells her: "Now you have started to menstruate, what happened to her could happen to you. Don't humiliate us... the villagers are watchful" (WW, 5). But she is not to share this story with anyone. So an invitation to silence initiates the first story:

> *You must not tell anyone" my mother said, "what I am about to tell you. In China your father had a sister who killed herself. She jumped into the family well. We say that your father has all brothers because it is as if she had never been born* (WW, 3).

Obviously, the father's sister, the narrator's paternal aunt, has killed herself. Up to this point, it looks like a regular suicide case. But this is not the only reason why the family treats her memory with collective amnesia; "as if she had never been borne." The people as a collective power decide on her fate. We later learn the cause of that suicide which also gives away the real reason lying behind the *all-brother* pedigree. It is because she has brought disgrace to the family by committing adultery in the absence of her husband who has left her to make his fortune in the Gold Mountain that is America.

The first reaction comes from the parents-in-law whom she is supposed to live with and serve like a slave during her husband's absence, which shows us something very important shortly. In fact, "a synonym for marriage in Chinese is taking a daughter-in-law" (WW, 7). Her parents, Maxine says, "could have sold her, mortgaged her, stoned her. But they had sent her back to her own mother and father, a mysterious act hinting at disgraces not told me. Perhaps Kingston muses, "they had thrown her out to deflect the avengers" (WW, 8).

As the news gets out in the village, the "watchful" village-people "who had also been counting" (WW, 3) raid the house on the night the baby is to be born. Kingston's mother gives a very detailed account of this violent raid: "Some were crying... tearing rice. The men and women we knew well wore white masks... The villagers broke in the front and the back... slaughtering our stock. We could hear the animals scream their deaths...They smeared blood on the doors and walls... When they left, they took sugar and oranges to bless themselves" (WW, 4-7). Although this scene invokes revulsion in the reader, it is significant in that it helps us understand the economic situation the village is in.

The aunt is one of the brides of the "seventeen hurry-up weddings" the village celebrates in 1924. These weddings take place "to make sure that every young man who went out on the road would responsibly come back" (WW, 3). The *Gold Mountain* has become their only hope of providing for their families. Or rather it has been presented to them as one opportunity they should not miss. Men set out to realize the American Dream promised to them. In fact, the opportunistic "blessings" hint at how desperate they are economically. Yet I think the reason why Kingston presents these details is not to justify what the village people do, or to emphasize the fact that they do nothing to the male side of the act of adultery, but rather to enable the reader to see the dramatic side of the road leading to the *dream.*

Maxine's father is one of the people in that group, which makes Maxine's mother one of the "hurry-up" brides. Although Maxine is born in the US and sees China only after she has written her book, her mother, who is of pivotal importance to Maxine's formation of self, has a very hard life when her husband is gone. Things do not go as planned and rather than going back to China, Maxine's father sends for his wife to go to America. And it takes her years to see her husband again. Interestingly enough, noone punishes him for not fulfilling his responsibility to come back.

This is not the case for the aunt. Kingston says that "the real punishment was not the raid swiftly inflicted by the villagers, but the family's deliberately forgetting her" (WW, 16). The real punishment comes after the raid. The aunt is banished from the memory of the family and denied a name to remember her with. Kingston implies that adultery was something they could have overlooked in better times: "Adultery, perhaps a mistake during good times, became a crime when the village needed food" (WW, 13). By beginning her book, with her aunt's story, Kingston puts an end to this

punishment and ensures her stance against such practices in the reader's mind. But the story is not that simple. Kingston ties her knots just as she promises at the beginning.

So, the punishment publicly announced as a response to adultery is just a cover-up, a mask- just like the ones worn by the raiders- for what the act really means to the people. As I have explained above, the men are married to make sure that they come back. It is their responsibility to come back. According to this agreement they "expected her [the aunt] alone to keep the traditional ways, which her brothers, now among the barbarians, could fumble without detection. The heavy, deep-rooted women were to maintain the past against the flood, safe for returning" (WW, 8). This is exactly what Maxine's mother is trying to teach her with this cautionary tale.

The mother warns her daughter not to be like her aunt and not to act "as if she could have a private life, secret and apart from them" (WW, 13). Because these people "depended on one another to maintain the real" and "whoever tries to put it to test is doomed to be forgotten" (WW, 13). She is fed this information from early childhood onwards. Her tendency to tell her story through the stories of others can be explained with this early conditioning.

If Maxine does not follow the rules of the game, the villagers will be waiting for her to "show her a personal physical representation of the break she had made in the roundness" just like they did with her aunt (WW, 13). So with hopes of returning "home", the mother presents her with an anti-model she should not follow.

I believe the same has been done for the mother supposedly by her own mother or mother-in-law (with perhaps another No-Name aunt) and so vividly I must add. Because, as much as the description of the raid is almost photographic in its

details, we learn from Maxine only a few pages later that her mother can't have witnessed the event. The mother could not have possibly been there, because, as I have pointed above, daughters-in-law live with their parents-in-law, and the event takes place at a time "when she and my aunt, a daughter-in-law to a different household, should not have been living together at all" (WW, 7).

The vividness of the details as told by the mother, how she has been able to tell all about the event as if she has seen it with her own eyes even after decades have passed points out to one of the most important functions of the mother which informs the core of the book. The mother has to preserve the past, the old ways and teach them to her daughter, the future mother to keep the *roundness* intact.

That night, the aunt gives "silent" birth to a daughter in a pigsty. She does not name the inseminator even at this stage. "Flayed, unprotected against space," abandoned by her people on the verge of boundaries not delineated in space, she expels the baby at last (WW, 14). In fact she is so desperate that "it was good to have a fence enclosing her alone, a tribal person alone" even if it is in the middle of the filth (WW, 14). Kingston once more emphasizes the importance of a collectivity surrounding the individual. In fact, she argues that this bond is so strong that it can ease the pain of the separation of the bond between the mother and the child. When the child is born she describes their suffering as such: "The two of them had felt the same raw pain of separation, a wound that only the family pressing tight could close" (WW, 15).

So the mother asks herself "how would this tiny child without family find her grave when there would be no marker for her anywhere, neither in the earth nor the family hall? Noone would give her a family hall name... A child with no descent line

would not soften her life but only trail after her, ghostlike, begging her to give it purpose" (WW, 15).

In the morning, she takes her baby with her and goes to the family well and drowns herself and her baby there. With the above soliloquy, Kingston stresses once more the importance of having communal bonds to protect us against the anonymity and emptiness of space. She equates -though from the aunt's point of view- having a descent line with having a purpose in life. Bearing in mind that she tells the aunt's story to show us how her life "branches into hers", this viewpoint should be taken into consideration for future analysis.

Kingston speculates that she must have done it out of love. Because only "mothers who love their children take them along" (WW, 15). The aunt does not choose to live and let her daughter live. But she does not go easily either. Kingston says it is "a spite suicide, drowning herself in the drinking water. The Chinese are always 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).

With this story, we see that people are selective with their memories in telling their stories. The villagers remember the punishment and the reason with which they justify it, but they choose to forget the aunt's revenge and simply don't make the fear of "the drowned one" a part of the story. Because, the story is told for a reason, which is to create a "bad example" that will make it impossible for young women to forget the consequences of breaking the circle, the continuity.

As I have pointed out above, Maxine's task is not an easy one. Her relation to her aunt leads her to a tri-partite crossroads at this stage. Kingston does not want to do injustice to her aunt. On the one hand, by telling her story, she does not want to reduce her aunt to a type, an anti-model that is not to be followed, when she is

breaking the silence that surrounds her story. As the potential mother of the future, she does not want her story to be the exact replica of her mother's, which does nothing but strengthen the mentality behind the silence. On the other hand, she does not want to perpetuate the silence, for she says "there is more to this silence: they want me to participate in her punishment" (WW, 16). Last of all, she has her mother's warning "Do not tell" to abide by.

Maxine has to find a mid-way between reducing her aunt to a type -which would mean the same thing as not telling her story at all-, participating in this punishment by not telling the story, and disobeying her mother's warning. But the telling, as I have pointed above has its own traps. Because telling may also function in the same way the silence does.

Kingston does not want to turn her "No-Name" aunt's story to one of implicit silence rather than an explicit one as it already is. To do that she does away with the "traditional ways"; the ways she as a future mother is supposed to preserve. She reverses the strategy of type-production, which is the villagers' way of erasing the memory of the aunt from the past that they are so keen on keeping intact.

Naming in that respect, functions as a powerful instrument serving this practice of erasing the aunt's traces of memory from history. The name, or rather the type-name, given to the aunt is ample proof of the anonymous status given to her *example.*

In her alternative reading of this story, Lee Quinby suggests that it may well have been the aunt's choice not to give herself and her new-born a name. Quinby thinks it's perfectly possible that she may not have wanted to be remembered with the descent line of the baby's biological father.

Even if that is the case, we see that the act of resistance can easily be manipulated by the villagers. People are told she does not have a name, for she committed adultery. This proves that repeating the old way of having a single approach to the story may be delimiting and missing the point. Kingston knows she has to be really careful, for this is a pitfall she risks falling into.

But she performatively shows her own solution in her writing. First of all, she renounces any position of authority over the story by telling us from the beginning that it was a story told to her by her mother. And by speculating that her mother, the teller of the story, can't have seen the raid herself, for she can't have been living in the same house with her aunt, she doubly distances herself from any authority regarding the story.

This approach to authority with respect to the story both enables her to tell the story yet saves her from repeating the old ways, which is to assume absolute authority over the individual story and to relegate it to oblivion through the lenses of that authoritative viewpoint. Related with this strategy, we see that she creates alternative viewpoints regarding the story.

In addition to her repudiation of any possible position of authority, Kingston has one very ingenuous way of bypassing that pitfall: we don't have "one" final story of the aunt as told by Maxine.

In fact, as Sibel Irzık very aptly puts it, "by the time we reach the end of this chapter, the story has been told many times, yet remains untold (Irzık, 58). Because throughout the chapter Kingston tries out different versions of what "might have happened" with each version ruling the other out. For instance at first, Kingston is adamant that her aunt could not have possibly been the "lone romantic who gave up everything for sex," that if she committed adultery it could only have been out of

blind unreflective obedience, because as a traditional Chinese woman, she had been conditioned all her life to do exactly as she was told (WW, 9).

Suddenly a page or two later we find her considering precisely the same possibility that she has just dismissed; that possessed by the same "urge west" as her men folk, her aunt might have done what she did out of love. In this version, Kingston, wonders what kind of a person that man could have been and finds out herself that –or let's say hopes in a very "American way"- the man "[her] aunt loved appreciated a smooth brow, that he was not just a tits-and-ass man" (WW,7). She comes up with still other alternative plots and repudiates them.

There seems to be no end to possible versions depending on the reader's choice of the particular moral or cultural perspective adopted with respect to the aunt's story. There is no "one" No-Name Aunt but many. This means stereotyping no longer applies to the aunt. This approach itself can be considered as a reaction to "one story, one life." Her starting point still being the collective experience of her "villagers" -though with a personal twist to it- we should read Kingston's autobiography with the motto "one life but many stories."

In that respect, Quinby draws our attention to the subtitle of the autobiography which signals that the author of this autobiography is not only going to talk about her girlhood but her "Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts." Kingston signals that she does not want to be read that way. In fact, in her "Personal Statement" Kingston says that "I am nothing but who 'I' am in relation to other people" (Personal Statement, 23).

We learn from Joan Lidoff that Kingston is also a practitioner of the Chinese talk-story tradition, which again proves she does not sever her ties with tradition. And her starting to tell her life-story with an ancestor's story is another proof of this

approach. Yet Kingston has a different viewpoint of her collective origins regarding the talk-story tradition.

Kingston does away with the part of the tradition that forcibly renders the non-conforming individual voice "silent" and forms a counter-memory. But the counter-memory through which she gives her aunt an individual voice cannot but be a part of the collective. She cannot escape using her aunt's figure as representative material to prevent further use of her "name" to perpetuate her silence. Nevertheless, as we understand from her example, it is not the form but the intention that is important here. As seen in the case of the selection of a single story within the talk-story tradition of many stories, the perspective matters.

By showing us the dangers of embracing a single tradition alone and giving us a multi-plot story which is indeed part of it, Kingston lays bare the foundations of the collective memory and lets us see both sides of the issue. She warns us that the counter-memory she has created is part of the *Memory*. Yet, with her treatment, the talk-story no longer serves the purpose it was initially designed for.

Similarly, Kingston understands silence in a different way. For her, silence is not silence vs. having a story or voice for that matter. Because, as she herself has shown us, stories can also be silencing. Therefore, as I've pointed out at the beginning, we can say Kingston sides with neither side of the standard dialectical oppositions; in this specific case the one between silence and having a story.

So far, she has met the two ends of the challenge. She has given her aunt a real voice and managed to form a counter-memory of her at the same time. As for the third end, we can say we have a happy mother in the end. Since we don't have "a" story at the end of the chapter, we can say she has not done anything that goes against her mother's warning: "Don't tell". Here, it is important to emphasize once

more that, the hesitation to act against the mother is what triggers all these manipulative strategies. Since she is Maxine's only guide to the "continuity circle," (and of course not only that as we will later see) the mother is very important for Maxine.

Kingston herself is happy too. Because, in all these years of neglect, the aunt has haunted her and been a burden on her conscience: "My aunt haunts me- her ghost drawn to me because now, after fifty years of neglect, I alone devote pages of paper to her, though not origamied into houses and clothes" (WW, 16). She has now answered her aunt's secret call. But she has done it in her own way. It is no longer *origamied.*

So not only the contents but also the format in which the story is presented has been transformed. I have indicated above that Kingston has chosen to work within the talk-story tradition by telling many stories about the same story but has diverted from it with her own presentation of the *lesson* of the story.

By "writing" her story she has again diverted from the tradition. These stories are not to be written. But she has kept the promise she has given to her mother: she has not told. She has *written* it.

As we can see, Kingston plays with words and what they connote. When she has she has written the story, she does not mean that she has written it in the counter-tradition. (writing as opposed to talk-story) In fact, while writing, Kingston does the same thing she does with talk-story tradition. She uses it, works through it as a means to achieve her initial purpose, which is to transcend its limits.

Consequently, while writing, Kingston does not observe the standards of that tradition either. For example, as we have already seen, we do not have a linear story line. In fact we don't have "a" story line. Kingston communicates the emotion she is

trying to invoke in the reader through free-association technique of the story-teller and inserts the mythical stories within the narrative.

When we look at the autobiography in its entirety, we have real-life characters, role-models, mythical characters through which Kingston tells her own story. However, the reality of these characters is for most of the time dubious. Information about them comes from the mother who perhaps might have missed other "tiny" details like the one about not being there during the raid. On top of that, through her mother, the author disclaims any authority over the Chinese part of her autobiography. So her perspective on writing is similar to her use of the talk-story tradition.

Kingston's way of using the Chinese origins to translate them into her individual non-origamied terms is very important for understanding her autobiography, particularly her attempts to reconcile America and China, which has become a part of her through her mother's talk-stories.

As for Kingston's approach to both traditions: talk-story and writing in comparison with each other, we can say that she thinks neither is complete enough in itself for her purposes. And her translation of talk-story into writing is not a translation in the classical sense. Talk-story is not typed and bound in the form of a book. Kingston, as with all her other translations, transforms her target language. For instance she manages to "write" through the talk-story. And because there is no trace of the target language previously known as such, her position is rather in a point between the two traditions with no single line dividing them.

Kingston designs her translation in a way as to show the readers the incompleteness of sided viewpoints. She makes sure the reader understands that she sides with neither completely but is part of them only in their interaction. So we can

say her translation is like a dialogue of the two, where they make sense in their interaction. Their dialogue makes them a whole and enriches them by covering their individual limitations.

The dialogue between these oppositions carries Kingston to a different plane. She in a sense borders the limits of both sides without being a spokesperson for either. These oppositions work in such a way that they constantly and mutually neutralize each other leaving no room for "continuous and stable forms of reality" (Graff, 8). Similarly, Rushdie observes that "exiles or emigrants are capable only of fractured perceptions" (IH, 394).

However, promising the new approach may be in terms of integrity, and completeness on the outlook, indeed, the reader has access to the story through a book, which when we take a closer look proves to be the manifestation of Maxine's fractured (or as I see it aiming-to-be-non-biased) perceptions.

As a writer, Maxine does not address a group of people in a café or another kind of gathering place for people as did the practitioners of the talk-story tradition. Nor is her audience limited to girls in need of guidance about "womanly" matters.

The story has become part of a book the readership of which we cannot know. But we can definitely say that there are some explanations for non-Chinese people. For example, the information that the drowned are feared and look for substitutes colors my reading of the rest of the book. It is no longer a mother-daughter story only. The aunt is exposed to a different and much larger audience.

At this point, we only need to know that this book, though written in English, was not intended for the non-Chinese only. For Kingston says that "there are puns for Chinese speakers only, and I do not point them out for non-Chinese speakers (Ken Fang Lee, 107). In fact, Fang Lee argues that Kingston challenges the concept of

"English as a unitary language.... making it foreign to its own monolingual speaker" (Fang Lee, 107). So Kingston, like in the previous case of translating talk-story into writing, does not use the Chinese story as a pretext for complaining about the Chinese culture to non-Chinese speakers.

Whoever its readers are and whatever their expectations of the book may be, the aunt's story has become written history. Kingston's perception of her writing agrees with what I think. She says: "I realized that by writing about her I gave her back life and a place in history and maybe immortality" (Fishkin, 786).

But I think we should, like always, be careful about the underlying meanings of Kingston's terminology, the relationship between history and writing. As an anti-character in the traditional story, the aunt is already a part of part of the "memory" of her people though *selectively*. There is nothing new about being part of history. In Maxine's personal history and thus her autobiography though, the difference lies in how she has become part of that history. In Maxine's history and thus in her readers', the aunt is not the non-conformist negative character. So she is part of a different history.

To sum up, through her first encounter with the "ghosts" of the past, Maxine achieves translating a collectively stereotyping talk-story into the story of an individual, silence into a place in history, and talk-story into writing. But we should note again note that she does this with all the subtleties I've tried to explain above.

Kingston is determined that these *subtleties* and *fractured perceptions* be taken into consideration. In addition to her aspiration of being an out-law knot-maker, she once more emphasizes that she gets her initial resources from her ancestors only to transform. She defines her way as "reverse ancestor worship" (WW, 16). Because as much as she has avenged her aunt's silence, she has disturbed

her aunt who is suffering in the land of the dead. She is one of those "people who comfort the dead [but]... also chase after them to hurt them further" (WW, 16).

That's why she doubts "she always means me well" (WW, 16). Maxine has chased after her but I don't I think she wants to be the "substitute" the aunt has been looking for. Although her aunt gives Maxine a direction to take, following her blindly would lead her to oblivion too. The aunt may be forerunner but we should leave the analogy between her and Maxine at that. After all, the aunt may have lit the torch but that does not make her a perfect model for Maxine.

For, whether as an act of resistance or simple obedience, she has given a silent birth. And she has chosen death for herself and her baby- at this point it does not matter whether she loved her either- instead of struggling. The road not taken may have been, as the aunt also acknowledges, one that would not "soften her life" (WW, 15).

But based on Kingston's remark that "the work of preservation demands that the feelings playing in about one's guts not be turned into action," it would not be wrong to think that she would expect her aunt- as a woman who has attempted to break that circle of preservation- to turn her feelings for the circle into action rather than killing herself and be the circle's "secret evil."

Yet, although she cannot be her aunt, she can be her listener and voice. (not in the totalizing way the story tells about her, though) In fact, in her MELUS interview Kingston acknowledges the fact that "I became a listener in the end. I can tell the stories from their own point of view" (Chin, 786).

Being the voice of her aunt brings us to the very controversial issue of whether she is licensed to talk in her aunt's behalf as a US- born Chinese who knows

China only through her mother's stories. But there are things in the culture that make all these discussions redundant.

In fact, Kingston has highly been criticized for reinforcing the image of the *silent, submissive Oriental.* But this is not in the least what she is trying to do. By showing us the real cause of silence and presenting her aunt not as a type but as a rebel- maybe not equipped with the necessary psychological tools to defend herself to the full-, and an individual, she has already transcended those *old* categories. However, that does not erase a history of women's subordination by patriarchal forces which are embedded in the language itself.

For example Kingston informs us, the non-Chinese readers that the English equivalent of the Chinese word for the female *I* is a "slave". Even if there is a second radical of the word implying a "person with the sword" (the avoidance of which, I should note, is ironical as we will see in the woman warrior's story) the word is demeaning for women in general.

In her "A Chinese Woman's Response" to Kingston's representation of the silent submissive aunt, Zhang Ya-Jie, a professor of classical Chinese, admits that she has surprisingly come to a recognition of her own biased outlook against her own sex. Nevertheless, in the end she has had to admit that the anti-women feeling is still deeply rooted in the culture even after 1000 years of feudal history.

Like in the case of the "No Name Aunt" with the inseminator not getting any punishment, she says that "noone says what a cheap boy. It is always the girl [who] is cheap. It serves her right" (Ya-Jie, 105). Both women point out to the hypocrisy of the culture. Kingston inserts in the suggestion that the man who possibly raped her may have arranged the group of villagers who raided her aunt's house. Other examples of the negative attitude towards women we can come across in the Woman

Warrior are proverbs like "it is better to raise geese than girls" or "girls are for strangers".

We later learn that the aunt is not Maxine's only role model introduced by her mother. At the very beginning of the White Tigers chapter, Kingston informs us that "when we Chinese girls listened to the adults talk-story, we learned that we failed if we grew up to be but wives or slaves. We could be heroines, swordswomen" (WW, 20). As she grows up, Maxine "at last saw that I had been in the presence of a great power, my mother talking-story" (WW, 19). The teenager Maxine, again from this holder of power, "heard the chant of Fa Mu Lan, the girl who took her father's place in battle." In fact, she remembers how "I had followed my mother about the house, the two of us singing how Fa Mu Lan fought gloriously and returned alive from war to settle in the village" (WW, 20).

Fa Mu Lan is the name commonly attributed to a mythical woman warrior. The choice of the Woman Warrior, the glorious fighter of her father's enemies, as her next possible role-model is instrumental for Kingston in juxtaposing the opposites. In that sense, the woman warrior is the other possible model for Maxine. We have seen with the aunt's example that her quest for a better model has not ended yet. She does not seem to be content with being a wife, thus a slave to her parents-in-law for that matter.

As opposed to the silence accrued to the aunt, we find out that the Woman Warrior's story has evolved into a legend to be recited and remembered for generations since 500 AD. In fact, people have been so concerned about its being remembered that they have turned it into the chant Kingston listens from her mother. Fa Mu Lan is to this day championed by the Chinese for her loyalty to both her familial duties and her emperor.

Before she tells us about the story she says: "I had forgotten this chant was mine, given me by my mother" (WW, 20). At this very initial point we should note that Maxine makes sure we know it is her story, her chant. By claiming the story she does the complete opposite of what she did in her aunt's case. The source is still the mother but this time Maxine wants to share the ownership of the story with her mother. In that respect, we should note once more that, as she has done it with her aunt's story, we will see the myth will be transformed by the time Maxine is done with it, for no origin is complete enough to be stable for her.

Through the Woman Warrior story, we learn more about Maxine's mother and her powerful influence on her daughter. For example, we can now speculate that she does not want to exercise this power on Maxine by limiting the scope of available models to those of the No-Name aunt type.

In this story, as we can infer from the above quotes, there is a girl who gloriously fights in battles in place of her father and returns home to her village after she has fulfilled her responsibility. But the specifics of the story are also important in that they will constitute my analytical tools in comparing China and America in Kingston's mind.

The opening is typical but as Sidonie Smith points out Kingston's integration of the myth into her autobiography is not in the form of myth printed in the autobiography per se. This integration will be one which denies the conception of "[Standard)] autobiography [which] has served to power and define centers, margins and assigned the embodiment to the status of the other which marks women as an encumbered self, identified almost entirely by the social roles concomitant to her biological destiny (Smith, 12-13).

According to the Chinese talk-story tradition, the same story may be told in many ways according to the purpose of the story-teller. Paradoxically, rather than variety, this leads to the production of stock material, which are types like the No-Name Aunt. But Kingston's approach differs in that she does not use it to limit her aunt's presence "forever wandering" in the story to an anti-model for girls (WW, 16). She works within this system but with representation of aunt figure she forms a counter-memory and presents her as an individual, a "forerunner." (WW, 16) The addition of personal details like the type of man she may have liked or the way she possibly wore her hair function to reinforce that individual effect.

Like most of the mythical tales, the story starts with a call. This specific one "would come from a bird that flew over our roof." (WW, 20) Before I can understand whose roof it is, or who the narrator of the story is, Maxine follows: "I would be a little girl of seven the day I followed the bird into the mountains (WW, 20).

We immediately understand that Maxine really makes the chant her chant. She not only claims the character but also becomes her. But this striking identification with a character in her autobiography can only be explained with the power of her mother's talk-stories. Because she previously notes when "night after night my mother would talk- story until we fell asleep... I could not tell where the stories left off and the dreams began, her voice the voice of the heroines in my sleep" (WW, 19).

With the telling of the aunt's story, Maxine had proven to be a part of the talk-story tradition. So there is enough evidence to suggest that she presents this identification with a mythical character for a purpose. I can think of two to begin with. The first is the wish to blur the clear-cut distinction between reality and fiction, which I think is a signal Maxine uses to prepare us readers for the metaphorical

analogies between Maxine the writer of the autobiography, and Maxine the mythical character.

The second in my opinion, is to prove that she is her mother's daughter or similarly to signal a wish to join her powers with her mother. For in her acculturation process, this turns out to be inevitable for Maxine to survive in America. So in my reading of the myth I will simultaneously draw parallels to what could possibly be facts about Maxine's life in America, her place of birth.

When we go back to the specifics of the story, we see that the bird leads Maxine, the Woman Warrior, to the mountains where the couple who train her live. After two days of rest, the old woman- for the couple is comprised of an old man and an old woman- asks Maxine, the girl-to-be-the-Woman-Warrior, whether she is ready to stay with them for fifteen years and train to become a Woman Warrior.

In response to the girl's hesitant reply, the woman shows in her magic gourd what awaits her if she goes back to live with her parents before she's become a warrior. It is not an interesting scene. The girl sees the other members of her family collecting sweet potatoes and busy with housework. "What do you want to do?" the old man asks. "You can go back right now. You can go pull sweet potatoes, or you can stay with us and learn how to fight barbarians and bandits" (WW, 22).

I believe these details serve to set the alternative domesticated wife-slave type in complete contrast with the woman warrior that Maxine wants to be. But as we shall see, the Woman Warrior is not so dramatically different from the potato pulling mother. At last the girl decides to stay and thus begins the training. "The first thing you have to learn, the old woman told me, is how to be quiet" (WW, 23). Interestingly enough, the Woman Warrior's training also starts with an invitation to silence.

The rest of the training parallels Maxine's acculturation in a Chinese family in North America, California, Stockton. For the next phase of her training, during her seventh year of her stay with them (at the age of fourteen), the two old people "led me blindfolded to the mountains of the White Tigers" which give their name to the chapter. But she "would have to survive bare-handed" there (WW, 24).

I think, this having to survive blind-folded and without any tools points out to how Maxine must have felt in her first real introduction to the "white ghosts" (the word ghost is used to refer to any stranger by the mother), the White Tigers of America. Because the parents themselves or in broader terms the Chinese ancestors – the old man and woman- are at a loss about America, they cannot guide her in the American ways. Nevertheless they do not forget to blindfold her (condition her in certain aspects) But Maxine has to see for herself whether the "Be quiet" part of the training applies to the White Tigers' world.

On the first night, at the top of the mountain, she hears "the white tigers prowling on the other side of the fire." But she cannot "distinguish them from the snow patches" (WW, 24). Her initial perception of white tigers (her mom's ghosts) is one that reduces them to a block. (White Tiger ghosts) Because she does not concentrate on the individual features, or rather because her eyes are not trained to see them as separate, Maxine cannot distinguish them from their surroundings. And she cannot distinguish their voices either for, what she hears is a prowling. And as she follows her lessons, she keeps so quiet that the white tigers don't see and harm her. Through her silence, she becomes invisible to them, as they are to Maxine.

Days pass with increasing hardships. But she manages to survive with the help of the lessons she has learned from the couple, that is her ancestors, come to her rescue at least on the emotional level. Yet, this time "there would be no bird" (WW,

24). But they can do it to a point. The hardships, hunger exhaust her so much that, "somewhere in the dead land I lost count of the days. It seemed as if I had been walking forever; life had never been different from this... I was fourteen years old and lost from my village. I was walking in circles" (WW, 26).

So Maxine's initial experience of America is one of anonymity of space and people, and disorientation. As the coordinates of her village no longer apply here, a feeling of loss of sense of place and time come over her and make her feel like she is walking in circles, encircling the center but never finding it. But unfortunately she has to make sense of it herself and from the peripheries is she is to survive. Because "those in the emigrant generations who could not assert brutal 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 fits in solid America" (WW, 5).

As she is about to consume the last remaining bits of her food and power, a white rabbit sacrifices itself and throws itself into the fire to "make her a gift of meat" (WW, 26). She herself does not make a move to kill it, for she has giving up her old carnivore habits when she's started living with the old couple. So from this instance, we see that self-sacrifice has saved her. And she should give up certain habits to harmonize with our new surroundings, to fit in this "solid America" for it is different than the "invisible world" her mother has created with her talk-stories. These are the initial signals of the necessity to break with certain aspects of the talk-story world while yet emerging from it.

As she talk-stories to the couple later, she tells them that she was led "safely through the forest" with the help of her great-grandparents. And she explains what she learns from the rabbit as follows: " I had met a rabbit who taught me about self-

immolation and how to speed transmigration: one does not have to become worms first but can change directly into a human being- as in our humanness we had just changed bowls of vegetable soup into people too" (WW, 28).

So she has learned that with self-immolation comes faster transmigration. I think in Kingston's case, this means she has to give up certain things- like when she gives up certain eating habits to live with the old couple- to be able to be humans. Like the ingredients of the vegetable soup, people "taste better" when they are together. Just like when one aroma mixes with a different smell, the soup is better. But transmigration- the odor and taste transfer- should be mutual. The following instance also supports that.

Suddenly she sees another couple, but this time a young one made of gold. It is interesting that Maxine presents them in the color of the mountain her father had traveled. The gold and the mountain suddenly come together. She watches them dance different dances from all around the world: China, Africa, and India. She also hears the voice of the American Indian bells. The dancers "danced the future" says Kingston "in colors I had never seen before" (WW, 27). So in America, Maxine can see –or rather hopes to see all these different dances together. Maybe because it is not something that she is ready to see, the scene hurts her eyes. But we should note that it is when they come together in their distinct colors that they shine and form the single color gold.

Suddenly, with no overt transition, she sees the old couple this time. In a matter of seconds during which she has to close her eyes- because it is so bright- she recognizes "the old brown man and the old gray woman walking toward me" (WW, 27). With such little time between the disappearance of the golden couple and the appearance of the old couple, Kingston makes me think that they are actually the

same couple. She reinforces that belief by later implying that "when I caught them from the corners of my eyes, he appeared as a handsome young man and she, as a beautiful young woman. Even the former ancestors transform, -as Maxine has already transformed them- so that they can be of help to her in the mountain of the White Tigers.

After she comes back from her survival test with the White Tigers, the couple starts training her in the Dragon lessons, which takes another eight years. "Copying the White Tigers had been a wild thirsty joy. Tigers are easy to find, but I needed the wisdom to know dragons. 'You have to infer the dragon from the parts you can see and touch' the old people would say" (WW, 28). But the dragons are so immense that she has not seen one in its entirety. She feels small when compared to it. "I was a bug riding on a dragon's forehead as it roams through space, its speed different from my speed" (WW, 28).

At the end of her training, the last step of which are the dragon lessons, Maxine has "learned to make my mind large, as the universe is large, so that there is room for paradoxes. As the dragon lives in the sky, the marshes, oceans and mountains, and sometimes the dragon is one and sometimes many," (WW, 29) so is reality or truth for Kingston. But this is not news for us since we've seen her way of handling of her aunt's story.

But she tells us it has not been an easy lesson to learn. Even the "menstrual days did not interrupt my training" (WW, 50). The training has really been hard but not without its awards in the end. Through her training with the old couple, the Woman Warrior not only has come to learn the ways of surviving in the White Tigers Mountain but also to be able to think through paradoxes.

But Maxine makes sure we understand that it is not copying the Tigers that she wants to achieve. She is after the Dragon. And all she can do to find it or have some sense of it is by inferring it through its parts. On the last New Year's Eve she spends with her, like they do every year, the couple shows the Woman Warrior how her family is doing in their magic gourd.

In the gourd she first sees the "men I would have to execute" These are "powerful men counting their money and starving men counting theirs" (WW, 30). The point of departure for the Woman Warrior is to right the wrong. The inequalities she observes in the mirror are like a panorama of what Chinese people experience in America. For America, starting with the first wave of immigrations has been no paradise for people.

Some historical facts could help us understand the situation better. According to the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, the entrance of Chinese laborers into the US was banned. According to the Nationality Act of 1870 Chinese were not qualified for citizenship. Last of all, The Immigration Act of 1924 specifically excluding Chinese women, wives, prostitutes helps us understand under which conditions the Chinese come to this country (Lee, 124). As I have implied in my discussion of the economic situation in the aunt's village making things worse, both the road leading to the dream and the dream itself can be said to have become a nightmare for these people.

To go back to the Woman Warrior's story, when she looks in the gourd once more, she sees "the whole merrily visiting friends on the other side of the river." But this merriment is immediately spoiled. Maxine sees the baron's men. They have come there to conscript men for the army. Seeing this, she asks for her leave to take her father's place. The old couple provides her with men's clothes and fifteen beads to protect her against terrible danger. The same bird leads her back. When her

parents learn that has been trained as a warrior and come back to take her father's place, "my parents killed a chicken and steamed it whole, as if they were welcoming home a son. But I had gotten out of the habit of meat" (WW, 34).

In the morning the parents wake her up and call her to the family hall. When they reach the parlor, "Kneel there... now take of your shirt" says the mother. Then, after the necessary preparations, "We are going to carve revenge on your back" says the father and the mother adds "wherever you go, what ever happens to you, people will know our sacrifice. And you'll never forget" (WW, 34). The pain would indeed make her remember. She complains that "it hurt terribly...the cuts sharp; the air burning... The list of grievances went on and on... I saw my back covered entirely with words in red and black files" (WW, 35).

As soon as she recovers, the Woman Warrior gets on a "kingly white horse" with words on her back "like an army, like my army" (WW, 35), with the equipment and food given to her as gifts by the villagers, including a pair of silver chopsticks on horseback. She sets off in men's clothes to take her father's place in the baron's army and to take her parents' revenge coded on her back. The sons of the villagers constitute her second army. "I took the ones their families could spare... not the young father and not those who would break hearts with their leaving" (WW, 36). Her choice of soldiers shows how much suffering her father's leaving must have caused to her mother.

The parents of the No Name aunt had given her away to her daughter-in-laws and abandoned her after the raid. But the Woman Warrior's "had carved their names and address on me, and I would come back" (WW, 37). As I have pointed out above, separation is a necessity to fit in solid America in certain respects. Yet the names on

her back, an address to return to is certainly crucial. Without names, the Woman Warrior would be "unprotected against space" just like her aunt (WW, 14).

She says "I inspired my army, and I fed them" by singing to them "glorious songs that come out of the sky and into my head" (WW, 37). Then she starts describing her war scenes in details drawing parallels to characters from other Chinese myths. In fact she chooses "Kuan Kung, the god of warrior and literature riding before me" her as her guide (WW, 38).

The fact that she draws on Chinese myths and follows the Chinese god of war and literature shows that these will be her guidelines in Maxine's struggle as a warrior and a writer. (For Kuan Kung is simultaneously the god of both fields) I had pointed above that the Woman Warrior fights the battles (for her soldiers) under male disguise. She cannot tell her Chinese soldiers her real identity for the "Chinese executed women who disguised themselves as soldiers or students, no matter how bravely they fought or how they scored on examinations" (WW, 39).

Yet again, with these remarks Kingston seems to criticize the tradition she has claimed to be working in. Just like in her treatment of the aunt's story, with the Woman Warrior too, Kingston is determined to show the defects of her initial point of departure. Still, as she has done it with the aunt's story, she not only plays with the concepts but the formats manipulatively used for restraining purposes. For further discussion of Kingston's treatment of the myth, I think we should be done with the plot of the story. But I will return to this point later.

During her quest to avenge the wrong done to her family and be remembered for her dutifulness- these are what the old couple promises the girl provided she chooses to be a woman warrior- one spring morning her husband to which she was married by her parents in her absence comes to see her in the camp. It is not just any

arranged marriage though. It should be noted that the parents have done that so that she would not be lonely in death. As they could not know about her whereabouts they were moreover grateful to this young man for taking their daughter as his wife. In fact we learn that they like each other but their previous acquaintance which had not gone beyond being childhood friends until their reunion goes further. Before their intercourse, the husband sees the scars and covers them with his wife's hair. And the Woman Warrior embraces him with the love of "the familiar first". Here I wonder whether Kingston draws our attention to the fact that the familiar first- the China of her mother's talk-stories- has precedence in the depths of her heart.

As a result, the Woman warrior gets pregnant. But because death is inevitable for the two if the soldiers find out, Maxine like her aunt- for different reasons though- hides her belly in a bigger armor and gives silent birth to her son. She even slings and breastfeeds him in that armor. But not long after their umbilical chord is cut, the woman warrior sends the baby away with his father for fear her son may recognize her.

Then, she embarks in other adventures. In the end, she reaches Peiping, the capital city. There, she acts contrary to what is to be expected of a dutiful daughter, a warrior and kills the emperor. In his place she inaugurates the peasant and the new order.

"Carrying the news about the new emperor, I went home, where one more battle awaited me. The baron who had drafted my brother would still be bearing sway over our village (WW, 43). If we readers know that Maxine's older brother was also drafted for a war in real life- the Vietnam war- we can have a clearer sense of who the bad baron might be. The act of "counting money" with fat fingers is also

familiar to us. It reminds us the scene with the rich and poor man counting their money in the gourd. And it also has its parallels in the American context (Lee, 124).

The woman warrior reproaches the baron and when the baron asks her who she is she replies: "I am a female avenger" Upon this statement, the baron starts laughing and appeals to the Woman warrior "man to man" (WW, 43). The baron "quoted me the sayings I hated" (WW, 43) by telling the warrior "oh, come now. Everyone takes the girls when he can. The families are glad to be rid of them. 'Girls are maggots in the rice' 'it is more profitable to raise geese than daughters'

When the woman warrior (Maxine) blames the baron for taking her brother away, the baron replies: "China [or is it America?] needs soldiers in wartime" (the brackets are my addition.)When she blames him for the loss of her childhood ("You took away my childhood"), the baron says he has never in his life met her before. Upon the disclaiming of responsibility, she shows the baron her back. But rather than her wounds the baron concentrates on the breasts. This is the last thing he sees. When we think of this act in terms of Maxine's American context, we can say she has taken her parent's and her own revenge on the wrongdoers.

Then as she looks for people to put on trial she comes across a group of women who can not escape because they have bound feet. She does not arrest them. Later, she hears "they turned into the band of swordswomen who were a mercenary army. They did not wear men's clothes like me, but rode as women in black and red dresses. They bought girl babies so that many poor families welcomed their visitations. When slave-girls and daughters-in-law ran away, people would say they joined these witch amazons... I myself never encountered such women and could not vouch for their reality" (WW, 45).

This passage is very important in that it presents Maxine, the writer and Maxine the Woman warrior as separate. I will come back to that. Maxine, the writer makes another such distinction in her depiction of the Woman warrior with her family. When she is introduced to her son as a general, Maxine disclaims the Woman Warrior voice and switches back to third person singular: "she gave him her helmet to wear and her swords to hold" (WW, 45).

Once this separation takes place, the Woman Warrior goes back home. It is now the Woman Warrior "model" speaking: "I knelt at my parents-in-law's feet, as I would have done as a bride. Now my public duties are finished... I will stay with you, doing farmwork and housework, and giving you more sons" The woman warrior has got what she wants. From now on, "from the words on my back, and how they were fulfilled, the villagers would make a legend about my perfect filiality" (WW, 45).

This ending to the story makes me think Maxine has "possessed" the Woman Warrior for a while and then let her go her own way. The separation in the end is important in many respects. First, the woman warrior like the aunt is left nameless in the sense that she is remembered more as "the woman warrior" rather than with her own name. Second, this proves that "this" Woman Warrior is not what Maxine is looking for either. Maxine seems to aspire to the mercenary army of women more. In fact, we will later see that her mother, who proves to be a woman warrior, is one of the gang. Third, we understand that Maxine has learned her "dragon lesson" well. She still cannot be satisfied with a single model, for she knows the dragon is one and many.

Yet there are still some things the two women share. Maxine herself pronounces the differences and similarities:

"The swordswoman and I are not so dissimilar. May my people understand the resemblance soon that I can return to them. What we have in common are the words at our backs. The idioms for revenge are "report a crime" and "report to five families." The reporting is the vengeance- not the beheading, not the gutting but the words. And I have so many words- "chink" words and "gook" words too- that they do not fit on my skin" (WW, 53).

As for avenging the unfair treatment to their parents they've both fulfilled their responsibility. Their means of achieving the same end differs, though. For Maxine, revenge is not beheading but reporting through words. In this case she has clearly sided with non-traditional.

The "chink" words and "gook" words don't fit her skin any longer. But I think it would be appropriate to add that they don't fit her new skin. By presenting them in quotations she may be trying to achieve two ends. The first thing that comes to mind is that she has realized she has to find a new vocabulary that fits her skin independent of what these gook words represent; namely China. The other thing she may be trying to achieve through the quotation marks can be that, she criticizes the limitedness of the speakers of English language, the way they reduce Chinese to "gook" or "chink" (maybe the culture too for that matter.) But like always, we will see that she is trying to do both simultaneously.

Maxine Hong Kingston is highly criticized for another reason. She is seen as the killer of myths and this is because she plays with them. This for some people is unpardonable. They claim that myths are part of history. People are offended by the

freedom with which she changes their *historical repertoire;* the storehouse of their culture, which they think is unchangeable. To support their case even further, they say she should be the last person to have a claim to the authenticity of the myths she uses, for her knowledge of myths is second-hand information. I will show how Maxine uses the same "excuse" for proving another fact about myths.

Despite criticisms, Kingston embellishes this myth with details of her own. She does that by borrowing some elements from another myth, the myth of Yue Fei; also a loyal warrior but this time as a man. In the "original" myth, Yue Fei inscribes characters on his shoulders: "perfectly loyal in the country's service" (Lightfoot, 61). In Kingston's version though, the woman warrior's parents carve revenge on her back, their oaths and names so that people know their sacrifice wherever she goes. She does this to make a statement about the status and function of myths in our lives.

Before we decide whether Kingston is entitled to authority over myths, there are things that we should know about Chinese myths in general. The first is that Kingston is not the first or the last person change myths. In fact, we might say her purposes are much more innocent.

In her analysis of women as mythic figures in Chinese culture, Susan Mann has found out that puppeteers and even historians have made veritable industry of myths of womanhood. Mann explains that "historicized" myths of women fill China's written records.

Mann has observed that female sovereigns follow closely upon Chinese models of exemplary womanhood especially the ideal of the woman warrior. All these myths are products of a civilizing project in which archaic myths were overwritten by history and literature. In their re-writing, beliefs and structures

embedded in the very patriarchal systems were systematically "historicized" in this process.

Domestic types were posed as moral ideals. With the urban print culture and the emergence of a public audience for myths about women in history, these stories were richly embellished with fictional detail and they were even performed on stage. There are many "versions" of the myth of the Woman Warrior both in historical and fictional books alike.

To these stories Mann says "we owe the sharp critical awareness of signs of decline in women's status in late imperial times that first emerges in the writing of the elite men starting in the late 18th century."(Mann, 841) Likewise, I think the myth of the Woman Warrior is a production of the same manipulative "stereotyping" factory that has produced the No-Name aunt. At first, this may sound illogical as the two figures stand in complete contrast to each other on the outlook. But a detailed analysis proves that they are not so different.

First, as I have already pointed out above, with the separation of Maxine the writer and Maxine the Woman Warrior, what we have left is another nameless woman (or rather Fa Mu Lan at home but nameless as a warrior) Just like Maxine's aunt, she is reduced to a type. However, this time she is to be "remembered" for her dutifulness. The No-Name Aunt and the Woman Warrior are supposedly parts of a different history but in fact they are not. They just happen to be at the diverse ends of the "civilizing project."

Second, the Woman Warrior, however powerful she may look at first- with her soldiers following her- is actually as powerless as the aunt. It is also external powers that decide on her destiny. And just like the aunt, she lets them. But this time her final destination is not the family well but the family house.

Third, at the end of the day, the Woman Warrior goes back home to her domestic duties, as if nothing has happened, like the aunt was treated as if she had never been born. And it is because Maxine does not want to share this same fate with them that she has written her own autobiography, to prevent her personal story from becoming her silence. For, the stories of these two women have been nothing but their silence.

Last of all, just as the aunt was not punished for the individual act of adultery but its circle-breaking effect, the Woman warrior is not rewarded, for what she does as a soldier, a warrior. She is rewarded because she fulfills her "public" responsibility towards her family.

I think the armor, in that respect, is a very important symbol. Although, the Woman Warrior wears the armor and fights the villains, she is not a heroine for what she does as a "woman warrior" but because she does it under male disguise. In fact, she risks her baby's and her own death in case the news gets out. There is constant danger of another "raid." People are "watchful." And the "Chinese executed women who disguised themselves as soldiers or students, no matter how bravely they fought or how they scored on examinations" (WW, 39).

Paradoxically, "the Chinese did not admire a bent back; Goddesses and warriors stood straight" says Kingston (WW, 10). But following upon that, to have a straight back requires being "superhuman" and erasing one's "sexual colors"- with the help of the armor perhaps-. She describes the rest of the women as looking like "great-snails," with their backs bent. Their backs are bent because they carry everything on their backs. And sometimes the weight of words on their backs can beat other kinds of burden. In fact, words, the reporting of the revenge can be so heavy that they can bend a woman's back.

It is only through this reading that the irony Chua points out about the double radicals of the Chinese female "I" makes sense. In fact, this "history" erases the differences between the No- Name aunt and the Woman Warrior. They are the different manifestations of the female I, or rather non-existence.

But maybe, Maxine needn't have gone so far to look for a model for herself. In the *Shaman* part of the book, we learn more about the mother and understand that her power does not come from transmitting stories only. Her life story proves that she is a real fighter. But like her daughter, she does not have a sword in her hand.

We now know that when the men are gone to make their fortunes in the Gold Mountain, women are supposed to wait for them and serve their parents-in-law like slaves. But Brave Orchid, (a woman warrior with a name) Maxine's mother does not do that. In these terms she is also a "circle-breaker", but there is more to her story. The Shaman chapter begins when "my mother brings out the metal tube that holds her medical diploma" (WW, 57).

When her husband leaves for the Gold Mt, Maxine's mother has nothing else to do but to wait. But "year after year my father did not come or send for her. Their two children had been dead for ten years. If he did not return soon, there would be no children. My father did send money regularly, though... Then she decided to use the money for becoming a doctor.... As my father had done my mother left the village by ship... 'I sailed alone to the capital of the entire province' she says" (WW, 60-61).

Brave Orchid travels all alone to the capital city at the age of thirty-five to become a doctor. Maybe not the travel but the decision to become a doctor at that age seems hard to me even now. As we will later see, there is enough evidence to believe it was not a very common practice among Chinese women then either. Going back to

the Woman Warrior episode can remind us that just like women warriors under male disguise, women who tried to be scholars were also killed. This may have been the practice in Fa Mu Lan's time but I will prove that the underlying mentality can be seen in Maxine's mother's time also. The society welcomes them when they have become doctors but still consider them as "outside women"

In her examination of the diploma Maxine makes sure that we know the medical school her mother went to (Hackett Medical College for Women) was as she had read "in a history book" a school founded "in the nineteenth century by European women doctors" (WW, 58), and that on the diploma the "school's English and Chinese names [were] embossed together in a circle" (WW, 57). Here Maxine wants us to know that this is not an unreliable piece of information she may have heard from her mother. There is a reason to it. As we will see in Maxine's portrayal of her American life, life in America for her and for her family is not all a Norman Rockwell painting. For, when she comes to America, Brave Orchid is told that she cannot practice as a doctor with the diploma she got in China, notwithstanding that she's got it from a well-known (good enough to be in history books at least) English-Chinese school. The two tough years she spends on her own to be a doctor are wasted away instantly and she starts building the muscles she did not need in China by working in their laundry.

Once Brave Orchid makes herself comfortable in a "room of her own" and has placed her things in the right places including her "silver chopsticks" (just like the ones the Woman Warrior had taken with her) her tough education of two years gets a start. It is even tougher for her, for most of the fellow *lady scholars* are young enough to be her daughters. Nevertheless, she manages to build "a reputation for being brilliant, a natural scholar who could glance at a book and know it" (WW, 63).

But although she makes things appear "natural" for her when they are not, she nevertheless emphasizes her preference of this life over life back at home (for during her education "she would not have to run errands for the father's tyrant mother with the bound feet or thread needles for the old ladies" WW,62) many times. It can also be said she's made good use of her stay there and achieved to be one of the thirty-seven graduates of the school out of the initial "one hundred and twelve" candidates (WW, 64).

But this chapter is important not only in terms of showing us what a remarkable student the mother was. It is also instrumental in showing us the exorcising power of the mother through talk-story.

During her stay with other woman scholars, Brave Orchid hears a rumor about ghosts inhabiting a certain room in the school. Her immediate reaction is to dismiss the possibility that they might be ancestors haunting them to be fed. She says "I like to think the ancestors are busier than that" (WW, 65). The ease with which she approaches the issue leads to a challenge. The girls dare her to spend a night alone in that room. "My mother may have been afraid, but she would be a dragoness. She would make herself not weak" says Maxine about her mother (WW, 67). But Brave Orchid tells her friends one thing before she goes in the room. "Listen, she said, if I am afraid when you find me, don't forget to tweak my ears. Call my name and tell how to get home. She told them her personal name" (WW, 68).

After midnight, she really sees and feels the burden of a hairy ghost on her chest. As soon as she feels it, she names the ghost: Boulder, the Sitting ghost. She fights the "Sitting Ghost" with her words, telling it she is not afraid of it and it should go where it belongs. She then "ignored the ghost on her chest and chanted her

lessons for the next day's classes... and as dawn came, the thing scurried off, climbing quickly down the foot of the bed" (WW, 71). With this instance, the mother literally talks away the ghost.

When Brave Orchid wakes up, she goes straight to her friends and asks them to tweak her ears and call her back home in case any part of her soul has gone away with the ghost. Her friends call her home but to a new address, the New Society Village, Kwantung where she lives with her friends now. Needless to say, this goes against the rule of home being traced by the descent line, which is always paternal. For if we remember the aunt's example, she had killed her child thinking she would not really exist without a paternal decent line.

As "no blood bonded friend to a friend and they had to figure out how to help my mother's spirit relocate the To Cheung School as home", the calling out of her real descent line would have led her to the wrong place, the village. These strangers had to make her come back to them. They called out their own names, women's pretty names...They pieced together new directions, and my mother's spirit followed them instead of the old footprints. Maybe that is why she lost her home village and did not reach her husband for fifteen years" (WW, 76).

After she's found her new home, however, Brave Orchid, just like the previous Woman Warrior goes back "to her home village as a doctor." She is welcomed in the village. Just like the Woman Warrior, "she had gone ordinary and come back miraculous" (WW, 76).

But we should not let the similarities between the mother and the Woman Warrior (the silver chopsticks, the twelve year-training, the glorious comeback) lead us into thinking that she is just another Woman Warrior. In fact, she is more like a soldier of the mercenary army that the Woman Warrior had seen. To repeat what I

have pointed out above, the Woman Warrior was not able to vouch for the reality of the gang of women who did not find it necessary to fight under male disguise but wore their red and black dresses. (like the ones mother's friends wear for their graduation ceremony) Note that the Woman Warrior, the mythical character had gone back home and had separated herself from Maxine the writer. But Maxine can do what the woman warrior could not. Since she has lived with that gang-member all her life, she can tell us all about her. And Maxine tells us that her mother bought a slave girl, just like the gang members mentioned above and trained her and married her off to a good man. In fact, Brave Orchid has loved her slave girl so much that Maxine envies her and once says that wants to be a slave girl to be loved more. This also shows that "slave-girl is not just an expression" (Yalom, 158).

It is not only the slave-buying that makes the mother an exceptional fighter. Also, the image of the mother who goes back to her home village is not even similar to the image of the slave woman warrior, for what we see is not a slave but rather a brave woman doctor traveling early in the morning with the bandits and ghosts all alone to help people.

So when we look at how Maxine presents her mother from the beginning, the figure we have of Brave Orchid is not a mother who tells her daughter not to tell her aunt's story only. Although she cautions her daughter not to be like her aunt, her own example as a role model says the opposite, for she has herself broken the circle.

Like her mother's, Maxine's "home" is also to be relocated. Maxine has had no direct contact with China, and her life until school has been confined to the mother's stories: "not when we were afraid, but when we were wide awake, my mother funneled China into our ears... Go the way that you came so that you will be able to find our house. Don't forget. Just give your father's name and any villager

can point out to our house." Brave Orchid gives the old address which she herself had found irrelevant to her condition. But there is a reason for that. It is because she is afraid her daughter will be lost in this new country. It is out of love that she wants to take her daughter with her on their return (just like the No-Name aunt had done.) But this is not the thing to do when we consider Maxine's new home. Treating it as a temporary abode does not help her situation. In fact Maxine finds it hard to understand how she is to "return to China where I have never been" (WW, 76).

Maxine learns that things have to change when she starts school. She understands that -like her mother- the calling of her decent line would lead her to the wrong home that the old footprints would guide her in the wrong direction. Her autobiography which she has written through the China funneled into her ears is clear proof of how much she believes she still she needs others to call her back to this new home. And who could do this better than her mother? But just her mother's stories are not a good enough way to cope with the realities she faces in her life outside home. Although the mother wants to help, she knows that she can't be her daughter's guide in a world she barely knows.

Maxine's "report" on her American life is one of disappointment: "My American life has been such a disappointment" This shows that the reporting of the wrongdoings is not just for the Chinese. This experience surely isn't helpful to her at a time when she "could not figure what was my village and it was important that I do something big and fine" to prevent her parents from selling her when they go back to China (WW, 45).

"My silence was thickest- total during the three years that I covered my school paintings with black paint (so black and so full of possibilities)... The teachers called my parents to school... pointed to the pictures... but my parents did

not understand English" (WW, 165). This quotation is telling in many ways. First of all, when Maxine believes it is a stage of endless possibilities that she is painting with black, the teachers see it as a negative sign of her intelligence or psychological condition. Because she is silent verbally, her message is misunderstood by her teachers (as I have pointed above, the same thing has happened to the aunt.) So the "Be quiet" lesson of the old couple only worsens her condition. Secondly, - related with the first- it points out to a lack of communication between the teachers and the parents which leaves Maxine all alone in this new English-speaking world.

Years at kindergarten pass in silence for both her sister and herself. In fact, she flunks kindergarten with a 0 (zero) IQ report. But Maxine says she simply enjoys silence (WW, 166). "It was when I found out I had to talk that school became a misery. I did not speak and felt bad each time that I did not speak (WW, 166). Silence with no negative connotations is suddenly a burden that she has to get rid of if she does not want to feel bad for being a bad girl. Silence is given another meaning this time. Like the dragon which is one and many, the very basic things which we take to be one, universal are different things in different contexts.

This experience in fact affects how she sees her aunt's silence: as something negative. We will see that her encounter with the silent girl and the acuteness of the pain she experiences while imposing speech on her may be helpful in understanding how she may have felt.

The punishment, and the cause of her "shame" (she is sent to the naughty boys' corner) are the exact opposite of those of her Chinese models. This time speech rather than silence is imposed on her. Because she cannot understand the American I and here, she has problems whenever those words come up in a reading passage. Maxine wonders how come the "I" which she is supposed to avoid is a capital letter

when "you" is a lower case. She cannot understand "here" either. She thinks that when compared to the two mountainous ideographs for the Chinese "here", the American "here" is so solitary, so flat. It has "no strong consonant to hold onto" (WW, 167).

Because her teacher does not know Chinese she takes her not being able to read these "simple" things as a sign of her dumbness. For this reason, she is sent to the corner for naughty students. She is punished for the exact opposite reason. She is supposed to assert her individuality by "I." In addition to that she and her sister are sent to speech therapy once a year. She is also reproached by one of her teachers for saying "We Chinese can't sing 'land where our fathers died" (WW, 167). But if we refresh our memories, Maxine's brother fights for (though arguably) the land "where our fathers died." In the end, Maxine is at a loss as to which "I" to embrace. In that respect, I agree with Lee who says that Maxine's challenge targets both US and China.

The overindependent American "I" is another restricting factor. In fact, Lee Quinby reads *The Woman Warrior* as an autobiography promoting "new forms of subjectivity by refusing the totalizing individuality of the modern era" (Quinby, 297). As an independent woman, she does not need (or rather should not need) anyone else to take care of her. She repeats this dictum to herself like a parrot that has learned a new vocabulary: "Nobody supports me at the expense of his own adventure." Then she gets bitter for that too: "noone supports me; I am not loved enough to be supported. That I am not a burden has to compensate for the sad envy when I look up at women loved enough to be supported. Even now China wraps double binds around my feet" (WW, 48). But far from being liberating for Maxine, this too is another

"bind." A traumatic experience has helps Maxine understand that she has to make a choice if she wants to untie these binds.

At school girls are not only expected to talk but to talk in modulated tones and not like their "strong and bossy" mothers (WW, 172): "We American Chinese girls had to whisper to make ourselves American-feminine. Maxine, along with the other girls, invents "an American-speaking personality," which is used by everyone "except for the one girl who could not speak up even in Chinese school" (WW, 172).

Maxine feels an unexplainable grudge for this girl's silence and decides that she will "help" her speak. Some critics say it is her split alter-ego. But I won't go into any psychoanalytical elaboration of the issue. A close reading of the passage about this "silent girl" is ample to prove that this is one more declaration of a theme that Kingston has been arguing for all along. Namely, that silence (rewarded or negated but modulated in different cases) should not be understood as a binary opposite of having a voice (for as we have seen in the case of the Woman Warrior voice may be silence in disguise.) Following that, voice, like silence must not be imposed.

"One afternoon in the sixth grade, (that year I was arrogant with talk, not knowing there were going to be high school dances and college seminars to set me back)" (WW, 173). Maxine finds the opportunity to be alone with this girl. All of a sudden she forces the girl to speak: "You're going to talk, I said in my voice steady and normal, as it is when talking to the familiar, the weak, and the small" (WW, 174).

The cruelty of the scene does not end here. Maxine pulls the girl's Chinese-doll cut hair, her porcelain white cheeks, pokes dimples into her cheeks. Then she confesses "I hate fragility... her weak neck" Why should Maxine think of all these

qualities as tokens of fragility all of a sudden? Where does her arrogance with talk come from? What makes her think her voice is "normal" when she is victimizing a defenseless girl with it? We can find the answers to these questions in the rest of this episode.

At last Maxine loses patience, for the girl is determined not to make a sound no matter how much physical and psychological pain Maxine may be inflicting on her. She asks the girl her father's name. She raises this up to remind her (or rather the reader) of the boy "who could not fill out a form because he did not know her father's name" (WW, 177). They –the sarcastic remark of the teacher can also be counted as her joining in the laugh- had all laughed at him. Now was she too "dumb" to know her father's real name?

Maxine knows the silent girl is not dumb at all. She has heard her yell in Chinese when she passes by the house. But she repeats the accusation: "Do you want to be like this, dumb your whole life? Don't you ever want to be a cheerleader? Or a pompon girl? What are you going to do for a living... You are a plant. Do you know that? If you don't talk, you can't have a personality. You think somebody is going to take care of you all your stupid life... Nobody's going to notice you... I'm doing this for your own good" (WW, 180-181).

Desperate in the end, she has to let the girl go. But she repeats the gesture that initiates her into womanhood: "Don't you dare tell anyone I've been bad to you" (WW, 181). The guilt of what she has done leads to a mysterious illness which ties her to bed for a whole year. She has tried to impose on the girl all the ideas that have in turn been imprinted on her unconscious. Namely, that she should have an "individual" voice, an independent life, and that she should be a cheerleader to be

noticed and get dates. Otherwise she is invisible to people like the Woman Warrior is invisible to the White Tigers because of her silence.

But as we see in a previous quote she herself is not a complete master of the qualities she is trying to impose: she is arrogant with talk "not knowing there were going to be high school dances and college seminars to set me back" (WW, 173). Thus the victim she has chosen for herself is one whom she knows to be defenseless without her sister. She approaches her because she knows she is "weak and small" (WW, 174). Maybe she remembers what her mother says and is trying to prove the opposite: "Be cute and small. No one hurts the cute and small" (WW, 170).

But now that she has written her autobiography in English, she can be considered as a master of the language (and the cultural unconscious behind it like the "girls are maggots in the rice" shows how women are viewed in China) Yet Maxine, even as a master, abstains from claiming to voice (or devoice by misrepresenting) her very aunt in the usual understanding of silence vs. voice. So we know that she does not want to be a master in that sense.

In fact she later tells about what happens to this girl later and admits that nothing she has foreseen about the girl's life comes true. The girl becomes no cheerleader but her family supports her. Her sister works as a typist and provides for her and her family who love her. With this episode, Maxine once more shows her readers the dangers of speaking for/in behalf of a person. Her efforts to bypass this in her presentation of the No Name and the Woman Warrior emanate from this same desire. She learns with this encounter that what the silent girl does is another way of living in the US. She can live but to remain mutual ghosts to each other forever is not the choice Maxine opts for.

The violence of the action and the mysterious illness that follows this instance hints at the possibility of this episode being a fictional insertion into the autobiography. But in the light of the rest of the autobiography, it would be a vain attempt to try to figure whether it is real or fictional. Fictional or real, it is a striking scene in that it shows us the biased perspective that Maxine is awkwardly trying to adopt. This in fact shows that -and the "fictional reality" of the event also proves that- Maxine does not want to be the master of such an imposing voice, that claims to know what is best for people. She does not want what's good for her to be imposed on her either.

Maybe she does not want to be a master. But she has made her choice (just like the silent girl, only in a different direction) to become a part of America. She starts her project with her myths. Kingston answers the people who criticize her for subverting the myths that she has only "heard" from her mother by saying that "myths have to change, be useful or be forgotten. Like the people who carry them across the oceans, the myths become American. The myths I write are new. American. I take the power I need from whatever myth. Thus Fa Mu Lan has the words cut into her back. In the traditional story, it is the man... whose parents cut wows on his back. I mean to take his power for women" (Personal Statement, 24).

This quotation is very explanatory of a few things. First, it is not due to a cultural ignorance on Maxine's side (her second-hand access to these myths) that Maxine changes the myth. Furthermore, we have seen with Mann's analysis that changing myths is far from being an aberration. It has become the norm within the Chinese "written" tradition.

In fact if we make a comparison, we can say that at least Kingston never gives her stories the illusion of authenticity as historical texts have done. Time and again she notes that these stories are stories her mother "remembered" and told her: "I live with a person who remembers that history. There are several places in the book where she either looks things up in the dictionary or an anthropology book" (Chin, 65). This is because with this tale she is trying to form a countermemory against prescribed lines of communal memory which turn out to be no more "real" than her own version of it.

By treating myths as such Kingston makes them live without essentializing their characters as definitive role-models. So what I have mentioned above as an "excuse" turns out to be a deliberate strategy of yet another "reverse ancestor worship." What she has been trying to do all along is, unlike the Chinese female 'I,' not to "break women with their own tongues" (including herself) (WW, 47).

But it is important to note that Kingston confesses she can't do it as much as she wants:

> *I was always trying to find an American language that would translate the speech of the people who are living their lives with the Chinese language. I had to find a way to translate all that into a graceful American language which is my language. But after I finished I started thinking I'm missing a lot* (Chin, 71).

Kingston acknowledges that she may be missing things. But apparently others including her mother miss more than Kingston. Because her mother can't read English, she has to read the book in pirate Chinese translations "which simply avoid certain parts the Chinese-reading public won't like and use ready-made literary

forms." Maxine supposes her mother "thinks I am strong on plot and very entertaining, like her favorite American book Gone with the Wind" (Personal Statement, 23). So in the misrepresentation race Kingston can be said to be far behind.

The second important thing about the quotation is the part about the need to become American on the part of the bearer of the myths. But Maxine cannot figure out what being Chinese means let alone what being an American means. In fact she says she continues to sort out "what is just my childhood, just my imagination, just my family, just the village, just movies, just living" (WW, 205). Maybe this autobiography is a call to Chinese Americans to question the things they believe make them Chinese. At the very beginning of the autobiography she proves a point by making that call:

> *Chinese-Americans, when you try to understand what things in you are Chinese, how do you separate what is peculiar to childhood, to poverty, insanities, one family, your mother who marked your growing with stories from what is Chinese? What is Chinese tradition and what is the movies?* (WW, 5)

She also emphasizes the fact that the parents are not very helpful about that. She believes they "must try to confuse their offspring as well, who I suppose threaten them in similar ways- always trying to get things straight, always trying to name the unspeakable" (WW, 5). Maxine is making a point by these two addresses. Her American experience reinforces this point. A closer look at her American life can help understand her point even better.

We know that starting in kindergarten, she is treated like a dumb girl because she cannot talk and is constantly referred to speech therapy. She is thought to have a problematic psyche because of the black paintings she draws. We can understand from the way she treats the silent girl that she is made to draw parallels between being a cheerleader and having a voice which will give her a speaking personality in the American feminine vein. We have further examples of the way Maxine experiences America.

She says "my mother has cooked for us: raccoons, skunks, hawks, city pigeons, wild ducks, wild geese... snakes" (WW, 90). From the look of people when they see the Kingston family at the dinner table Maxine understands that what they are eating is not as her mother argues the "emperor's" dish.

Or Brave Orchid's account of the "Urban Renewal Ghosts" is a very acute presentation of their situation when they lose their laundry:

> *Do you think your father wanted to stop work? Look at his eyes: the brown is going out of his eyes. He has stopped talking. When I go to work, he eats the leftovers... Those Urban Renewal Ghosts gave us moving money. It took us seventeen years to get our customers. How could we start all over on moving money, as if we two old people had another seventeen years in us... This is a terrible ghost country where a human being works her life away... I did not need muscles in China. I was small in China"* (WW, 104).

Their seventeen years are erased almost with the click of a finger. (just like mother's diploma) So there are ghosts over which the mother has no power. Her

"exorcising" capabilities don't seem to function in the face of such crude realities. (Lee, 109) Nevertheless, the dragon lessons (that the dragon is not one but many) Maxine has learned from her ancestors is a principle that goes beyond that crude reality.

The presence of the ancestors in her psyche, as she tells herself, gives her the power she needs to live in this ghost country. By saying that "nobody in history has conquered and united both North America and Asia an announcing that she is the descendant of pole fighters," she seems to claim the challenge. And she is sure "the eighty pole fighters... would follow me and lead me and protect me, as is the wont of ancestors", Maxine both explains her agenda of "conquering" both these lands and where she finds the power to do that (WW, 49).

She is aware that "writing does not make the ghosts go away. I wanted to record, find the words for the ghosts... I wanted to give them substance that goes beyond me" (Lee, 111). But it is obvious she cannot do it by imitating her mother who are helpless in that world.

Maxine is also helpless in explaining this new world to her mother. Because she can speak English, Maxine is the door leading to the outside world. She has to bargain "shamelessly" (not so "shameful for the Chinese though) for her mother. Once, the pharmacist's delivery boy delivers medicine to their house by mistake. But this simple event has an incredible effect on the mother. She gets furious because the boy has led sickness to their house and she forces Maxine "to make them rectify their crime" by giving her "reparation candy" and "remove the curse with sweetness" (WW, 170).

This event is very dramatic in showing Maxine's position between the two cultures. When Maxine tells her mother that this will only make them think they are

beggars, that the wrong delivery is just a wrong delivery, her mother tells Maxine " You just translate" (WW, 170).

Just as this event is not just a wrong delivery for the mother, Maxine cannot just translate. At the moment she tells the druggist that "my mother said you have to give us candy. She said that's the way we Chinese do it", Maxine feels the "weight and immensity of things impossible to explain to the druggist." (WW, 171) Because she just translates "he gave us candy all year" (WW, 171) thinking "we were beggars without a home who lived in the back of the laundry" (WW, 171). Presenting the case just as it is and just translating it into English "misrepresents" her.

Another sad account of "just do it" ("just say a word") takes place when Brave Orchid's sister Moon Orchid comes from China. Brave Orchid forces her "delicate sister" (WW, 127) to go to her husband and claim her first-wife rights over him. Even if Moon Orchid hesitates (for it has been years and the husband has sent her money but no news to send for her) "Brave Orchid would not relent; her dainty sister would just have to toughen up" (WW, 127).

In fact, before long Brave Orchid manages to drag her sister to Los Angeles to find the husband to ask him "why he never came back to China when he got rich" (WW, 129) (Mind you, the man's house and his new American wife were not raided for that) Despite numerous "I can't do that's" Brave Orchid takes Moon Orchid to her husband's office. Before they leave and on the way, Brave Orchid instructs her sister as to how she should treat that husband of hers, how she should blackmail him. But those are not the kind of things the maternal aunt can do. But Brave Orchid does not listen to her. When they get there Moon Orchid looks so wasted that Brave Orchid decides that "she needed movement" and walks her around the block but even the air does not agree with Moon Orchid's lungs, it is "full of gasoline fumes"

The confrontation between the husband and Moon Orchid ends in frustration. The man has married with an American wife who could best represent him to his – like himself- American friends and does not want Moon Orchid (who was probably one the hurry-up brides who did not have a real relationship with their husbands) but promises to support her financially as he has always done. Upon this news Moon Orchid loses her mental health.

Lee interprets her situation as one of paranoia which has been caused by her exclusion of language. Moon Orchid even imagines that she has heard Mexican ghosts and "miraculously" understood their language and she knows that they will come and get her. Now, Kingston's mother has a lot to do with it. As symbolized with the ritual of calling home, just like her friends did to her back in China, Brave Orchid tweaks Moon Orchid's ears and calls her "home" but to North America as home. Had she been "delicate" like her sister, her friends' call might have mislocated Brave Orchid's soul too. In fact this was what had happened to Moon Orchid. Because she could not "penetrate the words and understand what was happening inside" she lost her sanity and was hospitalized (WW, 181).

This shows Maxine one more time how impositions can ruin the balance of the psyche. But more importantly it teaches her the real definition of insanity. Or rather we should say this makes her understand what her mother had told about insanity better. Although it is her who locks Moon Orchid in a single motive by canceling Moon Orchid's language and trying to reframe it in terms completely alien to her, the mother had told Maxine that insane people were the ones who could not explain themselves, for they had a single story that they repeated over and over again.

Paradoxically although the mother is the source of the "insanity" and "dragon" lessons (Maxine at one point says they are both Dragonesses according to the Chinese horoscope) it is again she who causes her sister to go to an asylum by imprisoning her to this "dreadful single story." Also although the mother is depicted as this strong, willful woman as opposed to her "delicate" sister, she is helpless in calling Moon Orchid home, for she has lost it too. The only difference being that she has had the ambition and the time to adapt to hr environment, Maxine decides it is time to "tell" her to stop doing the same thing to her.

Because it is not China but America that has become Maxine's home, she cannot let it ruin her as it did to her maternal aunt. Although Kingston is trying to act as a bridge between cultures, she says she is determined to "not to let go of my [her] hold of this country... her home" (Chin, 65). She prepares the list of the things that have been piling inside her to tell her mom to stop doing them. She calls the list the "telling list." She plans to tell them to her mother in small numbers everyday. But as she starts, her voice starts "pouring out like Chinese opera" not knowing that her mother's responses would change everything that she had though about her" (WW, 197).

Her mother had cut Maxine's frenum so that she would not be tongue-tied. Using this reference, Maxine defines the telling as the "tongue cut loose" (WW, 197). Until she learned what real insanity was, Maxine had tried to look insane for fear that her parents would sell her out when they got back to China. And there was this little rich and retarded pervert who would sit (it is important that the imagery used describing this boy is very similar to the one describing the Sitting Ghost) across the Kingston laundry and watch Maxine which made her think he could be a viable son-in-law for her parents. So she begins her list by saying she may be ugly

but that she is smart. And this being the case she almost orders her mom to get rid of the idea that the retarded could be a husband for her. She goes on to say the cutting of the frenum (which she thought the mother had performed to stop her from talking) was not working

By the end of the long chain of I's, (for every sentence Maxine utters in this scene is marked with an I at the beginning pointing to the function of the telling list which is to liberate her from the imposing influence of her mother) the mother who is herself a "champion talker" (WW, 202) starts shouting back at her. Brave Orchid defends herself as follows:

> *I cut it to make you talk more, not less, you dummy. You are still stupid. You can't listen right. I didn't say I was going to marry you off. Did I ever say that? Did I ever mention that? Who said we could sell you? Can't you take a joke? You can't even tell a joke from real life....You turned so unusual. I fixed you tongue so you would say charming things... I did not say you were ugly. That's what we're supposed to say... we [Chinese] have to say the opposite (WW, 202-204).*

So all that Maxine has feared, been inhibited by, led to lose self-trust for could have been a "joke." This "joke" status of the autobiography which she has been telling through silent stories, silent myths is like the strawberry on top of the cake of "I am not representing those people but finding my way through them" Kingston does not disinherit her people but the representational uniform she is being made to wear.

The mother is right in a lot of things but in one particularly; that Maxine "cannot tell what's real and what you [the mother] make up…'this is a true story, or'

This is just a story.' [She] can't tell the difference" (WW, 202). So Maxine decides to leave home "to see the world logically, the new way of seeing" (WW, 204). But before that she tells us one more story the mother has told her. This time she makes sure we know it is not a childhood story though. It has been told recently. About the story she says "the beginning is hers, the ending mine" (WW, 206).

In China, she is told that the grand mother loved the theater very much. So much so that she would not miss a performance even when the threat of bandits breaking into houses was all around. She has an idea though, she makes her children leave the windows and doors wide open to fool the bandits into thinking the house is full of people, which they do. But the bandits strike the theater and not the house. From this instance came the belief that the family "was immune to harm as long as they went to the plays." This part of the story is mother's.

Maxine supposes that the Songs of Ts'ai Yen was one of the talismanic performances the family went to. Unlike other stories, Maxine gives historical details about this poetess who really lived in the second century A.D. so as to make us know it is not a false story the difference of which she cannot make from real stories. Also Wong says that because the stanzas were much longer than the legend of Fa Mu Lan, they were written down and thus were less popular which according to suggests Kingston must have read them. (as they were not part of the oral tradition, she could not have listened to them)

According to the story, Ts'ai Yen, who is the poetess daughter of Ts'ai Yung, a scholar famous for is library is abducted by a chieftain during a southern barbarian raid. She is made to fight for them and bears children to the chieftain during her twelve-year stay among the barbarians. "Her children did not speak Chinese. She spoke it to them when their father was out of the tent, but they imitated her with

senseless singsong and laughed" She is both a slave like the No name Woman and a woman warrior like Fa Mu Lan. As she fights for the Barbarians she hears the whistle of their arrows. But later she figures these are not "their only music," when she hears the "music tremble and rise like desert wind" (WW, 208). The music disturbs Ts'ai Yen so much so that "she could not concentrate on her own thoughts" but the music fills the desert. She hides but cannot escape the music. Then "out of Ts'ai Yen's tent, which was apart from the others, the barbarians heard a woman's voice singing, as is to her babies, a song so high and clear that it matched 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" (WW, 209).

In my first reading of the last part I had thought –assuming that the artist figure should be Kingston herself- that Ts'ai Yen was allegorically Kingston. But as Cynthia Wong points out, the "selective focus" of Kingston takes in the person of Ts'ai Yen actually points out to the predicament of the mother rather than Maxine.

The barbarian land is no home for Brave Orchid at the beginning. But later as hopes going back home fade (the communist regime takes over all their land), she begins to fatten and does not want to go back anymore. But even in the story Maxine makes her mother feel at "home" In fact, Kingston wishes she had included a certain detail that would color the story and that is "Ts'ai Yen, the woman warrior who composed eighteen songs for the barbarian reed pipe, looked up in the sky, she saw home-flying geese that made the formations of words- her letters home" (Personal Statement, 25). So the mother may still be in America but her message goes to China.

Although Kingston does not mention it, Wong says that it is a very well known fact that Ts'ai Yen leaves her children behind. In that sense, the story is the sign of separation from the mother's home but not from her and her stories though, for her children sing along with her. Moreover, the barbarians understand their suffering, the reporting has been completed. But to end the suffering she has to harmonize her voice with the Barbarian instruments.

What should not be missed is that the mother attunes her songs with those of the Barbarians. So what I have been talking about as the ambivalence of the mother is perhaps her attempt to help. What the mother may have thought would be betrayal to China has "translated well" in Kingston's rendition of the same material. In that sense as much as this story a sign of separation, the voices have merged in a space which does not belong to either. This space has enabled the translation. The picture is complete with the mother and the daughter in the middle of the desert. They "belong to the planet" now (WW, 106).

CHAPTER II

Lost in Translation (LIT) is the title of the autobiography of Eva Hoffman a "zero generation" (as she likes to call herself) Jewish-Polish-American immigrant The reason why she calls herself as such is because she immigrates to Canada with her parents at the age of thirteen. Unlike Kingston who is born in the US, Hoffman has had a life back in Cracow, her first "homeland." In fact, the organization of her autobiography is revolves around this homeland. Hoffman follows a linear approach to her life story. She begins with her childhood, grows into adolescence and adulthood in Canada and America respectively. She names these different phases of her life according to her retrospective vision of her past centering her childhood.

The first chapter is called "Paradise", which refers to Cracow. The criteria that determine the names become clearer as we read the rest of the autobiography. But the *"Paradise"* chapter does not begin with happy childhood memories. Instead, the book opens with a note of disappointment:

> *It is April 1959... I feel that my life is ending. I'm looking out at the crowd that has gathered on the shore to see the ship's departure from Gdynia- a crowd that, all of a sudden is irrevocably on the other side- and I want to break out, run back, run toward the familiar excitement, the waving hands, the exclamations. We can't be leaving all this behind- but we are. It is a notion of such crushing, definitive finality that to me it might as well mean the end of the world (LIT, 1).*

It is Hoffman's farewell to the "familiar excitement" of her childhood in Cracow on the deck of a ship heading Canada. But it is more than that. Hoffman equates the emotion this separation invokes in her with "the end of the world", the end of her life. She is crushed by the definitive finality the separation imposes in her, leaving her on the other side. But what is it in Cracow that makes this separation so traumatic?

We learn that it is the thought of having to leave behind Cracow which she loves as a person, its "sun-baked villages where we had taken summer vacations, of the hours I spent poring over passages of music with my piano teacher, of conversations and escapades with friends." (LIT, 4) But as we will see it is not as easy as that. Language will prove to be the central cause of Hoffman's anxiety.

Hoffman defines her situation as her "first severe attack of nostalgia, or teşknota," (LIT, 3) "a word that adds to nostalgia the tonalities of sadness and longing." At this point, it is important to note that although she has already lived that past and is no longer the little girl who was severed from her home, Hoffman does not find the word "nostalgia" sufficient to express her feelings and prefers "teşknota" over "nostalgia." (We see that the preference of Polish over English words wanes away) But for the thirteen-year old *Ewa* (we will see the significance of the change in the name later) "teşknota" has all the "shades and degrees... tonalities of sadness and longing" the word "nostalgia" does not have for her *then*. With this, Hoffman immediately draws our attention to the fact that even such basic things as emotions cannot be completely contained in a single language. The feeling of inadequacy starts even before she reaches her destination.

From the very beginning of the autobiography, we are made to feel the loss Ewa experiences through this journey. In fact she sees the inadequacy of "nostalgia" as "a premonition of absence, because at this divide, I'm filled to the brim with what I'm about to lose- images of Cracow. (LIT, 4) So, even now we can tell that loss has to do with language.

Moreover, she does not know anything about the place they are heading towards except for the information in the book her father has found. When juxtaposed against her Paradise, the description of their destination in this book as "a majestic wilderness, of animals roaming without being pursued, of freedom" does not sound very encouraging This "cold blankness" ahead, for she cannot locate herself in the middle of the ocean, renders her reference points useless; it comes as an "erasure of the imagining" (LIT, 4) Her own perception of Canada is that of a "Sahara", and she accuses Canada of prying her "out of out of my childhood, my pleasures, my safety, my hopes for becoming a pianist (LIT, 5).

Hoffman uses biblical imagery to refer to her childhood (as the title for this chapter my also indicate) She feels she is "being pushed out of the happy, safe enclosures of Eden. So if we sum up her initial definition of "childhood" the feelings Hoffman associates with it are familiarity (as opposed to the blankness, desert-like wilderness of Canada), safety (as opposed to the uncertainty awaiting her and her hopes to become a concert pianist), and happiness (as opposed to the feeling of loss- can also be thought of as an antonym for fulfillment- this journey invokes). In his article *"The Brave New World of Immigrant Autobiography,"* William Boelhower quotes Franco La Polla whom he thinks correctly observes, "America's historical self-perception [as] a mythic exercise, the historical discovery of an Edenic condition." Based on this, we can say Hoffman's beginning is not an example of

typical immigrant autobiography. Her parents' or rather her father's expectations of America are the exact opposite of Hoffman's, though.

After the painful scene of separation, Hoffman immediately starts quenching the curiosity of her readers waiting to learn about this Edenic city of her childhood. She starts talking about her childhood from when she is 4 years old. "It is Cracow, 1949." (LIT, 7) The starting point is very important. Eva Hoffman is born the year WW II ends. And her being Jewish in Poland in those years gives us an idea of the family situation then.

But Hoffman's psychological situation is not one that fits the post-war era "in a country recently destroyed by war, a place where my father has to hustle to get us a bit more than our meager share of meat and sugar" (LIT, 8). Hoffman describes the feeling filling in her as one of *sufficiency*.

> *I only know that in my room, which to me is an everywhere, and that the patterns on the ceiling are enough to fill me with a feeling of sufficiency because... well, just because I'm conscious, because the world exists and it flows so gently into my head... I'm filled with a sense of utter contentment... I love knowing from my bed, the street over which the tram is moving. I repeat to myself that I am in Cracow, which to me is both home and the universe.... (LIT, 5)*

Ewa is now content with the self-fulfillment Cracow, "the universe" can offer her. In fact she has been able to fit the universe into her room. But she will prove to be mistaken in thinking "everything is changeless and knowable" (LIT, 7) Just like in

the case of her namesake Eve, this Edenic feeling of contentment is unfortunately destined to be lost once she is expelled from this Paradise.

But her life is not completely free from feelings and thoughts that disturb her. Her mother constantly reminds her about "she", "my father's younger sister, who was killed during the war..." In telling us about her, Hoffman switches to the language her parents use to make sure she remembers: "she was so young, eighteen or nineteen. She had not even lived yet... and she died in such a horrible way. The man who saw her go into the gas chamber said that she was among those who had to dig their own graves... her hair had turned gray the day before her death" (LIT, 10).

Nevertheless, rather than invoking in her a feeling of responsibility towards this dead aunt, this language leads Hoffman to question the reality of the story even more. She says "that strikes me as a fairy tale more cruel, more magical than anything in the Brothers Grimm. Except that this is real. But is it? It does not have the palpable reality as the Cracow tramway. Maybe it did not happen after all; maybe it's only a story, and a story can be told differently, it can be changed... In my head, without telling anyone, I form the resolve that when I grow up, I'll search the world far and wide for this lost aunt" (LIT, 7).

I doubt it being so soon (for I think it is through the teleological perspective with which the autobiographical form enables the writer of the autobiography give meaning to an otherwise arbitrary-looking event) but from this very early age on Hoffman resolves to find reality in her own way rather than basing her judgements on her parents' stories. She does not disclaim her aunt's memory but does not accept it blindly either. After all "stories can be told differently." I believe that by inserting this can-or-cannot-be-real aunt, Hoffman wants to warn us against taking *her* story as final.

This may have been caused by an early conditioning on the part of the parents, who in turn as the children of the war ("the war- their second birth-place") have been "thrust in one enormous leap, across the abyss, into modernity" through which "most of their obedient preconceptions and beliefs have been corroded away by the lye of extreme suffering, and have been replaced by a perfectly modernist nihilism" (LIT, 16).

However, their loss of belief in "obedient preconceptions" does not stop them from asking their children -Ewa and her sister Alinka- to carry "the fate's terrible burden." In fact, they even name Alinka after that aunt "who exists like an almost concrete shadow in our lives" (LIT, 7) Ewa is also named after both her grandmothers. Although nothing- and noone- has survived the war including photographs which testify to the reality of the past, the parents try to establish their relationship with the past- or rather their future- through their children. Hoffman agrees that "they want happiness fervently, and they implore their children to be happy, to be happy no matter what." but "it turns out, in the long run, to be a paradoxical recipe" (LIT, 16).

R*emembering* is Ewa's introduction to the concept of being Jewish. She is taught that being Jewish requires remembering. In fact, "it's a matter of honor to remember, like affirming one's Jewishness." But the problem is, she does not understand what she remembers. "To atone for what happened, [she] should relive it all with her [aunt.]" Yet even if she tries, she "can't go as near as this pain as [she] *should.*" So there is a distinct Jewish way of experiencing pain that she does not know. Yet, for reasons she cannot understand, she "can't draw away from it either" (LIT, 24). This leaves her in a very difficult position.

She cannot relive her aunt's pain to understand it or rather her own situation renders it impossible for her to fully integrate it into her life. But remembering means to make things "stay" (LIT, 17) to freeze them in time. So Hoffman protests: "It does not apply to my life." In fact, this story is "misleading, making me into a knee-jerk pessimist" (LIT, 24). Similarly, when she is in Canada, their Polish maid Ciocia Bronia pleads for some news from "her darling Eva" but she never writes back. Because then again "there is no way I know that I can convey the nature of my new life to her" (LIT, 24).

Upon this, she decides to keep "my mother's stories at a long arm's length." In fact, years later she confesses that these kinds of stories render her parents "archetypal." Although the mother claims that they have been "molded by the same Thing", because Ewa has not experienced herself and just heard stories about it, it is impossible for her be a part of that Thing except in *listening* these stories. Still, she cannot help feeling guilty for how she really feels. She admits to herself that "it's useless to try to walk away" (LIT, 26).

This past which she has not experienced herself leaves her alone with the task of finding out what happened to her parents, what her origins are. She is told that the war is her origin but the telling is not satisfactory for her. "As with all our origins, [she] cannot grasp it," and speculates: "Perhaps we never know where we come from; in a way we are all created ex nihilo (LIT, 25). Her search of the meaning of being Jewish does not end here, though.

Maybe Hoffman sees this kind of questioning vision as a precondition for being a good writer, for she announces her wish of being a writer right after this comment. Long before telling us about this wish, she draws a picture of the language in which

she will tell her stories. This autobiography, besides being the story of her life as a person, is her story of coming to be the writer of this autobiography as well. So language as the material with which she experiences and writes is very important for our purposes, for it not only expresses *what* Hoffman wants to convey but also the format in which she wants to give it to us:

> *Bramaramaszerymery rotumotu pulimuli" I say in a storytelling voice, as if I were starting out a long tale, even though I know perfectly well that what I'm making up are nonsense syllables. I want to tell A story, Every story, everything all at once, not anything in particular that might be said thorough the words I know, and I try to roll all sounds into one, to accumulate more and more syllables as if they might make a Möbius strip of language in which everything, everything is contained* (LIT, 12).

From this quotation some readers may infer that Hoffman is contradicting herself. But we will see that the single story she will be telling us will be the one that tells there is no such thing as a single story. But there is a reason this passage is put together with the conflicting stories of her parents. I believe Hoffman tells about her initial approach to language for us to trace the change- imposed or voluntary- that comes to being in the later phases of her life. However, with our present knowledge we can say that, Hoffman as a child thinks that there can be a single language that can capture the essence of all stories. (This proves my disbelief in her acute skepticism towards the stories at a very early age.)

We can draw parallels between Hoffman's understanding of language-self relation and Lacan's theory of the child's initiation into language in two stages. To

be able to draw the analogy, (it is important in that Hoffman uses language and her relation to it as the "diagram" of her life) we should look at what Lacan says about language and self-perception through language. I will analyze the related aspects of this theory as I discuss the relevant points of it to different phases of Hoffman's personal development.

Lacan names the first pre-linguistic stage as the *imaginary*, "by which he means a condition in which we lack any defined center of self, in which what self we have seems to pass into objects, and objects into it in a ceaseless closed exchange" (Eagleton, 164). This stage mirrors Freud's analysis of the early years of a child's life, with no clear sense of a distinction between subject and object and the outside world, a stage (which he calls the pre-oedipal stage) where the child is not yet a unified subject "with no center of identity in which the boundaries between itself and the external world are indeterminate" (Eagleton, 154). So for now the child is not yet able to view its body as a complete, separate object.

For clarity's sake Lacan uses the image of the child contemplating itself in the mirror, the key metaphor of narcissism, where it establishes an imaginary identification with the image reflected back. In his book entitled *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, Terry Eagleton reserves an entire chapter on Psychoanalysis. In this fifth chapter, he says that this narcissistic act is instrumental in the child's acquisition of a sense of an "I" by finding that the "I" reflects back to ourselves by some object or person in the world.

Lacan explores and widens the implications of this narcissistic metaphor. The child looks in the mirror and is delighted by the several qualities of its image as one with that of its mother since she is the first being with whom it has the first interaction. As Lacan calls it, (Lacan, 197) the previously "shapeless mass" in its

amorphous state has now gained a sense of wholeness, an ideal completeness. This sense of completeness is related with there being a mother to interact with the child. For there to be an interaction the child starts to perceive itself as something outside the mother. Yet it simultaneously gains this self-perception in comparison with the mother. So we cannot talk about a complete break. This wholeness does not yet refer to wholeness as separate from the mother. "This object is somehow part of ourselves- we identify with it- and yet not ourselves, something alien" (Eagleton, 164).

As Elizabeth Wright very aptly puts it in her book entitled *Psychoanalytic Criticism,* "This gratifying mirror-image experience is a metaphorical parallel of an unbroken union between inner and outer, *a perfect control* that assures immediate satisfaction of desire" (Wright, 108). Although an integrated self-image is still lacking and the self that it sees in the mirror is not yet unified and physically coordinated in the world as such, by now, the child has already started constructing its center of self by the blurring effect of being both a subject and object.

On the outlook, Hoffman seems to have located the "center of the universe" in her little room in Cracow. In that respect, she seems to repudiate the theory of Lacan. But on the contrary she proves it rather than repudiate it. This thing she takes to be the "center" is actually an illusory reflection of unity with the mother and the surroundings and not center as Hoffman independent of them.

This "misrecognized" unity leads itself to the illusion of safety, familiarity which Hoffman associates with Cracow. Identification with objects- with place in this case- is crucial in ego-formation. In fact Hoffman points out to the importance of these first objects of identification. She wonders at their absurdity and "childishness" with her now-writer point of view. Although the recollection of the experience later

makes her think "how small and without significance they are," "the first things, the incomparable things, the only things" (LIT, 72) contribute to the formation of the self.

For Lacan, "the ego is this narcissistic process whereby we bolster up a fictive sense of selfhood by finding something in the world with which we can identify" (qtd. in Eagleton, 165). For Hoffman too "it's by adhering to the contours of a few childhood objects that the substance of our selves- the molten force we're made of- molds and shapes itself. We are not yet divided" (LIT, 72). This "molten force", the ego-object identification indicates the absence of a gap between the two: "We are not yet divided."

In his article titled "T*he Displaced Self: The Experience of Atopia and the Recollection of Space"* Denis B. Walker argues that the "recollection of place functions in the narratives of the self, both written and oral, as a means of composing, and re-composing, a sense of continuity in the self and of averting and repairing the sense of death of the self that is a consequence of the fracturing of the links that bind self to place" (Walker, 22). Following that, he interprets the Lacanian mirror to be a metaphor of space. The imaginary stage is when this feeling of continuity of place (and thus the identification with it as the center of the newly discovered self) is at its peak. Thus can we account for the feelings of teşknota that Hoffman so acutely feels on the ship taking her to Canada. However illusory or misrecognized, her sense of oneness with the landscape is being severed from her, a gap is forming between them both physically and mentally.

The Lacanian "gap" between the ego and its identification object opens with the child's initiation into the order of language, what Lacan calls the "Symbolic order"

This order is marked by the "Law of the Father". With the entrance of the father the dyadic relationship of the Freudian pre-oedipal stage now becomes triadic. This is simultaneously the opening of unconscious desire. Its libidinal relationship with its mother once disturbed by this newcomer, the child represses this desire for the mother into the previously non-existent unconscious. This "split" (consciousness-unconsciousness) can be considered as a result of the social imperatives exacted by the father who formulates them in the structures of the language. In fact, we will see a very vivid picture of that split in Canada.

In fact Hoffman acknowledges that for her to "exist" (and for her objects of identification of course) she should articulate them first. For, "nothing fully exists until it is fully articulated" (LIT, 27). As for her "strange" desire to become a writer she explains writing as the only way of "articulating a different desire", a desire which she herself cannot define. That desire is "to be transported into a space in which everything is as distinct, complete and intelligible as in the stories I read... I want reality to imitate books- and to capture the essence of reality. The more words I have, the more distinct, precise my perceptions become... Sometimes when I find a new expression, I roll it on the tongue as if shaping it in my mouth gave birth to a new shape I the world. Nothing fully exists until it is fully articulated (LIT, 27).

But we should note that in Hoffman's case it is the mother rather than the father who is trying to do that. Ewa says that "my father almost never mentions the war; dignity for him is silence, sometimes too much silence. And after a while, he finds it difficult to talk about many things, and it is not until the events have receded into the past that he recounts a few stories from those years-by that time so far removed that they seem like fables again. James Bond adventures" (LIT, 23). But the mother insists: "My mother wants me to know what happened, and I keep every detail of

what she tells me in my memory like black beads" (LIT, 24). The mother in this autobiography also takes over the responsibility of passing over the legacy of the past- however "unlived" it may be for her children. Yet again, we will see the father figure in different disguises in my discussion of Hoffman's introduction to other "centers." And when we do I will refer to the symbolic order and its relation to the "sign" But before that, looking at Hoffman's early and not-so-definite understanding of different social imperatives will help us understand her concerns in writing this autobiography.

Ewa's experience of time in Cracow is also not in the way she *should*. Hoffman relates this temporal experience to that of place with a very short, naïve but telling scenes from her childhood. She recounts those scenes as if she is reliving it; in the present tense:

> *It is a funny fall afternoon and I'm engaged in one of my pastimes- picking chestnuts... I pick up a reddish brown chestnut and suddenly, through its warm skin, I feel the beat as if of a heart. But the beat is also in everything around me, and everything pulsates and shimmers as if it were coursing with the blood of life. Stooping under the tree, I'm holding life in my hand, and I'm in the center of a harmonious, vibrating transparency. For that moment, I know everything there is to know. I have stumbled into the very center of plenitude, and I hold myself still with fulfillment, before the knowledge of my knowledge escapes me* (LIT, 41).

The moment gives her a sense of fulfillment and plenitude and she locates this moment in the chestnut in her hand, under a tree. The moment is the *center* of plenitude. In fact the sequencing of images (the commas and the "ands") without any break in between suggests it is going to last forever.

With this scene we see temporality and space as co-existing centers giving meaning to Hoffman's existence. But just as her center is about to change (for there won't be any Cracow at the end of the journey) her sense of time/the moment as "holding life" proves to be temporary:

> *I am walking home from school slowly, playing a game in which it's forbidden to step on the cracks... The sun is playing its games of lines and shadows. Nothing happens. There is nothing but this moment, in which I am walking toward home, walking in time. But suddenly time pierces me with its sadness. This moment will not last. With every step I take, a sliver of time vanishes. Soon I'll be home, and then this, this nowness will be the past, I think, and time seems to escape behind me, like an invisible current being sucked into an invisible vortex. How can this be, that this fullness, this me on the street, this moment which is perfectly abundant, will be gone? It' is like that time I broke a large porcelain doll and no matter how much I wished it back to wholeness, it lay there on the floor in pieces... How many moments do I have in life? I hear my own breathing: with every breath I'm closer to death. I slow down my steps: I'm not home yet, but soon I will be, now I'm that much closer, but not yet ... not yet ... not yet... Remember this, I command myself, as if that way I could make some of it stay. When you grow up,*

you'll remember this. And you'll remember how you told yourself to remember (LIT, 17).

Just like the instability of her center, the nowness of her moments pass. We can see that her later experience of the same *moment* has changed. The moment is no longer "complete" in itself; there is now a chain of moments leading to an "invisible vortex." The reason I point out to these is to show how Hoffman's journey signals a thorough "change". In fact (because Hoffman knows the end of the story, it is quite normal for her to want to make us also feel the impending change) her conviction that "I know that everything is changeless and knowable" (LIT, 6) has already started to change.

However, in the midst of these winds of change, there is still hope that she can hold time: "not yet... not yet." On the other hand, she is made to realize that there are things that can never change. We have seen that the aunt's story is the same no matter how many times it is told (not by Hoffman but by the parents of course). In fact, Hoffman does not abstain from laying bare the hypocrisies of both her parents and her Cracow. Just like Kingston, Hoffman talks about "unspeakable" things.

As we have seen with the firmness she displays in making Ewa remember her aunt, the mother is a strong figure, and sometimes even stronger than the father. Her parents' marriage has been "act of considerable rebellion" on the part of the mother. The mother's decision to marry Ewa's father, "one of the town's bad boys" has "instilled in my mother a determined- and, in someone of her time a surprising aversion to *feminine* pursuits and, throughout my childhood and youth, she is quite set on not teaching me how to cook or sew, lest such skills prevent me from turning to more interesting things (LIT, 9).

Yet the same mother thinks "a maid is a necessary part of a lady's equipment" (LIT, 53). In fact, she establishes her "ladyship", and self-importance through her difference from their maids. To most of the maids, the mother is "part *madame,* part friendly counselor, and they alternately bicker, work together" but at the end of the day, they "fall into their appointed roles of mistress and servant, insofar as such social separation is possible in the revealing proximity of our snug quarters." As I have mentioned above, the mother sees it as a means of maintaining "self-importance in such circumstances" (LIT, 54) but it also enables her to maintain her ties with the "prewar hierarchy of the shtetl" (LIT, 21) which she seems one of the few things she can hold onto, (as the war has corroded away her sense of continuity) since there is noone alive to remember it together. Interestingly, Hoffman thinks "such egotism is at the heart of feminine power which, consists in the ability to make others do things for you (LIT, 15).

However, when the concept of "femininity" is concerned Hoffman is proud to say that her "features have more of that irregularity – pouty lip, oblique cheekbone, slightly slanty eyes." Her physical appearance carries the characteristics which the Poles value as an ideal of feminine beauty..." Maybe out of embarrassment but definitely emanating from her later experiences which I'll analyze in their comparison to her previous convictions, she refers to these criteria as "pure myth" But nevertheless she feels obliged to recognize the fact that "the myths run deep, and we believe them ourselves, for years and decades to come." even with the foresight of her later experiences.

Lineage is one other thing the power of which she greets with respect and partial submission. She talks about its importance in her comparison of the new rich with the middle class in Cracow. As Ewa, Hoffman is told that "lineage

gives solidity, a depth that such newly minted success cannot bestow; it implies a moral uprightness and dignity of not having to prove yourself, of being somebody to begin with, and being, by the still preindustrial standards of this particular society is far preferable to striving" (LIT, 44). So in Cracow, Hoffman does not have to prove who she is because she has a prestigious lineage.

As Jennifer Browdy de Hernandez also points out, no matter how Edenic or central the picture Hoffman draws in our minds about her life in Cracow, hers is more like "a fallen paradise, haunted by the Holocaust and the discords of Poland's subordination to the Soviet Union." (Hernandez, 23) This pretentious ignorance (for even if Ewa the child was not aware of these circumstances, it is impossible for the adult Hoffman not to know them) demonstrates how Hoffman looks at history and her Jewishness. It is also Hoffman's narrative strategy juxtaposing two worlds (her childhood and her adulthood) as complete opposites.

Hernandez's panorama of the historical condition points out to subordination of the Polish people to the Soviet Union in general. The education she gets at school is the official proof of that. She says she gets "two political educations, one superimposed on the other like two transparencies conflated into one photograph. First of all, there is this business of learning Russian... the international language of communism" (LIT, 61).

The second is on history. Her class reads in history books the "stirring progress of the Polish Communist Party" under the disguise of the "dispersed polish knights fighting the Russian juggernaut in the fourteenth century, peasants rebelling against cruel feudal landlords... The history is "an endless

succession of class wars, a heroic pageant of the oppresses triumphing over the oppressor" (LIT, 62).

The education she gets does not in any way reflect Ewa's notion of history. For example, she finds Cracow "full of history." (LIT, 39) But for her, it is by virtue of being old that the city is full of history which unlike the "worthy" struggles of the knights has "many layers and layers of reality...beating at the heart of the city... holding their many-layered secrets" (LIT, 39). So, Hoffman views history as something that unfolds its secrets and gains meaning through its many layers rather than the fixed events of the past collected around a certain agenda.

But Ewa (or is it Eva Hoffman the writer?) is critical of such biased education. She is the only kid in her class who does not mourn the death of Stalin, the father of "our" nation, the center of the world. (This political education portrays the Soviet Union as a sort of parent country, the center toward which the whole world leans, 59) But although these official mournings include her, the non-Jewish Polish people express their opinion that it is not "their" (meaning Jews) nation. Pan (Mr.) Czajkowsky is one of those people who speak intensely about what they did to "our country" excluding Hoffman from this "we." As Christian religious education gains ground in schools, and as the ban on immigrations are lifted, the Jews are almost forced out of Poland with people's cries of "Out with the yids" (LIT, 34).

Inasmuch as she is critical of this kind of history, the concept of "national pride" that comes along with it really bothers her. But for fear that we may misunderstand her devotion to Cracow as such; she makes it clear that "the country of [her] childhood lives within [her] with a primacy that is a form of

love despite [her] knowledge of [their] marginality, and its primitive, unpretty emotions." Following this, she asks a question the answer of which she gives herself: Is it blind and self-deceptive of me to hold on to its memory? I think it would be blind and deceptive not to." The extent to which she decides to hold onto it is the subject-matter of the rest of the biography(LIT, 74).

But an object blind self-deception or not, Cracow is the city that "has given [her] the world... fed [her] language, perceptions, sounds, the human kind... given [her] colors and furrows of reality, [her] first loves." (LIT, 74) But the word "world" here refers to Ewa's sense of her place in this world, her references in space and should not be taken on its face value.

When we go back to Ewa's place in *this* society, we see that Ewa's Jewishness (the extent and definition of which she is trying to figure), besides her being Polish is an additional factor that renders her position "peripheral" (far from central) in the war-beaten Cracow. In this city, the Hoffman family is in fact doubly distanced from the "centers" of the city.

Hoffmans live on "Kazimierza Wielkiego, 79 is situated on the periphery of the city, in an area where urban houses give way to small rural cottages, patches of garden and weed-covered no man's land" (LIT, 13). And Hoffman associates this spatial location with their place in the society: "Like the apartment in which we live, we ourselves are located somewhere on the tenuous margins of middle-class society, in an amphibian, betwixt and between positions (LIT, 13).

Although this is some point overlooked by critics of Hoffman, *class* is determinative of Ewa's life both in Cracow and Canada. The mother's motto that every "lady" should have maid, or lineage's having to do with an extending

history of wealth point out to that. But class is not (at least in Cracow it is on their side, for class also has to do with a good pedigree) as effective on Hoffmans' peripheral status as their being Jewish. Even as a child Ewa feels that they are "the ones whom nobody wanted" (LIT, 58).

Despite their "their conscious disbelief" (LIT, 36). Ewa's parents have an established conception what being a Jew means. It is what they are trying to pass on to their children with the story of the aunt. At least, they take it for granted. They even observe some of the rituals. But they do not prohibit Ewa's flirtations with the practices of other religions. Because her friends are Christians, Ewa goes to the church with them and even eats pork with a neighbor knowing it is forbidden food. In fact, once her mom has to tell her "Jews don't do that." She also tells her that "it is time [she] stopped crossing [her]self in front of churches (LIT, 29). Although this distinctly "demarcates" seven-year old Ewa's resolution to "keep distinctions blurry," she feels relieved at having it officially confirmed." (LIT, 29). But for most of the time, Ewa's is left on her own to figure out how it should feel like to be Jewish.

In her attempts to understand "Jewishness", Hoffman learns that there is more to it than merely being a religion. As we already know "remembering" is a crucial element. To solidify the importance of this element in the reader's mind, Hoffman gives a photographic account of the ritual the family observes on "High Holidays" which is the single occasion on which the family visits the synagogue. Hoffman describes these visits as "a disruption of everything ordinary, a small journey into a hermetic otherness." (LIT, 36). The journey begins early in the morning in a "solemn mood":

My parents kiss my sister and me formally- not in affection, but as if they were stamping on our foreheads the seal of an impersonal legacy. For this day we cease being their children and become something both larger and smaller. Then we begin the long walk to the synagogue (LIT, 37).

So, as I have pointed above, Jewishness is remembering an "impersonal legacy" of suffering besides its rituals. In fact Ewa sees Jewishness not as something she is, something essential about herself, but as something that is passed on. It is also the reason "why everyone died in the war." Similarly Ewa sees the rituals as part of this responsibility to remember. The rituals are the "commemorations of all their dead" (LIT, 29). And to know that the Hoffman residence is outside of the Jewish quarter (their walk ends, not starts there) is proof of the double estrangement from the society that I have pointed out.

But all is not bad in Cracow. Ewa has two things in her life that she really likes: music and Marek. Ewa starts taking piano lessons starting from a very early age. It is another symbol of class for Polish people. "Playing an instrument is also a part of a good upbringing, of becoming properly middle-class" which is one of the reasons why her parents want Ewa to take piano lessons. The position of the artist in the society explains this very clearly. "Musicians in Poland have sacred beast status; great pianists or violinists are endowed with the glitter of stardom and the prestige of high art" (LIT, 67). Because they are capable of "polot", a term which Hoffman translates as the power of imagination, something inborn rather than the result of practice only, Hoffman aspires to artists herself too. This can account for Ewa's reluctance to go to Canada, for the only piece of information she has about the

country describes it "as a cultural desert, a country in which noone cares for fineness, or music, or art..." She cannot believe her parents are "taking me to a cultural desert!" (LIT, 88).

It may be a "cultural desert" for Ewa. But it is a perfect destination for the father who is known to be a real entrepreneur (he even does illegal trafficking of valuable goods.) Their sponsor advertises Canada as "the real land of milk and honey, the land of opportunity, the place where you can grow rich and be happy" (LIT, 84). For her father this is "an irresistibly alluring vision- to become a man of means in the American way, a man of substance." Although they don't "have the remotest idea of what [they] might find or do there", "America", for "Canada in [their] minds is automatically subsumed under that category" appeals to them as a web of "old fabulous associations: streets paved with gold, the goose that laid the golden egg" (LIT, 87).

In his analysis of immigrant autobiography entitled "*The Brave New World of Immigrant Autobiography*" William Boelhower refers to this approach the "dream anticipation." I will refer to his theory when I compare Ewa's life and Eva's life in Canada and America. But for now, we can say that this idea of a dreamland is what attracts people to America (and Canada subsumed under that name for that matter. But we will see that the dream does not last forever.

As the journey (both to America physically and to Ewa's new self metaphorically-for the journey is another metaphor of finding a self used in autobiographical writings in addition to self as woven material as adopted by Kingston) approaches, Ewa's connection with the people (especially her first love and friend Marek) and places form into a feeling of nostalgia even before she leaves.

Nostalgia, as we have already seen is a very important concept for Hoffman. The below quote almost defines it and gives us a sense of her feelings before the departure.

> *The sense of impending loss makes me want to hold on to what I've had with all my might. I stoke up the images of Marek- they are not memories yet, he is too much alive within me- as if my will could make him materialize... Fantasy is a sapping strategy, but for a long time I can't stop recycling and recycling it again and again... after all this is a fantasy not of something unreal but of something I once had- and could have had- and this knowledge strengthens the vividness of that ritual scene, and my repeated disappointment* (LIT, 87).

The word "fantasy" is close to what the Lacanian theory refers to as the "misrecognized unity" of the mirror image. The fear of loss triggers this feeling of the necessity to preserve by freezing memories in her memory as a means of support in the absence or dislocation of her references. But even from the beginning (though from her later point of view) Hoffman signals the "sappingness" of this strategy, for the discrepancy between what she remembers and what she is about to experience is a great cause of disappointment for her.

Despite her all-powerful "will", (which is able to materialize things that have not happened yet as memories), she is boarded on the ship sailing to "the great unknown" (LIT, 87). So she only has to wait to see what this "New World" (which is her title for the third part of the autobiography) will bring her. She embarks on this journey with mixed feelings. She does not want to leave Cracow, which meant the world to her (in fact the universe). It is also the fear that she will never be able to

recapture the absoluteness of those loves...as the landscapes that we saw as the first, and to which we gave ourselves wholly, without reservations (LIT, 74). She says that after all "it is here that I've felt most intimately understood; it's here that I've felt most intensely all my hopes for her future" (LIT, 82).

In her article entitled "*The Insertion of the Self into the Borderless Space of Possibility,*" Danuta Zadworna Fjellestad points out to the imagery Hoffman uses to describe her journey. Hoffman describes the movement of the ship as follows: "I am standing on the prow of the ship, watching the water tear away in a diagonal, forever repeating, forever receding line" (LIT, 87). Fjellestad says that here Hoffman is using one of the two recurrent tropes typical of emigrant autobiography: that of division into two" (Fjellestad, 24). The other one is that of second birth which we will see in the third part. Later, after they get off the ship to go to Vancouver Hoffmans take the train. Similarly Ewa compares her train journey towards the new destination with "scissors cutting a three thousand-mile rip" through her life (LIT, 100). These metaphors function to signal that there will no more be a "unified" Ewa anymore.

On the ship, the first reactions of Ewa to a world she has not experienced yet is one of refusal arising from the anger and fear she feels after separation. For example, she does not want to join the English classes on the ship. I think, at this stage, she feels that she can erase her separation by not being part of the new world they are heading towards.

In that sense the anger is a result of the fear of the unknown. Ewa must have felt trapped in her appointed role, for "all of this is happening out of time, out of space" for her. And because she is bereft of her reference points in space, this makes her feel as if she is a "figure of [her] own fantasy", which leaves her nothing to do but "play [her] appointed role as if I were in the movies" (LIT, 91).

As for the approaching landscape, we can say it is "ineffably and utterly different from the watery landscapes [she's] used to" Her perspective of the land reflects her inner mood. She says: "we seem to be in the middle of nowhere. On the shore there is nothing... It's cold."

Because she has no map of this new landscape, it comes to her as a block and the same can be said about the buildings in Vancouver; they are tall (almost crushing her underneath) monolithic, massy and shapeless. In fact, like intense light the homogeneity of the surroundings hurt her eyes which are not yet capable of seeing it in its particulars.

Furthermore, she does not have a model to follow. But she is determined not to share the fate of that woman on the ship who had undertaken the whole journey to marry man she had never seen in her life.

With mixed feelings of dislocation, fear and anger ends Hoffman's journey to Canada. She equates the end of this journey with that of the "narrative of [her] childhood narrative" (LIT, 95). It is not only the end of the *narrative* of child but perhaps also a farewell to the sense of unity, safety she associates with Cracow.

Ewa's first impressions of Canada are negative. In fact, she refers to her life as Exile. Like the expulsion her namesake from Paradise, she too is sent to Exile. It seems to her that the people were "avoiding to sit close to them" (LIT, 99). And she is all too ready to refer to this girl her own age wearing lipstick as "vulgar" Even this small incident shows how Ewa is bent on refusing this world.

As I have mentioned above, Hoffman uses the journey metaphor and her immigration as a forking of her once-straight path. She even pronounces the word

"divide" herself: "From now on [her] life will be divided into two pats with the line drawn by that train" (LIT, 100).

On the train she has the opportunity to compare the landscape of Cracow and Canada. In fact, Fjellestad argues that it is in fact a comparison of two "inner landscapes," and there is reason to believe that. When we look at the vocabulary Hoffman uses to describe the scenery (vast, dull, and formless) we see that she seems to set it as an exact opposite of the "intimate, familiar" landscape of Cracow.

All the parents can depend on in this "bit of nowhere" is a miracle. The parents take the big car of the Rosenbergs who comes to greet them as the "portent sign" they need. But for Ewa this "nowhere" signals nothing yet.

They "temporarily" stay with the Rosenbergs. Their garden strikes Ewa as the symbol of their pretentious "taste" for aesthetics. But she says she will only later learn that the garden is in fact a conglomeration of "rows of the marigolds, the circles of geraniums... artificial in their perfect symmetries, in their subordination to orderliness" (LIT, 101). One wonders whether Ewa is experiencing what she had feared all along: the cultural desert. Because she seems to think that what these people understand from aesthetics is "orderliness" as opposed to the polot of Poland. It also shows us different societies invest "taste" or "being civilized in different practices. Maybe, gardeners are the demi-gods of Canada.

Before she can recover from this shock, Ewa is made to feel that she is supposed to feel grateful to the Rosenbergs and *show* her gratitude. This cannot be said to make life easier for Ewa.

In the midst of these feelings, she has a nightmare. In her nightmare, she sees herself drowning in the ocean while [her] mother and father swim farther and farther away from [her] The shock must have been so great that she sees her parents, the last

resort of shelter left at risk which makes her feel she is drowning. The dream is instrumental in two ways. It enables both Ewa and us the readers to have a better idea of how it feels to "be cast adrift in incomprehensible space… to lose one's mooring." (LIT, 104) She wakes up in the "middle of a prolonged scream." Hoffman, calls this scream as the "primal scream of my birth into the New World" (LIT, 104).

The separation from the parents makes more sense in that light, for as much as it is a new beginning; birth is also the end of the "oneness" with the mother. In fact, Hoffman has to find her own way in Canada. Since the parents are of no help (as they had not been in Cracow) Ewa is again on her own in the middle of nowhere. Now, Hoffman (I say Hoffman because it is something only *she* can know at this stage in the narrative) understands more clearly that this is an irreversible experience, the knowledge of which she "can never lose"; the knowledge that "from then on, fragments of the fear lodge themselves in [her] consciousness" (LIT, 104).

Her second birth into the New World gets more trusting when she and her sister are given "new names." She is now Eva. She underscores the importance of the change- or maybe rather tells it from the perspective of the name givers- and says "nothing has happened except a small seismic mental shift." On the contrary, this act of changing their names alienates and distances them from something very basic about them. This shock is enabling as well as devastating, for it is through extreme circumstances that we can notice different things about very familiar things. Ewa realizes that their "Polish names did not refer to [them.] Ewa *meant* her name and her name was she only. But these names feel like "identification tags, disembodied signs that may as well have been hanging from the foot of a corpse in the morgue. They are close to themselves as much as a corpse can be to its self. The "mere" changing of names have made them "strangers to [them]selves" (LIT, 105).

At this point, we can again draw parallels to Lacanian theory and extend the analogy to the structuralist concept of "the sign" If we can think of the child as the signifier, and its image in the mirror of this structuralist schema the signified, then we can say that these together make the harmoniously united "sign" (the meaning itself) of Sausseran semiotics. This stage is a mode of being where there are no differences, lacks or exclusions of any kind. It is "a world of plenitude" as Eagleton calls it (Eagleton, 166) But Wright problematizes this perfect harmony by arguing that the reflected image the child identified with was illusory to start with. She says that since the identification of the signified was contextual (otherwise completely arbitrary), depended on judgements, in fact for her, the bar between the signifier and the signified serves more to mark the gap than indicate a relationship.

From this perspective, it can be said that the "connection" between the name (signifier) and Ewa (signified) proves to be, as Wright also argues, one that is "contextual" Hence the experience of location makes Ewa realize the "gap" (as she also calls it herself) more acutely. This is the beginning of the split in her psyche that comes with the Father's Law in the symbolic order. Hence, the concept of change is underlines in many places throughout the autobiography. For change is proof of the lack of an indispensable relationship between the two.

The "symbolic," which is the second stage of Lacan's theory of language creates a gap between the mother and the child, the signifier and the signified. So because there is this problem of reference, since what the child thinks it sees in the mirror is never the perfect replica of its signified, and it can only utter that thing in its absence or by virtue of its difference (the mother lacks the phallus which sets the rules.) There is also the fact that due to the never-stable chain of signifiers that

constantly refer it to other signifiers, the child can never achieve the meaning but at best approximate it; we can never have the security and the stability that Saussure promises at the beginning.

When he traces the implications of Lacan's thought to the field of ideology, Eagleton points out that we end up with the recognition that we all repeat the illusion of the complete, autonomous subject who is just as indispensable as the signifier to the signified (in the sense that their relationship is totally arbitrary) Similarly there is no reason for us to be "the" signifier, since it is the context that we are in that gives meaning. The point of all this is that the child is born into a world "always already" made for it. But it is important to note that submission with no resistance at all is the target of criticism on Hoffman's side. In fact, this is what Hoffman questions and affirms simultaneously.

Symbolized by the names, this is how Hoffman points out to the illusory existence of language for individuals. She argues that "the very places where language is at its most conventional, where it should be most taken for granted, are the places where I feel the prick of artifice..." (LIT, 106).

Due to losing the stability of her "*Eva*=Ewa, the person" equation, Hoffman loses her "words." Once the knowledge of "the signifier has become severed from the signified" dawns on her, the words she learns no longer stand for the things "in the same unquestioned way they did in [her] native tongue" (LIT, 106). They feel, taste artificial to her.

Because she believes that the word is the medium "that accommodates [the thing] to the psyche, the things she sees are alienated to her. Not only things but feelings have lost their "fullness" of meaning too. She tries to "translate" them to its Polish equivalent, which she still hopes is the feeling itself rather than its telling, she

loses "the spontaneity of response" and her hopes are frustrated. She realizes "words are just themselves" (LIT, 107). This "knowledge" drains the world "not only not only of significance but of its colors, striations, nuances- its very existence," the colors that Cracow had given her. She has lost the "living connection." between them (LIT, 107).

When we look at her experience from a broader point of view, it seems like "loss" is the dominating experience. She says "the worst losses come at night," for this is the time of dreams, the only time of the day when she can talk to her unconscious. But she sadly realizes that she has also lost the "inner language" she needs for this dialogue. "Nothing comes," since Polish "in a short time, has atrophied, shriveled from sheer uselessness." Like Kingston's "chink words", Eva complains that Polish "words don't apply to my new experiences; they're not coeval with any of the objects, or faces, or the very air that I breathe in the daytime." Yet again "English, words have not penetrated to the layers of my psyche" (LIT, 107).

Because Polish "words slip off" and English words "don't hook onto anything", the words "float in an uncertain space" just like herself and fall into the "black hole." Like the child who realizes the dominance of the Father's Law, Hoffman begins to feel the tug of prohibition" She is "not filled with language anymore" She comes to the recognition that words don't have the same constituent connotations in the two languages she can barely compare. Just like nostalgia cannot replace teşknota for her, some words like "silly," "dull," "idiot" mean different things in Canada, for English has an obsession with "everything's fine" and thus a negative feeling against "uncharitable words" although they may not be so "uncharitable" in Polish. For example, in Polish, "you can call someone an idiot

without particularly harsh feelings and with the zest of a strong judgment" (LIT, 107).

Hoffman thus establishes the relation between language and having a place in the society recognized by others. In fact, she feels very sorry when she is excluded from the "teasing circle" at the Steiners where their daughter is challenged and has to give her answers spontaneously. First of all, Eva has lost the spontaneity of response in her new language. Because at this stage she has distanced herself from Polish and has not yet been able to Also, although she argues that she does not see language as a symbol of prestige and class, she comes to admit "razzing can only happen between equals or else it's a deliberate presumption" (LIT, 114). In fact she later talks of her accent as the "stigma" of her marginalization, which she tries to get rid of. The neglected factor of "class" once again shows itself as an important factor of Eva's inability to adopt.

Hoffman calls *America* "the land of yearning." Her initial response to the seduction of consumerism by is to adopt a strategy of detachment. Before I go into it in detail, there is one thing I want to point out. I don't agree with Sarah Phillips Casteel in her argument that Canada is used by Hoffman to juxtapose against Cracow until she goes to the New World, USA proper. I think it is Hoffman who changes rather than the country she lives in. For, she herself mentions before that Canada was subsumed in their minds under America before they came to Vancouver. After spending years there Hoffman still refers to Canada as part of America.

As I have pointed above, Hoffman first thinks that she can be over the objects of yearning by avoiding them and finding other objects of identification, the possession of which will still make her feel satisfied, for she will know her invention will enrich her inner world. But it does not take her long to realize that her "ascetic

techniques" will not b of help to her to escape the desire "for the comfort of being a recognizable somebody placed on a recognizable social map" (LIT, 140).

There is more to it than just being good at the language. Hoffman is made to realize that not only her choice of vocabulary but also her display of her feminine beauty should be in "the right ways" on which Mrs. Mrs. Lieberman several other Polish ladies who have been in Canada long enough to consider themselves well versed in *native ways*" instruct her. Her features which were considered to be exemplary of "ideal feminine beauty" need reshaping here. For her beauty to be appreciated, it should be framed in the right way. When she is finally invited to a party by her "native" friends, she is also instructed on proper "feminine conduct" if she is considering her future marrigeability.

She is increasingly bitter about the false persona [she] is being stuffed into" Now "rage" is added to her list of mixed feelings. Because she cannot joke the American way, she tries to translate a joke she heard from her father. But because she is not good at the language or because the joke does not fit the American conception of funny or both (it may as well have been that because she was not good at expressing herself in English that she may have given them a direct translation of the joke which funny in Polish "is supposed to funny" in English) This frustrates Eva, for her loss of sense of humor (or rather her lack of the mastery over the language to rightfully express her wit) she's "enraged at [her] adolescent friends because they can't see through the disguise" Her constant "I beg your pardons" discourage her friends from getting to know her better. That's why they cannot learn what a "light-footed dancer" she really is (LIT, 119).

By coming to America, Hoffman not only loses her sense of place in the society (which she is trying to recover) her sense of humor, but also her sense of

By coming to America, Hoffman not only loses her sense of place in the society (which she is trying to recover) her sense of humor, but also her sense of time. Hoffman verbalizes this sense of entrapment rather than liberation time now represents:

> *Now, time has no dimension, no extension backward or forward. I arrest the past, and I hold myself stiffly against the future; I wan to stop the follow. As a punishment, I exist in the stasis of a perpetual present, that other side of "living in the present," which is no eternity but a prison. I can't throw a bridge between the present and the past, and therefore I can't make time move* (LIT, 116).

The feeling of nostalgia proves to be detrimental to her. For locking up images in her imagination only makes it harder for her to adopt and freezes in a perpetual present. Hoffman defines nostalgia as the "most lyrical of feelings-crystallizes around these images like amber." But if one is "arrested within it, the house, the past is clear, vivid, made more beautiful by the medium in which it is held and by its stillness" which is not a practical approach to reality. For attaching herself to the feeling of loss and desire is not forever sustainable. In fact, as we will see, she will realize that herself too.

Practicality, Hoffman figures, plays an important in American lifestyle. Before coming to Canada, Ewa had hopes of becoming a pianist, a destiny waiting to unfold itself. But she can no longer have hopes for such a future in Vancouver. And there are "practical" reasons why. It is because her parents cannot afford to support themselves on their own. However reluctantly, they manage to stay with Rosenbergs until they find a small "American cell" they can afford. It is ironical to see the American dream shrivel down to a cell. This desperate status of the parents is the

final blow to Eva's sense of security. With this, she understands that she cannot depend on her parents for a secure environment. The mother has an advantageous position due to her osmotic skills through her capacity for acquiring new languages.

But the father's situation is more serious than his helplessness in the face of poverty on the outlook. The father who used to be an imaginative entrepreneur in Cracow is paralyzed here. The land of milk and honey he was promised turns against him. This, Eva explains, lays bare the other side of the coin. The father is rendered incapable for two reasons.

The first one is because he "never really catches on to how different the rules are here, to the genteel and rational methods of doing business in Vancouver.... for the first time, he "can't find his nerve..." In brief, the father is "left at a loss" as regards the structure of space within which he moves. The new structure of space "has no obstacles he can jump over, no closed doors he can cleverly open."

The second reason (not unrelated with the first) for his paralysis is the loss of self-worth inflicted by the "corrosive logic" of the "New World dream." This logic says it is only yourself to blame, if you are unable to find your own way in the multiplicity of opportunities (but it may also be cause for "agoraphobia of choice" as Hoffman puts it) So Hoffman's father feels guilty for not being able to manipulate this system for the good of her family. But Hoffman takes it as her duty not only to herself but also to her family to "make it" (LIT, 128-129).

This points out to another fact though; that bereft of her parents' guidance Hoffman is on her own (once again) to make herself model to follow. Now that she has not brought any from the Old World, she has to build with the material in hand. But unlike in Cracow, she is not faced with a singular "structure of space." She has to extract from the "Babel of American language, the style of wit that fits." Also, she

has to find among the "Babel of American voices, hardy Midwestern voices, sassy New York voices, quick youthful voices, voices aching under the pressure of various crosscurrents" one that she can embrace as her own (LIT, 219).

It is true that this awareness of the multiplicity has made "a skilled diagnostician of voices" out of her but it also has its dangers. Because she does not yet have a voice of her own, she risks the possibility that "the voices of others [may] invade [her]" as though she were "a silent ventriloquist" (LIT, 220). Up to this point, the alternatives that she has been offered are not preferable.

She learns that she can try detaching herself, or rather not detach herself but be mistaken for a "pessimist" and continue being a "pretend teenager" by keeping her connection limited. The last alternative is not even an option. Because if she lets these voices "invade" and "possess" her (rather than she possessing them) then there will no more be an Ew/va to talk about. All that remains will be but a mouthpiece of the different voices voicing anything except herself.

Eva's solution to the problem is not a complete rejection of the idea, but a rather a reinterpretation of it. She thinks that if she can make the voices her own (without letting them erase her voice), if she can "learn to speak a part" of [herself] through it, then she can perhaps escape invasion.

But she very well knows that speaking her part through this unique mixture of assumed voices cannot be independent of her past. Although "everyone encourages [her] to forget what [she] left behind, she knows that she cannot "jump continents as if skipping rope" (LIT, 115).

She even envies Nabokov in that respect. For, like Nabokov, although she too wants to "unashamedly reinvoke[s] and revive[s] [her] childhood in the glorious colors of teşknota she feels unable to live in the "real world" of utterly individual

sensibility, untrampled by history or horrid intrusions of social circumstance" (LIT,197) But although her father's case proves, it is the individual who makes the dream come true and it is again the individual's fault if s/he cannot makes it(The individual cannot blame the circumstances, for they are always ripe and multiple.) Hoffman is not so sure of the individuals complete break form the society.

She too wishes she "could breathe a Nabokovian air... have the Olympian freedom... to give the Russian revolution more than a passing mention... as if it were so crudely collective." (LIT, 197) In that respect, she can be said to achieve a "Nabokovian air" by giving a "passing mention" to the Holocaust (just with doubted the story of the aunt, and the war as the reason why her relatives died).

In fact, this is a point of criticism. People wonder why she makes so little reference to the Holocaust. Her answer to those criticisms is that because Holocaust is not something she personally experienced, her memory of it stamped on her forehead, and in her sister's name carries the potential to make us misunderstand or misapprehend the past. If we look back we see that she had warned us about multiple stories with respect to her aunt. She does not want to take the risk of misrepresenting a very "delicate" past.

She almost criticizes people who were at that point were very remote from the Holocaust" but did not hesitate to take it up as their preoccupation. She emphasizes the fact that it "was not a personal history; there was no personal relationship to it." But as Michael Bronski points out, "Hoffman's work is written in the shadow of the Holocaust, and she is acutely aware that her books are part of a larger cultural trend; what she refers to as a "preoccupation" with the Holocaust" (Bronski, 52). I think,

the reason why she does not follow the trend is the fear that generalizations about it may also lead to representation.

Her reluctance to be part of this "preoccupation" is proof of Hoffman's belief that the individual independent of the collective experience is impossible, hence the childish presentation of Nabokov. In her aspiration to be Nabokov, Hoffman may be hoping for a return to her childhood. But as she has already told us, she "can't lose the knowledge" she has gained (LIT, 104).

So she can neither lose her knowledge of the collective affecting the individual nor her past. But she asks herself what she is to do with it. Her solution is pushing "the images of memory down, away from consciousness, below emotion." But this relegates them to a growing "internal darkness" which is not a very effective solution.

In the face of this confusion she splits herself into two personas and calls Ewa for help, for Eva wants to see whether updating Ewa can be of help. The split incurred by the changing of names is even more observable in these Ewa-Eva dialogues. It has been two years since Ewa came to Canada. The most striking point about this instance of a "real" split (not just in theory) is in showing us Eva's preferences. But there is one more important point and it is that the one who says "And you prefer her, the Cracow Ewa" is also Ewa speaking. So Ewa has doubly distanced herself from herself. So we could talk about a triangulation rather than a dialogue. It is Ewa (who apparently no longer lives), Eva and the alienated Ewa in Eva. Or it could be the writer talking to Eva which solidifies Ewa's alienation.

Her friend Penny gives Eva a diary for her fifteenth birthday, which leaves Eva at a crossroads again. Now she has to decide which language she will use to write about her most intimate feelings. We know that Hoffman's journey to Exile

was presented as one of the loss of intimacy. She weighs the pros and cons and asks herself a question first: "If I am indeed to write something entirely for myself, in what language do I write?"

So what Eva initially expects of this "diary language" is to represent her in her entirety. At this point, she relegates Polish the status of "a dead language, the language of the untranslatable past." But then, what would "writing for nobody's eyes in English" mean? She chooses English (even if it is not the "language of the self") over Polish and almost feels obliged to defend her choice to herself with a childish tone: "If I'm to about the present, I have to write in the language of the present, even if it's not the language of the self (LIT, 120). In fact, at first, she cannot say I in English.

As she is not capable of expressing emotions in that language, Eva ends up with a public persona and a public language that goes with that. Even so writing enables with an interstitial vision. By writing, she comes to have "a real existence that takes place midway between [her] and the sphere of artifice, art, pure language. She can feel that "this language is beginning to invent another me (LIT, 121).

Moreover, English being the language in which she has very skillfully told about her emotions from the beginning of the autobiography enables her to do (at the point of publication of the book at least) what Polish could not do for her then: translate the "untranslatable past." It is in English that we readers come to know Ewa and Eva. In that sense, the insertion of the triangulation together with Hoffman's beginnings of gaining mastery of the English language (at least in writing) and her decision to choose English signals Hoffman's final understanding of translation as a cross-fertilization of the languages that make the entirety of the self rather than choosing one. In that sense, maybe Hoffman cannot capture her self in its entirety in

her diary, but this is a precursor of her intention to achieve that. I will come back to this in my analysis of Hoffman's life in the "real" America, the North.

Like in her standing with respect to writing, her existence as a migrant is one that is not clearly delineated. She calls her standing in that society as a "location in itself" (LIT, 133) and thinks it is an advantageous one. But her friends do no share this advantageous location with her. For example, in class, her Canadian friends ask her about communism afraid that it is going to come and eat them all. With their preconceived notions of communism as a "Plutonian realm in which a spectral citizenry walks bent under the yoke of oppression" they pity Eva (for there is "no freedom there") and want to learn more about life in a communist country. At that moment Hoffman realizes that it is she who has to live with this "double vision" (LIT, 131), not because she cannot convince them that Cracow is the center of the universe but because she realizes that it is not. From that moment on she starts seeing Cracow in the way her friends see it: as a "distant spot, somewhere on the peripheries of the imagination, crowded together with countless other hard to remember places of equal insignificance (LIT, 132).

Although she gains this vision and although she spends hours with her sister "discussing a Tupperware casserole dish," (LIT, 134). Eva still feels rejected by her environment. But she admits that it because she does not have the eye to see the particulars of it yet. For this reason, they look out of proportion for "landscapes human sized and penetrable...The[se] mountains look like a picture postcard to [her], something you look at rather than enter. She needs more than Tupperware to penetrate into this landscape for this "mutual rejection" cannot last forever (LIT, 134).

To be able to do this, Hoffman decides to do her best to become a "recognizable somebody placed on a recognizable social map" (LIT, 140). This way her surroundings won't hurt her eyes like they did during the transatlantic journey.

Nevertheless, Hoffman won't do *anything* to be recognized. She approaches the "orderliness of middle-class convention" and its comforts with reservation. Her sister Alinka is at a disadvantage. Because she is younger, she is influenced by her parents more. The parents have all of a sudden become devout Jewish people. At a time when Alinka is "striving for an American normal teenager, they send her to Jewish community school. Because they too are at a loss as to how they should respond to her capacity for change. All they know is the necessity to protect their own little circle. I guess they figure the only way to do that is by keeping the great sadness they have come from. But Alinka feels trapped. Although she has already started talking about "our ethnic exclusivity" (which she learns at school), she too wants to roam through the thickets…to be free" (LIT, 146).

Hoffman's "freedom" that comes with English is interpreted by her mother as becoming "cold" (meaning becoming English- LIT,146). A family where the "the storminess of emotion" prevails is in "excess of the normal here" And she is not completely "normal" in that sense. So Eva has to learn American-normal in addition to American-feminine. But she already knows that the criteria of being "normal" is not something essential but contextual. So to be normal is to be perceived as such. But there is one problem. She feels that "because [she's] not heard, [she] feels…people look past [her] as they speak" She wonders how she looks like here. She realizes that to her classmates whom she refers to as "ghosts" and Vancouver as a gray "patch of land inhabited by ghosts," (LIT, 132) she too must look like a ghost: "impalpable, neutral, faceless" (LIT, 147).

She wants to be seen by people and recognized but she does not want to be a "recognizable species of émigré eccentric" like her Russian piano teacher Piotr Ostropov (LIT, 155). There is also another motive lying behind the enthusiasm for recognition. As I have pointed above, it is the "Big Fear" that they won't make it. As Hoffman is the only immediate candidate able to achieve it, she feels responsible to carry the "personal" burden of the family (unlike the impersonal legacy)

One other reason for Ostropov's eccentricity is his profession. In this "run" to be recognized, Hoffman feels that she has lost sense of direction, what she is "driving toward" (LIT, 158). At this point, she realizes that "being a pianist means something entirely different in [her] new cultural matrix: "it is no longer the height of the glamour or the heart of beauty...It's not a solid profession and it will hardly assure [her] ability to support [her]self..." let alone her family. But she will announce her final decision about her future career in the New World?

She is told that she should think "practically", for her position would not tolerate making mistakes or going in the direction her heart leads her. She is told one other thing that explains the drastic difference in the primacy of art in two cultures; that she is "too intelligent to become a musician" (LIT, 158).

As the "the unity, the seemly organic growth of [her] desires is becoming fragmented, torn, Eva loses sight of what she really wants. She now doesn't know "what to want, or how to want, any longer." (LIT, 158) She blames the absence of any previous models for this disorientation, But the necessity to "reinvent yourself everyday" (LIT, 160) is actually what renders "the comfort that comes from being cradled by continuity, the freedom from insignificance that increase her feeling of

displacement. But she finally finds someone who can be of help to her not by example but through opening her eyes to certain realities.

This model I am talking about is Mary Antin, another Jewish, Polish-American. She too has felt the pain of being "consciously of two worlds" (LIT, 163) These similarities make her Hoffman's "ancestress." But Hoffman is determined to leave the analogy at that. However, she says that "among the many immigrant tales that [she has] come across," Antin's is the one for which she feels a particular affection.

The reason why Eva chooses *her* as her ancestress is not because she is a perfect example to follow. Rather, with her illusion of "pure success," (but we can say it is a willed one, for Marry is aware that "success" has not been without consequences, the "scars") enables Hoffman to see two things.

The first thing Antin makes her realize is the "comical vanity" of the belief in her "singularity." And the second thing she learns from Antin is that she (Hoffman) is "a creature of [her] time." (LIT, 162) This is important in showing that it is not the same America that these two women experience. They have been formed by the "sentiments" of their time. The criteria for their "recognition" as "normal" have been different. And to give us an idea of these differences Hoffman gives a comparison of both "times" She starts by saying that Antin, by being led "to foreground certain parts of her own experience, and to throw whole chunks of it into the barely visible background," has limited her narrative to certain categorical shapes.

Although this looks like a criticism at first, we understand it is also the expression of the desire for continuity. Hoffman complains about not having any idea of the shape of her story:

And what is the shape of my story, the story my time tells me to tell? Perhaps it's the avoidance of a single shape that tells the tale. A hundred years ago, I might have written a success story, without much self-doubt or equivocation. A hundred years ago I might have felt the benefits of a steady, self-assured ego... the excitement of being swept up into a greater national purpose. But I have come to a different America, and instead of a central ethos, I have been give the blessings and terrors of multiplicity. Once I step off that plane in Houston, I step into a culture that splinters, fragments, and reforms itself as if it were a jigsaw puzzle in a quantum of space. If I want to assimilate into my generation, my time, I have to assimilate the multiple perspectives and their constant shifting. Who among my peers is sure of what success is and what failure? Who would want to be sure? ...We slip between definitions with such acrobatic ease that straight narrative becomes impossible. I cannot conceive of my story as one of simple progress, or simple woe. Any confidently thrusting story would be sentimentality... an exaggeration, an untruth. Perhaps it is my intolerance of those, my cherishing of uncertainty as the only truth that is, after all, the best measure of my assimilation; perhaps it's in my misfittings that I fit. Perhaps a successful immigrant is an exaggerated version of the native. From now on, I'll be made, like a mosaic, of fragments- and my consciousness of them. It is only in that observing consciousness that I remain, after all, an immigrant (LIT, 164).

Hoffman juxtaposes the absolute shape of Antin's story with the absolute *shapelessness* of her own. She denies her own story the label of "success story." Even though Antin does not want to admit it, Hoffman's reading of the Preface to Antin's autobiography shows that it has not been "out of this world." The only difference is that at the end of the day, Antin's life by the set definition of "success" then has "hit home" (LIT, 147).

On the other hand, Hoffman's life in both Canada and "real America" not only bombards her with the blessings *and* terrors of "multiple perspectives" but also disables any "success tale" as a story of "simple progress or simple woe" and a "home" that holds its meaning in the quantum of both space and time. The prepositional phrase "quantum of space" eradicates any claim to define *place* as opposed to *space* as a means by which a sense of placement is recuperated from the experience of displacement" (LIT, 22).

As I have mentioned above Dennis Walker analyzes the relationship between place and sense of self, and in his analysis he quotes the Overture to Marcel Proust's *Swann's Way:*

> *"Not knowing where I was, I could not be sure at first who I was"*

Walker argues that "failing to know where he was... brings Marcel to 'the abyss of not-being' to a disturbing apprehension of the death of the self, his self." According to Walker, "what most disturbs Marcel... is the apprehension of a moment of discontinuity, or fragmentation... in the place where he expected a familiar sense of continuity. Marcel describes the process: "The memory not yet of the place in which I was, but of various other places where I had lived, and might now very possibly be, would come like a rope let down from heaven to draw me out

of the abyss of not-being, form which I could never have escaped myself; in a flash I would traverse and surmount centuries of civilization... would put together by degrees the component parts of my ego" (Walker, 23).

In Hoffman's case though, the "memory of various other places where I had lived" does not come as a rope from heaven to get her out of the abyss. On the contrary, it presents itself as an obstacle. The fractured sense of continuity (due to displacement) is more like a permanent state for Hoffman.

Before she begins *The New World* part of her book, she let us know that the "right ways" she has been looking for will not be found in North America either. But Hoffman *cherishes* this uncertainty as the only truth and thinks this is the best measure of her assimilation. It is definitely a different America that she has come to where she is supposed to survive with the knowledge that it is her fragmented perceptions and her consciousness of them enables her "to fit" and to be recognized.

The account of *The New World* experience begins in April, 1979 at a point where she has become "a recognizable somebody placed on a recognizable social map" (LIT, 140). She is at a party with friends who are all New York intellectuals. She makes us focus on a visiting professor from Hungary. "Standing rather shyly on the margin of a little square" (LIT, 168) this Jiri makes a tactless comment on Cuba and changes the comfortable, friendly atmosphere of the room to an ice-room.

I think the reason why Hoffman presents Jiri is to point out to his "marginal" (both in the room and among her friends) status and juxtapose it to her situation then (the now of 1979). By 1979, "this goddamn place is [her] home." (LIT, 169) Her alertness to "all the subliminal signals sent by word, look, gesture" makes her feel

comfortable in this "overheated, insecure, well-meaning, expansive" (LIT, 169) room which she poses as a microcosm of her America.

However, I feel that the transition from the "abyss" to "home" has been quite abrupt. But Hoffman reverses her narrative line and tells us what she means by home and how this "goddamn place" has come to be her home through flashbacks.

She begins her account of the *how* by introducing a new vocabulary to her narrative: *relativity:*

> *Weightlessness is upon me; I am here, feeling the currents of conflict and warmth, but from that other point in the triangle, this is just one arbitrary version of reality. Nothing here has to be the way it is... It's just an awareness that there is another place- another point at the base of the triangle, which renders this place relative, which locates me within that relativity itself* (LIT,171).

From the very beginning she wants us to know that the home she is talking about is not home in the traditional sense, for home in the traditional sense a place that is one and stable. Because Hoffman's "relativity theory" reduces the place she inhabits at a certain point in time to the position of "just another" in comparison, home cannot be said to be *the* home we know. In fact, I believe Hoffman locates home in herself. She says this (meaning the goddamn place that has become her home) "is not a place where I happen to be, this happens to be the place where I am; this is the only place" (LIT, 171). How could there be anywhere more real? It is she who gives meaning to the place. It is interesting to see how she repudiates what she had dismissed as a possibility at the very beginning worrying over the loss of home

on her transatlantic journey, though. She now cannot imagine anywhere else (meaning except for the place she inhabits) to be *real.*

The next thing she does is to list the events that enabled her to come to that conclusion. There is a change of scenery. It is the Rice University campus in Houston. Unlike the Canadian landscapes which had scared her, this "real America" to which she is initially introduced through the dormitory life looks "like a friendly and manageable place" (LIT, 172). The dorm rooms are organized around the principles of "equalizing space" and "pure functionality" erasing any awareness of social distinctions (LIT, 172).

However, it does not take Hoffman to wake up from this too-good-to-be-true "equalizing" dream. She immediately comes to the recognition of the "subtle signals" which everyone knows but are lost on her (LIT, 172). Nobody tells her what those unwritten rules are. But like in Vancouver, she once more discovers that "one can't see the ball without knowing the rules of the game" (LIT, 173).

In order to overcome this equalized alienation, she starts listening to the campus eccentrics (almost gravitating toward her) whom she only later finds out to be as such hoping they could give her clues about what is "normal" there.

Her friend Lizzy who Eva takes to be fairly intelligible "poses problems of translation..." Lizzy argues that "the terms don't travel continents. The human mean is located in a different place here, and qualities like adventurousness, or cleverness, pr shyness are measured along a different scale and mapped within a different diagram. You can't transport human meanings whole from one culture to another any more than you can transliterate a text" For example, she realizes that there is *no* word for self-sufficiency (nothing she can translate). And she is expected to survive in a world that preaches "it is humiliating to be dependent" (LIT, 176).

Hoffman already knows by experience that the mere translation of terminology but what she does not know it how she will be able to live without translation or learning the rules of the game. Even so, people are interested in her because of the "European exotic" quality to herself. But that is again not what she is looking for. She wants recognition of herself but she does want to be recognized through the stereotype these people are looking at her with.

Her unease with the language does not help her either. She reads a lot but "by the time [she] look[s] up the words in a dictionary and accomplish[es] the translations from the sounds to their definition, it's hard to reinsert them into the flow of the lines, the seamless sequence of musical meaning..." But the harder she tries, the more she is frustrated by the inaccessible proximity of her object" (LIT, 180).

Nevertheless, as she is a woman of her "times," the New Critical times of her college life ease her situation. Although she cannot penetrate to the depths of what she is reading, her ability to see the "architectural plan" (LIT, 180) was encouraged by the Rice University of the mid-sixties despite her "verbally deprived condition" (LIT, 181).

"Literature does not yet give [her] America in its particulars, but she can still "feel a general spirit: the spirit, precisely, of alienness, of a continent and a culture still new and still uncozy, and a vision that turns philosophical or tortured from confronting an unworded world" (LIT, 184). Nevertheless the "democratizating power of literature" (LIT, 183) makes her feel at home (however at home she may be in a culture tortured by the spirits of alienness)

In fact, it can be said that it is literature which brings her back to the "music of language" and gives her the words as they were in childhood-and more. When she

is working on "the Love Song of Alfred J. Prufrock" which she is "to explicate it to a class of freshmen at the University of New Hampshire," she is suddenly "attuned through some mysterious faculty of mental ear, to their inner sense" She now hears "the understated melancholy of that refrain that civilized restraint of the rhythms reining back the more hilly swells of emotion, the self-reflective, moody resignation of the melody" and can read "tasting the sounds on the tongue, hearing the phrases somewhere between the tongue and the mind" (LIT, 186).

Literally, *all of a sudden* Hoffman regains the childhood bliss, the taste of the words on her tongue. Although she has by now learned that the relation between the thing and the word is an arbitrary one, the thing is now "assimilated...to the psyche" (LIT, 106) in English and what the word refers to is no longer a "contained element" (LIT, 106) but the thing itself.

As she has reestablished this relationship, the sounds regain their function of forming the tow word which is supposed to be the thing. This brings Hoffman "within the music of the language... Words become, as they were in childhood, beautiful things" But as I have mentioned above it brings more. Words are now "crosshatched with a complexity of meaning, with the sonorities of felt, sensuous thought" (LIT, 186).

But life is not just college. Hoffman falls with her first American, her "Texan" in Houston. The Texan can be said to be bit of an eccentric. This relationship poses the question of becoming feminine once more, only this time on a more intimate level. It takes her a while to understand the "allegory of gender" (LIT, 189) in the American vein.

One definition of love would be opening yourself to another person. But when Hoffman falls in love, she not only opens herself up but also accepts the

challenge to also fall in love "with otherness, with the far spaces between us and the distances we have to travel to meet at the source of our attraction" (LIT, 186). The distress of the Texan's parents when they hear he is with a "foreigner and a Jewess to boot" (LIT, 188) shows that it not only the two to travel those distances but all humanity.

Accepting each other's "ineradicable separateness" (LIT, 189) at that stage does not satisfy Hoffman. They "learn to decipher each other as one learns to decipher hieroglyphs... but never meet in that quick flash of recognition" They cannot yet transcend the stereotypes (like her exotic European status for the eccentrics on campus) and the relationship ends. But not without teaching something to Eva; namely that she should try to find a means of intimacy without reducing the other party to the position of the other and leave it there. For the recognition to take place one has to sacrifice oneself to let the other see oneself the way one should be seen in that culture. Yes, she wants recognition, some cultural frame to include her but she cannot risk losing what may be essentially feminine about herself, or the things she may want to keep about her Polish femininity.

Another event shows us her determination. During her freshman, Hoffman gets the news of Kennedy's assassination like all the other people around her but her reaction is not like them. She understands the tragedy to the full. The news hit the campus and are so everywhere as to make her feel obliged to join the mourning that she explodes. (She must have seen the same "impersonal" tinge to the news as the one she had seen with the story of her aunt, the legacy of which she had refused to drag around with her.)

I want to live within language and to be held within the frame of culture; they want to break out of the constraints of both language and

culture... But their oppressors haven't been mine, and therefore their fight cannot mine either (LIT, 194).

No matter how hard she tries to reject it she understands that "after all, the only reality is a shared reality, situated within a common ground" (LIT, 195). Yet *the times* are again an obstacle on her way. The "ordinary points of reference" that she accepts to follow are denied to her. The more she wants to "live within language and to be held within the frame of culture" the more the people in her generation "want to break out of the constraints of both language and culture" (LIT, 194). She is "bombarded with so much change that she is "fearful of trickling beyond [her] boundaries (LIT, 195). So emerges the problem of what and to what extent she can adopt without letting change invade her boundaries.

Because there is no single America but "sub-Americas," (LIT, 202) Hoffman argues this is not assimilation. In fact, she thinks this situation cancels the possibility of assimilation, for there is no single America to assimilate to. She even jokes about it: "In a splintered society, what does one assimilate to? Perhaps the very splintering itself (LIT, 197). "Within the limits of my abilities and ambitions, [she] can go anywhere at all, and be accepted there. The only joke is that there's no there *there* (LIT, 196).

Like Nabokov and her generation, she wants to transcend circumstance and cherish the "freeplay of subjectivity" (LIT, 203). But her privileged situation when compared with her friends makes her "sense the tyranny of subliminal conventions" and ties her hands. Their consensus colonizes and robs her of "distinctive shape and flavor" and of course of her advantage though. The "absence" of apparent

conventions labels her as the killjoy of her social circle. She even fights with her friends.

"But when the full force of [her] disapproval is spent… [she] remembers that [her] rage is an immigrant's rage, the blinding suspiciousness of an outsider. Then [she] tr[ies], fairly, to think from the other point of view…" She figures this is "a new version of the Emersonian experiment, the perennial American experiment, which consists precisely of reinventing the wheel, of taking nothing for granted and beholding human nature with a primeval curiosity, as though nothing has ever been observed or thought before… [Her]American friends live in a culture which is still young and in which the codes and conventions are still up for" (LIT, 208).

However, expectations of her haven't changed still. She still has to make a choice between music and literature. She gives herself one year for the "music question." But at the end of this period she still cannot make her mind. So she calls Ewa to help for the last time. They have a quite interesting dialogue:

Should you become a pianist? The question comes in English.

No, you mustn't. You can't.

Should you become a pianist? The question echoes in Polish.

Yes, you must. At all costs.

The costs will be too high.

The costs don't matter.

Don't be so dramatic

Don't kid yourself. You want to hear the applause.

That's a shallow ideal… What can I add to all those recordings of the Chopin etudes?

Reasons, reasons… You're passionate about it… You have a duty to yourself.

…Oh god, I don't know. I don't know what you should do any more.

I like literature a lot. I'm good at it...

Not the same. Nothing else expresses as much...

I'll love other things... I promise.

Remember how you felt...

No. I don't want to remember.

What do you want? What do you want?

I want... I want not to have to change so much. But I have to. I have to catch up to myself. It's not just a question of music...

Yes, I know. But it's going to hurt, giving it up.

Yes, it's going to hurt

But we'll get along somehow.

Yes, we'll get along (LIT, 199).

We see that Eva has made her mind and is having a hard time persuading Ewa that she is doing the "right" thing (which proves to the practical one in her case) She is making up "reasons, reasons, reasons" to prevent later regret. Although Ewa does not appear as a separate self again, we know that Eva is not going to lose her: Yes, we'll get along (LIT, 199).

With what voice is she to have a dialogue if she erases Ewa? Hoffman calls America the "Babel of Voices." There is so much change and there are so many voices that at first she is paralyzed by the "agoraphobia of open options" (LIT, 210) like her father... Rather than sitting and waiting for her "peace of mind" she goes out to claim these voices, make them her own in the proportions she sees fit but in this orchestra of voices each voice is "ready to lacerate the other" (LIT, 207).

But it cannot be Ewa only, for her schizophrenic division is not good for her mental health to begin with. If she keeps using Ewa as an escape from the expectations of the society she will "remain outside...common agreements" which "is to remain outside reality itself- and...risk a mild cultural schizophrenia" She realizes that if it is not what she wants she has to make "a shift in the innermost ways" (LIT, 210) the first of which is to send Ewa back to her unconscious to free herself of her influence.

The next thing she realizes she has to do is "to translate [her]self. Here again there is an obstacle. "If [she is] to achieve this without being assimilated- that is, absorbed- by [her] new world, the translation has to be careful, the turns of the psyche unforced."

But how is she do that without mouthing "foreign terms without incorporating their meanings?" for this "is to risk becoming bowdlerized." She figures a true translation proceeds by the motions of understanding and sympathy; it happens by slow increments, sentence by sentence, phrase by phrase (LIT, 210).

As for sympathy, when she goes back to Cracow (maybe another reason to avoid further split), to settle her accounts there as an adult, she is surrounded by friends she loves. But when it comes to talking about America, her friends bombard her with questions the answers of which they already know. At first, she launches a "desperate attempt to explain the complexities of the American educational system..." but then she gives up and says, "It's a complicated country. It's very big," and everyone nods sagely, gratified to have a cliché we can all hang on to.

This circle of friends, although they mean well, does not tolerate extra-stereotypical information. She sees the absurdity of this situation, where no translation but exchange of stereotypes takes place. What her friends see is not Eva

but the American Eva. In fact Eva's "tourist sickness" is proof that they are not so wrong. But even so they don't try much to understand the new Ewa. Also when she gets together with Marek in her 17th year in America, Marek asks her "Who are you?" Time opens gaps between Eva and her friends.

So apart from trying "to lose her alienation without losing her self," (LIT, 209) she has to make up for the cracks in time by rendering her translation a dynamic one not fixed in space and time like her ineffectual nostalgia. Her translation of self should be one that will enable her with not only a past that evolves but through it a future that unfolds. It should be noted that since at the time of her autobiography's publication Hoffman has been in America for twenty years, she can be said to have a whole American past to tell, too.

And as for the "phrase by phrase" translation, she says "eventually, the voices enter me; by assuming them, I gradually make them mine. I am being remade, fragment by fragment, like a patchwork quilt; there are more colors in the world than I ever knew" (LIT, 220). But the voices she is talking about are not just American voices. Once she starts to rewrite her past Hoffman has been able to understand it in its "right proportions" and thus made its voices part of her repertoire of voices but not like in the in the "ineffectual" (LIT, 242) way I have mentioned; freezing nostalgia.

At last everything has fallen in its proper place in the Hoffman puzzle. She describes this blissful puzzle picture as follows:

> *The main figures of my personal mythology have all gathered in one place at the very point when, in effect, I receive the certificate of full*

Americanization... Everything comes together, everything I love, as in the fantasies of my childhood; I am the sum of my parts (LIT, 226)

She is not only the sum of her parts as constituted by the people she loves, though. She has dreamed in English. Her unconscious has talked to her without the intermediacy of the "analytical complexities" (LIT, 243) of her mind, her unerasable knowledge that the sign is not the total of the signifier and the signified. She has said "I love you" in English, with the words "filled and brimming with the motions of [her] desire," (LIT, 245) and not with the "prick of artifice" (LIT, 106) She has even gone to a "shrink" which is another right of initiation into the language of the subculture" (LIT, 271).

But for her therapy has another significance for her. Therapy is "partly translation therapy, the talking cure a second-language cure" It is a "way of explaining myself to myself." This has eventually formed into a project of back translation (which was formerly impossible) For Hoffman, the way to "Know thyself" is to crawl backward over in it in English. Hoffman feels that "it's only when [she] retell[s] [her] whole story back to the beginning onward, in one language that [she] reconcile the voices within [her] with each other, it's only then that the person who judges the voices and tells the stories begins to emerge." And language that enables all that is English. But not English alone.

Hoffman's "internal dialogue proceeds in English" She "no longer triangulate[s] to Polish as an authentic criterion, no longer refer[s] back to it as a point of origin. Still underneath the relatively distinct monologue, there's an even more interior buzz, as of countless words compressed into an electric blur moving

along a telephone wire. Occasionally Polish words emerge unbidden from the buzz. They are usually words from the primary palette of feeling...announcing the simple truth" (LIT, 272). But Polish still remains to be one angle of Hoffman's "relativity theory." However, there is an additional function to it besides showing her the arbitrariness of the criteria that relegates her to that angle of the triangle.

Maybe "there's no turning back to the point of origin, no regaining of childhood unity," or maybe "Polish is no longer the one, true language against which others live their secondary life. Maybe Polish does not have an existence of its own but when Hoffman speaks "in Polish now, it's inflated, permeated and inflected by the English...Each language modifies the other, crossbreeds with it, fertilizes it..." making the "the other relative." In that sense English on its own is not Hoffman's only language either.

Like everybody, Hoffman is "the sum of [her] languages- the language of my family and childhood, and education, and friendship, and love, and the larger, changing world. –But it is not a mathematical addition of all her languages that gives that sum Rather it is their cross-fertilization, the "fractures between them and of the building blocks" that constitute Eva.

In fact, what Hoffman understands from "translation therapy" is not trying to help her get rid of one by subsuming it under the other or healing those fractures but to enable herself see that she has "been on both sides" (LIT, 273).

She has paid dearly for this crossing of boundaries. The knowledge of the New World is a hard burden to bear. Her childhood has been wasted away trying to find a way to retain her self-knowledge without bending over to either side and losing self. And it is true that it is impossible regain neither her childhood nor the sense of unquestioned place in the world (though whether being in that vegetative

state is preferable can be disputed) that she lost along with it. But if not in Polish she can speak of her childhood in English (the English that I have defined above though) English can bring together all "acquired voices, silly voices, sententious voices, voices that are too cool and too overheated," (LIT, 275) and give Eva her true voice, which is silence (but not silence as opposed to voice as in Kingston's autobiography) "She defines silence "the white blank center, the level ground that was there before Babel was built, that is always there before the Babel of our multiple selves is constructed.

But like the unity of childhood perceptions "this white plenitude" does not stay singular. From the "even voice...capable of saying things straight, without exaggerating or triviality," emerge "tonalities and timbres...[and] sometimes spontaneously the force of feeling or of thought compresses language into metaphor, or an image, in which words and consciousnesses are magically fused. But the voice always returns to its point of departure, to ground zero" (LIT, 275).

Hoffman says this is the point to which she has tried to triangulate, "this private place, this unassimilable part of myself. This is the only way to retain that something which is not totally individual or collective. According to Hoffman, if we want to exist "within culture but also outside it...we need to triangulate to something- the past, the future, our own untamed perceptions, another place- if we're not to be subsumed by the temporal and temporary ideas of our time" (LIT, 276).

Hoffman knows herself and points to the difficulty of it especially in her "times," for she is living in a period "when the collective is so oversaturated with trivial and important contradictory and mutually canceling messages" (LIT, 276). But this is exactly what enables her with the true axis. According to Hoffman, the only way to find one's way in the maze of multiple voices is to assimilate and master

the voices of my time and place- the only language through which we can learn to think and speak" (LIT, 277).

So the "silence" is not the opposite of voice in the traditional sense. For Hoffman, the "silence that comes out of inarticulateness is the inchoate and desperate silence of chaos." But the silence that comes after the words is the fullness from which the truth of our perceptions can crystallize" (LIT, 279).

Hoffman could not have achieved the latter kind of silence had she not "taken in disparate bits of cultural matter... accepted its seductions and snares," and from them "distilled" her own meanings "through the medium of language" which is the only way to come "from the ground up... to hit the tenor own my own sensibility, hit home" (LIT, 279).

But we know that accepting the seductions may be fatal if it is blind. The multitude is ready to subsume any "oppositional force." But if a minority voice like Hoffman's is able to introduce "terms outside the tension of a particular dialogue, terms that come from elsewhere" which in this case is the alternative silence- there is the possibility of being heard if only "as an irritating mosquito buzz on the periphery"

Hoffman has managed to create a buzzing effect but she is by no means on the periphery, she has "hit home." But unlike the home she left behind this is not a home outside her "there". Right now, she is at home but not because the landscape has "recognized" her only. She is home, for "this is the place where [she] is alive" (LIT, 280). How could ...it be any other place? "Be here", (she) think[s] to [her] self in the faintly ironic tones in which the phrase is uttered by the likes of [her]. Then the phrase dissolves... she is finally able to say "I am here now." Time, place and self have "hit home"

CONCLUSION:

This thesis has studied two autobiographies by two American immigrants in the context of their problematization of the self as perceived to be essentially belonging to a single culture. As this study attempts to show, the experience of immigration, though traumatic at first both for the parents and children immigrating to another country is a proliferating experience for the two writers in question.

Although Maxine Hong Kingston was born in the US and cannot be said to have experienced that kind of a transatlantic journey per se, because the stories of China as told to her by her mother are so strong and because the acculturation process in America does not start before school she understands for herself what it means to live in America only during early adolescence. This explains the similarities of the experience of both writers.

Through permanent contact with a completely different culture (in this context the American culture) the autobiographers come to recognize the alternative possible selves. The multitude and the contingency of the possible I's point out to the constructedness of the idea that one essentially, inherently belongs to one culture and not the other.

This idea which rejects a combination of different constituents of different I's making up a composite I is the delimiting perspective imposed on the autobiographers by the agents of acculturation in both the cultures they live in (namely their culture of origin and the culture they presently live in).

This limited outlook relegates the immigrant into an invisible corner in the society she lives in. The autobiographers, who are the children of immigrants, cannot risk being trapped in that invisible corner. For, unlike their parents who have lived all

their past lives in the country of origin and don't have much to expect from the future for themselves, the children have their future opening up in this new country they have immigrated to. And again unlike their parents, the children cannot bear to isolate themselves from the rest of the society.

At this point, the child immigrant is faced with multiple problems. The first is that the parents don't want their children to become Americans just because they live in America. In fact, the parents are only interested in the circumstance the American dream has promised to offer them. Apart from that, they are determined that their children stick to the "character" their own culture offers them.

But the Kingston and Hoffman realize that they cannot divorce character from circumstance in the sense the parents ask them to. But they find their own unique ways to manipulate both. While they are doing this they try their best to avoid being considered to be the spokesperson of the cultures they inhabit. Neither Kingston nor Hoffman argues that their individuality is independent of the cultures that have shaped them. In fact, their choice of autobiography is also something that points out that what they are accountable for is their own life and not the collectivities they come from.

Another reason why they have chosen autobiography is to show how this "personal" narrative is always in the process of becoming and is never final. Through the capacity of autobiography to present the self both as the narrating I and the narrated I (the present I and the past I) the experience of the self as informed by both cultures enables the autobiographer to situate herself in a mid-point between the cultures that belong to neither. But by juxtaposing the relativity of cultural practices of both cultures the autobiographer makes sure that the reader understands it is not the space between the cultures but the self itself that provides the two cultures with a

sense of location. The concept of home as the place one belongs to is eradicated by this new concept of where cultures reside. In the end, the autobiographer makes the story her story of self across cultures where the home is located in the self which enables the constant dialogue between them. In that sense they belong nowhere. And the act of non-belonging is the process of the dialogue, the translations the terms of which are never stable and always change with every new experience of both sides of the cultural boundaries. The dialogue in that sense takes place not only spatially but also temporally. With the narrative strategies unique to the autobiography, the present is constantly formed by the past, for every new experience makes the present a past (written or not)

Although the autobiography is in the form of a manuscript between the covers of the book, the process does not end with *The End* at the back. For as long as the writers who act like synthesizing centers of the relativity of cultures live, the process of paradoxical belonging and non-belonging goes on. Or rather, there is nothing to belong to because that which does not belong to one belongs to all.

BIBLIOGRPAHY

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* London: Verso, 1991.

Anderson, Linda. *Autobiography* London: Routledge, 2001.

Bammer, Angelika. Ed. *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.

------. "Mother Tongues and Other Strangers: Writing Family across Cultural Divides" *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.

Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture* London: Routledge, 1994.

Blinde, Patricia Lin. "The Icicle in the Desert: Perspective and Form in the Works of Two Chinese-American Women Writers *MELUS* 6.3 (1979): 51-71.

Boelhower, William. "The Brave New World of Immigrant Autobiography" *MELUS* 9.2 (1982): 5-23.

Boter, Bob. "The Great Power of My Mother Talking-Story" Ethnicity and Identity in the Work of Amy Tan and Maxine Hong Kingston. The Netherlands: Amsterdam, VU University Press, 1993.

Bromley, Roger. Ed. Narratives for a New Belonging: Diasporic Cultural Fictions Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, c2000.

Bruner, Jerome. "Self-Making and World-making" *Narrative and Identity* (Eds.) Jens Brockmeier and Donal Carbaugh Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2001.

Butler, Sean. "Both Joined and Separate: English, Mary Antin, and the Rhetoric of Identification" *MELUS* 27.1 (2002) 53-82

Casteel, Sarah Phillips. "Eva Hoffman's Double Emigration: Canada as the Site of Exile in *Lost In Translation" Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly* 24.1 (2001):288-302.

Chin, Marilyn. "A MELUS Interview: Maxine Hong Kingston" *MELUS* 16.4 (1989): 57-74.

Cheung, King-Kok. "Don't Tell: Imposed Silences in *The Color Purple* and *the Woman Warrior." PMLA* 103 (1988): 162-74.

Chua, C. L. "Two Versions of the American Dream: The Golden Mountain in Lin Yutang and Maxine Hong Kingston" *MELUS* 8.4 (1981): 61-70.

Cook, Rufus. "Cross-Cultural Wordplay in Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men* and *The Woman Warrior" MELUS* 22.4 (1997):133-146.

De Hernandez, Jennifer Browdy "On Home Ground: Politics, Location, and the Construction of Identity in Four American Women's Autobiographies" *MELUS* 22.4 (1997): 21-39.

De Man, Paul. "Autobiography as De-Facement." *MLN* 94.5 (Dec. 1979): 919-30.

Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology* trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976.

Eakin, Paul John. *How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1999.

------. "Breaking rules: The Consequences of Self-narration" *Biography* 24.1 (2001):113-128.

Fachinger, Petra. "Lost In Nostalgia: The Autobiographies of Eva Hoffman and Richard Rodriguez" *MELUS* 26.2 (2001):111-129.

Fink, Bruce. *The Lacanian Subject* Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, c1995.

Fishkin, Shelley Fisher. "Interview with Maxine Hong Kingston" *American Literary History* 3.4 (1991): 782-791.

Fjellestad, Danuta Zadworna. "'The Insertion of the Self into the Space of Borderless Possibility: Eva Hoffman's Exiled Body." *MELUS* 20.2 (Summer 1995): 133-47.

Folkenflik, Robert. Ed. *The Culture of Autobiography: Constructions of Self-Representation*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1993.

------. "The Self as Other" The Culture of Autobiography: Constructions of Self-Representation Ed. Robert Folkenflik. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1993.

Gullestad, Marianne. "Modernity, Self, and Childhood in the Analysis of Life Stories" Ed. Marianne Gullestad *Imagined Childhoods: Self and Society in Autobiographical Accounts* Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996.

Gusdorf, Georges. "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography" trans. James Olney *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical.* Ed. James Olney Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980.

Hirsch, Marianne. "Pictures of a Displaced Girlhood" *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question.* Ed. Angelika Bammer Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994. 71-89.

Hoffman, Eva. *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language* New York: Penguin, 1989.

Holte, James Craig. "The Representative Voice: Autobiography and the Ethnic Experience." *MELUS* 9.2 (1982): 25-46.

Hunsaker, Steven V. *Autobiography and the National Identity in the Americas.* Charlottesville & London: University Press of Virginia.

Hunt, Linda. "'I could not Figure out what was my Village': Gender vs. Ethnicity in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*" *MELUS* 12.3 (1985): 5-12.

Irzık, Sibel. "Maxine Hong Kingston: Languages and Silences of Being Chinese-American", Journal of American Studies Turkey, 1(1995): 57-63.

Jenkins, Ruth Y. "Authorizing Female Voice and Experience: Ghosts and Spirits in Kingston's *the Woman Warrior* and Alllende's *The House of Spirits*" *MELUS* 19.3 (1994): 61-73.

Juhazs, Suzanne. "Maxine Hong Kingston: Narrative Technique and Female Identity" *Contemporary American Woman Writers: Narrative Strategies.* Ed.

Catherine Rainwater and William J. Scheick. Lexington U of Kntucky P, 1985. 173- 90.

Kaplan, Alice Yaeger. "On Langugae Memoir" *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question.* Ed. Angelika Bammer Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994.

Kingston, Maxine Hong. The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts. New York: Vintage Books, 1989.

Kristeva, Julia. "A New Type of Intellectual: The Dissident." *The Kristeva Reader* Ed. Toril Moi London: Blackwell, 1986.

Lacan, Jacques. "The Mirror-phase as Formative of the Function of the 'I'" Ed. Slavoj Zizek *Mapping Ideology* London: Verso, 1994.

Lejeune, Philippe. "The Autobiographical Pact" *On Autobiography* Ed. Paul John Eakin Trans. Katherine M. Leary Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1989.

Lightfoot, Marjorie J. "Hunting the Dragon in Kingston's Woman Warrior" *MELUS* 13.4 (1986): 55-66.

Lim, Shirley Geok-lin. "Twelve Asian American Writers in Search of Self-Definition." *MELUS* 13.1 (1986): 87-79.

------. Ed. *Approaches to Teaching Kingston's 'The Woman Warrior'* New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1991.

Lyra, Franciszek. "Following the Cycle: The Ethnic Pattern of Polish-American Literature" *MELUS* 12.4 (1985): 63-71.

Mann, Susan. "Presidential Address: Myths of Asian Womanhood" *The Journal of Asian Studies* 59.4 (2000): 835-862.

McDonald Jason. "Conceptual Metaphors for American Ethnic Formations" *Representing and Imagining America* Staffordshire: Keele University Press, 1996.

Minh-ha T, Trinh. *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, c1989.

Munslow, Alun. "Imagining the Nation: The Frontier Thesis and the Creating of America" *Representing and Imagining America* Staffordshire: Keele University Press, 1996.

Nussbaum, Felicity A. *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century England.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1989.

Olney, James. Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1972.

------. "On Telling One's Own Story" Ed. Marianne Gullestad *Imagined Childhoods: Self and Society in Autobiographical Accounts* Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996.

Ordonez, Elizabeth J. "Narrative Texts by Ethnic Women: Rereading the Past, Reshaping the Future" *MELUS* 9. 3 (1982): 19-28.

Oster, Judith, "See(k)ing the Self: Mirrors and Mirroring in Bicultural Texts". *MELUS* 23.4 (1998): 59-84.

Proefriedt, William A. "The Immigrant or the Outsider Experience as Metaphor for

Becoming Educated in the Modern World: Mary Antin, Richard Wright and Eva *Hoffman" MELUS 16.2 (1990): 77-89.*

Quinby, Lee. "The Subjet of Memoirs: The Woman Warrior's Technology of Ideographic Self-Hood" *De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography* Ed. Smith and Watson Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992.

Deed-Danahay, Deborah E. Ed. and Intro. Auto/Ethnography: Rewriting the Self and the Social. Oxford: Berg, 1997.

Rose, Shirley K. "Metaphors and Myths of Cross-Cultural Literacy: Autobiographical Narratives by Maxine Hong Kingston, Richard Rodriguez, and Malcolm X" *MELUS* 14.1 (1987) 3-15.

Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands* New York: Viking Penguin, 1991.

Seyhan, Azade. *Writing Outside the Nation* Princeton &Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Shu, Yuan. "Cultural Politics and Chinese-American Female Subjectivity: Rethinking Kingston's Woman Warrior" *MELUS* 26.2 (2001): 199-225.

Smith, Sidonie and Julia Watson. Eds. *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2001.

------.De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography, Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1992.

Sollors, Werner. "Some Redefinitions of America" Ed. Hans Bak *Multiculturalism and the Canon of American Culture*. Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1993.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* Ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1988. Tiefenthaler, Stepp L. "The Search for Cultural Identity: Jewish-American Immigrant Autobiographies as Agents of Ethnicity." *MELUS* 12.4 (1985): 37-51.

Walker, Denis B. "The Displaced Self: The Experience of Atopia and the Recollection of Place" *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* 36.1 (2003): 21-33.

Wang, Veronica. "Reality and Fantasy: The Chinese-American Woman's Quest for Identity" *MELUS* 12.3 (1985): 23-31.

Watson, Rubie S. "The Named and the Nameless: Gender and Person in Chinese Society" *American Ethnologist* 13.4 (1986) 619-631.

Wong, Sau-ling Cynthia. *Reading Asian American Literature: From Necessity to Extravagance* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993.

------. "Necessity and Extravagance in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*: Art and Ethnic Experience" *MELUS* 15.1 (1988): 3-26.

Wright, Elizabeth. *Psychoanalytic Criticism: Theory in Practice.* London & New York: Methuen, 1984.

Ya-Jic, Zhang. "A Chinese Woman's Response to Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*" *MELUS* 13.3 (1986): 103-107.