Law as Literature, Literature as Law: Articulating "The Laws" in Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men*

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ABSTRACT

One of the most unsettling sections of Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men* is "The Laws" in which the author inventories various discriminatory laws against the Chinese immigrants in the USA from 1868 to 1978. Juxtaposed with other stories, this section poses a number of intriguing questions and challenges. This essay explores the interaction between law and literature in this peculiar work. It demonstrates how the author appropriates and chronicles the laws in her creative writing and how literature sets down laws and generates performative effects. By telling and inventing stories about the adventures, suffering, and perseverance of her male family members in Hawaii and the American continent over four generations, Kingston elevates these stories to the status of family saga, an epic of Chinese diaspora, and a new mythology of Chinese American.

KEY WORDS

Maxine Hong Kingston
China Men
law and literature
Chinese American literature
Chinese diaspora
articulation
silence
alternative
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I

To many readers, Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men* poses a number of intriguing questions and challenges. The first and foremost one is the naming of the book as *China Men*. Kingston remarks in a recent interview that "Originally, I'd entitled my book *Gold Mountain Heroes*. You can see I am trying to find a name for the pioneers. But the year that *China Men* came out, there were quite a few books being published with the words 'mountain' or 'gold' in their titles. So my editor and I settled on *China Men*" (Kingston 1995a, 2-3). As David Leiwei Li and I argued, by facing and re-inventing "Chinaman," a pejorative term imposed on the early Chinese immigrants, Kingston not only confronts squarely the history of the Chinese in the United States of America, but also transforms this term with its racist, regional, historical connotation into something positive and laudatory (Li 1990: 483-84; Shan 1994: 13-14).[1] Kingston does this by telling the stories about the adventures, suffering, and perseverance of her male family members in Hawaii and the American continent over four generations and, by so doing, by so doing, elevates these stories to the status of family saga and even an epic of Chinese diaspora. And to some critic, this also indicates her attempt "to create a new mythology for Chinese-American history " (Nishime 75).

The second question has to do with the genre. Once again here the publisher was involved. Whereas Kingston conceived her first two works, *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men*, mainly as creative writings, the publisher designated them as non-fiction. Consequently, the question of genre has been bothering the critics and readers ever since the appearance of these two works.[2] As a matter of fact, one of the earliest controversies over Kingston's works was whether they are fact, fiction, or a combination of both and how a reader should approach them. According to the Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data, *China Men* falls into, among other things, the categories of History and Biography. This fact, however, does not reduce the readers' anxiety in reading this peculiar work—namely, how do we

distinguish fact from fiction? Where does the factual end and the fictional begin?[3]

What further complicates the situation is that whereas in writing *The Woman Warrior* Kingston had direct access to her mother's talk-stories and her own feeling as a second-generation Chinese American girl growing up in a land of "ghosts," in *China Man* she was at a disadvantage due to her father's characteristic silence.[4] With respect to this peculiar situation, Kingston has this to say: "I'll tell you [her father] what I suppose from your silences and few words, and you can tell me that I'm mistaken. You'll have to speak up with the real stories if I've got you wrong" (15). This sense of uncertainty enhances the trans-generic attribute of *China Men*.

Structurally speaking, moreover, ordinary reading strategies do not help very much when coming to grips with these two works. The division of *China Men* into eighteen uneven sections generates additional question (the longest one being more than sixty pages ["The Father from China," pp. 9-73] and the shortest, one page only ["On Mortality Again," p. 122]). Whereas six long sections tell stories about her male family members spanning over four genreations from her great grandfathers to her brothers, the intertwining twelve short sections tell various stories from or about Chinese and Western mythology, literature, folklore, history, personal encounters...[5] The readers familiar with traditional Chinese narrative conventions might pride themselves on recognizing thest short sections as *hsieh-tzu* (楔子)—the short stories which serve to introduce a long narrative structurally and thematically in traditional Chinese literautre.[6] This way of reading divides the whole book into six parts (each of the longer sections is marked by the Chinese seal and heralded by one or two short section) and an epilogue composed of two short sections. However, the grouping of the sections on the table of contents defies this conventional Chinese way of reading. In short, the amorphous nature of this book transgresses the boundaries of traditional Chinese and Western literautre so far as the structure and genre are concerned.[7]

The most unsettling section, however, is probably "The Laws" (152-59) in which Kinston chronicles numerous discriminatory and even cruel laws and actions against the Chinese immigrants and registers the changing phases of the U.S. immigration policies towards the Chinese for more than a century—to be exact, from 1868 (the year of the Burlingame Treaty between USA and China) to 1978 (two years before the pubication of *China Men*).[8] Juxtaposed with other real or imagined stories about her family members as well as those concerning Chinese and Western mythology, literautre, and folklore, this *strictly historical* account is more than incongruous. So far as writing strategy is concerned, nowhere in *China Men* can we find greater gaps than that

between "The Laws" and other sections. The categorization of this book as "history" suits this section perfectly. However, the juxtaposition of this historical account with other (often very odd) tales undermines this categorization and creates a tension which sometimes produces an effect of peculiarity or even absurdity. One of the severe challenges to the readers, therefore, is how to make sense of this chronology by at once associating it with and dissociating it from the rest of the book.[9]

Clumsy as it may seem, this is by no means an unreasonable act on the part of the author.[10] In fact, "The Laws" figures as the central and pivotal section of the whole book not only by being the ninth among the eighteen sections, but also, as I would like to argue, by providing a fixed point upon which other sections could hinge—but only to a certain extent.[11] As an unconventional writer, Kingston would not allow this historical account to subjugate and dominate other stories, real or imagined. Much is generated by the interplay between this chronology and other sections.

The significance and dramatic impact of this passage is not neglected by Deborah Rogin, the playwright who adapted *The Woman Warrior: A Girlhood among Ghosts* on the basis of *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men*. In this play she manages to have various choruses composed of the Chinese man and women shout out directly to the audience some of the American discriminatory laws against the Chinese immigrants (74-77).[12] Although shocking and unbearable to a number of theater—goers and critics, this dramatic presentation, without doubt, is literally one of the most articulate moments about Chinese American history in Chinese American literature.[13] In other words, "The Laws" presents matter-of-factly the historical conditions under which Kingston's family members had long been suffering and struggling. This historical embeddedness highlights the family stories she tells and even raises them to epic proportions-an epic of the Chinese diaspora.[14]

Since this historical specificity is achieved by way of recording and re-inscribing the discriminatory laws against the Chinese immigrants in the United States,[15] it is plausible to approach this issue from the perspective of law and literature. As Brook Thomas observes, "a cross-examination of law and literature can help us reconstruct the narratives that different segments of American society imagined in response to the social and ecnonmic transformations that they experienced, as well as the narratives that helped to legitimize and structure those transformations" (16). Coming from a different perspective, this paper aims to deal with the explicit "laws" registered in *China Men* and to illuminate the relationship between law and literature in the Chinese American experience.

II

If the links between law and literautre "went largely unremarked and unexplored" until recently (Posner 1988: 9) and the study of their relationship seems to be a lacuna, it might be reasonably argued that the relationship between law and literature for an ethnic minority like Chinese Americans or the Chinese in the United States has been indeed the lacuna within a lacuna. This observation can be borne out by some of the representative works in the field of law and literature concerning either the USA or the Western world as large.

In *Law and American Literature: A Collection of Essays,* Carl S. Smith's chapter on "Law as Form and Theme in American Letters" mentions mainly Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, and William Dean Howells, whereas John P. McWilliams, Jr's chapter on "Innocent Criminal or Criminal Innocence: The Trial in American Fiction" discusses James Fenimore Cooper's *The Pioneers*, Herman Melville's *Billy Budd*, Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*, and Richard Wright's *Native Son.*

While Robert A. Ferguson's *Law and Letters in American Culture* confines itself to "the nexus between law and literature in the early republic" (6-7), Thomas's *Cross-examination of Law and Literature* discusses canonical works from the American Renaissance such as Cooper's *The Pioneers*, Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*, Harriet Beecher Sto·‚e's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and Melville's "Benito Cereno," "Bartleby, the Scrivener," and *Billy Budd,* despite his claim to adopt a perspective of cultural history and to find narrative alternatives to the dominant ideology (Thomas 3, 6, 16). Or, should we say, Thomas's "alternatives" are not alternative enough so far as race, class, and gender are concerned?

One of the pioneering works on the connection between law and literautre, Richard A. Posner's *Law and Literature: A Misunderstood Relation* expands its scope to include many important works in the Western tradition, ranging from Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Sophocles's *Oedipus Tyrannus*, Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus,* William Shakespear's *Hamlet, The Merchant of Venice* and *Measure for Measure,* Charles Dickens's *Bleak House*, Melville's *Billy Budd,* Feodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, James Gould Cozzens's *The Just and the Unjust*, Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, to Albert Camus's *The Stranger*, and Franz Kafka's *In the Penal Colony* and *The Trial.*[16] Moreover, among the forty-

three stories included by Amicus Curiae in *Law in Action: An Anthology of the Law in Literature*, there is only one by an Asian American writer, namely, Carlos Bulosan's "My Father Goes to Court" (486-90).

A rapid look at the above sampling indicates that only one African American author (Wright) and one female author (stowe) are included. Whereas Bulosan is a Filipino American author, "My Father Goes to Court" not only is excluded in his famous autobiography *America Is in the Heart*, but also is of dubious nature[17]. Among the above instances, not a single ethnic female writer is included. Therefore, it is comforting to read Richard Weisberg's statements that "[s]tories about the 'other' induce us to see the other, and once we do so, we endeavor consistenly to understand the world from within the other's optic "and that" [p]oethics, in its attention to legal communication and to the plight of those who are 'other' seeks to revitalize the ethical component of law" (46). In spite of the claim that his "preponderantly traditional choices actually serve as the most value-shattering and forward-looking sources for a just society" (47), Weisberg's insistence on "'the best' that both fields [law and literature] have to offer" (123) and his rejection of the postmodernist challenge to and the feminists reconstruction of the canon somehow fall into the trap of essentialism and fail to respond positively to the works other than those already included in the American canon.[18] In a sense, the present study is to further Weisberg's advocacy about the necessity "to understand the world from within the other's optic" by taking into account the alternative narrative from the group previously excluded from the American canon.

However, my argument differs radically from Weisberg's in that by treating canonical texts as cultural artifacts produced under specific historical conitions and permanently in the making, I would view the canon as an arena for constant confrontation and contestation, negotiation and re-negotiation. In his study of the relationship between law and literature, Thomas remarks, "I have self-consciously chosen canonized texts. Widely read today, expecially [sic] by college and university students, these texts continue to influence the public's attitude toward the law. Thus the critical debate over how they are read is inevitably a political debate." He regards his own readings of these canonized texts in the American Renaissance as his "contribution to that present debate" (18).

The above instances show that according to the traditional Western conon, no Asian American female author has yet been included. In this sense, Asian American texts can really provide alternatives to the canonical Western literature. However, if one of the criteria for judging whether a work is canonical or not is based on the visibility on college campuses, then Kingston

who claimed to be the most widely read living contemporary American author on campuses (1989-90: 68) is surely a canonical American author. The reading of her work would also contribute to the "present debate" by being "value-shattering and forward-looking" and, as J. Hillis Miller persuasively argues, will have certain performative effects.

III

This paper tries to demonstrate that *China Men* is alternative at least in the following aspects: (1) it is part of the tradition of Chinese American literature, a literature which has long been excluded from the American canon and has come to a wider notice only in the past decade or so; (2) the articulation of the female author tries to break through the double bind of racism and sexism (especially in its companion volume *The Woman Warrior*); (3) its subject matter concerns the four generations of Kingston's male family members who, like Chinese immigrants over the last one and a half centuries, have been discriminated against in a legal and institutionalized way and yet have struggled not only to survive but also to thrive under these tough circumstances; (4) in contrast to the form and theme of the canonical works, *China Men's* narrative strategies juxtapose fact with fiction and thus complicate the very notion and function of literature and history; and (5) *China Men* provides alternative narratives not only to American laws but also to Chinese laws.

An effective step to study the chronology presented in "The Laws" is to compare it with those presented in the history books. In this respect, Bill Ong Hing's and Sucheng Chan's books offer a convenient frame of reference. At the end of his study of the American immigration policy from 1850 to 1990, Hing provides a brief chronology of the discriminatory laws against the Asian Americans in American history. At the end of her "interpretive history" of Asian Americans, Chan offers an even more detailed one.

A comparison of "The Laws" with these two chronologies shows the pervasiveness of the discriminatory mentality and legislation against the Asians who either sojourned or stayed in the United States, as will as the tremendous proportion and significance of the people of Chinese descent.[19] Although itself a chronology, "The Laws" proves to be much more forceful than the other two chronologies. For not only Chinese American history gives it more focus and strength than Asian American hsitory, but also the juxtaposition of the chronology with other stories, especially those of Kingston's family, serves to flesh out vividly the maltreatment imposed upon

the Chinese immigrants. The very fact that it resembles yet also slightly differs from the strict chronology in a history book allows it more space to narrate lively different sufferings inflicted upon the Chinese immigrants in a foreign land.

Moreover, Kingston's way of contextualization, or rather, "re-contextualiztion" within such a peculiar book of familial and communal feelings lends force to the chronology itself. In other words, by re-inscribing in black-and-white the discriminatory laws against the Chinese immigrants and placing these cruel laws side by side with her family stories over four generations and other stories from Chinese and Western traditions, Kingston produces something which neither chronology nor history alone is able to offer. By writing about her family members over the generations as well as immigrants of the same ethnic group, Kingston transcends the ordinary and familiar scope of law and literature and enters into the collective memory of the Chinese Americans. Her act of re-inscription is indeed an "effort at reclamation" (Linton 37).[20]

It is quite obvious from Kingston's writing that one of the common threads connecting her stories about the Chinese immigrants is the American laws. What is much less obvious, however, is the other side of the Chinese diaspora—the Chinese history and laws which at different periods served to push these Chinese people away from their home country to foreign lands. Although the Chinese history and law are less explicit and not presented in the same orderly way, their significance should not be overlooked. What, then, is the relationship between law and literature in *China Men*? To understand this, we might start from the text itself by recounting Kingston's family members in terms of Chinese emigration as situated in the contests of both American and Chinese laws.

Adopting Michel Foucault's concept of "counter-memory," Cheung forcefully argues that Kingston's mother's order of silence prompts her to write *The Woman Warrior*, her father's silence prods her to write *China Men*, and, in a larger sense, the silence imposed on Chinese imigrants by the mainstream American society provokes her to write about them and, by so doing, to articulate for them (1993a). In this sense, Kingston's works embody what Stephen Greenblatt names as "alternative histories, competing accounts, and muffled voices" (viii). This partly explains why Kingston begins herstories about her family members not chronologically, but with her silent father, albeit in an intentionally ambiguous manner. By starting with her father and moving temporally backward to her great grandfathers (Bak Goong and Bak Sook Goong) and grandfather and forward to her brothers, with the interruptions of other shorter sections, Kingston reminds the readers of the

method of *in medias res* of the Greek tragedies. To facilitate our discussion, we will begin chronologically with her great grandfathers who went to Hawaii in the nineteenth century as contract laborers in the sugar plantation.

Writing about her own family members, Kingston actually pictures a panorama in the history of Chinese emigration abroad. Unlike the Western imperialism, expansionism and colonialism, the Chinese government not only did not encourage people to emigrate, but went so far as to ban the relations with foreign countries for a long time.[21] However, both pushed by the impoverished situation at home and pulled and lured by the material gain abroad, "[t]he nineteenth century, the age of the great migrations, saw the dispersal of the Chinese across the world on a scale unprecedented in Chinese history" (Pan 57). It is against this historical and legal background that Kingston's Bak Goong and Bak Sook Goong went to Hawaii.

Although Kingston does not identify exactly the year when her great grandfathers left for Hawaii, she does provide some historical background. Chan's chronology mentions that in the 1830s "Several Chinese 'sugar masters' at work in Hawaii," in 1835 "Americans establish first sugar plantation in Hawaii," and in 1852 "First batch of 195 Chinese contract laborers land in Hawaii" (192). Kingston, however, has a somewhat different sotry to tell or re-tell: "The recruiter [of laborers] told his fellow villagers, Chinese were the first sugarmakers in Hawai'i; they brought the first millstones and vats in 1802" (91). Unlike some "piglets" who were inveigled and sold involuntarily, Bak Goong willingly put his X on a three-year contract for "free passage, free food, free clothes, and housing" and a weekly salary (91).

The reasons behind Bak Goong's going abroad can be succinctly put in a Chinese phrase *t'ien-tsai jen-juo* ("天災人禍," natural catastrophes and human disasters). So far as natural catastrophes are concerned, *China Men* mentions "the Yellow River had reversed its course overnight ... The Yangtze also flooded" (92). Human disasters include mainly the facts that "the British demons opened the seaports to opium and soldiers" (92) as a result of the unequal treaty signed after the Opium War (1839-1842) and the rebellion led by a "crazy Cantonese" (92), namely the Taiping Rebellion led by Hung Hsiu-ch'uan from 1850 to 1864. Coming from Ssu-yi or "Four Districts," the poorest areas in Kwangtung, and "recogniz[ing] a century-size upheaval" (93), Bak Goong wanted to take chances abroad in the mid-nineteenth century.

However, he was soon disillusioned by the severe regulations in the plantation, especially that concerning silence.[22] As "a talk addict" (110), Bak Goong complained, "If I knew I had to take a vow of silence, ... I would have shaved off my hair and become a monk" (100). No longer a land of gold and

promises, the plantation with its various restrictions became "some kind of a slave labor camp" (102). Occupying an opposite position against the plantation supervisors, these laborers had to resort to different skills or tricks in order to outwit their supervisors and employers and survive under those difficult circumstances. The most weird one is "the shout party" (118). In this shocking and highly symbolic scene, these China Men dug a big hole on the ground into which they shouted their longings for their family, their sufferings as strangers in a strange land, and "any kind of thing" (117). Kingston figures out a powerful metaphor for this therapeuitc-ritualistic behavior,[23] "They had dug an ear into the world, and were telling the earth their secrets" (117), and "[t]alked out, they buried their words, planted them" (118). The originator of this innovative and symbolic behavior, Bak Goong was not unaware of the initiatory act they performed and justified it by saying, "That wasn't a custon... We made it up. We can make up customs because we're the founding ancestors of this place" (118). This is ostensibly Bak Goong's act of claiming his authority on this custom and this land—at least according to the story told by his great granddaughter. The initiatory and compensatory significance of this act is simultaneously conveyed in the expression "make up," as suggested by Cheung (1993b: 28-29).

Poignantly meaningful in itself, this shouting of secrets and planting of words have other intertexts in Western literary tradition. Cheung identifies two sources for this story of Bak Goong's—one in King Midas's story in Book IX of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the other in the story told by Wife of Bath in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales (Cheung 1993a: 27-28). This shows that Kingston incorporates whatever resources available into the apparently historically-specific story she tells and thus enriches it. The very fact that this shouting scene is expended from one individual to a group of Chinese laborers suggests the author's intention to make it collective and communal. This attempt is supported by the expressions such as "in 1856 *every great grandfather on every island*" (108).[24] By so doing, she represents the story of Bak Goong in an unusual way, expends it to the same generation of Chinese laborers, and associates the story of a particual ethnic group with other time-honored literary texts in the Western tradition.

Bak Goong came back to China, unlike a lot of Chinese immigrants who stayed in Hawaii. And Bak Sook Goong, who married a Hawaiian woman, also chose to come back with his Hawaiian wife to stay with his other two wives in China. The stories about "these two great grandfathers [who] made their lives of a piece" (118) constitute the first chapter of Kingston's family saga of emigration.

IV

The second chapter began with the arrival of Ah Goong (grandfather) in California in 1863—fifteen year after the discovery of gold in California. First hired by the "white demons" to fell the redwood, he later became a railroad worker for the Central Pacific Railroad.[25] The building of the transcontinental railroad has already become an indispensable part of the collective memories of the Chinese American.[26] Once again Kingston merges this collective memory with the life stories of her forefather. This convergence of the individual and the group is supported by Kingston's observation that the expressions "your grandfather" or "your grandfathers" built the railroad are determined "by context" (126).

Ah Goong's life in the U.S. can be divided into three phases: first as a worker and seeker after gold; then as an exile hunted by the hostile whites over the U.S. territory; finally as a sojourner who either died in the 1906 San Francisco earthquake or returned to China in an ignoble way. Kingston vividly portrays her grandfather's plight as a bachelor in a foreign land by bringing into the Chinese myth of the meeting of Altair and Vega, the Spinning Girl and the Cowboy, once a year (129-30). Whereas in China people for centuries have had deep sympathy for these two legendary lovers, Kingston's Ah Goong by contrast was in a much worse situation than these two mythical figures who, as the legend goes, at least can see each other once a year and have other people's deep sympathy.

Kingston tells stories about the stoic heroism of her grandfather and his fellow China Men. These stories recount the heroic deeds performed by these cheap Chinese laborers. What is unusual is her way of presenting her grandfather's sexual exhibition which, in turn, is a consequence of long-time sexual repression. When hauled down the cliff to bury gunpowder for explosion in order to pave the rails, Ah Goong the basketman developed a habit to "squirt out into space. 'I am fucking the world,' he said" (133). This is indeed an odd aombination of stoic herosim and sexual repression/exhibition. It took several years and many a life to build the railway. However, when the transcontinental railroad was finally completed, only "the demons posed for photographs, the China Men dispersed. It was dangerous to stay. The Driving Out had begun. Ah Goong does not appear in railroad photographs" (145).

Kingston almost draws up an inventory of what these China Men did in various walks of life after they had been dispersed immediately after the

completion of the railroad. So far as communications were concerned, "After the Civil War, China Men banded the nation North and South, East and West, with crisscrossing steel. They were the binding and building ancestors of this place" (146). However, enither the paper he bought from a white man with a bag of gold (half of his savings) nor his contribution to the New World could prevent him from being discriminated against and driven away from one place to another.

Kingston lists, among other incidents the Los Angeles Massacre, the Rock Springs Massacre, the Denver ravaging as well as "the Drivings Out of Tacoma, Seattle, Oregon City, Albania, and Marysville" (148). Ah Goong was fortunate enough not to get involved or killed in these tragic events. By 1902 when "the Boston police imprisoned and beat 234 chinamen[sic]... Ah Goong had already reached San Francisco or China, and perhaps San Francisco again" (149). We, or rather, Kingston cannot clearly trace the whereabouts of Ah Goong between the completion of the first transcontinental railroad in 1869 and 1902.[27] However, the way Kingston treats Ah Goong—as a wanderer roaming over the face of the American continent and even between USA and China—enables him to embody the common fate of the people of Chinese descent during the period of strong anti-Chinese sentiments.

Not insignificantly, Ah Goong finds in America another figure in the Chinese literature, Guan Goong (關公), at once "God of War and Literature" (149).[28] Just as she plays upon the Chinese word "bao" (報) as both "reporting" and "revenge" in *The Woman Warrior* (53), here Kingston plays upon the word "Goong" and turns this historical-*cum*-mythic figure into Grandfather: "Guan Goong, Grandfather Guan, our own ancestor of writers and fighters, of actors and gamblers, and avenging executioners who mete out justice. Our own kin. Not a distant ancestor but Grandfather" (149-50). Here the commonplace, the historical, and the mythical become one.

Ah Goong's second bag of gold was made into only a samll gold ring by a treacherous Chinese goldsmith. He was then able to sail out of San Francisco and presented this gold ring to his wife at home who liked it very much (150). However, as "[s]he quickly spent the railroad money, and Ah Goong said he would go to America again. He had a Certificate of Return and His Citizenship Paper" (150). No year of his re-entry is provided in the story told by his granddaughter. Nor do we know how he died. All we know is that this time Ah Goong had nowhere to sell his labor and had to live in a basement in San Francisco Chinatown.[29]

Furthermore, Kingston chooses to be ambiguous about his second visit

to USA by quoting stories she heard from others. Once story is that "he died falling into the cracking earth" in the famous San Francisco earthquake in 1906. To many Chinese immigrants, the destruction of the Hall of Records marked their rebirth as legal inbabitants—"[e]very China Man was reborn out of that fire a citizen" (150). Ironically, this rebirth was paid at a high cost—in Ah Goong's case, his lifelong working, longing, suffering, and ultimately his life. Another story was that his family paid two thousand dollars to get him, already "a louse eaten by lice" and "a fleaman" (151), back to China. However, Kingston has another conjecture: "He'd gotten the legal or illegal papers burned in the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire; he appeared in America in time to be a citizen and to father citizens" (151). It is this focus on "legal or illegal" and the presentation of different versions of the same person's life story that characterize the story of BaBa, Kingston's father.

V

Whereas it was difficult to date the years of birth of her Bak Goong, Bak Sook Goong, and Ah Goong, Kingston refuses to give the exact year of her father's birth even if she could. This is not without good reasons, Just as to many Westerners every oriental looks the same, one China Man can have more than one name as different situations arise: "I got away with aliases, 'he [BaBa] said,' because the white demons can't tell one Chinese name from another or one face from another" (242). And since the San Francisco earthquake and fire destroyed all the records, there was no document to distinguish the real from the fake, the legal from the illegal. While in China under no circumstances would a man of honor change his name, in America this act and "power of naming" is a necessary tactics for survival. In addition, as the end of Ah Goog's story, Kingston leaves some space for the possibility of legal or illegal children.

This having been said, in order to hinge BaBa to the chronology described by the author and the Chinese laws, we have to begin with the year of birth of her father, "Think Virtue" (Ssu-te "思德") and his entry into the United States. Even about these two of the most conspicuous and significant facts of BaBa's life, Kingston is nothing other than ambiguous. As to the former, Kingston brought in the cyclical concept of time embodied in Chinese lunar calendar by giving three possible years: "My father was born in a year of the Rabbit, 1891 or 1903 or 1915" (15). By so doing, Kingston is also able to bring in the Rabbit story from the Buddhist texts. It is after more than 200 pages that Kingston conceded her father's year of birth: "In 1903 my father

was born in San Francisco, where my grandmother had come disguised as a man" (237). But the way how her grandmother came to the US was so miraculous that readers cannot help treating this piece of information with suspicion, if not with downright denial.[30]

Notwithstanding this ambiguity about the year of birth, her father was definitely born after the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882). This fact established the possibility that her was among thousands of Chinese imigrants passing thourgh the detention camp on Angel Island (1910-1940). It therefore connects with another Chinese American collective experience and its legacy in literature—Angel Island Immigration Station and the poems carved on the wooden walls of the detention camp.[31] This enables Kingston not only to write about Angel Island (thus adding something to the textual representation and re-inscription of this historical site), but also to analogize her father's silence and passivity as part of what I would name as "post-Island symptoms," even among those Chinese immigrants who did not pass through Angel Island. According to the editors of *Island* poetry, the traumatic experiences at the humiliating Angel Island detention camp had tremendous consequences: "their experiences on Angel Island and under the American exclusion laws laid the groundwork for the behavior and attitudes of an entire generation of Chinese Americans" (Lai et al. 28). These symptoms were vividly embodied in BaBa and had effects on Kingston even when she wrote *China Men* several decades later.

The first ambiguity leads to the second: when and how did BaBa come to the United States? If it is firmly established that her father was born in 1903, then he probably entered USA during the period when Angel Island was officially set up for the Chinese immigrants. This conjecture is supported by the following textual evidence. In response to the request of "one of the grandfathers... [to] write a list of the man going-out-on-the-road... BaBa set down the date, which was in 1924" (45).[32]

But the question remains: whether he entered USA by way of Angel Island? Kingston gives different versions concerning her father's entry into the US. One is "a legal trip from Cuba to New York" in which BaBa helped with other illegal fathers who hid inside crates heading for Florida, New Orleans, or even up to New York (48-49). According to the immigration policy then, however, this trip was quite out of the question. Another is the illegal trip in which BaBa himself was a stowaway hiding inside crates. This version allows Kingston to write more about the adventure and feelings of a stowaway (49-53). The other is legal, passing through the Immigration Station on Angel Island. This version allows Kingston to describe in a very

personal way about the various experiences of the detainees on Angel Island, including the poems written and carved on the walls (53-60). Although BaBa was finally allowed to go ashore, he had no idea "on what basis they let him in—his diploma [as a Chinese scholar], his American lineage (which may have turned out to be good after all), his ability to withstand jailing, his honesty, or the skill of his deceits" (60). These different versions allow the author to depict the various ways these Chinese immigrants chose to enter the U.S. as well as their experiences and inner feelings. Here, again, the individual is expanded to the communal.

Significantly, it is only after her father's death that Kingston is able to reveal in recent interview the exact way how her father came to the U.S.: "Now that my father has died, I can tell you that he actually came to the U.S. as a stowaway on a ship from Cuba, and he made this journey not once but three times. He was caught twice by immigration police and deported twice. Of course, I had to tell many legal and magical versions of my father's entry in case immigration authorities read my book and arrest and deport him again, and my mother too" (1995a: 5).

With this hindsight in mind, we are in a better position to observe Kingston's artistic treatment of this single incident in BaBa's life. Her very sketchy description of the first way virtually dismissed the possibility and profundity of this way of entry, whereas both the second and third versions address the race-specific experiences of Chinese immigrants—legal and illegal alike—and foreshadow the deep psychological impacts which BaBa and his children would demonstrate. By the time BaBa got to New York, it was only the beginning of his life in the U.S. Much remains to be told, and in conjunction with ther stories of his sons—the fourth and final chapter of the family saga.

VI

Although the text does not specify when Kingston's younger brothers were born, the fact that Kingston was bron in 1940 testifies that they were born in 1940s or 1950s and had to join the U.S. armed forces during the Vietnam War period. Since Kingston and her brothers grew up under similar circumstances, it is quite reasonable to assume that they suffered from the same discrimination against them as Chinese Americans, though they might have been exempt from the sexual discrimination that Kingston suffered.

We can gain lively impressions about these sufferings from Kingston's depiction of herself in *The Woman Warrior* where she suffered from sexual

discriminations in addition to racial ones. Once again the act and power of naming are executed—this time on BaBa's children. Her silent father's love toward his daughter was shown by the act that he named her "after a blonde gambler who always won" in his gambling house (243) and her Chinese name T'ing-t'ing is from a Chinese poem about "self-reliance, independence, uniqueness" (1955a: 1). Since the Chinese patriarchal tradition regards males as the carriers of the family lineage, in addition to their English names, her brothers' Chinese names were chosen in accordance with the name of their generation "Bridge" (264). The older one was named as "Incorruptible Bridge or Pure Bridge" and the younger, "Han Bridge"—as Kingston puts it, "like a bridge between Han and here. We're Han People from the Han Dynasty" (264).[33] And they know a little bit of Chinese vocabulary (290). The cultural connection here is more than obvious.

Probably to provide a variation to the presentation of her personal experiences in *The Woman Warrior,* Kingston mainly describes how her father and brothers dealt with the draft for the Vietnam War. Pacifist in nature, they did not want to kill or get killed in this war. So it was suggested that her father evaded the draft by intentionally getting too thin, even at the expense of his own health. And one of her brothers beacame "a Pacifist in the Navy rather than in jail" and "resolved that in the Navy he would follow orders up to a point short of a direct kill" (285).

Despite the fact that he was born an American, her brother could not escape the fate of being the target of the "racial slur" (286) in the Navy due to his color. He had to prove himself as American or even out-American by passing through "Q Clearance," "Secret Security." Ironically, when in Taipei his superior informed him of the secruity check, his first response is "[his] breath caught—his family deported" (298). This significantly represents the deep-rooted fear and the instinctive response of the people of the Chinese descent, even if they were born Americans. Therefore, his having passed Q Clearance means a lot not only to him but also to his family: "The government was certifying that the family was really American, not precariously American but super-American, extraordinarily secure—Q Clearance Americans... Maybe that grandfather's Citizenship Judge was real and legal after all" (299). Here, the personal encounter is once again connected to the family history. That his older brother had also passed Top Secret Security Clearance and obtained a commission in the Air Force further certifies that "they had not only been checked but double-checked, and cleared, doubly cleared" (300). Again, ironically, to the pacifist brother, this is one of the "benefits" of the war: "I'm getting something good out of the Vietnam War" (298).

In additions to this sense of security, another related and significant gain is the confirmation of his identity. During his service in the Navy, her brother had chances to visit many places in Asia. China as a supporter of North Vietnam was, of course, prohibited to visit. Instead, he was able to visit other places in Asia sharing Chinese culture, especially Taiwan. It was in Taiwan that he was "for the first time in a country of Chinese people" (294). However, in contrast to "the real China," he found that "Taiwan was not China, a decoy China, a facsimile" (294) and that as a Chinese American "he had not 'returned.' Of course, the Center was elsewhere. This island was not the Center, its people emigrants, rejects, and misfits" (301). It was during this Odyssey that he gradually discovered what his identity was and where he belonged. When he was mustered out from the Navy three years before the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 (withour killing or getting killed) and came back to Stockton, it is of great significance that to him his father said, "Well, so you have come back" and his mother, "You're back home" (emphasis added, 304). The four-generation family saga finally came to an end with finding in American their home.[34]

VII

In literature, the relationship between law and literature is usually presented in such a way that law is used either as the form to structure the narrative of as the theme to thread through the whole story. The treatment of law in *China Men* at first sight appears to a very superficial and mechanical: one section is specifically set apart to chronicle the pervasive anti-Chinese sentiments and actions in American history. However, the remaining sections serve to delineate the situation of the Chinese immigrants in American in a diametrically different way. In other words, Kingston gives a personal account of the stories of the family (including different versions of the same events) to flesh out the experiences of the Chinese immigrants in general. Yet by presenting her family mambers in such an ambiguous way, she paradoxically both particularizes and collectivizes these experiences and makes them at once the individual memories, the family memories, and the collective memories of the Chinese Americans.

With regard to *China Men*, therefore, law as literature is well-grounded both because law becomes raw matericals to be included and transformed in association with other intratextual elements and because the special section on "The Laws" provides a historical skeleton to be fleshed out and re-inscribed by the life stories of Kingston's male family members over four generations,

spanning from the mid-nineteenth century to the third quarter of the twentieth century, and produces rich ethnic experiences and memories. The historical conditions and laws in China as well as U.S. pushed and pulled these Chinese immigrants across the high seas. Without these laws and rules/rulings, the Chinese diaspora and its literature would be drastically different. Kingston's bold insertion of "The Laws" spurs the readers to ponder over the complicated and intriguing relationship between law and literature and its possible significances.

In this recent thought-provoking study of the relationship between law and literature, Miller stresses the performative function of literature, or more specifically, how literature sets function of literature, or more specifically, how literature sets down laws, namely, literature as law. His argument can be used here to discuss the performative effects of *China Men.* After recounting her great grandfather's shouting party, kingston says, "Soon the new green shoots would rise, and when in two years the cane grew gold tassels, what stories the wind would tell" (118). When the great granddaughter of Bak Goong and Bak Sook Goong came to Hawaii more than one hundred years later, she saw and heard Mokoli'i Island, alias "Chinaman's Hat" (88). The description in this passage is moving and forceful:

> It was, I know it, the island, the voice of the island singing, the sirens Odysseus heard. . . .
>
> It's a tribute to the pioneers to have a living island named after their work hat.
>
> I have heard the land sing. I have seen the bright blue streaks of spirits whisking through the air. I again search for my American ancestors by listening in the cane. (90).

What stories, then, would the wind tell? What sons would the land sing? About these we have no ideas. But we do know that Kingston was deeply moved and prompted by these scenes and that she wrote both *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men* in Hawaii. Just as her ancestors work in the sugar plantation and set the foundation for Hawaii agriculture, Kingston with her powerful writing produces something initiatory and compensatory.

Unlike mainstream literary works on law with their definite themes and story lines, in *China Men* law and literature, the personal and the collective, the mythic and the historical, the fictional and the factual are mutually substantiating and enriching. "We can *make up* customs," Kingston's Bak Goong proudly declared, "because we're *the founding ancestors* of this place" (emphasis added, 118). As a pioneering ancestor and founding father, a

laborer on a foreign land, and a rebel in defiance against the law of silence, Bak Goong invented the tactics to confront the dire situation the best way he could. Here the act of inventing and supplementing is epitomized in the expression "make up."

In discussing literature as law, we can further argue about the creative role of Kingston as an author and the performative effect of literature. Be her work history or fiction, biography or story, Kingston as an author not only hears her mother talk-story but also talk stories in her own way, thus embodying the double meanings of the word "author" as both "transmitter" and "augmenter." By producing something new with her words on pages, she contributes to Chinese American literature and provides alternatives not only to canonical texts of law and literature, but also to the cultural and historical canons of USA at large. As one critic remarks, "*China Men* subverts notions of a seamless, 'factual' history, untouched by either mythology or particularity, in an effort to write Chinese-Americans back into the history of America (Nishime 76).

The various performative effects of Kingston's effort can be seen from the warm reception of her works. Here a special example would suffice. At the beginning of *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*, Roland Takaki, a third-generation Japanese American (whose grandfather once worked in Hawaii), urges that "We need to 're-vision' history to include Asians in the history of America, and to do so in a broad and comparative way" (7). His goal is undoubtedly to proffer an alternative narrative to American history. Takaki cites Bak Goong's defiance against the command of silence and draws lessons from the significance of the shouting party: "Today we need to fill the shouting holes, to listen to the Bak Goongs of the past and learn their secrets. Their stories can enable us to understand Asians as actors in the making of history and can give us a view from below—the subjective world of he immigrant experience" (8).[36] One of the results is, not surprisingly, Takaki's own book *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* several years later. In other words, as a historian, Takaki carries on the initiatory function of kingston's story about Bak Goong and constructs his version of American history by giving voices to the long-silenced Asian ethnic groups in American history.

This paper tries to explore the way how Kingston deals with *China Men* by articulating "The Laws." Here "articulating 'The Laws'" has several meanings: to make explicit the laws in American history as represented in an author's creative writing, to explicate the function of the section "The Laws" in *China Men* in my act of writing a critical text, to explore Kingston's various talk-story strategies as acts of articulation, and, not the least among

argue for the way how a literary work can lay down the laws (here by reading Kingston's appropriating the laws originally laid down to set limits to her ancestors). By so doing, she is able to "conduct and ideological critique of the law through fiction" (Beebee 173). In short, Kingston articulates the laws by writing about them and makes up new laws with her creative writing. This act of articulation enables the author and her readers (including her father) to "*bao*"—not only to report and revenge, but also to respond, reciprocate, re-vision, and re-invent.[37] I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to the Harvard-Yenching Institute for the 1994-1995 Fellowship that enabled me to write this paper.

Notes

[1] The Chinese title of this book is also a complex question. Whereas the four-character Chinese seal on the title page and in front of each of the six longer sections reads *chin-shan yung-shin* ("金山勇士", literally, "Gold Mountain Brave Men"), both Kingston and King-Kok Cheung think that the term *chung-kuo lao* (中國佬) or *hua-tsai* (華仔) can better capture the "slangy guy connotation" of the English title (Kingston 1995a: 3; Shan 1994: 13 n11). This exemplifies the complexity of this title in the bi-lingual and bi-cultural context.

[2] For instance, this question has been raised repeatedly by Linda Ching Sledge in 1980 (3-4), Joan Lidoff in 1987, Wu Qing-yun in 1991-92 (85-86), and Leilani Nishime in 1995. Interestingly, when Lidoff's article "Autobiography in a Different Voice: Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*" was adapted for *Approaches to Teaching Kingston's* The Woman Warrior (MLA 1991), the subtitle was changed into "*The Woman Warrior* and the Question of Genre." This shows that genre is one of the basic questions to be confronted by the teachers and students of Kingston's work.

[3] Donald C. Goellnicht's ambiguous term, "(auto)biographical fiction" (191), reflects this dilemma.

[4] Goellnicht indicates, "The is not a positive silence but the silence of resignation that signals withdrawal and humiliation, the inability to articulate his own subject position so that he is doomed to the one—that of inscrutable, passive 'chinaman'—created by the dominant society" (201-02). Kingston's writing, therefore, is an act of articulation.

[5] Most of these stories have to do with themes such as suffering, silence, exile, and alienation. While King-Kok Cheung discusses the theme of silence in *China Men* (1993a), Shu-mei Shih connects these sections with the theme of exile and characterizes this book as post-modern in her Chinese essay

(1991: 162). With its emphasis on gaps, fragmentation, heteroglossia, and generic transgression, *China Men*, a "postmodern writing" according to Patricia Linton (41), fits into what Carole J. Lambert describes as "postmodern biography." In his book-length study of genre, Thomas O. Beebee observes, "The effect that many identify as postmodern is produced by defeating the generic expectations of the reader" (9).

[6] For a book-length study of *hsieh-tzu*, see Chuang Yin.

[7] As one critic points out, "Reverence for anicent authority, generic purity, and East-West dichotomy is especially alien to Kingston, who consciously defies conventional boundaries in both of her texts" (Cheung 1993b: 122).

[8] Frank Chin and Jeffrey Paul Chan also emphasize the importance of the law in the Chinese-American context: "For the Chinese, [the white dominant society] invented an instrument of racist policy that was a work of pure genius, in that it was not an overtly hostile expression of anti-Chinese sentiment, yet still reinforced the stereotype and generated self-contepmt and humiliation among generations of Chinese and Chinese-Americans, who after having been conditioned into internalizing the white supremacist Gospel of Christian missionaries, looked on themselves as failures, instead of victims of racism. This wondrous instrument was the law" (71). Kingston goes further by representing the laws as the legalized instrument for the white majority's racial discrimination against the Chinese immigrants. In his interpretation of Tang Ao (唐敖) as "emblematic of Chinese male sojourners in America (the Gold Mountain)" (191), Goellnicht points out that "the restrictive and exclusionary laws instituted by the dominant white culture against the Chinese had emasculated these immigrant men, frocing them into 'feminine' subject positions of powerlessness and silence, into 'bachelor' Chinatown devoid of women, and into 'feminized' jobs that could not be filled by women" (192). So far as the Tang Ao in *China Men* is concerned, although the original character undergoing this suffering in the novel *Ching-hua-yuan* (鏡花緣, *Flowers in the Mirror*) is Lin chi-yang (林之洋, a literal translation of his name is "going overseas"), yet the name Tang Ao carries rich meaning: the surname "Tang" can signify the Chinese (as "Chinatown" is also known as "T'ang-jen-chieh" 唐人街); and the original meaning of "Ao" is "wandering," and its homonym 熬 means both "suffering" and "persevering."

[9] Here Jurij Lotman's observation about Pushkin's word-for-word reproduction of an authentic legal text in his novel is pertinent: "A change in the functoin of a text gives it a new semantics and new syntax. Thus … the construction of a document according to the formal of a legal test is perceived

as construction according to the laws of artistic composition" (qtd. in Beebee 13). The same can be said about Kingston's construction of a chronology in "The Laws."

[10] In an interview published in the same year of *China Men*, Kingston said to the interviewer, "The mainstream culture doesn't know the history of Chinese-Americans, which has been written and written well. The ignorance makes a tension for me, and in the new book I just couldn't take it anymore. So all of a sudden, right in the middle of the stories, plunk—there is an eight-page section of pure history... It really affects the shpae of the book and it might look quite clumsy" (Pfaff 26). In her recent personal correspondence to me, Kingston further remarks, "One of my purposes for juxtaposing 'The Laws' with the stories was to show the differences in language—legal language vs. poetic language" (1995b).

[11] Whereas Goellnicht provides an ironic reading of the centrality of this section ("this centric authority of American law is subverted and contested by the 'eccentric' or marginal, but richly imaginative, stories of China Men that surround it" [197]), I want to show that in addition to that, the legal/historical discourse and the literary discourse are mutually supporting and illuminating.

[12] Namely, in 1870, The Nationality Act did not allow the Chinese to be naturalized; in 1878, California prohibited Chinese from entering this state; in 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act excluded all unskilled *and* skilled laborers for ten years; the Exclusion Act was extended another ten years in 1892 (known as the Geary Act) and extended indefinitely in 1904; and in 1924, the Congress passed an Immigration Act which specifically excluded "Chinese women, wives, and prostitutes." These are only six samples from the thirty-two items chronicled in "The Laws."

[13] Another controversial/meaningful aspect of this play is that all the actors and actresses are of Asian descent and the white characters and played by these Asians with white masks. Kingston's observation about this is of interest: "Hiring an all-Asian cast is redress for a theater that excludes us and stereotypes us, and gives our roles to white actors with tape to pull back their eyelids. I thougt the characters in white masks made many interesting points—that a good actor can play any race, do any accent. That if it weren't for the few inches of mask over the eyes and nose, there is no difference between an Asian and a Caucasian. The few white critics who were offended by whiteface now know how we feel seeing yellowface and blackface" (1995a: 3).

[14] As Linda Ching Sledge argues, "Like that other American singer, Walt Whitman, Maxine Hong Kingston raises private experience to the level

of American myth. The structure of her song is epic—that most heroic and elastic of literary forms—by which she is able to encapsulate the date of history, the deep dreams of myth, and the archetypal drama of one American family" (19).

[15] In this respect, the most comprehensive anthology up to now is Chinese Immigrants and American Law which collects representative articles by "legal scholars, historians, and other social scientists" (xi) on the Chinese immigrants' "struggles in the U.S. courts against discriminatory state and federal laws" (McClain vii).

[16] Posner's recent work *Overcoming Law* has a chapter on "Law and Literature Revisited" (471-97) in which he expands his area of research by devoting a special section to "Law in Popular Literature." The subject under discussion is Tom Wolfe's best-selling novel *The Bonfine of the Vanities* (1987).

[17] This story verges on being a folktale with exotic colors. And the same story can be found in the folktale of Hsin-chiang, China. Special thanks go to Yin Hubin, Shang Wei, and Chen Jianhua for pointing out the latter fact to me.

[18] His limitation can be clearly seen from the syllabus he proposes for a course on law and literature (117) and the way he deals with the concept of "canon" and "Great Books" (117-23).

[19] This is also reflected in the literary expressions of the Asian Americans. For instance, in *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian-American Writers* (1974) Frank Chin and others tried to give the impression that their anthology covers the major ethnic groups of Asian Americans—nanely, Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino Americans. Nearly two decades later, in *Big Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Chinese American and Japanese American Literature* (1991), the same editor, being aware of the complexity of the umbrella term "Asian Americans," narrows it down to Chinese American and Japanese American literature. In his long and controversial introduction to the second anthology, Chin tries to establish an Asian American literary tradition on the basis of the heroic tradition of Chinese literature.

[20] This is confirmed by Kingston's assertion elsewhere, "When I say I am a native American with all the rights of an American, I am saying, 'No, we're not outsiders; we Chinese belong here. This is our country, this is our histroy, we are a part of America. If it weren't for us, America would be a different place" (Yalom 16).

[21] In order to fight against Koxinga, the Ch'ing government decreed the great Boundary Shift in 1661 which banned travels abroad and removed the population of the southern coasts several miles inland. The Kangxi Emperor

adopted the recommendation on the control of maritime trade submitted by his subjects in 1718. The measures included the severe supervision of ocean-sailing ships, the issuance of permits, and even the restriction of the rice each passenger was allowed to carry. In an edict issued in 1728, the Yongaheng Emperor showed his concern even with the inland migration to Sichuan, saying literally, "The ignorant commoners always harbor a desire for material gain." In his vermilion endorsement on a memorial from provincial officials on Chinese emigration to Luzon and Batavia one year earlier, the Yongzheng Emperor wrote, "What is the use of asking them back? They left their native places for a foreign country years age; suddenly they return to our country. I'm afraid that they may have some scheme for secret collaboration [with foreigners]. In my opinion, those who have been gone for years should not come back." To the Chinese people with a strong filial tie and desire to return to their homeland, this was indeed a very severe punishment and discouragement to people who wished to improve their livelihood by going abroad. On the other hand, there were some intellectuals and officials like Lan Dingyuan and Shen Qiyuan in the eighteenth century and Lin Zexu and Xue Fucheng in the nineteenth century who considered that the government should play a more active role. Xue wrote in 1892 that "we should negotiate special agreements to stipulate that when they [countries like Mexico and Cuba] invite Chinese to cultivate their land, they should continue to treat them well even after the work is completed, rather than expel them as the U.S. has done." For some background information concerning Chinese emigration, see Lynn Pan 1-57 and Wang Gungwu 28-79, whereas Sucheng Chan offers "The International Context of Asian Emigration" (1991:3-23).

[22] For a historical account, see Ronald Takaki's "Raising Cane: The World of Plantation Hawaii" (1989: 132-76). Takaki is from the perspective of Asian Americans, whereas Kingston, that of overseas Chinese laborers of her great grandfathers' generation.

[23] Goellnicht mentions this scene as "a group therapy session" (204).

[24] Therefore, Nishime rightly observes that "While the 'Grandfathers' are individual people with their own personalities and personal histories, they also are a type or a generic forefather whose story is representative of many Chinese-American immigrants" (70).

[25] Chan's chronology reads, "1858 California passes a law to bar entry of Chinese and 'Mongolians';1865 Central Pacific Railroad Co. recruits Chinese workers for the first transcontinental railroad" (192). In *China Men*, however, there is no telling how Ah Goong arrived in California.

[26] For instance, in *Donald Duk* Frank Chin makes up the trans-continental railroad-building story through a Chinese-American boy's series

of dreams and ethnic memories.

[27] Among the thirty-two items mentioned in Kingston's chronology in "The Laws," theirteen appeared between 1868 and 1900. Even in 1868 when the Burlingame Treaty was signed between USA and China, "40,000 miners of Chinese ancestry were Driven Out" (152). In addition to some cases and rulings, Kingston chronicles some acts passed by the Congress against the Chinese immigrants: the first Chinese Exclusion Act (1882), the Scott Act (1888) which "declared that Certificates of Return were void. Twenty thousand Chinese were trapped outside the United States with now-useless re-entry permits" (*China Men* 155), and the Geary Act (1892).

[28] Guan Goong also plays an important role in Chin's novel *Donald Duk* as well as his constuction of the heroic tradition of Asian American literature (see Chin et al., 1991, esp. 30-44).

[29] For a graphic representation/misrepresentation of the San Francisco's Old Chinatown before the 1096 earthquake and fire, see Arnold Genthe's photographs as arranged and represented by John Kuo Wei Tchen. Kingston expressed her strong dissatisfaction with Genthe's Orientalist photographic representation of the Chinatown (1978).

[30] Hong Ssu-te's Chinese inscription on the Chinese translation of *China Men* at the age of 80 (Cheung 1993b: 117) substantiates that if BaBa was born in the Year of the Rabbit, it must have been 1903 (though the Chinese and Western ways of counting the age may differ from one to two years).

[31] The most significant collection of Angel Island poetry is *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910-194*0 co-edited by Him Mark Lai, Genny Lim, and Judy Yung, three descendants of the Chinese immigrants passing throungh Angel Island. For a study of the (re-) inscription and representation of Angel Island poetry on the walls of the detention camp, *Island*, and *Heath Anthology of American Literature*, see Shan 1995a. Shawn Wong also wrote about the Angel Island experience in his 1979 novel *Homebase (*87-93).

[32] Kingston's chronology on 1924 reads in part: "An Immigration Act passed by Congress specifically excluded 'Chinese women, wives, and prostitutes.' Any American who married a Chinese woman lost his citizenship; any Chinese man who married an American woman caused her to lose her citizenship. Many states had also instituted antimiscegenation laws" (156). Between 1882 and 1924, Kingston chronicles thirteen items.

[33] Incidentally, the Chinese character "bridge" is pronounced as *ch'iao*, the same as "sojourner." So the naming of her brothers according to the genealogical order not only demonstrates the acceptance of the traditional

Chinese naming system, but also symbolizes the transformation from a "sojourner" to a person who, as a Chinese American, is a "bridge" between China and U.S., past and present. Victor Li discusses these two homonyms in terms of identity and concludes that "We are, or can be, the bridge linking two societies, and linking the past with the future" (220).

[34] This finding home in another land can be succinctly summed up by the Chinese expressions: from *luoye guigen* (falling leaves returning to their roots) to *luodi shenggen* (taking roots where they fall), from *huaqiao* (Chinese sojourners abroad) to *huajen* (people of Chinese descent living outside of China), from *qiao* (sojourner) to *qiao* (bridge). See Ling-chi Wand, Him Mark Lai (1992 [esp. 364-90]), and Victor Li.

[35] As mentioned earlier, in *The Woman Warrior* Kingston also plays upon the Chinese word "bao" as both "reporting" and "revenge"—and thus, "reporting [writing] as revenge" (53). To Leslie W. Rabine, if in *The Woman Warrior* the author takes "vengeance against the family by expressing her rage," in *China Men* then she plays the role of "the woman warrior who takes vengeance *for* the family by reporting the vicious racism her male relatives combatted in America and the uncredited contributions they made to building this country" (476-77). Similarly, Goellnicht describes Kingston as "a word warrior" (206) and "writer-avenger" (207) whose "vengeance on behalf of her forefathers is literary rather than physical" (208). Here I want to stress that "bao" and "make up" are closely related, for instance, "reporting/revenge as inventing/compensating," "inventing/compensating as reporting/revenge." Moreover, the initiatory effect of her writing is evidenced by the fact that her father repays (one of the original meanings of "bao") her by writing Chinese classical poems, in addition to various responses (another meaning of "bao") from the critics and readers.

[36] The next example he cites is again from literature—the Chinese poems carved on the walls of the Angel Island Immigration Station in San Francisco Bay (8-9).

[37] Special thanks go to Leo Ou-fan Lee for pointing out the nuances of the Chinese character "bao" in the present context.

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