

## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the question: how do Chinese American writers adapt the Chinese traditional myths in their work? The definition of myth used in this study is inclusive, encompassing both stories of supernatural beings and stories of humans. Through a home framework, I examine how Maxine Hong Kingston's use of the myths of Mulan and Ts'ai Yen in *The Woman Warrior* shows the dilemma of being a Chinese American female .

Through the same framework, I investigate the ways in which Chinese American writers might diverge in their mythological reimagination by looking at different adaptations of one myth: the myth of Sun Wukong. Through a close reading of Kingston's *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book*, Gene Luen Yang's *American Born Chinese*, and Ken Liu's "The Litigation Master and the Monkey King", I give insights into the ways in which three different writers make faithful or subversive decisions when adapting the essence of Sun Wukong and the effects of these myth adaptations. While Kingston and Yan both discuss Chinese Americans' identity crisis, Ken Liu addresses a historical topic beyond that recurring theme in other texts: the crimes of the Qing Empire.

Additionally, this study examines Liu's Sci-Fi short story "Good Hunting" which sets in British Hong Kong. Through an analysis of Liu's portrayal of the hulijing, this study aims to provide insights into issues related to colonialism, environmentalism, and sexism.

At last, this study provides the means for future researchers interested in exploring myth adaptations, examining the influence of foreign language story collections on American literature, and even critiquing silkpunk literature.

**Myth Adaptations in Chinese American Literature**

By Yumu (Emma) Xue

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To fate that is interesting.

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## Introduction

In the fall of 2020, my introduction to Asian American literature class explored “Good Hunting”, a scientific work written by the talented Chinese American science fiction writer Ken Liu. Later, in the fall of 2021, I researched myth adaptations for “Good Hunting” in my Shapeshifting course’s final project. Conducting this research sparked my interest in exploring myth adaptations and studying science fiction, particularly Ken Liu’s. Later, I learned that Ken Liu invented the genre of silkpunk literature where a story of resistance to authority happened in a world where Asia develops its own industrial technology by using “Asian materials”. As a result, many silk punk works use mythologies as Asian materials or simply adapt them. In addition to examining cultural appropriation, I am interested in critiquing how writers adapt myths from their own culture. Due to my interests in studying myth adaptations and critiquing the silk punk genre, I initially wanted to do a project that shifts from the analysis of the adaptations of Chinese myths in science fiction to the criticism of silkpunk genre.

However, during the thesis research process, I discovered that it was challenging to examine silkpunk genre from a perspective of mythological adaptation through an effective critical framework without examining how earlier writers adapted their own cultural myths. Given the genre’s roots in Chinese American literature, studying the adaptations of Chinese myths in previous Chinese American literature would be highly effective. During the research process, I found out that I was more fascinated by how Chinese American writers incorporated Chinese myths into their writing. As a result, I have shifted my research focus to explore the adaptations of Chinese myths in Chinese American literature. Though I set the field of this study in Chinese American literature, in

the thesis's conclusion, I will still discuss how this analysis can contribute to the future study of my initial interest: the criticism of the silkpunk genre.

### **The Woman Warrior & Myth**

*The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*, abbreviated as *The Woman Warrior*, is a memoir written by the Chinese author Maxine Hong Kingston and first published in 1976. In this book, Kingston uses Chinese legends, folktales, and mythological creatures to explore her own identity as a Chinese American woman. To be more specific, in *The Woman Warrior*, only the Chinese folktales presented in Chapter Three "Shaman" are about spiritual creatures. The other chapters all focus on tales or legends of women. Chapter One "No Name Woman" imagines the struggle of Kingston's late aunt; Chapter Four "At the Western Palace" presents a Chinese folktale of an empress. I am interested in studying Chapter Two "White Tiger" and Chapter Five "A Song For a Barbarian Reed Pipe". "White Tiger" shows the recreation of the story of Mulan, a female literary figure, and the other one imagines the life of a historical female figure named Ts'ai Yen. These two stories are usually regarded as legends, which "are more often secular than sacred, and their principal characters are humans" (Bascom 4), not myths. Therefore, according to the widely accepted definition of myth – a story "often associated with theology and ritual [and its] main characters are not usually human beings" (Bascom 4) –, only one chapter of this memoir can be considered a conventional myth. That's why despite my familiarity with this memoir, I did not realize its potential as an example of myth adaptation.

However, Kingston showed me an unusual definition of myth in her interview with Timothy Pfaff. Kingston said, "The way I keep the old Chinese

myths alive is by telling them in a new American way”. (Pfaff 18)”, revealing that she regards the above folktales and legends as myths. In doing so, she creates a new kind of myths that is relevant to contemporary Chinese American experiences. Thus, I believed that taking Kingston’s definition of myth would enable me to develop a theoretical approach to explore Kingston’s methods of adapting the myths that are applicable to other Chinese American literary work which adapts Chinese myths, especially those which adapt to discuss identity issues of Chinese Americans. Therefore, the definition of myth in this thesis, in particular, Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* is inclusive.

### **Home Framework**

Home is not confined to the common understanding of a dwelling place. The scholar Rosemary Marangoly George in *the Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction* (1996), argues that home has a broader definition. It refers to “the larger geographic space where one belongs: country, city, village, community” (George 1). One’s family is also a kind of home because people can return to where their family lives or feel a sense of belonging to family members who live in different areas. George also states, “Home is also the imagined location which can be more readily fixed in a mental landscape than in actual geography” (George 1). My explanation of an imagined location is a spiritual shelter, a home for those who cannot establish one geographically, or a mental space providing a sense of belonging.

Furthermore, racial and ethnic-related homes are also located in a mental landscape. According to Benedict Anderson, nation “is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members , or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their

communion” (6). Based on this concept, most racial and ethnic-related communities are also imagined as many members will not communicate with each other.

On the other hand, Anderson says that nation “is limited because even the largest of them ... has finite ... boundaries” (7), because the imagined nations are limited by physical boundaries, it is possible that racial and ethnic-related homes, also imagined communities, are similarly confined by the geographic areas where they are established on. This can be seen, for example, in the case of the imagined political community of Chinese Americans, which is fixed within the geographic boundaries of the United States.

By applying George’s definition of home and Anderson’s concept of nation to Chinese American literature, I found that home is a pervasive theme expressed through various forms such as familial, communal, national, and spiritual shelters. However, racial and ethnic (communal) homes stand out as a unique type, as they are not only imagined communities, but also bounded by physical space. This characteristic creates a distinctive sense of belonging and identity for members of these communities.

More specifically, Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior*, adapting the five myths I mentioned earlier, discusses her intense relationship with her familial home, her ethnic communal home, her national home, and even her gender communal home. Her later work *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book*, which adapts the myth of Sun Wukong, demonstrates the protagonist Wittman’s different relationships with his national home, his ethnic and non-ethnic communal homes, and his potential familial home. Gene Luen Yang’s *American Born Chinese* and Ken Liu’s “The Litigation Master and the Monkey King” also adapt the myth of Sun Wukong.

Yang portrays the protagonists' journey of leaving behind their racial homes and eventual returns while Ken Liu explores the potential relationship between Chinese who lived in the Qing dynasty and residential, familial, mental, and national homes in this short story. Ken Liu's "Good Hunting", which adapts the myths of hulijing, uses Yan, a hulijing character who lost her familial home and residential home, to call a home that is safe for women, to imagine a postcolonial home.

Given the common theme of home in each text, I use a home framework to study how Chinese American writers adapt the myths to demonstrate the characters' relationship with homes. As part of the home framework, I define this result or process of someone having a home—a house, family, community, village, city, or country that the individual belongs to, or a private spiritual sanctuary as homing. This homing narrative influences readers, such as making them feel happy when they see people love their homes. I define this influence as the homing effect, the result of showing readers that someone has a place that gives them a sense of belonging: home. When the creation of this effect happened the first time, readers see a plot that gives someone a home. The homing effect is strengthened when the other later plots show readers that characters establish / will establish / return to home or emphasize characters' belonging to the established home. The homing effect is weakened when readers learn that someone loses their belonging to their established home or readers realize that someone's home is not their real home.

I use this term when studying "White Tigers", the second chapter of *The Woman Warrior*. The narrative of "White Tigers" is often in tension with the identity-based communities and families of Kingston and Mulan. Specifically, Kingston and Mulan have the same two identities: Han Chinese and female.

Besides, Kingston is an exile and a Chinese American. Mulan is sometimes in tension with her Han Chinese community while Kingston is often in tension with her family, her Han Chinese exile community, her gender community, the American mainstream society (community). These tensions can both strengthen and weaken the homing effect created by “White Tigers”, distinguishing the other Chinese American texts that tend to showcase creating and strengthening the homing effect. To analyze this dynamic, the study investigates the processes of creating, strengthening, and weakening the homing effect in “White Tigers”.

## **Methodologies**

### 1. Comparative Approach

Since my goal is to study the adaptations of myths, it is necessary to compare the literary texts with the prototypes. However, it is very hard to determine the exact content of Chinese myths that writers were based on. Choosing the prototype of the writers’ retelling of Sun Wukong is quite easy because *Journey to the West* is widely recognized. It is relatively easier to find the prototype of Kingston’s mythologized writing of Ts’ai Yen because her story is recorded in *the Book of the Later Han* (written by Fan Ye). This only historical account of her can be regarded as the origin of all the later adaptations of Ts’ai Yen. Though the credibility of this historical account is doubted, I still regard her as a historical figure because *The Woman Warrior*, the memoir that I study, takes her as one.

It is true that “The Ballad of Mulan” is widely regarded as the traditional version. However, Kingston reveals that her mother teaches her Mulan’s story through a chant, “[a] chant of Fa Mu Lan, the girl who took her father’s place in

battle” (Kingston 19). Therefore, researchers cannot determine the exact content of her mother’s chant. I adopt the widely acknowledged version, as I did for Ts’ai Yen and Sun Wukong, as a solution. This approach is optimal as its widespread recognition could potentially influence the writers’ creative process and enable readers to comprehend the comparative study more effectively. Because of the extensive number of hulijing stories in Chinese literature and the lack of a specific prototype mentioned by Ken Liu, it is impractical to determine a single prototype for “Good Hunting”. In the interest of doing the study through the home framework, I choose to focus on the traditional stories that are most relevant.

## 2. Literary reviews

I use this approach for studying “Good Hunting” particularly. This approach is essential because, unlike other Chinese myths, hulijing, as mythological creatures, lacks popularity in the English world. I provide a concise history of Chinese hulijing literature, including its connection with nail-tailed fox literature, as scholars believe the latter may have influenced the former as its origin. Also, this literature review focuses on exploring the potential of traditional stories serving as the inspirations of “Good Hunting”. Under this goal, I give a brief literary analysis of the translated excerpts of *Classic of Mountains and Seas*, “Biography of Wuyu, King of Yue”, The Record of Xuan Zhong”, “Xue Jiong” and “Li Nun” in English.

## 3. Translation

I use Hans H. Frankel’s translation of “The Ballad of Mulan” for close reading. To facilitate researchers’ potential research, I use widely recognized

English translations when translating the Chinese title of Ts'ai Yen's songs and the source of another Chinese myth that Kingston adapts when retelling the story of Mulan. However, most of the hulijing stories that I choose for literary reviews do not have English translations. So, I translated them from Classical Chinese into modern English myself. During the process, I carefully selected words while cutting irrelevant content to make the quotations condense and intelligible, which I will discuss in the third chapter.

#### 4. Summarization

Despite the popularity of these myths among the Chinese, I cannot guarantee that English speakers are familiar with them. So, I provide summaries for each myth. The length and focus of each summary are different. The summary of "The Ballad of Mulan" is relatively short because I offer a close reading of some of its lines in comparison to Kingston's reimagination. I choose to summarize the experience of Ts'ai Yen recorded in *the Book of the Later Han* not the scholarly debate of whether she existed or not because my focus is to study myth adaptations, not myth credibility. To analyze different writers' adaptations of the traditional image of Sun Wukong, I put a well-rounded, thus relatively long, summary of Sun Wukong's portrayal in *Journey to the West*. I summarize a lot of traditional hulijing stories as part of my literary view of hulijing literature in the third chapter of the thesis.

#### **Chapter Outlines**

In my analysis of the first chapter, I focus on the second chapter "White Tigers", which adapts the myth of Mulan, and the fifth chapter "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe", which adapts the myth of Ts'ai Yen, of Maxine Hong

Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*. In "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe", Chinese Americans' experience as an ethnic minority is the focus of this mythologized home narrative: Ts'ai Yen's myth implies a national home free of linguistic unhomeliness and thus offers Chinese Americans a mental shelter. In "White Tigers", however, identity conflicts, such as Mulan and Kingston's struggles as women in their sexist Han communities, become the emphasis of Kingston's retelling of Mulan's myth, enabling an examination of the strengthening and weakening of the homing effect in the story. More specifically, Kingston's adaptation of Mulan's myth strengthens the homing effect through plot changes that reflect Mulan's and Kingston's sense of belonging to their communities. However, the unjust patriarchal duty given to Mulan weakens the homing effect, reflecting Kingston's ruptured sense of belonging to the sexist Chinese community. The portrayal of Mulan being tattooed allows for multiple interpretations of whether the homing effect is strengthened or weakened.

In the subsequent chapter, I examine how Kingston, Gene Luen Yang, and Ken Liu adapt the myth of Sun Wukong. Maxine Hong Kingston's *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book* depicts Wittman Ah Sing, who identifies as the rebellious Sun Wukong. Wittman's proclamation of being the incarnation of Sun Wukong prevents him from establishing a new familial home. Learning from Sun Wukong's rebellion against heaven, Wittman quits his job when he feels humiliated by this so-called communal home for employees. By examining Kingston's other changes to Sun Wukong's myth, I argue that despite Wittman's being embraced by the multi-racial Anti-War community and the Chinese American theater group, the success of the Chinese American show, he still suffers from linguistic discrimination and the perpetual foreigner stereotype.

Therefore, *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book* reveals the common struggles of Chinese Americans to establish homes outside of their ethnic community.

Notably, while I refer to the Chinese-related communities in Kingston's two works all as "ethnic communities", these Chinese-related communities are different concepts. For *Mulan*, and *Ts'ai Yen*, they belong to an imagined Han Chinese community fixed in the physical landscape of ancient China. Kingston's ethnic communities shown in this memoir, on the other hand, are far more complicated. She is from a less imagined Han Chinese American community of Chinatown in Stockton, California. Sometimes, Kingston blends this community with the larger imagined Chinese American community together as one. Third, in her fictional work *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book*, Kingston solely focuses on the larger imagined Chinese American community, which I call it as "ethnic home."

Moreover, I refer to the same Chinese American community in *American Born Chinese* as "racial home". It is important to note that these terms are not intended to differentiate between Chinese Americans as an ethnicity and as a race, but rather to reflect the distinct contexts and perspectives of each work. Unlike Kingston's books which highlight the experience of Chinese Americans, or even Han Chinese Americans, as a distinct group, the graphic novel *American Born Chinese* focuses on telling the Chinese experience from a racial-centric dual narrative. In this graphic novel, the experience of Jin Wang parallels that of Sun Wukong. Yang makes changes to recreate the redemption image of Sun Wukong: he embraces his racial home after denying his monkey racial identity due to the discrimination in heaven. The parallelism makes the racial discrimination that Jin Wang suffers explicit. The original plot of Sun Wukong's son implies that as Sun

Wukong did, Jin Wang abandons his racial home due to internalized racism. Then, Sun Wukong incarnates as Chin-Kee to guide Jin Wang back on the right path: (re)embracing one's racial identity.

Ken Liu's "The Litigation Master and the Monkey King" portrays the Monkey King as a demon visible only to the protagonist, Tian Haoli. This short story is special because it sets the location in China not the U.S. It is also special because this adaptation is kind of subversive: the narrator claims that the Monkey King is an ordinary demon who is not always rebellious though mostly portraying him as a rebel. The existence of the Monkey King helps how Tian Haoli's volunteer work helps ordinary people preserve residential and familial homes. By convincing Tian Haoli to help preserve *the Yangzhou Ten Day Account* and comforting him when he is dying, Ken Liu pays tribute to the brave Chinese rebels during the Qing Dynasty. This story feels nostalgic for reimagining heroic acts in the past.

In the third chapter, I focus on Liu's adaptation of hulijing literary traditions in "Good Hunting". "Good Hunting" is ambiguous regarding the specific inspiration for its hulijing figure. This ambiguity led me to delve into traditional hulijing/fox stories to explore how this story incorporates this kind of literary tradition. Based on the literary review, I argue that the hulijing characters represent the displacement of animals due to human-animal conflicts. Yan's loss of innate demon power reveals the loss of her demon home and implies the loss of home for the Chinese due to foreign forces. Yan's traumatic experience as a prostitute is influenced by the image of hulijing as a foreign prostitute in Chinese Classical literature, revealing the displacement of women, in particular, prostitutes. However, Yan's rebellion and utilization of Western technology

suggest a post-colonial new home that embraces all being while accepting the positive legacy of colonialism. Overall, the story reflects the Chinese American author's nostalgia and looks toward a brighter future for sex workers, women, and animals, where they can coexist peacefully. I also discuss the methodologies used in this chapter to provide the potential researchers an insight into studying the impact of literary collections in a foreign language on English literature because I believe this kind of study is not common in terms of modern literature.

In concluding this thesis, I have examined each myth adaptation through the lens of the "Who" question, offering valuable insights for potential researchers interested in studying myth adaptations or the influence of foreign literature on English literature. Furthermore, this thesis also holds potential in contributing to the criticism of the silk punk genre, which intersects with Chinese American literature.

## CHAPTER ONE: HOMES AND THE HOMING EFFECT OF MYTHOLOGICAL ADAPTATIONS IN *THE WOMAN WARRIOR*

### Introduction

*The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood* is a memoir written by Maxine Hong Kingston, a second-generation Chinese female immigrant. This unique memoir consists of Kingston's recreation of Chinese traditional tales, legends, and her personal memories. In order to develop a framework for analyzing myth adaptations in Chinese American literature through the study of this memoir, I employ Kingston's inclusive definition of myth, which encompasses tales and legends featuring human protagonists as used by Kingston.

In this chapter, I compare the life of Ts'ai Yen in record to Kingston's portrayal of her when analyzing the myth adaptation of "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe"; I compare "The Ballad of Mulan" to Kingston's rewriting of Mulan by studying her adaptations' homing effects, which I will define later as the influence of showing readers that someone has a home. I also discuss Chinese Americans' experience because Kingston's adaptation decisions are influenced by her Chinese American identity. I analyze Kingston's comments about her rewriting of Mulan because those comments link to Chinese Americans' experience. Because unlike Ts'ai Yen's story, which is placed after Kingston's memories, Mulan's story is placed before Kingston's memories and comments. Therefore, to analyze these texts, I discuss not only the situation that readers have an interpretation of a particular part of the chapter after immediately reading it but also the situation that readers have an interpretation after reading the whole

chapter.

As I mentioned before, I pay attention to identities when comparing. In this chapter, I first study the adaptation of Ts'ai Yen's myth in the fifth chapter "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe". Ts'ai Yen and Kingston both are self-identified Han Chinese women who experience linguistic unhomeliness in a society dominated by another race. I argue that Kingston's detailed imagination of Ts'ai Yen's life in Hsiung-nu reflects the linguistic unhomeliness that Chinese Americans experience. Since Chinese Americans are portrayed as troubled by their inability to find effective solutions to end linguistic unhomeliness, the plot of Ts'ai Yen finding a solution to communicate with the Hsiung-nus gives hope that Chinese Americans can live in the U.S. free of linguistic unhomeliness in the future. In the eyes of readers, in this future where every Chinese American can have a voice, their country will provide them with a sense of belonging. Thus, they will finally be able to establish a national home — a country free of linguistic unhomeliness. In addition, to Chinese Americans readers who experience linguistic unhomeliness, Kingston's recreation of myth offers a spiritual shelter to them. Moreover, this adaptation replaces the dark future that second-generation Chinese Americans stop considering their Chinese community as their home with a bright future where two generations can understand each other.

In the second chapter "White Tigers", Mulan and Kingston are often in tension with their identity-based communities and families. These identity conflicts experienced by Kingston and Mulan lead the readers' flexible perception of whether these two people's communities and families are their homes. As I mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, Mulan's Han Chinese

community is an imagined location confined by the physical boundaries of ancient China because although all members consider them as Han people live in China, it is impossible to communicate with all the members within this community. In comparison, the Han Chinese (American) community that Kingston grew up in is much less imagined. Located at the Chinatown of Stockton, California, this community, according to Kingston, consists of first-generation Han Chinese immigrants who emigrated from the same village and their descendants. Members of the community have a greater possibility of connecting with each other compared to Mulan's community, although it remains challenging due to population mobility. In her writing, Kingston sometimes merges this smaller Han Chinese American community with the larger imagined Han Chinese American community. Additionally, her experience of racism within this smaller community influences her perceptions of China and Chinese culture as a whole.

To examine the identity conflicts in "White Tigers", I introduce the concept of the homing effect, defined as the consequence of showing readers someone has a home. This chapter showcases how the homing effect can be both strengthened and weakened. This is in contrast to many Chinese American texts, such as the fifth chapter "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe", which only show how a homing effect is created and strengthened. Thus, the dynamic relationship between characters and their homes in "White Tigers" is particularly unique.

To illustrate this unique dynamic relationship to readers, I examine how the homing effect is created, strengthened, and weakened in "White Tigers" in detail. I argue that the plot that Mulan is a Han Chinese with the duty to help them creates a homing effect and strengthens it. I argue that Chinese Americans

are double exiles. Mulan helps the Han people by giving them land, matching Chinese Americans' exile experience, and thus strengthening the homing effect. Kingston's change of Mulan's enemies strengthens the homing effect by showing that the imagined Han Chinese community is Mulan's home. This change also reflects Kingston's desire to defeat the racist policy makers for (Han) Chinese (Americans) who are exiled from mainstream society, strengthening the homing effect from two perspectives. Though both portray sexism and patriarchalism, the plot of assigning Mulan a patriarchal duty weakens the homing effect whereas the plot of Mulan liberating the sexist Han people strengthens the homing effect. Kingston adapts a violent tattooing scene from Yue Fei's myth to present Mulan's journey of fulfilling her duty to avenge, inviting four interpretations of this scene. Three of them strengthen and one weakens the homing effect.

### **Ts'ai Yen's Myth Across the Ocean**

In the fifth chapter of *The Woman Warrior* "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe", Kingston adapts the myth of Ts'ai Yen. This adaptation equals a future that ends Chinese Americans' linguistic unhomeliness as home. The chapter title "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe" matches Kingston's self-translation of the title of the guqin<sup>1</sup> music named 胡笳十八拍: "Eighteen Stanzas for a Barbarian Reed Pipe" (Kingston 209). The music is attributed to Ts'ai Yen for telling her story through a first-person narrative. Therefore, this title implies that Kingston adapts Ts'ai Yen's myth in this chapter.

Who is Ts'ai Yen? According to *the Book of the Later Han*<sup>2</sup>, Ts'ai Yen or Cai Yan (mandarin) was the daughter of a famous scholar Cai Yong (mandarin)

<sup>1</sup> A unique seven-string Chinese instrument.

<sup>2</sup> There is no complete English translation of this book.

of the Eastern Han Dynasty. After her first husband died, she returned to her original family. China entered a chaotic period due to the decline of the Han. The Hsiung-nus invaded Han. One of the chiefs of the South Hsiung-nu captured her. She had two half-Han and half-Hsiung-nu sons. After living among the Hsiung-nus for twelve years, her father's friend, the Han Chancellor at that time, Cao Cao, paid an expensive ransom for her release. She remarried Dong Si and when Dong Si faced the death penalty, she begged Cao Cao to cancel his execution warrant. To repay this favor, she transcribed the content of four hundred lost antique books from her father's collection. She also wrote two long poems to narrate her life experience.

Due to Ts'ai Yen's tragic experience of captivity, Kingston's adaptation of Ts'ai Yen's myth assumes a different form, one that focuses on language and Ts'ai Yen's feelings. Kingston creates scenes that portray Ts'ai Yen as an unhappy woman who becomes silent for not being able to talk with the Hsiung-nus. Ts'ai Yen's record does not tell how she communicates with people in Hsiung-nu, whereas Kingston's version portrays their communication in detail. In her story, Ts'ai Yen could not communicate with the Hsiung-nus at first because they did not understand Chinese. Ts'ai Yen fails to teach her children Chinese: "[Her children] imitated her with senseless singsong words and laughed" (Kingston 208). Ts'ai Yen is forced to be silent, isolated, and lonely. Because of language barriers, no one understands her words. She has no one to speak to, not even her children. Thus, she can neither tell her sad feelings nor have friends to comfort her.

This captivity narrative echoes the Chinese Americans' collective silent experience in schools, especially females, because of their limited English skills.

Kingston understood nothing in English before going to kindergarten. Lacking language acquisition turned her into a silent figure: she “had to speak English for the first time, [she] became silent” (Kingston 165). Her experience shows that, like Ts’ai Yen, this Chinese immigrant is forced into silence for the same reason. Her sad silent experience is not personal. For example, her sister did not speak for three years, and other girls were also silent. Kingston thinks that “the silence had to do with being a Chinese girl” (166). I argue that people who have this silence experience linguistic unhomeliness because their silence is caused by the loss of the dominant status of the Chinese language.

### **Linguistic Homelessness and Linguistic Unhomeliness**

This concept of linguistic unhomeliness, as mentioned above, originates from Mikhail Bakhtin’s linguistic homelessness. In Bakhtin’s *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, he writes: “The novel begins by presuming a verbal and semantic decentering of the ideological world, a certain linguistic homelessness of literary consciousness ...” (Bakhtin 367), demonstrating that he initially discusses linguistic homelessness in novels. Bakhtin further explores this idea by saying it is “[a] fundamental liberation of cultural - semantic and emotional intentions from the hegemony of a single and unitary language, and consequently the simultaneous loss of a feeling for language as myth, that is, as an absolute form of thought” (Bakhtin 367). For Bakhtin, linguistic homelessness is the loss of a language’s dominant status and its related ideology. According to John Neubauer, Bakhtin invents linguistic homelessness to oppose “the All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers in August 1934, which served to create a monologic ‘all-Union’ literature, in spite of its lip service to ethnic and national pluralism” (Neubauer 539). Therefore, in the context of Soviet Union literature, linguistic

homelessness is a positive force for liberating people from a monolingual, monoethnic, and mononational hegemony.

However, that is not the case in the context of Chinese American literature. Due to the loss of the Chinese's dominant status, many Chinese Americans not only doubt the toxic ideology taught by elders that only the Chinese people are civilized but also believe in the opposite toxic ideology that the Chinese people are uncivilized, which I am going to elaborate on later. Linguistic homelessness cannot describe a situation in which people are liberated from the first toxic monoethnic ideology while being simultaneously confined to another toxic one caused by the dominance of English in American society. Therefore, to analyze the complicated experience of Chinese Americans, I use a new term linguistic unhomeliness to replace Bakhtin's linguistic homelessness. The definition of this term is that when immigrants come to a new country, the influence of their native language and its related ideology is overwhelmed by the influence of a certain dominant language of the new country and its related ideology. In other words, the dominant status of immigrants' native language and its related ideology is lost due to the dominant status of a rooted language of the new country that immigrants come to. In addition to that, I choose the word "unhomeliness" because Chinese Americans' experience of being discriminated against gives a sense that the U.S., their country, is not a home that embraces them. In other words, they are unhomed by the discrimination that they receive.

### **A Linguistic Home for Chinese Americans**

In "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe", Chinese in the United States and non-Chinese people in Kingston's adaptation of Ts'ai Yen's myth are both regarded as uncivilized people, revealing that Chinese Americans during the

1940s to 1970s experienced linguistic unhomeliness caused by monolingual American society. Kingston describes the uncivilized aspect of the Hsiung-nu tribe which the historical record did not mention, revealing a Chinese ideology that only the Chinese are civilized. For example, she writes “the tribe fought from horseback, charging in a mass into villages and encampments” (Kingston 208), presenting the Hsiung-nus as evil and brutal because they attack and rob common people. In addition, Ts’ai Yen “gave birth on the sand; the barbarian women were said to be able to birth in the saddle” (Kingston 208). The dirty childbirth environment further emphasizes that the Hsiung-nus are barbarians. Kingston concludes that “The barbarians were primitives” (208). This adaptation illustrates that Chinese culture contains the ideology that foreigners are barbarians. First-generation Chinese immigrants in Kingston’s community did not change their belief in this ideology despite living in a foreign country. For example, they call the United States a “ghost country” and non-Chinese individuals “ghosts”. These dehumanized names disclose that they consider only China as civilized and only her people as humans.

However, in the U.S., the Chinese are considered uncivilized. They are discriminated against because of their race. Kingston notes that “you can see the disgust on American faces looking at Chinese women who speak loudly because of “the way Chinese sounds, chingchong ugly, to American ears” (Kingston 171). Words like “disgust” and “ugly” highlight that the Chinese also experience discrimination because of the way they speak. The image of uncivilized non-Chinese people in Chinese culture, and the image of uncivilized Chinese in American society create a mirroring contrast. The ideology that Chinese are civilized, and foreigners are uncivilized is lost and even reversed because Chinese

is not the official language of the United States. Since Chinese Americans' linguistic unhomeliness involves the rise of another harmful ideology that the Chinese are uncivilized, it must end.

Even worse, the Chinese Americans presented in this memoir are in a desperate state of being incapable of resolving linguistic unhomeliness. Many Chinese Americans in this chapter believe that assimilation is the solution. For example, facing disgust from native English speakers in the U.S. for the way Chinese people speak, "American- Chinese girls had to whisper to make ourselves American-feminine" (Kingston 172). This change of voice dynamics reflects their desire to assimilate, implying a submission to the racist idea that the Chinese accent is inferior and less civilized than the American one. In addition, Kingston's mother cuts her tongue so that "[her] tongue would be able to move in any language ..." (Kingston 164). Although abusive, this step also shows Kingston's mother's love for her, revealing the desire for her to be multilingual. However, Kingston recalls that "The Chinese say, 'a ready tongue is an evil'" (164), indicating that her mother sacrifices a norm of Chinese culture to prevent her children from being silenced. Her mother's response, "Things are different in this ghost country" (Kingston 164), demonstrates that she compromises with the dominant American society in exchange for her daughter's brighter future. Compromise means acquiescing to the ghost's idea, the idea of uncivilized Americans, that some Chinese norms are inappropriate. This compromise marks the ideology loss that Chinese culture is the most civilized. Therefore, linguistic unhomeliness is strengthened rather than weakened.

Conversely, some Chinese Americans believe that not leaving the Chinese community to avoid communicating with foreigners is a method. For example,

one of Kingston's classmates staying at her home in Chinatown and never leaves it after growing up. However, this is not a feasible method to eliminate linguistic unhomeliness. Living in the Chinese community cannot prevent residents from becoming the victims of English Hegemony or discrimination.

Therefore, in this critical situation, Kingston's portrayal of Ts'ai Yen, who is trapped in Hsiung-nu, being able to break the forced silence gives the hope of ending linguistic unhomeliness for Chinese immigrants, creating a homing effect. In Kingston's imagination, Ts'ai Yen is shocked when barbarians play their flutes. The quotation "Its sharpness and its cold made her ache" (Kingston 208) shows that Ts'ai Yen could understand the barbarians' moods through music. The next line "It disturbed her so that she could not concentrate on her own thoughts" (Kingston 208) reveals how deeply affected she was by their emotional music. Realizing that music can convey feelings, Ts'ai Yen manages to break silence through music: she starts to sing about China and her family while the barbarians are playing their flutes. "Her words seemed to be Chinese, but the barbarians understood their sadness and anger" (Kingston 125). This quotation reveals that emotional songs can transcend the language barrier. It is possible for people with different ethnic backgrounds, languages, and ideologies to communicate with each other equally if they are sincere enough. Ts'ai Yen brought her songs back to China, including the one named "Eighteen Stanzas for a Barbarian Reed Pipe". Then, Kingston ends the whole chapter, the whole book, with her comment of "It translated well" (Kingston 125). Translate? What is "it"? What did it translate? Given the quotation's positive voice, I believe that "it" can be interpreted as Ts'ai Yen's Chinese song, which successfully "translated" Ts'ai Yen's nostalgia feelings to the Hsiung-nus without actually translating it into the

Hunnic language. Therefore, Kingston highlights that emotional resonance can be a bridge of mutual understanding between people of different races, languages and ideologies. In addition, Kingston's decision to conclude her self-proclaimed myth of Ts'ai Yen with a highly ambitious matches the mysterious atmosphere of myths, reinforcing her broader framework of humans' stories as myths.

Furthermore, this enigmatic ending opens the possibility for readers to consider this tale's relevance to modern society across the Atlantic Ocean, transcending its original geographic context: this story of Ts'ai Yen can also translate the pain of Chinese Americans suffering from linguistic unhomeliness to mainstream society. Ts'ai Yen, a civilized Han Chinese, were treated like a slave in a country of barbarians; Chinese Americans, as descendants of the great Chinese civilization, were linguistically discriminated against by the white barbarians at that time. So, if Ts'ai Yen's "barbarians" were capable of empathizing her emotions through her singing; Chinese Americans' "white barbarians" would ease linguistic discrimination after learning their struggles under English hegemony. The newfound respect for language diversity could provide Chinese Americans with the liberty to communicate in Chinese without fear of discrimination or marginalization. This would enable them to maintain their Chinese ideologies, including those that may be considered problematic. In brief, thanks to storytelling, Chinese Americans will enjoy a future free of linguistic unhomeliness, a future where every American has an equal voice. This national home free of linguistic unhomeliness for all will give Chinese Americans a sense of belonging. In addition, to Chinese Americans readers who suffer from linguistic unhomeliness, this published myth can serve as a source of comfort since it is shown as a means to alleviate linguistic unhomeliness. Thus, this

myth provides a spiritual shelter that protects mental health, another kind of home, in the eyes of Chinese American readers.

### **A Hope for Two Generations**

Moreover, this adaptation of Ts'ai Yen's myth gives the possibility for second-generation Chinese Americans to maintain their belonging to the Chinese community which is established by first-generation Chinese Americans. In "A Song for A Barbarian Reed pipe", Kingston recalls that first-generation Chinese Americans "would not tell [their] children [their secrets] because we had been born among ghosts, were taught by ghosts, and were ourselves ghost-like" (Kingston 183). Her memory reveals that first-generation Chinese Americans isolate their children because they were surrounded and educated by non-Chinese. Thus, they are not pure Chinese and become "a kind of ghost" (Kingston 183). The isolation Chinese Americans face from their community due to familiarity with American culture gives them a feeling that they don't belong, showing readers a possible future in which second-generation immigrants break ties with first-generation immigrants. Therefore, the sentence "[Ts'ai Yen's] children did not laugh, but eventually sang along when she left her tent to sit by the winter campfires" (Kingston 209) shows not only Ts'ai Yen's success in making her half-Hsiung-nu sons understand her feeling but also the possibility for two generations immersed in different cultures to understand each other. Therefore, the dark future of the second-generation immigrants cutting ties with their families and even the Chinese American community due to isolation from the first-generation immigrants is denied. It is replaced by a bright future where the mutual understanding between the two generations enables both parties live in harmony. This implied future guarantees readers that Chinese Americans will

continue to possess a familial and a communal home.

### **The Ballad of Mulan**

Kingston's adaptation of Mulan's myth in *The Woman Warrior's* second chapter "White Tigers" showcases a far more intense relationship between the protagonists and their homes compared to that in "A Song for A Barbarian Reed pipe". Before fully exploring this complex relationship, I need to first introduce the prototype of Kingston's adaptation: the story of Mulan—a woman warrior widely known in Chinese culture<sup>3</sup>. The most famous version of her story is the poem "The Ballad of Mulan,"<sup>4</sup> whose author remains unidentified. According to the ballad, a young woman named Mulan disguises herself as a male to join the army to spare her father from military service. She survives the war. Instead of seeking power or wealth, she returns home to live the life of an ordinary person. When her military friends visit her, she reveals her gender to them. The poet concludes that "双兔傍地走/安能辨我是雌雄" ("Mulan Shi"<sup>5</sup>). In English: "Two hares running side by side close to the ground, / How can they tell if I am he or she?" (Frankel 70)<sup>6</sup>. "I" in the question indicates a shift of the poem's narrative perspective from the third-person to the first-person, pointing out that hares here, in fact, refer to humans. Thus, through this metaphor, the rhetorical question emphasizes that women can be as capable as men even on battlefields, a realm that is understood as exclusively masculine, refuting the biased claim that women are weaker than men. Such a

<sup>3</sup> The common scholarly view is that this myth was created during the Northern Wei dynasty.

<sup>4</sup> The poem is named "Mulan Shi" in Chinese. Compiled in *the Music Bureau Collection* attributed to Guo Mao Qian of the Song Dynasty, it is the earliest recorded story of Mulan that people can access. It is very well-known among the Chinese. For example, it is collected in Chinese junior high school textbooks in mainland China.

<sup>5</sup> This is the Chinese digital source of "The Ballad of Mulan": <https://zh.m.wikisource.org/zh-hans/%E6%9C%A8%E8%98%AD%E8%A9%A9>.

<sup>6</sup> All the English translations are from Hans H. Frankel's *Flowering Plum and the Palace Lady: Interpretations of Chinese Poetry* (69-70).

feminist assertion gives Mulan's story cultural significance in Chinese literature.

### **Han Chinese Communities as Homes**

Kingston adapts this famous ballad in "White Tigers", retelling her version from a first-person narrative. Different from Mulan in the ballad, her Mulan is a Han Chinese warrior who takes the responsibility to protect her Han compatriots. This kind of reimagination creates a homing effect while strengthening it. The demonstration of Mulan having a duty to fight for the Han people highlights Mulan's ethnicity. When Mulan's female master invited Mulan to be her apprentice, she said, "You can be remembered by the Han people for your dutifulness" (Kingston 23). "Dutifulness" indicates that Mulan is responsible to fight for the Han, implying that Mulan is a Han Chinese. Mulan's reply is "I'll stay with you" (Kingston 23), showing her willingness to accept this duty. Her determination to fight for the benefit of the Han people reveals that she politically and emotionally aligned with the Han Chinese community. In other words, Kingston's adaptation discloses that Mulan considers her Han Chinese community home because she belongs there, politically and emotionally. Therefore, here, the creation of a homing effect happens.

In comparison, in "The Ballad of Mulan," Mulan's ethnicity is unclear, and Mulan does not have the duty to protect the Han Chinese. Mulan's ruler is called "可汗" ("Mulan Shi"), translated as "The Khan" (Frankel 69), implying the regime is not Han. However, Mulan also calls her ruler "天子" ("Mulan Shi"), translated as "the Son of Heaven Khan" (Frankel 69), a Han title. The mixed titles show that Mulan's ruler is the emperor of the Northern Wei Dynasty because they are Xianbeis, who localized themselves after conquering

northern China<sup>7</sup>. Since the regime was multi-ethnic, it is impossible to know whether Mulan is Han Chinese.

This information reveals that it is Kingston's own decision to make Mulan a Han Chinese in her adaptation. Notably, Kingston self-identifies as Han Chinese: she comments "the Han people won't be pinned down" (Kingston 112) when the undocumented citizens of her Chinese community express their concern about being deported. Therefore, Mulan's Han ethnicity in Kingston's adaptation reflects that she recontextualizes her Han Chinese identity while rewriting Mulan's story.

This recontextualization is significant because without it, readers would not be able to see Mulan's perception that the imagined Han Chinese community is her home and the homing effect would not be created. In addition, this recontextualization reflects that Kingston is affiliated to the imagined Han Chinese (American) community, which means she considers that community home. Thus, this change simultaneously strengthens the homing effect while creating it.

Moreover, in the poem, Mulan enters military service for her father, who is drafted yet too old to survive. The line, "阿爷无大儿" ("Mulan Shi"), translated as "Father has no grown-up son" (Frankel 69), implies that if Mulan had an elder brother to replace her father, she would not fight. This possibility demonstrates that the motivation for fighting of Kingston's Mulan is more selfless than that of Mulan in the poem: she fights for the Han people, not just her family. Kingston's decision to make Mulan a Han warrior who is obligated to fight for the

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<sup>7</sup> Lv Jihong holds the same view in their work "The study of 'The Ballad of Mulan'" (9-10). They also argue that the Xianbei regime calls other non-Chinese ethnicities barbarians. That matches the fact that in the poem, there is a phrase named "胡骑" ("Mulan Shi"), translated as "nomad horses" ("Mu-lan" 3), which means barbarian foreign cavalry.

Han Chinese emphasizes that Mulan and Kingston consider their Han Chinese community homes, strengthening the homing effect.

### **Chinese Americans as Double Exiles**

#### *The Exiles of China*

Kingston's Mulan gives the Han people land as part of fulfilling her duty to fight for them. This plot development matches Kingston's Han Chinese community's exile experience of losing land in China, strengthening the homing effect. Mulan says that before she and her troops enter Peiping, one of the scenes that she sees is that "the land was peopled—the Han people" (Kingston 42). The scene implies that after her troops conquered part of China, they redistributed land equally among people, revealing that Mulan does help the Han Chinese. Connecting "the Han people" to the word "peopled" reveals the heroine's regard for the Han Chinese as people, emphasizing her loyalty to the Han Chinese community while exposing her indifference to other ethnicities. After imagining this scene, Kingston comments that if she were Mulan, "[she would] have to storm across China to take back our farm from the Communists" (49). Kingston declares that she can only return to her family's old farm if she has achieved the grand goal of conquering China, which is impossible. Therefore, her thought suggests that it is impossible for her family to visit their old land, which the CCP took. Edward Said in his work *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (2000) states, "Exiles are cut off from their roots, their land, their past" (177), meaning that people who do not have access to ancestral places, traditions, a land they should own as property, or any place where they once lived are exiles. Since Kingston's family lost their accessibility to their land that bears their past, their cultural roots and were forced to separate from other relatives, they are exiles.

Similarly, most first-generation immigrants of Kingston's community are also exiles. One of them cries, "We don't belong anywhere since the Revolution. The old China has disappeared while we've been away" (Kingston 184). Their claim indicates that these war refugees lost not only their home country but also their past because being trapped in the U.S. only allows them to revisit their old hometown and even their relatives through gradually blurred memories. Moreover, these undocumented citizens can "never [enjoy] the state of being satisfied, placid, or secure" (Said 186), which means that they can never feel satisfied, safe, or can never find peace. The reason is that they have the constant worry of being deported. Although the younger generation in this community does not share this worry because they were born in the U.S., they are also exiles because they are unrooted from their ancestral home, a village in China. Kingston's adaptation of Mulan giving the Han people land reflects her desire to stop her community from being cut off from their land and end the exile status of her community. This desire reflects Kingston's belonging to her anti-CCP exile community, further strengthening the homing effect.

### *American Exiles*

Kingston and her community were exiled not only from China but also from American mainstream society. Edward Said comments, "exile is a solitude experienced outside the group: the deprivations felt at not being with others in the communal habitation" (Said 177). My explanation is that people who are considered exiles share loneliness caused by being isolated from a group. Exiles feel their rights are deprived due to their isolated status. Chinese Americans are isolated from mainstream American society. For example, between the 1940s

and 1970s, to some extent, Kingston and her community experienced racial segregation as she grew up: people in her community avoided talking to non-Chinese for fear of being deported. Therefore, although Kingston grew up attending schools with different races, she did not have opportunities to make friends with non-Chinese Americans. Moreover, (Han) Chinese Americans' rights were deprived of this isolation. Kingston witnessed the forced demolishing of her parents' laundry shop and the slum due to the urban renewal program for a parking lot. According to her, her parents and the community did not receive any compensation. These experiences demonstrate that white Americans ignored Chinese Americans' compensation rights at that time. These unpleasant experiences of being a minority are one of the reasons why she feels her "American life has been such a disappointment" (Kingston 45). This quotation shows that as an exile, Kingston once felt lost and alone, and she lived without purpose.

Based on this context, by depicting the enemy of Kingston's Mulan as matching Kingston's definition of the enemy of Chinese Americans, rather than Mulan's enemy in 'The Ballad of Mulan', this adaptation not only demonstrates Kingston's loyalty to the inclusive Chinese community, but also suggests that she has found a sense of purpose in fighting for Chinese Americans and thus will no longer feel alone. "The Ballad of Mulan" never states who Mulan's enemy is. In Kingston's version, Mulan has several enemies, such as the Mongols, the emperor, and the baron. The most important villain is the baron. Why? In the traditional poem, the emperor issues the conscription order: "昨夜见军帖 / 可汗大点兵" ("Mulan Shi"). In English: "Last night I saw the conscription notice, /The Khan is issuing a great draft" (Frankel 69). However, in Kingston's story,

it's the baron who "has pledged fifty men from this district, one from each family" (31). Changing the issuer of the conscription notice indicates that the baron is eviler than the unjust emperor and, thus, the true villain. Moreover, he is the final target of the heroine's journey of revenge, reaffirming that the one who makes and enforces unjust policies is the vilest.

Notably, Kingston's decision to make the baron, an executive, the vilest villain in her story matches her hostility towards executives in reality. Kingston said, "I've learned exactly who the enemy is. I easily recognize them—business-suited in their modern American executive guise" (48). This description of the clothing worn by the enemies of Chinese Americans indicates that, according to Kingston, their enemies are executives with a higher social status than most Chinese Americans during the 1970s. Kingston continues, "It's not just the stupid racists that I have to do something about, but the tyrants who for whatever reason can deny my family food and work" (49). "For whatever reason" indicates that her family was rejected without a valid reason, implying that they suffered from racism. Therefore, according to Kingston the most important enemy of Chinese Americans is those people who make and enforce racist policies rather than random racists.

Due to this correspondence between Kingston's Mulan's most important enemy and Chinese Americans' most important enemy, the scene of Mulan killing the baron reflects Kingston's desire to punish those people who enabled unjust policies that targeted the Chinese. Kingston thinks, "The swordswoman and I are not so dissimilar" (53), indicating that she and Mulan have something in common. "The resemblance in the next sentence "May my people understand the resemblance ..." (Kingston 53) shows what she and Mulan have in common is the

ability and the desire to revenge the wicked to help the Chinese. This quotation thus strengthens the idea that Kingston wants to battle injustice for the rights of her family and the inclusive Chinese American community, which includes the one located in the Chinatown and the broader one confined by the boundaries of the U.S. Kingston feels that she has a responsibility to be an American activist who defends Chinese Americans' rights. Since taking back their rights can eliminate their feelings of dispossession and isolation, Kingston also aims to end the exile status of Chinese Americans. This goal reveals her sense of belonging to her family, the inclusive Han Chinese American community and thus implies a future that Chinese Americans are no longer exiles, strengthening the homing effect.

Moreover, embracing this duty motivates Kingston to establish relationships with people from American mainstream society. Kingston explains the meaning of the vengeance in her eyes: "The reporting is the vengeance" (53). This quotation implies that she would revenge her family and her ethnic community members who were discriminated against by reporting the incident. Also, Kingston's explanation of revenge is: "The idioms for revenge are 'report a crime' and 'report to five families'" (53). This quotation strengthens the point that Kingston would defend the rights of Chinese Americans by reporting cases of discrimination cases or hate crimes. The phrase "report to five families" (Kingston 53) suggests that Kingston would revenge the Chinese Americans' "enemy" by telling others about the experience of being discriminated against in writing or orally. Because Chinese Americans at that time mostly lived in Chinatowns, if Kingston wanted to report cases of Chinese discrimination and allow the discriminators to be punished fairly, she would have to persuade those

in charge of these matters in mainstream society or win the support of the majority of mainstream society to make officers feel pressured. Either way, she would need to have a strong ability to socialize in mainstream society. In other words, to accomplish this life goal, she would establish some kind of relationship, whether close or distant, with people from mainstream society. And building a relationship is often the beginning of establishing a sense of belonging. Therefore, Kingston's adaptation implies an end to her US exile status and an establishment of her Chinese American identity and her belonging to the American society outside Chinatown, strengthening the homing effect.

### **Sexist and Patriarchal Homes and the Homing Effect**

As I analyzed before, Mulan in "White Tigers" considers the Han Chinese community her home. In this chapter, Kingston also expresses her love for her family and the Han Chinese exile community where she grew up. However, these homes are patriarchal and sexist. It is easy to understand that Mulan's community is patriarchal and sexist because that's a norm for ancient worlds. On the other hand, there are more aspects to consider when concluding that a modern community is sexist or patriarchal. So, I need to clarify that the first-generation founders who believe in patriarchalism and sexism control the Chinese community that Kingston grew up in. When I argue that this community is patriarchal and sexist, I refer to such a dominant community atmosphere that is influenced by those founders. I do not include the young generations who are against patriarchalism and sexism, such as Kingston, because this memoir shows that they are the minority

Furthermore, the sexist and patriarchal features of those two communities weaken or strengthen the homing effect depending on the scenes that Kingston

pains. I argue that when readers focus on scenes where Mulan and Kingston decide to take on or not take on the patriarchal responsibilities imposed on them by their communities, the homing effect is weakened. When readers focus on the scenes where Mulan and Kingston are willing to fight for their communities regardless of the discrimination, the homing effect is strengthened.

Though I mainly discussed how the duty-giving adaptation strengthens the homing effect, it is not always the case. The scene of Mulan deciding to fulfill her duty as a wife cannot strengthen the homing effect for such a duty is sexist. Kingston uses the plot that Mulan will become an obedient housewife as a platform to express her rejection of the patriarchal familial duties that her community expects women to undertake. Thus, in “White Tigers”, Kingston shows her desire to leave the community, weakening the homing effect.

In both the ballad and Kingston’s story, Mulan stops serving in the army after the war and returns to her domestic life. However, in the poem, Mulan remains unmarried while in Kingston’s version, Mulan gets married<sup>8</sup>. Thus, they undertake different domestic responsibilities. The poem begins with a scene of Mulan weaving: “唧唧复唧唧/木兰当户织” (“Mulan Shi”). In English: “Tsiek tsiek and again tsiek tsiek, Mu-lan weaves, facing the door” (Frankel 68). This scene indicates that as a daughter, Mulan needs to weave for her family. As an unmarried woman, Mulan will continue to carry such a familial responsibility after returning to her original home. In Kingston’s version, the married Mulan returns home and tells her mother-in-law that “I will stay with you, doing farmwork and housework, and giving you more sons” (Kingston 45). Her

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<sup>8</sup> In her poetic memoir *I Love a Broad Margin to My Life* (2012), like some pre-modern Chinese historical fictions (etc. *Romance of Sui and Tang Dynasties*), Mulan commits suicide at the end.

commitment shows that the heroine accepts the gender norm that women are expected to work, do housework, and have sons, while men have no domestic obligations. The heroine also yields to the sexist mindset that favors boys. Therefore, Kingston reveals the sexism of traditional Chinese society in a way that “The Ballad of Mulan” fails to do: women in traditional Chinese culture are regarded as reproductive labor. Even the outstanding Mulan cannot escape such a fate. Therefore, the ending of Mulan deciding to fulfill her heavy familial responsibilities does not strengthen the homing effect because readers do not feel that a society or family that oppresses women is Mulan’s home.

Moreover, this adaptation elicits Kingston’s desire to leave her sexist community and family. Like the society that Mulan lives in, her community only requires women to cook and wash dishes. Kingston opposes these familial duties: “I refused to cook. When I had to wash dishes, I would crack one or two” (Kingston 47). Her mother calls her “a bad girl” for refusing to do housework. Her response “Isn’t a bad girl almost a boy?” (Kingston 47) shows that she knows that men are privileged in her community. Her community has a son preference. Before her brothers were born, “[her] parents [were] ashamed to take their [daughters] out” (Kingston 46), showing that like Mulan, women there are required to have sons. Based on this situation, Kingston said that she “did not plan ever to have a husband” (48) because “marriage and childbirth strengthen the swordswoman, who is not a maid like Joan of Arc” (48). “a maid like Joan of Arc” (48) refers to herself, emphasizing her unwillingness to enter marriage due to her community’s unequal demands for women. This comment also explains why she thinks of leaving her family: “Once I get outside the house, what bird might call me; on what horse could I ride away?” (Kingston 48). Kingston

confesses that she feels envy “when [she looks] at women loved enough to be supported” (48). Her jealousy exposes that the sexism of her family leads to their lack of care of her, motivating her to leave the household. As Kingston expresses her wish to leave her home, the homing effect is weakened.

Moreover, Kingston continues with “Even now China wraps double binds around my feet” (48). This metaphor indicates that she feels that her pursuit of freedom is hindered by China, a country that she never visited. Since her impression of China was built upon her Chinatown, her resentment of China reveals that the oppression that she experiences is enormous and her hate towards the sexism of her community is great. Readers feel that Kingston’s sense of belonging to her community has been ruptured because of the miserable living conditions for women, further weakening the homing effect. As a result, she moves to a place with Chinese but “no emigrants from [her] own village” (Kingston 52), reminding readers that she dislikes her original community rather than Chinese or China.

In “White Tigers”, there are other scenes that depict the gender inequality Mulan and Kingston experience. However, these scenes strengthen the homing effect because they show readers that Mulan and Kingston still regard those communities as their homes despite the discrimination they receive. In Kingston’s adaptation, the narrator describes Mulan’s willingness to fulfill her duty to liberate the Han Chinese people though they may persecute her once her gender is revealed, reinforcing that she regards this Han Chinese community as her home. Unlike the traditional poem which describes neither Mulan’s military position nor how she disguises herself, Kingston’s story portrays Mulan as a beloved commander who risks her life to conceal her gender. Most of the soldiers

in her army are strangers who joined the army because they admired her although she recruits her army first from villagers who know her. These soldiers yell that they are “On his side” (Kingston 39). “His side” here refers to Mulan’s side. This phrase shows Mulan’s great leadership while indicating that they admire Mulan as a male. Mulan herself said, “I never told them the truth” (Kingston 39) because “Chinese executed women who disguised themselves as soldiers or students, no matter how bravely they fought or how high they scored on the examinations” (Kingston 39). Yet, this information, to some extent, contradicts the fact that there are a number of female generals and intellectuals recorded in Chinese history<sup>9</sup>. This information mismatch reveals that through this adaptation, Kingston exaggerates gender inequality in Chinese culture.

Why did Kingston exaggerate gender inequality? First, due to the severe sexism, Mulan has to send her one-year-old son away from her when she battles to keep her fatal secret, making her suffer emotionally. However, even though she suffers, even though she knows that if her secret was revealed, the soldiers who admired her would kill her, and the people she helped or is trying to help would kill her, she still risks her life fighting for them, fighting alongside them. Therefore, this exaggeration emphasizes Mulan’s high sense of belonging to the Han Chinese community, strengthening the homing effect.

Nonetheless, Kingston’s decision to exaggerate means more than that.

Under Kingston’s portrayal, the sexism of Chinese ancient society is more severe

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<sup>9</sup> Female generals in Chinese history: 1) Lady Liang, the wife of Han Shizhong. 2) Princess Ping Yang Zhao. She organized an “Army of the Lady” to fight with her father, the founding emperor of the Tang Dynasty. 3) Qin Liangyu. She is the only woman who gained a traditionally male noble title (忠贞侯/ the chaste and loyal marquis) due to her success in battles. Ancient China has several famous female poets, such as Li Qinzhaoh. It is also recorded that in the Song Dynasty, two women named Lin Youyu and Wu Zhirui disguised themselves to attend the male-only imperial examination. After being exposed, they were rewarded.

in the story than in the ballad. In the plot of “The Ballad of Mulan,” Mulan reveals her secret to her former colleagues after retiring as a soldier. However, in “White Tigers”, even after the war is finished, Mulan in “White Tigers” does not tell her secret to anyone who is not her villager– anyone who did not know that she was a female in the first place. This comparison highlights the extreme sexism of ancient Chinese society in the story versus the ballad, revealing that Kingston exaggerates gender inequality in Chinese culture again.

The severe sexism in Chinese culture in Kingston’s revision is similar to the sexism in Kingston’s Chinese community. As Mulan is willing to fight for the Han people despite their discrimination, Kingston’s revision reflects her willingness to fight for her sexist Chinese community like Mulan, strengthening the homing effect. . In Kingston’s revision, women are regarded as second-class citizens. They are disposable and persecuted. As I analyzed before, Kingston’s Han Chinese community also sees women as inferior. Her community believes that “When you raise girls, you’re raising children for strangers” (Kingston 46), illustrating their belief that women belong to their husband’s families. Kingston grows up hearing sayings like “Feeding girls is feeding cowbirds” and “Better to raise geese than girls” (Kingston 46). Comparing girls to animals like cowbirds and geese demonstrates that the elders in her Chinese community dehumanize girls. Moreover, comparing girls to cowbirds confirms that females will leave their families through marriage, like birds. Since girls will depart and serve their husband’s families, raising geese is more beneficial than raising girls because people can at least eat geese. These metaphors demonstrate that females are objectified in Kingston’s community since parents treat women based on the profits that they can gain from them. Kingston even said, “There is a Chinese

word for the female I—which is “slave” (Kingston 47). This quotation reveals that due to the sexism she experienced in her Chinatown community, Kingston holds the belief that Chinese women are regarded as slaves.

By using her revision as an agent, however, Kingston expresses her desire to fight against injustice for the community members even though her community is abusive to women. Her words “May my people understand the resemblance [between the swordswoman and I] soon so that I can return to them” (Kingston 53). As I analyzed before, “The resemblance” implies that, according to Kingston, her will and ability to defend her Chinatown community are as strong as that of the Mulan she created. “I can return to them” indicates that if the community members respected her as much as Mulan, Kingston would forgive their sexist biases like Mulan did, and help them as she had previously wished. Her requirement to be respected is not hard at all: she only asks to be an exception, not asks for gender equality. Her willingness to mend relations with the extremely sexist Chinese community she left behind with one simple request shows that her sense of belonging to this Chinese community is like a broken light cord: broken but still hanging there. Even though this home is abusive, it is still her home. Therefore, Kingston’s self-comparison of her and Mulan slightly strengthens the homing effect.

### **There Are One Thousand Interpretations in a Thousand People’s Eyes**

Because the homing effect is defined as the consequence of showing readers that someone has a home that gives them a sense of belonging, it is understandable that readers may have interpretations towards a certain point, influencing the homing effect. So far, I have discussed that readers have one or

two interpretations of the plot. For the case of two interpretations, in the eyes of readers, either Mulan and Kingston have a home or they do not have a home. In other words, these explanations are not competitive. Therefore, they do not have an opposite influence on the homing effect.

In this section, I explore a more complicated relationship between the reader's interpretations of a plot and the homing effect. I argue that readers have four interpretations of a certain scene. Three readers' interpretations of this scene support a person having a home, while one suggests a person losing a home, which means that three interpretations suggest that the homing effect is strengthened while one interpretation suggests that the homing effect is weakened.

The scene is before Mulan leaves to recruit the army, Mulan's parents tattoo many words on Mulan's back. In addition, not only the myth of Mulan engages in the storytelling of this scene. This tattooing scene is adapted from the legend of Yue Fei<sup>10</sup>, a male general from the Song dynasty. The traditional version of the myth is that Yue Fei's mother tattoos four characters on her son's back, which means "serve the country with allegiance", before he fights Jin, Song's enemy. In other words, Kingston appropriates Yue Fei's mythical plot while creating her story of Mulan.

This tattooing scene is violent. Kingston describes the process of tattooing in detail: "[Mulan's father] began cutting; to make fine lines and points he used thin blades, for the stems, large blades" (34). The use of the phrase indicates large cuts, implying a bloody scene. As he tattooed, "the list of grievances went on and on" (Kingston 35). This plot suggests that her parents tattooed many

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<sup>10</sup> 《说岳全传》 (General Yue Fei) is the earliest source of this legend that people can access.

words on the heroine's body. It not only emphasizes that the scene is violent but also implies that Mulan is a capable fighter because she can endure significant pain, which is an essential quality of being a good fighter.

The interpretations of this plot involved two perspectives: ethnicity and gender. The first interpretation focuses on Mulan's belonging to her ethnic community. The phrase "The list of grievances" (Kingston 35), which I mentioned above, also refers to the list that records the names of victims of the tyranny. The tattoo's content changes from serving the country to mourning the dead, emphasizing the sufferings of people under tyranny. Her father says that tattooing is "[carving] revenge on [her] back" (Kingston 34), indicating that Mulan has taken responsibility for revenge on behalf of her people since tattooing is a symbol of vengeance. Thus, Mulan is portrayed as an enduring and responsible woman who is ready to wage war against the emperor for justice. Therefore, this scene enables readers who understand Mulan's love for the Han Chinese community to reinforce their impression that Mulan regards the Han Chinese community as her home and thus the homing effect.

Some readers interpret the tattooing scene from a gender perspective. They focus on the reason that Kingston chooses to adapt the story of Yue Fei and carry that question while reading the whole chapter. Their interpretation is the one that weakened the homing effect as it reflects Kingston's wish to not be a girl. As I analyzed before, this scene is both violent and portrays Mulan as a capable warrior. These two characteristics are considered masculine in the eyes of some readers. I quote the feminist ethicist Nel Noddings's words to explain this perspective: "the historical record confirms that wars have been men's wars. Within a society, males commit the overwhelming majority of violent crimes ...

Men are naturally more ... violence-prone than women” (213-214)<sup>11</sup>. Because history records more male-dominated violence and war, violence and war are masculine. Because of their belief in this view, those readers interpret Kingston’s appropriation of a violent scene of tattooing from a male warrior’s myth as her endowing Mulan masculine features.

In addition, those readers will be convinced that this adaptation reflects Kingston’s desire to be a male after reading the whole chapter because later in this chapter, Kingston discusses her rejection of her female identity. As I analyzed before, Kingston’s Han Chinese community is sexist. Later in this chapter, Kingston recalls that she probably said “I’m not a girl” (Kingston 46) when she faced sexism. This memory shows that she temporarily once rejected her female identity, suggesting Kingston’s wish to be a male. When her parents choose to welcome her brother’s return instead of hers, Kingston comments that “I would have liked to bring myself back as a boy for my parents to welcome with chickens and pigs” (47). This quotation reveals not only her parents’ preference for sons but also her wish to become a male due to the unfair treatment that she receives as a woman. Therefore, when looking back at the tattooing scene, readers who have already held the opinion that Mulan is given masculine traits think that Kingston creates a tattooing scene for Mulan to fulfill this impossible wish. In the eyes of those readers, the homing effect is weakened as Kingston’s affiliation to the female community is ruptured. It is important to note that this female gender community, like the nation, is an imagined community as it is impossible for all the females to communicate with each other.

Furthermore, the two following interpretations contain both gender and

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<sup>11</sup> Noddings’ perspective is debatable in academia.

ethnic perspectives. The third interpretation of this tattooing scene is that it reflects Kingston's desire to tolerate the unfair treatment of women in her familial home and the Han Chinese (Chinatown) community, slightly strengthening the homing effect. The tattooing scene foreshadows that Mulan is a woman warrior by emphasizing her endurance. The first-person narrative of the quotation "[My parents] would sacrifice a pig to the gods that I had returned" (Kingston 45) points out that Mulan's parents welcome her with sacrifice. This scenario is similar to that of the ballad: "小弟闻姐来 / 磨刀霍霍向猪羊" ("Mulan Shi"). In English: "When Little Brother hears Elder Sister is coming / He whets the knife, quick quick, for pig and sheep" (Frankel 70). These lines reveal that Mulan's family decided to welcome her home by giving her a special feast. However, as I said before, unlike Mulan, Kingston did not receive anything for graduating from UC Berkeley while her brother who "returned alive from Vietnam" (Kingston 47) received chicken and pigs from her parents.

For readers who take this scene as a part of the portrayal of a great woman warrior and know Kingston's regret of not being welcomed by her parents when she graduates, they would think that this scene reflects Kingston's belief that the Chinese respect female soldiers as well as male soldiers. Her brother receives special treatment because her brother served in a war. If she returns from Vietnam, she would be welcomed as well. Therefore, Kingston's decision to preserve the celebration scene of the ballad invites readers to interpret the episode as the narrator's self-comfort by deliberately ignoring the gender inequality that existed in the family that she grew up in to maintain her sense of belonging. The homing effect is slightly strengthened.

Moreover, the fourth interpretation is this scene implies that Kingston is

willing to help the members of her Han Chinese (Chinatown) community if they can reunite to fight against injustice rather than oppressing women. These readers relate the tattoos on Mulan's back to Kingston's comment on the tattoos later in this chapter: "What we have in common are the words at our backs" (Kingston 53). As I analyzed before, these words symbolize the villagers' sufferings and people's collective desire for revenge. Kingston tells her Chinese fellows that they are the same because they experience the same racial oppression and share the desire to fight against oppression. Her call to the Chinese for equality and understanding discloses that her connection with the community has not been severed. Therefore, the next quotation "May my people understand the resemblance soon so that I can return to them" (Kingston 53) shows that if the Chinese community members understand that they need to respect Kingston as a leader because, like the swordswoman, she will unite both Chinese men and women to fight against racial injustice, she will fight for them through pens. ^As I analyzed before, Kingston's wish to return to her Han Chinese (Chinatown) community leaves a seed of hope. Therefore, for readers who interpret this tattooing scene as an agent to express Kingston's willingness to serve her people if they change their sexist minds, the homing effect is strengthened.

In conclusion, I study Kingston's myth adaptation of Ts'ai Yen's story in the fifth chapter "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe". I argue that Ts'ai Yen's experience in Hsiung-nu echoes Chinese Americans' linguistic unhomeliness: they not only experience the loss of the dominant status of Chinese and its related ideology but also yield to the toxic ideology that English conveys. Kingston further adds the details of Ts'ai Yen's life in Hsiung-nu to reveal that emotional resonance can contribute to the multi-ethnic harmony, hinting that storytelling,

such as her retelling of Ts'ai Yen's story will help alleviate linguistic unhomeliness. The future demise of linguistic unhomeliness promises Chinese Americans a home in the future: they will establish a sense of belonging to an egalitarian U.S. Therefore, Kingston's retelling establishes a mental shelter that heals and protects Chinese American readers' hearts wounded by linguistic unhomeliness. Another imagined future where two generations of Chinese Americans can understand each other, like Ts'ai Yen and her sons, shows readers that Chinese Americans will continue to maintain their belonging to their ethnic community.

Kingston's adaptation of Ts'ai Yen's myth in "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe" reveals the struggles, such as linguistic unhomeliness, that characters face as minorities. In contrast, Kingston's adaptation of Mulan's myth in the second chapter "White Tigers" highlights identity conflicts, such as Mulan and Kingston's struggles as women in their sexist Han communities. These identity conflicts intensify the relationship between the protagonists and their homes, resulting in a detailed exploration of how the homing effect can both be strengthened and weakened in this chapter.

More specifically, in "White Tigers", Kingston gives the Han Mulan a duty to help the Han people when adapting the traditional myth of Mulan whose ethnicity is unknown. These two plot changes create a homing effect and strengthen it. To fulfill her duty, Mulan gives the Han people land. This plot development reflects not only Mulan's sense of belonging to the Han but also represents Kingston's sense of belonging to her exile community, aligning with their exile experience. To fulfill her duty, Mulan takes up arms against a baron. Notably, Mulan's battle matches Kingston's wish to fight against racist

policymakers. This plot dynamic shows that Kingston not only considers her ethnic community as her home but also has the intention to work with American mainstream society, strengthening the homing effect. When the unjust patriarchal duty is given to Mulan in the adaptation, the homing effect is weakened because it reflects Kingston's ruptured sense of belonging to the sexist Chinese community that she grew up in. When readers pay attention to Mulan and Kingston's attachment to their sexist communities, the homing effect is strengthened. Kingston's portrayal of Mulan being tattooed gives space for four competitive interpretations of whether the homing effect is strengthened or weakened.

In summary, Kingston's two adaptations of myths in her narration help demonstrate Chinese Americans' relationship with their homes. While not all of the changes made by Kingston show a sense of rootedness or belonging for Chinese Americans, the overarching message is one of hope. Through Kingston's magic hand, the old Chinese myths continue to empower Chinese Americans to build new homes in this new land.

## CHAPTER TWO: THE TRANSFORMATIONS OF SUN WUKONG

### Sun Wukong in Chinese Culture

Sun Wukong is a mythological figure, known worldwide as one of the main characters in the Chinese classical novel *Journey to the West*, said to be written by Wu Chenen. Therefore, although he was created before *Journey to the West* came out, I still use the portrayal of Sun Wukong in *Journey to the West* as the traditional one when comparing the different adaptations of this myth.

In *Journey to the West*, he first appears as a monkey born from a divine stone of Mount Huaguo. He has his first title: the Handsome Monkey King after becoming the Monkey King of Mount Huaguo. Puti Zushi, also known as Master Bodhi or Master Subodhi, is his first master. Puti names the Monkey Sun Wukong. Sun Wukong learns many advanced Daoist practices, such as the well-known seventy-two transformations, from Puti. Sun Wukong is portrayed as a fearless rebel in the first seven chapters. He makes a big fuss in the underworld to escape death. As a result, the Jade Emperor makes him “Protector of the Horses”. After knowing that it is the lowest position in heaven, he quits heaven and proclaims himself Qitian Dasheng (The Great Sage, Heaven’s Equal<sup>12</sup>). The Emperor “promotes” him to “Guardian of Heavenly Peach Garden” to ease him. Sun Wukong realizes that he is deceived again after knowing that he is not invited to the Royal Banquet. He sneaks into the Banquet and rebels against heaven, but is arrested. After escaping, he rebels against heaven again. Eventually, this rebellious monkey is suppressed by the Buddha under the Five Elements Mountain for five hundred years.

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<sup>12</sup> I choose to capitalize the first letter of every word as this translation of Sun Wukong’s title is more common. This choice does not contradict my decision to cite Gene Luen Yang’s different translation later when analyzing because my purpose is to not criticize his translation.

Five hundred years later Tang Sanzang rescues him on his way to the West (ancient India) to retrieve the Buddhist sutras. In exchange, Sun Wukong swears to protect Tang Sanzang as his apprentice during his journey. Although during this journey of redemption, the Monkey King's rebellious heart often conflicts with the mission of his journey, the Eighty-one tribulations they encountered made him mature. After they obtain the sutras and return to the Tang Empire (China), Sun Wukong is granted the title of Victorious Fighting Buddha for his accomplishments, marking his transformation from a rebellious figure to a figure who is successful in redemption.

Sun Wukong as a heroic character has enduring popularity. It has appeared as the protagonist in more than two dozen TV shows and more than two dozen movies involving *Journey to the West*, countless cartoons, graphic novels, and even music and video games. Notably, most reimaginings of Sun Wukong have been obsessed with his rebellious heart, continuing to portray him as a heroic rebel rather than a figure who seeks redemption. A rebel who yearns for freedom: this is what Monkey King transformed into in Chinese pop culture.

### **Sun Wukong's Transformations in Chinese American Literature**

The Monkey King's enduring popularity has transcended borders and cultures, captivating fans around the world, including in the United States, leading to the question: how has this beloved mythological figure been transformed in American culture? In this chapter, using the same home framework as a critical lens, I examine how three different Chinese American writers diverge in ways of transforming this Monkey into American literature.

### 1. *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book*

In the first section of this chapter, I continue to study Maxine Hong Kingston's work. *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book* talks about the life of the second-generation Chinese American protagonist Wittman Ah Sing in the U.S. Kingston's use of Sun Wukong's myth first reveals that he accepts his Chinese American identity and considers this community as his home. Borrowing a speech from Superman, this Chinese American man claims himself as the Monkey King. However, this imitation discloses his inability to build a new familial home. The adaptation continues to show that Wittman learns from the rebellious Monkey King to oppose his company for demoting him, revealing that his job does not provide him with a home. These two plots reveal Wittman's loneliness as a Chinese American. The cause of his loneliness is ambiguous. One possible cause is the inappropriate choices that Wittman makes, such as courting Nanci in such an unconventional way and frequently blowing off his work. However, another factor could be the discrimination that Chinese Americans face in the dating and theater industry, which particularly interests Wittman. He may have to compromise his creative aspirations and settle for a sales job that he does not love due to the barriers he encounters in the pursuit of his dreams, leading to his misbehavior. However, his conversation with Mr. Sanchez clearly indicates the systematic linguistic discrimination that Chinese Americans face. By demonstrating even Wittman's rebellious heart and his abilities (as powerful as the Monkey King) cannot defeat such a kind of discrimination, Kingston reveals that Chinese Americans of the time could not consider mainstream society as their home. Wittman plans to make changes to the Monkey King story as a director. This plan elicits that he finds a sense of belonging in two groups. The

first one is the Anti-War (Vietnam War) group, highlighting Wittman's rebellious heart. The second one is his direction group, which emphasizes his love for his country despite racism. The use of firecrackers highlights his love for his Chinese American community. Despite the show's success, Wittman's reference to the Monkey King's journey when complaining about the reviews of the Chinese American show reveals that mainstream society at that time always refused to embrace Americans of Chinese descent. His vocal rebellion against mainstream views reveals the cruel fact that Chinese Americans at that time could not have a national home.

### **Chinese American Community as Home**

In the first chapter "Trippers and Askers", Wittman addresses the Monkey King to talk about the difficulties that Chinese Americans experience as a whole, showing that he considers the Chinese American community as a home. Wittman asks whether Nanci has a Gold Mountain trunk that is "big enough to hold all the costumes for the seventy - two transformations of the King of the Monkeys in a long run of *The Journey to the West* in its entirety" (Kingston 29). The destination of Sun Wukong's journey changes from ancient India to the United States. Gold Mountain refers to the region where the Chinese migrated due to the gold rush. Therefore, the Gold Mountain trunk is a symbol, a representation. In *the Journey to the West*, the Monkey King needs to use seventy - two transformations to overcome all the obstacles to complete the journey. As the phrase "the costumes" implies that immigrants need to hide their true selves, "the costumes for the seventy - two transformation" here refer to the different kinds of sacrifices, compromises, and assimilation choices made by Chinese immigrants to take root in a new land. Therefore, this trunk represents Chinese Americans'

collective hard immigration journey. Wittman's inquiring about Nanci's Chinese ancestral immigration journey on their first date shows that he is more interested in Chinese American immigration history than Nancy, reflecting this Chinese American man's sense of belonging to the Chinese American community.

Therefore, this appropriation of Sun Wukong reveals that Wittman considers his Chinese American ethnic community as a home.

### **The Lonely Unhomed Chinese American**

Despite taking the Chinese American ethnic community as his home, Wittman faces difficulty in finding other homes. This difficulty is shown through Wittman's self-comparison with the Monkey King. First, Wittman's reference to the Monkey King in his date reveals his failure to establish a home. Wittman says to Nanci, "Listen, Lois. Underneath these glasses ... I am really: the present-day U.S.A. incarnation of the King of the Monkeys" (Kingston 33). It is rude for him to call Nanci Lois and this rude action implies that he intimates Superman's confession when claiming that he is the incarnation of the Monkey King. He thinks, "Now, if Nanci were the right girl for him, she would have said, 'Dear monkey. Dear, dear old monkey. Poor monkey'" (Kingston 33). The quotation shows that Wittman is not simply making a Superman joke to mock Nanci Lee. He uses his acting as a testament to Nanci Lee: whether she is his soul mate or not. Since Wittman confidently claims that he is the Monkey King, Nanci's sweet talk to the Monkey King in his imagination reveals that his soul mate must have the ability to comfort him. In addition, Lois here is Lois Lane, Superman's soul mate who always supports him. The combination of the Monkey King and Superman, a Kryptonian American, in Wittman's speech discloses that Wittman desires to use a romantic relationship to fulfill his as a minority in the U.S.,

implying that he has been so far unable to build a new familial home after leaving the household of his parents.

However, this speech makes Nanci feel insulted and thus leaves him. Wittman's reaction is to yell, "'Bee-e-eeen!'... loud enough for her to hear. 'Bee-e-eeen!' which is what Monkey yells when he changes" (Kingston 33). The capitalized Monkey here refers to the Monkey King. However, in *Journey to the West*, the Monkey King only sometimes yells "变" (change) when he practices his seventy-two transformations. In addition, though "Bee-e-eeen!" here refers to "变", their meanings are not the same. This translation change makes the sound longer. Longer the sound lasts, the longer Nanci has to listen to Wittman as he already makes the sound "loud enough for [Nanci] to hear" (Kingston 33). What Nanci has to listen to? The prolonged sound also makes the mood sad, suggesting that Wittman wants to use his sad voice to evoke Nanci's sympathy. Wittman utilizes the Monkey King again in his desperate attempt to change Nanci's mind, to find a soul mate. Yet, his attempt fails again. Thus, this adaptation emphasizes Wittman's failure of establishing a familial home for himself.

In the second chapter "Linguists And Contenders", Wittman compares himself to the Monkey King after he is demoted, showing readers that his job does not provide him with a home. The narrator supplements Wittman's thoughts on demotion with the following words in parentheses: "(The Monkey King had not minded cleaning stables until somebody told him that his title, Shit Shoveler to Avoid Horse Plague, was bottom in rank.)" (Kingston 61). This comparison directly tells readers that like the Monkey King, Wittman is displeased and disappointed that he is demoted to a part-time salesman, the lowest position in the Toy Department. The similarity between these two characters foreshadows

that just like the Monkey King in *Journey to the West* who quits his job and rebels against heaven after realizing the truth, Wittman will quit this job and make trouble in that store. And Whitman is indeed expelled by using toys to simulate sexual intercourse, as the foreshadowing said. Work offers people a chance to communicate with others. The working community is supposed to give a collective sense of belonging to all the employees. However, through the Monkey King narrative, readers know that Wittman feels humiliated in this environment enough to cause trouble before quitting the job forever. Therefore, by giving Wittman the rebellious heart of the Monkey King, Kingston tells readers that Wittman's first working community is not his home.

In the sixth chapter "A Song For Occupations", Wittman's reference to the Monkey King shows that mainstream society at that time was not home to him, to Chinese Americans. Mr. Sanchez, the unemployment officer, tells him that the Cs Wittman receives are "Chinese Cs". He explains, "The professor I t.a.'ed for told me to give guys like you the Chinese C, never mind the poor grammar and broken English. You're ending up engineers anyway" (Kingston 241). His words reveal that academia has the bias that all the Chinese have poor grammar and broken English and the bias that every Chinese will be an engineer. Wittman's question "Do you mean they kept me down to a C no matter how well I was doing?" reveals that the unfairness of language discrimination is that Chinese Americans are judged based on their race or ethnicity, not their actual language skills. Mr. Sanchez's response that "No, they were raising you to a C. They were giving you a break who couldn't learn the language" strengthens that academia at that time discriminated against Chinese because they assumed that people of Chinese descent could not learn English. The phrase "raising ... to ..."

emphasizes their arrogance: they were hurting the benefits of Chinese American students while thinking of themselves as the students' saviors.

In response to this, Wittman thinks, "Monkey powers—outrage and jokes— went detumescent at the enormity of the condescension" (Kingston 241). The Monkey King in *Journey to the West* is almost omnipotent. However, by claiming that the Great Monkey King cannot win a single battle in the U.S., Wittman highlights his frustration with discrimination against Chinese (including Chinese Americans) in academia and the entire system of government (represented by Mr. Sanchez). Thus, this quotation implies that Wittman self-identifies as the rebellious and powerful Monkey King who is eager to fight to win equality again. Since this kind of systematic discrimination is shown as unshakeable, it is hard to believe that Chinese Americans could find a sense of belonging in the mainstream society that discriminates against them systematically. Thus, Kingston's emphasis on the rebellious side of the Monkey King in the traditional image reveals that the U.S. mainstream society at that time was not home to Chinese Americans like Wittman.

### **Anti-War Community as Home**

Despite being discriminated against, Wittman still manages to find a multiracial community that provides him with a sense of belonging: the anti-Vietnam War community. Wittman's adaptation of the Monkey King's story implies his affiliation with this community. In Chapter 4 "The Winners of the Party", to persuade his friends to act in his show, Wittman tells his vision of adapting *Journey to the West*. He says, "The King of Monkeys drills and reviews troops; he leads martial arts regimens" (Kingston 137). This scene is original:

*Journey to the West* does not discuss the review of monkey troops. His monkey troops and troops of other animals do not practice martial arts in *Journey to the West*. This original plot echoes the military training and the reviews which American military soldiers receive before they join the war. The background that Wittman opposes the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War and is at the risk of being drafted reveals that the war is the Vietnam War. Wittman continues "The baby monkeys chase his whipping tail" (Kingston 137). He creates another original scene, emphasizing the cruelty of war as even baby monkeys who are supposed to play at their age have to join the battles. This creation emphasizes his affiliation with the Anti-Vietnam War community, a community against the government.

In addition, community members of a different race than him are caring. Taña De Weese, a white woman who also opposes the Vietnam War, marries Wittman to prevent him from being drafted. Greg, a man with a common white name, volunteers to be the ordained minister of their wedding. The help from these two people shows that the Anti-Vietnam War community is friendly to Wittman. This community gives Wittman a sense of belonging for the community members are united under the goal of rebelling against the Vietnam War. Thus, this adaptation shows that Wittman finds a home thanks to his rebellious heart.

### **A New Home: the Chinese American Theater**

The novel also shows Wittman's passion for the Chinese American theater helps him find a new home. The demonstration of Wittman's love for his new home can emphasize his affiliation with the Chinese American community or with the U.S.

In Chapter 4, Wittman tells his plan of showing how Sun Wukong rebelled against heaven to his friends. He says, “A band of a hundred and eight superheroes punt swift boats out of the sloughs” (Kingston 138), indicating his change from the traditional version. In *the Journey to the West*, the anti-hero Sun Wukong fights with the gods alone. In addition, this quotation indicates an adaptation of another Chinese classical novel *Water Margin* in which a hundred and eight outlaw heroes take Liangshan Marsh as their stronghold. Why would Wittman combine the two myths? The next sentence “An offstage voice will call out the names of heroes and heroines that were once not long ago—less than twenty years ago—star roles in American theater” (Kingston 138) points out the reason: he takes directing the play of the Monkey King as a chance to reintroduce all the characters who were once popular in American theater. This combination of two myths shows his passion to revive the American theater.

Interestingly, these heroes and heroines that Wittman wants to add to the play of the Monkey King are all Chinese figures. For example, “Liu Pei and Chang Fei” (Kingston 138) are the names of historical figures of the Three Kingdoms and fictional characters of the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. “Red Jade” (Kingston 138) is Liang Hongyu, a fictional character based on the experience of Lady Liang, and “Flower Wood Orchid” (Kingston 138) is our dear Mulan. Wittman also includes “the ladies and goodwives of the Water Margin” (Kingston 138). Wittman self-explains this change, “I want to bring back—not red-hot communist Chinese—but deep-roots American theater. We need it” (Kingston 141). This quotation indicates that he considers these figures part of American theater culture. Since these characters are originally Chinese, the implication is that the American theater Wittman is interested in reviving is

the Chinese American theater. During the process of accomplishing his dream, Wittman seeks help from the Benevolent Association, a Chinese American organization, and his white friends. They all agree to help him for accomplishing such a goal. This Chinese American Theater club thus gives Wittman a sense of belonging which mainstream society fails to give. Therefore, this club is his new home. In addition to that, the demonstration of Wittman's adaptation of the Monkey King also shows his affiliation towards the Chinese American community, his home. Notably, this kind of affiliation here leans more towards his American identity as he explains that his interest in Chinese plays is rooted in his love for his American identity. Therefore, despite being unable to find a sense of belonging with mainstream society, Wittman still considers his country, this imagined community, as home.

I want to clarify that the demonstration of the Chinese American theater, Wittman's new home, in the novel does not always emphasize Wittman's love for his country. In Chapter Eight "Bones and Jones", Wittman chooses to use firecrackers during the performance of the Monkey King play, which *Journey to the West* does mention, reflecting his affiliation with the Chinese American community. He explains, "Blow it all up. Set the theater on fire" (Kingston 303). This quotation shows that Wittman uses firecrackers to make the theater look like it's on fire. The narrator says, "In the tradition of theater fires, in remembrance of the burnings of Chinatowns, and of the Great Earthquake and Fire, and of the Honolulu plague fire at the New Year and the new century ..." (Kingston 303), implying that Wittman uses firecrackers to commemorate the traumatic incidents that Chinese Americans experienced. The notion of one of the reasons why Wittman uses firecrackers as the stage props for this Chinese

American play in theater underscores his devotion to his old home: the Chinese American community.

### **An Ultimate Failure to be Homed**

In Chapter Nine “One-Man Show”, Kingston changes not only the destination of the Monkey King’s journey, as she did in the first chapter, but also its departure location. These changes help express Wittman’s dissatisfaction with racist mainstream society. Wittman’s drama is quite successful because at least six newspapers publish drama reviews (the Chron, the Examiner, the Oakland Tribune, The Daily Cal, the Berkeley Gazette, and the Shopping News).

However, this success emphasizes mainstream society’s exclusion of Chinese Americans. One of the comments says, “East meets West” (Kingston 307).

Wittman complains about this comment, “There is no East here. West is meeting West” (Kingston 308). In *Journey to the West*, “East” refers to China, the starting point of the Monkey King’s journey; “West” refers to ancient India as the journey’s destination. Yet, the “West” mentioned by both the commentator and Wittman is not ancient India but the U.S, indicating the spread of the Monkey King’s myth into American society. Moreover, Wittman disputes that the commentator’s idea to follow the traditional implication of “East”, the destination of the Monkey King’s journey. He asserts that the Monkey King is from the U.S.

Wittman’s change in the departure location of the Monkey emphasizes that the Americanness of this Chinese American show, revealing that this show’s nationality is American not Chinese. Wittman’s contention makes readers realize that the hidden racism and xenophobia lie in the previous comment: it assumes that all people of Chinese descent are not Americans. Wittman continues, “This was all West. All you saw was West. This is The Journey *In* the West” (Kinston 308).

The italicized word highlights that the American Monkey King is making a domestic tour, not an international travel, in the country of the U.S. His change of the Monkey King is a protest against the alienation of Chinese Americans.

Although Wittman's reference to the Monkey King shows his love for his country and his Chinese American fellows, it also shows readers Wittman's anguish at mainstream society's xenophobia of Chinese Americans. The idea that mainstream society at that time was not Chinese Americans' home is reinforced. Moreover, the novel does not mention any improvement in the inclusiveness of society. And the title of this chapter "One-Man Show" implies that no one can understand Wittman's anguish and that his protest against racist xenophobia is in vain. These two points continue to strengthen readers' minds that mainstream society was not yet a home of Chinese Americans. Thus, while Wittman, like Monkey King, has a rebellious heart, the homing narrative ends in despair.

In conclusion, I examine three ways in which Kingston adapted the Monkey King myth in this novel. In the beginning, by changing the destination of the Monkey King's journey, Kingston presents Wittman's view of the Chinese American community as his home. The second way to compare Wittman to the Monkey King. Wittman proclaims that he is the Monkey King by imitating the confession of Superman, showing his loneliness as a Chinese American and his desire to use a romantic relationship to ease his loneliness. However, he fails to woo Nanci because of this imitation. His original rendition of a heartbroken Monkey King emphasizes his failure to start a family with his soulmate. Since family represents a kind of home, the adaptation demonstrates Wittman's failure of establishing a familial home. Wittman continues to compare himself to the Monkey King when being demoted. Their similar experience and similar

rebellious hearts show that Wittman cannot find a home by working. While it is unclear whether these two failures are solely caused by social discrimination, Wittman's other proclamation of being the Monkey King after his conversation with Mr. Sanchez makes it clear that mainstream society was not a home for Chinese Americans at that time. The third way is to demonstrate how Wittman changes the Monkey King's experience in his play. His change in the pre-War scene reveals that his rebellious heart helps him find a home outside of the Chinese American community: the Anti-War group. His presentation on how to change the traditional plot helps him find a group that provides him with a sense of belonging: a multiracial group working together for this play while demonstrating his love for his home country: the U.S.A. The creative use of firecrackers on stage emphasizes his affiliation with his ethnic home. At last, Kingston goes back to the first way when she presents Wittman's complaints about the racist reviews of this successful show. The changes on the Monkey King's destination and departure location reveals that Wittman rebels against mainstream society's xenophobia. However, just as the Monkey King's rebellion cannot help himself find a home in heaven, Wittman's rebellion could not help Chinese Americans find a true home in mainstream society at that time.

## ***2. American Born Chinese***

By retaining the Monkey King's rebellious heart while altering the details, Kingston underscores the seriousness of racism in *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book*, a work about Chinese American identity. In his graphic novel *American Born Chinese*, Gene Luen Yang also discusses Chinese Americans' identity issues. However, different from *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book* and Chinese

pop culture, the adaptation in *American Born Chinese* focuses on the visual illustrations and the redemption aspect of the traditional image of Sun Wukong, which can be regarded as a subversion of the readers' modern impression of Sun Wukong. This recreation aims to present the redemption journeys of Sun Wukong and Jin Wang, emphasizing the importance of accepting one's racial identity. First, Yang makes a dramatic change to the myth of Sun Wukong, giving Sun Wukong and Jin Wang an incentive to commit the sin they need redemption for. Yang subverts the deities' view of barefoot to create a Sun Wukong who faces racism that makes him unhomed, defined by me as being unable to establish a home, in heaven. Sun Wukong's experience points out the racist nature of the microaggressions his parallel character Jin Wang encounters, revealing why Jin Wang's new school is not his intellectual home. The unhomed feeling caused by racism provides the foundation for both characters choosing to abandon their racial homes to assimilate, making mistakes that they need to redeem. Second, Yang alters several details to emphasize that Sun Wukong is guilty of denying his monkey identity because it is rooted in racism. Yang creates Sun Wukong's son named Wei-Chen whose conversations with Jin Wang imply that he also makes the mistake of abandoning his innate racial community (his Chinese American home) out of racism. Then, Yang recontextualizes Sun Wukong's story in Christianity. Tze-Yo-Tzun preaches to him why it is a sin to deny his innate racial identity in terms of Christianity, providing the religious foundation for Sun Wukong to self-reflect in the future. Tze-Yo-Tzun punishes Sun Wukong for his sin, demonstrating Sun Wukong's first step on his road to redemption. Barefoot Wong Lai-Tsao guides Sun Wukong to redeem his mistake by embracing his monkey identity again. The repented Sun Wukong, disguised as Chin-Kee, later

makes Jin face the reality that he is Chinese and realize his mistake, guiding him to return home. Through retelling Sun Wukong's redemption story, the graphic novel shows readers, especially Chinese Americans, the necessity of maintaining the connection to their innate racial homes even in the face of racism.

### **Failures of Establishing Homes Are Seeds Of Sins**

The graphic novel reimagines the story of *Journey to the West* to reveal the racial discrimination faced by Sun Wukong, contributing to the demonstrations of Sun Wukong and Jin Wang's failures of establishing homes. In *Journey to the West*, Sun Wukong enters the Royal Banquet disguised as Barefoot Immortal, while in the adapted version by Yang, the gate guard claims that he rejects Sun Wukong because he "[hasn't] have any shoes" (Yang 14). This subversion of the traditional plot seemingly shows that violating the dress code is the sole reason that Sun Wukong cannot attend the Banquet.

However, the guard continues, "You may be a **king**- you may even be a **deity**- but you are still a **monkey**" (Yang 15). Despite Sun Wukong's titles, the guard still despises him because he is a monkey, revealing that Sun Wukong is the victim of the guard's racism. Notably, because Yang makes being barefoot a monkey custom and the racist guard uses it as an excuse to reject Sun Wukong, the dislike of being barefoot is linked to racism.

Furthermore, it is not just a guard who discriminates against Sun Wukong, but many other characters of heaven. The panel on page 15 reveals that when the guard insults Sun Wukong, all the other present characters laugh. The large number of deities who took pleasure in the discrimination Sun Wukong suffered indicates the systematic racism against monkeys in heaven. Due to the severe racism, Sun Wukong cannot establish any sense of belonging to heaven, which

means heaven is not his home. Sun Wukong's life parallels Jin Wang's, helping reveal that Jin Wang fails to establish an intellectual home due to racism. After Sun Wukong's POV ends in his frustration over racism, the novel switches to the POV of Jin Wang who transfers to a new school. When his white classmate Timmy claims that all Chinese eat dogs, Jin's teacher reacts, "Jin's family probably stopped that sort of thing as soon as they came to the United States" (Yang 31), revealing that she shares the racist assumption that all people in China eat dogs. When a teacher does not intervene and instead supports a student's prejudice against another student, it is a sign of systemic discrimination. Jin Wang also suffers from the perpetual foreigner stereotypes because his teacher assumes that Jin is from his ancestral land, not the country he grew up in.

Both Jin and Sun Wukong's narratives are about being discriminated against, implying a parallel relationship between their experiences. Unlike the severe discrimination against Sun Wukong, the racist saying of Chinese eating dogs and the perpetual foreigner stereotype are often categorized as microaggressions. In addition, Jin Wang chooses to not confront racism. So, if a reader reads the scene of Jin Wang being introduced to his new class alone, the subtle racism may not be felt. So, Yang's use of parallel narratives helps readers, especially those who are not sensitive to racism, better understand the insidious racist nature of these microaggressions. Ultimately, readers can see that Jin Wang does not belong to this white-dominated school, revealing that this white-dominated educational institution is not his intellectual home. In short, Yang effectively demonstrates the destructive power of racism: it makes Jin Wang and Sun Wukong feel unhomed, leading them to commit racist wrongdoings that they

must work to redeem later.

### **Abandoning One's Racial Home: The Sinful Choices of Sun Wukong and Jin Wang**

Facing discrimination, Sun Wukong commits the mistake of pandering to racism. After being rejected to enter the dinner party and being mocked by the attendants, Sun Wukong “was thoroughly embarrassed” (Yang 15). The highlighted word shows his sadness about being discriminated against. As a result, he beats all the characters who witness his embarrassment. Then, he returns home and is greeted with “the thick smell of monkey fur” (Yang 20). “He stayed awake for the rest of the night, thinking of ways to get rid of it” (Yang 20). This quotation shows that a physical victory in battles cannot ease Sun Wukong’s sadness about being discriminated against. His thought to get rid of the smell of his fur indicates that he chooses to eradicate his monkey features rather than fight against racism. He yields to the racial hierarchy that believes that monkeys are inferior to others and want to achieve success through assimilation.

Moreover, Yang creates a plot of Sun Wukong issuing a decree that “all monkeys must wear shoes” (Yang 55). As I analyzed before, the criticism of monkeys not wearing shoes is rooted in racism. Therefore, Sun Wukong’s order to change the monkeys’ customs by force reveals the internalized racism that he experiences because Sun Wukong’s decision is like forcing Black people to straighten their naturally curly hair. He says to a shoeless monkey, “Those shoes must be worn on your feet, little ones” (Yang 61). The monkey’s response is to say “Awww ...” (Yang 61). The little monkey’s sadness shows Sun Wukong’s oppression of his fellow monkeys for forcing them to give up their culture. Therefore, this scene reinforces the argument that he experiences internalized

racism. Thus, Yang makes Sun Wukong a character that once rejects his monkey identity due to racism.

This is reinforced by Sun Wukong's declaration: "I am **not** a monkey" (62). Sun continues, "I am now **the great sage, equal of heaven**" (Yang 63), showing that he created this title to deny his monkey identity. Notably, though both proclaim themselves **the great sage, equal of heaven**, Sun Wukong in *Journey to the West* makes this decision because he feels that he is insulted by his low rank in heaven. The change of the reason for proclaiming such a title emphasizes Sun Wukong's rejection of his monkey identity due to racism. Because monkey identity marks Sun Wukong as a member of the monkey community, his identity denial equals his denouncement of membership to the monkey community. The adaptation reveals that Sun Wukong's decision to abandon his racial home is sinful because he is motivated by racism. By making these changes, Yang subverts the traditional portrayal of Sun Wukong as a proud monkey: Sun Wukong makes the mistake of giving up his old racial home. This subversion reflects Yang's focus on Sun Wukong's redeemed heart in the traditional work. In the eyes of readers who consider Sun Wukong as a rebel figure, Yang's portrayal of a sinful Sun Wukong subverts their understanding.

Similarly, Jin's conversations with Wei-Chen, the human incarnation of Sun Wukong's son created by Yang, reveal that he rejects his Chinese identity as a result of facing racism. When Wei-Chen first meets Jin in the new school, he asks Jin a question in Chinese. Jin says, "You are in America. Speak English" (Yang 37). Jin's words show his desire to abandon one of his native languages, Chinese. Since language represents identity, Jin's response marks his subconscious desire to deny his Chinese identity after facing racial discrimination

in school.

Jin officially renounces his Chinese identity after believing that racism is the reason why his first romantic relationship ends. Greg asks Jin “Not ask Amelia out again ... I want to make sure she makes good choices” (Yang 180). His words imply that Jin is not good enough for Amelia. Anyone who hears these words will think that it is an insult. So is Jin. The reason why Greg insults Jin seems to be unknown. Greg only complains to Amelia that “he’s kind of a **geek**” (Yang 184) after Amelia stops dating Jin. This comment reveals that there are two possible interpretations of Greg’s motive to insult Jin. He may say such a comment because he stereotypes Chinese or Asians as nerds, implying that he insults Greg out of racism. The second interpretation is that he does not hold any racial stereotype and he insults Jin simply because he does not like Jin’s nerd personality.

Jin’s insult to Wei-Chen echoes Greg’s earlier insult to him, showing readers Jin believes the first interpretation: he is insulted because he is Chinese. After being insulted by Greg, Jin chooses to kiss Wei-Chen’s girlfriend Suzy, and then insults Wei-Chen. Jin says, “Maybe I don’t think that you’re **worthy** of [your girlfriend]” (Yang 191). The implication of the insult here is the same as that of Greg’s insult to Jin: You are not good enough for her.

Jin continues to insult Wei-Chen “Maybe I think she can do **better** than a F.O.B. like **you**” (Yang 191). The implicit message is that Wei-Chen does not deserve Suzy because of his relatively short stay in the U.S. and his non-assimilated state. This insult, therefore, shows that Jin considers Chinese culture inferior, foreshadowing his future rejection of Chinese identity. Jin’s second insult to Wei-Chen shares a similarity to Greg’s to Jin since the implication of Jin’s first insult to Wei-Chen is the same as that of Greg’s insult to Jin. Therefore,

at least in Jin's view, the implication of Greg's insult is: "I think that Amelia can do better than a Chinese (American) like you". In other words, Jin's insult to Wei-Chen, Sun Wukong's son, reflects his view that he is insulted and loses her date because he, a Chinese (American), is considered inferior to white people.

Moreover, the seven figures of Jin portrayed in panel (194) show that after ending his friendship with Wei-Chen, Jin's hair, skin, and eyes get lighter. This transformation process shows that Jin becomes a white person with blonde hair, like Greg. Since Jin does not have the magic power to turn himself into a white person, this plot shows that Jin gives up his Chinese identity. Later, Jin gives himself an English name: Danny. Jin's new name reinforces that Jin chooses to pretend to be white. Jin's decision to reject his identity rather than fight against his insulter reveals that he has internalized racism. Thus, this adaptation criticizes Jin for committing the misdeeds of abandoning his Chinese (American) home.

### **Redemption Journeys to Return Homes**

Yang changes the god who defeats Sun Wukong, the reason why Sun Wukong is punished and his human master. These changes create a special image of Sun Wukong, different from the atoning Monkey King who is guilty of rebelling against heaven in *Journey to the West*: a sinner who atones for abandoning his racial home. First, in this graphic novel, Sun Wukong is defeated by Tze-Yo-Tzun, God in Christianity, not Buddha in *Journey to the West*. Through this change, Yang makes Sun Wukong listen to a religious explanation of why it is sinful to reject one's racial identity, emphasizing the righteousness of his redemption. Tze-Yo-Tzun introduces himself: "I am Tze-Yo-Tzun. I **was**, I **am**, and I **shall forever be**" (Yang 80). These highlighted words emphasize that

he is omnipresent. He continues, “I know your most hidden thoughts ... My eyes have seen all your days” (Yang 80). His words indicate that he is omniscient. His words “I am in the heights of heaven and the depths of the underworld” (Yang 80) indicate that he is the god of all gods, implying that he is omnipotent.

Because these are also the characteristics of God in Christianity, Tze-Yo-Tzun is related to Christianity. In addition, Gene Yang confirms that “I added Western, Judeo-Christian elements to my version” (Yang) and explains that “Tze-Yo-Tzuh” means “self-existence” in Chinese, “an existence independent of any other” (Yang). Since God in Christianity is self-existent, Yang’s words in his blog prove that Tze-Yo-Tzun in his novel is more like God in Christianity. In addition, the panel on page 68 shows that he holds a shepherd’s crook, which symbolizes compassion in the Bible, reinforcing this point.

Tze-Yo-Tzun is the Creator: “I created you. I say that you are a **monkey**. Therefore, you are a **monkey**” (Yang 69). This conversation shows that Tze-Yo-Tzun can design creatures. This power of creation reinforces the argument that Tze-Yo-Tzun is like God the Creator in Christianity. The repetition of the highlighted word “monkey” emphasizes that Sun Wukong is a monkey because of God’s design. It is considered a sin for Sun Wukong to refuse to accept the innate race assigned to him by Tze-Yo-Tzun. Yang’s change of the plot, therefore, helps readers who are familiar with Christianity understand why Sun Wukong in this graphic novel needs redemption as Christianity demands that people accept the body that God gave them.

After defeating Sun Wukong, Tze-Yo-Tzun says, “A monkey I **intended** you to be. A monkey you **are**.” The highlighted words reinforce the idea that denying the racial identity assigned by God is a sin. He needs to “accept this and

stop [his] foolishness” (Yang 81), the foolishness to attempt to change his race through self-denial. In brief, Yang’s decision to change Sun Wukong’s opponent from Buddha to God in Christianity enables Sun Wukong and readers to understand why it is a sin to refuse to admit one’s race from a perspective of racism: the Christian perspective. Though Sun Wukong did not repent at that time, Tze-Yo-Tzun’s teaching is invaluable for Sun Wukong’s later repentance because it provides a theoretical tool for his self-reflection on his decision to abandon his racial home.

Yang changes the reason why Sun Wukong is punished from rebelling against heaven to denying that he is a monkey, showing how Sun Wukong is forced to embark on the road of redemption. After defeating Sun Wukong, unlike Buddha, Tze-Yo-Tzun does not punish him immediately. Instead, he makes the above speech about accepting one’s racial identity in an attempt to enlighten Sun Wukong. However, Sun Wukong does not listen and attempts to attack him. As a result, Tze-Yo-Tzun buries Sun Wukong under a mountain. This change of plot reveals he punishes Sun Wukong for his unrepentant behavior rather than his rebellion against heaven. In addition, the last panel of page 81 shows that Tze-Yo-Tzun sighs after seeing Sun Wukong’s reaction of refusing to accept his teachings. This sigh emphasizes Tze-Yo-Tzun’s unwillingness to punish Sun Wukong and implies that if Sun Wukong admits that he is a monkey, he will not be punished. This plot change not only emphasizes that Sun Wukong’s sin is abandoning his racial home but also demonstrates the official start of Sun Wukong’s redemption journey because being punished for one’s sin is the first step of redemption.

Third, Yang changes Sun Wukong’s human master from Tang Sanzang to

Wong Lai-Tsao, a barefoot monk who does not have the ability to save Sun Wukong. Unlike Tang Sanzang in *Journey to the West* who frees Sun Wukong, Wong Lai-Tsao asks Sun Wukong to “return to your true form and you shall be **freed**” (Yang 145). This change emphasizes that the only way for one to gain freedom is to accept one’s identity. There is no savior except oneself. As usual, Sun Wukong is unwilling to do so. Wong Lai-Tsao responds “... with me dies your last chance at **freedom**” (Yang 147). These words motivate Sun Wukong to follow Wong’s teaching because he does not want to be buried forever. When Wong is stabbed by a demon, he says, “To find your **true identity** ... that is **the highest of all freedoms**” (Yang 149), urging Sun Wukong to be a monkey again. The dying Wong questions, “Is yours the **eternal prisoner** ... of a mountain rock?” (Yang 149), reminding Sun Wukong that if he dies, he will never have freedom. This question urges Sun Wukong to transform back into a monkey to free himself. In brief, Sun Wukong is forced to fight against internalized racism because he does not want to be buried forever, and, as a good deity, he does not want to watch Wong die.

However, transforming into a monkey in an urgent situation does not equal Sun Wukong’s reentrance of his monkey home. Therefore, this barefoot master continues to teach Sun Wukong. Wong asks Sun Wukong to take off shoes because “on this journey ... [they] have no need ... for **shoes**” (Yang 159). Later, the panel shows that there is a pair of shoes left in the desert (160), revealing that Sun Wukong listens to Wong’s teaching. Since shoes is linked to racism and being barefoot is a custom for monkeys, Sun Wukong’s action marks his abandonment of his desire to assimilate and thus his return to the monkey community. Notably, unlike *Journey to the West* which focuses on how Sun

Wukong physically protects Tang Sanzang when encountering eighty-one calamities, *American Born Chinese* does not portray how Sun Wukong protects Wong Lai-Tsao except for this scene. This difference suggests that Yang's scene of Sun Wukong taking off his shoes means that he redeems his sin of abandoning his racial home, emphasizing that the redemption here is about accepting one's own race.

If Wong wears shoes, Sun Wukong will not trust his saying that travelers on this journey do not need shoes. If Wong does not guide Sun Wukong to transform back to a monkey, Sun Wukong may insist on wearing shoes because he does not realize the benefits of being a monkey. If Tze-Yo-Tzun did not give him the speech, Sun Wukong would not learn a point of view that he should not abandon his monkey identity. If Tze-Yo-Tzun did not punish him, Sun Wukong would not have the chance to reflect his actions. In brief, all these three changes are essential for recreating Sun Wukong's redemptive side.

Similarly, Yang creates the plot of Sun Wukong transforming himself into Chin-Kee to show Danny (Jin Wang)'s journey of returning to his Chinese home. Chin-Kee sounds like chinky, a racial slur to Chinese. His name implies that Chin- Kee is the ultimate racial stereotype of Chinese. For example, when Chin-Kee is introduced to the readers, he yells, "**HARRO AMELLICA!**" (Yang 48). His heavy English accent matches the stereotype that all Chinese speak English with a thick accent. Later, Chin-Kee eats "**Clispy Flied Cat Gizzards Wiff Noodle**" (Yang 114), highlighting the first stereotype while presenting another racist stereotype that all the Chinese eat cats.

The unchanging presence of Chin-Kee, Danny's cousin, elicits the racist discriminations of Danny's classmates against Chinese, reminding him the

existence of his old racial home. Danny blames Chin-Kee, “Chin-Kee ‘[embrasses] the crap out of me’ (Yang 127). He explains to a friend that after Chin-Kee visits his first suburban school, “no one thinks of [him] as Danny anymore” (Yang 127). He is, instead, “Chin-Kee’s cousin” (Yang 127). The implication is that Danny hates Chin-Kee for making his plan to pretend to be white fail: he found out that he was still regarded as a Chinese who could be ridiculed by white people. For example, a white schoolmate does a slant - eye gesture after seeing Chin-Kee, making another schoolmate laugh (121), their action is not a mocking of Chin-Kee’s appearance but also a racist insult to the Chinese. Witnessing this discriminatory behavior wakes Danny from his dream of being white. Yet, Danny chooses to transfer instead of confronting racists, implying that he still refuses to admit his Chinese identity despite the fact that his dream of being white is broken. Then, Chin-Kee follows Danny to every school to force Danny to face the reality that he is Chinese. Without Sun Wukong’s insistence, Danny will live in the fantasy that he is white, let alone accepting his race.

Chin-Kee’s presence is also essential for Danny’s later acceptance of his Chinese identity. To make Danny confront him, Chin-Kee says stereotypical words to Melanie, Danny’s crush: “Must bind feet and bear Chin-Kee’s children” (Yang 50). His words show another racist stereotype that Chinese women are still required to bind their feet. Although his words are not the reason Melanie refuses to date Danny. Danny’s reaction “I’m not like him, Melanie” (Yang 123) implies his belief in Chin- Kee should be blamed for his failed attempt to establish a romantic relationship. Despite Melanie’s correction, Danny repeats, “I’m not like him!” (Yang 123). This exclamation mark here also emphasizes his obsession

with the idea that Chin-Kee ruins everything.

Sun Wukong's acting finally makes the cowardly Danny hate him enough to fight against Chin-Kee, giving him a lesson on identity acceptance. Danny punches Chin-Kee (204) and says, "I'm sick of you ruining my life, Chin-kee! I want you to pack up and go back to where you came from" (Yang 205). His violent act and words mark Danny's progress: he finally has the courage to say his feelings. Ironically, the phrase "go back to where you came from" that he used is usually considered a racist slur that targets Asian Americans. It indicates Danny's internalized racism. Because of Danny's punch, Sun Wukong's disguise is exposed (212). Chin-Kee, which is the ultimate racist stereotype of Chinese, is not a real person. Therefore, Yang shows to readers that those stereotypes of Chinese are not true and are caused by racism. After his disguise is exposed, Sun Wukong says to Danny, "It is time to reveal **yours** ... Jin Wang" (213-214), revealing that Danny is, in fact, Jin Wang. By revealing Danny's real name, Sun Wukong forces Jin Wang to admit his Chinese identity. Like what Sun himself experiences, being forced to acknowledge his racial identity is the beginning of Jin's return to his racial community.

However, forced acceptance is not enough. So, Sun Wukong tells Jin Wang that the consequence of his wrong way to deal with racism is to lead Wei-Chen to have a sinful lifestyle. Jin Wang reacts, "To punish me for Wei-Chen's failure" (Yang 221), showing that he still thinks that he is innocent and Chin-Kee is his source of pain. Sun Wukong says, "I did not come to **punish** you" (Yang 221), correcting Jin Wang's misunderstanding that he suffers because of Chin-Kee, not racism. Sun Wukong continues, "I came to serve as your conscience- as a signpost to your soul" (Yang 221). Sun Wukong's words imply that it is immoral

for Jin Wang to hurt Wei- Chen and never apologizes. This explanation is very important. Jin Wang always insists he is the victim of Chin-Kee's behaviors. If Sun Wukong does not point out that their conversation is about his conscience, Jin will not reflect on himself and ask Sun Wukong: "So what am I supposed to do now ?" (Yang 223). This question reveals his desire to repent.

Sun Wukong responds, "I would have saved myself from **five hundred years imprisonment** beneath a mountain of rock had I only realized how **good** it is to be **a monkey**" (Yang 223). The first highlighted phrase shows that Sun Wukong first warns Jin of the deleterious consequence of continuing to deny his racial identity. The second and third words show that Sun Wukong emphasizes that it is beneficial for Jin to accept his Chinese identity. If he accepts, his pain will disappear and he shall have happiness. This carrot-and-stick teaching persuades Jin Wang successfully. Jin Wang, at last, finds Wei-Chen and apologizes to him: "I guess I am just trying to say I'm **sorry**" (Yang 231). Sorry for hurting Wei-Chen; sorry for venting the anger of being discriminated against by the innocent; sorry for choosing to abandon his Chinese identity rather than apologizing to Wei-Chen at first. This late apology, therefore, not only signifies Jin's acceptance of his race or his return to his racial home but also the completion of his journey of redemption, a journey was only made possible with the help of Sun Wukong.

In conclusion, in *American Born Chinese*, Gene Luen Yang reinterprets the redemptive aspect of Sun Wukong's traditional image, shifting readers focus away from modern public perception of its rebellious aspect. Yang's portrayal of Sun Wukong's experience of racism reveals the racist nature of the microaggressions encountered by Sun's parallel character, Jin Wang. The significant changes of the

traditional myth give both characters in Yang's novel a motive to commit the sin of abandoning their innate racial home and thus seek redemption. Jin Wang's conversations with Sun Wukong's son Wei-Chen, created by Yang, tells to readers the reason why it is wrong for Jin Wang to reject his Chinese identity from the perspective of racial discrimination. Yang recontextualizes Sun Wukong's story in Christianity: Tze-Yo- Tzun attempts to teach him that religiously speaking, it is sinful to deny one's innate racial identity, leading Sun Wukong to self-reflect and eventually repent. Tze-Yo- Tzun's punishment for Sun Wukong signifies Sun Wukong is finally on his journey to back home. The replacement of Wong Lai-Tsao with Tang Sang Zang enables Sun Wukong to redeem himself without having to go through a lot of hardship like the traditional plot, emphasizing the importance of embracing one's own race. The repented Sun Wukong later reappears as Chin-Kee. He makes Jin to face reality, to admit his racial identity and thus to return home while revealing that the racial stereotypes of Chinese Americans are wrong. In the end, although the issue of racism persists, all the characters understand that their racial identity is an essential part of their subjectivity. The ending narrative is hopeful as the characters will never abandon their old homes again. Therefore, by taking the redemptive image of Sun Wukong, Gene Luen Yang gives readers a lesson to prevent readers, particularly Chinese American ones, from abandoning their racial homes. This story that exposes Chinese Americans' lives in schools gives hope that it can help people with racist stereotypes realize their ignorance and repent. One day, then, educational institutions will be the home of all Chinese Americans in reality.

### **3. "The Litigation Master and the Monkey King"**

Unlike the previous two works which discuss the lives of Chinese Americans, Ken Liu's short story "The Litigation Master and the Monkey King" imagine the lives of the Chinese in the Qing Dynasty. The Monkey King also appears in a different form: he is the guardian demon that only the protagonist Tian Haoli can see and hear. Although Liu does not make changes to the Monkey King's past experience, he reimagines the cowardly side of the Monkey King. By subverting the traditional image of the Monkey King as a brave rebel, Liu portrays Tian Haoli as someone who is keen on homing justice: he helps Li the Widow to preserve her residential home for free. By revealing that the whole justice system of the Qing government is corrupted, Liu demonstrates Tian as a homing justice seeker from another perspective: he prevents the common people from losing their familial homes. Then, Liu shifts to the traditional rebellious image of the Monkey King. His conversation with Tiao Haoli about silent philosophy makes Tian realizes that he should fight against the Qing government, foreshadowing his future rebellion. Liu makes another dramatic change to the Monkey King's when portraying his rebel image: the Monkey King considers himself an ordinary demon rather than a great hero. This change paves Tian's way to his rebellion because the Monkey King uses his ordinary identity to expose Tian's excuse and educate him. Later, he refutes Tian's claim that Shi Kefa is a hero to lead Tian admits that it is righteous to fight against the Qing government. His repeated claim that heroes are, in fact, ordinary beings, encourages Tian to join the rebellion. By telling Tian that he will be the accomplice of the Qing government's crime, the Monkey King urges Tian to save *An Account of Ten Days at Yangzhou*, Qing subjects' spiritual home. His speech that the book is the carrier of the hope of a post-Qing home for all the Chinese

leads to Tian to make up his mind to help the rebels. The Monkey King's interaction with Tian reveals how Tian uses his intelligence to prevent Qing soldiers from destroying the book and his retribute to Tian. This reflects the author's respect for people who help save the book in reality, leading readers to admire people who did heroic act to save the carrier of homes.

### **Homing Justice of a Litigation Master**

First, unlike *Journey to the West* where Sun Wukong is portrayed as a rebellious hero who is never afraid, the Monkey King here is sometimes portrayed as a coward who is unwilling to fight against injustice. Liu subverts the traditional rebel image of the Monkey King to portray the protagonist Tian Haoli as a litigation master who helps people gain justice and preserve homes. After Tian agrees to help Li Xiaoyi, the Monkey King appears to communicate with Tian: "You sure about this?" (Liu 809), revealing his disapproval of Tian's selfless action. The Monkey King continues: "You haven't even seen the contract (Liu 809-810). The contract refers to the contract in which Li was deceived into signing and thus agreeing to sell all her property to her cousin. This quotation explains the Monkey King's hesitation is caused by Tian's inability to access the important piece of unfavorable evidence, the contract which is at the hand of Li's cousin. Thus, by showing the cowardly side of the Monkey King in the face of the injustice, Liu emphasizes that Tian's caring and compassionate personality as he agrees to help a stranger without hesitation.

In response to the Monkey King's question, Tian answers, "I'll worry about *the law*" (Liu 810). The implication is that he still chooses to help Li for free when he is reminded that the success rate of the case is very low because there is no access to unfavorable evidence. Notably, Li cannot lose the case. Magistrate

Yi dislikes Tian and announces that if Tian loses, he will have him “given forty strokes of the cane” (Liu 817). It is a brutal punishment because Tian can die or be maimed. Therefore, the Monkey King’s cowardice question leads to the display of Tian’s unwavering determination to help Li get justice. What type of justice then? Li’s cousin Jie cheats her of her land and declares that Li and her daughter need to leave their house, now legally Jie’s, by tomorrow, revealing that their house is built on land. Without land, they have nowhere to live. Because, as I said in the second chapter, the common understanding of home is a dwelling place, Li the Widow here experiences the crisis of losing home. Therefore, by creating a cowardly Monkey King, Liu emphasizes that Tian is a residential homing justice fighter because he risks his life to prevent common people from being deprived of residential homes.

Notably, Tian’s selfless volunteer work is not merely significant for that. The narrator says, “a judge-administrator who held the power of life and death over the local citizens in his charge” (Liu 932). This quotation shows the Qing Empire’s justice system is flawed because as it is the magistrate’s personality that determines the quality of local justice. Most magistrates, however, hinder the common people’s way to seek justice. For example, Tian always has to pretend to be his litigants’ cousin to seek in the court, implying that the local justice of Yangzhou, Magistrate Yi, does not allow the litigation master to help common people legally. Therefore, without Tian’s help, those ordinary people, like Li, who lack the money to hire a litigator or the education to understand the law of the Qing Dynasty would likely lose their lawsuits.

The consequences of losing a lawsuit are dire, as the losers not only lose

their homes but also risk being beaten or imprisoned (such as Jie whose scheme failed). As I analyzed before, the first punishment is horrible because people may die from being beaten. The second punishment is also horrific: “Who could intuit the right clerk to bribe to avoid torture?” (Liu 934). This question implies that the innocent poor prisoners will be tortured if they have no money to bribe the prison guards, showing the corruption of the Qing’s justice system. Therefore, without Tian, the local common people would lose their freedom and even their lives. The comments that yamen court is a “place full of terror for the average man and woman” (Liu 806) strengthen the point the common people live in the fear of losing lives by court. Therefore, readers regard the court as a place where people lose their innocent family members, that is, a place where familial homes are destroyed. Therefore, by subverting a traditional image of the Monkey King, Liu highlights that Tian’s role as a justice seeker from another perspective: a familial homing justice seeker, which means he risks his life to appear in court and save common people’s families from being destroyed.

Despite helping the poor against Magistrate Yi’s will, Tian never intends to fight against the rule of the Qing government. Nonetheless, Tian struggles with whether he should be a rebel regarding the Qing government’s evil crime of making people lose their homes. Liu uses the rebel voice of the Monkey King to persuade Tian to fight against the government’s injustice.

When Tian warns Li from saying that she knows one of the men wanted by the emperor based on the philosophy “When it comes to politics, it’s best to see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil” (Liu 943), the Monkey King comments, “*That’s a philosophy a lot of my monkeys used to share, ... But I disagree with it*” (Liu 943). Evil here has a more specific definition than general evilness.

Because the incident that Li sees “posters of wanted men” (Yang 942) that was put up by soldiers triggers Tian to share this saying, “see no evil” here implies that what the soldiers did is evil. Tian’s another warning to Li is: “if one of [the imperial soldiers] hears you, even the greatest litigation master in China won’t be able to help you” (Liu 942). Tian is certain that Li would be tortured and killed by the soldiers because she saw the criminal. Tian’s certainty about Li’s possible tragic death implies that imperial soldiers have tortured innocent people before. Soldiers’ torture of innocents confirms that the Qing government officials, not the so-called criminals, are the real evil for oppressing the innocent and thus making people lose their families (their homes) for no reason. Therefore, Tian has the desire to avoid witnessing anything, hearing anything, and talking about anything related to the government’s evil persecution to save his life. However, the Monkey King’s disapproval of this silent philosophy that is practiced by most people emphasizes his image as someone who dares to rebel against heaven. Tian’s decision to not argue against the Monkey King implies that he realizes that it is wrong to keep silent. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer says, “Silence in the face of evil is itself evil”. One’s silence in front of crimes of making people lose homes means that one yield to evil in exchange for their own safety. Therefore, silence is complicity. Tian’s subconscious disbelief in the silent philosophy implies that as a familial homing justice seeker, he has the desire to resist the injustice of the Qing government’s destruction of families.

### **Saving the Dual Homes**

The rebellious Monkey King contributes to the perseverance of the book *An Account of Ten Days at Yangzhou* by persuading Tian to save it. It is not only an

account written by Wang Xiuchu, the survivor of the Qing massacre to the people of Yangzhou, but also a carrier of Wang's traumatic memory, a home for the Qing government's subjects. According to Edward Said, the Qing subjects are mentally exiled because they are cut off from their past. First, the narrator points out that the Chinese are cut off from their past culture, and their past roots. The quotation "The Emperor's noble Banners had succeeded in forcing all the Chinese to shave their heads and wear queues to show submission to the Manchus, and to abandon their *hanfu* for Manchu clothing on pain of death" (Liu 980) gives two examples of the subjects' forced cultural assimilation: the forced change of ethnic cultural hairstyles and cultural clothes. Furthermore, Tian Haoli recalls that he "himself had not even believed the stories whispered in his childhood about Yangzhou" (Liu 979). The word "whispered" shows the Qing government's strong censorship because the truth could only be spread in the form of oral stories to avoid censorship and persecution.

However, Tian did not believe the oral stories. It means that he refuses to believe in the dark past, the past of the Chinese being slaughtered by the Manchu invaders. Thus, he is cut off from his past until he sees the witness's account himself. Tian is "quite sure that most young men in Yangzhou now have never even heard of them" (Liu 979). Now, even oral stories disappear. No one can even know the possibility of the past. This disappearance implies that all the young people are cut off from their past. Therefore, Tian concludes that the Manchu invaders "cut the Chinese off from their past, made them a people adrift without the anchor of their memories" (Liu 980).

Memory is important as a home for exiles. According to Alfred Oyaró Omwenga, people who "move physically to exile are unable to return home

because of discomfort. The only way they can do so is through memory (metaphorically)” (Omwenga 47). Omwenga’s saying shows that memory helps physical exiles to return home spiritually. In other words, memory is a spiritual shelter, another home, for physical exiles. This feature is also applicable in this short because like those physical exiles who cannot return home, the Qing subjects cannot travel back to the old China where the Manchu invasion and the forced cultural assimilation did not happen. The end of the Qing Empire can neither change the fact that the development of Hanfu has discontinued nor eliminate the cultural influence of the Manchus on the Chinese. Since memory can be a spiritual home for characters in this short story, the book that records one’s memory of the past massacre is a spiritual anchor of the Chinese’s memories, helping turn Qing subjects into rebels. It is an object which invites any Qing subject who doubts the Qing’s propaganda to join the rebellion. In other words, it gives the rebelled Qing subjects a sense of belonging to the rebellion community. In brief, this book is a spiritual home.

Unlike the Monkey King in *Journey to the West* who is portrayed as a great rebellious hero, the Monkey King here claims that he is an ordinary rebel to persuade Liu to help Li to save the book. The Monkey King wears a purple cape that “declared him to ... rebel against the Jade Emperor” (Liu 982). This narration indicates that Liu portrays the Monkey King as a rebel. Previously, Tian just commented that the Manchu Emperor is “more powerful than the Jade Emperor”(Liu 980). This connection between the Jade Emperor and the Manchu Emperor suggests that the Monkey King intends to convince Tian to rebel against the Manchu Emperor. The Monkey King says, “You think you’re not a hero” (Liu 982). The implication is that by denying that he is a hero, Tian wishes to convince

himself to stand by and return to his ordinary life. Yet, the Monkey King continues, “I’m not a hero either ... I just did my job when needed” (Liu 983). By similarly denying that he is a hero, the Monkey King points out that ordinary people can also do heroic things like him. By exposing Tian’s excuse, the Monkey King forces Tian to face the moral dilemma of either being a coward or risking his life to help Xiaojing save *An Account of Ten Days at Yangzhou*. This claim paves Tian’s way to his rebellion as Tian does not want to be a coward subconsciously. Moreover, the Monkey King uses his experience to persuade Tian to make the correct decisions: the Monkey King rebelled against heaven when needed; so, should Tian.

However, Tian is not persuaded. In response to that, the Monkey King proposes a question, “Do you know *any* heroes?” (Liu 984) to lead Tian to admit that Shi Kefa, the general who guarded Yangzhou, is his hero. Then, the Monkey King raises objections from two perspectives. First, the Monkey King claims that he is not a hero because “He should have seen that fighting was futile” (Liu 986). The implication is that Shi Kefa should surrender because the Qing’s army is much more powerful than his. His disagreement makes Tian say that “the city’s defiance might have made the Manchus willing to give better terms to those who did surrender later” (Liu 987). His disagreement shows that Tian believes that it is necessary to fight evil to provide the later people with a better life. In other words, Tian admits that it is necessary to fight against the Qing government. The conversation leads Tian to subconsciously realize that he should fight against the Qing empire to save a spiritual home for the later people, planting the root of him helping Xiaojing. Second, the Monkey King denies that Shi Kefa and Wang Xiuchu are heroes because just him, they are just ordinary beings “faced with

extraordinary choices” (Liu 990). The Monkey King’s denial strengthens the point that the ordinary Tian should follow the steps of the Monkey King and his idol Shi Kefa to accept the chance to fight for justice.

The Monkey King warns Tian that if he does not fight against injustice, he will be the accomplice in the destruction of people’s spiritual home, urging Tian to help Li and Xiaojing. The Monkey King says, “But the past lives on in the form of memories” (Liu 991). The word “but” emphasizes that the book, as a record of Wang’s memories, provides the mentally exiled Qing subjects a way to return to the past, a way to go home. The Monkey King’s words, therefore, confirms the point that saving this book is saving people’s home. His words “those in power are always going to want to erase and silence the past, to bury the ghosts” (Liu 991) show that the Qing rulers used forced silence or censorship as a tool to erase the past, and erase people’s way to go home. The Monkey King continues, “If you do not act, you’re complicit with the Emperor and his Blood Drops in this new act of violence, this dead of erasure” (Liu 991). The Monkey King’s words indicate that if Tian does not help Xiaojing, he also participates in the violence of destroying the Chinese’s spiritual homes.

Furthermore, the Monkey King continues to teach Tian that saving the book will give an opportunity for the Chinese to have a true home in reality, motivating the just Tian to sacrifice for the post-Qing home. The Monkey King says to Tian, “Writing that book was a brave thing to do—look at how the Manchus are hunting down someone today just for *reading* it (Liu 989). The emperor’s decision to prosecute an individual for just reading a book implies that this book can cause huge damage to the Manchus’ reign by exposing its past evil crimes. The narration “And as the Qing Dynasty, founded by Manchu sages, was

without a doubt the best dynasty ever to rule China” (Liu 923-924) tells that advocating the advantages of the Qing system helps the Manchu rulers fool their subjects and thus maintain their rule. The saying that the Qing Dynasty was established by wisdom and peace, not violence, is an essential part of this propaganda. Therefore, through writing, Wang preserves not only the memory of the Yangzhou massacre but also a writing that breaks the Qing’s government nation construction in which the Manchus and Hans peacefully coexisted. The Monkey King’s words give Tian’s final decision to help Li and Xiaojing escape with the book another significance, the significance of shaking the Qing’s reign. Because this short story shows how severely oppressed the Qing subjects were, readers cannot see the Qing as a home that gives the Chinese a sense of belonging, even though the Qing is technically their country. Only after the Qing empire is overthrown, can the Chinese build a country where different ethnic groups have a sense of belonging and a new home. Therefore, Tian, who helps preserve anti-Qing books, participates in the establishment of this future home of the Chinese. This litigation master pursues a justice that is not related to the law but more important: a futuristic homing justice for all Chinese.

Even after the book is saved, the Monkey King continues to appear as a supporter of the Qing government’s enemies, praising Tian as a hero to preserve these two homes. He comforts the imprisoned Tian, “You told them many tales, none true” (Liu 1007). The Monkey King praises Tian, the enemy of the Qing government because of his smartness in covering for the other two rebels, Xiaojing and Li, despite being tortured. When Tian is afraid that Xiaojing and Li are captured, the Monkey King says, “*Have I told you about the time I fought Lord Erlang and confused him by transforming my shape?*” (Liu 1008). There are

two metaphors: The Emperor is like Lord Erlang and Tian is like the Monkey King. The Monkey King transforms his shape and fools Lord Erlang successfully. So, by playing with words, Tian can make a perfect lie. “*None of Lord Erlang’s demons could see through my disguises*” (Liu 1008). According to the previous metaphors, “Lord Erlang’s demons” is a metaphor for Tian’s tormentor sent by the government. Therefore, the Monkey King assures Tian by saying that no torturer will find out that he is lying. Deceiving the powerful Blood Drops emphasizes Tian’s intelligence in saving the book, the carrier of the home of the oppressed Chinese who do not know about the past, and the carrier of the hope of the Chinese to overthrow the Qing government to establish a new national home.

The Monkey King’s last words and actions emphasize that saving these two homes through self-sacrifice is a form of heroism and justice. Before Tian dies, the Monkey King comforts him, “*You’re an ordinary man who was given an extraordinary choice*” (1019). The word “extraordinary” matches the Monkey King’s previous comment about himself, Shi Kefa, and Wang Xiuchu: ordinary beings “faced with extraordinary choices” (Liu 990). This similarity shows that the Monkey King considers Tian as great as his idol Shi Kefa and himself, revealing his recognition of Tian’s feat of saving the book, the carrier of two homes of Chinese. The passive voice implies that Tian can enjoy a peaceful life, yet he voluntarily chooses to risk his life to preserve that book. Therefore, although the Monkey King claims that Tian is an ordinary person, his words still lead readers to see Tian as a hero. The Monkey King continues, “*You can’t ask for more than that*” (Liu 1019), showing that dying for justice is the highest achievement a person can accomplish. At last, the Monkey King, “bowed before Tian Haoli, not the way you kowtowed to an Emperor, but the way you would

bow to a great hero” (Liu 1019). The act of obedience made by this great rebel shows his significant respect and even admiration of Tian, giving readers an impression that Tian is a great hero for rebelling against the Qing government

In conclusion, this short story places the Monkey King in the context of the Qing Dynasty to imagine how ancient Chinese lived during that time. Liu recreates the Monkey King as a demon who sometimes feel reluctant to fight injustice. Through this subversion of his conventional image, Liu depicts Tian is depicted as a seeker of homing justice: he not only helps Li the Widow thwart her cousin’s plot to seize her residential home, but also prevents the commoners from losing familial homes under the corrupt justice system of the Qing government. Notably, the Monkey King is still portrayed as a rebel. By disagreeing with the so-called silent philosophy, the Monkey King encourages Tian to rebel against the Qing government. In a significant change from tradition, the Monkey King perceives himself as an ordinary demon, urging Tian to reexamine the option of joining the rebellion. After making Tian admit that it is righteous to rebel against the Qing government, the Monkey King uses the ordinary-people theory to encourage Tian to help the rebels. By telling Tian that inaction means participating in the Qing government’s crime of destroying people’s spiritual home and that the book is also a symbol of hope for a post-Qing national home that embraces all Chinese, the Monkey King manages to guide Tian to do the right thing. The Monkey King’s interaction with imprisoned Tian not only emphasizes Tian’s intelligence in preventing the destruction of the book, the carrier of these two homes but also highlights Tian as a respected martyr. Through reimagination, Liu shows his respect for the real people who protected the Yangzhou Ten Day Account in history. By showing how an ordinary person

with good conscience becomes a martyr, Liu's adaptation enables readers to believe that any individual, including the commoner, who sacrifices for a noble cause can be regarded as a "hero". Therefore, Liu's emphasis on ordinary people sends a message to the readers that they should do something righteous, perhaps like helping homeless people build their homes physically and mentally, as Tian does in the short story.

In addition to that, this work challenges the "domestic" mode of Chinese American literature which always talks about Chinese Americans' identity issues. It exemplifies another mode of Chinese American literature: the global one that allows readers to examine the history of China, which is a part of the Chinese heritage of Chinese Americans. Notably, this global mode does not make Chinese American literature less American. The re-imagination of Chinese history enables the Chinese American writers to go back to their ancestral land, to go back to the old China where their ancestors or themselves once lived but they can never visit. Thus, the history of their past is the Chinese Americans' spiritual home and this examination of the past of China is the writers' homing journey. This homing journey reflects the writers' nostalgia feelings. Shu-Mei Shih says, "Nostalgia for China in Sinophone American culture is nostalgia produced from the experience of living in the United States" (Shih 715). Therefore, this type of nostalgic work emphasizes the writers' Americanness, not Chineseness.

In all, although the three cases of Sun Wukong's "transformations" in Chinese American literature all regard Sun Wukong as a real figure because Sun Wukong is known as a fictional mythological character, what matters is their different use of the traditional Monkey King image. In Maxine Hong Kingston's *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book*, the character Wittman self-identifies as the

incarnation of the rebellious Sun Wukong. Through reading Wittman's experience, readers see Chinese Americans' struggle of establishing homes outside of the Chinese American community, partially because of the perpetual foreigner stereotype. Although Gene Luen Yang focuses on the redemptive side of the traditional Sun Wukong in *American Born Chinese*, the perpetual foreigner stereotype is also an important theme. Being discriminated against as a monkey even after becoming a deity makes Sun Wukong commit the sin of abandoning his racial home. Although the perpetual foreigner stereotype is not the type of racism that triggers Jin Wang to deny his Chinese identity, he was also once treated as an alien in his own land. This recurring theme of Chinese American novels of different eras reveals that Chinese Americans have always suffered from xenophobia. Moreover, Yang alters God that defeats Sun Wukong, his master and creates Chin-Kee to show that redemption means reembracing one's racial home while refuting the racist stereotypes target Chinese Americans. Yang's graphic novel which talks about Sun Wukong and Jin Wang's return to their racial homes addresses another serious issue that Chinese Americans face: internalized racism. Ken Liu's short story "The Litigation Master and the Monkey King" diverges from the previous two works on the lives of Chinese Americans by exploring the lives of Chinese individuals during the Qing Dynasty. In this story, the Monkey King is portrayed as a demon visible only to the protagonist, Tian Haoli. Liu presents a new subversive perspective on the Monkey King by imagining his cowardly side, portraying Tian as a person who is passionate about preventing innocent people from being seized away. Despite revisiting the Monkey King's rebellious character, Liu makes another subversive choice to label the Monkey King's as an ordinary demon that fights against injustice. This ordinary Monkey King convinces Tian to

help preserve *the Yangzhou Ten Day Account*, the carrier of people's homes, and pays to retribute to his intelligence and bravery. This story is nostalgic for reimagining the heroic act done by Chinese people in the Qing dynasty. In the next chapter, I will discuss another short story by Ken Liu. While it also examines Chinese history, it feels futuristic rather than nostalgia.

### CHAPTER THREE: “GOOD HUNTING”, Its Contexts and Methodologies

Hulijing, the Chinese mythological creatures that are capable of transforming into humans, frequently appear in Chinese literature. There is a constant production of new hulijing stories added to the collection. And their images change according to the times. The most famous hulijing figure in Chinese literature is Daji, portrayed as a vicious concubine of the King Zhou of Shang. She is not the first hulijing character to be created and her popularity does not make her the center of the hulijing folktales that came after her. It's like there are many different werewolf figures in werewolf literature; Dracula's popularity can neither erase the fact that the character Camilla was created before him nor prevent latecomers from creating other vampire characters, such as Edward Cullen. Therefore, although there are other later adaptations of Daji, especially TV dramas, this does not mean that this story (“Good Hunting”) is an adaptation of Daji's story. There are two reasons. First, Ken Liu does not state any source of inspiration for his hulijing characters (Yan and her mother). Second, the hulijing figures (Yan and her mother) in this short story share features of fox protagonists in many other stories of hulijing and nine-tailed foxes. Therefore, unlike previous chapters where I only used the most famous ancient versions as traditional texts for comparison, in this chapter, I use different ancient versions as references of comparisons to explore how Ken Liu changes the traditional image of hulijing.

#### Literary Context

For readers who are unfamiliar with Chinese literature, I would like to briefly introduce the relevant literary history of hulijings (including nine-tailed

foxes). The reason is that scholars believe that Chinese hulijing literature is built upon the earlier stories about the nine-tailed fox. The nine-tailed fox literature is commonly categorized as part of the broader category of hulijing literature in scholarly publications and I have no intention to challenge this academic tradition.

The earliest surviving depiction of the nine-tailed foxes comes from *Classic of Mountains and Seas*<sup>13</sup>. “The Scripture of Eastern Lands Beyond the Seas” directly claims that they exist in the kingdom of Green Hill. It is believed that the “The Scripture of Southern Mountains” depicts it as a being that “can eat humans. [Also,] whoever eats it will not be affected by evil”<sup>14</sup> (Liu). While it is portrayed as a threat to humans, the nail-tailed fox is associated with divinity as its flesh and blood can ward off evil. We can see the same association in “Biography of Wuyu, King of Yue”<sup>15</sup> :

When a nine-tail white fox visited Yu<sup>16</sup>, Yu said, “My clothes was white. Its nine-tail is the representation of kinship. The song of Tushan said, ‘The white fox is alone; its nine tails look thick ... the guest of Tushan will become king ... the locals will prosper. It is the will of heaven’. Now I understand”. Yu married a girl of Tu Shan named Nü Jiao... (Zhao 18)

Yu directly points out that the white nine-tail fox represents monarchy.

“Heaven’s will” emphasizes the white nine-tailed fox is divine. “prosper” indicates that the white fox is a symbol of prosperity. Thus, this account

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<sup>13</sup> The English text is self-translated. The book is composed in the Western Han Dynasty. Its known editors are Liu Xiang and his son Liu Xin. Guo Pu annotated the work. Yet, its previous authors and contributors remain undetermined.

<sup>14</sup> All the Chinese literary texts here are translated into English by myself. See Appendix A for the original Chinese texts of all literary quotations in this chapter.

<sup>15</sup> It is the sixth volume of *Spring and Autumn Annals of Wu and Yue*. This book was written by Zhao Ye, who died around 83AD, in the East Han Dynasty. I did not say that it is the first official appearance of hulijing in Chinese literature because scholars have different views on whether Nü Jiao is hulijing or not. The English text is self-translated.

<sup>16</sup> Yu is the legendary Chinese hero and founder of the Xia Dynasty.

exemplifies that the white nine-tailed fox was sacred.

However, after hundred years later, hulijing is portrayed as a lustful being in *The Record of Xuan Zhong*, written by Guo Pu (276-324) in the East Jin Dynasty, “...fifty-year-old foxes can transform into women... they can know things that are happening thousands of miles away. They are good at enchanting, and enticing people to lose their senses” (Guo). Guo Pu clearly states that foxes are capable of transforming into women, giving the first widely-recognized portrayal of hulijings in Chinese academia though some scholars argue that Nü Jiao is the first hulijing. This last quoted sentence suggests that hulijings can seduce and hurt humans through their beauty and excellent sexual abilities. Thus, Guo Pu creates a wicked hulijing image, which subverts the previous sacred image of foxes. His friend Gan Bao *In Search of Supernatural*<sup>17</sup> depicts a hulijing named A Zi who seduces a warrior named Wang Ling Xiu and makes him suffer. According to Xu Jing Tong, despite the negative portrayal of hulijings as wicked creatures, historical records indicate that people continued to believe in the existence of nine-tailed foxes and even offered them, particularly white foxes, as tributes to rulers in order to gain their favor. This practice persisted until the Tang Dynasty, more than a thousand years after the initial emergence of hulijing in Chinese literature, indicating that the decline of the status of foxes in Chinese culture is gradual.

Both *Guang Yi Ji* of the Tang Dynasty by Dai Fu and *Taiping Guangji* of the Song Dynasty<sup>18</sup> feature hulijing stories set during the Tang Dynasty. What they have in common is the association of female hulijings with sexual

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<sup>17</sup> This book also has male hulijing stories, exemplifying that writers do not forget male hulijings.

<sup>18</sup> Notably, its purpose is to collect the stories before the Song Dynasty, especially the legends of the Tang Dynasty, under the order of the second emperor of the Song Dynasty. It dedicates nine chapters to the short stories about foxes. Many people edited this book. The primary editor is Li Fang.

objectification, as seen in “Xue Jiong,” where the hulijing is a prostitute, and “Li Nu,” where the hulijing is sold and shared as a wife. This theme persists in later Song literature, such as *Kui Che Zhi* and *Yi Jian Zhi*, marking the continuous decline of the mythologized fox’s status in Chinese literature.

Drawing upon earlier historical literature imagining the Shang-Zhou war, the Ming Dynasty’s fiction *Investiture of the Gods*<sup>19</sup>, features Daji, the most popular hulijing character, in what is considered the most well-known portrayal of this mythical figure. Listening to the order of the goddess Nüwa, a nine-tailed hulijing occupies the body of Daji and enchants the King as his concubine, helping overthrow his kingdom. Together, they torture and kill both nobles and commoners. Although she is evil and seeks to overthrow the monarchy rather than maintain it, she still represents the mandate of heaven like her white nine-tailed fox predecessors.

Later in the Qing Dynasty, Pu Song Ling attempted to restore the reputation of hulijings through his work *Liao Zhai Zhi Yi*. In the seventy to eighty hulijing stories he wrote, more than half of which are about female hulijings. All of them are portrayed as lovely and innocent beings. For example, in “Hong Yu”, Hulijing Hong Yu helps her ex-lover seek justice. In modern times, people adapt the previous hulijing stories (*Investiture of the Gods* and *Liao Zhai Zhi Yi* into TV dramas while creating new hulijing characters in popular literature (web novels and webcomics). September in the comics *Fei Ren Zai* is such a hulijing character.

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<sup>19</sup> Its author remains undetermined. The fiction is categorized into the shenmo (gods and demons) genre not only because the characters include a goddess, demons, and even humans with supernatural powers but also because it ends with the plot of deifying three hundred sixty-five people.

### Introduction of “Good Hunting”

“Good Hunting” is a short story written by Ken Liu, collected in his published book *The Paper Menagerie and Other Stories*. This story contains the elements of Chinese hulijing myths because the protagonist Liang befriends a hulijing named Yan. By subverting the hulijing’s evil nature in the Chinese literary tradition, Liu uses his faithful adaptation of the enchanted hulijing in eyes of humans to accuse the mankind as their prejudice makes Yan lose her home. The appearance of the hulijing character is based on early texts that acknowledge the divinity of the white nine-tailed foxes, inviting one interpretation that the story reveals the displacement of animals due to human encroachment on nature as the foxes in the story are struggling to maintain their home in nature. Liu creates an original plot that hulijing (Yan) can lose their innate shapeshifting power, presenting Yan’s loss of her demon home. By attributing Yan’s loss of power to Foreign Involvement in Imperial China, Liu demonstrates that the Chinese have also lost their home. By showing Yan’s traumatic experience as a powerless prostitute in British Hong Kong, Liu reveals that colonialism makes the Chinese lose their sense of belonging to Hong Kong. Meanwhile, the second interpretation is invited from Liu’s previous description of Yan’s appearance. Taking Chinese traditional hulijing stories “Xue Jiong” and “Li Nun” as examples and using a scholarly source as evidence, I argue that in this adaptation, the traditional image of the Chinese regarding hulijings is reversed: the Chinese change from the oppressors of foreign prostitutes to the victims. This dramatic change is a call to provide an equal home for prostitutes and women. Furthermore, Yan’s rebellion signifies not just her ambition to rebuild her demon home but also her aspiration to build a new home where all oppressed beings,

including demons and humans, can live happily together. This also hints at a future where animals and humans can peacefully coexist in reality. It is worth noting that Yan's attributes as a white fox and hulijing are associated with the mandate of heaven. Thus, Yan's appearance invites a third interpretation that suggests that both futures will come true.

### **The Loss of Homes**

First, the hulijing protagonist Yan and her mother lose their homes to humans. Hulijings in "Good Hunting" are perceived wrongly by humans. When, Liang, the male protagonist, meets Yan, he complains that Yan's mother "lures innocent scholars and draws on their life essence of lured men to feed her evil magic" (Liu 56). This complaint shows that in his mind, hulijings are evil creatures who consume men's lives. Liang was a child at that time. His knowledge of hulijings was taught by adults. Liang's father comments that the merchant's son is "bewitched" (Liu 51) by a hulijing; the merchant's father complains that his son is enticed by the "wiles of a hulijing" (Liu 52). These two sentences prove the evil image of hulijings in people's minds. This evil image of hulijing is consistent with the traditional portrayal of hulijings as malevolent mythological creatures in ancient Chinese literature.

However, Yan says, "Bewitched? He's the one who wouldn't leave her alone" (Liu 55). Her direct rebuttal to the word "bewitched" implies that her mother is the real victim. She continues, "But once a man has set his heart on a hulijing, she cannot help hearing him no matter how far apart they are" (Liu 55). The real situation is the opposite: the man hurts an innocent hulijing. Yan's saying "My mother is the one who's kept him alive with her nightly visits" (Liu 56) reveals that this hulijing is not the murderer of the man but his savior. Yet,

this savior is killed by humans in the name of saving the man. Therefore, the true image of Yan's mother is the innocent victim of slander. The two opposite images create a contrast, emphasizing that the world is not safe for huliijings because of humans' slander. As a result, Yan loses her mother, the only family member. Thus, Liu takes away the human perception of huliijings as malevolent creatures in Chinese literature while presenting a narrative that subverts this belief, showing how humans' prejudice can have deleterious consequences, like destroying a huliijing's home.

Furthermore, Yan "[is] a small white fox" (Liu 55) in her fox form. Her mother wears "a flowing white silk dress" with a "silvery belt" (Liu 52). The clothes suggest Yan's mother is also a white fox. In addition, "her face [is] pale as snow" (Liu 52), revealing that her human skin is white and thus strengthening the idea that Yan's mother is also a white fox. As I said before, the white nine-tailed fox was a symbol of divinity during that the earlier Chinese literature, indicating that Liu adapts the appearance of foxes in the above ancient texts.

However, as I analyzed before, to most people in this story, their impression of white foxes or white huliijings is the opposite: they are a symbol of bad luck and evilness. Thus, this adaptation shows a decline in the fox's status, which reflects a more intense relationship between humans and nature.

According to Yan, the huliijing always choose to "live near human villages" (Liu 57). However, humans persecute them regardless of their forms. In human forms, they are hunted by demon hunters. In addition, Yan's mother was "caught in a chicken farmer's trap" (Liu 55). Her experience shows that as foxes, huliijings have to risk their lives to eat chickens owned by farmers.

Why do they have to have conflicts with humans? After Yan chooses to

stay away from humans, she cannot catch any pheasant as a substitute for chickens. Instead, she can only eat salamanders and rabbits. Rabbits may be on foxes' diet but salamanders are absolutely not a good food source for foxes. Yan says, "I can't ever seem to get enough to eat" (Liu 57), showing that wild foxes have a food shortage. The implication is that people domesticated pheasants and occupied the habitat of foxes. At the same time, the lack of a living environment for foxes forced them to invade human settlements. Thus, no matter in which form, hulijings can never find a dwelling place that gives them a sense of belonging. Hulijings' inability to find a residential home in the story reveals that the dramatic change in hulijings' image from good to evil is a reflection of human's destruction of nature, suggesting animals' loss of their home in reality. In addition, hulijings are highly associated with women in traditional literature, and there are only female hulijing characters in this work. Liu's decision to make people demonize hulijings demonstrates society's vilification or slut-shaming of women, suggesting that women cannot establish a sense of belonging to a society that oppresses them.

Furthermore, Yan loses her hulijing magic because of Foreign Involvement in China, which none of the hulijing characters in Chinese literature have ever experienced. The first consequence is that Yan loses her demon home. She says, "It's getting harder for me to return to my true form" (Liu 58), implying Yan is losing her demon power. Then, Yan and Liang see a British man named Mr. Thompson break the Buddha statue's hands. This is illegal, yet Mr. Thompson does not fear any punishment. He says, "This is why you people lost the war to Britain" (Liu 61), indicating that the incident happened after the Opium War. The reason that he breaks the statue is a Chinese officer pleading with him to change

the path of the proposed railway. The fact that a British officer is in charge of China's domestic affairs rather than a Chinese reveals that the foreign force has taken control of China. Yan comments, "I think that's why the old magic is leaving. A more powerful kind of magic has come" (Liu 61). The new and more powerful magic is the foreign technology which is brought by the British. The word "powerful" has two implications. One is that foreign industrial technology was, indeed, much more advanced than the Chinese's. The second is that the Chinese during that time could not say no to technology because the British who controlled China intended to forcefully promote it. Later, Yan feels "the last bit of magic leave [her]. [She] could no longer transform" (Yan 65). Yan's magic is her key to the demon world. Without magic, she is trapped in her human form, which means that the gate of the demon community is closed to her. Her demon home is destroyed. Yan's experience is quite different from the other hulijing protagonists in Chinese modern pop culture who still have their magic. By creating a hulijing protagonist who loses after the Opium War, Liu suggests the British's harm to Chinese people, in particular, peasants after the British's control of China. In other words, Liu implies that Chinese people after the Opium War lose their home- a China where foreigners would not interfere with Chinese affairs.

After Yan moves to British Hong Kong, she continues to suffer, revealing the loss of home for the Chinese in Colonial Hong Kong. Because she is trapped in the human form, Yan appears as a Chinese female, which means her sufferings represent the sufferings of Chinese women. In Hong Kong, Yan is a prostitute. "Her tight western-style cheongsam and the garish makeup told me her profession" (Liu 64). The fact that the westernized Cheongsam is the

uniform of Chinese prostitutes indicates the British's cultural appropriation of Chinese dresses, implying that Chinese women are orientalized in colonial Hong Kong. Also, the fact that Yan has to sell her body emphasizes the difficulty of life for ordinary Chinese women in colonial Hong Kong. Because unlike men (such as Liang), they could hardly secure employment to support themselves, they had to rely on others to survive, including resorting to prostitution as a means of receiving money from male customers.

Moreover, Yan has to suffer from the misconduct of foreigners. A British man says to her, "How can you be done for the day when we still want you?" (Liu 63), showing that two British men insist to buy her "service" when she wants to get off the sexual work. One attempt "to put his arms around her and she [backs] out of the way" (Liu 64). This quotation indicates that two British men sexually assault her, suggesting that they want to force Yan to have sex with them. In other words, they intend to rape her. She says "please" (Liu 64) to evoke their empathy. Her plead reflects the low status of Chinese prostitutes at that time. Her obedience does not work. She would be raped if Liang did not intervene.

In addition, after Yan's foreign customer drugs Yan to replace Yan's legs with machines. However, she "let him continue" because no one would believe "a legless Chinese whore" (Liu 70). Yan's other traumatic experience reveals British colonizers' discrimination against the Chinese, emphasizing the danger of being a sex worker. Yan's abuser is the Governor's son, the abuse reflects the colonial oppression of the Chinese. Thus, Yan's traumatic experience further reflects the low status of the Chinese because in their native land, they are bullied by colonizers yet no law can protect them. It is impossible for the Chinese to have a

sense of belonging in such a society. Therefore, this short story reveals that the colonized Chinese in Hong Kong lost their old home, a place that treats the Chinese fairly.

### **A Call for Unhomed Prostitutes and Women**

The white dress of Yan and her mother and her white color skin has another implication. As the scholar Ren Zhi Qiang argues in his article, “The Study of Ancient Chinese Stories of Huli Jing”. “Wearing white clothes is the habit of foreigners in western regions” (116). He uses Ru Hui Lin’s “Yi Qie Jing Yin Yi” which argues that common people in western regions all wore white clothes and Xuan Zang’s “Great Tang Records on the Western Region” which records similar phenomena as evidence. He also argues that “Many merchants from western regions came to Tang to do female slave business ... It’s very common that those foreign female slaves became prostitutes or concubines” (Ren 121). His arguments provide the historical background that Yan and her mother’s origins include the foreign prostitute image of hulijings in Tang China.

For example, in “Xue Jiong” of *Guang Yi Ji*, Xue Jiong had sex with a prostitute. “One midnight t... the woman went to a watercourse and transformed into a wild fox ...” (Dai). This quotation points out that the prostitute is a huli Jing. In the story of “Li Nun”, collected in *Taiping Guangji* and claimed to be from *Guang Yi Ji*, the male protagonist Li Hun has an affair with a huli Jing:

Li had an acquaintance who sold foreign bread as a living; this acquaintance shared a wife whose last name is Zheng with others. She was beautiful. Li saw her and was pleasant, so he stayed in her room for several nights. Then, he bought the foreign wife ... (*Taiping Guangji*).

The passage directly uses “foreign wife” to refer to Zheng, showing that she

is foreign. Having multiple husbands at the same time is against the rule of Confucianism, strengthening the point that Zheng is a foreigner. The fact that Li bought her and she is a shared wife implies that Zheng is some sort of prostitute. She disappears after having an illness and later “villagers found out that a female fox died in the hole. Dressings was taken off; stockings still on its feet” (*Taiping Guangji*). The descriptions of clothes indicate that the fox once transformed into a woman, suggesting that the dead fox is the disappeared Zheng. Thus, in the story, hulijing is shown as a foreign prostitute. This story of Zheng being always transferred like products also reflects the low status of foreign prostitutes of the Tang Dynasty. Later, Li Nun put their son in the care of relatives and never visits him. That son is called fox born and receives neither cloth nor food until Zheng’s ghost appears. The child’s experience is traumatic because people, even his father, discriminate against this inter-species child and want him dead, reflecting the xenophobia foreign prostitutes suffered in the Tang Dynasty.

The fact that Yan also becomes a foreign prostitute strengthens the point that “Good Hunting” adapts the foreign prostitute hulijing image from the Tang legends. This adaptation suggests that Liu pays attention to the pain of lacking a home for foreign prostitutes in Tang China. Ironically, the image of the Chinese is reversed in the story. In the traditional versions, the Chinese are the oppressors of foreign prostitutes. However, through the experience of Yan, this short story demonstrates that the Chinese were the oppressed foreign prostitutes in British Hong Kong. This ironic plot change emphasizes the endless suffering of prostitutes, opposing the everlasting oppression and discrimination against sex workers. As I analyzed before, Yan is portrayed as a hulijing who has to do sex work for a living and as a victim of exploitation in the sex industry. This

portrayal further refutes the prejudice that sex workers are lustful and selfish people who willingly enter the industry for money. Since Liu adapts the previous hulijing figures to create Yan to clear people's biases about prostitutes and to evoke readers' sympathy, this adaptation is a call to end the unchanging oppression against prostitutes, a call to provide a home, a safe and equal environment, for sex workers.

Furthermore, sex workers in "Good Hunting" are genderized. Thus, the reversed identity of the hulijing prostitute in this adaptation also implies the unhomed status of women because no matter when and where women are constantly oppressed and thus unable to gain rights and find a sense of belonging in society. This adaptation is a call to give all the women in the world a cosmopolitan home by ending the unchanging xenophobia, racism, and sexual oppression.

In addition to that, there is another reversed image of hulijings in the story. As Yan said before, hulijings cannot "help hearing [their pursuers] no matter how far apart they are" (Liu 55). As I quoted on page 2, the hulijings are portrayed in *the Record of Xuan Zhong* as being able to know everything that is happening even thousand miles away. Thus, hulijings' passive skill in "Good Hunting" matches the active ability that hulijings possess in *the Record of Xuan Zhong*. This resemblance indicates that Liu adapts the ability from the earlier version. More importantly, the fact that he changes the ability from active to passive and takes it as evidence for Yan to prove her mother's innocence reveals that he aims to subvert a traditional image that hulijings are evil and restore hulijings' reputation. Because, as I analyzed before, the wicked image of hulijings can be regarded as the defamation of women, this subversion disapproves of the slanders

against women. Thus, setting an example through his own adaptation, Liu calls to provide women, regardless of race, with a sense of belonging to the world, by giving them a home where they will not be verbally oppressed.

### **Homes In Vision**

Unlike the said hulijing figures who do not fight against oppression, Yan, at last, decides to fight against sexual oppression from the British. By presenting Yan's journey of rebellion, Liu shows readers a vision of a new home for people who live in British Hong Kong. First, when Yan "[strikes] back" (Liu 70) due to the violence, she does that "with desperation" (Liu 70). The second phrase shows that Yan is abused to the point where she has to fight back to protect herself. Thus, Yan's rebellion is motivated by the violence she suffers or her self-preservation instinct rather than her dislike of the British. As a result, the abuser "[falls] like he [is] made of straw" (Liu 71). This simile shows how powerless the abuser is in front of the cyberized Yan, revealing that technology, like magic, empowers Yan. Yan herself says, "I realized, suddenly, how much strength I had in my metal arms" (Liu 71), indicating that she falls in love with her metal body for its power. Yan continues, "A terrible thing had been done to me, but I could also be terrible" (Liu 71). "Could" reveals that Yan's attitude towards violence has changed: she now prefers using it. The situation of her robbing her oppressor, the Hong Kong Governor's son, suggests that she begins to like using violence as a tool to resist oppression from the British colonizers.

With the help of Liang, Yan transforms fully: she changes her face to a metal one as well. She plans to "find others like [her] ... and bring them to [Liang]" (Liu 72). This quotation suggests that Yan intends to find other demons

who lose their powers or even other people who are oppressed and she wants to let Liang transform them into powerful cyborgs. As Liang comments before, “The old magic was back but changed: not fur and flesh, but metal and fire” (Liu 72). The phrase “Metal and fire” indicates that the robotic power or the new technology is now the new magic. The technology brought by the British once destroyed the magic of Chinese demons now become the new source of their magic! This plot twist reveals that technology itself should not be blamed for the sins of colonies. The fact that the howl of the cyborg Yan reminds Liang of “the call of a *hulijing*” (Liu 71) strengthens the point that technology gives demons powers.

Why does Yan want to give demons new magic? She says, “Together, we will set them free” (Liu 72). “Free” here has two implications. One is that she wants to help liberate the demons from the status of being powerless. As Liang comments, Yan runs “toward a future as full of magic as the past” (Liu 73). Thus, this adaptation indicates that there will be a reestablished demon community, a home for all demons, in the future. The second implication of “free” is that Yan wants to free the oppressed ones like her from the British colonial government’s oppressions by utilizing modern technology. As technology in this short story manifests itself as one of the positive influences of the Britain on Chinese, in this implication, the vision of Yan is to build a new Hong Kong free from British oppression rather than bring Hong Kong back to its pre-colonial state. This post-colonial home should give all the residents who are not colonists a sense of belonging while continuing to use the positive legacy of British colonialism: modern technology.

Moreover, Yan does not say that she only intends to help demons. Liang’s

confession: “Once, I was a demon hunter. Now, I am one of them” (Liu 73) indicates that Liang has joined the reunification of demons to confront the oppression. Yan’s friendship with Liang reveals that the post-colonial Hong Kong in her vision embraces both demons and humans. Moreover, Liang’s recall of the saying “once a man has set his heart on a *hulijing*, she cannot help hearing him no matter how far apart they are” (Liu 73) implies that he falls in love with Yan. Yan’s later response (howl) to Liang’s whisper proves this point. Their love breaks the taboo of humans that a man cannot fall in love with a *hulijing* due to their misconception of *hulijings*. Thus, the post-colonial home in Yan’s vision should also be a place that gives demons a sense of belonging by giving them the same rights as humans. Because the relationship between demons and humans in this short story is considered an implication of people’s relationship with animals. Liu also utilizes the story of *hulijings* to call for environmental protection, to call for a future that humans and animals can co-exist peacefully, and to call a futuristic home for both animals and humans.

Moreover, Yan is depicted as a white fox in her fox form. As I analyzed before, the white-nailed fox is considered divine in earlier Chinese literature for representing heaven’s preference for monarchs, lending a similar sense of importance to the white color. Also, I used Daji to exemplify that *hulijings* were associated with the mandate of heaven before. Thus, two attributes of Yan are linked to the heavenly will. This association implies that Yan will realize her dream of establishing a post- colonial home; in reality, Hong Kong will be a post-colonial for all and the world will be eco-friendly.

In conclusion, Liu’s adaptation of “Good Hunting” illustrates how humans caused Yan to lose her mother, the sole member of her familial home. By

drawing on early texts that recognized the divine status of white nine-tailed foxes, Liu portrays the hulijing characters with an interpretation that suggests both the displacement of animals due to the expansion of humans and the difficulty women face in finding a social home due to societal defamation. In this adaptation, Liu introduces an original plot where Yan loses her innate demon power, revealing the loss of her demon home and implying the loss of home for the Chinese who lived at that time. By depicting Yan's traumatic experience as a powerless prostitute in British Hong Kong, Liu continues to show the loss of home for the Chinese due to the foreign force. Yan's appearance as a white fox helps introduce the possibility that the portrayal of hulijings as foreign prostitutes in Tang literature inspired Liu: he keeps this image while reversing the image of Chinese people regarding hulijings. This change calls for an equal home for women, in particular, prostitutes. Yan's rebellion at last first represents her desire to rebuild her demon home. Second, her utilization of Western technology shows a post-colonial new home in her vision: it embraces all beings (demons and humans) who are not colonialists while accepting the positive legacy of colonialism. Ultimately, this adaptation suggests a future where animals and humans can coexist peacefully in reality. As both of Yan's attributes (white fox, hulijing) are associated with the mandate of heaven, the post-colonial, women-friendly, demon-friendly future will come true in the literary world and the eco-friendly egalitarian future will come true in reality. Thus, although it is historical fiction, the story not only reflects the Chinese American author's nostalgia but also looks for a brighter future for sex workers, women, and animals.

In terms of methodologies, I use literary reviews. Because the traditional

hulijing stories are as numerous as stars, it is necessary to conduct research on the Chinese literature history of hulijing myths to find out which hulijing stories Liu actually drew inspiration from. Second, I use comparative analysis, which is essential for the research on mythological adaptations. The comparative subjects are traditional hulijing stories and “Good Hunting”. Due to a large number of traditional hulijing stories, this chapter differs from other chapters in using the comparative method: multiple traditional stories, not just one, can serve as the inspirations of a certain plot. More specifically, I argue that hulijings’ appearance and dressing in “Good Hunting” reflect Liu’s reference to two kinds of hulijing stories in Chinese literature. I use scholarly sources with an analysis of the historical background to enhance the credibility of my argument. For detailed comparisons, I use close reading when analyzing the excerpts of “Xue Jiong” and “Li Nun”. All the above texts are originally written in Chinese. Most of them do not have English translations. So, I translated them myself. I carefully selected words to make texts understandable. Most of the primary sources are in Classical Chinese. I chose to translate them into modern English rather than Old English because modern English is the language that all English readers speak. In addition, the phrase “不盡” in *Classic of Mountains and Seas* means “will not be affected by evil qi”. Qi in ancient Chinese culture is a very complicated idea. It is related to the field of traditional Chinese medicine and the field of Chinese mythology. If I translate it literally, I will need to explain it, spending too much space on the context. Therefore, I translated it as “will not be affected by evil”, ignoring “qi”, because the word “evil” itself contains the meaning of evil qi. “Evil spirit”, this simple phrase, both keeps the authenticity and proves the point that nine-tailed foxes were once sacred creatures in Chinese

literature. In addition, it could save space for my analysis of Liu's adaptation decisions. By the same token, I cut some words that are irrelevant to my comparative analysis when translating texts. For example, I removed the part of "Xue Jiong" about how the prostitute escaped from her clients. I also use summarization skills. For example, I summarized the part of the content of "The Scripture of Eastern Lands Beyond the Seas" in one sentence. Yet, this short summary of the nine-tailed fox helps reinforce the idea that the nine-tailed foxes were once sacred creatures in Chinese literature since "Scripture of Mouth South" does not directly refer to the supernatural being as the fox. The summary of huijings' literary history helped me save space without hindering my purpose. I hope that this discussion of my research methodologies could be helpful for future researchers who are also interested in studying the influence of foreign-language story collections on American literature.

### **Conclusion: “WHO”/FUTURE/HOME**

In this thesis, the home framework provides a useful theoretical lens for exploring how the adaptation of Chinese myths discusses Chinese Americans' struggles to be homed. The difficulty of having a home or homes for Chinese Americans makes them lack a sense of belonging. The feeling of being displaced leads them to question their place in society and who are they as individuals. To answer the question, many Chinese American writers turn to their cultural roots, which include Chinese myths.

In the second chapter “White Tigers” of *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*, Maxine Hong Kingston adapts the myth of Mulan to explore Kingston's struggle for identity and belonging as a Chinese-American woman are shaped by the intersection of sexism within her Han Chinese exile community, gender discrimination, and racism from white people in mainstream society. More specifically, in situations of inner identity conflict, Kingston alters the myth of Mulan while retaining Mulan's bravery and self-sacrifice to present her question, “Who am I?”. At the last of the chapter, by comparing herself to Mulan, Kingston expresses her desire to help the Han Chinese by reporting racism in mainstream society, suggesting that her identity crisis is resolved. She still considers herself a Chinese American. Later, in Chapter Five “A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe”, she uses Ts'ai Yen's myth to express her concern about Chinese Americans' linguistic unhomeliness, giving a clear answer to that philosophical question: she is a Chinese American.

Approximately a decade later, Maxine Hong Kingston continues to follow the conventional image of the mythological figure in Chinese tradition when adapting the myth of Sun Wukong. In *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book*,

Wittman takes Sun Wukong's rebellious spirit to continue to explore the question "Who am I?" -- Who is he as an unemployed person who fails to find a partner? Is he a pacifist? Is he a director? His directing of Sun Wukong's myth reveals that "a Chinese American" is his answer. At last, Wittman utilizes the myth of Sun Wukong to refute the perpetual foreigner stereotype, emphasizing that "a Chinese American" as his answer. However, this refutation also reveals that the perpetual foreigner stereotype is the discrimination that Chinese Americans have always encountered. This is further supported by the continued discussion of this issue in *American Born Chinese*, which is published more than two decades later. The writer Gene Luen Yang uses Sun Wukong's myth to discuss the identity crisis caused by racism, such as the perpetual foreigner stereotype. He follows traditional literature in describing Sun Wukong as a redeeming figure, although his adaptation is considered unconventional in the eyes of readers accustomed to the rebellious image of Sun Wukong. Recreating Sun Wukong shows not only the necessity of reclaiming racial identity after handing it over to racism but also Jin Wang's redemption journey of reconstructing his identity. Through this way, Yang gives the answer that "We are Chinese Americans": we are born Chinese Americans; even in the face of racial discrimination, we should still be Chinese Americans.

The tense of these literary works is always present and past because it focuses on the living situation of Chinese Americans in the U.S. It is true that Kingston delivers a hopeful message about the status of Chinese Americans in mainstream society in the future in *The Woman Warrior* and these works may open the doors of multi-racial communication and thus help create a better future for Chinese Americans. However, their tense is not futuristic because of the

reality that after more than six decades, racism faced by Chinese Americans may have lessened but not eradicated. Perpetual racism makes writers have to answer the question “Who am I?” again and again when talking about the lives of Chinese Americans in the U.S. Therefore, nostalgia becomes a recurring theme of Chinese American literature as it repeatedly looks back at their immigration history or history of discrimination to shout out “I am Chinese American”!

Even fictional stories that focus on other themes cannot escape this nostalgic feeling. It is evident that Ken Liu’s “The Litigation Master and the Monkey King”, which focuses on the Qing government’s oppression of the Chinese people, explores the question “Who were we?” -- “What our Chinese ancestors were like?”. To tell readers the answer, Liu even subverts the image of the Monkey King to some extent: he is shown as an ordinary, and even occasionally timid, demon, while still having his rebellious heart. Through subversion, Liu depicts a character named Tian Haoli vividly. Tian used to be an ordinary person who does charity regularly and sacrifices himself to save *the Yangzhou Ten Day Account* after experiencing an inner struggle. The Monkey King’s acknowledgment of Tian Haoli as a heroic figure, therefore, represents a tribute not only to the character himself but also to the people in history who saved *the Yangzhou Ten Day Account*. Through his work, Liu spreads his answer to the question: Chinese Americans’ ancestors were not only the oppressed but also fighters, fighters against oppression. And their spirit of resistance is a heritage that Chinese Americans can inherit. Therefore, although Liu’s use of Sun Wukong’s myth and the change of nostalgic subject may seem unconventional, the story itself remains a conventional way to express this feeling of nostalgia.

In Ken Liu’s “Good Hunting”, Liu imagines a story of rebelling against

British colonialism based on the traditions of hulijing stories. While this short story is nostalgic in its look back at the history of British Hong Kong, it is also futuristic for leading readers to consider the question: “Who we will be?”. By showing a scene where a hulijing and a human fight for a future free of oppression together, Liu’s work envisions a future in which humans and animals coexist harmoniously and women are no longer oppressed. This story’s futuristic style encourages readers to be builders of such a better future. In prompting readers to consider the question of who we will be as a society, with a focus on humanity as a whole rather than solely on Chinese Americans, this short story stands out for having another unconventional feature. I briefly discuss the approaches I use for this chapter, hoping to help potential researchers who are interested in studying the influence of foreign literary collections on American literature.

Moreover, I hope that this project as a whole can benefit potential researchers by showing methodologies of doing mythological studies of Chinese American literature and the study of the influence of foreign literary traditions on English literature from a transnational or transcultural perspective. In addition, this research offers potential researchers a critical framework for critiquing the silkpunk genre, which was my initial goal.

Invented by Ken Liu, the silkpunk genre’s worldview is that the technology there is based on traditional Asian materials. Therefore, the question that silkpunk literature explores is “Who would we be”? What would Asian or Chinese people be like if this continent began its own “Industrial Revolution”? The key question determines that the silkpunk genre is still nostalgic although it is not confined to Chinese American literature or the adaptation of Chinese myths.

For example, in the first book of *The Dandelion Dynasty* series for which Liu invents this term, he reimagines Chu-Han Contention in Chinese history; The Chinese American writer R.F. Kuang's *The Poppy War* is basically an outrageous retelling of the life of Mao Zedong. And the Korean American writer Yoon Ha Lee looks back on the Japanese colonialism of Korea in her work *Phoenix Extravagant*.

The aesthetics of “punk” here are “rebellion, resistance, re-appropriation and rejuvenation of tradition, and defiance of authority” (Liu). The phrase “re-appropriation and rejuvenation of tradition” indicates that in addition to rebelling against authority, adapting Asian traditions (which include myths) is also a vital element of silkpunk literature. That leads to the potential criticism of silkpunk literature from the perspective of myth adaptation.

One such aspect is cultural appropriation. For example, R.F. Kuang appropriates Shaman culture in *The Poppy War* by claiming that Shaman priests can summon gods, such as phoenixes, to destroy their enemies. No, that's not true. Shaman priests summon (ancestral) ghosts, and natural spirits/gods upon them and these supernatural beings do not have destructive powers. And many supernatural beings mentioned in the novel are not from Shaman culture. Phoenix (Fenghuang<sup>20</sup>) and Nüwa<sup>21</sup> are considered non-Shaman Chinese mythological beings; The Jade Emperor is regarded as a Taoist mythological figure. In traditional Chinese mythology, none of them would be depicted as possessing human bodies to empower them. Thus, Kuang's copying of elements from a minority culture in danger promotes the misconceptions that other cultural

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<sup>20</sup> Fenghuang is the king of birds in ancient Chinese mythology. It is also a symbol of imperial power just like long (the dragon) in Chinese culture.

<sup>21</sup> In Chinese mythology, she is the mother goddess of Chinese and the creator of humans.

elements are part of Shaman culture and Shaman culture is violent, having a negative impact.

The other aspect is the myth adaptation of one's own culture, which we examine in this thesis. As a sketch of how the critical framework I establish in this thesis can be applied to the criticism of this genre, I am going to present a 2-page critique of *The Poppy Wars* series. Kuang's story of Yin Nezha is adapted from the story of the deity (Li) Nezha in *Investiture of the Gods*: The mothers of Yin Nezha and (Li) Nezha share the same last name and their brothers have the same surnames. Even Yin Nezha's hostile relationship with dragons resembles Nezha's famous story of slaying the third prince of the East China Sea Dragon King. Nezha is commonly viewed as a rebel figure of anti-authoritarian filial piety for having a hostile relationship with his father. Thus, the story of Nezha is given the significance of anti-hierarchy and anti-patriarchy. Yin Nezha's good relationship with his father and his great achievements in Sinegard Academy, a school with an aristocratic hierarchy shows that Kuang's adaptation subverts the traditional plot. This subversion of Nezha, such as his symbolism of anti-authoritarian filial piety, is always controversial whatever the nationality of the author: people have polarized views on the 2019 Chinese film "Nezha" for creating a Nezha who fights against destiny and villains with his beloved father.

As I analyzed before, Liu's subversion of the Monkey King and hulijing is an essential part of the storytelling of how the protagonists Tian Hao Li and Yan determine to help provide homes for others while addressing homing issues in reality. Yet, Kuang's subversion neither depicts Yin Nezha as a heroic figure dedicated to aiding others in establishing or preserving homes nor portrays the protagonist Rin as a heroine with the same determination. Therefore, Kuang's

adaptation fails from this perspective.

On the other hand, in terms of identity-based home framework, Yang's subversive changes of the traditional story of Sun Wukong and Kingston's adaptation of Mulan, Ts'ai Yen, contribute to the identity construction of the protagonists, revealing identity issues in reality. Some readers may disagree with Kingston's decision to shift the focus of Mulan's story from highlighting the virtues of filial piety in a multi-ethnic context to centering it solely on the Han nationality. However, they cannot deny that Kingston utilizes Mulan to tell the dynamic identity struggles of a Chinese American female perfectly well. Some readers may disagree with Yang's decision to retell Sun Wukong's redemptive side instead of his rebel side and even his recontextualization of Christianity. However, they cannot deny that redemption is the foundation of the whole story that emphasizes the significance of self-identification with one's inherent racial identity and Yang's recontextualization contributes to this storytelling of the anti-internalized racism redemption journey. In brief, Yang's adaptation addresses the issue of Chinese Americans rejecting their Chinese racial identity very well.

As we see, in order to be considered successful, Kuang's subversion must also contribute to the discussion of identity construction. Yin Nezha's adherence to the social hierarchy might contribute to Rin's initial failure to establish an intellectual home, opening the possibility of examining whether Rin has identity conflicts in school and thus whether Yin's acceptance of the hierarchy plays a role in her identity conflicts. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that apart from this aspect, the plot about Yin makes no potential contribution to Rin's identity construction. Consequently, Kuang's myth adaptation of Nezha in *the Poppy War* series can be criticized as lacking functionality in this regard. Also,

the portrayal of Nezha in Kuang's work has left a negative impression among some non-Chinese readers, such as expressed on Reddit. This has had a negative impact on the reputation of the beloved Chinese mythological hero Nezha, making the adaptation more problematic. In general, I hope that my critical framework and this example will inspire potential researchers to further explore this topic, including other myth adaptations in *The Poppy War* series or other literary works.

Notably, the silkpunk genre itself has been subject to criticism. For example, Yoon Ha Lee imagines that a magical calendar, painting, and potion (*Ninefox Gambit* and *Phoenix Extravagant*) are possible. In Ken Liu's *The Dandelion Dynasty* series, spacecraft is the main represented technology. These elements raise concerns about whether this genre invented for bookselling can be regarded as a coherent, separate genre or rather these works should be recategorized as space opera or fantasy.

These are the aspects scholars must examine before proclaiming that the silkpunk genre, this genre with transnational and transcultural features, indicates the future of Chinese American literature. According to Ken Liu, the inventor of the silkpunk genre, his silkpunk book series *The Dandelion Dynasty* books are ultimately a story about modernity and the constitutive story we tell to feel at home in it" (Liu). This comment suggests that silkpunk literature is expected to give readers of modern society a sense of homeliness. Liu's words do not silkpunk limit the genre to purely nostalgic themes. For example, offering a vision of home, such as "Good Hunting" does, can make readers feel at home as much as reading the reimagination of the past. It is my sincere hope that the silkpunk genre will develop into a genre that modernizes myths properly, thereby

providing another opportunity for Chinese American writers to create nostalgic or futuristic homes.

## Appendix A: Chinese Original Texts of the Translated Chinese Literary

### Works in Chapter 3

1. “南山经” [The Scripture of Southern Mountain]:

“能食人，食者不蛊” (Liu)。

2. “Biography of Wuyu, King of Yue”:

乃有白狐九尾造于禹。禹曰：“白者，吾之服也。其九尾者，王之证也。涂山之歌曰：‘绥绥白狐，九尾彘彘...来宾为王...我造彼昌。天人之际，于兹则行。’明矣哉！”禹因娶涂山，谓之女娇（Zhao 18）。

3. 玄中记 [The Record of Xuan Zhong]:

“狐五十岁能变化为妇人...能知千里外事；善蛊魅，使人迷惑失智” (Guo)。

4. “薛炯” [Xue Jiong]:

“一夕午夜...至水窠，变成野狐” (Dai)。

5. “李麇” [Li Nun]:

“店中有故人卖胡饼为业。其妻姓郑有美色，李目而悦之，因宿其舍。留连数日，乃以十五千转索胡妇...见牝狐死穴中，衣服脱卸如蛻

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