



**Biotext and Chinese/American Identity in
Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior:
Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts***

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Abstract

This article explores Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts*, which is a blend of autobiography, fiction, myth and history, as a biotext, a text that is able to articulate the author through the writing itself rather than being reduced to binaries or to a single genre. This essay makes the case that *The Woman Warrior* by Hong-Kingston should be seen as a biotext since it gives the author the opportunity to write about herself and make it an extension of who she is. Instead of giving in to the constraints of genre or classification, the biotext gives the writer the opportunity to integrate themselves into the work rather than having them appear as a character in the story. By incorporating both familial and cultural themes and emphasizing the lineage and kindred, Kingston's text differs from the typical autobiographical genre and creates a warrior who resurrects the suppressed female legends and celebrates her femininity.

Keywords: autobiography, biotext, femininity, female legends, warrior

In *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts* (1976) which is a blend of autobiography, fiction, myth and history, Maxine Hong Kingston narrates her story of being brought up in America as a daughter of Chinese immigrants. The text is divided into five short narratives and in those narratives the narrator retells her mother's 'talk-stories,' female

ancestors, Chinese legends and folklores. In the novel, Maxine Hong Kingston attempts not only to reconcile two quite distinct cultures of Chinese and American, but she also incorporates the experiences of her mother and aunts as well as Chinese legends which feature strong female characters like the warrior woman called Fa Mu Lan and the poetess called Ts'ai Yen into the autobiography. Including both familial and cultural elements and thus putting emphasis on the lineage and kindred, the text distinguishes itself from traditional genre of autobiography which lays more stress on the individual identity. Identifying herself with the woman warrior Fa Mu Lan, Kingston rejects the traditionally imposed gender roles. Instead, she constructs a warrior who embraces her womanhood and resurrects the repressed female legends. Therefore, Kingston, as Veronica Wang (1985) states, needs to reconcile her past, that is the familial Chinese culture from which she is detached and her present that is American culture from which she is alienated and excluded in order to create her own identity. In this process of turning from a "woman-as-slave" into a "woman-as-warrior," Kingston is obliged to delve into deep-rooted values and behaviors and refuse all socially and culturally constructed constraints. Only then can she coalesce her past and present and thus find her own identity (p. 23). It is mainly this dual struggle of Maxine Hong Kingston's identity formation that is emphasized in the text as she attempts to reconcile her detachment from Chinese culture and alienation from American culture. The transformation from "woman-as-slave" to "woman-as-warrior" highlights the empowering process of rejecting societal constraints, but it also raises questions about how fully one can integrate past and present without losing elements of either.

Maxine Hong Kingston's, *The Woman Warrior* has long been a problematic text to define or categorize into a single genre. Intended as a work of fiction, *The Woman Warrior*, would eventually be published as Kingston's own memoir which "questions the line between fiction and non-fiction, examines the relation of poetry to prose. It does this by way of metaphor" (Johnston p. 139). Even upon publication, Kingston's work avoids a clear label of genre. In terms of content, *The Woman Warrior*, also avoids categorization by blending elements of metafiction – rewriting the Chinese folktale of Fa Mu Lan through the voice of the woman warrior – with personal narrative and biographical details from her family's life in China and America. The vast majority of the research that has been carried out on Kingston's text attempts to divide the content of her text into binaries: fact and fiction, America and China, memory and logic; or else tries to situate her text within a more or less liberal American multicultural paradigm. By reducing Kingston's text to simplistic binaries or situating it within one cultural paradigm, however, is contradictive to what the text is capable of – challenging and disrupting the very binaries many scholars set out to set up. Instead of seeking to analyze *The Woman Warrior* in terms of reductive binaries or trying to reduce the text to a single genre, this article argues that Hong-Kingston's text should instead be read as what George Bowering coined as the 'biotext' – a text that is capable of articulating the author through the writing itself. In other words, the biotext is an extension of the author themselves. This paper argues that Hong-Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* should indeed be read as a biotext as it allows for Hong-Kingston to write herself through the writing thus allowing the writing to become an extension of Hong-Kingston herself. Rather than succumb to the limitations of genre or categorization, the biotext allows for the author to include themselves within in the writing itself, as opposed to being represented as a character within the narrative structure. Therefore, Kingston as Deborah Homsher (1979) observes, "breaks up time as she breaks up the usual distinctions between fact

and fantasy, and in doing so, separates her book from more traditional, chronological autobiographies” (p. 93). Kingston employs an innovative narrative technique, where the blending of fact and fantasy disrupts linear storytelling and traditional autobiographical forms. By breaking up time and rejecting conventional distinctions, Kingston not only challenges genre boundaries but also mirrors the fragmented, multifaceted nature of identity, particularly in a diasporic context.

The biotext allows for a sense of discovery within its narrative that may otherwise be limited within a traditional autobiographical structure. A sense of self or selfhood is also developed throughout the biotext allowing for an authentic voice or self to be established over the narrative. Incorporating many characteristics often considered postmodern, such as: metafiction, incongruency, and non-linearity, *The Woman Warrior* seeks to disrupt notions of identity and self through writing. In order to further show how *The Woman Warrior* might be seen as a biotext, this study first addresses some of the qualities that make the text a postmodern text. After that, in-depth interpretations are offered to contextualize Hong-Kingston’s writing in the perspective of a postmodern biotext. It concludes with examples of how identity and selfhood are explored in the text.

Hong-Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* is frequently recognized as a postmodern work for its use of metafiction, myth, disjointed timeline, and lack of a coherent self among other themes. As many of the postmodern components in Hong-Kingston’s text complement a biotextual reading of *The Woman Warrior*, it is worthwhile to briefly discuss them. Disrupting or questioning the idea of a coherent, authentic self is one of the numerous characteristics that define a postmodern work. This can be accomplished by a variety of literary techniques, including numerous narrators and alternate characters, as well as literary devices like an unreliable narrator. Kingston practices the latter more. Kingston as Bonnie Melchior (1994) emphasizes challenges autobiography’s presumptions about the nature of the self and “fact,” demolishing it along with the masculine American ideals that surround it. Reading her writing reminds us that “*I* is not causal; it is a textual construct, open-ended, that exists only paired with *you*.” A self is an active process rather than an end product. A text’s or a person’s meaning is not always linear. As the title suggests, her writing repeatedly folds back on itself, reflexively contradicting meanings it had appeared to support. This is autobiography set in a postmodern world (p. 282). Within the text, Kingston deconstructs traditional autobiographical conventions, challenging fixed notions of the self and linear storytelling. By presenting the self as a fluid, relational, and open-ended construct, Kingston aligns her writing with postmodern ideals, where meaning is constantly renegotiated and self-reflective contradictions add to the narrative’s complexity. Kingston uses mythological characters such as Fa Mu Lan and writes in “their” voices to disrupt the idea of one true authentic voice. We are eventually left with a multitude of voices and identities. Furthermore, the lines between fact and fiction or myth are also disrupted as we begin to question the multiple multifaceted but sometimes contradictory voices throughout the text.

Kingston’s blending of myth, memoir, and personal stories in multiple self-contained, yet non-linear storylines signal to what is one of the more popular indicators of a postmodern text: incongruency. *The Woman Warrior* is decisively hard to categorize or label in terms of genre. There is a lot going on at any given time throughout the text – the narrative voice is often relaying stories from other family members or family history she heard second-hand from her

mother, or else we are being told about a legendary 'woman warrior' who successfully disguised herself as a man in battle. It is worth clarifying briefly that incongruity does not necessarily render the stories unreliable, inauthentic, or false by any means, rather, the incongruity in narrative format is meant more to challenge the reader's notion of a sense of a cohesive self. In the text, as Ruth J. Yenkin (1994) endorses, the supernatural and female voice are strongly related as authority for articulation and identity is provided by ghosts and spirits in both cases. Importantly, such authority presents a real threat to patriarchal authority, particularly in cases where the supernatural is infused into cultural experiences and beliefs (p. 69). Kingston points out the significant role of the supernatural in empowering female voices within the narrative. By intertwining ghosts and spirits with identity and articulation, Kingston not only challenges patriarchal authority but also reclaims cultural experiences as a source of strength and resistance, emphasizing the transformative potential of spiritual and cultural heritage.

Kingston's continuous use of metafiction is another element of postmodern fiction in the text. Whether it is the story of Fa Mulan, a mysterious dead aunt, or the reworking and retelling of the stories the narrator's own mother told her as a child, Kingston uses metafiction to break up the narrator's own thoughts of an Asian-American identity. Kingston opens her text with the story of her unnamed aunt who died by drowning herself in the village well after an illicit affair was exposed. She also retells her mother, Brave Orchid's story of being haunted by a ghost while attending medical school in China. Rewriting the stories of others and retelling them in the first person is a metafictional technique that calls into question the binary of fact and fiction. The lines are blurred, and we are left skeptical as to what truth lies in her memoir. Kingston's point is not to have her reader attempt to sort fact from fiction or logic from imagination, rather, by incorporating all these elements into her story, we are left with the task of coming to terms with reconciling our own coded binaries of time, identity, and truth. Furthermore, Hong-Kingston calls into question the idea of identity as we typically understand it. As an example of biotext, the memoir uses a variety of narrative voices to reconfigure identity and the self in order to represent Hong-Kingston herself through her characters. 'Biotext,' a term originally coined by George Bowering and expanded by Joanne Saul (2006) in her book, *Writing the Roaming Subject: The Biotext in Canadian Literature*, refers to:

a way of privileging literary form as the place where the writer of a specific poem or fiction finds him - or herself. While 'autobiography replaces the writer,' Bowering suggests, 'biotext is an extension of him.' This distinction emphasizes an ongoing sense of discovery, the idea of the subject as performative and in process within the text... Rather than admitting a gap between the self and the text, the term 'biotext' foregrounds the writer's efforts to articulate his or her self through the writing process. (p. 4)

Rather than seeing biotext as strictly a genre then, we can instead see how a reading of *The Woman Warrior* through a biotextual lens could allow Hong-Kingston to articulate her self through her writing process throughout *The Woman Warrior* without necessarily getting caught up in the need to categorize the text or reduce its central themes to simplistic binaries. While the politics of reading for genre and the politics of genre remain, reading *The Woman Warrior* as a biotext may ease the degree to which politics enter the discussion of genre. By crafting *The Woman Warrior* as a biotext, Hong Kingston becomes both a performer and a participant in the narrative process, much like the characters she portrays. In this way, Hong Kingston herself emerges as a character within the text, alongside figures like Brave Orchid and Fa Mu Lan. The

break between the self and the text thus becomes blurred and the writer is articulated through their own writing process.

By letting the writer discover who they are inside the work, the biotext can also escape some of the more generic expectations of the autobiographic and life-writing genres. That is, the biotext does not privilege one genre over the other but rather it incorporates many of them. Elements of memoir, life-writing, fiction, and myth are all present and allow the author to work through notions of self and selfhood throughout the text. Multiple voices blend to create Hong-Kingston's selves in the text. According to Ruth J. Yenkins (1994), by giving women (or other outsiders) personal authority and the chance to express other experiences, Kingston's use of the fantastic operates as a countercurrent to the domain of patriarchal control. These spirits, existing outside of patriarchal, sequential history, also stand for experience that is neither limited nor confined by such scripts. Women authors might use the supernatural as a tool to question scripts, evaluative standards, monolithic histories, and narrative styles that specify what experiences are worthy of being documented and how they should be expressed (p. 70). Kingston's use of the fantastic subverts patriarchal norms, granting women and marginalized voices a platform to challenge dominant narratives. By invoking spirits that exist beyond linear history, Kingston not only disrupts traditional storytelling but also redefines whose experiences deserve recognition, offering a powerful critique of restrictive cultural and literary standards.

In *The Woman Warrior*, Hong Kingston integrates multiple voices, such as Brave Orchid and Fa Mu Lan, to construct her own identity through the stories and experiences of other women. By embedding herself within these characters, she blurs the boundaries between individual and collective identity, using their voices to express aspects of herself. This narrative strategy allows Kingston to weave together personal, cultural, and feminine histories, reclaiming silenced voices while highlighting the interconnectedness of selfhood, storytelling, and heritage. These characters serve as vehicles through which Kingston can write herself into the narrative, often through fictionalized portrayals that blend elements of myth and personal experience. By weaving these figures into her memoir, Kingston retains the core of a family history while simultaneously using fiction as a tool to explore deeper truths. This interplay allows her to navigate the complexities of cultural identity, gender, and memory, positioning her own story within a broader, more fluid narrative that defies conventional boundaries between fact and fiction. Through this approach, Kingston not only preserves the authenticity of her family history but also elevates it to a more universal, symbolic realm. Furthermore, Hong-Kingston is articulated in her own writing, allowing *The Woman Warrior* to retain its memoir and life-writing elements. *The Woman Warrior* thus blends elements of postmodernity and biotext to allow the text to become an extension of Hong-Kingston herself. The text itself is, after all, an extension of Hong-Kingston; it is her collection of memories that “links her to all the generations of her people, past, present, and to come” (Miller, p. 29).

There are indeed biographical details about Hong-Kingston's childhood in California included throughout the narrative. We are provided glimpses into Hong-Kingston's childhood growing up in the Chinese American community in Northern California. We are also provided with details of her parents and their separate journeys to America and their eventual reunion. These glimpses into a family history blended with mythical stories and stories about legendary yet mysterious family members combine in the biotext and close a gap between Hong-Kingston's self and her text. The question here is not one of authenticity or of sorting fact from

fiction, rather, we should read the combined stories as a way of Hong-Kingston to articulate her self in her writing and come to terms with her selfhood by attempting to close a break between the author and the writing. To that end, Kingston, as Deborah Homsher (1979) suggests, creates a partially imagined world so that she can reenter it imaginatively as a reader who is both emotionally invested in the narrative and sufficiently detached to see it clearly (pp. 96-7). By creating a partially imagined world, Kingston can re-enter her story as both participant and observer, navigating the emotional depth of her experiences while maintaining the critical distance necessary to reflect on them with clarity.

While the biotext is certainly able to allow authors to write themselves throughout their text, it may also bring to light some of the challenges of cultural identity and representation. In *The Woman Warrior* another issue present is Hong-Kingston reconciling cultural identity with notions of selfhood. Kingston, as Ruth Y. Jenkins (1994) observes, examines the difficult task of expressing a female voice in societies that view silence as the proper way for women to express their experiences (p. 63). By breaking through societal norms that enforce silence as a form of female expression and giving voice to women's experiences, Kingston resists these cultural constraints, offering a powerful critique of the ways in which silence is often imposed on women in patriarchal societies, and instead, she reclaims narrative authority for women's stories.

Multiple cultures are present throughout Kingston's text. Something worth noting is Kingston's blending of Chinese folklore and representations of Chinese cultural misogyny with a more traditional American prose style. Along with the tale of Fa Mu Lan, the narrator also remembers being a child and hearing her parents as well as the other immigrants from the village scold her with, "Better to raise geese than girls" (p. 46). The connotation here, being that girls are rather useless, whereas geese provide nutrients; you can eat them. Although a seemingly humorous comparison, Kingston is also drawing attention to the idea of having to reconcile Chinese misogynistic attitudes while growing up in America. Furthermore, the tale of a Fa Mu Lan as a female warrior also points to traditionally misogynist attitudes that women were typically not given a sense of agency, nor were they seen on the battlefield. A cultural binary of America versus China or American and Chinese values is muddled in so much that Chinese culture does not necessarily end or stay in China. Culture transcends time and place as misogynist beliefs have travelled time and place from a female warrior to a young girl being shunned by her parent's friends. In the text, as Ruth J. Yenkin (1994) states, Kingston thus creates her own voice and identity by reconstructing a woman who is a warrior against tradition and suppressed by her own culture (p. 65). Kingston's creation of a powerful, self-defining female identity through the figure of the warrior, who defies cultural traditions and resists the suppression of women within her own society enables her not only to challenge the cultural norms that confine women but also create a new narrative where female strength and agency are central to the process of identity formation.

In terms of content, *The Woman Warrior*, also fits within the definitions of multiculturalism. *The Woman Warrior* can position itself fairly well in terms of critical or radical multiculturalism – that which is quick to draw in other influences such as race, gender, class and sexuality in its discussion of culture. Although perhaps not directly or overtly radical, Kingston criticizes elements of multiculturalism such as the idea of inclusion and the ability to

harmoniously balance multiple racial and ethnic cultures. In almost a throwaway sentence, the narrator asks her mother, “‘Why didn’t you teach me English?’ ‘You like having me beaten up at school, don’t you?’” (Kingston p. 46). Kingston highlights some of the troubles first generation immigrant children might encounter at school – that of language and having to be responsible for knowing when to speak which language. In the text, Kingston exhibits, as Jeehyun Lim (2006) observes, how the illusory idea of standard English, which is inextricably tied to assimilation, comes to enforce a regime of language normality that is only supported by excluding language diversity (p. 51). The idea of being responsible for knowing multiple languages can also further complicate the idea of identity, selfhood, and cultural representation. The fact that the narrator was also beaten up at school also points to not being accepted by the other non-othered children her age. Further along in the story, the narrator also notes the accepted notion within her family and their friends:

[...] females desert families. It was said, ‘There is an outward tendency in females,’ which meant that I was getting straight A’s for the good of my future husband’s family, not my own. I did not plan ever to have a husband. I would show my mother and father and the nosy emigrant villagers that girls have no outward tendency. I stopped getting straight A’s. And all the time I was having to turn myself American-feminine, or no dates. (p. 47)

Here, Kingston criticizes the inability to balance Chinese, American, or the hyphenated Chinese-American identities. Even after neglecting her grades to prove a point to her family, the narrator is still unable to reconcile an American identity in so much that she cannot secure a date for herself. Kingston is imploring many of the issues critical Multiculturalism is indeed critical about – race, gender, and sexuality. There is a false binary set up between American and Chinese culture that Kingston is challenging. Chinese and American culture are not opposites, nor are they necessarily in competition with one another. Kingston’s narrator realizes the pressure to get good grades in school that is often associated with Chinese culture, but she also notes the simultaneous need to turn herself American-feminine to appeal to boys her age. Here, gender and sexuality are not uniquely American, and they do not fit solely within American culture. After all, it was Kingston’s grades, she realized, that would attract her future husband’s family as well. Here, school grades worked as the attraction.

In the narrative, the narrator’s parents never fully realize the American dream, thus failing as the model minority. Having owned and operated a laundromat for seventeen years, they eventually lost it when their building was rezoned, and the space became a parking lot. Having been too old at that point to start over with a new career, the narrator’s parents are forced to retire on the ‘relocation’ money they were given after closing the laundromat. If parts of the American dream include financial success after immigrating and working in America, then the narrator’s family is not exactly successful under these circumstances. Nor are they part of the model minority, which radical Multiculturalism can also be very critical of. With their continued emphasis on Chinese traditions such as favoring sons and not teaching their children English, the narrator’s parents do not fully assimilate into American culture, thus excluding them from the model minority. In the text, Kingston refers to these shortcomings of both cultures. In an interview with Shelley Fisher Fishkin (1991), Kingston emphasizes that telling the truth is always crucial since lying can have a lot of negative social and psychological effects. When you have significant energy and forces within of you, there might be implosions and crazinesses. Some of our truths, Kingston states, are topics that are not covered in typical autobiographies.

Dreams, according to her, are crucial for women and for everyone's mental health, and being able to access one's dreams is a powerful ability. Additionally, we have "silent, secret" things like prayers and visions of what we might do. Finding a new kind of autobiography that can accurately convey the stories of visions, prayers, and dreams is, in Kingston's opinion, one of the things we need to do. For her, it is vitally important for both our political and mental well-being. The typical autobiography, she points out, focuses mostly on the outside world - when and how we are born, our participation in significant historical events that we are publicly involved in - and it ignores the complex, intimate inner lives of the people who write them. Her goal is to create a new autobiographical form that accurately depicts the inner lives of women. Minority people should particularly benefit from this, as they are always in danger of going extinct as these communities are always dissolving, and their culture is vanishing. Understanding these very strong, unseen forces within themselves is one way they may maintain their survival (p. 786). Here, we see Kingston's belief in the importance of truth-telling, particularly in capturing the hidden, inner lives that are often overlooked in traditional autobiographies. By advocating for a new form of autobiography that includes dreams, visions, prayers, and other "silent, secret" elements, Kingston not only challenges conventional narrative forms but also highlights the need for marginalized voices - especially women and minority communities - to share their internal, often suppressed experiences in order to preserve their cultural identities and mental well-being.

Although seemingly aware of the limits of American multiculturalism, Kingston's text can be critical of the American dream and the idea of moving or migrating to America solely for a better or improved life. The portrayal of her parents, more specifically her mother's life, demonstrates the way in which Kingston can be critical of cultural binaries and an ideal multiculturalism. A celebrated doctor in China, Brave Orchid arrives in America to spend the rest of her adult life running a laundromat with her husband and children. While there is no direct mention of whether Brave Orchid had wanted to continue practicing medicine upon immigrating to America, she nonetheless gives up a professional career as a doctor to perform the menial task of washing other people's clothes in America. There is one conversation between Kingston and Brave Orchid however, that points to Brave Orchid being unhappy with her decision to move: "I have not stopped working since the day the ship landed. I was on my feet the moment the babies were out. In China I never even had to hang up my own clothes. I shouldn't have left, but your father couldn't have supported you without me" (p. 104). Here, Kingston is teasing out a few ideas. First, the idea that many people with advanced degrees are reduced to menial tasks and work upon immigrating to America. Also, that America is not necessarily the ideal when considering standards of living. That is, Brave Orchid arguably had a better standard of living while she was in China - she was a woman with an advanced degree who could afford to hire domestic help. To some degree, Kingston is also challenging the notion that all immigrants to America have come willingly. That is, this passage plays with the notion of whether immigrants arrive in America out of necessity and looking for better opportunities. Blue Orchid came to America after her husband sent for her to help with the laundromat. She came to America to reunite with her spouse who was already established there. She did not come simply because of necessity, or for a better future for her and her children. All the ideas at work in Kingston's conversation with her mother are aware, if not critical of the limitations of American multiculturalism. They do not present the fruitful successes of a realized American

dream. They represent a very raw experience of migration and isolation within a racialized cultural community.

Maxine Hong-Kingston's *Woman Warrior* has been the topic of great debate in terms of attempting to situate it within genre and representation. Likewise, attempting to situate any text within the confines of genre produces expectations for the given text – expectations in terms of theme, content, and structure. Hong-Kingston however, manages to deny or at the very least disrupt expectations of genre and categorization in *The Woman Warrior* by using many postmodern techniques in her memoir-like text. Furthermore, if we read *The Woman Warrior* as a biotext we can further see how many of these postmodern techniques such as the use of incongruity, myth and metafiction actually help Hong-Kingston to foreground her self in the text and close an existing gap between the written work and the author.

The Woman Warrior continually challenges the way in which we can read memoir and autobiography. Kingston's text, as Bobby Fong (1989) suggests, challenges the idea that the normative pattern of personal growth should be a linear journey to individual autonomy, which is a central assumption underlying the form and content of traditional autobiographies (p. 117). Although she uses fictional and mythical characters and plot devices throughout the text, Hong-Kingston produces a memoir and account of her life in so much that she has successfully managed to write her self into the text and negotiate a liminal space for the text. We are still provided with the information and expectations of a typical memoir (family history, childhood memories), yet Hong-Kingston also provides us with mythical representations (Fa Mu Lan and the unnamed aunt) that also connect her with memories and stories of a child in growing up in the Chinese American diaspora. Kingston, as Bobby Fong (1989) points out, pieces together a history using bits and pieces of recollections, mostly from stories her mother told her. That past is myth and narrative retold and altered to suit the narrator's purposes, not just facts recollected. The work is open-ended and achronological, giving readers the sense that life is a work in progress with a dynamic order that is never static (p. 117). Kingston employs a non-linear, fluid approach to storytelling, where she constructs her history not through rigid facts but through myth, personal recollections, and narratives that evolve with the narrator's intent. By crafting an open-ended, achronological narrative, Kingston reflects the idea that life and identity are ongoing processes, constantly shifting and never confined to a fixed, static order, thereby challenging conventional, linear forms of historical recounting.

By blending themes of memoir and personal narrative with folklore and metafiction, Kingston's, *The Woman Warrior*, challenges a sense of a cohesive self throughout the narrative and through the incongruity and disrupted notion of linear time that flows throughout her text. Furthermore, Kingston's work, whatever we may label it, further challenges binaries especially as they relate to cultural binaries regarding China and America. By disrupting cultural and racial binaries, Kingston not only calls into question some of the limits and challenges of American multiculturalism but she also offers an alternative to these shortcomings as she points out in her interview with Shelley Fisher Fishkin (1991) in which we observe that according to Kingston, imagining the potential of a powerful, nonviolent woman, a playful, peaceful, nurturing, mothering man, and peaceful, harmonious communities is what we need to do. If we can only imagine these things, that would be the first step toward creating and becoming them (p. 783). The text thus offers us Kingston's vision for an alternative, more inclusive reality, where the boundaries of gender, power, and identity are reimagined. By challenging cultural and racial

binaries, she calls for the imaginative creation of more harmonious, nonviolent, and nurturing roles, suggesting that the first step toward societal change is the ability to envision such possibilities and embody them in the future.

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