I. Representation of Gender Roles in *The Woman Warrior* and *Pangs of Love*

Chinese American literature involves the issues of race, gender and sexuality. Jeffery Paul Chan and others proclaimed unanimously in 1974 that "wounded, sad, or angry, or swearing, or wondering" (viii) voice of Asian American writers towards marginalization and white American stereotypes of Asian Americans. They further argue that Asian American stereotypes, "good, loyal, obedient, passive, law-abiding" (x), are products of racist love to protect whiteness and to patronize Asian Americans as foreigners in American culture. The fact that ninety percent of early Chinese immigrants were male combined with anti-miscegenation laws and laws prohibiting Chinese laborers' wives from entering the U.S., forced these immigrants to congregate in the bachelor communities of various Chinatowns, unable to father a subsequent generation. While many built railroad, mined gold, and cultivated plantations, their strenuous activities and contributions in these areas were often overlooked by white historians. Chinamen were better known to the American public as restaurant cooks, laundry workers, and waiters, jobs traditionally considered "women's work" (108). As for Asian American women, they are, according to Elaine H. Kim, viewed "as submissive and dainty sex objects…only sexual, imbued with an innate understand of how to please and serve" (64). These stereotypes of Chinese Americans for both genders echo a long-standing theory of Orientalism. The theory of Orientalism is the foundation of such Chinese American stereotypes: female – inferior and submissive, male – effeminate and emasculated. The proliferation of such Orientalistic stereotyping only serves to bind the Chinese American society into a marginalized minority.

Society is conditioned to accept the given minority only within the bounds of the stereotype. The subject minority is conditioned to reciprocate by becoming the stereotype, live it, talk it, and believe it, and measure group and individual worth in its terms. Social oppression apparent in marginalization resulting from these stereotypes is heard in the silence of Chinese Americans: "[t]he Chinese-American is told that it is not a matter of being ignored and excluded but of being quiet and foreign" (9).

The texts of this research *The Woman Warrior* by Maxine Hong Kingston, and *Pangs of Love* by David Wong Louie share a central concern with silence. The characters' silence is ultimately a choice of formulated silence as alternative for the negatively connoted imposed silence and the silencing of others. This alternative of formulated silence opens space for plural redefinitions and creation of individualized identities in their currently restrictive and marginalized positions as Chinese American men and women. The opening line of *The Woman Warrior*, "[y]ou must not tell anyone…what I am about to tell you" (11), establishes a silence imposed on the narrator in her own memoir. *The Woman Warrior* depicts Chinese American women as not only racially marginalized but also oppressed by gender: "[t]here is a Chinese word for the female. *I* – which is "slave" (49); "[g]irls are maggots in the rice . . . It is more profitable to raise geese than daughters" (45). Its opening is set in 1924, a few decades before women were 'let on board' into America even as wives; the first chapter of *The Woman Warrior* narrates the stories of men on journeys to the Gold Mountain who leave their wives in China to live as widows (138). This aspect of *The Woman Warrior,* where women are historically excluded from America, sets a counterpoint to the male and female "engagement" in David Wong Louie's *Pangs of Love*. The male characters in

Pangs of Love internalize the historically excluded, inferior Chinese female status (as in *The Woman Warrior*), along with the Western psychoanalytical notion of eliminating the mother figure in order to establish masculinity. Internalizing stereotypes of the "good, loyal, obedient, passive, law-abiding" (Chin et al. x) arising from racist love, the male characters in *Pangs of Love* consequently internalize the emasculated and effeminate stereotype of the Chinese American man. The protagonist is silenced by the pressure of having to measure up to a white American hegemonic masculine model that emphasizes the elimination of the mother figure and the opposition of masculinity to femininity, which includes passivity. Due to this internalization, combined with the history of the inferior female, the mother is therefore continuously silenced by her sons because of her status and stereotype as a Chinese female immigrant. They undermine the importance of the mother whose voice calls out for an inclusion of Chinese ness in the (re)definition of Chinese American masculinity – an inclusive model which opens up the restrictive Western notion of gender oppositions into pluralities. The protagonist's brother in *Pangs of Love* is homosexual – a minority within minority – is doubly silenced by race and (homo) sexuality.

These established configurations of silence are but the foundation for a resistance to stereotyped understandings based on characters' race, respective gender, and sexuality. This research examines the complexities of these contributing factors in imposed silences, formulated silences, and the silencing of others, as both female and male characters resist being bound by stereotypes and gender roles.

Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* is famous for its narrative heterogeneity in the interweaving for fiction with non-fiction. When *The Woman Warrior*

was first published in 1976, it arrived amidst much controversy: whether memoir or what numerous critics as Paul John Eakin and Sidonie Smith called "autobiography" or even what John Leonard simply called a "book" throughout his *The New York Times* review in 1976**,** its generic status was under scrutiny. A winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award as the best *non-fiction* book of 1976, the narrative features Kingston's liberal interweaving of fiction into her own childhood experiences and has more comfortably situated itself across genres, from memoir to novel. As Nan Robertson writes, *The Woman Warrior* is "a memoir-fantasy that mingles fact and dreams" (21). Its narrative heterogeneity is well received by a range of readers, including those in academia. It is taught across faculties and disciplines, from Asian American Studies, Feminist Studies, and Anthropology to Black Studies. This possibility of wide acceptance due to many ambiguities, in other words plurality, in *The Woman Warrior* is strongly opposed by a group of Asian American critics, especially of Kingston's style of mixing fiction with non-fiction. These critics insist on the authenticity of Chinese myths in *The Woman Warrior*, which are passed on in the form of talk-stories. The idea of authenticity in talk-stories contradicts its nature as oral history, which does not have one absolute version. This text, already resisting the binds of one single genre along with its narrative technique of a plural subject in Chinese American literature, explores fluidity in the definition of Chinese American female characters without precedents. Similarly, David Wong Louie's *Pangs of Love*, is a short story; published in 1991; calls out for a similar possibility of plurality in the definition of Chinese American male characters.

Directly opposing stereotypical definitions of Chinese American masculinity with the hyper masculine traits only give one other singular type. This opposition results in an

equally restrictive Chinese American masculine definition without opening room for plurality. In *Pangs of Love*, the two Chinese American male characters – the narrator and his brother, Bagel — serve to demonstrate male types bound by Orientalistic stereotype. In this text alone, to suggest for one other singular alternative type in opposition to the passive and effeminate stereotype is clearly insufficient. It is through recognizing formulated silence in this text for both male characters that they find alternative definitions of Chinese American masculinity. All these texts under analysis arrive at formulated silence, which allows fluidity, and thus plurality, in the definition of Chinese American character subjects.

The narrator in *The Woman Warrior,* for instance, through formulated silence seeks to write herself into multiple talk-stories, in order to redefine her gender and reinvent her identity as a Chinese American girl as a plural subject. A central silence, one seemingly imposed on her, is in effect a formulated silence, in which by choice the narrator participates in silence; in an extended space for redefinition and creation of her self across time and gender. The narrator maintains invisibility and therefore, plurality as resistance to being bound by a singular talk-story, which proves to define other women. Similarly, in *Pangs of Love*, the protagonist's silence which seems to arise from internalization, an imposed silence, is but transitory for the protagonist to establish a formulated silence as resistance. In this formulated silence, the protagonist also creates room for alternative definitions to the currently destabilized definition of Chinese American masculinity.

Journeying through these levels of complexity, the characters under study seek resistance to binding and restrictive social norms of Chinese American stereotype for

both genders. By studying a canonical text *The Woman Warrior* along with marginalized text, *Pangs of Love*, the research not only attempts to draw a comparison between texts of different levels of recognition across decades to prove the need for plurality in the subjects of discourse under the field of Chinese American literature for both genders, but also to trace the development of discourse within the theme of silence for both genders. This introductory part maintains silence as a creative space for the female narrator in the canonical novel/memoir *The Woman Warrior* to reinvent her identity as a Chinese American girl. It also illustrates in the lesser-studied text *Pangs of Love* that silence is for the greater part a room, and thereafter a passageway, for the Chinese American male protagonist to resist stereotypes. The distinction in the theme of silence in the two genders—for the female a creative space (although it also serves as resistance) and for the male a room and a space for a passageway for resistance—has roots in the youth of the discourse of Chinese American masculinity. Due to the youth of the Chinese American masculinity discourse, the theme of silence is still being used as a predominant means of resisting binding stereotypes and social norms, whereas resistance for the Chinese American female struggle has had its part in history. This is so to the extent that the current Chinese American female discourse is not only about resistance but at the same time about creating a creative space in gender roles and plurality in the subject.

Through the analysis of the text *Pangs of Love*, published in 1991, shows in the discourse of Chinese American masculinity. The focus exists in the binds of masculine stereotypes for the protagonist, and therefore in a need for resistance of such restrictive stereotyping. This development places the subject in question for Chinese American masculinity on par with the question of Chinese American femininity in *The Woman*

Warrior published in 1976. Although Chinese American masculinity is still a young field compared to its counterpart, an element of silence proves to be central issues in these whether as an imposed silence, a formulated silence or a participatory silencing of others.

II. Silence as a Means of Resistance in *The Woman Warrior* and *The Pangs of Love*

Plurality and heterogeneity are the central characteristics of *The Woman Warrior* and the narrator herself. As subject, invisible, the narrator can be "a voiceless girl dancing when no one is looking" (183). Here, the narrator remains effectively invisible, anonymous, as the subject "I", throughout a recounting of her own childhood. It constructs an invisible, and potentially plural, "I" opens new possibilities of perception. By avoiding a visible and single declaration of "I", the narrator weaves in and out of her mother's talk-stories, organized as fiction, and as ancient Chinese myths, incorporated as nonfiction:

> The door opened, and an old man and an old woman came out carrying bowls of rice and soup and a leafy branch of peaches. 'Have you eaten rice today, little girl? they greeted me. 'Yes, I have,' I said out of politeness. 'Thank you.' (No, I haven't,' I would have said in real life, mad at the Chinese for lying so much. I'm starved. Do you have any cookies? I like chocolate chip cookies.')" (26).

She transgresses such talk-stories and myths, accumulating multiplicity and depth, while reintegrating criticism for her luminal position: "I did not want to be our crazy one" (170), the narrator says. "The first thing you have to learn…is how to be quiet" (28), she continues. She also says, "I liked hiding in the dark, which could be anywhere" (180). Here, "quiet" plays at two levels: imposed silence and formulated silence. On one level, given the opening line "'[y]ou must not tell anyone'" (11), the narrator says "[t]he first thing you have to *learn*…is how to be quiet", this at first appears to be a silence imposed upon her by her mother. At the same time, this is a *learned* silence, a formulated silence

in which she chooses to maintain herself. In her chosen formulated silence, she hides from visibility. In formulated silence she is “a voiceless girl *dancing* when no one is looking” (183) without constraints. The narrator grows up hearing, especially, talk-stories of “mad” cases of women who were left in China.

These women’s “mad” tales transform for the narrator into verbal warnings against the danger of being bound within a single talk-story. One story, one mad woman: the equation marks a relationship between singularity and madness. These women, such as the narrator’s no-name Aunt, Crazy Mary and Moon Orchid, are confined by one single mad story that they tell, and that is then told about them. Their single and singular story generates an excess of visibility, thus, invisibility is sustained by the narrator in *The Woman Warrior* as a self-protective response. The narrator resists being named throughout; even the subject “I” resists appearance in most parts of the book. Through her invisibility as the subject “I”, the narrator therefore reinvents herself as a plural construct. In this chapter, I will begin with examining the singularity behind the mad tales of women in the mother’s talk-stories. Then, I will examine the narrator’s invisibility and participation as subject in formulated silence, hence the possibility of self-invention as a plural construct.

The story of "Crazy Mary", like her name, is closely affixed to “craziness”. Her “crazy” story is the one and only told of her, just as is the story of the no-name aunt’s suicide or Moon Orchid’s story with her bigamous husband. Each of their singular stories generates an excess of focused speculation, hence, visibility. The singularity and the visibility of these women’s lives double up on the adjective “mad”. The word is only at first a synonym of “crazy”; it takes up a second meaning - “angry” - by the time they are

only reduced to one single story. This second meaning is what serves to uncover how the "mad" stories of Moon Orchid, Crazy Mary and the no-name aunt come back in talk-stories to help the narrator to create her own definition of herself as a Chinese American girl. It is by transgressing across these multiple stories of "singularity" that the narrator blends and stays invisible, creating a possibility for self-invention that the other "mad" women do not have.

It is believed in Brave Orchid's family, among other Chinese and Chinese American families, that "every house had to have its crazy woman or crazy girl, every village its idiot" (170). Madness to different degrees prevails in the lives of women in *The Woman Warrior*. Two prime examples are the cases of Moon Orchid, the narrator's aunt, and a girl named Crazy Mary, who lives in the narrator's neighborhood. Moon Orchid is a wife abandoned in China by her husband. She travels to America looking for him after waiting in vain for him to send for her. In America, Moon Orchid finds her husband with his new wife and learns that he has no intention of getting back with her. Moon Orchid is then believed to have gone "mad" when her family discovers that she thinks there are Mexicans hunting her down. Although this "madness" is a product of her overexposed story about her bigamous husband, that is, her immediate society, Brave Orchid, Brave Orchid's husband and her own daughter only see her madness, her craziness, as a result of this story's equation of her with a madwoman-- not with a madness, anger, due to the singularity of this story that binds her: "Perhaps Moon Orchid had already left this mad old body, and it was a ghost bad-mouthing [my] children," (144) Brave Orchid speculates. Moon Orchid is therefore sent to the mental asylum because her family, like Brave Orchid, cannot comprehend her "madness". Moon Orchid

warns, “Beware. Turn off your lights so you won’t be found. Turn off the lights before they come for us” (142). Moon Orchid’s warnings are those against the excess of light – of visibility. Moon Orchid’s story, with the bigamous husband, makes her stand out excessively, which consequently binds her in this singular story. Turning off the lights literally and figuratively in madness protects against being visible. It also resists the phenomenon of the single story, and the confinement of madness associated with it. At the same time, of course, it defines the very madness it seeks to avoid.

Moon Orchid points out “Crazy house” is the place for women like Moon Orchid and Crazy Mary who have only one story; “we are all women here,” (144). It is the place for those women who have an excess of visibility in the community, produced by the confinement of a single story. Crazy Mary “was almost twenty and crazy” (167), echoing the narrator’s words that there are “crazy” women and girls alike in the Chinese and Chinese American community. Age does not make a difference; gender does. The Chinese and Chinese Americans believe “[g]irls are maggots in the rice . . . It is more profitable to raise geese than daughters” (45). Crazy Mary, like Moon Orchid, is abandoned. Moon Orchid is abandoned in China by her parents when she is just a toddler. Being abandoned, she acquires one tale by which she is represented, and thereby becomes mad, as Moon Orchid is: “Her mother and father had come to the Gold Mountain leaving Mary, a toddler, in China. By the time they made enough to send for her, having replaced the horse and vegetable wagon with a truck, she was almost twenty and crazy” (167). The conclusion that “she was almost twenty and crazy” narratively inhabits the same sentence that reveals abandonment. The community also jumps to the conclusion that Crazy Mary is equitable to “craziness”, hence her name “Crazy Mary”.

"She seems cheerful, but pointed at things that were not there", (167) the narrator exclaims. "The other children, who were born in the US, were *normal* and could translate" (167): here, the fact that Crazy Mary cannot translate for her parents equates her once again as not "normal," hence "crazy". Over the years in America, "Crazy Mary did not improve, and so she *too* was locked up in the crazy house. She was never released. Her family said she liked it there" (168). "Too" here shows that Crazy Mary, along with other "crazy" women, is assumed under an ironic assumption of madness and disappears into asylums: "[t]here were many crazy girls and women" (166). Moon Orchid eventually dies in the mental asylum and Crazy Mary is said to "like it there" (168). They disappear into a place where others in the community do not see them, as an act of transgression.

This physical relocation figuratively relocates their madness into the second rendering of "madness" – angry. At this point, where Crazy Mary is said to "like it there" in the asylum, she is in fact overtaken by anger over the singular and visible life she leads under the spotlight. The contentment in the asylum is the possibility of relocating herself physically away from the eyes of society, granting her invisibility. Through "madness", she and other "mad" women alike, transgress outside others' comprehensions, and away from the confinement of any single story.

Once invisible, their one and only tale comes back into the lives of other females as multiple versions in talk-stories. Their "mad" tales in the form of talk-stories transform into angry messages and verbal warnings to other females, as in the case of the narrator. The narrator grows up amongst the "mad" cases of these women from her mother's talk-stories. As a self-protective response, she sustains invisibility in the body of the text *The*

Woman Warrior as a narrator and subject in formulated silence. The narrator herself, the subject "I", does not appear in most parts of the book, just as she is nameless throughout. In the first story of the "No Name Woman", for instance, the first appearance of the subject "I" (11) arrives under the condition of the narrator's mother's talk-story. This voice of the narrator's narration makes clear that the subject of the memoir begins submerged, suggestively born into her mother's voice. The first story of the memoir continues this way.

> The emigrant confused the gods by diverting their curses, misleading them with crooked streets and false names. 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. The Chinese *I know hide* their names; sojourners take new names when their lives change and guard their real names with silence…*If I want* to learn what clothes my aunt wore, whether flashy or ordinary, *I would have to* begin "Remember Father's drowned-in-the-well sister?" *I cannot* ask that. (12)

The actual word and subject "I" of the narrator do not come into surface until she utters "I suppose" (13) later in the story and this, clearly, a non-affirmative presence of the subject "I". The subject "I" reappears in "I know" in the next line but is ironically followed by the verb "hide". Similarly, the next appearance of the subject "I" assumes a conditional voice "If I want to learn…I would have to begin…" which, once again, is only an assumptive thought. The delayed entrance of the subject "I" of this memoir is then underscored by "I cannot ask" – a silent indicator that the narrator has learnt from

this talk-story to exist silently, in formulated silence, and invisibly inside her own speculative story.

This first story of the death of the narrator's no-name aunt is the narrative location into which the narrator is born. Thus, the narrator's own narrative of herself begins beneath the voices of others – predominately her mother's, and the mother's talk-stories, a strategy that helps the narrator to exist invisibly, while contributing transgressively to the visible world of "mad" stories by magnifying and multiplying them. The narrative technique is metaphorically prefigured by the first talk-story in which the no-name aunt "kept the man's name to herself throughout her labor and dying; she did not accuse him that he be punished with her. To save her inseminator's name she gave silent birth" (18). Strategically, the aunt does not primarily "save" the identity of her inseminator by holding back his name. The inseminator's name, as the narrative suggests, is ultimately her own: "All the village were kinsmen, and the titles shouted in loud country voices never let kinship be forgotten" (18). Instead, withholding the name is a means to save herself as a story, literally embodied by an offspring's existence within the village. By preserving his existence in the society, the narrator's no-name aunt in fact preserves the root of her offspring within that society. Her child's physical existence on the other hand is terminated because she has been too visible; hence so will her child be otherwise visible. As the child is born into "silent birth" with no first name nor family name, her offspring exists silently in formulated silence, but also speculatively, in excess of the facts of its illegitimate birth.

The narrator's aunt, therefore, effectively kills her own name to allow narrative, or storytelling space, while at the same time killing the inseminator's name to keep

temporarily safe the insertion of her voice into the voices of the crowd. That space, again, is literally and figuratively marked by "wonder". The narrator says, "I wonder whether he masked himself when he joined the raid on her family (14)". The use of "wonder" in this expression does not serve to indicate a possibility; the narrator immediately casts out this possibility when she affirms, "he joined the raid on her family". It serves instead to organize and reopen what is narratively closed, her voice among other voices. By protecting a name by her own formulation, his and hers, she does not let anyone identify single individuals within the society or the raiders. At the same time, the withholding of the same name perpetuates an element of wonder, inviting excess of speculation and deliberate excess of determination of their individual voices.

There is, then, a metaphorical link between the narrator's "birth" and the birth of this infant. The narrator does not carry a name or a family name throughout the memoir. She aims to exist, paradoxically, in her own story, protected by formulated silence and invisibility, avoiding the potential destruction possible to women in her society. Working silently and invisibly, she provides herself with a storytelling space in which she can manipulate language into action; a tool of creation and self-invention. The story blurs with the narrator's own version. As a narrator he creates a "confusion" of fiction and authenticity in a "neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and fairy-land, where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet, and each imbue itself with the nature of the other". By doing so, he confronts the historical knowledge of the local history, just as in *The Woman Warrior* the talk stories are identifiably not in their original form. This mix, along with the self-conscious action of bending the rules, allows space and time for the narrator to create herself in the midst of the other women's stories.

In addition to such constructs of creation, and self-invention, the subject "I" is invisible for two other reasons. As Lee Quinby notes in "The Subject of Memoirs: *The Woman Warrior*'s Technology of Ideographic selfhood, the letter "I" constitutes "the phallic American "I" [that] systemically denies its multiplicity and interconnectedness," and the Chinese "I" designates women's inferiority, as the narrator herself affirms the "Chinese word for the female *I* – which is 'slave'" (132).

As demonstrated in the second story of "White Tigers", the narrator creates herself by denying both of these embodiments of the subject "I". The narrator once again does not secure herself an actual center of the story. The first story sets her out with a "silent birth"; in the second story, she takes up center stage but only through writing herself into the Fa Mulan legend. In "White Tigers", the narrator is trained to be in action. Her training prepares her for the transgression in the battlefield of gender as she dresses up in male armor in the legend of Fa Mulan. As Leslie W. Rabine notes in "No Lost Paradise", "by dressing up in male armor…she can take revenge…" (88).

The narrator's intention of "revenge" is furthermore supported by the mix of another legend - of Ngok Fei, which is originally a male story. Writing herself into a male story and disguised as a male character, the narrator not only establishes her status as an equal with men in her patriarchal society, but she retains her invisibility as a female subject which allows her to transgress across gender roles. Rabine continues with the observation that the revenge is directed "against the greedy landlords and barons for the injustices done to her family" (88). This is true only on the level of the story line; figuratively, the narrator's target of revenge is the misogynistic male gender. Once in the battlefield, the narrator's vengeance is clearly shown towards men. As the baron repeats

the sayings that she hates - “[g]irls are maggots in the rice” and “[i]t is more profitable to raise geese than daughters” (45), and as he shows no remorse for his crimes--she “slashed him across the face and on the second stroke cut off his head” (46). She kills him after she rips open her shirt to reveal to him that she is a “female avenger” after all, indicating to him that when she says “[y]ou’ve done this” (46) she means she is “reporting a crime” (53) done to women. The narrative exposition in “White Tigers” is explicitly a transgression of gender made possible by invisibility, which in turn allows the narrator to recreate her role as a female and to self-invent as a female avenger. What is less explicit is that the narrator has launched at the same time into the action of creating her own *story* by writing herself into legends as powerful as Fa Mulan and Ngok Fei’s. The implication of this is that the narrator is more skillful than is possible to anticipate from only one angle or one story. With her own hands, she has also created multiplicity, hence layers of depth for herself, which do not hold true for the other women in the talk-stories because they are confined to only one story.

In the third story “Shaman”, the narrator once again is out of the big picture refusing a single image by merging into another talk story. The focus of this story is her mother – Brave Orchid. Not only is her mother the one “who communicates to her the culture and its myths and who interprets the community for her” (Rabine 91), her mother is also someone whom she is most influenced by; “I saw that I too had been in the presence of great power, my mother’s talking story” (25). The narrator is similar to her mother by the way in which Brave Orchid plots to avenge for Moon Orchid against her bigamist husband and second wife (Rabine 97). The narrator’s strategy to be an invisible narrator is also clearly influenced by her mother. The narrator follows closely the

footsteps of her mother as an outlaw, a brave yet careful woman. As King-Kok Cheung speculates in "'Don't Tell': Imposed Silences in The Color Purple and The Woman Warrior", "Maxine's mother, Brave Orchid, who at first seems an accomplice in enforcing female silence, is yet a 'champion talker'" (166). Brave Orchid's talk stories take form in multiple versions, which allow her to exist in different stories and different versions of the same story. She has the intention to allow the narrator to do so as well by cutting her tongue to allow her to speak freely: "I cut it to make you talk more, not less," (180) asserts Brave Orchid. Ironically, for the narrator to achieve what her mother passes on to her, she has to first rebel against the rule of her mother, which is not to tell the story of her no-name aunt. The narrator instead decisively *writes* her memoir starting with a story she is not supposed to *tell*. Nevertheless, this rebellion is not so much against her mother's order, but, as Rabine affirms, it "is indeed to violate the paternal/community injunctions to silence and, beyond that, to destroy their power and authority" (94).

Contrary to Cheung's belief that the narrator needs to "cry out" her (imposed) silence on paper (164), by writing out the story of her no-name aunt, the narrator makes herself an outlaw who bends her mother's rule to her own favor. Writing is an alternative to speech but not out of desperation. Through *telling* the story in words, the narrator indeed creates a space for her to join in the forbidden voice, one that her mother transgressed for her sake. By recounting the story self-consciously in words, rather than in sounded voice, the narrator is influenced by her mother's bravery and rebelliousness. Her mother breaks the rules by telling the narrator of this forbidden story in order to warn the narrator; the narrator bends the rules in order for self-inventing; "[t]he beginning is hers, the ending, mine" (184).

In "The Western Palace" is the story about the "mad" case of her aunt Moon Orchid. "You've had to live like a widow for thirty years" (120) asserts Brave Orchid. Compared to the mother, the "champion talker" as Cheung points out, this talk-story clearly elicits to the narrator the confinement within which Moon Orchid has to endure for the singularity of her story. Moon Orchid is reminded by her sister of her mistreatment by her bigamous husband throughout the story: "[h]e deserves your getting angry with him. For abandoning you and for abandoning your daughter . . ." (114) Brave Orchid insists. "Moon Orchid did not say anything" (114) to her sister's urging for her to confront her husband and to her husband's question of "[w]hat are you doing here" (138); she could only "open and shut her mouth without any words coming out" (138). The result of this narrative of Moon Orchid's story alone suffices to elicit the victimization and danger of being bound by a single talk-story. Moon Orchid is silenced as a result of her "madness," on both ends, "crazy" and "angry": "[i]nsane people were the one who couldn't explain themselves" (165). By the time Moon Orchid turns "mad" due to this story, and is relocated to the asylum, "[s]he had a new story…she slipped entirely away, not waking up one morning" (144)**.** It is then in the asylum that Moon Orchid breaks away from the visibility of her one single story, where she can move to another, a new story, through the transgression of her death. The beginning of Moon Orchid's new story further offers an example of plurality beyond the visible world that Moon Orchid led, making clear to the narrator the importance of resisting the confinement of a single story.

In the last story of "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe", the narrator, therefore, persists in her resistance to visibility as the subject "I". Here is a long excerpt to show how she merges into a talk story in which she is not originally present.

> What my brother actually said was, 'I drove Mom and Second Aunt to Los Angeles to see Aunt's husband who's got the other wife.' 'Did she hit him? What did she say? What did he say? 'Nothing much. Mom did all the talking.' 'What did she say?' 'She said he'd better take them to lunch at least.' 'Which wife did he sit next to? What did they eat?' 'I didn't go. The other wife didn't either. He motioned us not to tell.' 'I would've told. If I was his wife. I would've told. I would've gone to lunch and kept my ears open.' 'Ah, you know they don't talk when they eat.' 'What else did Mom say?' 'I don't remember. I pretended a pedestrian broke her leg so he would come.' 'There must've been more. Didn't Aunt get in one nasty word? She must've said something.' 'No, I don't think she said anything. I don't remember her saying one thing.' In fact, *it wasn't me* my brother told about going to Los Angeles; one of my sisters told me what he'd told her…*If I had lived* in China, *I would have been* an outlaw knot-maker (My emphasis; 147)

Syntactically the narrator constructs herself through language by bending the rules to create who she wants to be, where she wants to be, when she wants to be and in which story she wants to be a part of. She creeps into the story of Moon Orchid's rendezvous with her bigamous husband in the story of "At the Western Palace", without ever being present: neither at the scene of the rendezvous nor at the scene where her brother tells it to her sister. In the discourse, the initial subject "I" does not refer to the narrator, despite expectation. The narrator's actual voice enters as she says, "If I had lived in China, I would have been…" (147).Characteristically, the narrator writes herself into the

conditional historical past to allow her to recreate a new recounting of a story. Doing so, she reinvents herself into Moon Orchid's "mad" talk-story thereby creating herself into a part of a story in which she never took part, but nevertheless learns from – a story that warns her of being a woman bound by one singular story.

Going beyond the rules in the space of storytelling as she writes what she is not supposed to tell, and even writing herself in stories in which she does not belong, the narrator creates literal time inside narrative space in which invention becomes a possibility. The difference between Moon Orchid, Crazy Mary and the narrator is that Moon Orchid and Crazy Mary have it hard being identified in the community under the spotlight, only to realize the danger of visibility, whereas the narrator learns at the very beginning of her "birth" into the world of *The Woman Warrior* to be both invisible and silent in formulated silence. She merges into the talk-stories of other women in order to construct herself as someone with multiple stories. By recreating these talk-stories, she accumulates plurality for a renewed identity for her own character. She learns from the women in the talk-stories to be invisible hence plural and not to be reduced to one representation only.

To be rendered, opportunistically, as invisible is not stylistically unique to Kingston. In Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* for instance, the nameless character also sustains invisibility to survive. After being run into by a pedestrian, he decides to bump people back because he claims that his invisibility is caused by their refusal to see him. Just as is true in *The Woman Warrior*, invisibility allows power to be retrieved from formulated silence: "hibernation is a covert preparation for a more overt action" (Ellison 3).

So the narrator's invisibility in turn enables her to take action in words for all the "mad" women around her, beyond normative boundaries of the society, through language. As Ellison's invisible man says, being invisible till the end is this, "the end is the beginning and lies far ahead" (6). The narrator in *The Woman Warrior* makes herself an outlaw in language, daughter and citizen in the Chinese American community, to give herself the necessary darkness. In this self-chosen darkness, the narrator is not "mad," in terms of "crazy," because she is not confined within singularity; nor is she "mad," in terms of being "angry," because she has her revenge for other women, and the power with words of the stories in which she exists. Indeed, her invisible state of "hibernation is a covert preparation for a more overt action" (Ellison 13). In *The Woman Warrior*, the narrator lurks invisibly in the text as an outlaw, writing and owning herself to stories in which she never lived. Writing, as warrior-like action, creates and re-invents, bringing forth the feminist theme in the memoir. As Helene Cixous' writes in the "Laugh of Medusa", "[s]he must write her self, because this is the invention of a *new insurgent* writing which, when the moment of her liberation has come, will allow her to carry out the indispensable ruptures and transformations in her history…" (337). The narrator in *The Woman Warrior* fights a war with her words in her patriarchal society, which as the talk-stories show, drives most women "mad" in both senses, and confines them in a singular story and role as women.

Being an outlaw in a storytelling-space, who writes what she is not supposed to tell, and even writes herself in stories in which she does not belong, the narrator rewrites temporality inside narrative space, in which invention becomes a possibility. Similarly, the stories that the narrator creates for herself in *The Woman Warrior* need not be of

historical truth, if that may be said to exist. Historical truth, or local history, however that may be construed, is not the intention of *The Woman Warrior*; any "truth" behind it is the technique to survive in not only the Chinese American society but also in history across time.

The strategy of invisibility not only allows the narrator to transgress across stories, gender and time; further, it allows her to transgress across the world of the living and into the world of the dead, i.e. amongst the ghosts. Rabine speculates that, "it is the mother's ghosts who breathe life into the daughter's writing" (92). The mad women who disappear into mental asylums switch off their lights, as Moon Orchid advises in order to transfigure into an "invisible presence" in the world of the narrator11. Each of these women's single stories comes back through her mother's talk stories, which take form in multiple versions, to help the narrator "tell" with her own voice literally in writing. "I thought talking and not talking made the difference between sanity and insanity" (166), "[i]nsane people were the one who couldn't explain themselves," (166) she concludes; by "telling" these stories, she alternatively proves to be sane, layered with depth, unlike the women in her mother's talk-stories.

The ghosts' "invisible presence," as is so with the narrator's narrative technique, render a multiplicity that is not possible when they are confined in a woman's body. Coming back as ghosts in different versions of talk stories, they therefore have multiple functions in *The Woman Warrior*. Comparably, the designated word "ghost" also features more than one connotation in this context. The word "ghost" is a translation made by the author from the Chinese word "gwai," otherwise translated as "demon" by critics, such as Jeffrey Paul Chan in "The Mysterious West" (86). In Chinese, one use of the word

"gwai" is to refer to the spirits of the dead, and a second to Caucasians. Both of these usages are translated as the word "ghost" in *The Woman Warrior*. This code mixing serves to open up a point of reference into multiple levels. Arising from this encoding, the function of ghosts in the text is also multiple.

Thus, ghosts do not only carry with them threatening connotations. As Leslie W. Rabine affirms it is these ghosts who "breathe life" into the narrator's writing (92), ghosts in the talk-stories are not what Lee Quinby believes as haunting the narrator. There has not been any episode in *The Woman Warrior* that indicates that ghosts harm the living in any way. The sitting ghost does not harm Brave Orchid, and the no-name aunt's ghost is never recorded to have pulled anyone down into the well. Ghosts do not in effect haunt the narrator to the extent that her writing "serves as a ritual of exorcism" that "drives the fear away" from her (Quinby 128-129). Ghosts in talk stories are essentially what alert the narrator to the danger of visibility, which in turn confines a female within a single story. Ghosts serve as messengers of warning, even angry warning, on one level. On another level, however, they keep the narrator's family on surveillance (Quinby 128). Ghosts are transgressed, from objects of excessive speculation when they are living, into speculators as invisible beings: they "could be anywhere" (180). Not only do they exist within talk stories, as the second provision for "ghost" indicates; the narrator is surrounded by the American ghosts, i.e. Caucasians and other non-Chinese. The narrator exclaims, "America has been full of ghosts – Taxi Ghosts, Bus Ghosts, Police Ghosts, Fire Ghosts, Meter Reader Ghosts, Tree Trimming Ghosts, Five-and-Dime Ghosts" (91). Despite these American ghosts' seemingly harmless posts in daily routines, the narrator is afraid of them, nevertheless, as the Chinese are of the Chinese spirits of the dead. The

narrator equates the Caucasians in America as unfamiliar to her, to Chinese spirits with angry messages: "[o]nce upon a time the world was so thick with ghosts, I could hardly breathe" (99). However, the fairy tale clause "once upon a time" here signals that her fear for ghosts, both the spirits of the dead and Caucasians, is something of the past. She affirms at the end that "we had been born among ghosts, were taught by ghosts, and were ourselves half ghosts" (165), a statement demonstrating that she realizes in the end that she is nurtured by the knowledge of these ghosts who watch over her, as much as she is protected by the Chinese woman ghosts in their "mad" talk stories.

By self-consciously rejecting a visible, thus, singular subject "I", the narrator risks destabilization for remaining outside the purview of one single representative story. Another complicating angle widens the perception: not only does plurality create a potential for space of self-invention, it resists specific and cultural constructs of self-destruction. Other women in her mother's talk-stories make clear the direct relation between singularity and madness. "Mad people have only one story that they talk over and over" (143), affirms the narrator. Their relocation and transgression into "madness," and into beings with "invisible presence," warns the narrator of such a danger for all Chinese and Chinese American women. Indeed, existing as a plural subject "I" the narrative heterogeneity of "I" is a communal Chinese American call for self-invention.

Another text ***Pangs of Love*** by David Wong Louie**,** White American masculinity, homosexuality, femininity and Chinese American masculinity are shown to be all constructs bound by restrictive gender divisions from which they are defined. The white American hegemonic masculine model, as Michael Kimmel states, for instance, is overpowered by homophobia: "[h]omophobia is a central organizing principle of

[America] manhood" (131). This construction of masculinity, based on fear, is reflected in strict gender identifications of difference between male and female, defined "[h]istorically and developmentally…as the flight from women, the repudiation of femininity" (Kimmel 127). Kimmel argues, "the flight from femininity is angry and frightened, because mother can so easily emasculate the young boy…" (127). R.W. Connell affirms that "[m]asculinity does not exist except in contrast with 'femininity'" (68). He continues, as for the "opposition of masculinity and femininity, masculinity is the unmarked term, the place of symbolic authority. The phallus is master-signifier, and femininity is symbolically defined by lack" (70). Consequently, hegemonic models for white American masculinity are focused on excluding those constructs that fall short of the "manly," rather than including them: "an unmasculine person would behave differently: being peaceable rather than violent, conciliatory rather than dominating, hardly able to kick a football, uninterested in sexual conquest and so forth" (Connell 67).

Recognizing the problems of the American hegemonic model of masculinity, Kimmel urges instead for a democratic manhood, which emphasizes inclusion: "a gender of politics of inclusion, of standing up against injustice based on difference." (333). Concurring with Kimmel regarding problems entrenched in femininity that extend to Chinese American masculinity, derived from such gender politics of exclusion, Jachinson Chan suggests in a recent essay that "[i]f we can redefine both masculinity and femininity in a more fluid way, then the threat of feminization and emasculation to [Chinese American] men would be minimized" (152). Furthermore, specifically because Chinese American masculinity is such a young field, the definition of it is as yet unstable; further, that instability has been, in effect, destabilization, one that has been effeminized, already

defined as “lacking”: “the Asian man is defined by a striking absence of down there” (Fung 183) by the destabilized white American model of masculinity in which it is situated.

With respect to both white American and Chinese American masculinity, redefinition for inclusive models is crucial. There are calls to redefine both fields of Chinese American and American masculinity, as those calls respond to stereotypes of emasculated and effeminate Chinese American male models. Taking into consideration that *Chinese American* masculinity immediately draws on two cultures - and those easily sliding into multiple cultures - makes an inclusive definition practically redundant. Fluidity across strict gender definitions, not to mention plurality of ethnicities, is important for an inclusive Chinese American masculinity. One approach to help Chinese American male models to open the stringent and exclusive white definition of masculinity, derived and counter pointed to femininity. To construct an exclusionary white hegemonic gender binary, as a basis for defining Chinese American masculinity, by definition eliminates the possibility of inclusion that the theory embodies. Kam Louie and Louise Edwards argue that “[I]n a cross-cultural analysis one could propose that Chinese masculinity is ultimately more all-encompassing than Western masculinity as a result of this acceptance" (139) Therefore, dispossessing the white hegemonic masculinity of its exclusive gender divisions is essential to begin to allow plurality for “masculinities”, specifically in Chinese American manhood. Plurality in a presently (white) hegemonic masculinity can only exist through resistance to being bound within such a socially constructed exclusionary definition. In this chapter, I will study the struggle of resistance to white hegemonic masculine models in defining Chinese American masculinity in the

short story *Pangs of Love* by David Wong Louie. By examining three types of silence organized as taxonomies of censorship - the silenced, silencing, and formulated silence, it looks at silence organized around internalization of white male models, the silenced or self-censorship, both heterosexual and homosexual. Then, the analysis looks at the silencing of the mother figure in parodied censorship and examines the formulated silence (at the limit of censorship), a transitory form of self-conscious expansion, and making room for new constructions in attempts to resist white-constructed masculine models.

In *Pangs of Love*, a Chinese American protagonist perpetuates an emasculated Chinese American male stereotype, such as the one that Kimmel describes, "small, soft, and effeminate - hardly men at all" (134). The protagonist, for instance, internalizes the white hegemonic model of American masculinity and deems himself short of "manliness", hence powerless; "[t]he manly scent of musk is no longer manly enough" (82) he affirms. At the first sign of trouble, instead of fighting, the protagonist repeatedly reverts to self-censorship; he is silenced as a result of his internalization: ""[f]*orget it*" I say, waving her off. That's right. Always '*fo-gellit*, *fo-gellit*" (82). He is represented as unambiguously powerless in love and, concomitantly, as a Chinese American male: love is but repression. Watch the layers to which such repression is submitted: it is first underscored by the defeat of Bubby Arnold as the protagonist's own model of masculinity, albeit white, and then by the victory of the vicious Asian / Chinese stereotype, the Samurai Warrior, in a wrestling match on television. He complains "[m]y musk, testament to our love, and my tenuous hold on Mandy are crumbling, going the way of Bubby Arnold under the Samurai Warrior's assault" (94). For the protagonist,

there are two major forms of oppression in terms of ethnicity, both of which he internalizes - first, falling short of a model of white masculinity “Bubby”. Secondly, of course, this degenerate model “Bubby” is being defeated by a Chinese male stereotype. Such doubled powerlessness in the protagonist results from competing oppressive forces, generating humor. This extends to self-effacement when the protagonist is situated in communication between his white girlfriend Deborah and his Chinese mother, who together represent women from both ethnicities as participants in the construct of the protagonist’s self-censorship, being silenced:

> “Tell her this is a ‘bik’ pain in the you-know-what,” Deborah says in a huff. “Tell her I’m tired of your secrecy of being gossiped about in front of my face. I say, “Slow down, okay? We’re discussing my brother.” “What’s Mah-ti saying?” my mother asks. “She’s saying her parents have a big car. She wants to take you on a drive someday”. (86)

The protagonist’s powerlessness is ubiquitous; as Chan writes, “[t]he Chinese male characters in Louie’s short stories [in *Pangs of Love*] clearly do not measure up to Connell’s definition of a hegemonic model of masculinity. They are not aggressively heterosexual, they do not have power, and their desires to acquire power are unsuccessful” (141). Consequently, internalizing such a definition of “aggressive” and “powerful” masculinity as a determinant of masculinity, regardless of ethnicity, and falling short of its definitions, the protagonist self-censors and is therefore silenced to meet a Chinese American stereotype. Chan observes that this tendency toward self-condemnation of the “unmanly” in Chinese and, more broadly Asian American men, against the white hegemonic masculine model is not unique to the character in this story.

Teaching an "Asian American Men's Issues" course, his own students felt, for instance, that "the need to affirm Asian American manhood was more important than redefining notions of masculinities" (152). The language - "need to affirm Asian American manhood" - shows a lack of affirmation of the white hegemonic "manliness" in Asian American masculinity in general. Chan argues for the source of such self-condemnation: "the Chinese American male characters in Louie's text are all coping with social, cultural, and emotional rejections that force them to develop coping strategies to manage their desires and fears as Chinese American men" (141). The protagonist's self-deemed unmanliness and powerlessness, therefore, are actually not "self-deemed" but a matter of internalization of white social constructs, which hold responsible for his repeated reversions to self-censorship. These reversions, therefore, are only an initial phase of being bound within presently destabilized definitions of Chinese American masculinity. Ironically, while encoding his own internalized failure at claiming "manhood" within a white American hegemonic model, the protagonist regards his homosexual brother successful in the very same: "my brother makes his entrance decked out in hound's-tooth slacks, tight turquoise tennis shirt, and black-and-white saddle shoes" (89); "Bagel's got bulk. He pumps iron. I feel as if I'm holding a steer" (89). This construction of Bagel echoes an affirmation, not to mention glorification, of the white American muscle-bound masculine model: the white house of bleached white oak floors (88); a successful commercial artist comfortably surrounded by white homosexual men, a white group into which Bagel has commercially assimilated. Nino, for instance, is "in a *white* turtleneck and *white* pleated trousers…He's very blond, which dazzling teeth and a jawline that's an archeologist's dream," and Jamie is "in a *white* terry-cloth robe and Italian loafers" (88).

This parody of the white construct of the “muscle-bound” gay Bagel ironically translates to the narrator’s dream of American manhood. In the protagonist’s words, “[t]he American Dream in all its muscle-bound splendor” (94) is a wrestler he sees on television. Bagel, a man of few words, is also strikingly emblematic of the American silent-hero type in Westerns: “[s]o entirely self-contained…the Western hero that he seems to exist beyond everyday commonplaces of talk and explanation, of persuasion, argument, indeed beyond conversation altogether” (Mitchell 165). Bagel rarely speaks in the story; on the occasions in which he does, he closes conversations, saying “[*f]orget it*” (88), as his brother does. Bagel too self-censors and is silenced by his minority position as a homosexual Chinese American man. His position as both a homosexual and Chinese American male impose on him one more layer of repression, based on his sexuality, pushing him even further into self-censorship and to the extreme of silence; “[*f*]*orget it*” he says. He adds, “Too much trouble” (88). The trouble of speaking, the convenience in self-censorship, and his muscular physique, ironically, package him as the ultimate emblem of the American silent-hero type.

Of course, here parody is self-evident: the protagonist’s hero of white masculinity, his gay Chinese American brother, is open to question. His mother asks “why is it that *Ba-ko* has no girlfriends?” (86). She persists, saying, “all the men in this house have good jobs, they have money, why don’t they have women?” The protagonist’s answer, “I don’t know why there’s no woman here,” (97) is one of absence, both of truth (he does know of Bagel’s homosexuality, hence “no woman”) and of self-critique (there is “no woman” for himself). Therefore, on the one hand, this response, revealing flight towards the expedient, lies (as a form of self-censorship) in the face of

difficulty in discussing a sensitive topic, his brother's (homo)sexuality. On the other hand, the protagonist's response to such social oppression reveals that the muscle-bound homosexual Bagel, combined with the white men in Bagel's house, i.e. a match for his self-recognized stereotype of American manhood, is insufficient answer to the problem of masculinity. Since neither the protagonist nor Bagel has words for the self-parody under which they are acting, they revert to self-censorship in saying "forget it," and are therefore silenced in the internalization of their respective minority positions and stereotypes. Homosexuality as an alternative possibility for the "masculine" is obviously; on one level, a non-stereotypical repositioning of the protagonist's envy of his brother's muscular physique, success and comfort around other / white, but in this context that alternative is distorted by the ethnicity to which it is subjected. The homosexual as an alternative model of masculinity, in fact, ironically contributes partially in this context to the development of white hegemonic oppression. According to Eric C. Wat, "images of masculinity have a long history in the gay community" since the 1940s. "Tracy D. Morgan documents the rise of the "physique movement" in 1940s and credits the proliferation of "physique magazines for making men who were desirous of other men visible to each other, informing them about gay style, gay desire and gay language" (60). These images of glorified "patriotic, strong, and white" (60) masculinity contribute to the construction of the American manhood stereotype; as a result, homosexuality has been ironically participatory and emblematic in the foregrounding of white American "manhood". Homosexuality has therefore been equally participatory in the making of white hegemonic American "manhood" as it is established around homophobia, itself in opposition to femininity.

In fact, Bagel's comfort around his white homosexual friends, in addition to his heterosexual brother, specifically and paradoxically resist a struggle for manhood, in contrast to his heterosexual brother's multiple constructs of overlapping oppressions. Instead of forcing himself into fitting a socially constructed heterosexual mold of white American masculinity, Bagel parodically finds an alternative that already participates in the white hegemonic definition of masculinity: "God Billy," Nino says, "you always look so pulled together" (89). Rather than denying and suppressing the possibility of a homosexual type, Bagel ironically embodies this homosexual subgroup's silent / silenced existence by remaining in the background as foreground to the narrator's own aspiration. Comfortable with "masculine" definitions that his heterosexual brother simultaneously craves and critiques, Bagel saves an element of choice simply by being "quiet". In this case, it is a formulated silence: this time as participatory, as a gay minority, rather than exclusionary. With this choice, one that already participates in the definition of white hegemonic masculinity, Bagel at the same time, and paradoxically, participates in evolving definitions for an alternative construction of masculinity, one that resists the heterosexual American hegemonic masculinity ideology. "[T]here's more to manhood than a compulsory heterosexuality" (141) Chan asserts. "It seems that gay masculine constructs offer alternative strategies to resist the effects of a hegemonic model of masculinity: particularly, gay models of masculinity allow straight men to confront an inherited homophobia and the conventional masculine fear of effeminization" (Chan 138). Of course, the protagonist's envy of his gay brother's white American "masculine" characteristics, and Bagel's comfort in that mold, remain self-conscious and satirical. The protagonist's inability to fit into the white hegemonic male model is ironically fulfilled

by his homosexual brother; Bagel's aspiring "manliness", his muscles and success within a white male group, in fact erects in front of him an assimilated model which does not escape racial hierarchy. The fact that Bagel is seen sitting comfortably in his white dominated house, in which its "oak floors *have been bleached white*" (my emphasis; 88) reveals that he is ultimately bound by a white construct despite his choice and participation in the seeming alternative masculine model.

His entrance, again, with his "*turquoise* tennis shirt, and *black-and-white* saddle shoes" (my emphasis; 89) shows that Bagel does not in effect blend in to the whiteness of his socially-constructed alternative. Bagel's white friends, in fact, do not hesitate to "converge on the stains" (89) that his mother makes on Bagel's white couch, which she has forewarned would not "withstand the dirt" (88). The urgency to avoid "spotting the off-white fabric" (89) with other colors is apparent. Thus, not only is Bagel "muscle-bound"; he is bound by whiteness. Bagel's seemingly emblematically white American silent-hero type, in fact, represents also a silent / silenced individual in self-censorship, struggling to resist the whiteness in his own characteristics that binds him.

In this narrative of overpowering pursuit of, and resistance to, the white American hegemonic masculine model, a prominent female figure - the mother - serves foremost as a warning against the "whiteness" in Bagel, and against the pursuit of white masculinity by the protagonist, her other son. When she warns Bagel of buying a white couch that will not "withstand the dirt" of any other color, she is also "surprised at how clean it *looks*" , of course signifying how "white" and assimilated Bagel has begun to look, as he acts as a mirror of the white construct. She also warns the protagonist "[b]efore it's too late" to marry "a Chinese girl who will remember my grave and come with food and

spirit money" (88), once again critiquing the whiteness i.e. non-Chinese ness, that the protagonist pursues. To a degree, the mother's perspective is "omniscience," combining social consensus and, founded as it is in future-potential, integrated and watchful as she does the same with the wrestling match on television: "[f]or as long as I can remember, my mother has been a wrestling fan…No language skills required here. A dialogue of dropkicks, forearm smashes, and body slams" (93) the protagonist declares. Her preoccupation with the minority depicted in wrestling shows her in fact to be in a majority: "[e]ach night, like most Americans, my mother watches hours of TV"; thus, while it equally locates her literally outside the box of the wrestle for Chinese American masculinity, at the same time, it locates her bird's-eye overview of understanding Chinese ness, as one that is currently left outside the box in her sons' pursuit of Chinese American masculinity.

To the protagonist, his mother, with no communicability in the English language, is sometimes but a naïve female Chinese immigrant, seemingly incapable of participating in the dialogue of Chinese American masculinity; "[m]y mother stares out the windshield. Her eyes look glazed, uncomprehending. She seems out of place in a car, near machines, a woman from another culture, of another time, at ease with needle and thread, around pigs and horses" (86), and he adds, sometimes a child: "[i]t's fair to say she's as innocent as a child" (77). But every time the protagonist claims that his mother does not understand the "whole" picture, her representative consensus humorously proves an inclusion ultimately greater than his knowledge. He speaks to her, for instance, about death, and she reproachfully replies "[y]ou think I don't know [death]. Your father just died" (78). When the protagonist attempts to correct her on another occasion, "[w]hat are

you doing?" he says. "This is Saturday. There's no Johnny Carson," he continues, "[y]ou think I don't know" his mother corrects him back "Saturday night has to have wrestling" (93). As he tries to conceal Bagel's homosexuality, she asks rhetorically "all the men in this house have good jobs; they have money, why don't they have women? Why is our brother that way?" (97). Therefore, the mother figure's perspective of overpowering whiteness and its limited future is not to be dismissed; she might not be within the immediate and current dialogue of Chinese American masculinity but omnisciently she holds the dialectics of its future of inclusion.

When heard carefully, the mother's talk equally serves as a signal of a future alternative for the present Chinese American masculine stereotypes, one in which the vicious stereotype of the Japanese Samurai Warrior will be overridden. She believes that "her words of encouragement have currency" (94), as audience outside the box. She is at once a participating victim of white stereotypes - as a female Chinese immigrant stereotype dictated by her sons' internalization, in opposition to both her femininity and ethnicity – and an omniscient viewer that paradoxically derives its power to see the future not from being present inside the masculine box but from the possibility of seeing plurality, by being literally and figuratively outside the box. "The good guy should win. Somewhere in that mind of hers she carries hope for the impossible," (95) the protagonist affirms. Her temporal displacement and perspective of the future suggest plurality of racial color to the monotony in the white American hegemonic masculine model, an offering that is inclusive and in keeping with the Chinese theory: "[t]he application of *yin-yang* theory to gender discourse is firstly manifested in the ideal of *harmonious interaction* between the male and the female" (129). The mother's ethnicity allows for

representative alternatives in Chinese American masculinity currently overpowered by white American counterparts.

Still, currently overpowered by the sons' own need to throw off the mother-figure, she does not fit in and the white American hegemonic model prevails. Her sons do not hear either the currency in her warnings of whiteness or the inclusion of Chinese ness in her words for their pursuit of masculinity. She complains, "[h]ow can I be your mother if nobody listens to what I say?" (98). She verbally tries to wrestle outside her sons' masculine box for them to hear the currency in her word, as the protagonist describes, "[s]he screams for her man to step on his opponent's bare toes, to yank on his goatee" in the match on television, "[b]ut that isn't in the script…no one, not my mother and her frantic heart, can change the illusion" (94); neither is she in the script to be a participant in defining her sons' masculine box. Although she is ready, eager and present for wrestling with the definition of Chinese American masculinity, she is merely "omniscient", still absent within the present, the present struggle, in which the overpoweringly constructed stereotypes are winning.

The two sons attempt to deny the mother-figure's "dreams of America", as she joins in the cued laughter on *Johnny Carson* and the fake wrestling matches; "it's a big fake but my mother believes" (93) says the protagonist. The mother is the only one who believes, but who believes that there is an inclusive participatory factor possible in the socially constructed white American models of types and stereotypes. The mother's "narrowness" as a female Chinese immigrant, bound within her own stereotypes - the oversimplifications of what she represents to her sons - only contributes further to the rejection of what she represents, their Chinese heritage. The exclusive nature of their

being bound in the dominating white construct of the masculine box, along with her being bound in the female Chinese immigrant stereotype, overrules any possibility of inclusion for which she is a voice. She and her sons, all bound by white constructed stereotypes, cancel out the possibility of communication in either direction. The resulting binds do not allow either sons to receive the warnings, and hope, for the future from their mother, or the mother to understand the power of the constructs, or her own location outside its definition.

Bagel, the more assimilated of the two brothers, and a seeming emblem of the American silent hero type, is more aggressive in silencing the mother figure; he actively switches off the wrestling match that his mother watches on television (97): "[h]e doesn't want his friends to know he dropped from the womb of one who loves something as low as wrestling" (97). Such a silencing of his mother is first revealed in his rejection of her food (89), and then his pretentious rejection of her wrestling pleasures (97), both paradoxically conformist: despite his repressed position as both a gay and ethnic minority, he imposes a white American element of masculinity with which to reject the female mother, and an internalized oversimplification of the female Chinese immigrant stereotype. This parodied censorship - his silencing of this mother-figure – is also a sign of Bagel's rejection of her naivety, in which she believes that there is a way that she, a female Chinese immigrant, also falling inside stereotypes, can participate as an "external" voice in the masculine struggle for resistance.

Bagel's act of censorship results in a total incommunicability with his mother, which shows clearly his own inability to hear either her warnings of the whiteness that binds him or the currency in her words for the hope of an alternative to Chinese

American masculinity. His perilous act of switching off the wrestling match between the Italian immigrant Bubby Arnold and the Japanese Samurai Warrior executes his part in a possibility of change; that is, he refuses her embodied "understanding" that the immigrant will win over the white constructed vicious Asian stereotype. Lending a lens of the common stereotype of a vicious Asian, the mother's cheers, as an audience, shows the possibility of overriding such constructed stereotypes. Bagel's act of silencing is an act of resistance to his mother, which ultimately leaves him locked further in a racial, white box, comfortably and uncomfortably in his choice, paradoxically participating in its construction.

The act of Bagel turning off the wrestling match of his mother's television set also symbolizes the action of "pulling the plug" (97) on the mother, echoing a commingling story of a newborn baby girl.

> The doctors hook her up to machines, but in a few days *she dies*. Only *she doesn't look dead*. The machines pump air into her lungs, and somehow her heart keeps beating." "Then *she's alive*", I say. "No, she *looks* alive, but that's what Montezuma claims. Her chest goes up and down. But *her brain doesn't register* a single blip on the screen…so finally the city steps in and turns off the juice". (77)

The passage makes a striking parallel to what the mother figure represents in the story. The oversimplified narrative of the immigrant mother stereotype defines her first as an innocent child, that is, as the newborn girl in this passage, also a non-influential character, i.e. a "dead" character. Nonetheless, "her heart keeps beating" from her continual presence in the story, along with her sons' struggle for Chinese American

masculinity. As the protagonist says “she’s alive”; her presence is acknowledged, as is a sign of currency in his mother’s words of an alternative in Chinese American masculinity. Yet, again, the immediate response resorts to “[n]o, she looks alive…her brain doesn’t register”. The mother is condemned to be non-influential due to her perceived oversimplified character and, therefore, the verdict is to “turn off the juice”, as her sons do in the story by cutting her off and pulling the plug on her (97).

There is a partial acknowledgement of the mother’s words on the part of the protagonist for being the one to say, “[t]hen, she’s alive” (92). Although “I’ve robbed my mother of her pleasure of her flimsy faith in Americans, in America, and in me…I have just…rush[ed] in and pull[ed] the plug on her” (97); so he admits regretfully her silencing, as she therefore cannot participate within the definition of Chinese American masculinity. From the beginning of the story, the protagonist in fact has room for his mother to enter, even literal room with which to move in with her, and figurative room for the Chinese ness she embodies (in the future definition of his masculinity). The protagonist reveals symbolically that there is slight but available room for the beliefs that his mother embodies; “maybe her brain will wither proportionately less than the average American’s” (75). Throughout the story, the protagonist is regretful for his silencing of his mother. As soon as he acts on silencing his mother, or thinks of eliminating his mother, from his own life, for instance, he tries to take it back: “I stumble over my own meanness. Some son I am…Suddenly, I have the urge to wrap my arms around her solid bulk and protect her, only she’s think I’m crazy” (77). However, outwardly self-censored and silenced as a Chinese American stereotype the protagonist is also struggling, going back and forth, between the urge to silence his mother and protecting her whilst reserving

room for her. Nevertheless he remains incommunicable with her mother, as she says "…that's right. You're a good son…who doesn't know how to talk to his own mother. His American girl speaks better Chinese" (82). He has little means to fully translate his mother's embodiment of future alternatives in his own struggle for masculinity; until this point he has had little vocabulary with which to articulate the little that she is "alive" to him: "I don't even know the words for Mexico, so how do I begin" (83).

Further, the protagonist's incommunicability with his mother in the story is not merely a sign of powerlessness in communication, self-censorship or consent to his the silent Chinese American stereotype, but a tool of resistance to them. Bagel's seemingly assimilated and white "muscle bound" body of the white American hegemonic model proves unable to answer to a heterosexual male such as himself (not anymore than it does for Bagel himself of course). The protagonist therefore is in search of an alternative neither overpowered by white constructs nor Chinese constructs. Through a formulated silence - the seeming incommunicability with his mother - there can be therefore temporary resistance to becoming, rigidly, constructs of masculinity that his mother more locally, and non-omnisciently, expects of him. Staying silent, for example, without consenting to his mother to marry a Chinese girl - and not agreeing to move out of his mother's place when called "mama's boy" (85) - allows him to resist being bound by expected types in *either* the Chinese *or* stereotypes in the white American world. Such non-communication of categorization gives room to refuse an alternative type of Chinese American masculinity that would revert to being overpowered by Chinese ness (which the mother embodies and imposes) in the future, inclusive as it is, as it is overpowered by whiteness in the present. Although he hears currency in the inclusive nature of Chinese

masculinity, it is formulated to be partial and selective, as is true with his formulated silence in the end.

> "*Bagel*," I say, *stopping* his hand as he's about to spoon sugar into *my* mother's coffee. "Bagels?" Jamie says. "You're hungry for bagels? We're having bagels for breakfast." *I say nothing*. I pull from my pocket gold-foiled packets the size and shape of *condoms*. Inside each is a tablet *developed at the lab*. You dissolve it in your mouth, and it will *disguise* the sourness of whatever you drink or eat. I pass then to *everyone* at the table. *They won't know what happened*. They will laugh, delighted by *the tricks of their tongues*. But soon the *old* bitterness in our mouths will be *forgotten*, and from this moment on, *our words will come out sweet*. (85)

The protagonist takes control of the situation in the end of the story. He is the one with power by "stopping" his brother from adding "regular" sugar to dissolve the taste of "his" mother's coffee. The use of "my mother" as opposed to "our mother" here signifies his claim, however selective or partial, of the Chinese ness that "his mother" embodies, and his attempt to protect her against the aggressive silencing Bagel imposes on her, as well as from his own internalization. This active impediment symbolizes the protagonist's ultimate rejection of the regular, i.e. the socially accepted hegemonic way of censorship, both of being silenced as a result of internalization and the subsequent silencing of the female represented by the mother. He also chooses to call Bagel by his name assigned by his Chinese family, instead of Billy, his "real" name, by which his white friends call him. The protagonist himself establishes earlier in the story, "God help him who drops "Bagel" in front of Bagel's friends" (82). Of course, knowing perfectly well not to call

his brother by "Bagel" because it is not a “regular” white name, he does so here in the end by choice to identify the Chinese side of Bagel. Well aware of the consequence of humiliating Bagel, he remains silent in a formulated silence: “I say nothing” he establishes. This is a silence in which he does not have to be accountable for “developing”, selecting and circulating to “everyone” an equally “fake” / synthesized sweetener wrapped in the “size and shape of a condom” from *his* pocket, used to prevent reproduction of white constructs. This is formulated silence with which also to “disguise” himself in keeping with the white constructed stereotype of the inarticulate Chinese American male: “they won’t know what happened”. “The tricks of their tongues”, the “disguised” silences will make them “forget” the “old” white constructs of American hegemonic masculinity. Through this formulated silence, the protagonist finds a space and choice to remain in silence, and in resistance to the old definitions, in a promise of “sweet” articulation of the future: “our words *will* come out sweet” (98).

An inclusive alternative emerges across the multiplicity of its earlier forms of the aspects. It is from stepping outside the bounds of exclusive definitions, whether racial or sexual, where the protagonist formulates, if he does not always see, an overview, one that if not always locally in the process of being formulated and rejected, still opens possibility for what to inherit from two cultures. Resisting and rejecting socially constructed types does not equal the denial of heritage, whether Chinese or American. Resisting and rejecting within these bounds potentially open up room to embrace both, and all, cultures.

III. Conclusion

Silence can serve as consent to stereotype and, when reversed, can equally serve as resistance to the same stereotype – a creative response. Silence itself elicits the possibility of a plural reading, carried to a definition which has long held a negative connotation in Chinese American literature. Whether as assimilation of racist love – the passive Chinese or Asian Americans or imposed silence, silence is a powerful metaphor in Asian American history. And silence also proves to be a crucial element of discussion in gay/lesbian identity, the oppressive cost of a racially biased or heterosexist society. By reversing negative connotations of silence into resistance, light is shed onto the possibility of plurality in the young and struggling Chinese American male and female types.

The contributing factors of race, gender and sexuality that result in the development of such a strong need for resistance, apparent the texts of *The Woman Warrior* and *Pangs of Love* indicate a communal call for redefinitions in Chinese American stereotypes. Among the reasons for the continuing call for redefinition is a longstanding dissatisfaction with white stereotypes of Chinese American models, and newer, alternative models. The white stereotype of the Asian is unique in that it is the only racial stereotype completely devoid of manhood. Male characters in the texts are contemptible because they are womanly, effeminate, devoid of all the traditional masculine qualities of originality, daring, physical courage, creativity. Such response to male stereotypes in these texts, in particular, is mere aggression towards re-masculinization and re-empowerment to prove once again the white-hegemonic model of masculinity and redefinition of Chinese American masculinity as not feminine. Such a

response does not escape the heterosexual white hegemony Chinese American masculinity seeks to resist.

Instead, the individual calls of “I” for the plural the stories under study represent a unanimous vote for plurality in alternatives and ultimately individual choice, not alternative constructs which are equally restrictive as the former ones. Comparing *The Woman Warrior* – a female text, with *Pangs of Love* – male text, the struggle of resistance is clearly a conjoint effort between both female and male characters to create their own definitions as opposed to social assignations.

To conclude, whether imposed silence, formulated silence, or silencing, the very concept of silence reveals an emerging plurality to bring light to a young and struggling field of Chinese American literature. It is a means to struggle for the plurality of gender definitions at the same time for resistance against the stereotypes imposed upon the marginalized figures in the society.

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