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“The beginning is hers, the ending, mine”: Social Performance and Intergenerational Female Relationships in Works by Chang and Kingston

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And at last, I dedicate this project to myself.

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Introduction

It is no secret that cross-cultural misunderstandings cause conflict, even in close knit families. When searching, one can find myriad op-eds, articles, and formal social science studies on Asian American mental health in relation to intergenerational trauma. They vary in finding a culprit, but many if not most point to the child's parents, with "child" referring to both adolescents and adults; the conversation remains with fingers pointed at the parental figures. For example, there is even a subreddit — a topic-specific community of a forum social network named Reddit.com— named r/AsianParentStories, title tag called "(bad) Stories caused by Asian Parents", with over 72.7k members as of April 2022; crucially, it was created less than a decade of this thesis's creation: June 6, 2012 ("r/AsianParentStories"). Because most of Reddit's traffic comes from the US at around 47.82%, followed by other countries in which English is commonly spoken (the UK, Canada, and Australia), it is perhaps safe to assume that contributors to the subreddit are Asian diaspora (Dean).

Seeing a forum created less than a decade ago dedicated to airing grievances, I determined discussions about intergenerational conflict to be relevant to contemporary times. Yet as a 'baby scholar' of Asian American literature, because my education *is* literature, how might I explore the intersection between literature and familial conflict? I was lucky enough to tie this interest in with my field of study. This thesis project involves my intention to explore Eileen Chang's *The Rouge of the North* and Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, both which I enjoyed within the classroom, and said intergenerational conflict.

Published about ten years apart, these authors and their works received differing levels of attention from the general Anglophone audience, Chinese American and diasporic groups, in addition to varying levels of warmth from critics and scholars of Asian diasporic texts. Compare the New York Times articles for both works. On *The Woman Warrior*'s back cover, the press describes it as "a remarkable book… As an account of growing up female and Chinese-American [sic] in California [...] it is dizzying, elemental, a poem turned into a sword"; the review for *Rouge of the North* does not address Chang's written work. Rather, it reviews the 1988 movie adaptation directed by Fred Tan, illustrating the contrasting degree of regard between the two authors (Bernstein). Because both authors may not be familiar to a general audience, I will provide background information on them as well as summaries of the respective works I focus on.

Eileen Chang and *The Rouge of the North*

The Rouge of the North barely garners attention in non-Asian American or diasporic communities. Written in 1967, Eileen Chang had hoped that this novel would boost her writing career in the United States after her immigration from Hong Kong in 1955, a move which was preceded by her journey from her birthplace of Shanghai (Chang vii).

It is also the product of constant rewriting and translation. Its origins come from one of Chang's previous works, named *Jin Suo Ji* (金锁记, 1943), or *The Golden Cangue* in English. Besides major changes transitioning from *The Golden Cangue* to *The Rouge of the North*, such as exclusion of certain characters and differences in plot details, Leng summarizes her writings as drawing from her "own personal experiences" which "intimately informed her writing"; her stories "frequently" follow "a naïve, sometimes idealistic, youth who gets drawn into the chaos"

of "a deceiving, selfish, and disintegrating adult world"; and of scholars, many note Chang's "unapologetically introspective and sentimental but largely apolitical" writing (Leng 16). We rarely see the "Chinese historical turmoil from the fall of the Qing dynasty to the last years of the Second Sino-Japanese War" (Chang vii); the upper-class family setting in *Rouge of the North* dominates above the politics and merely gives us a glimpse of life beyond the suffocating domestic.

Rouge of the North begins with Yindi's decision to accept an engagement to the wealthy Yao family's Second Master, an unnamed blind man with an unspecified disability and opium addiction, over Young Liu, the shop assistant of a pharmacy. After her marriage, an attempt to escape the poverty she fears she will spend her entire life in, the story follows her years as a rich yet unhappy wife and mother navigating the oppressive Yao household in addition to her relationships with the Second Master, Old Mistress, brothers- and sisters-in-law, and servants. As the novel continues, Yindi's sense of restrictions and isolation grows more apparent to her and the audience. Not only is she "a southerner" living in a Shanghai household, but the geographical difference also already causing a divide between the bride and her new family, her financially poorer origins is another matter of tension. In a key moment of pursuing romantic and sexual release, Yindi seeks it with her brother-in-law, the Third Master, but is turned down and later attempts suicide. She survives, and the latter portion of the novel narrates her later years as the matriarch of her own branch and relationships with her own son, Yensheng, the remnants of the Yao family, her servants, and her own daughters-in-law. As the Old Mistress did with her, Yindi treats her son's first wife poorly, ultimately leading to the latter's death.

While political events take place during the novel's temporal span, we rarely glimpse said events; rather, Chang's novel smothers the reader into the domestic sphere as a spectator. C. T.

Hsia, a scholar of Chinese fiction, speaks of Chang's work as "utterly uncontaminated by the leftist influence, her stories of this period are concerned with modes of existence in Shanghai and Hong Kong, ranging from traditional opulence of the official families to the cosmopolitanism of the smart set" (Hsia 332-3). Indeed, Yindi reflects modes of existence in her environment. We see how she perpetuates familial patterns in her household, and neither does the author's words support nor deny Yindi's participation in the hierarchical cruelties and cycle of female abuse in the Yao household. for Chang, her character neither transcends above societal values nor makes a feminist stand. For an inattentive audience, the novel is merely an episode about an unfortunate young woman turned unlikeable old woman with no merit beyond its domestic drama.

As a matter of fact, according to the novel's foreword by David Der-Wei Wang, *Rouge of the North* was "received coldly by both reviewers and general readers" (Chang ix). However, Chang's Chinese self-translation of the same novel, which she named *Yuannü* (怨女) or, in English, "*Embittered Woman*", received more attention and higher praise "in Hong Kong and Taiwan, and in overseas Chinese communities" and brought about a revival of her popularity among these groups (Chang ix). On the book's cover, the publisher notes that "despite her great fame among Chinese-language readers around the world, her work has been nearly unavailable in English in [the United States] for many years" but has finally gained recognition due to the "reissue", exposing "a new generation of readers" to her work.

There are several factors that might contribute to the lack of popularity of Chang's English version, though one might be the differences of culture and lack of understanding the customs within the story. For example, *Rouge of the North* spends much more time explaining the customs and reasons for certain traditions that a Chinese version would not. Even with these types of explanations, someone who is not familiar with Chinese culture and especially the types

of etiquette taught in Chinese families may not find as much interest nor connection even on an entertainment level with the novel. Plus, readers may find Yindi unlikeable. Chang's depiction of her is both as one who suffered and causes suffering, and this may not appeal to some audiences as it would to others who already have an understanding of the culture, literature and conventions possibly present in a unique work such as *Rouge*, and so on.

Maxine Hong Kingston and *The Woman Warrior*

On the other hand, Kingston's work finds a massive audience in not only Asian Americans and diasporic communities, but also readership with non-Asian American groups. Her novels have also drawn criticism from Asian American scholars such as Frank Chin. In my personal experience when explaining my thesis, finding someone familiar with Kingston's work is more likely than for Chang — and I even know one UC Merced professor who had Maxine Hong Kingston as their lecturer at UC Berkeley.

Maxine Hong Kingston's own story began "in the post-war environment of Stockton, California", and in her academic life, she was involved "in ethnic, pacifist and feminist activism [...] at the same time as a period of especially vigorous political activity on the University of California, Berkeley campus" (Grice 4). Her works, including *The Woman Warrior*, made her considered to be "the most widely taught living writer in US colleges today" though the preluding awards, respectively enthusiastic and scathing reception by a general audience and "some famously hostile" reactions "from Asian American writers and critics" (Grice 3-4). It has been described as "a classic of recent American literature", and sometimes a work inspiring confusion (Dong 210). This is because the book has been marked under multiple genres, perhaps owing to its narration style or the latter part of the title, called "Memoirs of a Girlhood Among

Ghosts"; it has been labeled fiction, nonfiction, and autobiography, and also under anthropology. On the back cover, my own physical copy labels it as "nonfiction/literature".

The reactions of its audience have also varied greatly. The novel is considered by many to be a pivotal work, defining Asian American literature — and more specifically, Chinese American literature. Some regarded it as a "definitive telling of the Asian immigrant experience, at a time when there weren't many to choose from" and is thought to be "monolithic", a literary paragon of which "younger Asian-American writers would later complain" that their own works are judged against by fanatic publishers (Hsu). The point is, *The Woman Warrior* is held on a pedestal by some readers, mostly a white audience considering the novel as representational of true Chinese American experience (a singular experience which does not exist), but also disliked due to said reputation by Asian American and diasporic scholars and writers because the previous group considers it canonical, and to which later works by Asian American authors are compared.

A common point of criticism is also that Kingston's work perpetuates racist stereotypes. Chin, who is a notably outspoken critic of hers and her writing and possibly the "famously hostile" reactor referred to by Grice, when Kingston asks for feedback of *The Woman Warrior* before publication, replies by stating that she's "used all [her] craft and skill with words" and is "good, no doubt about it"; however Chin lectures her on her supposed appropriation of Chinese culture, "the making of mythical connection with all sorts of pasts and cultures out of the stuff of everyday Chinese American girlhood", and wished she'd "pushed harder, let go and done it instead of being so prissy and sissy" (Dong 212).

During my literature review, I found this to be a common reaction from Asian American scholars and critics in conversation about Kingston's work — and sometimes as direct

commentary about the author herself. One can say this relates to Kingston (along with other Asian American authors of her time like Amy Tan) who gained popularity among general readers and were expected by some audiences to represent their culture accurately through their writing. While I did find myself partly agreeing with these critics, a close analysis of the narrator and purposeful placement of the two stories I discuss reveals motives unrelated to representation of a whole diaspora population: *The Woman Warrior*, above all, seeks to interrogate the relationship between a specific Chinese immigrant mother and her America-born daughter; this, I demonstrate throughout my paper. However, I digress — I find that touching on the criticisms the work receives gives additional context, which helps to ground our understanding of the novel's reputation so far.

The Woman Warrior, made up of five stories, all concern the childhood of its protagonist, Chinese stories and myths that are rewritten and reinterpreted by said protagonist as someone growing up in an environment of Chinese and American values, and other key events of diasporic experience involving other family members. Even though the protagonist is not referred to by name by other characters, resulting in most scholars simply calling her the "Kingston narrator" or "Maxine", audiences should remember to separate the author from their characters. Of the five stories within Kingston's novel, I focus my analysis on two: "No Name Woman" and "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe". Both are narrated in first person.

Recounted to us by the Kingston narrator, "No Name Woman" (re)tells the story of a mysterious aunt whom her family attempts to forget. It is originally passed from the narrator's mother to herself, its purpose to discourage and warn her against the consequences of acting on female sexuality. Beginning from the account of the Kingston narrator's mother, the narrator attempts to imagine and recreate the forgotten aunt. Her mother tells of how the woman in

question, whose husband had left for America, mysteriously conceived a baby. Aware that the child could not be her husband's, the villagers raided her family's property as punishment. Whether or not the pregnancy was the result of adultery — ambiguity surrounds the aunt — the community and her own family turned their backs on the woman, who proceeded to drown herself and her newborn in the family's well. The Kingston narrator's imaginative investigation of her subject depicts contrasting explanations for her pregnancy, variations in the woman's relationships with her impregnator, and possible thoughts and motivations for her aunt's final moments. Additionally, the Kingston narrator weaves in her own encounters with traditional gender roles and cultural contrasts of treatment of male versus female family members in her own life.

Overall, this entry is an introduction into the novel's repeating motif of "talk-stories", which are tales usually told by the narrator's mother, which the latter then retells to the audience. These talk-stories are significant because they appear as a way for the narrator's mother to pass down and teach her daughter morals. Additionally, as the Kingston narrator does so repeatedly of other types of tales, such as myths and folktales from Chinese culture, the talk-stories are ways for the Kingston narrator to demonstrate her interpretation of these stories; they are told by a Chinese immigrant mother to her Chinese American daughter, who reacts to the tales as someone possessing American viewpoints and morals. As the reader progresses through the story, they see how conflicts between mother and daughter usually stem from this cultural clash and consequential failure in interpersonal understanding and communication.

"A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe" (also referred to as "Barbarian Reed Pipe") discusses events from the Kingston narrator's childhood, especially focusing on the theme of communication and fitting into diverse American society and immigrant Chinese society as an

American-born Chinese diaspora. There is an emphasis on talk-stories and the suspicions and tension between the Kingston narrator versus her mother. “Barbarian Reed Pipe” begins with a conversation between herself and a sister, which was relayed to the latter by their brother, and transitions to the Kingston narrator’s memory of asking her mother why she had cut her tongue and freed it so the daughter “would not be tongue-tied” in American despite, as “the Chinese say: ‘A ready tongue is an evil’” (Kingston 164). Our protagonist then recalls her time in elementary school, navigating her complex identity through attempts to conform to America’s standards of femininity for young girls and acceptable behavior in elementary school versus meeting the Chinese standards that were carried over by older immigrant generations. The Kingston narrator remembers a young female classmate whom she despised for her Chinese quietness, a stressful juxtaposition to the children of other races whom the Kingston narrator admired for their outspokenness — and even more stressful because said classmate refused to speak “even in Chinese school” (Kingston 172). The climax of that scene peaks when the Kingston narrator corners the girl and begins to taunt and physically bully her, urging her to speak in order to stop the torment, but ends up sick for an extended period which she attributes to being cursed for bullying her classmate.

The next sequence of memories focuses on what the Kingston narrator perceives to be the secretiveness of the older immigrant generations. She claims that these Chinese immigrants refuse to share information with the younger generation who are born in the States. Besides examples from interactions between strangers, she gives an instance of how said perceived secretiveness and exclusion of the American-born Chinese children have created a chasm between the different generations; according to her, this is also to blame for the lack of unifying

cultural traditions to pass to these diasporic children ("How can Chinese keep any traditions at all?") (Kingston 185).

On the topic of family and generational conflict, Kingston narrator brings in other scenes from her childhood, such as the period of time in which she feared being betrothed to a "Fresh-off-the-Boat" or a boy from her neighborhood who had a mental disability; dinner with relatives during which the Third Grand-Uncle suddenly began ranting about his lack of male grandchildren, and the granddaughters' exasperated but stoic resignation to the older man's ranting; a young Kingston narrator's attempts to express herself, one 'secret' at a time, to her mother on account of how she believed her cut tongue controlled her ability to speak; and a later argument with her mother as an act of accumulated frustrated and misunderstanding between both parties. They yell at each other, the daughter complaining that her mother looks down upon her while the mother vents that her daughter was ungrateful and a "Ho Chi Kuei" (Kingston 204). The narrator believes, after attempts to translate the phrase, it to mean "Good Foundation Ghosts", children whom "the immigrants could be saying [...] were born on Gold Mountain and have advantages", possibilities owed to their English-speaking skills and cultural understanding and expected integration into American society (Kingston 204-5). The immigrants, which includes the Kingston narrator's parents, lack said advantages and, for example, toil for the benefit of their "Ho Chi Kuei" children who are better able to enjoy the opportunities of American society. At the end of "Barbarian Reed Pipe", the Kingston narrator ends with her family's talk-stories mixed with the tale of Ts'ai Yen (or Cai Yan), a poet of the late Eastern Han dynasty who was captured by the Hsiung-nu and spent a portion of her life as the wife of a chieftain before returning to the dynasty.

Seeing that Chang's *Rouge of the North* and Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* share similarities in their dealings with culture and female characters attempting to fit into their prescribed roles and expectations yet also share crucial differences in both plot and the context of their creation, I thought it appropriate to explain the purpose and goals of pairing these two Asian American and diaspora texts together.

Why Pair Chang and Kingston?

Created by Chinese American and diasporic authors, these texts focus on the navigation of their space and roles. Additionally, they tackle intergenerational female relationships in a cultural — in Chang's case — and transcultural — in Kingston's case — context. Both novels follow a female protagonist, deal with the domestic, and both contemplate said female characters' place in their community. One is a US-born daughter growing up between the talk-stories of her Chinese mother; the other is a young woman living in a solely Chinese culture.

Additionally, I chose these two texts because *Rouge of the North* has not been studied as frequently, meaning that there is an original trove of analysis to be discovered. As said, Kingston is well known in academia and among Asian American and diaspora literature scholars. Meanwhile, Chang and her work do count as diaspora (Chang had immigrated from China to the United States; she also rewrote and retranslated *Rouge* for a Western audience), but I have seen few studies between Chang and the more well-known authors when an abundance exists between Kingston and her contemporaries. I do believe that Chang's work should be studied more by scholars today and aim to promote her through my own thesis.

To state my focus, Chinese society in Eileen Chang's *The Rouge of the North* is a space governed by strict and intricate rules of etiquette and social performance, patriarchy and moral values of filial piety, and threats of punishment as a result of failing to abide by enactment.

Within spaces occupied by these values, intergenerational teaching between female characters occurs in order to preserve the status quo and teach the newer generation about their identities in society and how to perform in said roles. As a result, the hierarchical, socio-cultural foundation of Chinese society is preserved. However, through a comparative analysis between Chang and Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, I ultimately attempt to analyze the community dynamics of Chinese society that govern social performance, then building upon the former, observe how lessons on social performance are taught between female members, and, focusing on Kingston, answer what happens in multigenerational female relationships as a result of cross-cultural misunderstandings.

In Chapter I, I introduce concepts surrounding identity, community, and patriarchy present in these novels in order to set a foundation for understanding the following material. In Chapter II, I synthesize information from Chapter I and tie said concepts of face and judgment, punishment, filial piety and social performance in order to draw interpretations about intergenerational relationships between female characters in patriarchal and patrilineal cultural settings, even when the location where each respective story takes place. Finally, my arguments in the first and second section will be synthesized in the close reading-heavy Chapter III and its own theories on how face, filial piety, social performance and identities within communities lead to teachings between the generations.

Chapter I: On Identity, Community, the Public, and Private

In this section, I define what I mean by identity, community, and public versus private in terms of my paper. These will eventually build and be synthesized in later chapters. It is important to be aware of these terms because they will be our understanding's foundation for understanding relationships, manifestations of societal norms (defined as "the informal rules that govern behavior in groups and societies"), and ultimately how they apply to my argument about intergenerational female relationships (Bicchieri).

To establish in words the respective identities of Yindi and the Kingston narrator would be a tall order, especially when attempting to summarize them through the lens of the paper. However, it is important to note the differences in order to inform the reading and interpretation of each text. The factors that remain constant are that both characters are female and part of a community — the latter differs in size and spatial makeup. For Yindi specifically, she resides in a monocultural setting. Her story, although in fragments, is sequential in events and spoken of by a seemingly unaffected and neutral narrator — indeed, this could be Eileen Chang's choice to neither blame nor praise her protagonist. As for the Kingston narrator, the novel and its collection of stories are nonlinear, though the work itself is called a "memoir" by the author. In both *Rouge of the North* and *The Woman Warrior*, we also see that identity is constructed through respective characters' negotiations of their place within their setting — the self in relation to their family, to fictive kinships, and the broader spatial community, others who one does not have personal relations with.

The individual's identity, at least the identity within a specific socio-cultural community, is role-based. However, one's role is never static and limited to one label. Other factors that determine one's identity range include age, gender, and place in the familial hierarchy.

appropriateness and inappropriateness of interactions are dictated by identity and relationships. For example, just as we would behave differently depending on whom we are interacting with — whether the other party is our spouse or our boss — we see similarities in books from Chinese culture. A sense of filial piety, which is foundational of Chinese society, of its ethics, decision-making, and regarded as a moral obligation and debt, is especially prominent. When neglected, it costs a person their community's respect in addition to self-respect. We will also see resistance towards these roles and the cultures influencing them within Chang and Kingston. I also discuss what I refer to as "social performance", the actual 'performance' and 'appropriate' ways of behaving within these cultures that depends on one's place in society and that requires judgment by onlookers; in Chapter III, I further demonstrate this with references to Judith Butler's work on gender performance but will focus almost solely on community in this section. Characters in these novels are either rewarded or punished depending on how well they 'perform' their places within their communities and families; they do not have to believe in the values and morals behind the expectations, if they are willing and able to meet the criteria in the eyes of others.

Social Identity and Role Identity

In the context of my paper, how one performs based on their identity is also motivated by face, the keeping of face as opposed to losing face, and the judgment of their true kin, fictive kin, and strangers who reside in the community; I will elaborate further on how identity ties into judgment and define the concept of face later. Before I illustrate how identity operates in these two texts, I explain social identity theory and role identity; my reason for doing so lies in its helpfulness in articulating the dynamics I observed between characters, and the term additionally provides a foundation for explaining later concepts in the paper, such as face. Additionally, I

incorporate these terms from the field of social psychology into this literary analysis in order to interpret and inquire about the characters' respective experiences, choices, and interactions as a means of detecting meaningful similarities between *The Rouge of the North* and *The Woman Warrior*. Because these texts are rich in cultural detail and require explanation for audiences unfamiliar with Asian American and diasporic cultures, not mentioning yet other details such as transcultural events in Chang's life, I find that turning psychology into a tool for understanding is effective for explaining complexities, especially a short paper like this one.

The characters in Chang and Kingston's work demonstrate the social identity theory, a social psychology term by Henri Tajfel (Ellemers). According to Stets and Burke, social identity theory (also known as group identity) refers to the "person's knowledge" of the "social category or group" they belong to, with "a social group" defining as "a set of individuals who hold a common social identification or view themselves as members of the same social category" by determining through "self-categorization or identification" (Stets and Burke 224-5). These sets of individuals include family, close friends, and those an individual might not interact with but have shared distinct attributes. In the novels, especially in Chang, I find that they are commonly indicated through word choices that collectively refer to multiple people committing the same action.

Stets and Burke present another concept called role identity. Role identity emphasizes an individual's "adopt[ion of] self-meanings and expectations to accompany the role as it relates to other roles in the group, and then act to represent and preserve these meanings and expectations" (Stets and Burke 227). For example, in *The Rouge of the North*, we see a similar pattern of a matriarch's charge over the household versus the daughter-in-law's expectation of obedience towards her hierarchical and familial superior. This relationship is one which Yindi encounters,

first as a daughter-in-law, then as the mother-in-law, revealing that identity constantly changes and depends on whoever one interacts with. It even influences how a person behaves and treats another person, such as how Yindi might behave in front of her mother-in-law versus her sisters-in-law.

Plus, we can juxtapose role identity against social identity. As explained, the "important distinction between group- and role-based identities" is the "basis of social identity [...] in the uniformity of perception and action among group members, while the basis of role identity resides in the differences in perceptions and actions that accompany a role as it relates to counterroles" (Stets and Burke 226). I believe the two texts demonstrate a mix of both. Both increasingly become relevant to these texts as a means of navigating the social dynamics existing between characters.

In comparison to social identity, role identity lends itself more noticeable individuality, especially in its notions of identification versus internalization. Stets and Burke elaborate:

> If each role is to function, it must be able to rely on the reciprocity and exchange relation with other roles. Individuals do not view themselves as similar to the others with whom they interact, but as different, with their own interests, duties, and resources. (Stets and Burke 227)

Interestingly, we see different embodiments of social identity and role identity in the texts, and it is especially apparent in *The Rouge of the North*. When neighbors are referred to as a group, like a Greek chorus who acts as a collective, they are portrayed with a level of sameness in their beliefs and attitudes towards certain situations. Before her marriage, "the neighbourhood" referred to Yindi as "Sesame Oil Beauty" (Chang 3). The term 'neighbourhood' eliminates the sense of personhood by referring to each separate character within the 'neighbourhood' as a

whole entity. This unity, however, creates a sense of unity and agreement. Later, "the attitudes of the servants and relatives" demonstrate this again in response to Yindi's near-lack of a third day's homecoming; posed as a question, Chang writes: "What kind of a marriage was this if there weren't even any third day's homecoming? How was [Yindi] going to live among them?" (Chang 28). In context, while this passage can be interpreted as Yindi's concern for her reputation in the Yao household, nothing stops an audience from interpreting the questions as the collective rhetorical judgment of the servants and relatives. With her arrival, she disrupts their daily life and unites them with their curiosity of the woman marrying the Second Master.

Also, the latter question asks how Yindi could fit into her place as the Second Master's wife, fulfill her wish to escape her original poverty ("How tired she was of being poor") and reap the benefits of wealth, if the Yao family members themselves do not show respect for tradition (Chang 22). With eyes on the new bride, the Yao family observe characters such as the Old Mistress and her treatment of the bride to gauge Yindi's status. If the latter is not treated according to the expectations befitting her position, then Yindi risks the inability to integrate into her new family; she perceives herself to be denied respect. After all, acceptance requires the acknowledgement of another person.

As an example of role identity, when arranged to marry his first wife who turned out to be unattractive, "Yensheng took it coolly" because "it was just a duty that he owed his family" (Chang 164). Before he can marry "a beauty," Yindi and Yensheng must "wait until the important business is out of the way" — meaning that a bride with a family of similar social standing must become his official wife, whether there is attraction or not, before he can take someone of his choosing as a concubine (Chang 149). This is for two reasons: it is expected due to his role as the son of a prominent family to marry appropriately and without scandal, and it

saves the family's face. Relating back to role identity, Yensheng, while unhappy with his union, tolerates the ceremonials because it is a means of fulfilling "expectations" that "accompany the role" (Stets and Burke 227). While social identity (in Yindi's concern with her third day's homecoming) is related to a person's status and standing among others, role identity (in Yensheng's acknowledgement that his marriage must happen to fulfill his duty as an eligible bachelor and to please his mother's wish) relates to what a person must accomplish to meet an obligation. Through the following examples, we can further elaborate on the difference between social identity versus role identity.

In *The Rouge of the North*, the concern of social identity revolves around Yindi's status in the Yao family; role identity concerns fulfilling the task assigned to oneself. Sometimes, it is a means to an end — to keep one's position stable, to simply keep the obligation for a future goal, among various examples. Simply put, one's emotional agreement and desires do not need to align with the action. For example, if Yensheng married someone deemed respectable, this counts as performing his duties as a son and a man of his position. Additionally, in the example scenes above, we can see a clear divide in attitude between character's action versus desire; what Yensheng does is mostly based on beliefs that he has a responsibility to marry someone his mother finds suitable, and this internal phenomenon seems to lean towards characteristics of role identity. While performing and reciprocating their roles based on who they interact with and what is expected of their behavior, we see how characters in Chang's novel demonstrate social and role identity based on whether they act to pursue or preserve their status in their community or in order to fulfill a responsibility.

In comparison, *The Woman Warrior*'s depiction of social identity and role identity stems from the Kingston narrator's perception of her own connection with the Chinese culture that her

mother attempts to instill in her. In “No Name Woman”, the Kingston narrator recalls her mother’s talk-story about a deceased aunt figure whom the whole family attempts to erase from their history. In an attempt to dissuade the narrator from premarital sex now that her daughter had her first period, the mother’s narrative cautions and teaches about consequences, especially in a society preoccupied with patrilineage. The talk-story features a scene in which a mob of neighbors storm into the aunt’s family home, destroying and looting. They are described as a mass of people with one unifying goal: to punish the aunt for giving birth to a baby not belonging to her husband’s. Keeping in mind that it is a story within a story with many layers of narrative intention — the Kingston narrator first tells us the version that her mother passes down to her, then reproduces variations of the story to attempt to understand her aunt’s actions — we can argue that the story’s purpose transcends beyond simple cautionary intention and informs the Kingston narrator of her role as a Chinese daughter. Her mother warns her daughter to be chaste, filial, and obedient. This is one way that the immigrant mother has tried to teach the narrator about one of the latter’s identities within the Chinese American community. However, what the mother based her interpretation of the daughter role differs from her own observations as a young woman growing up in China versus her daughter’s, who grows up in the United States.

The responsibilities tied to the Chinese daughter role belong to her mother’s generation and culture. Even if she attempts to adapt Chinese values to suit American culture, it arguably fails. As a teen, the Kingston narrator sees incompatibility between the Chinese expectations her mother prescribes versus the American society she lives in, and especially when she exchanges experiences with other Chinese American daughters. In “A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe”, the Kingston narrator reflects on the outburst between herself and her mother when she accuses the latter of wanting to marry her off to a neighborhood man and what she assumes are beliefs

against her own level of intelligence. In retort, her mother calls the narrator a “Ho Chi Kuei”, a term which the Kingston narrator supposed to mean “Good Foundation Ghosts” after searching about said words (Kingston 204). “Good Foundation Ghosts” possibly referring to the Kingston narrator’s generation of American-born Chinese Americans reaping the benefits of an American life, ignorant or unacknowledged to their immigrant parents’ generation of suffering, the mother is expressing her frustration of the perceived ungratefulness she receives in return for her efforts. The cultural clash reveals the older woman’s good intentions versus their interpretation and reception by the Kingston narrator, a reaction which can be owed to the difference between the respective cultures both were raised by. It is the result of miscommunication and misunderstanding. Growing up in American society, the daughter misunderstands and rejects what she perceives to be her mother’s complaints and cruelties. The Kingston narrator places herself against the perceived expectations, and, as a result, she acts against her role identity as a daughter in a Chinese value-influenced context and offends her mother.

So far, I have shown the difference between social identity and role identity and provided examples within the texts. This analysis will connect to my next section about community, the public spaces, and private spaces within said communities by setting up the basic template of relations between characters. In other words, how characters have acted towards one another is influenced by what they and others see as their identity and the values and obligations that make up their place alongside other people. Sometimes, how another person perceives a subject’s identity will contrast the latter’s own, leading to conflict.

Community, the Public, and the Private

In the context of my paper, community is the term referring to people who are connected by relational means or by spatial proximity. They do not necessarily have to interact with each

other but are linked because of their shared culture; both *Rouge of the North* and *The Woman Warrior* use the term "village", which serves as an example of community and relation within my chosen texts.

Within these communities, I also want to illustrate notions of the public versus the private. Public is a space or imagined space in which people and their lives, actions, and relations and reputations are up for others to react to and judge according to social expectations. The private is where individuals convene, especially in familial units. Within these two texts, the public versus private space can be seen in a sense of separation between the following characteristics: where and in front of whom a character must behave strictly and according to social expectations or risk being ostracized due to their failure in performing social expectations is the public; where characters learn about said social performance, expectations, and, giving them the opportunity to revise their behavior, receive the judgment of others within that private group with less person loss of reputation is the private. For example, the private can be where families, especially the older members, give feedback towards younger members regarding their performance. Overall, the private is where characters can partly relax their performance (though they must still mind their roles and dynamics in the family), and the public is the space that unites these families against other units, forming an "us versus them" dynamic.

However, I want to clarify that familial terms, which do exist in the novels, do not discount nor negate the existence of the private space of family. As an example of familial terms, when the Kingston narrator's parents told their daughters to refer to "a series of new workers" who "showed up at the laundry" as "'Elder Brother,' although they were not related" to the girls, it does not mean that the adults consider those male strangers their sons or siblings to their daughters (Kingston 193). Those workers are not family, but rather the parents were using

"elder brother" as a term of friendliness. Similarly, while kinship calls on familial terms between those who potentially do not share blood relations, we must also realize that, despite these intimate labels, individuals do not consider each other through incestuous lenses. Rather, this develops familiarity between the daughters and the young men— but I digress. I found it imperative to explain because, in my experience, audiences unfamiliar with familial labels being used between two unrelated characters ("older brother" 哥哥, "younger sister" 妹妹, auntie "阿姨", and so on) risk misunderstanding their relationship as literally blood kin when they are actually not, especially if those characters are in a romantic relationship. Though, in explaining this, perhaps my reader can detect how familial labels can be utilized to reinforce feelings of community bonding.

Aside from that, I emphasize a previous point: in the familial unit is where we might find a sense of privacy — a sense of them versus us, a group within the community which is connected by blood relations or marriage. In these private spaces, at least semi-separated from the eyes of the public though the performance of roles still stands, the family is able to review and critique each other based on their own said performance; there is less risk of offense and upset than if one confronted the other in public. Of course, this also depends on who is critiquing who. As I explain later in my filial piety section, there are limitations on which person is qualified to comment on the behavior of another, especially in a hierarchical, seniority-based structure.

However, I want to highlight the scene between the Chais family and the matchmaker as an example of how slippery this topic might be to grasp. With my argument about public versus private and where it is deemed appropriate to criticize another person, the matchmaker in *Rouge of the North* does criticize the Second Master for the perceived failing of performing masculinity.

Yet the matchmaker and the Chais are not family, so why would they speak harshly and openly about Yindi's future husband? I believe it is because the Chais' home had transformed into a "public" space temporarily; many factors accumulate here: every character present actively performs their prescribed roles as expected (except for Yindi, whose frustration at her own fate renders her unwilling to 'behave') while being mindful that, in the quasi-intimacy of their shared willingness to poke fun at the Second Master, their space is not "safe" and truly private. If neither the Chais nor the matchmaker wants to be criticized in turn by the other, they are still to perform what is expected of them. The Chai family, including Yindi, still held themselves to behave accordingly based on their relationship to the matchmaker and are not creating a private space in which they safely preserve their own face if they act out of line. The Second Master, the Chais, and the matchmaker are part of the same community, and this is simply an example of the community's (the Chais and the matchmaker) negative evaluation of one of its members (Second Master).

However, conflict does arise when the public space is interfered with by the private. For example, it is looked down upon if a person keeps to themselves because they must always participate in the public space's expectations. I explicitly explain face in my next chapter, but the following example provides a preview of that concept in addition to an intersecting example of the public space and community, and how defiance against the process of public judgment conjures resentment from the community. Within "No Name Woman", the Kingston narrator wonders if "the villagers punished [the aunt] for acting as if she could have a private life, secret and apart from them" (Kingston 13). Within the close 'confines' of the village, no one can own their own secrets; the matter of the individual is the matter of everyone. Because in a public space such as the village, individuals are obligated to be open to have their behaviors *publicly*

reviewed against social norms. The aunt's lack of openness is a defiance against said social norms — without being allowed to judge the aunt, the villagers might have naturally felt suspicion and resentment.

This is also significant because the above example is one of the Kingston narrator's interpretations of the aunt's life and of the community. By being a judge of all parties within the story and arriving at conclusions in her imagined interpretations, the Chinese American narrator reveals their beliefs of how individuality is limited, and the community is a hostile territory within the mainland Chinese village. Just as her mother's story begins with the villagers ransacking the family home, the Kingston narrator bloats this plot point, making said villagers just as vigilant about the aunt's pregnancy in the weeks before the birth. This reveals one way in which the narrator, with her limited knowledge of Chinese society, caricatured understanding of the "victimized individual" (the aunt) versus the "malevolent community" (the villagers) compares her diasporic representation of individualism and community versus her mother's culture. In pointing this out, I have hinted at my discussion of cross-cultural misunderstanding in the third chapter.

Patriarchy and Patrilineage

Before we reach the succeeding chapter, I must discuss patriarchy as an inseparable part of Chinese and Chinese diaspora culture. While I could introduce this in my next chapter, I felt that patriarchy ties too closely with how identities and communities operate within my texts that I chose to include it in this chapter instead. Patriarchy and its influence in the Chinese and Chinese diaspora community is arguably also a main motivator for older women in these texts to educate younger female characters — for example, either out of desire to maintain the status quo

in the community or, out of good intentions, teach the latter how to survive and avoid punishment for ignorantly overstepping an invisible boundary.

Patriarchy and patrilineage within Chinese society dictate hierarchies and the role of its human components — and consequently the treatment of women — within both the family setting and in the community. Traditional gender roles dominate. In exemplifying the Chinese and Chinese diaspora cultures present in the respective novels, we observe how seniority and social status in relation to another individual also dictates what is considered acceptable and expected conduct in interpersonal interactions.

As part of a patrilineal culture, males are also preferred and prioritized. This is not only because they head the family, but also due to expectations that they will pass down the family name and stay with their parents after marriage. In contrast, daughters are expected to be raised and eventually join the in-law's family, leaving her biological parents. Because of this, daughters are seen as being raised for someone else's benefit. This is a basic explanation, but one that has stayed accurate for centuries.

To exemplify patriarchy and patrilineage, notice two scenes in *The Woman Warrior*: in "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe", as a young child, the Kingston narrator encountered an opera song and performance in which the daughter-in-law is beaten by her family as the audience of all genders laugh "until the tears rolled down their cheeks" (Kingston 193). After the performance, the older women surrounding her "shook their old heads and sang a folk song that made them laugh uproariously:"

Marry a rooster, follow a rooster.

Marry a dog, follow a dog.

Married to a cudgel, married to a pestle,

Be faithful to it. Follow it. (Kingston 193)

To hear these songs and see the reactions of the adults as a child, it must shape the acceptability of beating daughters-in-law and accepting a marriage no matter the outcome of the relationship, the Kingston narrator and other children included. Of course, this influence later follows her when she finally confronts her mother at the end of the story, yelling that her mother is going to marry her off to a boy from the neighborhood.

We can interpret the treatment of girls, resignation of the women, and the reactions of the older women as acceptance of the social norm. Of heterosexual marriage, they anticipate poor treatment from in-laws as the simple truth of life; the humors they find is relatability and compliance with the culture they grew up in. The role of daughter, granddaughter, great-granddaughter and so on, wife, and mother — any 'title' assigned to the female characters come with the expectation of being lower than a man of the same social standing. This is a type of knowledge that is instilled by family relations and community kinship, maintained throughout the culture and generations without much major change.

In another scene, the Kingston narrator recalls the great uncle who lived with her "second cousins" would throw a fit ("Maggots! Where are my grandsons? I want grandsons! Give me grandsons! Maggots"), pointing "at each of" the girls at the dinner table (Kingston 191). These two events, one experienced in the public space and one in the private domestic demonstrate to Kingston the expected role of girls and women especially in juxtaposition to their husbands and families — as secondary to male members of their families, submissive to the wills of their hierarchical superiors, and unwanted compared to sons and grandsons.

Directly after the great uncle's scene, the Kingston narrator mentions that her "Third Grand-Uncle" eventually had a "great-grandson", whom the entire family spoiled by buying

“him everything — new diapers, new plastic pants” compared to “homemade diapers” and “bread bags” (Kingston 191). In this contrast, we might infer that those girls received the latter two; unlike any great-granddaughters, the family hosted “a full-month party inviting all the emigrant villagers” to celebrate his birth (Kingston 191). Compared to the treatment of great-granddaughters, this clearly illustrates the gender preference of the Chinese patriarchal culture. These threats to women will either encourage rivalry between said women (especially in Chang) or a need to guide (especially in Kingston).

In Chang, the woman is blamed. As a result of the patriarchal demands, her husband, whose disability does not allow him to “perform” as a man by, and herself, for others' perception as a bad mother, are credited for Yensheng’s appearance and inability to fulfill his own role as a man. Firstly, Yensheng cannot physically match his male peers and has asthma. The onlookers (her in-laws) blame it on the diet in her household, the “salty food [which] mother and son [dine on] in their rooms” and “stunted his growth, dried him up and choked him so he got asthma” (Chang 137). In reality, his diet may not be the only reason. Yensheng had “asthma [...] from his father.” The villagers “forgot how small Second Master had been, they had been conditioned to forget him even when he was alive. Old Mistress had been short too and so was Ninth Old Master the grand-uncle” (Chang 137). By blaming Yensheng’s poor health solely on Yindi, the community establishes three intentions: they dislike Yensheng and Second Master for their failed representation of ‘powerful’ patriarchal men, are attempting to forget the Second Master’s existence, and assign more shame on Yindi as a mother than arguably necessary. They disdain Yensheng and Second Master’s ‘unmasculine’ appearance which renders both unable to match up to patriarchy’s demands towards men; they disdain Second Master especially for his disability, a blockage in his attempts to be ‘manly’ and punish him severely by erasing his

existence; and they also disdain Yindi because, in their eyes, it is her fault for not being able to ensure Yensheng's growth. No matter the case, this proves how patriarchy influences the perception of its community members based on how well they fit their prescribed roles.

Ultimately, I would argue that the combined patriarchal-constrictive and expectation-driven nature of the Chinese society that Yindi inhabits, and the Kingston narrator learns about through her mother (and sometimes inhabits too in fragments of her Chinese diasporic community) lead to a need for guidance between generations. As stated before, sometimes this need is out of good intentions so the subject does not suffer punishment for unknowingly overstepping a boundary or to save the face of a whole family.

To summarize, we have observed a mix of group identity and role identity in close reading of the texts, and these concepts can be used as a means of understanding characters' relational dynamics. I also mentioned examples between both works, as well as the community's relationship with an individual and notions of public and private. Additionally, so far, these two novels have demonstrated how identity, especially role identity, notions of community and a public and private existence occurs within said communities. Especially thanks to the difference in cultures — Yindi's world is in mainland China around the fall of the Qing dynasty in contrast to the Kingston narrator's multicultural United States — we also see hints of how culture will possibly affect the transfer of lessons about social expectations. By setting up a theoretical foundation on which to build off, it is possible then to discuss what takes place within these spaces and because of the complex relationship dynamics happening between the characters. In the succeeding chapters, I aim to expand on the idea of face, filial piety, and judgment on a communal scale. In turn, these notions will add onto theories presented in this chapter, creating a richer and more complex but hopefully understandable look at the environments within our texts.

Chapter II: On Face, Filial Piety, and Social Performance

In this section, I explain the concept of face, filial piety while referencing Confucius and the *Analects*. I also synthesize face with social performance and give examples of such occurrences within my texts. Though I explain two forms of face (*lien* and *mien-tzu*), my analysis focuses more on *lien* because of its relations to morality and moral obligations. In turn, *lien* ties in with themes of moral duties in filial piety and the resulting social performance, including the obligations considered owed between a parent and child in the hierarchical sense.

Face and Judgment

There are multiple recognized and distinct definitions of face in Chinese culture. Of them all, *lien* and *mien-tzu* are two forms which I will discuss briefly in the context of this analysis. They both have important distinctions and understanding of these concepts will aid us in fully understanding the implications and subtle happenings within Chang and Kingston's respective texts, hence why I employ two scholars to explain. Plus, the concept of face connects crucially back to my main statement that in order to understand how and why teaching of performance happens between female characters specifically in my chosen scope.

According to Hsien Chin Hu, *mien-tzu* "stands for the kind of prestige that" relates to "reputation achieved through getting on in life, through success and ostentation" and "by means of personal effort or clever maneuvering" (Hu 45). On the other hand, *lien* is moral- and ego-based, "represent[ing] the confidence of society in the integrity of ego's moral character, the loss of which makes it impossible for him to function properly within the community"; it is additionally "a social sanction for enforcing moral standards and an internalized sanction" (Hu 45). To illustrate *lien*, Hu points out examples in which it is lost through "condemnation by the

group for immoral or socially disagreeable behavior" (Hu 46). The main takeaway is that mien-tzu is a reputation for success while *lien* relates more towards the moral quality within a person.

Similarly, in defining face, David Yau-fai Ho illustrates:

> A man of high social standing is said to be *yu mien-tzu* (having *mien-tzu*), while *mei yu mien-tzu* (not having *mien-tzu*) may be used to express having a humble status, or it may be taken to mean that *mien-tzu* has been lost. How much *mien-tzu* a person has is, in general, a function of his social status. But the quantity of a person's *mien-tzu* usually varies according to the group with which he is interacting. (Ho 869)

The shameful actions of oneself can determine loss of face. Ho claims that "face may be lost when conduct or" when that "performance falls below the minimum level considered acceptable or when certain vital or essential requirements, as functions of one's social position, are not satisfactorily met" (Ho 871). Through this, face is also an indivisible aspect of a community, a main driver in the decision-making, interactions, and measurement of an individual's competence through their "performance."

Because of face, the community and the individual cannot be separated, and notions of public versus private are sometimes blurred — the business of one individual or family becomes the concerns of their neighbors. Therefore, the identity of an individual is also tied intricately with those of people around them. If identity is inseparable from face, and face is inseparable from relations, then identity and face are inseparable as well.

In turn, this means that one's identity (at least within that specific community) and face depends on the reciprocity of others. Face, especially losing face, does not only depend on one's actions, but also the actions of others in relation to oneself; to specify, "losing face can arise not

only from the individual's failure to meet his obligations but also from the failure of others to act in accordance with his expectations of them" (Ho 873). For example, and speaking in a hierarchical sense, if a master were to be ignored or humiliated by a servant, the action of the servant would cause the master to lose face — and especially if this were to occur in front of onlookers. This is because face is neither limited to the belonging of one person but possibly represents the "social performance" of a group.

The loss of face, and permanence of said loss, can happen simultaneously between a group of individuals. Among these examples, Ho describes "a family disgraced by incestuous relationships," pointing at the possibility that a whole familial unit not only simultaneously loses face, but that the family can be considered one entity that — even if the incest happens between two individuals — commits the taboo (Ho 873). This is important to know because as long as a person's reputation and perceived moral standing is tied into another person's, then there is pressure for a whole group (whether a family, a group of associates, or even a whole village) to keep each other in check.

In *The Woman Warrior*, the family loses face together as a result of the birth of a bastard child. The actions of the village proves that they consider the family as deserving of penalizing and not just reserving punishment for the aunt herself. Relating to Ho's statement, the family is punished together as one combined entity; individuals in this face culture are not just singular but entangled with others as a whole. Though the aunt's husband has not come home in years and, in one interpretation by the Kingston narrator, she possibly fell in love with another man, the expectation is that all women will be faithful. The baby as proof that she engaged in sexual intercourse with a man other than her husband is enough to condemn her — she failed in her role. The village punishes the family by raiding their property, killing their livestock, destroying

their possessions, and cursing them for cursing everyone else with the aunt's potential adultery. Here, the blame is laid not only on the aunt but also her blood relatives. The villagers' anger is taken out on the whole family as opposed to simply the offender. Through the onlooker's (the villagers) judgment that the aunt has committed a wrong and their retaliation against the perceived wrong, the villagers are publicly demonstrating and announcing to the family and entire community of said family's loss of face.

Punishment

As a result of losing face, a person is usually punished by condemnation and exclusion from the community. In "No Name Woman", the aunt is considered to have failed in her social performance as a loyal wife. Consequently, what follows afterwards exemplifies punishment.

Recall the above section and the mention about villagers raiding the family's property. In addition to that, it is also the family that inflicts punishment. Not only does the aunt face condemnation from the community and former kinships but also her own blood relatives. In turn, after the village punishes the Kingston narrator's aunt and her family, it was "the family"'s turn to "[break] their silence and [curse] her"; they call her "Ghost! Dead ghost!" for cursing them and having the child (Kingston 13-14). Though it is not clear whether the baby was a result of adultery or rape — again, the "No Name Woman" story is one of ambiguity and interpretation from the Kingston narrator — her former village kinsmen and family lay the blame on her and cut relational ties with the woman ("You've never been born.") (Kingston 14). The aunt loses not just her home, her identity as a daughter of her family and her connections in the village, but her life — metaphorically and literally. Her condition as a living being is denied. Furthermore, after she drowns herself and her newborn in the family well, she is not just a 'ghost' but a disowned ghost that will wander without anyone of the "descent lines providing [...] paper suits and

dresses, spirit money, paper houses, paper automobiles, chicken, meat, and rice into eternity"; the aunt's ghost will "always" be "hungry, always needing" and required to "beg food" or "snatch and steal" (Kingston 16). Both in life and in death, we see that she has become identity-less, community-less, and shunned to an after-existence of the same punishment. We must also note that this is a cautionary tale told from the Kingston narrator's mother to her after the young narrator starts menstruation; this talk-story is a warning to guard against sexuality, emphasizing the terrors of ruining one's reputation, being targeted by the whole community, and the aftermath of continuous shunning. Because of the threat of punishment, the story is also a warning to the narrator against causing herself or her whole family to lose face.

By exemplifying the critical nature of face in the acceptance and place of an individual in a community, I demonstrated how this connects to the importance placed on the older, experienced generation in teaching (and warning) their younger generation, especially in a patriarchal and patrilineal society. In teaching morals, how to perform, and the dangers of an always-vigilant community, we must also consider another aspect of Chinese society that determines relationship dynamics and social performance.

Filial Piety

In this section, I will talk about filial piety in Chinese culture as a theme present in both Kingston's and Chang's respective works. Though I briefly mentioned it in the first chapter, it is important to explain due to the complexity extending beyond obedience towards parents. This concept, like face, also builds up on my topic about the significance of older female generations in teaching their younger generation about how to behave in their society.

Filial piety extends before Confucius and the *Analects*. In Radice's chapter on "Confucius and Filial Piety," filial piety (or *xiao* 孝) appears "as far back as the Western Zhou Period",

which is about two hundred years between the end of said dynasty versus the birth of Confucius (Radice 186). There have been multiple thinkers of the period before and after who may discuss or "emphasize different nuances of filial piety" meaning different interpretations exist which can be applied to the analysis of *Rouge of the North* and *The Woman Warrior* (Radice 186). However, for the sake of simplicity and not without sacrifice to discussion of this topic, my analysis uses Confucius, the *Analects*, and pulls from multiple scholars' work in order to include an explanation of filial piety and its most crucial points.

Of crucial points, there are two that must be noted: filial piety, in relation to face and identity, is also a matter of morality and filial piety is a debt owed not just to one's parents but also transcends physical existence and people — it is a legacy and a bedrock of Chinese society.

Filial piety can be understood in terms of morality and debt. In a family, it is the respect that children owe and must demonstrate to their parents, especially through care in the latter's older age. In Chinese society, it is the system of beliefs that controls relationships and sustains principles of everyday life. Through hierarchical relations, a young person owes and demonstrates respect to the older generation; sometimes, the input of an elder person affects a younger person's life-changing choices such as marriage or career. How a person interacts with their elders, even those outside of blood kin, is determined by filial values too. What also causes filial piety's sticking power is that, besides being a bedrock of society, it is "tightly connected with ancestor worship" (Radice 186); Sangren agrees, adding that the sustained relationship "is never intended to be repaid" due to its moral nature and transcendence beyond the present. If one neglects to demonstrate filial piety, they are disciplined not just by the offended but likely also collectively by society. Radice notes the one-sidedness of filial piety: he explains that in *Analects*, Confucius asserts "how one should (or, more specifically, should not) feel towards

one's parents, even when they" commit or "continue in their immoral behavior" (Radice 196). To simplify, respect and appreciation is owed as a moral obligation to one's elders, but one's elders do not owe the same in return. Even if a person's parents commit wrong, it is not the place of the person to call this out or ask for a change in behavior. However, after discussing the basics of filial piety, we must see how it synthesizes (or does not) with the aforementioned concepts of identity within communities. Especially because the terms from psychology I pulled are not specific to Chinese society, I shall discuss what the relationship between social identity and role identity are to filial piety.

When we compare discussions about social identity and role identity from Chapter I, it might be tempting to immediately claim incompatibility between the former two terms versus filial piety. It may seem that the latter, associated with Chinese society, demands sameness in belief and behavior among people as the one demonstrating respect versus the one being respected. While social identity and role identity do not seem to require that said internal sameness (only sameness in identification) and seeming at first to be the only ones allowing interiority and an internal self-contradicted to the external behavior, I think filial piety is merely role identity in another skin: while filial piety is a moral matter, this does not discount the person's individuality. Filial piety, while influential in decision-making and relationships of Chinese social life, is itself a type of performance.

The *Analects* are suggestions on how to interact with others. Sangren states that "insofar as filial piety is imagined as debt; it is thus not surprising that it can provoke resentment as well as reciprocity or mutual recognition" (Sangren 229). The possible presence of resentment, while it can possibly be followed by a self-sense of shame, points towards an existing internality in the subject whose own desires and values can be different from the desires and values of filial piety

itself; it is only natural and human to have desires, especially those contradicting to a society's ideals. Plus, the possibility of reciprocity and mutual recognition further demonstrate individuality through its existence alone. A person's desires can be different, and like role identity, "with their own interests, duties, and resources" too; applied to filial piety's reciprocity and mutual recognition, these themselves are also the subject's choices to make (Stets and Burke 227). Simply if caused by human desire or choice alone, even when said desire or choice aligns with society's ideals, the performance proves itself motivated by human interiority. Therefore, by being a human choice, it is not always motivated by a demand for sameness.

There is also an element of "ornamentation" to filial piety. This is a crucial part of the performance: because filial piety is so foundational, it has an influence on the reputation — especially the face — of a person within the community. In other words, it fulfills filial piety. One part of being filial is to be *seen* as filial. For example, mourning itself is not enough; one must be seen grieving, sometimes Radice notes that the public as an onlooker is just as important as the relationship between the person and their parents; to be seen and judged as filial is as important as the respect behind the "rituals". As stated in the *Analects*: "when his father is alive, observe the son's intentions; when his father is dead, observe his actions. If for three years he does not change the ways of his father, he can be called filial" (qtd. in Radice 190). This excerpt emphasizes both the act by the "son" and the act of the onlooker as well as the latter's role in deeming the "son" as filial, further demonstrating the crucial part that an outside party has in the moral and performative scrutiny of a subject. To highlight again, filial piety is regarded as one of the most important values a person should embed in themselves and embody; what must be embodied is the ability to perform the "rituals", which refer to the literal and metaphorical practices performed as part of filial piety, and what they must embody must be expressed. It is

through "'countenance' (se 色)" which "serves as a form of ornamentation that demonstrates or expresses the respect that make these filial behaviors *more than empty rituals*" (Radice 191; emphasis added).

In contrast, in "Filial Piety as an Emotion in Late Imperial China," Epstein mentions an essay by Hu Shi, published in 1919, which I believe demonstrates a filial piety-motivated performance in a mourning event:

> [The writer] treats the wearing of mourning robes as a metonym for mourning and as synonymous with the concept of filial piety itself. He declared: "My mother is the person I have revered and loved most of my life" 我生平最敬爱的一個人, but his discussion of mourning focuses only on the technical aspects of ritual, not its function in channeling emotions and making one's grief socially legible. He comments that the wearing of mourning robes is a superficial remnant of the ancient rites, that it's just a way for people to put on a façade "to deceive themselves and others" 自欺欺人. (Epstein 271)

There is a conflict between Radice and Epstein: while Radice's article mentions that ornamentation makes the ritual more than an empty affair, Epstein, through his own close reading, highlights the dramaturgy of an event especially demanding filial piety's respect and worship of ancestors, including the deceased. Hu Shi's example is certainly bleak where "wearing" the "robes is a superficial remnant of the ancient rites" related to filial mourning (Epstein 271). In calling the robes a "superficial remnant", it implies that the robes are little more than empty decoration for the affair. Instead of serving a significant purpose in the funeral rites themselves, the robes are worn for the sake of *being seen* and interpreted by others in one's state of mourning. I do think that it would be offensive to claim all instances of spectated mourning are influenced by a desire to be seen as respect towards the ancestors without actual, genuine

feelings of grief. Yet, the instance shown still proves that with performance comes an awareness of being observed and a need to fulfill the expectations placed on oneself by the observers.

I will also discuss filial piety and the ornamentation or aesthetic part of performance in my third chapter. When applied to my chosen texts, we see how the concept interacts and creates reactions in "real-life" situations. Even if these are excerpts from fiction, the ways in which characters think of and utilize it for their own purposes ground filial piety rather than allow it to hover as an untouched and sterile, flat and 'simple' concept. Additionally, by adding explicit mentions of filial piety, the novels are in fact participating in a conversation about its importance within the societies said novels represent. In the following section, I synthesize the concepts I explained throughout my work so far in order to clearly illustrate its presence within Chang's and Kingston's novels.

Face, Filial Piety, and Social Performance

In the two novels, Yindi reluctantly follows and uses patriarchy for power. On the other hand, the Kingston narrator's interactions with these concepts differ because of her cross-cultural upbringing. This section includes mostly close reading in order to highlight the scenes that combine the previously discussed theories, demonstrating their presence and how characters within the text operate with these aspects of Chinese culture.

In Yindi's case, compared to the Kingston narrator who grows up in a cross-cultural setting and Eileen Chang, Yindi's author, who had familiarity with western culture and is a diasporic writer in America, she is raised in a monocultural setting. While being seen as a burden to her relatives and hurried to marry, Yindi is eventually wedded to the Second Master of the Yao family. It is in her life as a wife and later a widow that we see how this character navigates

expectations placed upon her by her in-laws, and how she takes part in the patriarchal culture as an old woman.

In the beginning of the novel, as Yindi yells at a man who harasses her, “her voice carried down the block” and her anger became known to the neighborhood. Bingfa, Yindi’s brother, warns her against this, especially because her yelling would bring said block’s attention towards their family, “as if” she was “afraid people don’t know” (Chang 4). In response, Yindi asks: “Can you wonder people look down on me?” (Chang 4). Bingfa’s wife warns her husband to marry his sister “off quick” because with “the way people talk, they’d say we want her to sit at the counter and draw crowds. A living signboard” (Chang 4). The argument between the protagonist and these two characters concerns as much about delays in Yindi’s marriage and their worries about their Chai family’s status as how the rest of the neighborhood may view or speak of them. In the domestic and private space of their shop and home, the Chai family’s concerns illustrate how they perceive the danger to primarily be their relations to the community. It does not matter the reason for Yindi’s unmarried status despite her being at the expected age to be wed: what matters is not the truth but how others might find her as unfulfilling of roles as an eligible but unmarried woman.

Because Yindi has not married and the possible perception that she, as a single woman, is being used like an attractive object to attract men for the shop’s business — “a signboard” — this would be considered unacceptable and shameless; first, because Yindi is unmarried when she should be, and, second, the quantity of men hinted to be coming to the shop for her (“There’s bound to be trouble one of these days with all these men hanging around”), she is not following expectations to become a wife and join her in-laws as a woman of her age is required to do, rather possibly lavishing shamelessly in male attention (Chang 5). In simple terms, Yindi, and

the rest of the Chais, could be seen as inept at fulfilling social expectations and therefore *are* socially inept. The neighborhood's reactions create tension within the private space of the Chai family unit and causes them to place importance on finding a match for the protagonist.

Through their consultations with a matchmaker, Yindi does enter a union with the rich Yao family. Her status in a new environment gives us insight into how relations function for a daughter-in-law in the novel's Chinese society. With the change in her status — from poor to rich, from unwed to wife — *The Rouge of the North* also gives the audience narrative details that demonstrate how Yindi begins claiming her role and, in a household that tests against her as a newcomer, how she navigates patriarchal power and interpersonal interactions with her new Mistress status.

As a new wife in the Yao household, she is treated poorly starting from her wedding — just as expected. The Yao's Old Mistress, mother to Second Master and Yindi's own mother-in-law, denies the bride her third day's homecoming on the claim that "Second Master was not well and [she] did not think he should risk going out" (Chang 23). Considering Yindi's financially poorer background and her status compared to both her husband (blood kin and a man) and mother-in-law (the matriarch) plus the geographical difference between the poor Chais and wealthy Yaos (the former are southerners while the latter are northerners), she and her needs, including her face, are considered inferior. She is, in numerous ways, the outsider who has yet to establish her position in the household.

This neglect and purposeful lack of consideration for the bride is a way for the Old Mistress to call Yindi's attention to her inferiority in the household. The full needs of the Second Master are taken into consideration, and the Old Mistress's will reigns over Yindi. Due to the gap in status between Old Mistress and Yindi, the older woman is not required to give face to

someone younger, much less her daughter-in-law, so Yindi loses respect from her new "servants and relatives" because the latter group observantly will follow suit with the matriarch's attitude (Chang 28).

However, Yindi manages to invoke filial piety. During her argument with the Second Master, she uses filial piety towards her parents and the expectation for her husband to "kotow" to them as a reason for visiting her old home (Chang 28). The Second Master argues against this in consideration of his face. He thinks it would be an "embarrassing" act for "a bridegroom of two days [to speak] for the bride" (Chang 29). Two factors come into play: the Second Master is a man and the husband as Yindi is a woman and his wife. If he gives into her demands, then it could be seen as a husband, the hierarchical superior, being pushed around by his inferior. Considering the hierarchy of family and patriarchy, and the expectations of social aptitude, Second Master cannot accept.

Still, Yindi manages to eventually persuade him. After calling him "shameless", she "soften[s] the blow" by "add[ing that], 'Men are all like this'" (Chang 29). Throughout the novel thus far, because of Second Master's blindness, "delicate health", and his physical appearance ("the man [Yindi] had married" is "hunch-backed and pigeon-breasted, panting as if he had asthma" and his "pale clean-cut face seemed too large for the bunched-up frame") could be a source of insecurity (Chang 24). In a culture which concerns itself with appearances — both the aesthetic sense and appearance of ability to fulfill social expectations can be cultivated as sources of power — Yindi takes advantage of his person, her seemingly generalizing comment about men used to reassure her husband of his masculinity, appeal to a sensitive aspect related to his identity, and add a general acknowledgement of said masculinity. This has the desired effect: "he

melted at once" and uses the excuse of "filial piety" as the basis for Yindi's third day's ceremony (Chang 29).

While Second Master speaking for his new bride would still seem inappropriate and even embarrassing due to their comparative gender, status, and position in the family, filial piety is one of the ideals that arguably drives roles and relations within the familial unit, and also "it reveals the complex relationship between one's personal feelings and public behavior — and by extension, one's relationship to a society of onlookers" (Radice 189-90). Yindi's distress, according to Second Master, is because of her concerns about fulfilling her duties towards her parents, especially that of reverence and thoughtfulness from a child to their parents. She uses filial piety as "ornamentation" (to borrow Radice's term) for her own gain by evoking it, a concept and practice both of them know of and are expected to follow. It is as convenient for her to use it for appeal as it is for him to accept and use it as a reason for her persistence in pushing for a third day's homecoming. When crediting Yindi's persistence, he also uses it to shield himself from seeming to give into his new wife, thereby putting the responsibility and blame onto Yindi, her sense of duty towards her parents, and the concept of filial piety. After all, it is "the highest virtue, so he need not feel ashamed for giving in to her", especially because this event may become to talk of the household — of both family members, servants, as well as risking the event spreading onto the streets about the man who obeyed his wife rather than the other way around (Chang 29). He saves face; he satisfies his role identities as son, son-in-law, and husband; and he appears to be filial to his own in-laws by allowing their daughter to receive her deserved ceremony; his reputation is saved.

As for *The Woman Warrior*, the Kingston narrator's reinterpretation of the "No Name Woman" story ends on a haunting line as she recounts the aunt jumping into the well along with

her baby: the newborn "was probably a girl; there is some hope for forgiveness for boys" (Kingston 15). Whether or not this was the intended message, it remains that the young Kingston narrator believed the unwanted child would have had a better chance of survival if she had been male. Yet because the baby was potentially a girl, the narrator believed that the child's mother "show[ed] loving" by "tak[ing] them along" (Kingston 15). Recalling patrilineage from Chapter I, there is an inherent value in male children because they pass down the family name and stay with their families instead of moving in with their in-laws, unlike female children. Plus, the baby partly caused the family to lose face, suffering a loss in reputation simply by existing. Accuracy of the aunt's story matters less in this discussion; the point surrounds the Kingston narrator's speculation surrounding the aunt's choice to drown the child along with herself in addition to thinking that "there is some hope for forgiveness for boys" indicates her understanding of women as lower in status than men in a traditional, patriarchal Chinese society. Her attempts to interpret the aunt's personality, relationship with her impregnator, the vigilance of the family and the aunt's interiority demonstrate her synthesis of face, filial piety, patriarchy, and relationships within said community. The significance is that, as a Chinese American, her own comprehension of the Chinese values her mother attempts to instill in her, which was the caution against sexuality, is further accompanied by curiosity and fearfulness of those Chinese values too. For this example, I expand on this in my next chapter in combination with the previous chapters' explanations in order to finally illustrate my point regarding intergenerational knowledge transfer between female characters.

In this chapter, I defined concepts of face, punishment as a result of violating societal norms, filial piety, and its different existences within Chang and Kingston. The main takeaway is that the two characters handle these foundational values in separate ways, and I will discuss other

ways they act and react to these values. In addition, I explain how these values are passed down between female generations.

Chapter III: On Gender, Values, and Intergenerational Female Relationships

This next section is the culmination of previous topics and argues how female characters within *Rouge of the North* and *The Woman Warrior* learn and practice (or not) the norms in question. In the second chapter, I discussed how characters perform their roles when considering face, filial piety, and identity within patriarchal environments. Now, I talk about how face and performance partly drive the continuation of these societal roles by their involvement with gender. Finally, what have all these factors — identity, community, patriarchy, shame, and the dynamics between characters — proved? For *The Woman Warrior*, I also address the conflicts and miscommunication between Maxine and her mother, which I connect to semantic memory theory.

When speaking of social performance and face, I demonstrated that the ability for a character to show their "participation" in their community and fulfill expectations is more important than truly being apt at meeting said expectations in their families, among neighbors, and with the larger community. Most of the evidence I discussed pertains to Chang's novel instead of Kingston's text. I think that *The Woman Warrior*, juxtaposed next to *Rouge of the North*, yields significant textual speculations of what could occur in cross-cultural contexts as opposed to the monocultural setting of *Rouge of the North*. By having American culture to contrast her mother's Chinese culture and vice versa, the Kingston narrator reflects more readily on her complex ethnic placement. Overall, this chapter contains more close reading than previous ones. Chapter III serves to integrate theories surrounding my topic into a well-rounded analysis of the two texts.

Pursuit of Gender and Aesthetic

Another fixation relating to social expectations and face can be found in the characters' focus on gender as part of their performance. Though only briefly discussed in the chapters mentioned before — even implicitly written — the idea of gender and the act of performing a role cannot be separated from each other. Even in the patriarchal and patrilineal Chinese culture, I admit that gender and expectations of gender cannot be simply explained in a few sentences. However, in Chang's work, there are instances in which gender is emphasized, and especially in an outwardly presentational context.

If a character cannot perform the standards set by their community, then they are possibly looked down upon — either publicly or privately, or both. For instance, we can recall moments when characters were described by Yindi as, speaking with traditional binaries, the opposite gender: when Second Master was called "gentle as a girl", Yensheng's wife sounded "like a man with a cold", and the widowed Old Mistress and her mannerisms described as "mannish" (Chang 20, 37, 163). In those moments, the characters seem to "violate" the traditional gender roles and performance of said roles. Second Master should be 'manly' while he is girlishly gentle, Yensheng's wife should be a beauty (and would be treated better if she were) yet her voice is akin to an ill man, and Old Mistress, though dominating and powerful as she might be expected to be as the matriarch and elder member of the Yao family, curses and upholds herself in a manner that would be considered inappropriate and crude — though perhaps it is her age and position in the family hierarchy that keeps others' mouths from revealing their distaste of her.

Plus, in the massively influential *Analects*, "the aesthetic [is] a constitutive element in the moral" (qtd. in Radice 190). This means that to fulfill the requirement of an involved onlooker who acts as judge for one's filial piety, demonstrating one's ability to meet the standards (and

ideals) set, is equally important as doing the act itself — if not more. On the topic of aesthetic appearance in relation to social performance, I found that it agrees with previous chapters' theories, such as Radice's other "ornamentation" concept as well as Epstein when mentioning the dramaturgy of mourning in Hu Shi's essay. Though different from "ornamentation" or "dramaturgy of mourning", I do think the *Analects*' idea about aesthetics can be taken literally.

Connecting to Judith Butler's "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution, An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory", she describes a relationship between gender and social control:

> In effect, gender is made to comply with a model of truth and falsity which not only contradicts its own performative fluidity, but serves a social policy of gender regulation and control. Performing one's gender wrong initiates a set of punishments both obvious and indirect, and performing it well provides the reassurance that there is an essentialism of gender identity after all. (Butler 528)

The "gender regulation and control" Butler mentions could very well apply to physical appearance — the physical aesthetics — of a person, and not just how, based on gender, a person will perform filial piety, mourning, or any other action.

However, when adding on the hierarchical power structure based on seniority, sometimes a person must keep their judgments to themselves because it might be seen as disrespectful. Think back on filial piety and the quotes about a child being discouraged from rebuking their parents. A distance by disgust is created as a result between subject and judge, or, if the subject is publicly shamed for the transgression, between subject and community. In the case of Yindi observing her mother-in-law, she cannot outright express her disapproval for what she deems as the latter's slacking in performing 'womanliness' and even 'degrading' herself to become

"mannish" in her old age and widowhood. Yet, because the Old Mistress holds more power in the family; being the Yao family matriarch; being the mother and mother-in-law to her sons and their wives respectively; and naturally being owed respect and face due to the previous aspects and her seniority; it may cause backlash for Yindi if she were to express said disapproval. She may be rebuked by the Old Mistress for her rudeness and possibly spurned by the rest of the family — a collective dismissal as a result of Yindi's hypothetical public declaration of disdain. While the Old Mistress's "punishment" is not "obvious", it is at least "indirect" as Yindi's scathing, private disrespect (Butler 528).

Throughout *Rouge of the North*, multiple characters act doubly spectators and participants in Butler's described "gender regulation and control", their said gaze landing on other characters and tone cruel in their commentary (as seen in scenes besides the Yindi-Old-Mistress excerpt), demonstrating the private criticism mentioned before; gender is part of the performance. Butler's discussion of gender as a social construct, one brought in and out of hiatus by individuals performing their gender identity, is further proved along with her point about the existence and enactment of "punishment". While there may not be outright criticize, for example, the matchmaker noting the Second Master for his "gentle" manner to the Chais or Yindi noting the Old Mistress's "mannish" cursing, the seemingly collective criticism of another's behaviors (perhaps 'misconduct' is more appropriate to the critics) proves that *Rouge of the North*'s setting carries "a model of truth and falsity" (Butler 528). To remedy the 'inappropriate' gender act, it is possible for characters to be punished publicly or privately in another's mind; this all ties in with how one expects face and a losing of face can happen. One person, in accordance with the shared community's beliefs, determines that another person has broken a rule — reached a falsity versus truth — and is punished through ostracization.

Perhaps unnecessary to say, but the previous moments in Rouge of the North were not compliments either when talking about performing one's role and identity. The origin of Yindi's evaluation is based on the patriarchal values of "manly men" and the "meek woman", and the degree with which she expresses her thoughts about other characters' "inadequacies" depends on her relationship with them in the family's hierarchy — she could not disrespect the Old Mistress, she was careful in her schemes against Second Master, and downright cruel to her son's first wife. Again, this ties back in with filial piety in Chinese society.

In comparison, the Kingston narrator's fixation on gender stems from her understanding of her family's expectations versus the representations and personalities she encounters at school. In "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe", she describes her observation of other female classmates of different races and how the behaviors encouraged in the classroom influenced her idea of acceptability.

Yet her understanding of Chinese American girls like herself sours into resentment. She speaks of a particularly quiet Chinese American girl from grade school who Maxine herself hated for her silence. The other child never talked in class, though Maxine had seen her speak with the former's older sister. She dislikes her physical appearance, especially her "weak neck" and "fragility" as opposed to her Mexican and black classmates' "tough[ness …] when they fought" (Kingston 180). When the narrator finds the chance, she corners the quiet girl and bullies her, attempting to force words out of her. Through bullying and pulling the other's face until she cried, Maxine's rage turns into tears as well. She asked: "Why won't you talk? [...] You don't see I'm trying to help you out, do you? Do you want to be like this, dumb (do you know what dumb means?) your whole life?" (Kingston 180). The younger Kingston, in seeing how her non-Chinese American classmates act, equals silence with lack of power. We might interpret this

as the narrator seeing a reflection of her own weakness in the other girl and resentment towards herself, which she projects externally. She believes she is doing good for the quiet child, trying to save her from lacking oral communication skills and, consequently, lacking identity ("If you don't talk, you can't have a personality.") (Kingston 180). As a young girl, Kingston already demonstrates her awareness of the dangers between her two conflicting cultures; she also shows concern with her own bodily aesthetic by wanting a stout neck to match the "tough[ness]" of her non-Chinese American classmates (Kingston 180). The Chinese culture her mother describes seems to encourage her silence and obedience, forming her role identity as a daughter, while the American culture she experiences encourages expression. I think, in her struggle to grasp both, she shows how a person living between two cultures will consider the socio-cultural values and how to perform them. Maxine knew she could not perform one without being punished for the other — her quietness is discouraged in school, but she might have learned from her mother that excessive talking is "unfeminine" at home. This scene also proves that lessons on social performance, in Kingston's case of Chinese versus American culture, are easily misconstrued especially when the person can juxtapose the values of one culture next to the other culture. In this case, Maxine's knowledge of Chinese values becomes exaggerated through her imagination and lack of real-world representation to reinforce her knowledge. Instead that knowledge is compared as she experiences American culture.

Passing on the Values in Chang

In *Rouge of the North*, the older generation indirectly teaches manners, values, and etiquette to the younger with the objective to keep the status quo. Their teaching methods harsh, especially taking the form of familial humiliation, the act of preserving and passing on the values and norms helps to reassure said status quo, reassure oneself of belonging and maintain a

relatively stable and ‘clear’ definition of one’s social and role identity, and acknowledge and confirm others of the dynamics, hierarchy, and security within their socio-cultural scope.

As an example of said “humiliation”, we can observe the Old Mistress as an example, from her powerful place in the hierarchical, familial structure to her control over the aesthetic looks of family as well. As Jessica Tsui Yan Li points out in her article, Yindi’s mother-in-law uses the power available to her through patriarchy to rule over her hierarchically inferior family members; she, and decades later, Yindi, is complicit in the maintaining of cruel management of domestic matters and instilling of acceptance and despair in the younger female generation (Li 399). We can assume the high possibility that the Old Mistress was once herself in the daughter-in-law position, at the mercy of her own mother-in-law’s orders. However, once her position in the Yao family changed, she played her new role and seemingly embraced the power over her younger counterparts over time. Through this, the Old Mistress continues the cycle, following social performance, and maintaining the structure of community and her face through fulfillment of expectations. Furthermore, the management of the house, which usually falls on the male head of the house, becomes her job. In taking up this ‘man’s job’, such as maintaining the family’s finances or the property’s appearance to her liking, the gender transformation occurs.

In a demonstration of power and to maintain the Yao family’s image in the public eye, the Old Mistress also determines the aesthetic appearance of her daughters-in-law. For example, Yindi “notice[s] that the women of the house used much more rouge than was customary and there were heavily painted middle-aged women among their relatives" and that the “fashionable pale colours were forbidden” because they are traditionally “mourning colours” (Chang 33). To explain her choices, “Old Mistress would say, ‘I’m not dead yet, no need to wear mourning’”;

the excess rouge by Yindi's standards is reasoned as "pale cheeks were also called funereal [sic]" (Chang 33). By maintaining the physical appearance of the women under her hierarchically, Old Mistress becomes "the possessor of her daughters-in-law because she exercises a power granted to her by patriarchy" (Li 399). Because of patriarchy's part in creating the familial hierarchy and influenced ideas of what constitutes proper behavior, Old Mistress's word becomes law. Her commands can strip another woman of her face by simply berating them, until even servants' attitudes despite said woman and their status are affected, such as the attitude that Yindi faced when the trousseau was used to make up for her third day's ceremony. The example of the Old Mistress's transformation from daughter-in-law to mother-in-law is significant because it shows us the perpetuation of patriarchy. Because there is nothing she herself could have changed about the treatment of women in the domestic sphere, the Old Mistress endures her years under her own mother-in-law before being able to wield the latter's power as her role changes. Not seeking to transcend beyond societal norms, she perpetuates them and, in her wielding of power and punishments inflicted on her own daughters-in-law, passes on those patriarchal values — and Yindi herself also demonstrates this in her later years.

When Yindi later faces the same situation, her husband having died and the Yao fortune divided for the family remnants, the protagonist perpetuates the cycle now as a victimizer. Now assuming the role of mother-in-law for her son's first wife, she becomes the source of the young woman's misery just as the Old Mistress was a source of her own misery. Yindi complains that the "bride" acted "like a woman who's been married for years", "gruff and unsmiling" (Chang 164). Yensheng's wife also passes her wedding day passively and without reaction to her surroundings as though she was already prepared for the result of the day's events; she does not complain as Yindi had, accepting that, especially because of her appearance, she would not be

treated well. Indeed, “not a day passes[s] without incident” (Chang 164). Yindi finds fault in the young woman every day and causes her to cry. Yindi’s actions can be interpreted in a combination of ways: as a woman worn out by life and her own unhappiness who perpetuates patriarchal values by using it to her advantage just as her mother-in-law did — as offended that the bride’s attitude did not match expectations for a woman in her position; or because of the bride’s physical appearance, which was described as ugly by the narrator. I would argue that it is a mix of all three. Yensheng’s wife could cause her and her son to lose face in the eyes of the community. Not only was their wedding out of the ordinary (Yindi blamed the woman’s parents, claiming the latter had a preference for the old wedding customs versus the newer customs), but the bride’s appearance was another matter of gossip and insult. By doing so, Yindi and the Old Mistress show us how, in their suffocating environment of patriarchy and accepted cruelty, they learn lessons on social performance by observing the generation before them and, after becoming an “Embittered Woman” as *Rouge of the North*’s Chinese title (怨女) translates to, later implement the knowledge when their role identity changes.

Intergenerational Lessons in Kingston

In Kingston, lessons are initially rejected. The lessons that the mother tries to pass onto the narrator, even done with good intentions, face hostile reception. This is because her knowledge applies to a certain spatiotemporal space: the China of the past when she immigrated to America. For example, in “No Name Woman”, the mother concludes her warning with “the villagers are watchful” as an add on to advice about being careful “now that” Kingston has “started to menstruate” (Kingston 5). There may be “villager”-like people in their neighborhood of Chinese diaspora, but they are a minority among the cross-cultural populations that Kingston interacts with regularly; the latter straddles between American and Chinese culture.

Consequently, when attempting to apply her understanding of Chinese culture to the United States — especially applied to face, filial piety, and how women fit into its society — through her mother's talk-stories, said talk-stories can easily be misconstrued. Priborkin cites Endel Tulving's semantic memory to understand the misconstruction: "[Semantic memory is] something that enables us to have culturally shared, general knowledge not tied to learning experience [and] obtained from our cultural environment"; this information is considered "in our memory as objective, reliable information" about the socio-cultural world (Priborkin 164). However, the issue lies in that the Kingston narrator's "semantic memory, shaped by an American rather than a Chinese environment, makes it impossible for [her] to experience and store [her] mother's behavior as self-evident" (Priborkin 164). In other words, the Kingston narrator cannot fully grasp Chinese societal values because, though her mother teaches them to her, those values conflict with the American environment she inhabits. As a result, she is unable to fully grasp face, filial piety, and other foundational concepts.

Because of the Kingston narrator's upbringing and exposure to multiple cultures, the values of her heritage versus the country she grew up in seem at conflict with each other, but said multicultural nature seems to allow her to simultaneously interrogate the aunt's existence critically and rewrite interpretations that reveal her preconceived ideas and understanding of one culture's behaviors. Her preoccupation surrounds the myth of and mysticism of the aunt's story, and she attempts to grasp the cruelties done by kin and performed in her mother's talk-story.

The following in-text scenes from *The Woman Warrior*, along with Tulving's semantic memory, demonstrate how easily misunderstandings may occur in transfers of intent across culture, specifically in the case of Chinese societal values into American culture. For example, the "no name woman" is more than nameless. While the Kingston narrator's mother presents the

unnamed aunt as the doomed protagonist of an old family tale, an real aunt might have existed, but her existence and true story has been lost: the narrator's mother is possibly an unreliable narrator, which the Kingston narrator points out when the older woman describes seeing the aunt's emerging pregnant belly. According to custom, the daughter-in-law moves in with her husband's family; the aunt, sister to the narrator's father, would be living with her own in-laws, in the household of her husband's family, and not under the same roof as the narrator's mother who is living with her own in-laws. As a result, it is hard to determine if the aunt of the mother's talk-story was a made-up character as part of a lesson regarding promiscuity, told to the Kingston narrator when she reached puberty. At the possible expense of truth, a tale about a forgotten woman is crafted in order to serve as a warning against sex and sexuality. How if the aunt truly existed, in using her story as a cautionary tale, it could disqualify proof of her existence; she becomes the personification of a "fallen" woman, more caricature than a formerly living family member.

However, there is a less bleak interpretation of the story: if the aunt did exist and was not a character created for a talk-story, every retelling of the aunt emphasizes her ambiguity — and this is how she transcends the social norms that killed her, giving her memory power. The Kingston narrator contemplates possibilities: the aunt's 'betrayal' ("If my aunt had betrayed the family at a time of large grain yields and peace, when many boys were born, and wings were being built on many houses, perhaps she might have escaped such severe punishment"), whether or not the aunt had a lover or was raped ("I hope that the man my aunt loved appreciated a smooth brow, that he wasn't just a tits-and-ass man" versus "Some man had commanded her to lie with him and be his secret evil. I wonder whether he masked himself when he joined the raid on her family") and attempts to retrace the woman's steps to the family well where she drowned

herself (Kingston 6, 9, 13). Unknowingly, the young Kingston narrator is immortalizing and remembering her through "writing" biographical variations. By becoming ungraspable, the aunt is also more than just a cautionary tale: she spitefully transforms her memory into an object of fear. After all, “the Chinese are always very frightened of the drowned one, whose weeping ghost, wet hair hanging and skin bloated, waits silently by the water to pull down a substitute” (Kingston 16). After the “twenty years since” she “heard this story”, the Kingston narrator realizes this point to the aunt’s “spite suicide” (Kingston 16). In fact, perhaps she has also come to comprehend her fear and curiosity of the “no name woman’s” story: it is possible that the younger narrator, in hearing the story, subconsciously registered that she might become a rebel to her mother and the Chinese culture she thought the latter had been trying to instill in her.

Like the talk-story about the aunt when her younger self exaggerated her mother’s lesson, the narrator had believed that her mother also tried to impose her control through tongue cutting. Of this action, she thought her mother should have “scraped away the rest of the frenum skin [where she cut], because” Maxine has “a terrible time talking. Or she should not have cut at all, tampering with” her “speech”, especially in American classrooms (Kingston 165). This is because the narrator associates “voicelessness with victimization and madness [...] but the brutal and domineering aspect of speech gives her pause”, the latter referring to the type of communication she encounters in American schools (Cheung 164).

To add on, the polarizing expectations placed on her between said American settings that demanded she speak “louder” versus the public quietness she thought was expected as a Chinese American girl (“the other Chinese girls did not talk either, so I knew the silence had to do with being a Chinese girl”) could have led to seeing a false need to pick quiet voice or loud voice (Kingston 166). She might have “[perceived] her individuality in Western terms” as “rebellion

against one's family and social environment" as "legitimate ways of self-construction" (Priborkin 174). To avoid going against her family and her school environment, Maxine chose an in-between: she and fellow Chinese American girls "invented an American-feminine speaking personality" (Kingston 172). Through the trouble of invention, I believe this is a way that the narrator attempts to reconcile aspects of her multicultural life. While she cannot give up speech because it is seen as a tool to construct individuality, she is also insecure because of her confusing position as a Chinese American and requirement to obey the societal values taught by her mother through talk-stories. This conflict turns into resentment over time.

Maxine had resented her mother for the supposed tongue cutting as she eventually saw her own silence as the issue. She had been "afraid of losing her identity, of being erased or unhinged — as" the drowned aunt had "been [...] erased [...] through silence" (Cheung 164). The authority to speak, she perceived, was not hers. Therefore, she risked being forgotten like the aunt. However, when a woman told Maxine's mother to "improve" her daughter's "voice [...] or else you'll never marry her off", she quickly misinterpreted the conversation as an actual plan to marry her off (Kingston 192). In her view, the two older women must have used patriarchal values and filial piety as reasoning to marry her off, turning her into the beaten daughter-in-law from a previously mentioned play; she also thought they disliked her because her voice specifically did not match ideals about Chinese nor American femininity. As a young girl attempting to navigate her cultures, which she finds pressuring and threatening towards her place in her diaspora community, she was susceptible to misunderstanding intentions by her mother. As Tulving explains, the incompatibility between growing up in an American environment versus attempts to learn Chinese values is owed to the difference between the observable environment and the ideals being taught. The resulting socio-cultural disagreement on social

performance proves that, as opposed to *Rouge of the North*'s monocultural setting where performance can be learned through observation, transfer of knowledge in a cross-cultural setting like one inhabited by Maxine demands more conscious effort.

To Understand

To resolve the intergenerational conflict, I argue that the Kingston narrator takes two solutions: to place herself in connection with her mother through the latter's talk-story technique and understand herself through comparisons with Chinese myths. These two allow Maxine to come into closer narrative contact with her mother — the stories become collaborative — and, as a result, begin a reconciliation with the older woman and with her own identity.

Compellingly, "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe" ends with the collaborative efforts between mother and daughter; it also parallels in structure to the "No Name Woman" tale though there are exceptions. In finally appreciating the tongue cutting as possibly her mother's "technique" for freeing her from silence in "this ghost country" (the mother said she "cut [Maxine's tongue] so that" she "would not be tongue-tied" and "able to move in any language"), Maxine later reveals to her that she "also talk story" (Kingston 164, 206). Of the story they combine together, Maxine says: "the beginning is hers, the ending, mine" (Kingston 206). The collaboration begins with the mother's story. Like "No Name Woman", it revolves around family matters but in which a grandmother adamantly demands the entire household accompany her to a play despite risks of bandits raiding the house. The bandits, on that night, "struck the theater itself" though surprisingly, the whole family survives. It implies a lesson for the Kingston narrator: she should listen to one's elders, no matter her personal disagreements with the former's wisdom. Similarly, Maxine takes a story — this time, it is an old tale about Ts'ai Yen, a female

poet from centuries past — and adds her own interpretations of the subject's life in order to engage with the text.

In this example, we see the two solutions I argued the narrator takes. Firstly, she initiates communication with her mother through the latter's preferred way of teaching. As mentioned before, in teaching ways of social performance, the mother could still be attempting to pass on lessons and values to her daughter. The story of the grandmother, like "No Name Woman", serves to teach societal expectations, specifically to never challenge a hierarchical superior. However, unlike "No Name Woman", Maxine does not invade her mother's story by questioning her details. Instead, she builds upon the tale by hoping that "at some of those performances, they heard the songs of Ts'ai Yen" (Kingston 207). By not challenging with hostility, the Kingston narrator instead builds rapport. She engages with her mother by connecting the former's story with her own creation. As opposed to "rebell[ing] against one's family" for "self-construction", Maxine instead constructs through this collaborative effort (Priborkin 174). She does not challenge her identity as daughter to her mother and maintains filial piety through said lack of challenge.

This is where Maxine connects to the "Chinese" half of her "Chinese American" identity. By incorporating the tale of Ts'ai Yen, she draws new parallels between herself and the poet. Cheung notes that "instead of struggling against her Asian past and her American present, she now seeks to emulate the poet who sings to foreign music" (Cheung 172). Just as Ts'ai Yen sang to her captors, the Hsiung-nu, and their initially "disturbing" flutes, eventually bringing the cross-cultural music back to the Chinese, the narrator implies juxtaposition between herself and the former poet. She expresses relatability between the poet's music and her discovered power in English language — first fear of the unfamiliar sounds to a collaboration in order to create a new

art form. Through this, the Kingston narrator has found a possible way to connect to her heritage, become comfortable with her multicultural nature, and begin to understand her mother by learning to communicate with the latter in a way suitable to them both.

In this chapter, I have combined the theories and textual evidence I presented into an explanation of how female characters within these novels teach each other social performance. Yindi's world of the domestic is suffocating and bleak to match her eventual attitude towards her own daughter-in-law while the Kingston narrator eventually finds a way to reconcile Chinese culture and American culture to find peace in her Chinese American identity, and to initiate understanding and communication with her mother. Despite these two character's differences, the way that knowledge of social performance in relation to gender and aesthetic and the passing of said knowledge remains similar in how it must traverse through the complicated web of identity, Chinese values of faced, filial piety, patriarchy, and (for Maxine) American values in order to reach the recipient. I admit: the synthesis of these concepts was a difficult task, but by regarding these ways of communication as an art form, like the talk-stories of Maxine's mother, we may eventually find a way to understand.

Conclusion

In my comparative analysis, I have attempted to dissect and argue the difference in how social performance could be taught between intergenerational female characters. I have discovered and discussed the different forces at play in the knowledge transfer of these texts. Observing the ways that Yindi and the Kingston narrator respectively navigate their setting, we can see that identity cannot be separated from their kinship and community; the forces of Chinese values govern their choices, their interactions, and how they perform in public versus private. Said choices are tied to dynamics between themselves and the onlookers, especially where face and filial piety apply. Specifically in a cross-cultural setting like Kingston, those values taught to the narrator clash due to the incompatibility of the cultures involved. As seen in Kingston's "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe", when a person must navigate their places between two sets of conflicting demands, in their attempts to please both sides, they end up being unable to fulfill one without disappointing the other.

My point is this: to be a satisfied and enlightened reader, whether said reader relates to the authors or characters through gender, ethnicity, sexuality, or other aspects of identity, appreciation of stories such as *The Rouge of the North* and *The Woman Warrior* requires awareness and experience of literature as potential sites of cross-cultural empathy. In this comparative analysis, placing the two novels in question in juxtaposition has revealed that while transferring lessons about performing social expectations successfully in a monocultural setting is easier than attempting so in a multicultural setting. What *is* significant is that we see how, accompanying the contrasting level of ease or difficulty, the hearing-about versus constant experiencing-of culture as seen in Tulving's semantic memory can lead to a misconstruing of any

socio-cultural information based on the recipient's bias. Aside from what the Kingston narrator discovers between herself and her mother, I described how a general audience came quickly to the conclusion that the Chinese and Chinese American culture in *The Woman Warrior* is representative of true experience. Their folly lies in taking the text in front of their eyes as it is without critically considering the characters' contexts, biases, and environments. I would argue that cultivating knowledge of cross-cultural understanding will help not only in reading these two texts and more, but also understanding of other cultures in daily life as well. This lesson, which I pass onto my reader, I believe will ring true in our contemporary times.

For further research, it may be interesting to also examine any texts like Kingston that have been translated into Chinese and the reader's response to the experiences of Chinese American daughters. This, in combination with the type of research I have conducted, could lend some results in the examination of how culture affects the reactions of readers. Of course, I also propose future investigations involving Eileen Chang's work.

Though before I officially conclude my thesis project, we must return back to r/AsianParentStories. As a person within the Chinese diaspora myself, I have seen personally and in others' lives how this miscommunication between generations can occur though perhaps not exactly mirroring the Kingston narrator's experience entirely. Like Maxine, where a person resides between two cultures, one's cross-cultural identity and any familial dissonances as a result of cultural clash cannot be so immediately processed — it takes time. While I am no psychologist and have no credible position to explain this phenomenon without bias, I do not aim to patronizingly ask for other Chinese American and diaspora people to forget any familial clashes as a result of cross-cultural misunderstanding nor trust that empathetic communication is the fast route to heal one's trauma. However, the good thing about literature is the ability to find

much-needed empathy. After all, it is sometimes self-healing that we need, especially to come to terms with our multicultural selves.

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