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Diasporic Experiences in Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men*

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By

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This thesis titled "Diasporic Experiences in Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men*," submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University , by Mr. Anup Sapkota has been approved by the undersigned members of thesis committee.

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Abstract

Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men* (1980) attempts to delineate a new kind of Chinese American male heroism and to incorporate historical information on discrimination against Chinese Americans. In this book, Kingston recreates history from the Chinese American viewpoint.

This dissertation has carried out the study of diasporic experiences in Kingston's novel *China Men*. In the novel, all the characters who are claiming America in their own way face the problem of home. The characters' psychological problems are causes of displacement and dislocation from their native land.

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I. The World of Maxine Hong Kingston

General Introduction

Born in Stockton, California, in 1940, Maxine Hong Kingston is the eldest of six surviving children of Tom Hong (scholar, laundryman, and manager of a gambling house) and Ying Lan Chew (midwife, laundress, field hand). She earned a B.A. from the university of California at Berkeley in 1962 and a teaching certificate in 1965. She has lived and worked both in California and in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Author of three award-winning books, *The Woman Warrior (1976)*, *China Men* (1980), and *Trip Master Monkey* (1989), Maxine Hong Kingston is undoubtedly the most recognized Asian American writer today. Her work attracts attention from many arenas: Chinese American, feminist scholars, literary critics, and the media. In 1977, Kingston won the Mademoiselle Magazine Award, and in 1978 the Anisfiled Wolf Race Relation Award. In 1980 she was proclaimed living Treasure of Hawaii. *The Woman Warrior* received the National Book Critics Award for the best book of nonfiction in 1976, and *Time* magazine proclaimed it one of the top ten nonfiction works of the decade. It is however, a collage of fiction and fact, memory and imagination: a hybrid genre of Kingston's own devising. Through the Chinese legends and family stories that marked her childhood and the mysterious old customs, Kingston enriches her texts. With Kingston's own experiences and her imaginative and poetic flights, *The Women Warrior* details the complexities and difficulties in Kingston's development as a woman and as a Chinese American. It focuses on a difficult and finally reconciled mother/daughter relationship.

Kingston's second book, *China Men*, focuses on men and is shaped by a rather uncommunicative father/daughter relationship. It depends heavily on family history, American laws, and imaginative projections based loosely on historical facts. Its purpose Kingston has stated, is to 'Claim America' for Chinese Americans by showing how indebted American is to the labor of Chinese men. Her great grandfather and grandfathers, who cleared jungle for the sugar plantations in Hawaii, split rock and hammered steel to build railroads in the United States, created fertile farmland out of swamp and desert, yet faced fierce discrimination and persecution.

In *Tripmaster Monkey*, her first novel, Kingston again blends Chinese myth with American reality. She combines allusions to a Chinese classic *Monkey or Journey to the West*, the story of a magical, mischievous monkey who accompanies a monk to India for the sacred books of Buddhism, with the life of the 1960s Berkeley beatnik playwright.

Maxine Hong Kingston is a highly acclaimed writer of both fiction and non fiction and was one of the first Asian Americans to make it to the top of the literary world in America. Her first book, a memoir published in 1976 called *The Women Warrior*: *Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*, won the National Book Critics Circle Award and made her a literary celebrity at the age of 36. Kingston has since written two other critically hailed books. *China Men*, a sequel to *The Women Warrior*, was published in 1980 and also received the National Book Critics Circle Award; and in 1989 she published her first novel, *Trip Master Monkey: His Fake Book.*

One way to look at Kingston's major works is to regard them as different stories of growth. In *The Woman Warrior* the first person narrator explores her identity formation in relation to her mother and female relatives. Kingston's major project in *The*

Woman Warrior is to avenge oppression by reporting stories about the women in her family. The book opens with "No Name Woman", a story of a nameless aunt in China. This aunt who had become a family outcast for getting pregnant out of wedlock, finally drowned herself. Brave Orchid, Kingston's mother reveals this family secret to the young Maxine on the onset of her daughter's menstruation to caution her against sexual indiscretion. At the same time, the mother attempts to suppress this story by forbidding the daughter to repeat it. Kingston, however, reports the story as a tool of political resistance to Chinese patriarchy and repression in general. Further more she contrives different reasons for her aunt's pregnancy: the aunt could have been a victim of rape and patriarchy, she could also have been a passionate seductress and individualist. Through active imagination Kingston gives this aunt life and immortality in her own way.

The second section of *The Women Warrior*, "White Tigers", is an often anthologized and discussed part of the book because of its fantastic portayal of a female avenger. This story of the swordswoman is derived from the tale of the legendary Chinese heroine Fa Mu Lan, who substitutes for her aging father in a military conscription. In Kingston's version, the swordswoman studies martial arts from a pair of mysterious old couples and leads a peasant uprising against the tyrannous emperor. After she decapitates the misogynist baron who has exploited her village and ruined her childhood, the swords woman renounces her masculine power and returns to the traditional roles of daughter-in- law, wife and mother. By adopting the story of an exemplary woman who has successfully balanced her roles in the public sphere, which is almost always dominated by men, and in the private sphere of home, Kingston is imagining victory over the andocentric Chinese and American traditions. Further, in *The*

Woman Warrior Kingston writes of the conflicting cultural messages she received as a daughter of Chinese immigrants grown up in America in the 1950s. The book also tells the story of the generations of Chinese woman that preceded her and the weight she felt as an American trying to emerge from their stifling presence. The subtitle of the book Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts, suggests the almost fantastic tone of the text, while referring specifically to the ghosts of Kingston's female relatives and tragedy of their lives, as lived in the extremely male dominated society of China.

In *The Woman Warrior*, Kingston's concern for ethnicity and gender is evident in the way the narrative is build-up. In the text, the Chinese mythic 'talk-stories' are brought in with modern American reasoned objectivity allowing Kingston to mix fact and fiction, and comment on both the Chinese and American cultures and bring about a final reconciliation. By placing herself in the 'liminal position' she writes in the cross cultural context and manages to dovetail in both gender and cultural categories. By maintaining her psychic connection to her Chinese heritage, Maxine Hong Kingston, in *The Woman Warrior* has made a critique of prevalent racism and sexism and attempted to reconcile two for the construction of a harmonious multicultural society.

Kingston's next book, *China Men*, was in many way a companion to her first. In it she explores the Chinese American experience, this time as its was felt by the men in her family.

Maxine Hong Kingston is a highly acclaimed memorist who integrates authobiographical elements with Asian legend and fictionalized history to delineate cultural conflicts faced by American of Chinese descent. As an American born daughter of stern Chinese immigrant parents Kingston relates the anxiety that often results from

clashes between radically different cultural sensibilities. Kingston blends her melodic and poetic story telling ability with her rich Chinese ancestry and her own cultural struggles. The result is partly autobiographical, partly fiction; masterpieces of literature that have helped recent generations discover the fullness of their own spirit.

One of Kingston's greatest strength is her ability to weave in all sorts of other stories into the narratives, facts, essays, fables, legends, ghost-stories, scenes and reporting that all add up to a complete picture of the lives of the China men who came to the United States. Kingston's work is difficult to place either biography or historical novel. In many places she identifies facts that she has projected from her own life into that of her ancestor's stories. In either case the text functions as a postmodern commentary on the state of Chinese Americans. Kingston shows how myths were functional part of the lives of her ancestors, and that the myths served a purpose- they helped her ancestors adapt or cope with their situation.

In 1989, published her third book, *Trip master Monkey: His Fake Book*, her first novel. The story is about a playful and highly verbal young man who is out of college. After being fired form his job at a toy store, the irreverent Wittman turns his enormous energies to writing a contemporary epic based on an old Chinese novel. The book was a startling departure for Kingston and confused many readers.

China Men: A Short Review

China Men (1980), Maxine Hong Kingston's second book is a sequel to her first book, *The Woman Warrior*. *China Men* depends heavily on family history, American laws, and imaginative projections based loosely on historical facts. In this book, Kingston extends the narrator's personal story to reconstruct a family history, which in

turn questions the 'official' national history of America. The narrator of *China Men* identifies herself as a family historian with the self assigned and sometimes disturbing task of safe keeping family histories and memories.

Throughout *China Men*, Kingston repeatedly describes Chinese immigrant men—from the father from China to the wild man of the Green Swamp, to Uncle Bun— who are altogether unable to sustain a comfortable relationship with a dominant American point of view that excludes them. They are not seen as proper members of the nation-state; a state that nevertheless is eager to exploit their noncitizen labor on the railroads, sugar plantations and farms, and in canneries, laundries, and restaurants. Disempowered to move outside, their lives are constrained by the material violence that threatens both their psychic and bodily existence.

The purpose of writing *China Men,* as Kingston has stated, is to claim America for Chinese Americans by showing how indebted America is to the Chinese laborers, especially Chinese men. Kingston, in the book, shows how her great-grandfather and grandfathers cleared jungle for the sugar plantations in Hawaii, split rock and hammered steel to build railroads in the United States, created fertile farmlands out of swamp and desert, yet faced fierce discrimination and persecution.

Since it's first publication *China Men* has received hordes of comment some appreciating it where as others criticizing it vehemently. Some notable feminist scholars from Asia valorize Kingston's work for rupturing the boundaries of gender and giving women a significant position and voice. Others are not satisfied with her techniques of twisting the original myths to her own purpose. Elaine H. Kim in her seminal book *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context* writes:

> Some critics have objected vehemently to Maxine Hong Kingston's attempts to delineate her experiences from the point of view of Chinese American woman. Frank Chin and Jeoffrey Paul Chan allege that Kingston's primary concern is the market place, the Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* (1975, 1976) represents her attempts to "Cash in" on a "Feminist fad". Chinese American psychologist and writer Ben Tong accuses Kingston of "Selling out … her own people" by addressing herself to a predominantly white readership and gift-boxing old Chinese about China and Chinese Americans, there by obscuring the fact that Chinese Americans are not exotic foreigners but have deep roots in American life. Tong classifies Kingston's work as "white-pleasing autobiography passing for pop cultural anthropology". He even contends that in order to sell her books, she depicts Chinese American woman as superior to the men. (198)

But, as opposed to the view of E.H. Kim, Tomo Hattori examines the *China Men* as a counter discourse to the mainstream culture of Eurocentrism. In the chapter entitled "The Grandfather of the Sierra Nevada Mountains" of the *China Men*, the eponymous protagonist and railroad worker Ah Goong masturbates in the open air. "The act of masturbating", Hattori remarks, "is an escape from the cultural notion of proper subject formation under compulsory heterosexuality, and as a pathetic attempt to mimic the imagined pleasure of the dominant male subject" (Hattori). Similarly Sau Link Cynthia Wong describes *China Men* as "a kind of Chinese American male heroism and incorporates historical information on discrimination against Chinese American" (50).

Defending Kingston, Kim herself asserts that a comprehensive look at *The Women Warrior* and at *China Men* (1980) reveals that Kingston is never anti male. Moreover, it can be seen that she shares the fundamental concerns expressed in literature by Asian American men: *The Woman Warrior* is an attempt to sort out what being a Chinese American means, and *China Men* lays claim to America for Chinese Americans, there by permanently reconciling the immigrants and American-born Chinese. Kim further illustrates:

> Despite what some Chinese American male critics of Kingston have alleged, *China Men* is not anti-male; on the contrary, it is the portrait of men of diverse generations and experiences, heroes who lay claim on American for Chinese Americans and who refuse to be silenced or victimized. They are strong and vocal men who love and care for each other. *China Men* is also about the reconciliation of the contemporary Chinese American and his immigrant forefathers, nourished by their common roots, strong and deep, in American soil. Kingston's men and women are survivors. The reconciliation between the sexes is not complete, but Kingston demonstrates that Asian American writers can depict with compassion and skill the experience both sexes. (212-213)

Like *The Woman Warrior*, *China Men* also expresses the Chinese American experience through family history combined with talk-story, memory, legend, and imaginative projection. But while *The Woman Warrior* portrays the paradoxical nature of the Chinese American experience through the eyes of an American born Chinese, *China Men* is a chronicle or Chinese American history less particular and less personal.

In *China Men* the relationship between the father and daughter does not emerge clearly. The daughter, also a narrator, knows the father less well. Her father is the Chinese scholar who toils, silent and grimfaced, in the laundry, never speaking, never talking story, but screaming "Wordless male screams that jolted the house upright and staring in the middle of the night" (13). The daughter is distressed by the anti-female curses that he mutters under his breath as he works. But the narrator's feelings about the male characters are not often brought forth in *China Men*. She feels it necessary to step aside in order to allow them to become protagonists. Kingston's men are victimized and kept womanless, but they are never emasculated victims. Self-assured, resilient, and vocal, the Chinese railroad strikers of 1869, of whom Ah Goong is one, are described as semi-mythical heroes: they are bare-chested and brown, muscular, "perfect young gods reclining against rocks—long torsos with lean stomachs (141-142)."

The negotiating position taken by Kingston in writing *China Men* underscores the ideologically interdependent relationship among gender, race, class, and other historical experiences. Kingston's disturbing critique to patriarchy in *The Woman Warrior*, and her constructive reconfiguration of gender relations in *China Men* clearly show that articulation of the subjectivities of Asian American Women and men can not be understood as an ideological given or as an explicitly triumphal or recuperative endeavor. Rather, such subjectivities have to emerge from complex and contested process of differentiation and renegotiation of discourses.

II. Chinese Diaspora

Postcolonial Studies

Postcolonial studies is the critical analysis of the history, culture, literature and modes of discourse that are specific to the former colonies of England, Spain, France, and other European imperial powers. It is usually used broadly to refer to the study of works written at any point after colonization first occurred in a given country, although it is sometimes used more specifically to refer to the analysis of texts and other cultural discourses that emerged after the end of the colonial period. These studies have focused especially on the 'Third World' countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean islands, and South America. "Some scholars", as Abram points out "extend the scope of such analysis also to the discourse and cultural productions of such countries as Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, which achieved independence much earlier than the 'Third World' countries" (124). Postcolonial studies sometime also encompass the aspects of British literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, viewed through a perspective that reveals the extent to which the social and economic life represented in the literature was tacitly under written by colonial exploitation.

An important text establishing the theory and practice in this recently developed field of study was *Orientalism* (1978) by the Palestinian-American scholar Edward Said, which applied a revised form of Michel Foucault's historicist critique of discourse. Said has focused on the way in which the colonizing 'First World' has invented false images and myths of the 'Third World'—stereotypical images and myths which has conveniently instified western exploitation and domination.

Despite the increasing use of the term ‘postcolonial’ the problem of definition soon appears. Does the term refer to texts or to practices, to psychological condition or to concrete historical process? Or does it perhaps refer to the interaction of all these? In this regard, Padmini Mongia admits “postcolonial theory becomes the locus of complex debates and the target of virulent criticisms” (2). While analyzing the definition of the term Mongia writes that “Homi Bhabha asserted that ‘the term post colonial is increasingly used to describe that forms of social criticism that bears witness to those unequal and uneven process of representation by which the historical experience of the once colonized ‘Third world’ comes to be framed in the West” (1). Thus, for Bhabha the valence of the postcolonial seems to be that it functions to direct our attention, indeed to ‘bear witness’, to inequities in modes of representation.

The vast majority of postcolonial critics and theorists seem to agree that the discourse surrounding ‘postnationalism’ offers a more satisfactory reading of the colonial experience and simultaneously, the most visionary blueprint for a postcolonial future. The growing body of academic work on globalization insists that in the face of the economic and electronic homogenization of the globe, national boundaries are redundant or at least no longer sustainable in the contemporary world. The random flow of global capital is accompanied by an unprecedented movements of peoples, technologies and informations across previously impermeable borders— from one location to another. In such circumstances “post colonialism is just another name for the globalization of cultures and histories” (Ashrofts 126).

Over the last decade, postcolonial studies has emerged both as a meeting point and battle ground for a variety of disciplines and theories. While it has enabled a

complex interdisciplinary dialogue within the humanities, its uneasy corporation of mutually antagonistic theories—such as Marxism and post structuralism confounds any uniformity of approach. As a consequence, there is little consensus regarding the proper content, scope and relevance of postcolonial studies. Disagreements arising from usage and methodology are reflected in the semantic quibbling which haunts attempts to name post colonial terminology. Whereas some critics invoke the hyphenated form 'post-colonialism' as a decisive temporal marker of the decolonizing process, others fiercely query the implied chronological separation between colonialism and its aftermath on the grounds that the post colonial condition is inaugurated with the onset rather than the end of colonial occupation. Accordingly, it is argued that post colonialism is more sensitive to the long history of colonial consequences.

The term 'post colonialism' is resonant with all the ambiguity and complexity of the many different cultural experiences it implicates. It addresses all aspects of the colonial process from the beginning of colonial contact. Postcolonial studies does not refer only the meaning of the term such as 'after-colonialism' or 'after-independence'. All the post-colonial societies are still object in one way or another to overt or subtle forms of neocolonial domination, and independence has not solved this problem. The development societies, often buttressed by neo-colonial institution; the development of internal divisions based on racial, linguistic or religious discriminations; the continuing unequal treatment of indigenous peoples in settler/invader societies- all these testify to the fact that post colonialism is a continuing process of resistance and reconstruction.

In this sense, postcolonial writing has a very long history. But it would be true to say that the intensification of the theoretical interest in the postcolonial has coincided

with the rise of post modernism in western society and this has led to both confusion and overlap between the two.

The rejection of the Cartesian individual, the instability of signification, the location of the subject in language of discourse, the dynamic operation of power: all these familiar post-structuralist concepts emerge in post-colonialism thought in different guises. Post colonialism, nevertheless, confirm the political agency of the colonized subject. "Colonialism is not simply a kind of 'postmodernism with politics' - it is a sustained attention to the imperial process in colonial and neocolonial societies, and an examination of the strategies to subvert the actual material and discursive effects of the process" (Ashcroft 117-118).

Postcolonial theory involves discussion about experience of various kinds: migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender place, and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe such as history, philosophy, and linguistics, and the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which all these come into being.

Postcolonial cultures are inevitably hybridized, involving a dialectical relationship between European ontology and epistemology, and the impulses to create or recreate independent local identity. Decolonization is a process, not an arrival; it invokes an on going dialectic between hegemonic centrist system and peripheral subversion of that system; between European or British discourses and their postcolonial dismantling. Since it is not possible to create or recreate national or regional formations wholly independent of their historical implication in the European colonial enterprise, it has been the project of postcolonial writing to interrogate European discourses and discursive

strategies from a privileged position within (and between) two worlds; to investigate the means by which Europe imposed and maintained its cultural and "civilizational" codes in the colonial domination of so much of the rest of the world. Thus, the rereading and rewriting of the European historical and fictional records are vital and inescapable tasks. These subversive manoeuvres, rather than the construction or reconstruction of the essentially national or regional, are what characteristic of post colonial texts, just as the subversive mode is characteristic of postcolonial discourse in general. "Postcolonial literatures/cultures" as Tiffin views, "are thus constituted in counter-discursive rather than homologous practices, and they offer 'fields' counter discursive strategies to the dominant discourse" (15). The operation of the postcolonial counter -cultural discourse is dynamic, not static; it does not seek to subvert the dominant with a view to taking its place in the static manner.

Critics read the 'post' in postcolonial as signifying both changes in power structures after the official end of colonialism as well as colonialism's continuing effects; particularly as they are manifested discursively. For them, postcolonial theory is an umbrella term that covers different critical approaches which deconstruct European thought in areas as wide-ranging as philosophy, history, literary studies, anthropology, sociology and political science. From this perspective the term postcolonial refers not to a simple periodization but rather to a methodological revisionism which enables a wholesale critique of western structures of knowledge and power, particularly those of the post-Enlightenment period.

Thus, post colonialism has generated an enormous corpus of specialized academic writing because of its diverse and interdisciplinary usages. Nevertheless, although much

has been written under its rubric ‘post colonialism’ itself remains a diffuse and nebulous term.

Diaspora

From Greek meaning ‘to disperse’, diaspora historically refers to the exclusively dispersion of Jewish almost 4000 years ago. Diaspora, the voluntary or forcible movement of people form their homelands into a new regions, is a central historical fact of colonization. Although the concept of diaspora has been epistemologically and semantically derived form that of dispersal experiences of those ancient Jewish people of that distance past, in the present context it has come to merge into the issues raised in postcolonial theory. Colonialism itself was a radically diasporic movement, involving the temporary or permanent dispersion and settlement of millions of Europeans over the entire world. Due to the wide spread effects of these migration, continued on a global scale, many such ‘settled’ regions were developed historically as plantations or agricultural colonies to grow food stuffs for the metropolitan populations. A large number of slaves were shipped to the plantation colonies to supply the labor where the local population could not supply the need.

After the slave trade, and when slavery was outlawed by the European powers in the first decades of the nineteenth century, the demand for cheap agricultural labor in colonial plantation economics was met by the development of a system of indentured labor. This involved transporting, under indenture agreements, large population of poor agricultural labourer from population rich areas, such as China and India, to the areas where they were needed to service plantations. The practices of slavery and indenture thus resulted in world-wide colonial diasporas. Analyzing the history of colonial diaspora Aschroft writes:

> Indian population formed (and form) substantial minorities or majorities in colonies as diverse as the West Indies, Malaya, Fiji, Mauritius and colonies of Eastern and Southern Africa. Chinese minorities found their way under similar circumstances to all these regions too, as well as to areas across most of South East Asia and the Spanish and later American dominated Philippines. (256)

Even during the second world war, because of heavy causalities and disturbance in the normal lives of people, many of them fled helplessly as war victims and refugees to foreign countries, later most of them chose to settle down there in foreign lands permanently—even second class citizens — after the wars were over.

After the Second World War, formerly colonized nations such as India, Ghana, Kenya and others became politically independent from the colonial power and regime. In many countries, the national movement began with the strategies of reforming their countries after the political independence. As the nationalist movement failed in their mission, people began to get disillusioned, and the rapid succession of capitalism and the globalizaton pushed them westward. Searching better life and higher income, people began to migrate westward, which is increasing day by day even in the present time. Consequently, diaspora has been as indispensable issue of the present global scenario. The most recent and most socially significant diasporic movements have been those of colonized people back to the metroplitan centers of Europe, and western countries like Britain and France have, substantial minorities of diasporic ex-colonial peoples by now.

The descendants of the diasporic movements generated by colonialism have developed their own distinctive cultures which both preserve and often extend and develop their original cultures. The development of diasporic cultures necessarily questions essentialist model to interrogate the ideology of unified 'natural' cultural norm; an approach that underpines the centre/margin model of colonialist discourse.

Both of the modes of migration, either the migration led by the imperial European or British in term of cheap labourers and slaves, or migration that occurred in the periods of late capitalism and the globalization in the post colonial phases, has created a significant number of diasporas. All these migrants are displaced from their homelands. The displacement from homelands not only refers to the spatial dislocation but also signifies the displacement from their origin, their root and their culture, as well. Therefore in this diasporic state their sense of exile, their nostalgia for homelands, their sense of humiliation over the identity crisis that they face with and sometimes even their feeling of 'in-between- ness', especially sensed by the descendants of diasporas become extremely intense and irrepressible. Some diasporic writers have recreated their very dispersal sensibilities in their fabulous literary writing. Regarding diasporal sensitivities, an Indian critic Sudhir Kumar points:

> The diasporic consciousness as some critics aver presupposes the predominance of such feelings as alienation, dispersal, longing for the ancestral homeland, a double identification with the originary homeland and the adopted countries, identity crisis, remembering myths related to the homeland, protest against discrimination of all sorts in a new land etc,

> the metaphor of imaginary homelands does not cum up the conditions of the diasporic communities well. (70)

Diasporic writing basically focuses on the experiences of migrants people. The migrant people as they resettle in the foreign countries, have to face a lot of different problems in terms of all aspects like culture, language, food and others. They are always considered as outsiders through eyes of native people. Diasporic writings capture both the problems and experiences of the migrants. The writers in such texts try to recollect their past through the help of memories, nostalgia and familial myth. The writers not only re-visulize their history of origin, offer the reader all exotics and fantasies of their homelands, and compel us to re-examine about its authenticity. They also reaffirm their own distinct identity as subjects constructed by diaspora. Therefore, on the account of immigrant people both as recreating their history and making an appeal for their marginalized identity, the diasporal writings hold the significant position in the literary genre.

Despite the immense popularity in Diasporic writing the theory of diaspora is not free from controversies. The diasporic writers and theorists have been assailed for being inauthentic and misrepresenting the reality. They are also critiqued for using more fantasy and exaggerating the reality of their faraway homeland in order to create an aesthetic effect on the reader or to engage large audiences. Despite the adverse criticism, fantasy is still an inevitable part of the diasporic writing. It is a only source that makes it possible for the immigrant characterizes to be connected between their past and present.

Subjectivity and Diaspora

Stuart Hall's wonderfully nuanced notion of identity negotiates between essentialist and poststructuralist formation. He offers two related ways of thinking about identity. In the first, cultural identity is defined "in terms of one shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true-self'" (116). This notion as he points out, played an important role in the anticolonial struggles of this century and continues to be a very powerful and creative force in emergent forms of representation amongst hitherto marginalized peoples. The second position on identity stresses that identities are not fixed but "subject to the continous "play" of history, culture and power" (112). Hall suggests that 'identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. By arguing for these two notions as it were in the same register, Hall is able to argue that the 'play of "difference" with in 'identity' exceeds a binary structure of representation, the boundaries are re-sited. Hall emphasizes the necessity of understanding different notions of identity to argue for notion of a strategic essentialism that has served a crucial role in anti-colonial struggles of the past and continues to do so today.

The poststructuralist subject represents the 'return of the repressed': it stands for all those themes, possibilities, and emergences that have been repressed by a tradition that has been naturalized in the name of 'identities', 'continuity', 'stability' and subject oriented epistemologies. But this of course is not the whole story, for there is place for continuity and a place for discontinuity, a place for consolidation and a place for destabilization, a place for conserving the past and a place for de-authorizing it, a place for identity and a place for difference. But post structuralism, with its commitment to a

nameless and open ended process finds itself at odds with the exiquencies of political subjectivity. Because the political subjectivity is not easily served by a deconstructive epistemology of perennial disaccomodation. It requires the determinate authority of names identities and constituencies.

Hybridity, marginality and the diaspora become more seductive notions for describing contemporary constitutions of conflict-ridden subjectivity. So the experience of migration becomes emblematic of the fissured identities posited by poststructuralist theory and hence synonymous with the fractures-espistemic and otherwise-experienced by colonized people.

The past continues to speak to us. But it no longer addresses us as a simple, factual 'past', since our relation to it like the child's relation to the mother, is always already 'after the break'. It is always constructed through memory, fantasy, normative and myth. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew through transformation and difference.

Chinese Diaspora

The Chinese had a long history of movement overseas. Chinese migrants defied the laws of the central governments of Ming and Ching dynasties, which prohibited overseas travel on pain of death. By the seventeenth century, there were many Chinese in Thailand and Philippines. But the greatest outflow of Chinese occurred in the nineteenth century: between 1840 and 1900, an estimated two and half million people left China. They went to Hawaii and the United States as well as to Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South East Asia, the west Indies, South America, and Africa.

Although a handful of Chinese came to the eastern United States in the early national period as seamen and supercargoes in the China trade via Mexico, to Louisiana in the eighteenth century, numerically significant immigration from Asia to the American west was roughly contemporary with the California gold rush of 1949. Thousands of Chinese emigrated to the United States, but that was a small fraction of the Chinese diaspora that took large numbers of Chinese laborers and merchants to the four corners of the earth in the nineteenth century. Many in that diaspora, including most of the tens of thousands of Chinese who went to Cuba and Peru, were indentured laborers, or coolies. Despite the claims of some historians, the Chinese who came to North America were free immigrants.

The Chinese who came to the American west were overwhelmingly male and almost exclusively from the Pearl River delta of Guangdong province. Although the immigration was predominantly of laborers, some students, merchants, and political exiles also came. Many, probably most, of the immigrants intended to work for a time in the “Golden Mountain” as the Chinese characters for California may be translated, and

then return, rich men, to China. Some actually did so, but most of those who survived remained poor and became settlers rather than sojourners, as did large number of nineteenth century male immigrants from Europe who came with the same intention.

Three factors set these Chinese immigrants apart from other immigrants: their race, the region to which they came, and the unique discrimination they encountered. Throughout the nineteenth century more than ninety percent of the American Chinese lived in the ten westernmost states and more than two thirds were in California. A virulent anti-Chinese movement developed in California in the late 1860s and quickly spread to other parts of the nation. 'Ethnic antagonism in the mines, factories, and fields reinforced the movement of Chinese into self-employment stores, restaurants, and especially laundries. In America the Chinese were forced to become strangers by economic interests— the demands of white capitalists for a colonized labor force and the 'ethnic antagonism' of white workers— as well as by an ideology defining America as a homogenous white society. The Chinese found new conditions of 'necessity' circumscribing their lives.

Describing the plights of Chinese American, Takaki points:

> Before they had come here the Chinese could not have fully anticipated what they would do to the new land and America to them. Years after their arrival they could marvel at they had achieved and wonder at what they had become. Mostly peasants in the old country, the Chinese bad become pioneering prospectors in the foothills of the Sierras, railroad workers lasting tunnels through the granite mountain of California and laying tracks across the deserts of Utah, agricultural laborers in the fruit

> orchards of California and the cotton fields of Louisiana, enterprising farmers in the San Joaquin and Sacraments valleys, factory workers in San Francisco and North Adams, laundrymen and shop keepers from New York to Washington. (130-131)

Twelve years later, after several false starts the anti-Chinese movement won its great victory: the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Despite its name the act did not excluded all Chinese. Merchants, their families students, and elite travelers could enter the country, and certain former residents could return but the Chinese laborer were barred.

The steady decline of the Chinese American population from the 1880s to the 1920s and the persistence of a sex-ratio characteristic of the early stages of migration are unique in the history of American ethnic groups. Thus the Chinese American community was an aging one. The largely bachelor society dominated Chinese America until after Word War II.

Chinese labor played an important and little appreciated part in the economic development of the American West. Chinese built railroads, were miners, cleared land, and were pioneers in market gardening and other forms of agriculture in California and else where in the West. After 1880 more and more Chinese lived in large cities and engaged in urban persuits. Chinese owned laundries and restaurants-labor intensive business requiring little capital-employed more and more of them. Some laundries were family owned and operated businesses, like one described in Maxine Hong Kingston's marvelous book *The Women Warrior*. Others employed large numbers of single men at minimal wages and under abominable working conditions.

World War II and the changed world that it created made prewar assumptions invalid. The once nearly closed golden door of immigration began to swing open. Japanese Americans endured a lot of torment. Unlike Japanese American, the American view to look at Chinese somehow changed. The Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed and the Chinese (but no other Asians) were eligible for naturalization. The significant number of Chinese women who legally immigrated to the United States had a tremendous impact on the structure of Chinese Americans. On the one hand they reinforced Chinese rather than Chinese American values; on the other the increased number of families with children would became a major force for acculturation.

III. Diaspora in *China Men*

Critical Synopsis

Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men* is a novel that contains eighteen different chapters. Each chapter describes the different issues about the Chinese immigrants containing family history, ghost story, historical documents, myths, memory, etc.

Kingston begins *China Men*, her history of Chinese immigration to American with a prologue " On Discovery " which describes the legend of Tang Ao, a Chinese man who sets off for America, the Gold Mountain, the land of infinite riches. Instead of finding America, he discovers rather the Land of Women where, in a grotesque parody of Chinese traditions, his feet are broken and bound, his ears are pierced, he is fed nothing but rice cakes and enters into female enslavement. By highlighting Tang Ao's suffering in his state of effeminization, Kingston created a feministic critique of the Chinese sexist practices and an allegory of the emasculation of the Chinese immigrants in America. By opening the book with Tang Ao's story Kingston Underlines her two main goals: to retrieve the Chinese past and to reexamine American 'official' history.

The second chapter, “On Fathers,” suggests another kind of failed immigration. A young American girl and her sisters are waiting at their gate for their father to come home from work. They rush to greet him when he arrives, only to find out that they have greeted the wrong man; from the back certainly looking like their father, but not him. Their mother reassures them and they return to the sidewalk. Their father does finally come, but the chapter leaves us with the haunting image of a man who, only from the back, looks like the real father; a man easily mistaken.

The third chapter, “The father from China,” opens with the description, which is derived from family history of talk story, perhaps by her mother, of father who was not always unhappy but also sometimes was lighthearted and played with the children. She remembers what sorts of experiences came to the mind of the children after returning from the laundry to the house. The Narrator’s father was angry most of the time and used to scare the children. He used to swear obscenities—“Dog vomit. Your mother’s cunt. Your mother’s smelly cunt” (12). Also he slamed the iron on the shirt while muttering, “Stink pig, mother’s cunt”(12). The narrator made a wish that he only meant gypsies and not women in general. Her father was tricked twice by gypsies. They called the police but could not defend themselves because they were not able to speak English. The problem that the language had brought is explained clearly. BaBa used to scream “Wordless male screams that jolted the house upright and staring in the middle of the night” (13). Worse than the swearing and the nightly screams were his silences when he punished the family by not talking. BaBa who only looked and talked Chinese used to say with the few words and silences: No stories. No past. No China. So he wants to escape from the past, he wants to be in the present. There are not any photographs of BaBa in Chinese clothes and against Chinese landscapes. The narrator questions: Did he mean to give them a chance of being real American by forgetting their Chinese past? Kingston writes:

> You fix yourself in the present, but I want to hear the stories about the rest of your life, the Chinese stories. I want to know what makes you scream and curse, and what you are thinking when you say nothing, and why when you do talk you talk differently from mother … I’ll tell you what I

> suppose from your silences and few words, and you can tell me that I'm mistaken. You'll just have to speak up with the real stories if give got you mistaken. (15)

Of four brothers, BaBa was the youngest and the smartest. He was different from others because according to his mother, he was skinny and his hands and fingers were long. And such type of hands are "made for holding pen" (16). After passing the imperial examination, BaBa made his living by being a village teacher. But, his profession as a teacher could not satisfy him. He could not control the students. The students ran amok. They stole vegetables from the neighboring gardens; they played war, and they were "more bestial then the animals" (39). Fed up with the profession he yearned for the fields with their quiet surprises.

BaBa was fascinated by the stories of gold mountain sojourners who were talking about plausible events that were not fabulations like the fairy tales and ghost stories. The Gold Mountain sojourners were sitting right there in the room and telling what creatures they met on the road, what customs the non-Chinese follow, what topsy-turvy land formations and weather determine the crops on the other side of the world, which they had seen with their own eyes. On night of full moon, his oldest brother, Dai Bak, who had already traveled to Cuba and back, told how fish the size of long squash fell with the rain. Other interesting stories BaBa heard were the Grandfather's story of "plains covered with cattle from horizon to horizon", and Great grandfather's stories about the luxuries of meal in the Gold Mountain (42).

The writer imagines the two possible ways through which BaBa might have entered America. The first possibility, which was illegal, consulted in BaBa's friends

nailing him inside a crate with no conspicuous air holes. He traveled through the ship and had to endure physical pain inside the crate to reach America. The second possibility was that the father could have entered America legally, the possibility that really happened. After arriving in San Franscisco Bay, BaBa was detained for an indefinite time at the immigration station on Angel Island. In a wooden house, "a white man physically examined him, poked him in the genitals, looked in his mouth, pulled his eyelids with a hook" (53). He was interrogated several questions. In the camp, BaBa read the walls, which were covered with poems. Those who could write protested this jailing, this wooden house. They wrote about the fog and being lonely and afraid, and wrote of the wooden house as their coffin. At the same time many detainees wrote their wives and mothers how wonderful they found the gold mountain, describing America as a magical country.

The story suddenly shifts to the story of four Chinese Americans—Woodrow, Roosevelt, and Worldster— who are struggling to exist in new society of America. They go to shopping, seeing English movies and drama and sometimes to the nightclub where they dance with white girls. They feel that America is a free nation. Ed receives the message of his two children's death in China and he sends lots of money to his wife for her education (Western) that will make her easy to enter America. At last they met in America, and left for California after being deceived by their three partners.

"The great Grandfather of the Sandalwood Mountains," opens with the various events that the narrator faces. It is a collection of letters that was sent to the China to her relatives. The chapter also includes the informations about Chinese people in China. The talks of Chinese American visiting their ancestral land and the writer's own record of the

traveling the historical land of Hawaii are also included. This chapter also shows the diasporic feeling of the narrator. She wants to go to China and experience the nation that she has imagined, heard and read from various sources. She writes:

> I would like to go to China … It's not the Great Wall I want to see but my ancestral village. I want to talk to Cantonese, who have always been revolutionaries, non- conformists, people with fabulous imagination, people who invented the Gold Mountain. I want to discern what it is that makes people go West and turn into Americans. I want to compare China, a country I made up, with what country is really out there. (87)

As a contract worker on a Hawaiian sugar plantation, Bak Goong (Great Grandfather) is forbidden to talk during work. As a trickster figure, the talk addict, Bak Goong invents ways, such as singing and coughing, to circumvent this interdiction. "The deep long loud coughs, barking and wheezing, were almost as satisfying as shouting. He let out scold disguised as coughs" (104). His final, liberating act is to organize a shout party for his fellow Chinese workers. He mobilizes the workers to bury their homesickness and anger in a huge hole.

"The Grandfathers of the sierra Nevada mountains", "The laws", and "Alaska China Men" highlight the tenacity of the Chinese Americans faced with racial discrimination in the American legal system and in daily life. The narrator places her emphasis on the collective identity of China men including her own Grandfather and their efforts to conquer natural obstacles to survive Exclusion in America. The American railroad system is physical evidence of China men's contributions. The narrator provides a vivid description of how Ah Goong and other Chinese workers risked their lives setting

off dynamite manually in baskets dangling over ravines. Despite all these, the Chinese workers were driven out, even murdered, after the railroad was completed. "The Laws" included a catalogue of anti-Chinese exclusion laws from 1898 to 1978, which underlines the victimization of Chinese Americans, a political manipulation.

"The making of more Americans," "The wild man of the green swamp," and "The adventure of Lo Bun Sun," include Chinese American and Sinocized European adventure stories about where and how Chinese immigrants build their homes. It also registers the ambivalence about where the 'home' for Chinese American is. Each of the protagonists in the five family stories in "The making of more Americans," for instance, need to decide their home address. The ghost of Say Goong (Fourth Grandfather) lingers until his brother tells him to go back to China; Cousin Mad Sao can't continue his American life until he escorts the hungry ghost of his mother back to her home village; paranoid uncle Bun flees America. Kau Goong (Great maternal uncle), on the other hand, renounces old China and his old wife, and is buried in America; the Hong Kong aunt and uncle immigrate to U.S. become the newest addition to the narrator's Chinese American family.

China Men: Claiming America

China Men expresses the Chinese American experience through family history combined with talk story, memory, legend, and imaginative projection. What the *China Men* have in common is that their main objective is to claim America. According to Elaine H. Kim, Kingston herself has indicated:

> What I am doing in this new book is claiming America … that seems to be the common strain that runs through all the character in the story after story Chinese American people are claiming America, which goes all the way from one character saying that a Chinese explorer found this place before Lief Ericsson did to another one buying a house here. Buying that house is a way of saying that American -and not China- is his country. (209)

Kingston's male characters are victimized but they are never emasculated. They are self assured, resilient, and vocal. The Chinese railroad strikers of 1969, of whom Ah Goong is one, are described as semi-mythical heroes; they are bare-chested brown, and muscular, "perfect young gods reclining against rocks-long torsos with lean stomachs. Ten thousand heroes" (21). They had always been revolutionaries and non-conformists despite the difficulties they had to endure. They were people with fabulous imaginations, people who invented the gold mountains, and people who knew immensity.

The Grandfather who immigrates the Hawaii to work in the sugarcane fields carries with him the indomitable spirit and expressiveness of the Cantonese. Although he works like an animal, his soul seethes with rebellion and a burning desire to break the silence imposed by the labor foreman. He complains, curses and sings about the black mountains reddening and how mighty was the sun that shone on him in this enchanted forest and on his family in China. He sang to his fellow workers, " if that demon whips me, I'll catch the whip and yank him off his horse, creak his head like a coconut" (101).

Even after he is whipped and punished by the plantation foreman, the grandfather cannot be silenced. He camouflages his talk in coughing curses directed at his oppressors.

China Men is a celebration of strength and a rejection of sentimentality and self pity. Even after they are threatened with lynching, reduced to laundry labor, cheated by lying gypsies, and taunted by racists, the spirit of the men is never broken. By binding the nation north and south, east and west with the transcontinental railroad, they have established their legitimacy as the "binding and building ancestors of this place" (118). Even after they are subjected to the Driving-Out, they remain, planting trees that take years to bear fruit. The ghosts of Third and Fourth Grandfathers are said to haunt the stables of the farm where they once lived, and their descendants still revere the vacant lot in Stockton that they call the ancestral ground.

Each China man claims America in his own way. Although mad Sao must venture back to China to placate his mother's ghost, he brings his wife and children to settle in America. Old uncle, Kau Goong, decides to stay in California after the "gapping, gaping spaces of the years had put a planet between him and his old wife in China"(183). He finally tells, "this is my home I belong here" (184). The narrator's American father has the power of going places where nobody else went. He claims America by donning Fred Astaire clothing and admitts himself in department store in New York city.

China Men attempts to recover history from Chinese American point of view. It expresses the difference between the way Chinese immigrants view themselves and the way they are viewed in a racist society. Even though Kingston sees them through the

eyes of an American born Chinese woman, she gives voice to the Chinese immigrants, especially men.

The Chinese American brother is enlisted during the war in Vietnam. What links him to his immigrant forbears is their Chinese heritage, their refusal to be victimized, and their mutual claim on America. The brother claims America by being in the US Navy. But he is haunted by terrifying nightmares of himself as a soldier in the rescuing army walking among enemy corpses who become indistinguishable from his blood relatives in the Chinese American laundry. The Chinese American brother refuses to accept a chance to go to the army's language training school, even though it would mean being able to return home. He thinks he will be assigned to spy on or interrogate Vietnamese, whom he finds disturbingly similar to Chinese people.

China men and their Problems

Like other Chinese American literary works, *China Men* reflects the tension between Chinese descents and the Anglo-conformed world that discriminates against them. It shows that the Chinese American imagination is catheched in cultural conflict between two worlds. Whether recent immigrants or American born, Chinese in the United States find themselves caught between two worlds. Their facial feature proclaims their Asian ethnicity but by education, choice, or birth they are American.

Drawn by a combination of push-pull factors- famine, civil unrest, and poverty in China; labour opportunities in the gold mines, Hawaiian plantations, and railroads in the American west-Chinese immigration rose dramatically between 1860 or 1980. The immigrants faced different types of difficulties once they reached America. Family,

home, community, origin, loss, dislocation, relocation, racial differences, cross-cultural resistance, second generation Americanization and assimilation, identity destabilization and reformulation, are common issues or problems, that Chinese American are facing in America. Unlike their European counterparts, a series of exclusion acts, begining in 1882 and culminating in the severest legislation in 1924, prevented these Chinese immigrants from returning to the United States. Other discriminatory legislation against the land ownership, naturalization, miscegenation, and the entry of Chinese women further discouraged Chinese American settlement.

The untenability of existence becomes especially relevant when it is recontexualized in terms of the Chinese American male immigrants in the United States. Through out *China Men*, Kingston repeatedly describes Chinese immigrant men─ from the Father from China to the Wild Man of the Green Swamp, to uncle Bun ─Who are altogether unable to sustain a comfortable relationship with the dominant American point of view that excludes them. They are not seen as a proper members of the nation state-a state that nevertheless is eager to exploit their non-citizen labor on the railroads, suger plantations, farms canneries, laundries and restaurants. Their lives are constrained and such a state of being threatens both their psychic and bodily existence.

In “The Grandfather of the sierra Nevada Mountains”, Kingston provides an extended and detailed exploration of the most charged historical image of Chinese American absence: the exclusion of Chinese American laborers from the Golden spike Ceremony that marked the joining of the Union Pacific and the Central Pacific railroads. There are no visual records of the thousands of Chinese male laborers who built the transcontinental railroads. There is no record of how many died, risking life and limb by

blasting through the Sierra Nevada Mountains. While living in artic-like winters in the tunnels, they excavated self made graves. Ah Goong knows that the railroad he is building "would not lead him to his family" (129). Because of American exclusion laws against immigration, naturalization, miscegenation, and citizenship, the railroad he is building will not bridge the distance that separates Ah Goong from his family in a distant land. The China man his not needed for his reproductive but for his labor power. His presence is not intended to populate the barren landscape of the Wild West with Chinese families but to build the national economic infrastructures supporting Westward expansion. Kingston minutely describes the situation of the China man working in the mountain:

> The dirt was the easiest part of tunneling. Beneath the soil, they hit granite Ah Goong struck it with his pickax, and it jarred his bones, chattered his teeth. He swung his sledgehammer against it, and the impact rang in the dome of his skull. The mountain that was millions of years old was locked against them and was not broken into … "A man ought to be made of tougher material than flesh", he said. "Skin is too soft. Our bones ought to be filled with iron". He lifted the hammer high, careful that would not pull him back ward, and let it fall forward of its own weight against the rock. Now thing happened to that gray wall; he had to slam with, strength and will. He hit the same spot over and over again, the same rock. Some chips and flakes broke off. The granite looked everywhere the same. It had no softer or weaker spots anywhere, the same

> hard gray. He learned to slide his hand up the handle, lift, slide and swing, a circular motion, hammering, hammering, hammering. (134)

Ronald Takaki, in *Strangers from a Different Shore*, tells the terrible story of the winter of 1866 when Central Pacific managers, determined to accelerate construction, forced Chinese laborers to work in the bitter cold:

> The snowdrifts, over sixty feet in height, covered construction operations. The Chinese workers lived and worked in tunnels under the snow, with shafts to give them air and lanterns to light the way. Snow slides occasionally buried camps and crews; in the spring, workers found the thawing corpses, still upright, the cold hands gripping shovels and picks and their mouths twisted in frozen terror. (85-86)

Kingston is careful to note the materials circumstances that not only make it difficult for the Chinese laborer to oppose this punitive visual ordering but also threaten to obliterate his presence from railroad history entirely. Writing about the visual absence of China men from the Promontory Point photographs, Kingston attempts to seize their fleeting images at this moment of danger. She emphasizes the driving out that culminates in Ah Goong's absence in the photographs:

> The transcontinental railroad was finished. They Yipped like madmen. The white demon officials gave speeches. "The Greatest Feat of the Nineteenth century" they said. "The Great Feat in the History of mankind", they said. "Only Americas could have done it", they said, which is true. Even if Ah Goong had not spent half his gold on citizenship papers, he was an American for having built the railroad. A white demon

> in a top hat tap-tapped on the gold spike, and pulled it back out. Then one China man held the real spike, the steel one, and another hammered on it … while the demons posed for photographs, the China Men dispersed. It was dangerous to stay. The driving out had begun. Ah Goong does not appear in railroad photographs. (145)

Focusing on the stunning contradiction between Ah Goong's economic exploitation and political disenfranchisement, Kingston insists that even if Ah Goong had not spend half his gold on citizenship papers, he was an American for having built the railroad. Kingston describes the pathetic plight of Ah Goong, a consequence of 'drive out':

> Ah Goong would have like a leisurely walk along the tracks to review his finished handiwork, or to walk east to see the rest of his new country. But instead, driven out, he slid down mountains, leapt across valleys and streams, crossed plains, hid sometimes with companions and often alone, and eluded bandits who would hold him up for his railroad pay ano shoot him for practice as they shot Injuns and jack rabbits … In China bandits did not normally kill people, the booty the main thing, but here the demons killed for fun and hate. They tied pigtails to horses and dragged China men. (146)

Puzzled with all these circumstances Ah Goong was "a home less wanderer, a shiftless, dirty, jobless man with matted hair ragged clothes, and fleas all over his body. He ate out of garbage cans. He was a louse eaten by lice. A flea man". (150-151)

The racial discrimination that China man had to undergo is also clearly described in “The Great Grandfather of the Sandalwood Mountain”. Kingston’s Great Grandfather was enrolled in a sugarcane plantation field as a contract laborer. Bak Goong, along with other Chinese laborers, comes to the Sandalwood Mountain faraway from his homeland, leaving his family back in China. Where, at first in America, there was no farm, no sugarcane ready to tend. It was their job to hack a farm out of the wilderness, which they were to level from the ocean to the mountain. To do this, Bak Goong was given a machete, a saw, an axe, and a pickax. In the middle of the thick forest where no sunlight could reach. As Bak Goong, and other laborers had to work continuously, he remembers his own land, China. He is overwhelmed by the memory of his family and country. The white demons prohibited Bak Goong from talking to his fellow workers. They made those laborers do the hard labor. Due to all this he was full of anger towards the white over lookers. The money the Chinese laborers were paid was too little and they were often fined for talking and not working properly. Once Bak Goong was fined for talking and the laborers were whipped by the white demons. The hard labor and the dust had brought a lots of problem in the health of Bak Goong:

> “The cough that had begun when he cut trees and stripped leaves worsened because of breathing sweet smoke and because of the hoeing in the rains. On the hottest days, the coughing made his nose bleed. He stuffed rags in nostrils and kept working. The blood clotted in the back of his throat, and he spit out gouts. He hawked and spat to entertain. When the demons howled to work faster he coughed in reply. The deep, long ,

> loud coughs, barking and wheezing were almost as satisfying as shouting. He let out scolds disguised as coughs. (104)

The hard work and health problems, time and again, reminded him of China. He feels lonely and misses China in this newland. Due to the hard labor he falls sick and in his fever "yearned so hard for his family that he felt he appeared in China." He reached out his arms and said, "Wife, Wife. I'm home." But she said, "What are you doing here? What are you doing here without the money? Moneyless and bodiless, you better go back to the Sandalwood mountain. Go back where you belong. Go now" (115). He tried to talk to her, but his tongue was heavy and his throat blocked. He awake certain that he had to cure himself by talking whenever he pleased.

These lines show the physical difficulties he has to endure in the sugarcane plantation in the Sandalwood mountain, his longing for the homeland, and his economic reality due to which he has to struggle in the foreign land with difficulties. His dream like situation when he is in fever, is an example of how is he psychologically tortured in the foreign land.

Far from the China, China men are feeling the homesickness in the Sandalwood Mountain. Kingston writes:

> The next day men plowed, working purposefully, but they dug a circle instead of straight furrows. They dug a wide hole. They threw down their tools and flopped on the ground with their faces over the edge of the hole and their legs like wheel spokes.
>
> "Hello down there in China!" they shouted. "Hello Mother."

"Hello, my heart and my liver."

"I miss you." "What are you doing right now?"

"Happy birthday. Happy birthday for last year too."

"I've been working hard for you, and I hate it." (117)

"The Making of more Americans," strongly raises the issue of where the real home is for Chinese Americans. Throughout the novel all the Chinese Americans are struggling for their real home or where they belong to. The narrator's Fourth Grandfather's ghost still appears in the farm house and stable after he is dead. Other members of the family find his ghost roaming here and there until the Third Grandfather, Sahm Goong, strongly tells him that he belongs to China and urges him to go back China where he belongs to. The Third grandfather, Sahm Goong, also disappears; perhaps he goes back to China or is already dead in America like his brother Say Goong.

The third Grandfather had a grandson, whom the writer calls Sao Elder Brother to his face, but mad Sao, at least for a while, behind his back. He also faces the same problem of belonging. Sao's couple who were young and modern, bought a ranch house and car, wore fashionable clothes, spoke English, and seemed more American. Sao's mother sends letter to him asking continuously to return to his own real home in China, but Sao continued his American life and did not return. When Sao's mother is dead in China because of starvation she haunts him in America and it becomes a real problem in Sao's life. After she is dead, her ghost begins to chase Sao's each moment in America. At last, the situation becomes really bad and he had to take her back to China. Her soul

calms there in China, and after returning to America, Sao again becomes normal and spends his life in America normally.

The worsening situation in China about which the Chinese American could only hear and read through their relatives and their letters, make the Chinese American's life more pitiful. Such condition in China are made clear through the Sao's mother letter to him. Kingston explains:

> "Let me tell you about hunger", wrote his mother. "I am boiling weeds and roots. I am eating flowers and insects and pond scum. All my teeth have fallen out. An army drafted the ox, and soldiers took the pigs and chickens. There are strangers in the orchard eating the fruit in its bud. I tried to chase them away, "we're hungry we are hungry", they kept explaining. The next people through here will gnaw the branches. The sly villagers are hoarding food, begging it, and hiding it. You can't trust the neighbours. They do anything". (172-173)

Kau Goong, Kingston's maternal grandfather had to face a similar problem of home. In his old age, his wife asked him to come to China. But Kau Goong feared communism in China. Later his wife, Great Aunt, came to Hong Kong and asked him to spend their rest of life in Hong Kong. He refused, however, to go to Hong Kong. His wife returned to China. The Great uncle decided to stay in California. And two people remained with "a planet between them, and the planet unfathomable with its hunger and wars and laws" (183).

Uncle Bun, who had turned paranoid went back to China to be a communist. He had become crazy and always talks of communism. The other members are frightened

because his talk of communism my trap them. The white may think that "communist and the Chinese are the same" (193).

The Wild Man of the Green Swamp who could not tolerate the American society or the society that considers him as a mad man, suffers from homesickness. He was thirty-nine years old, the father of seven children, who were in Taiwan. To support them, he had shipped out on a Liberian freighter. Because of homesickness, he asked everyone if he could leave the ship and go home. But the officers would not let him off. He was sent to Tampa Hospital for his mental treatment. He escaped, however, and went into the swamp. Later one night, he fastened his belt to the bars, wrapped it around his neck, and hung himself.

"The American Father," describes the plight of Kingston's family. Kingston's father had run a gambling house as a worker. Later, however, it was closed by the white demons. He could not find any jobs in America and had to struggle to feed his family. As a hapless fellow "he became a disheartened man. He was always home. He sat in his chair and stared, or he sat on the floor and stared. He stopped showing the boys the few kung fu moves he knew. He suddenly turned angry and quiet." (247). He started drinking wine and screaming in his night.

"The Brother in Vietnam," similarly expresses the situation of Chinese Americans. During the Vietnam war Chinese Americans were frightened because they had to take part in the war. Kingston's brother who was drafted in the war and had to go for fighting "talked Chinese and yelled in his sleep, complaining even more in sleep than awake" (292). Due to the service of brother in the war "The government was certifying threat the family was really American, not precariously American but super-American"

(299). Though he is proved to be an American, he finds a close affinity between Vietnamese people and Chinese people. There is a close relation of race. Even though the brother has a chance to be a senior officer in the war, he rejects the offer because he knows well that Navy would assign him the job of a spy or an interrogator because of his knowledge of Chinese language.

IV. Conclusion

Maxine Hong Kingston (1940), a literary celebrity of Asian American literature, is an author of three award-winning books, *The Woman Warrior* (1976), *China Men* (1980), and *Trip Master Money* (1989). Like her other books, *China Men* is a hybrid genre of her own devising. It heavily depends on family history, American laws and imaginative projections based loosely on historical facts. In China Men, Kingston extends the narratior's personal story to reconstruct a family history, which in turn questions the 'official' national history of America.

In this text, too, Kingston blends myth and fact, autobiography and fiction, blurring the usual dividing lines. One of the Kingston's greatest strength is her ability to weave in all sorts of other stories into the narratives, facts, essays, fables, legends, ghost stories, scenes and reporting that all add up to a complete picture of the China men who came to the United States.

As Kingston has stated, the purpose of writing *China Men* is to claim America for Chinese Americans. She intends to do this task by showing how indebted America is to the Chinese laborers, especially Chinese men. Kingston, in the book, shows how her great grandfather and grandfathers cleared jungle for sugar plantations in Hawaii, split rock and hammered steel to build railroads in the United States; created fertile farmlands out of swamp and descent; and yet faced fierce discrimination and persecution.

Despite all the physical difficulties and psychological tortures - because of these physical difficulties and of cultural conflicts they have to undergo - all the China men claim America in their own way. But they are unable to sustain a comfortable relationship with a dominant American point of view that excludes them. They are not

seen as a proper members of United States that exploits their non citizen labor on the railroads, sugar plantations and farms, and in canneries, laundries, and restaurant. Unable to move and work freely, their lives are constrained by the material violence that threatens both their psychic and bodily existence.

China Men strongly raises the issue of where the home for Chinese American is. Each of the protagonists in the five family stories in "The making of more American", for instance need to decide their home address. The ghost of Say Goong, fourth Grandfather, lingers until his brother tells him to go back to China; cousin Mad Sao can't continue his American life until he escorts the hungry ghost of his mother back to her home village; paranoid uncle Bun flees Amerca. Kau Goong (Great maternal uncle), on the other hand, renounces China and his old wife, and is buried in America. The Hong Kong aunt and uncle immigrate to U.S. to become the newest addition to Chinese Americans.

In *China Men* Kingston describes the how the Chinese Americans feel displaced and dislocated in American. Far from China, China men are feeling the homesickness. The Grandfather of the Sandalwood Mountain dug a wide hole and them down their tools and flopped on the ground with their faces over the edge of the hole and their leg like wheel spokes. Kingston describes the imaginary conversation of the laborers with their families:

> "Hello down there in China!" They shouted, "Hello Mother."
>
> "Hello, my heart and my liver."
>
> "I miss you." "What are you doing right now?"
>
> "Happy birthday. Happy birthday for last year too."

"I have been working hard for you and, and I hate it." (117)

The hard work and the continuous health problems, time and again, reminds them of China. The China men who wore building railroads knew very well that the railroads they were constructing would not lead them to China.

The Chinamen had to bear all the physical as well as psychological difficulties because of dislocation and displacement from their native land. In the new society, they were looked upon, compelled to do hard labor, and were not even allowed to talk freely. Because of American legal system based upon ethnic antagonism and anti racialism, Chinese Americans had to face such difficulties. The problem of family home, home community, origin, loss, racial differences, cross cultural resistance, second generation Americanization are the common issues or problems that Chinese Americans are facing in America because of dislocation and displacement.

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