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Unity of Opposites: Questioning the Genre of the Woman Warrior and the Protagonist's Cultural Identity

Sun Binghui*

College of International Education, Yantai Institute of Science and Technology, Yantai, China
**Corresponding author: sun.classone@qq.com*

Abstract: *The unity of opposites, which Sean Sayers describes as the 'basic principle of dialectical materialism, the philosophy of Marxism' and the 'fundamental basis of Marxist thought', describes a situation in which two aspects of a thing are opposite to each other, yet dependent on each other. In this essay, I try to use this dialectical principle to explore two questions: what is the genre of Kingston's The Woman Warrior? (Is it fiction or nonfiction?) and what is the protagonist's cultural identity? (Is she Chinese or American?) As far as I'm concerned, the debate of the genre is a product of the specific historical period, and the answer depends on the reader's own identity and the sociohistorical context. The opposites of "fiction" and "nonfiction", "Chinese" and "American" can be united; and the book can be both fiction and nonfiction and the protagonist can be both Chinese and American.*

Keywords: *Unity of Opposites, Genre of the Woman Warrior, Cultural Identity*

1. Introduction

Maxine Hong Kingston, born in 1940 in California, USA, is a famous female Chinese American novelist. She graduated from the Department of British Literature at the University of California, Berkeley in 1962, was elected as an American Fellow of Humanities and Natural Sciences in 1992, and was awarded the Outstanding Literary Contribution Award at the National Book Awards in 2008. Kingston has created influential novels such as *The Woman Warrior*, *China Men*, and *Tripmaster Monkey*, which have established Kingston's position in the history of Chinese American literature. Kingston's works cover a wide range of subjects, but from the time of publication of her works, the theme of her works runs through a main line: feminism (*The Woman Warrior*), racial egalitarianism (*China Men*), building ethnic cultural attributes (*Tripmaster Monkey*) and world pacifism (*The Fifth Book of Peace*).

An important feature of Kingston's literary creation is the combination of novels, autobiographies, and myths. The main materials of the two works *China Men* and *The Woman Warrior* come from the stories that the author heard from her mother in her childhood. They are both told in the first person. In these two "autobiographical" novels, the author takes the life and destiny of her own family and other Chinese people as the main theme and integrates many Chinese cultural traditions, folk traditions, customs, myths and legends through storytelling. Kingston's literary works also reflect the fusion and collision of Chinese and Western cultures, and also reflect the author's goal of integrating into mainstream American culture in life. In terms of bloodline, Kingston is of Chinese descent; In terms of nationality, she is an American. Due to her unique dual identity and her growing up experience in the United States deeply influenced by Chinese culture, Kingston's literary creation has dual characteristics of Chinese culture and Western culture; His works also reflect the fusion and collision of Chinese and Western cultures. And this feature occupies a more important position in his novel creation.

The story of *The Woman Warrior* is set in China and showcases the childhood life of a young girl living in a difficult and entrepreneurial Chinese community, as well as the real life of the women around her, through imaginative fiction and concise line drawings. The book is divided into five parts: No Name Woman, White Tigers, Shaman, At the Western Palace, A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe. The first part focuses on her mother talking about the tragedy of the family through the first person narrator "I". Not long after the narrator's aunt got married, her husband went to the United States to search for gold. A few years later, she became pregnant. The whole village was enraged. On the night of her delivery, they smashed her house, leaving her helpless and forced her to give birth to a child in a pigsty. She then threw the baby into a well and committed suicide. The second part is adapted from the well-known story of

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Hua Mulan, a woman disguised as a man, who kills enemies and performs meritorious deeds. The narrator imagined herself to become a "Mulan" who went to White Tiger Mountain for fifteen years of cultivation, then led troops to fight to avenge national hatred and family feud, and returned to his hometown to become a hero. The third part describes the experience of his mother in learning and practicing medicine in China, as well as the story of her ability to catch ghosts and summon souls. The fourth part describes the unfortunate experience of her Aunt. The final part is about "I" recalling my growth experience from kindergarten to adulthood. The book covers a wide range of topics, almost including various elements that deeply interest western scholars and readers, such as immigrant situations, generation gaps, confusion and rebellion among teenagers, feminism, marginalized culture, root-seeking consciousness, family epics, Eastern discourse, cultural conflicts, personal experiences, and official discourse.

The novel caused a sensation in the American literary world as soon as it was published, attracting widespread attention and active discussion in the academic community. It also won the National Book Critics Non Fiction Award that year, and Kingston herself became one of the major contemporary American writers. This novel was later praised by President Clinton as a groundbreaking masterpiece and selected for the reading list of Chinese American literature at American universities. The first sentence at the beginning of the novel, "You must not tell anyone what I am about to tell you," once became a catchphrase among American college students. This novel reversed the understanding of Chinese society in American society at that time and overturned the prejudice of the American public towards Chinese women. Since its publication, *The Woman Warrior* has always been concerned in Chinese American literature. The majority of scholars who praise this work are feminists, while the voices of criticism mostly come from the Chinese American male writer camp, with Frank Chin as the representative. Frank Chin is also a famous Chinese American writer who used to be a classmate of Kingston, but his criticism of Kingston's works is not lenient at all. Frank Chin criticized Maxine Hong Kingston's work *The Woman Warrior* greatly. He believes that the female stories in *The Woman Warrior* cater to the white people's fantasies about Eastern women and their belittling of Chinese men.

2. Genre of Maxine Hong Kingston's The Woman Warrior

The genre of Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* is a question widely debated among critics. The focus of the debate is the authenticity of her stories, i.e., whether her writings tell "true stories" about her life, Chinese culture, classics, customs, and history. "Winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award for Nonfiction" is printed on the front cover of the Vintage International edition, while "Fiction/Literature" is printed on its back cover simultaneously. In her afterward written for the Picador Classic edition in 2014, Kingston says 'I place myself at the wide border between categories. I've invented a way to write about real people, who talk-story and dream'[1]. It seems that she has answered the question, but not in a way as clear as we can understand at first glance. So, what, precisely, is the genre of the book?

It can be read as an autobiography and a family biography. After all, the subtitle of the book is 'Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts'. From this 'memoir', we can catch a glimpse of the narrator's childhood, girlhood, and some moments when she grows up. We know that she flunked kindergarten and got a zero IQ because she believed it was because her mother cut her tongue fraenum to keep her quiet and didn't teach her English. We know she felt so embarrassed when she was forced to ask for the reparation candy from the drugstore because her mother believed the family was cursed by Delivery Ghost's wrong delivery of drugs. We know she bullied a little girl to force her to speak in her sixth grade and experienced an eighteen-month mysterious illness after that. On the one hand, all three stories are relatively independent in terms of structure and content, and their combined shares account for one-third of the book. It is not impossible to call the book a family biography. But on the other hand, all three stories, told from the perspective of the narrator herself, are inevitably mixed with her own understanding, imagination, and recreation. To a certain extent, the family biography is her own autobiography.

It can also be read as a history book. It is a book that depicts the lives, joys, and sorrows of the early Chinese American emigrants. The red, green, and gold Chinese school in Chinatown, the children running through the streets singing the lesson 'I am a Person of the Middle Nation', the laundry with creaming hot boiler and machines, the women at round tables eating black seaweed gelation, talking and gambling, the crazy women and girls within a few blocks of the author's house, as well as the young FOBs (Fresh-off-the-Boats) placing ads in the newspaper to find wives, all of these elements together establish the history of the first and second generation of the early emigrants.

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Nevertheless, many critics insist that the book is fiction. Yang Chun argues that 'the authenticity of the autobiography, its advocacy of individualism, its success story mode, etc., are all broken by *The Women Warrior*. This is the result of the author's rethinking and reprocessing of the form and content of historical narratives'[2]. Yang regards the book as a postmodernism fiction rather than autobiography because he thinks the book lacks the authenticity, which is an indispensable part of an autobiography.

The narrator does not tell the absolute "true stories" about her life. She is also confused about the authenticity of the stories. 'Chinese-Americans, when you try to understand what things in you are Chinese, how do you separate what is peculiar to childhood, to poverty, insanities, one family, your mother who marked your growing with stories, from what is Chinese?' 'I cannot ask that. My mother has told me once and for all the useful parts. She will add nothing unless powered by Necessity.' 'She never explained anything that was really important'. In front of a some kind of dictatorial mother who always gives orders and seldom explains, the narrator, as well as other children in the family, has to distinguish by herself what is true story and what's not, and restore the original appearance through her own imagination. The story of the 'No Name Woman' is told by the narrator's mother to warn her that she must pay attention to her behavior, obey and respect the rules, otherwise she will be punished and cast aside by the clan. 'Now that you have started to menstruate, what happened to her could happen to you. Don't humiliate us. You wouldn't like to be forgotten as if you had never been born. The villagers are watchful'. Obviously, the mother must have reprocessed the story for the purpose of educating the narrator. The narrator, refusing to participate in the punishment of the family's deliberately forgetting her aunt, further retells the story on the basis of her mother's story with her own imagination to show her rebellion against the persecution of the woman and sympathy for her aunt. The story we read now is the one adapted by the narrator's mother and the narrator herself. As for the real truth, whether her aunt's pregnancy was caused by adultery or rape, no one knows. A similar multi-layer narrative strategy is used in the telling of the story of 'At the Western Palace'. The ostensibly authoritative and objective third-person narration is overthrown by the information provided in the next chapter. 'In fact, it wasn't me my brother told about going to Los Angeles; one of my sisters told me what he'd told her'. The authority of the narrator as the witness no longer exists.

Similarly, the narrator does not also tell "true stories" about Chinese culture. There is no doubt that *The Woman Warrior* is a book with a strong Chinese style, which is flooded with various Chinese elements: Chinese customs, beliefs, festivals, fairy tales, myths, and literary classics. But the narrator seems reluctant to repeat them in their original appearances but more willing to select, add, cancel, and adapt these elements according to her own will, like a chef choosing her food materials to prepare a cuisine. The frame of the story 'White Tigers' originates from a well-known folktale happening in the Northern and Southern Dynasties (386 BC-589 BC), in which a young girl, Fa Mu Lan (mandarin pronunciation Hua Mulan) took her father's place in the army and fought for the country disguised as a man. Instead of sticking to the original plot, the narrator alters it significantly and adds numerous subplots, such as "learning martial arts in the White Tigers Mountain", "carving words on the back", "giving birth to the baby in the army", "beheading the tyrant", and "revenging on the evil baron". The original story is intended to praise Mulan's spirit of filial piety to her parents and the responsibility to serve the country, but in the adapted story, the narrator prefers to use Mulan as her own spokesperson. As Guo Xiaolu says, 'Mulan becomes Kingston's inner voice as well as her alter ego' [3]. She, as a girl suffering from the persecution of both male superiority and racism, wants to be a swordswoman who will destroy the shackles of patriarchy and take revenge on the stupid racists and tyrants who deny her family food and work.

The narrator does not always tell "true stories" about Chinese customs. In the chapter 'Shamen', the narrator says her mother cooked a lot of weird food for them, such as raccoons, skunks, hawks, city pigeons, snakes, and garden snails. In particular, she describes in detail the cruel and shocking scene of eating a monkey's brain while it is alive. In fact, the habit of eating wild animals only exists in a very small part of China (the narrator's home is part of that) and that happened only in ancient times. According to my investigation, the 'eating of an alive monkey's brain' never happens actually, even in these areas. The story is more likely to be made up to ridicule the bad habits in these areas (there are also other similar satirical words or stories), but is regarded as a true story by the narrator. So, we can draw the conclusion that the narrator does not always tell "true stories" about her life experiences and Chinese culture but uses her imaginative literary methods to reprocess these elements. Consequently, it is appropriate to read this book as fiction.

Why are we bothered by the genre of the book? We can just travel in the fantastical world created by the narrator and enjoy the beauty of words without worrying whether it is fiction or not. We think we can, but we can't. The genre of the book is an inevitably question that must be answered. Simply speaking, if

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we regard the book as nonfiction, it means that we admit the descriptions of Chinese American life experiences and Chinese culture, including those misunderstood, adapted, and distorted, are true. That is why there is a lot of criticism when it was published as nonfiction. Zhang Xihua accuses Kingston's book 'to achieve its self-orientalism by collaging, distorting, and even subverting the Chinese customs, cultures, and ideology in order to cater the discourses of the orientalism about characteristics of the Chinese culture: lust, despotism, backwardness, and insanity, which are not true'[4].The question of the genre of the book even sparked the famous 'pen war' between Kingston and Frank Chin. American scholar Sau- ling Wong believes that the focus of the debate was three: first, how to understand the rewriting of traditional Chinese culture in Chinese American literature; second, how to understand the autobiographical writing in Chinese American literature; and third, the gender debate in the Chinese American community [5]. In short, the debate is about whether Kingston tells "true stories". Chin argues that Kingston's book deliberately exaggerated the oppression of Chinese women under the patriarchal system, distorting Chinese historical legends and the outcome of this "racism" further deepened the stereotype: traditional Chinese society is more discriminatory against women and thus inferior to western civilization. He criticizes Kingston, saying that exposing and criticizing Chinese men's attitudes towards women when Chinese men are despised by white people is tantamount to helping the tyrants.

How about Kingston's reaction towards Chin's criticism? In the reply to Chin's urge not to accommodate the needs of the mainstream printing industry and not compromise on the division of the genre, Kingston wrote that the type she shied away from was the political or debate tirade, which she didn't like [6]. Apparently, Kingston does not respond directly to Chin's accusation of "racialism". She prefers to focus on art progress rather than political debate. From her words mentioned in the first paragraph, we can also get a similar conclusion. In fact, Kingston herself initially wishes to publish her book as fiction, emphasizing the uncertainty of the narrative authority repeatedly in the text, but is eventually persuaded by the publisher with the consideration of the expectations of the mainstream critics and readers and the sales of the book, succumbing to the self-centered cultural pride of the white American readers and the consistent stereotypes of the Chinese Americans. Jennie Wang, a Chinese American critics, by consulting Kingston's correspondence with the editor Charles Elliot, found that the title of the book originally proposed was 'Women of the Golden Mountain' and Kingston called the book a novel in the outline. But Elliot didn't want the book to be published as a novel, explaining that 'well, first novels are hard to sell. I knew it would stand a stronger chance of selling well as nonfiction autobiography. It could be called anything else'. We now know that there are two types of views regarding the genre of the book. The first one believes the book is nonfiction. Supporters of this view are mainly white American critics and readers who regard the Chinese stories in the book as something with exotic oriental styles. Kingston herself also yields to this view. The second one maintains the book as fiction. Advocates of this view argue that the Chinese stories in the book completely deviate from the original and are false statements made up to cater to white readers. Frank Chin is a representative of them.

Is there a third answer to the question? I do think so. Before giving the answer, it would be better to have a look at how the two answers come. The Woman Warrior was published in 1976, when the Cultural Revolution ended in China. In the nearly three decades since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, China has made considerable progress, but some backward customs still exist. The negative elements of Chinese culture described in the book existed more or less. To a certain extent, white American readers' stereotypes about Chinese people are not groundless. Meanwhile, under the background of the confrontation between the two camps of communism and capitalism, there is almost no communication between China and the United States. Ordinary Americans almost have no access to information about China at all. No wonder they read the book as something with exotic oriental styles. Without the support of a powerful home country, male Chinese Americans at the time were usually marginalized in society and despised by white men. It is not difficult to understand why male Chinese Americans, like Frank Chin, are so infuriated when Kingston exposes the negative elements of Chinese culture and criticizes male Chinese's superiority to women. So, we can know that both these two reactions to Kingston's book are products of a specific historical period, even though some similar notions appear occasionally in modern criticism. For today's readers, the question of the genre is not as important as before. On one hand, with the deepening of Sino-US exchanges, American readers are more familiar with China and will not regard the stories in the book as absolute truths, even if the book is marked as nonfiction. Of course, there's nothing we can do if those deeply prejudiced readers have to think so. On the other hand, as China develops gradually into a modern country from poverty and backwardness, Chinese readers (including some Chinese American readers) can face up to the shortcomings of the past with internal confidence and peaceful minds and are not so sensitive to others' opinions towards them. So, the third answer to the question of the genre is that it can be either nonfiction or fiction.

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3. Protagonist's Cultural Identity

"Nonfiction" and "fiction" are two opposite conditions of Kingston's book as well as the "praise from the white American readers" and the "criticism from the Chinese American writers". They are opposite to each other, dependent on each other, presupposing each other, and can be unified during the process of movement and change. The book can either be nonfiction or fiction, and praise and criticism can both exist. Moreover, the dialectical principle of the unity of opposites is also reflected in the protagonist's quest for identity and self-construction in the book, which attempts to answer the fundamental philosophical questions 'Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going?'

Who am "I"? This is both an easy and difficult question to answer for the protagonist of the book. From the perspective of the law, "I" am an American citizen (*China Men*, Kingston's other "autobiographical" work which can be regarded as the twin book of *The Woman Warrior*, shows that the family has got American citizenship). From the perspective of biology, "I", with black hair and yellow skin, am Chinese without any doubt. But in terms of cultural identity, who am "I"?

3.1. Cultural Identity of the First Generation of Emigrants

For the first generation of emigrants, the question of self-identity seems not too hard to answer. On the way to the laundry by way of Chinatown, Moon Orchid mistook the Americans and Brave Orchid told her 'these aren't the Americans. These are the overseas Chinese'. They arise at six a.m. in the morning, work in the laundry with the inside temperature of one hundred and eleven degrees at noon, and scab in the tomato fields at the age of eighty, never stopping working and allowing themselves to retire. They use orange and apple crates as chairs, pay in guilt and count their change on the dark walk home after the carnival. Whenever they say 'home', they suspended America and enjoyment. All they want is to save more money and return home. They tell their children 'some day, very soon, we're going home, where there are Han people everywhere. We'll buy furniture then, real tables and chairs. You children will smell flowers for the first time'. They wish their children to be Chinese but also want to teach them to look after themselves and survive in this new land. They send children to 'ghost teachers', and they cut the fraenum, allowing the tongue to move in any language. But, they found they were in a dilemma: the children born among ghosts and taught by ghosts 'turn out bad' and become 'half ghosts'. Eventually, even they have to change themselves. They start to 'buy a sofa, then a rug, curtains, chairs to replace the orange and apple crates one by one'. The mother takes to wearing shawls and granny glasses, which are American fashions. The words 'we're not going back to China for sure now', which has been saying for twenty-five years, becomes true. They give permission to the villagers to let them take over their land in China. They have no more China to go home to. How sad they must be at the time when they write the letter of permission to cut the only tie to their homeland! For the first generation of emigrants, the question of "who am I?" is easy to answer. They are Chinese, overseas Chinese who retain the customs of the Chinese people, adhere to the beliefs of the Chinese people, and recognize the identity of the Chinese people, even though some of them might be unable to come back to China again for the rest of their lives or some of them have been used to living abroad.

3.2. Cultural Identity of the Second Generation of Emigrants

For the second generation of emigrants, the question of "Who Am I?" is more difficult to answer. Wu Bing believes that most of the early immigrants will go through five stages of cultural adaptation, namely: 'from realizing that they are different from other ethnic groups, to striving to identify with white people, to the awakening of ethnic consciousness, to pursuing the roots and longing to understand the home country, and finally integrating into American society'[7]. As a representative of the second generation, "I" am in the second and third stages, striving to identify with white people and starting to realize my ethnic identity. While "my" parents are missing the homeland and hope to return one day, "I" don't want to go to China. In "my" opinion, 'in China, my parents would sell my sisters and me. My father would marry two or three more wives, who would spatter cooking oil on our bare toes and lie that we were crying for naughtiness'. "I", as a little girl growing up in an ethnic community deeply influenced by the concept of male superiority, am filled with fears and hatred for China, which "I" have never been to. The Great-Uncle who went shopping only with boys and bought them candy and new toys, the great-grandfather who shouted "Maggots" to girls, the Third Grand-Uncle who gave his only great-grandson a full-month party and deliberately ignored the girls, and the father who claimed 'A husband may kill a wife who disobeys him' make "me" extremely grieved. "I" want to be a heroine, a swordswoman rather than just a wife and "slave". "I" got straight as, and worked hard trying to earn the affirmation of the

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family, hoping “my” parents would be proud of me. But “I” failed. ‘Feeding girls is feeding cowbirds’, ‘there is no profit in raising girls. Better to raise geese than girls’, ‘when you raise girls, you’re raising children for strangers’, ‘there is an outward tendency in females’ are the replies “I” got. So “I” decided to stop getting straight as and refuse to cook. When “I” had to wash dishes, “I” would crack one or two. “I” have tried to turn “myself” American-feminine.

“I” walked erect, spoke in an inaudible voice, not like the Chinese who spoke loudly in public places, even like the library. ‘We American-Chinese girls had to whisper to make ourselves American-feminine. Apparently we whispered even more softly than the Americans’. We despised those funny-looking young migrants and were determined that we would never date an FOB. We want to be Americans. But white American society seems not ready to accept us. When “my” parents’ laundry was demolished and “our” slum was paved over for a parking lot, when the colour of bright was called “nigger yellow”, when the “Noisy Red-Mouth Ghost” imitated our accent, and when “I” was asked to book a restaurant being picketed by CORE and NAACP, “I” knew “I” didn’t belong to them. I hate those stupid racists and the tyrants who ‘robbed’ my parents’ laundry, which they had run for seventeen years. Who Am “I”? “I” am totally confused. The Horse, a teacher in Frank Chin’s Gunga Din highway, says to his Chinese American students:

I can teach you to read and write Chinese […] but you will never be Chinese. And by now you should all know no matter how well you speak English and how many of the great books of western civilization you memorize, you will never be bokgwai, white European Americans. The Chinese kick you around for not being Chinese. And the whites kick you around for not being American. Obviously you are neither white nor Chinese[8].

“I” was neither white nor Chinese. “I”stopped checking “bilingual” on job applications because “I” could not understand the Chinese dialect the interviewer tried on me and he didn’t understand “me” either. “I” wanted to go back to China, went to New Society Village to find out who’s lying and what’s a cheating story and what’s not. “I” wanted to sort out ‘what’s just my childhood, just my imagination, just my family, just the village, just movies, just living’. “I” wanted to know “Who Am I?”

Some years later, when “my” mother said, ‘we have no more China to go home to’, “I” told her, ‘we belong to the planet now, Mama. Does it make sense to you that if we’re no longer attached to one piece of land, we belong to the planet? Wherever we happen to be standing, why, that spot belongs to us as much as any other spot’. “My” mother’s stories were over and it’s time for me to tell “mine”. Here is the story of Ts’ai Yen, a poetess and the daughter of a famous scholar. She was captured by a barbarian chieftain when she was twenty years old. During her stay in the Southern Hsiung-nu, she created the famous song “Eighteen Stanzas for a Barbarian Reed”, telling stories about China and her family there. Twelve years later, she was ransomed and came back to China with her song, which was sung to Chinese instruments. It seems that “I” saw “myself” in the story of Ts’ai Yen. Ts’ai Yen had to put her arms around the barbarian chieftain’s waist to keep from falling off the horse, and “I” had to yield to the pressure of white American society to make a living. That Ts’ai Yen’s children who don’t speak Chinese imitate and laugh at her when she tries to speak Chinese to them was just like what “my” children had done to “me”. After keeping silent for many years, Ts’ai Yen walked out of her tent and sang about China. And “I” decided to take the pen to write Chinese stories. Ts’ai Yen was “me” and “I” was Ts’ai Yen. Finally, “I” knew who I am.

Mulan's revenge is just a fantasy from the innocent heart of a little girl. If such “revenge” can also be said to be a solution to the racial and gender dilemmas faced by the narrator, then we can only say that it is a naive solution. In the process of growing up in pain and confusion, the narrator constantly thinks, searches, questions, and resists. She tries to find her way out of the hostile environment and to find where she belongs. Finally, the little girl grows up, and she tells her story of Ts’ai Yen. In the story of Ts’ai Yen, the narrator sees the possibility of reconciliation between two cultures. The song for a barbarian reed pipe can be seen as the solution to the quest for cultural identity and self-construction. The narrator, absorbing nutrition from both Chinese and American cultures, can write Chinese stories in English. The “barbarians” can understand her sadness and anger, and the Chinese can also appreciate them when they are translated. But American readers seem not to fully understand the story of Ts’ai Yen. Their stubborn insistence on the oriental imagination makes them choose ‘White Tigers’ (the story of Mulan) as their favourite chapter. When was told Mulan’s story should be the climax of the whole book, Kingston replied that she put it at the beginning to show the childish stories were a thing of the past, not the climax of the story[9]. Ts’ai Yen’s story should be the climax. The narrator finds the answer to “Who Am I?” in her story.

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4. Conclusions

According to the law of the unity of opposites, two opposite aspects of a contradiction are not equal. There must be one aspect superior to the other, and the superior aspect is called the principal aspect of the contradiction. When looking at the two aspects of the contradiction, one must follow the principal aspect[10]. For example, the book can be read both as nonfiction and fiction, but according to Huo Xiaojuan's analysis, in the current time period, the number of readers who believe it as nonfiction and those who believe it as fiction are not equal and those who believe it as fiction are more than those who believe the controversy [11]. It means that most modern critics and readers read it as fiction. In addition, we can see that the first generation of the emigrants, such as the narrator's mother, are getting used to American life and starting to realize their American identity, but it doesn't mean that they regard themselves as Americans like the second generation. To a large extent they still believe themselves to be Chinese. Moreover, Mao Zedong also points out that 'this situation is not static; the principal and the non-principal aspects of a contradiction transform themselves into each other and the nature of the thing changes accordingly'. So when we read the book, we should not read it as a static object but a dynamic thing with changes and developments. For example, we should not ignore the change of narrator's attitude towards Chinese and American culture in the quest for cultural identity. As a young girl, she hates the traditional Chinese culture and wants to be American-feminine. However, as she grows older, she begins to understand the meanings of Chinese culture to her and reconsiders her cultural identity. Similarly, we should also pay attention to the change in the reader's reaction to the book: from regarding it as an exotic oriental description, to criticizing it for distorting Chinese culture, and finally to focusing on its literary and aesthetic values. As the basic law of dialectic materialism, the law of the unity of opposites can help a lot in analyzing the genre of the book and the protagonist's cultural identity. In conclusion, the debate of the genre is a product of the specific historical period, and the answer depends on the reader's own identity and the sociohistorical context. The opposites of "fiction" and "nonfiction", "Chinese" and "American" can be united; and the book can be both fiction and nonfiction and the protagonist can be both Chinese and American.

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