

## 身體的論述：女戰士以及女性主體之展現

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### 摘要

二十世紀中，美國華裔女作家湯婷婷在寫作中採取一種介於自傳與小說間的形式，展現了不同於一般之女性書寫主體策略來對應她所處的以男性中心為本位之身體論述和政策。在此已被美國書評界選為非小說類名著《女戰士：鬼影幢幢中的少女回憶》，湯婷婷策略性地運用傳統中國女民族英雄花木蘭作為其中心主軸，並藉由賦予此傳統神話中花木蘭力量來顛覆傳統花木蘭所逃不開之女性宿命，使花木蘭之角色由父權光榮維護者搖身一變為女性復仇者！在此論文中，我將探討在美國華裔社會中所存在語言、性別以及種族之間男性以及女性權力運作之關係。此外，我將援用拉崗、克里斯蒂娃、德勒茲以及瓜達希之理論來體現湯婷婷解構男性所設身體政治之策略。

關鍵詞：美國華裔、身體論述、踰越、雌雄同體。

# Body Discourse: Woman Warrior and the Creation of Woman Subjectivity

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## Abstract

The twentieth century Chinese-American writer Maxine Hong Kingston displays an entirely different female writing strategy in response to andro-central body discourse<sup>1</sup> and politics. In *Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*, Maxine Hong Kingston employs the ancient Chinese heroine Fa Mu Lan as her major axis. By revising the traditional myth, Maxine Hong Kingston endows Fa Mu Lan power to undermine the traditional purpose of the character from the "keeper of the patriarchal honor" to the "avenger for woman!" In the proposed project, I would like to explore the power relation between the male and the female in language, race and gender among Chinese-Americans. Besides, I would also like to show Maxine Hong Kingston's writing strategy which deconstructs the male body politics in light of the perspectives proposed by Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, Deleuze and Guattari.<sup>2</sup>

**Key words:** Chinese-American, Body-Discourse, Transgression, Androgyne

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<sup>1</sup> Male nudity was an important feature of ancient Greek society. To the Greeks, male nudity was considered wholesome, sound, liberal, and healthy by their contemporaries. The Greeks spent a lot of their time outdoors exposing their bodies. They were full of animal spirit and muscle power. Nudity and sportsmanship seemed to have produced rationality, liberty, and wholeness. Whereas, naked athleticism, balance of mind and body, liberty, and the intellect were necessarily combined in Greek culture. The Greeks pursued liberty and gymnastics with constant reference to some ideas of complete human perfection and wholeness. Males were spiritual. Their nudities became an emblem of their heroism. From this we know that the Greeks' concept of male nudity was moral and healthy. Only men could go out and expose their bodies. They belonged to the public place. Women, in contrast, were considered unhealthy and immoral. Women's nudities were defined as sexual. Up until the fourth century, the Greeks in fact depicted only male nudes, while women even remained veiled due to their "obscene" bodies. Women belonged to the private place because they could not expose their unsound bodies in public.

<sup>2</sup> In my present study, I would like to explore and investigate Maxine Hong Kingston's writing strategy in terms of language, race, and gender. Besides, I would also try to examine Maxine Hong Kingston's pattern of creating woman subjectivity in these fields. In my view, Maxine Hong Kingston has a transpositional identity and subject oscillating between the world of the verbal and non-verbal, the East and the West, and the male and the female. In order to cope with the situations which she confronts, Maxine Hong Kingston's subject metamorphoses into many facets. We can find many examples in the *Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari attribute this psychological symptom to Schizophrenia. Schizophrenia does not have a fixed identity. Sometimes Schizophrenia follows the social rules, but sometimes Schizophrenia abjures them. Because of this, Schizophrenia gets the grotesque power which threatens undermining the social rules. In order to create the Subjectivity, Maxine gets a nomadic subject which oscillates between the world of the verbal and non-verbal, the East and the West, and the male and the female. On the one hand, Maxine reconciles with them, while on the other, she also challenges them.

Veronica Wang contends that one can not have an identity without a voice. She relates, "an encounter with another voiceless Chinese girl, who serves as the surrogate self for Maxine. Projecting herself as this, Maxine confronted and tormented her with all the intensity and cruelty she could master to make her alter ego speak because at that moment Maxine realized the single importance of self-expression." According to Veronica Wang, Maxine seems to encourage and correct the voiceless doll-like Chinese girl to speak. If the Chinese girl can proclaim herself loudly, she can free herself from pain and isolation and make a new beginning. In my view, the beating theme does not mean to encourage and correct the surrogate self for Maxine to speak. Instead, Maxine beats the voiceless Chinese girl because Maxine is envious of the voiceless Chinese girl.

Lacan's theory of ego, or "I," to which the subject tries to conform, and with which he or she tries to coincide, constitutes his or her identity. Like the super-ego, the "I" as a linguistic effect, an agent of cultural censorship, watches, judges, measures and condemns the self as it tries to meet the demands of its social order (Lacan5). To appropriate the Lacanian schema, we can say the voiceless Chinese girl successfully resists entering the symbolic world. In the symbolic world, the sign system of language pre-exists before Subject. When we acquire our language system, we are forced to fill up our positions in the symbolic world which are already there. Our desires submit to the pressure of the order of the symbolic world. Consequently, our freedom is controlled and organized by this language system. That is, language creates "I", and "I" will be differentiated in language. We are the captives of language!! (Sarup108). Maxine relates "[w]hen I went to kindergarten and had to speak English for the first time, I became silent" (165). When she studied in the first grade, Maxine says "I could not understand 'T' . . . How could the American 'I,' assuredly wearing a hat like the Chinese, have only three strokes . . . I stared at that middle line and waited so long for its black center to resolve into tight strokes and dots that I forget to pronounce it . . . The teacher, who had already told me every day how to read 'T' and 'here,' put me in the low corner under the stairs again" (166). In the Chinese school, Maxine also finds her voice is a strained one. She says, "Not all of the children who were silent at the American school found voice at the Chinese school" (168). When the teacher asks Maxine to recite in front of the class, she still feels choked. She says, "You could hear splinters in my voice, bones rubbing jagged against one another" (169). Maxine also confuses the concept of the Chinese word

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for female "I" with "奴." She says "[t]here is a Chinese word for the female I which is 'slave'" (47). Maxine continues, "I won't let you turn me into a slave or a wife. I'm getting out of here" (201). When Maxine studies in the sixth grade, she can be arrogant with talk. It is also the time when Maxine hates "the younger sister, the quiet one" (173). Maxine finds her excuse for bullying the voiceless Chinese girl. She says "Why won't you talk? . . . You've got to let people know you have a personality and a brain" (180). "I'm doing this for your own good" (181). In Lacan's theory, he stresses that the Subjects of human beings are formed by language. The Subjects are the subjects of languages and the subjects which face languages. The character of language activity is its dialogue which includes speakers and listeners (Lacan61). When a child can pronounce the noun "I," he has declared his Subjectivity. He has also entered the sign system of the symbolic world. But if there is no "you," "he," "her," there will be no position for "I."

In the *Woman Warrior*, Maxine refuses to enter the sign system of the symbolic world; however, with the acquiring and accepting of the language, the split and separation between the pre-mirror stage and the symbolic world is larger and larger. Language has consequently become an unbreakable limitation. Language also causes the original repression which results in sub-consciousness. Maxine grows up and accepts the language system, but she still has a nostalgia for returning to the pre-mirror stage subconsciously, the world without limitation. When Maxine finds the voiceless Chinese girl, she becomes very envious and stands on the same position with the teacher in punishing and correcting the voiceless Chinese girl unconsciously. In fact, by torturing the voiceless Chinese girl, Maxine is revealing how much pain she suffers from the sign language, and how eagerly she wants to get rid of the "prison-house" of the symbolic world. No wonder Elaine Showalter relates, "we ought to be expressed- mind and body, rather than wishing to limit women's linguistic range . . . we must fight to open . . . not the spaces where female consciousness reveals itself but the blinds of a 'prison-house'" (*Contemporary Literary Theory* 467).

On the subject of race, Elizabeth J. Ordonez states in regard to Maxine Hong Kingston, "A ponderous realization for a woman writer, especially an ethnic woman writer who . . . has been caged up in just such a generic double bind [not only gender but also race]" (20). Chinese-American history has been a battle for recognition as Americans. They have fought hard for the right to be legal American citizen. When the two cultures meet, they both want

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to incorporate and assimilate with each other. Besides, both of the two powers want to invalidate each other. Because of this, it generates larger gaps and conflicts. The most obvious example is the relationship between Chinese parents and their American Chinese children. In the Western point of view, America is logical, punctual, free, concrete and accurate. The Eastern world is illogical, superstitious, and inaccurate. In *Woman Warrior*, Maxine seems to represent Western points of view to criticize the Eastern world. Notwithstanding, she also criticizes the Western world within her words. She is also like a mediator between the impacts of the East and the West.

Maxine Hong Kingston has her roots in America. She is different from her mother. Born in America with a Chinese ancestry, Maxine develops her own points of view toward Americans and the Chinese. Maxine presents Chinese culture as a conglomeration of controversial diversity. She considers Chinese culture as superstitious, inaccurate, barbarous, and aboriginal. During the eclipse of the moon, the mother considers that it is because of the frog which swallows the moon. However, Maxine would correct her mother, "That's just a shadow the earth makes when it comes between the moon and the sun" (169). Maxine considers the Chinese customs quite brutal. She says, "I used to believe that the expression 'caught by the short hairs' meant a captive held with a depilatory string. It especially hurt at the temples, but my mother said we were lucky we didn't have to have our feet bound when we were seven" (9). When Maxine's aunt Moon Orchid who represents with traditional culture asks Maxine about a section that somebody had underlined or annotated, "What's that?" Maxine answers, "That's an important part" (133). But when Moon Orchid asks again, "Why is it important?" Maxine answers impatiently, "I don't know the Chinese words for it" (134). Maxine considers that the traditional agricultural practices of the Chinese do not know the importance of being accurate. So she does not want to answer her aunt. However, in the eyes of the traditional Chinese, Western culture is not totally positive. Maxine's aunt Moon Orchid has often criticized, "They were capable [Westernized] children; they could do servants' work. But they were not modest" (134). From this we know that there is a delicate power relationship between the East and the West.

When Maxine makes an indictment towards conservative China, she also criticizes the hypocrisy of Western culture. The most obvious example is the conflict between Maxine and her Boss. The Boss always looks down on the Chinese. Maxine refuses to type the

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invitations for the banquet which is being picketed by CORE and the NAACP. Because of this, Maxine is fired. Maxine is very angry that she says "If I took the sword, which my hate must surely have forged out of the air, and gutted him" (49). However, Maxine mostly plays the role as a mediator between the East and the West during the intertwining of the two cultures. For example, Maxine complains that the fast-paced life in her American laundry is not comfortable, and says, "When the thermometer in our laundry reached on hundred and eleven degrees one summer afternoon . . . it was time to tell another [Chinese] ghost story so that we could get some good chills up our backs" (87). From this we know Maxine misses her slow-paced Chinese life. Only Chinese ghost stories could ease their tension. Besides, the event of mis-delivery of drugs by the Rexall drugstore boy is ominous to Maxine's mother. She thinks this wrong delivery has tainted her house with sick medicine. The mother insists "Revenge. We've got to avenge this wrong on our future, on our health, and on our lives" (169). Because of this, the mother asks Maxine to go to the drugstore to make them rectify their crime and get reparation candy. No matter how Maxine tells her mother that they don't understand stuff like that, the mother insists. Because of this, Maxine makes a reconciliation. She knows it is impossible to explain to the druggist the weight and immensity of things, so Maxine only asks the druggist for some candy without explanation. When Maxine returns home, she will tell her mother she did ask the druggist to rectify his crime and give her reparation candy. It is not only Maxine. Maybe most Chinese-Americans play the same roles as mediators as Maxine when they face the confrontation of the two cultures.

Not only the East but also the West put emphasis on women's "maternity" or "motherhood." In their points of view, the ideal of the good mother should be taught to please her husband. Besides, she must not forget her nature to bear children and care for the family. She must abjure the opportunity to contact other men and her sexuality should be lessened or de-sexed. From this we know the society puts much emphasis on a blissful mother and her contented children but never forget to constrain women. I explore the social phenomenon and find that women are bound to increase the population and forced to carry out patriarchal commandment that we should be productive. In the patriarchal society, women are limited to private spaces. They are required to stay at home and their best jobs are as males' sexual servants. Men also reject the description of the unclothed women in

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public because public places violate the symbol of "maternity" and "motherhood." Consequently, men have successfully transferred the private spaces from living rooms into the symbol of maternity. As a matter of fact, this phenomenon can be attributed to the man-made gender division of labor. Men do not hope women to touch men's weapons. If women got the same chance to touch their mode of production, it will jeopardize men's jobs, privilege, and benefit.

In the West, Virgin Mary is the one who is tamed to be a good mother. Kristeva talks about it: "as early as the sixth century in the church of Santa Maria Antiqua in Roma, Christ is king but neither he nor his father are pictured wearing crowns . . . That opulent infringement to Christian idealism is centered on the Virgin Mother. Later, she assumed the title of Our Lady . . . Mary's function as guardian of power, later checked when the Church became wary of it . . ." (170). Men admire Virgin Mary because she is the mother of Jesus. But when they find that Virgin Mary gets the same rights and power which are even more supreme than God, men decide to dethrone her. It is the fear of patriarchal society towards women's power. Kristeva continues, "Simon de Beauvoir too hastily saw a feminine defeat because the mother kneeled before her barely born son" (171). In the East, men also want to constrain women in private spaces. The most obvious example is the custom of the footbound women in China. In *Gyn / Ecology*, Mary Daly relates "[t]he history of the footbound women of China provides us with a vivid and accurate image of the way in which women have been coerced into 'participating' in the phallographic processions" (41). When women's feet were bound, they hobbled on three-inch-long feet and moved slowly in meaningless circles within the homes of fathers and husbands. Besides, if women do not obey men's orders, they will be punished seriously. In the *Woman Warrior*, Maxine relates this poor situation and quotes her father's attitudes toward women in the Chinese tradition that "'A husband may kill a wife who disobeys him. Confucius said that.' Confucius, the rational man" (193).

In the *Woman Warrior*, Maxine stands for the Western point of view scrutinizing Eastern culture. However, she also criticizes the Western patriarchy unconsciously. Maxine is the part East and the part West of her Identity. She has a transpositional subject oscillating between the world of the East and the West. That is, Maxine escapes from the social structure of the East and the West. She builds up her feminine kingdom by herself. In the

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*Woman Warrior*, Maxine narrates the unfair treatment meted out to her by her family and society. In the beginning of the book, "No Name Woman," Maxine's aunt is punished for transgressing her social role as wife. The aunt gets pregnant and has a swelled belly long after the departure of her husband. Because of this, the aunt incurs the wrath of the village. Finally, the aunt drowns herself and the child as well. The aunt's womb should be presented as having been "fruitful and multiply." However, the fetus inside the womb has become the food consumer which might endanger the villager's life. Ironically, there is a fat Bandit in Maxine's hometown; however, no one would blame him for his "big belly." The Bandit's fat belly has changed symbols from arid into fruitful. Besides, Maxine's parents and the emigrant villagers have different attitudes toward the birth of males or females. In their eyes, girls are "maggots in the rice," "It is more profitable to raise geese than daughters" (43), "There is an outward tendency in females" (47). If people get boys, they will surely celebrate. They will roll an egg on the little boys' faces. They will turn on all the lights and have full-moon parties for the boys. When Maxine gets straight A's, no one will cheer for her. People will think getting straight A's means that Maxine is getting straight A's for the good of her future husband's family, not Maxine's own. Because of this, Maxine feels disappointed. She swears that she "would have to grow up a warrior woman" (20).

The traditional Chinese tale of Fa Mu Lan represents Maxine Hong Kingston's symbolic warrior woman who takes her father's place in battle and fights bravely in the battlefield and finally returns victoriously. This legend is not original; however, Maxine revises it mostly. In the traditional tale, Fa Mu Lan follows traditional rules. She must be pious not only to her father but also to her nation. She takes her father's position to fight in battle just because she needs to maintain "man's honor." Besides, she must compensate her father's "penis-malfunction." Fa Mu Lan must disguise herself as a soldier carefully because the "Chinese executed women who disguised themselves as soldiers or students, no matter how bravely they fought" (39). So the traditional tale only ends up reduplicating another patriarchy. In Maxine Hong Kingston's version of the legend, she rewrites the story and empowers the woman warrior Fa Mu Lan. Fa Mu Lan not only maintains her femininity but also gets masculine power. She is just like an androgyne. Fa Mu Lan leaves her family to seek her future. Her masters are an old man and woman. However, the couples are the embodiment of perennial, natural forces. They are always changing, but they are also always in harmony.

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Fa Mu Lan says, "he appeared as a handsome young man . . . and she, as a beautiful young woman who ran bare-legged through the trees . . . By this time I had guessed from their manner that the old woman was to the old man a sister or a friend rather than a wife" (28). In other words, the couples transgress the limitation of gender. They do not reduplicate the patriarchal system. Their combination does not count on husband-wife relationship. So the couple is the ideal model for Maxine to emulate.

In Maxine Hong Kingston's *Woman Warrior*, the Chinese-American female author endows Fa Mu Lan with power to undermine the traditional purpose of the character. This traditional Chinese girl Fa Mu Lan transgresses the patriarchal man-made structure in the exotic American society. Her transgressive body consequently betrays a nostalgia for a kind of female Eden, a pre-verbal, pre-theorized time-place of unmediated experience. Under the creation of woman subjectivity, the traditional Chinese girl Fa Mu Lan becomes an exponent of the avant garde Chinese-American who uses her transgressive body to undermine the fixed structure of the symbolic world.

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