

2008

## A HAUNTED HOME: GHOSTS IN MAXINE HONG KINGSTON AND WAYSON CHOY

Pin Sun  
*Western University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/digitizedtheses>

---

### Recommended Citation

Sun, Pin, "A HAUNTED HOME: GHOSTS IN MAXINE HONG KINGSTON AND WAYSON CHOY" (2008).  
*Digitized Theses*. 4256.  
<https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/digitizedtheses/4256>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Digitized Special Collections at Scholarship@Western. It has been accepted for inclusion in Digitized Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholarship@Western. For more information, please contact [wlsadmin@uwo.ca](mailto:wlsadmin@uwo.ca).

A HAUNTED HOME:  
GHOSTS IN MAXINE HONG KINGSTON AND WAYSON CHOY

(Spine title: A Haunted Home)

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

Pin Sun

Graduate Program in Comparative Literature

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada

© Pin Sun 2008

## **Abstract**

This thesis comparatively studies the notion of ghost in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and Wayson Choy's *The Jade Peony*, *Paper Shadows*, and *All That Matters*. In the theoretical framework of diaspora studies, I argue that the ghosts in these texts serve as metaphors for the ambiguities, complexities, and contradictions of Chinese diasporic experiences in North America. Specifically, they represent Chinese diasporic subjects' crises concerning home and identity provoked in the process of dislocation and relocation. Taking an anti-essentialist position, I note that the ghosts in question do not originate from certain superstitious national cultures but are fashioned in cultural displacement as cross-cultural creations, constantly articulating the interactions between an intangible homeland and a tangible hostland. Associating the notion of ghost with the politics of belonging, this thesis aims at a historically contextualized understanding of contemporary Chinese diaspora literature in North America.

Keywords: Maxine Hong Kingston, Wayson Choy, diaspora, Chinese diaspora, ghost, haunting, identity, home, Chinatown

To my family

## **Acknowledgments**

I am grateful to Dr. Lily Cho, my supervisor, for her patience, kindness, and, above all, her insightful advice. Thanks to the examining board for their care in reading my thesis and for their thought-provoking questions. Special thanks to my parents and Kevin for their trust, encouragement, and love. Finally, thanks to Andrew, who made the process of writing enjoyable and meaningful.

## **Table of Contents**

Certificate of Examination	ii
Abstract	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgments	v
Table of Contents	vi
Introduction	1
I. A Haunted Home: Cultural Haunting	11
II. A Haunted Home: Racial Haunting	42
III. The Haunting of Homelessness	71
Conclusion	98
Works Cited	104
Curriculum Vitae	112

## Introduction

The appearance of ghosts in literature is not a recent invention. From the long and influential tradition of Gothic novels to the modern ghost stories that are marked by a Freudian understanding of psychology, literature has become a haunted site that keeps its readers alert and ignites their imaginations. It is notable that, in recent years, ghosts have been slipping into diaspora literature of various ethnic groups—particularly those of many Asian and African literary works in North America. Among these contemporary ethnic ghost stories, the ones by authors of Chinese origin have emerged in growing numbers and taken on features of their own, as exemplified in certain works by Maxine Hong Kingston, Wayson Choy, Amy Tan, SKY Lee, among others. In these texts, supernatural presences, mysteries, and suspense create a haunted atmosphere.

However, these conventional spectral elements adopt a different literary role in contemporary Chinese diaspora literature in North America. The ghost in the works of the above-mentioned authors becomes more than a source of the pleasurable thrill or an externalization of the individual psyche; it takes on a “communal nature” (Brogan 5), in that it is “not simply a dead or a missing person, but a social figure” (Gordon 8). It is not only the reflection of the tortured mind of an individual, but of “the crises of a larger social group” (Brogan 2). Avery Gordon reflects upon the idea of haunting and its social role in her book *Ghostly Matters*:

The ghost cannot be simply tracked back to an individual loss or trauma. The ghost has its own desires, so to speak, which figure the whole complicated

sociality of a determining formation that seems inoperative (like slavery) or invisible (like racially gendered capitalism) but that is nonetheless alive and enforced. (183)

This “determining formation” for Chinese immigrants in North America is diaspora. Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur observe that diaspora is a contested term; it etymologically suggests the fertility of dispersion, dissemination, and the scattering of seeds, and historically refers to communities of people displaced from their homeland through the movements of migration, immigration, or exile. It denotes a “dislocation from the nation–state or geographical location of origin and relocation in one or more nation–states, territories, or countries” (1). In my thesis, I discuss the idea of diaspora and intend to argue that the ghosts in contemporary Chinese diaspora literature in North America serve as rich metaphors for the complexities of diasporic experiences. Specifically, they represent Chinese diasporic subjects’ crises concerning home and identity provoked in the process of dislocation and relocation.

The contemporary diaspora ghost story is not solely a Chinese American or Chinese Canadian phenomenon; it is, as Kathleen Brogan perceives, “a pan-ethnic phenomenon, registering a widespread concern with questions of ethnic identity and cultural transmission” (4). This “pan-ethnic” nature of the new ghost story undermines the proposition that the haunting is attributed to a certain supernatural culture, such as Chinese culture, which is habitually believed to be submerged in rich symbolism, superstitions, and rituals. If the origin of the ghost does not lie in the tradition the



immigrants brought with them, what factors in diaspora determine the category, appearance, and essence of the spectral presence?

In most cases, traumatic experiences are the source of this haunting. For certain diasporic communities such as Africans, Jews, and Indians, haunting in their respective diaspora literature is triggered by certain influential historical events of violence, imperialism, and exploitation, such as the trans-Atlantic slavery, the Jewish Holocaust, and the 1947 Partition. No historical event, however, suffices to explain the origin of haunting experiences in Chinese diaspora; rather, such haunting experiences arise from the continuous agony in dislocation and cultural dilemma, with trauma due to loss of land or homes, deaths of family members, or acts of racial persecution. The tension engendered by the encounter of two cultures, East and West, provokes haunting in contemporary Chinese diaspora literature, where ghosts are not only representations of the past but, more significantly, metaphors of the present. Cultural identities in diaspora, as Stuart Hall states, are “the unstable points of identification or suture,” and “not an essence but a *positioning*” (237). Similarly, the ghost that figures diasporic identity formation is not a static entity, but a “positioning,” representing an ongoing process of ethnic redefinition.

Therefore, taking an anti-essentialist position, I examine ghosts as they appear in contemporary Chinese diaspora literature through the lens of diaspora studies with illumination of this literature’s specific, local contexts and special interests in notions of home and identity. With the purpose of investigating the latent connotation of the lurking

ghosts, I meditate on Chinese diaspora community's collective predicament regarding the politics of belonging in diasporic spaces such as Chinatowns. The thesis conducts a comparative study focusing on two writers of Chinese origin in North America: Chinese American Maxine Hong Kingston and Chinese Canadian Wayson Choy, with references to other Chinese diaspora literature. Moreover, I refer to cultural and historical texts concerning Chinese diaspora to achieve a historically contextualized understanding of home and diaspora.

Kingston's semi-autobiography *The Woman Warrior*, Choy's memoir *Paper Shadows*, and his novel sequences *The Jade Peony* and *All That Matters* are the primary texts I use to explore how the metaphor of ghosts in contemporary Chinese diaspora literature symbolizes the survival dilemma of Chinese immigrants. I address Choy's three texts as a whole because they are interrelated with each other. First, *All That Matters* is "a continuation" of *The Jade Peony* revealing the "paternal" qualities of Chinatown in correspondence to the "maternal" side told in the previous novel (Choy, "Interview with Montgomery," screen 3). Second, since his novels are "autobiographical especially in their emotional context," his personal experiences portrayed in *Paper Shadows* share uncanny similarities with those of the characters in his novels (Choy, "Interweaving Stories," 274). Thus thinking of the three works in conjunction with each other helps to provide a thorough understanding of both Choy's personal history and his literary world. These selected works by Kingston and Choy serve as typical texts of Chinese diaspora with settings in Old Chinatowns in "Gold Mountain" (*Gim Shan*), the diasporic space that

held early Chinese immigrants and witnessed their struggles in dispersion. As coming-of-age memoirs or novels, the texts present versions of haunted Chinatown childhoods during the 1940s and 1950s narrated independently by Chinatown-born or Chinatown-raised children: Kingston, Choy, and the four siblings in the Chen family. While these narratives share striking similarities, there are notable differences. Through analyzing these texts, I illustrate the common features of North American Chinese diaspora, as well as reveal the heterogeneous nature of it.

This thesis is not restricted to the exploration of the “vertical” generational model that tends to essentialize Chinese culture, but also explores the “horizontal” relationship in Chinese diaspora cultural practices, borrowing the terms from Lisa Lowe when she examines Asian American cultural politics in *Immigrant Acts* (63-64). On the one hand, I examine the “horizontal” relationship through comparisons of Chinese communities represented in the narratives by narrators from different host countries, of different gender, age, and diasporic backgrounds. On the other hand, I juxtapose Chinese diasporic subjects’ “critical inheritance of cultural definitions and traditions” with the “racial formation that is produced in the negotiations between the state’s regulation of racial groups and those groups’ active contestation and construction of racial meaning” by examining both cultural haunting from the home country and racial haunting from the host country (Lowe 65). One conspicuous feature of the texts I have chosen is that the Chinese immigrants depicted, the first generation and their descendents, are suffering from this double haunting. By interpreting the hidden meanings of the double haunting, I

attempt to achieve a better understanding of Chinese immigrants' identity problems generated in the process of both vertical cultural transmission and horizontal cultural interaction. The examination of both vertical and horizontal cultural practices in Chinese diaspora in the texts of Kingston and Choy aims to avoid homogenizing the Chinese diaspora as well as to reveal Chinese immigrants' identity crises that is continually shifting and being contested from pressures both inside and outside Chinese-origin communities.

The thesis is divided into two parts in which I investigate the relationship between a haunted home and the haunting of homelessness. In the first part, "a haunted home," I discuss cultural haunting and racial haunting in two chapters. As I argue, the spectral appearance from both the land of origin and the land of settlement registers the troubled nature of the home of these second-generation narrators—Old Chinatown, a diasporic space that serves as a home away from a home, and also a town within a town. I further argue that the ghosts appearing in these two types of haunting, while mysterious and oppressive as well as evil and seductive, serve as metaphors for Chinese diasporic subjects' paradoxical relationship with two national spaces: they are simultaneously connected and disconnected with the native place, as well as inside and outside the residential country. In the second part, "the haunting of homelessness," I discuss the identity crisis of Chinese diasporic subjects in North America and their struggle from dislocation to relocation. Stuck in cultural conflicts and encircled by both cultural and racial haunting, first-generation Chinese immigrants suffer from the separation between

the place where they live and the place they miss, while members of the second generation are in a more troublesome situation because they suffer from the syndrome of spatial uncertainty. In this conclusive part, I further interpret the meaning of ghosts in the chosen texts as a metaphor for Chinese immigrants' identity crisis caused by being homeless and nameless in North American diaspora.

The ghosts appearing in the chosen Chinese diaspora literature, although representing a consistent theme, take on varied meanings that fuse both Chinese and Western cultural interpretations. In cultural haunting, the ghosts correspond to *life*, representing a state of *afterlife*, which demonstrates "a simultaneous acknowledgement of and denial of death" and the concurring continuity and discontinuity of life (Brogan 20). In the context of Chinese diaspora, the ghosts represent the problematic cultural attachments and troubled cultural transmission between the space of origin and the space of resettlement. Present and absent, the ghost stands as an emblem of both cultural recovery and cultural loss, providing both comfort and melancholy. In racial haunting, the ghosts correspond to *human*, indicating a state of being *nonhuman*. This chapter will demonstrate how the trope of the ghost functions in the mutual demonization between Chinese diasporic subjects and white society in the process of cultural confrontation. In the final chapter of my thesis, I will explore the identity crisis of Chinese diasporic subjects represented by the ghosts that denote a meaning of homelessness and ambiguity of location through studying the notions of anonymity, adoption, and adultery. By tracing second-generation narrators' struggles from dislocation to relocation, I will also

demonstrate the transformation of the ghosts appearing in these texts.

Both Maxine Hong Kingston and Wayson Choy have earned critical acclaim and popular success in North America. Compared with the extensive critical essays on Kingston, criticism on Choy is relatively limited, and most critics review only *The Jade Peony*. The theme of identity construction is often discussed from different perspectives. Both Eleanor Ty's "'Each Story Brief and Sad and Marvellous': Multiple Voices in Wayson Choy's *The Jade Peony*" and Racio Davis's "Wayson Choy's *The Jade Peony* as Novella Cycle" focus on the novel's narrative structure. Christopher Lee studies the negotiation of Chineseness by Chinese Canadians during World War II in "Engaging Chineseness in Wayson Choy's *The Jade Peony*." Huai-Yang Lim is one of the few critics who pay attention to the ghosts in Choy. In his insightful "'There's Nothing More to Know': Silences, Secrets, and Ghosts in Wayson Choy's *Paper Shadows: A Chinatown Childhood*," he argues that silences, secrets, and ghosts in Choy's memoir "function both as expressions of the past and as loci for a positive reengagement with that past" (249). Conducting a thorough examination of the imagery of ghosts that appear in Choy's works, my work will add to previous criticism of Choy's work by seeing all three texts as a whole and by seeing the imagery of ghosts as representations not merely of the past but also of the present.

Criticism of Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* is substantive and diverse, focusing on questions of genre, postmodern narration, mother-daughter relationships, and thematic issues such as silence and voice, identity construction, among others. Both Bonnie

Winsbro's "Warring with Ghosts: Power through Individuation in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*" and Gayle K. Fujita Sato's "Ghosts as Chinese-American Constructs in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*" conduct a meticulous study on the motif of ghosts. In addition, Kathleen Brogan and E. D. Huntley respectively read the imagery of ghosts as the production of either cultural transmission or of racial confrontation in *Cultural Haunting: Ghosts and Ethnicity in Recent American Literature* and *Maxine Hong Kingston: A Critical Companion*. Benefitting from previous criticism, my thesis avoids oversimplifying the meaning of ghosts. Not only do I reveal the exterior double haunting of different nature, but I further discover the interior ghost hidden in the narrators' identities. Most importantly, I illustrate the interrelations among different types of ghosts, to which previous scholarship has not given enough attention.

*The Woman Warrior* has generated a large number of feminist readings, such as works by King-Kok Cheung, Amy Ling, Suzanne Juhasz, among others<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, my thesis juxtaposes Kingston's text with the works of a Canadian male writer, not in order to undermine feminist interpretation, but to consider Chinese North American diaspora literature beyond the confines of gendering or nationhood. I argue that the ghosts in contemporary North American Chinese diaspora literature are first of all diasporic constructs, in particular, Chinese American or Chinese Canadian constructs.

---

<sup>1</sup> See King-Kok Cheung's *Articulate Silences: Hisaye Yamamoto, Maxine Hong Kingston, Joy Kogawa*, " 'Don't Tell': Imposed Silences in *The Color Purple* and *The Woman Warrior*" in *PMLA*; Amy Ling's *Between Worlds: Women Writers of Chinese Ancestry*; Suzanne Juhasz's "Narrative Technique and Female Identity" in *Contemporary American Women Writers: Narrative Strategies*.

Gender is only one of many factors (such as generation, sexuality, and class) that play crucial roles in affecting the degrees of haunting and the appearance of ghosts. Through examining the emergence of ghosts in multiple voices in Chinese American and Chinese Canadian narratives, I examine the communal crisis that Chinese diasporic subjects are facing while looking at the differences among communities.

In mainstream literary circles, a number of reviews evaluate Chinese diasporic works through “the cloudy lenses of long-entrenched cultural and ethnic stereotypes,” such as the articles listed in Kingston’s “Cultural Mis-readings by American Reviewers” (Huntley 61). In such criticism, ghosts are usually regarded as representations of the exotic Oriental. My thesis departs from this critical direction in that it puts ghosts in the dynamic process of diasporic identity formation. Through scrutinizing the constant transformations of ghosts in these texts, I intend to achieve a non-essentialized understanding of ethnic culture and identity.

Together with theoretical writings of diaspora criticism, I analyze the selected works of Maxine Hong Kingston and Wayson Choy to set up a bridge between notions of the ghost, haunting, and diaspora studies. By investigating the relationship between a haunted home and the haunting of homelessness, I associate the trope of the ghost with the politics of belonging in order to achieve a historically contextualized understanding of Chinese diaspora literature in North America, where the historical meets the mystical.



## Chapter One

### A Haunted Home: Cultural Haunting

[The ghost] represents a compromise, or an essentially antithetical act: a simultaneous acknowledgement of and denial of death.

— Kathleen Brogan

The ghost, according to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, is “a disembodied soul.” On the one hand, it is physically dead because it does not possess a concrete body. On the other hand, as the soul of a dead person, it indicates spiritual resurrection. To some extent, it also represents the continuation of life. It is, as Kathleen Brogan notes, “an embodiment of the continuity between the living and the dead,” and “evades the finality of death” (20). Nevertheless, this seeming continuation of life is not real life. It is an imitation, a shadow of life, a creation of comfort that may help relieve the horror of death and brings hope into despair. It is a “life” that is already dead. In this sense, the ghost indicates a special state of life as well as a state of death, a representation of continuity as well as discontinuity.

In Chinese diaspora literature, as I will argue in this chapter, this type of ghost properly symbolizes the original home that is at the same time lost and retrieved by diasporic subjects. In the face of the impending catastrophic loss of a past and a place, the discontinuity of cultural and ancestral connection, the ghost appears as a remedy for the fear of death and the amnesia experienced in an attempt to maintain the continued “life”

of the original home. The old home that is most valued and was lost, now “dead,” continues to live with the immigrants via the agency of ghosts. This kind of haunting, I argue, accords with what Brogan calls “cultural haunting” (4). This cultural haunting, which characterizes diaspora literature from diverse nations, is particularly important in understanding diaspora and those dwellers-in-displacement who inevitably experience it. Because of this haunting, the past is vitally alive in the present and shapes the experience and identity of those in diaspora today and in the future. The individual living in diaspora experiences “a dynamic tension every day between living ‘here’ and remembering ‘there,’ between memories of places of origin and entanglements with places of residence, and between the metaphorical and the physical home” (Agnew 4). The ghost, in this case, serves as a diasporic metaphor of “go-between.” It is not only an enigmatic transitional figure moving between death and life, but also between past and present, original and residential spaces, and different cultures (6). As both absence and presence, the ghost stands as an emblem of both the physical break and the seething attachments, of both cultural loss and recovery.

In this chapter, I will examine the cultural haunting in Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* and Wayson Choy’s three works, *The Jade Peony*, *All That Matters*, and *Paper Shadows*. In the literary world of these four Chinese diaspora texts, cultural haunting happens on two levels. Both private and collective ghosts haunt diasporic characters; the present is not only visited by expected and unexpected guests with mystery and meaning, but also shadowed by an invisible but palpable history. On the one

hand, the ghosts of the dead or lost from Old China constantly visit the Chinese people in diaspora. I refer to the visiting of these ghosts as “familial haunting,” because most of these ghosts are from the immigrants’ own families, or are very intimate lovers or friends considered to be like family. On the other hand, diasporic characters are haunted by a nation in purely metaphorical terms. That is, China as the lost home, like a ghost, hovers in the diasporic space—Chinatown. This type of haunting, obviously, can be designated as cultural haunting. These two types are not isolated but intertwine with each other. Cultural haunting is embodied in familial haunting; the ghost of the home is incorporated with the ghosts of the beloved. In other words, the ghosts resurrected from death function as the symbols of a history, culture, and home simultaneously lost and retrieved, continuously questioning and complicating the identity of the people in diaspora.

I will first study how the old home, as the irreplaceable origin and the ultimate destination, is lost and resurrected. Then I will explore the illusory nature of the resurrected ghost by observing troubled cultural reconstruction and transmission. Moreover, I will examine the “will” of the haunting ghost. In the end, I will wrap up the chapter by arguing that the ghost in cultural haunting in these texts represents a paradox that the Chinese diasporic subjects are at the same time connected and disconnected with their home of origin.

## **The Lost Home**

“Ghost-talk was everyday Chinatown talk. Spirits were everywhere” (Choy, *Paper*

117). Many of Chinatown's citizens, as observed by Choy, believe in a world inhabited by unseen presences (*All* 327). For them, the visible is merely transitory, while the invisible belongs to the eternal. The wind is not only the wind, the shadow not a shadow; they are signs that one should be aware of and treat seriously. Most of Chinatown's citizens, especially the first generation, are living with ghosts, hearing the moaning spirits of the departed, and seeing things in the absence. Ghosts, in Old Chinatown, become a part of life.

In Choy's three works, the first-generation immigrants who come from Old China each brings a "ghost-whispering history" with them (Choy, *Jade* 136), or we may say that certain ghosts pursue them from Old China all the way to Chinatown. Since Chinese people place much emphasis on family and family reunion, this familial haunting never stops during their lifetime in diaspora, represented by mysterious, intangible presences.

Third Uncle in *The Jade Peony* and its sequel, *All That Matters*, is one of the early immigrants who suffers from this type of haunting. Because of civil unrest in southern China, his wife and ten-year-old son are abducted and held for ransom. The ransom note arrives in Vancouver with an incorrect address and the name badly blotched by rain. Third Uncle doesn't immediately notice this letter even though he has passed by it many times. When he finally opens the letter, it is already too late—his wife and son have been killed brutally (Choy, *All* 7). Then, the ghost of his wife begins to haunt him. Before making any big decisions, he will ask for his dead wife's approval. He never remarries, for he is afraid that he will "offend the ghost of his angry wife and bring a curse upon

himself” (8). For the rest of his life, he sleeps alone in his warehouse beside a fading picture of a tall woman and a young boy.

Like Third Uncle, members of the Chen family from Old China are each haunted by their own ghosts. Although he remarries and has two more children, Father never lets go of First Wife’s ghost, the only woman he loves who died in China before he goes to Canada. Whenever he misses her, he tells Third Uncle that he sometimes feels a slight push against his back (*All* 20). Stepmother, Father’s second wife, is always missing and mentioning her most intimate girlhood friend in China—Chen Suling—who knows the true stories of her family she left behind. Even Kiam-Kim, the first son brought to Vancouver at the age of three, has the ghost of his dead mother in his mind periodically. However, the most gripping haunting described by Choy is the story of the Old One, the Grandmother.

Grandmother is the central figure in *The Jade Peony* who threads together the narrations of the three children. She is often referred to as the Old One, which signifies her close connection with Old China. This connection is reinforced as her unforgettable love from Old China has followed her to Canada in the form of a ghost.

“He was as pale as a ghost,” Grandmother recalls. This juggler came to her father’s farm to perform street magic and fell in love with her. He left with a promise to return but never came back and has become her “phantom lover” who arouses a lifetime of fantasies (*All* 335). Especially in her last years, his ghost often returns as if to beckon her for reunion. The last haunting comes during an evening supper when the crash of garbage

cans from the back porch startles the family. Grandmother goes outside and curses the cat but then recognizes that it is actually the ghost of her love in the form of a large, pure white tomcat with pink eyes. Grandmother dies a few days after that.

In his own memoir, Choy also tells an impressive story about a “phantom woman” who haunts his father, Toy Choy, for his whole life (311). The “phantom woman” is the mother his father lost while he was still a boy in China—in his deliberate dodging words, “the one back in China” (311). In fact, her ghost is ever present in his father’s life in Canada until the end.

Choy’s grandfather went to the Gold Mountain and left his wife, two daughters, and one son (Choy’s father) in China. He returned three years later because his wife had committed adultery. To elude the punishment of her villagers, she and the children escaped to another village. However, Choy’s grandfather found them and took his son back to Canada with him. At that time, Choy’s father was only nine years old. This wound and the ghost of his mother hence follow him, although he refrains from talking about it. At his wife’s funeral, he reaches into the coffin, kisses her, and calls her the strange name “Mah-ma.” On his own deathbed, his last words are also this desperate calling for his mother. Most astonishingly, when Wayson Choy asks about his grandmother’s story during one of their last talks, his father’s unusual reaction gives him the sense that her ghost has turned up in front of them: “*something* took hold of him,” and “*something—someone—*had stood before us” (312-313, emphasis in the original).

These haunting stories Choy writes about, of Third Uncle, Grandmother, Father, and

Stepmother of the Chen family, and of his own father, Toy Choy, are of a similar nature. These hauntings happen to first-generation immigrants by their Chinese families, lovers, or intimate friends. On the surface, each haunting represents an indelible personal history and love experienced in either childhood or youth in China. On a deeper level, these ghosts collectively construct a “home,” from which they are physically fissured but still spiritually connected. In other words, the beloved symbolizes home, which early immigrants regard as the inexchangeable origin and the ultimate destination.

Home, according to Vincent Vycinas paraphrasing Heidegger, is “an overwhelming, inexchangeable something to which we were subordinate and from which our way of life was oriented and directed, even if we had left our home many years before” (84). Home serves as a center as well as a starting point from which an individual’s life develops. Home is not just the house where one lives, nor something that can be anywhere, but a locus of significance, a home-like place where families strike roots and to which individuals are emotionally attached. The inexchangeable feature of home predicts the difficulty of constructing a new home elsewhere. Since the original home provides the foundation of a man’s existence and is a central point of individual identity from which one looks out on the rest of the world, to build a new house or settle in a new territory, as E. C. Relph remarks, is “a fundamental project, equivalent perhaps to a repetition of the founding of the world” (41).

In the eyes of early Chinese immigrants, only their old home in China can be this irreplaceable home. Choy writes in his memoir, “‘Home,’ of course, was always a village

or city in Old China, the place where you were raised, where they still wanted you, even dead; where you belonged. For ever” (31). In this case, whether a village or city, home is no longer merely a domestic space but has a similar meaning to “homeland” (*Zuguo*, translated as “the ancestor’s country”, or *Laojia*, *Guxiang*, both literally meaning “the old home”), which is one’s native place where one lived and loved for an extended period of time before migration, a deep wellspring of lasting memories that cannot be erased easily, and a place of intense and lasting emotional attachment.

This eternal sense of belonging to home parallels the immigrants’ affinity for their lost kin. Almost all the ghosts that haunt the families in Choy’s novels and memoir are the irreplaceable “first”—birth mother, first wife, or first love. Even through immense changes of space and time, these firsts remain in their superior position resisting substitution: Third Uncle never remarries; First Wife is the only woman Father loves; the juggler is the only love with whom Grandmother reunites after death. Besides these lovers, the “haunting mothers” are especially noticeable since they are not only representations of the first, but also of the original.

The image of mother is associated with homeland, which is usually referred to as motherland. Hence, the haunting of mother, to a certain extent, can be regarded as the haunting of a home country. China, as the birth country of the Chinese immigrants, becomes “the phantom woman” that has been haunting not only Choy’s father but also the other first-generation immigrants until their deaths. In the novels, the woman who haunts Father is not only the first wife, but also the only woman his children can call



“mother,” while the second wife is called “stepmother” even by her own child.

Correspondingly, for the first generation, only China the birthplace is the irreplaceable birth mother, while Canada is always the stepmother. Even for the second generation who are Canada’s “own children,” China is also supposed to be their “motherland” in the eyes of the older generation.

These intimate and intricate spiritual connections that the first-generation immigrants hold toward their “motherland” can be referred to as “umbilical attachments” (Pandurang 91). These biological attachments that connect one to the maternal body represent the emotional affinities to the “motherland.” These spontaneous affiliations inextricably link the diasporic subjects who are elsewhere to home, and through which the “motherland” permeates every sinew and cartilage in the bodies of their wandering “children.” What’s more, they stimulate a desire to reunite with the maternal body and draw the wanderers back to home.

The theme of returning dominates Chinese ideology concerning diaspora. Laurence J. C. Ma points out that historic international migration was characterized by “permanent, unidirectional, and onetime movement of people from one country to another often under economic, religious, or political duress at the places of origin” (1). However, early Chinese migrants were not so much settlers who emigrated to sink roots as they were sojourners who went abroad with an aim to strengthen their roots back home. For those Chinese sojourners, leaving the homeland did not mean deserting but maintaining it; furthermore, it signified returning. “To save as much as possible, and to return to China

as soon as possible” were two goals of the early Chinese immigrants (Lai 20). While in diaspora, most of the Chinese intended to return to their home villages after working a period abroad, or when life improved in China. If one could not return soon, many of them dreamed of returning to their home villages for retirement, much like falling leaves would naturally return to the roots of trees (*Luo ye gui gen*) (Ma 21). If the immigrants could never go back home, their last wish was to have their bones sent back to China. “Bones must come to rest where they most belong,” Chinese people believed (Choy, *Jade* 68). This eternal longing for returning to one’s ancestral land, Ronald Skeldon points out, “fits well with the classic Chinese concept of migration that maintained the perspective that no self-respecting Chinese would leave home permanently but would travel as a sojourner” (52). The longing also fits well with Confucianism, the Chinese ethical and philosophical system that advocates the primacy of family.

At a time when ships were the only means of crossing the vast ocean and when Chinese migrants were far from being rich enough to afford tickets, the dream of returning was relentlessly shattered. Most likely, those early migrants, stuck in dislocation, ended up detained in the strangers’ land. Thus, the old land becomes *Gu Xiang*, which translates as “the old home.” The term *Gu Xiang* implies the appearance of a new home and the separation between the individual and the old land. For Chinese people in diaspora, especially the first generation who left their land of birth, China is their *Gu Xiang*. For them this term may imply another meaning. In Chinese, the character *Gu* not only carries the meaning of “old,” but also “dead.” If we take the latter

interpretation, *Gu Xiang* then becomes the “dead home”—it has lost its “corporal body” to the Chinese in dispersion.

This loss is double. In one way, the geographical disappearance of these locations leads to the physical death of a home. In another way, the irreversible change of these places makes them lost to their former inhabitants. After decades of exile, the individuals in diaspora, like Kingston’s mother, Brave Orchid, had “no more China to go home to” (Kingston 106). On the one hand, the turbulence in China destroyed the corporality of home by razing many early immigrants’ houses. After about forty years of expecting that they may go home one day, Brave Orchid at last finds out that they have no home to go to because villagers took over their land in China. On the other hand, although home may remain intact in the same location, it is ever changing. The old land has been constantly reconstituted and has changed irreversibly ever since the departure of the immigrants. “We don’t belong anywhere since the Revolution. The old China has disappeared while we’ve been away,” Brave Orchid sighs (184). This disappearance, of course, does not refer to a complete physical inexistence, but the irretrievability of the original. Due to the longtime geographical fissure, their house, village, and country can no longer be the one with which they have been familiar. Home, even if it physically exists, can never be *the* home that is frozen in time and idealized in the nostalgic imagination of the immigrants. It is, in Rushdie’s words, “a lost home in a lost city in the mists of lost time” (9).

## **Resurrection**

In the face of loss, the ghost appears trying to realize the dream of reunion depending on its ability to straddle time and space. The beloved, either people or nation, transform into phantomlike beings to haunt the ones in dispersion and become their permanent companions. These ghosts, whose ambivalent nature shuttles between the invisible and visible, not only indicate traumatic loss but also resurrection. The dominant stories of cultural haunting in Chinese diaspora are about the human–ghost reunion, which juxtaposes the dead and the living in the same space. Based on the conscious recognition of the singularity and irreplaceable nature of what has been lost, the reunion features an unconscious fantasy of resurrection.

Pierre Nora observes that “memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects” (9). Hence, collecting concrete traces left by the past may provoke the memory of the living and accordingly save the dead from oblivion. In Choy’s works, keeping residues of the past is a common way to resurrect the dead and keep company with them.

Photographs, as a special kind of residue, play an important role in the lives of the early immigrants. For Third Uncle’s whole life, he sleeps alone in his warehouse beside the fading picture of his dead wife and son. Like him, many immigrants keep with them pictures of their families, either dead or alive. For most of them, especially when the families in the pictures have already been lost, these pictures become their only means of communing with their beloved. Some immigrants weep over the pictures of their little babies taken many years ago; some cry over the pictures of their suddenly grown-up

children. In those pictures, which remain peculiarly inert and obstinately fixed, the flow of life has disappeared; all that is left is a frozen moment that allows only monotonous repetition, yet the process can no longer be retrieved. The static faces in the photo that, in reality, have changed continuously signify the pictures' losses as well as those of the immigrants. More strikingly, photography, in essence, is associated with death. "Death," declared Roland Barthes, "is the eidos of the photograph" (15). Photographs show a moment from the past that is gone forever, dead. However, they also indicate life. A photograph, as a souvenir of personal experience, proves the person once existed. It is an object that has a place with the subject, and, at the same time, the subject is absent. This concurrent presence and absence thus makes the subject in the photograph ghostlike. Through pictures, early immigrants reunite with the ghosts of their loved ones.

Besides photographs, other residues from the past bear the soul of the lost and are treasured by early immigrants. The title of Choy's first novel, *The Jade Peony*, refers to Grandmother's most valuable souvenir of the past that she keeps with great care. It is a piece of the parting present from her unforgettable love in China that holds the unraveling strands of her memory. She always keeps this precious and "magical" possession in her pocket, even until death (149). It becomes sacred for her. The color of the jade, she says, is the color of her spirit. The tiny pendant embodies her love's ghost that comes back each time Grandmother stares at or feels the present.

Resurrection is accomplished through mingling the dead and the living, the past and the present. Thus, death becomes a part of life and the past becomes a part of the present.

By keeping the spirit of the dead in the life of diaspora, “the one back in China” actually becomes “the one always in Canada.” A ghostly shadow follows each first-generation immigrant in Choy’s works across the Pacific. However, this palpable shadow does not embody only human beings, but also places. The private familial haunting projects a communal national haunting experienced by nearly all early Chinese immigrants in Choy’s works—the haunting of a home. In this level of haunting, resurrection takes form in conscious and unconscious cultural reconstructions and transmissions, both visual and verbal, in the space of resettlement and even in the rhythm of daily life. Just as the preservation of the residues helps resurrect individuals, the meticulous reconstitution that early immigrants have been obsessed with make China, the old home, alive in the new home—Chinatown.

Old Chinatowns naturally offered a way of imposing an imaginary coherence on the experience of dispersal and fragmentation. Aside from the pressure coming from the host society, ethnic affiliations as strong unifying forces drove people from China to a localized community. These spaces of resettlement never departed from the shadow of the lost homeland, although this bonding is not always explicit. Old Chinatowns were sites of memory. “They served as storage space for the immigrants’ memories of their homelands” (Laguerre 14). As ethnic enclaves formed outside of home countries, they were regularly labeled in terms that suggest “they are ‘little’ or ‘town’ versions of countries,” and, as perceived by Michel Laguerre, the new place was “an offshoot town” that “the old country is collapsed into” (4). In these little versions of China, every site

was haunted and reminded people of another land; every corner was peculiar for its sights, odors, and sounds of Old China. David Chuenyan Lai gives a vivid description of the Old Chinatown in his influential book *Chinatowns*:

Signs written in Chinese characters outside the small stores, and exotic Chinese merchandise inside them made the streetscape of a Chinatown visually different from other parts of the town. The smells from Chinese restaurants, the aroma from grocery and herb stores, and the odour from opium dens pervaded the crowded Chinatown. Sometimes, funeral processions and festival celebrations brightened the streets with the sound of firecrackers, drums or gongs, and the shouting and talking of Chinese dialects. (36)

Only the Chinese could bear, get used to, and even enjoy the sounds and smells that carried the specter of a lost and beloved homeland.

A particular space in Chinatown that Old China could be projected onto was the stage of the Cantonese opera. In his memoir, Choy recounts an unforgettable childhood memory of watching Cantonese operas with his mother. The Sing Kew Theatre that he and his mother visited regularly, he writes, was in the traditional Canton and old village way, and “was a place to ‘be home,’ as in Old China—a place to pass the time, to meet friends, to gossip, and now and again to focus on the stage” (50). Furthermore, it was not only a place to “be home,” but to experience home. Living myths and stories from Old China swayed onto the stage; the lyrics conjured up images of a genteel country life and

lost family. Early immigrants, after a day of hard work, escaped into this constructed home of fantasy, where they might find comfort and gain courage in the illusion of being at home. Even for little Choy, the Cantonese opera bestowed upon him such a wealth of high drama and myth that he “lacked for nothing in the ordinary world” (52).

The Cantonese opera theater belongs to “the virtual Chinatown” named by Daphne Pi-Wei Lei, according to her research on the Cantonese opera in San Francisco’s Chinatown (194). This virtual Chinatown created in the actual Chinatown, she notes, brings actual audiences to the temporally created Chinese theater. Home is constructed during the opera performance as part of the virtual reality. Time in virtual Chinatown is special. The virtual temporality of Chinatown, Lei writes, is constituted by a substantially unchanged nineteenth-century Californian impression of Chinese theater—old, stale, and forever living in the past. In addition, such virtual temporality manifests itself in both tense and speed; not only do Chinese theater and old Chinese people forever exist in the past, but time also seems to move more slowly in this virtual time zone (194). The Cantonese theater is actually a throwback to a vanished past. Based on the research of Lei, some of the historical and legendary stories told on stage in the twentieth century are very likely the same ones performed a century earlier.

For early Chinese immigrants such as Choy’s mother, to enter the virtual Chinatown was to enjoy being Chinese “in the old Chinese way” (195). The Chinese tempo of the virtual world offered a breathing space for those who were confused and frustrated by reality. It was a world made up of cultural haunting provoked by dislocation. The virtual



Chinatown, maintaining the tradition, cultural habits, and even temporality of the old land, forged a ghost of the lost home, and allowed the immigrants to simultaneously live in one place and experience another.

For the community in diaspora, besides visual constructions, native language is also an important means of reconstructing and resurrecting homeland. It is one of the most basic cultural emblems that the immigrants brought with them across the ocean, and a representation of the umbilical attachments to the old home.

Language in Old Chinatown was extremely diverse. The grandmother in *The Jade Peony* “had a wealth of dialects which thirty-five years of survival in China had taught her” (Choy 16). Each dialect hints at a private family culture and history, and opens up a reality, time, and space (Choy, *Jade* 134). For the second generation, the dialects of their parents, which they cannot grasp with detail, serve as reminders of their origins—“their sing-song phrases warning me: ‘You never forget you Chinese!’” (Choy, *Paper* 12).

Moreover, language plays an important role in cultural transmission from one generation to another. It is through these “sing-song” dialects that the past resonates in the present, and that the most important type of cultural transmission is achieved: the “talk-story.”

Talk-story is the translation from the Cantonese *gong gu*, the first part of the word meaning “to talk” or “to tell,” the second “the past” or “the history.” For Chinese, oral tradition plays an important part in cultural transmission through generations, especially when one is far away from the land of origin. “Long time ago...in Old China...” Almost all Chinese parents in diaspora tell stories of the past (Choy, *Jade* 97). Familiar stories

and phrases comfort the elders of Chinatown (113). Moreover, the parents paint images of China into the minds of their children. Ancient myths, ghost stories, family legends, all kinds of events, real or fake, encouraging or terrifying, are stuffed into the minds of second-generation immigrants “like the suitcases” which the parents “jam-pack with homemade underwear” (Kingston 87). Kingston also recalls, “when we were wide awake and lucid, my mother funneled China into our ears: Kwang-tung Province, New Society Village, the river Kwoo, which runs past the village. ‘Go the way we came so that you will be able to find our house. Don’t forget. Just give your father’s name, and any villager can point out our house’” (76). Through narratives, the older generations attempt to establish their home in China with the younger generations so that they won’t lose their way when they go back one day, although their painstaking effort is not always very successful.

### **The Fantasy of Resurrection**

Cultural haunting makes reunion come true, yet this reunion is not with the original, but with the reconstruction, the ghost. As I previously mentioned, the original has been irretrievably lost due to diaspora. Therefore, the umbilical attachments do not connect first-generation immigrants to a physical location in China, but rather to a spiritual home, a home in memory and imagination. In this regard, for the Chinese in diaspora, either first or second generation, the old home is merely an illusory ghost, as is “going home.”

With the disappearance of the original, even the most meticulous reconstitution

becomes merely fantasy. Chinese immigrants have no way to revive the “life” of their homeland, only ghostlike forms. In the process of their visual and verbal reconstruction, whether conscious of it or not, they are obliged to deal in “broken mirrors, some of whose fragments have been irretrievably lost” (Rushdie 11).

The elusive nature of the reconstructed homeland is primarily due to the medium through which the lost land manages to reach the first generation—memory, the most powerful and most unreliable tool. Toni Morrison compares memory to water to indicate its fluidity and transitory nature (305). Stephen Bertman defines it as follows:

Memory is the construction or reconstruction of what actually happened in the past. Memory is distorted by needs, desires, interests, and fantasies. Subjective and malleable rather than objective and concrete, memory is emotional, conceptual, contextual, constantly undergoing revision, selection, interpretation, distortion, and reconstruction. (27)

Because of the mobile nature of memory, it is no longer the depository of facts, but an active process that creates new understandings of both the past and the present.

Furthermore, time and distance increase the complexity of remembering. It ignites imaginations and enables people in dispersion to recreate their recollections of home “encrusted with layered accretions of nostalgia, solitude, and longing” (Matsuoka and Sorenson 152). Hence, through the transformative activity of memorizing, the lost homeland sometimes becomes a haven filled with nostalgia, and sometimes a legend full of uncanny happenings. Memory marks a loss. As Azade Seyhan writes, memory is

always a re-presentation, “making present that which once was and no longer is” (16).

Therefore, having been filtered and blurred by the fragmentary and constructed nature of memory, China becomes a faded photograph in black and white either through the arias of the opera singers or the stories of the elders. A unified Chinese culture is unavoidably unsettled, and for second-generation immigrants, it becomes indecipherable.

The unreliable cultural reconstruction undermines transmission. I argue that this Chinese cultural transmission inside community from one generation to the next, the “vertical” creation of Chinese American/Canadian culture defined by Lisa Lowe, is not as “stable,” “unmediated,” secure, and transparent, as she observes, compared with the “horizontal” relationship among communities. On the contrary, the cultural transmission inside the Asian-origin community is just as multiple, conflicting, and capricious as the practices outside of it. As a crucial part of building Asian American/Canadian culture, Chinese tradition, in this process, is “partly inherited, partly modified, as well as partly invented” (Lowe 65). Both the cultural landscape of Chinatown and the talk-story are not rediscovery but reproduction; the image of the lost home, like ethnic cultural identity, is “not grounded in the archeology, but in the retelling of the past” (Hall 235). The image, or rather the ghost of the lost home, carries more messages of discontinuity than continuity, which is especially true for second-generation immigrants.

For those of the second generation, unlike their parents, Chinatown is not a temporary shelter, but a home where they spent their childhoods. It is also a depository that holds their parents’ memories of a land far away, and a mediated space that maintains

their symbolic attachment to that long lost land. When Kingston opens the metal tube that holds her mother's medical diploma, "the smell of China flies out, a thousand-year-old bat flying heavy-headed out of the Chinese caverns where bats are as white as dust, a smell that comes from long ago, far back in the brain" (57). For second-generation immigrants such as Kingston, China, a place that holds their parents' roots but where they have never set foot, is lurking "far back in the brain" on a subconscious level, linking to a twilight world of dreams and mysteries. It becomes a symbol that lacks certain concrete forms, like "a thousand-year-old bat," "a smell that comes from long ago," or simply like a ghost, old as well as strange, existent as well as intangible.

For the younger generations, the struggle is severe in order to imagine a clear past based on a space that is already established in fracture and fantasy by the previous generations. For the generation of immigrants born in China, Chinatown images and narratives serve as mirrors to reflect their original home. However, for the second generation that has never been to China, the images and narratives concerning that faraway land are merely myths that haunt them in the form of ghosts, enchanting as well as confusing. Culture, Azade Seyhan writes, is embedded in the past and will have to be retrieved in symbolic action (16). Therefore, reconstruction makes the homeland merely a notion, which is intangible for the second generation. In his third book *All That Matters*, Choy describes the distance that a child raised in Chinatown feels about his parents' China. "I stared into space, thinking about my own life inside the borders of Chinatown, a life sometimes so far away from the Old China world they all still lived in" (220).

Lacking a substantial connection with Old China, the lost homeland merely takes on the shadowy appearance in their minds that requires their own imaginations to add flesh and bones to it.

In *The Woman Warrior*, Kingston describes a strange phenomenon: she and her sister often taste something sweet while they are not eating anything. When they ask their mother about it, she tells them that it is because their grandmother in China is sending them candy (99). Beyond time and space, grandmother's "messages" reach her granddaughters in an uncanny way, emblemizing the elusory ties between different generations and beyond a distance that cannot be transcended. This distance, not only geographical but also spiritual, produces an ambivalent mixture of fear and nostalgia in the hearts of the second generation. "As a child I fear the size of the world," narrates Kingston. The size of the world reduces grandmother to only a taste by the time she reaches Kingston, and their village in China to only a dot on the map. "The trains sounded deeper and deeper into the night. They had not reached the end of the world before I stopped hearing them, the last long moan diminishing toward China" (99). For Kingston, China is something that she can hardly figure out. Her train drives toward it and tries to reach it, however, the last moan fades into an unknown world, and the sound is eventually lost.

In most Chinese American and Chinese Canadian literature, such as the works of Kingston and Choy, talk-story is highlighted as the most common and important form of cultural transmission, especially through different generations. However, talk-story itself

is characteristically subjective, radical, and unstable. Brogan points out, “the focus on storytelling shifts emphasis away from biological to adoptive models of cultural transmission” (18). This “adoptive” feature is a result of the fragmented and blurry narratives that make the past partially obliterated and inaccessible.

Kingston recalls, “My mother has told me once and for all the useful parts. She will add nothing unless powered by Necessity, a riverbank that guides her life” (6). The narratives told by the elder generations, full of hints and metaphors, are never fully articulated, leaving their descendents to piece together an image from a collage that is not chronological or even logical. More despairingly, the second generation is not only confronted by the stories without endings or explanations, but also encounters crucial words that resist translation, such as the indecipherable term that parents call Kingston and some other children, “*Ho Chi Kuei*” (204). Kingston keeps looking in dictionaries under those syllables, but finds nothing that makes sense. She is confused and frustrated by the untranslatable feature of the word (204). In Choy’s novel, the Canadian-born boy Sek-Lung also expresses his frustration when there is little hope for him to figure out the overwhelming family rankings and Chinese kinship terms: “Everything was a puzzle to me. Everyone was an enigma” (Choy, *Jade* 134). When the second generation tries to transcend the fragmentation of inheritance, the diverse dialects in Chinatown become impossible mountains that they must conquer before they succeed.

Another frustration of the younger generations is that they cannot tell truth from falseness. Based on memory and imagination, talk-story itself is a mixture of fact and

fiction. Parents give their children pictures to dream about and at the same time, they bring them bafflement. “Night after night my mother would talk-story until we fell asleep. I couldn’t tell where the stories left off and the dreams began” (Kingston 19). For the first generation, only the Old China in their memory is real, but for their descendents, the situation is the opposite. “To make my waking life American-normal,” Kingston narrates, “I turn on the lights before anything untoward makes an appearance. I push the deformed into my dreams, which are in Chinese, the language of impossible stories” (87). For little Kingston, Old China merely belongs in dreams; what is concrete is the diasporic life she is experiencing in America. Her mother’s paradoxical talk-stories further confuse the mind of her daughter. In her final explosion of rage, Kingston complains that her mother never tells her whether a story is true or not: “I can’t tell what’s real and what you make up” (235). In addition, problems become more serious when the invisible and inscrutable world the first generation builds around them confronts the solid America where the second generation exists. With two conflicting inculcations, the younger generation can hardly sort out “what is just childhood, just imagination, just the family, just the village, just movies, just living” (205).

One essential reason for the blurriness of the narratives is the ethnic group’s own prohibitions about language, in particular, the Chinese’s secrecy. The deliberate omission or even abandonment of words primarily finds its origin in traditional Chinese culture, which appreciates silence as profound and knowledgeable and depreciates eloquence as splurge and superficiality. More importantly, while being detained in a strange land, the



Chinese feel unsafe in their words. Their secrecy thus becomes self-protection. The Chinese believe “a ready tongue is an evil” (Kingston 190). In an attempt to avoid courting calamity, they keep immigration secrets to themselves, never to be said in front of white people (183), “guard their real names with silence” (6) and hide their actual life histories within fortress walls (Choy, *Jade* 50). Even with their offspring, who always try to get things straight and name the unspeakable, they still shield themselves through dodge and silence (Kingston 5). What’s more, this secrecy is to be passed down to their children—“Don’t tell” becomes the prevalent exhortation that Chinese parents urge upon their children, although the children can’t tell if they want to because they “don’t know” (Kingston 183). Consequently, the second generation can never distinguish history from talk-story, or tell fact from fiction.

### **The Will of the Ghost**

Although the ghost does not have a substantial form, it does have a will. Thus cultural haunting, in a certain sense, becomes a cultural claim. The ghosts haunt first-generation and second-generation Chinese immigrants with different purposes and requests. For the former, as I previously noted, it claims reunion; for the latter, nevertheless, it claims remembrance and respect.

In *The Jade Peony*, after Grandmother’s death, she becomes the ghost that haunts her little grandson, Sekky. The boy, who spent much of his time with his grandma when she was alive, has a strong faith in the Old One’s return. He sees her everywhere: on the

staircase, beside the dining table, in his room. He even hears Grandmother telling him her motto: “Old way, best way” (Choy 162). The Old One’s ghost continues to tug at Sekky and will not let him go until the whole family formally performs *bai sen* twice, a Chinese ritual to bow to and respect the Old One’s spirit.

This familial haunting of second-generation children such as Sekky is not simply the returning of a missed family member, but the claim of a faraway nation. It indicates the symbolic attachment that second-generation immigrants maintain to the old home. The Old One is the representation of Old China. Chinese culture stuffs her room—antique shawls, the ancestral calligraphy, multicolored embroidered hangings, shelves of sweet-smelling herbs and bitter potions (148). Therefore, her constant returning and the exhortation “old way, best way” is an attempt to fight against the amnesia of a cultural heritage that, for the second generation, has been lost. What the ghost really needs is the ritual of *bai sen*, the formal act of showing respect to Chinese culture. By putting the jade peony in Sekky’s pocket, Grandmother passes down her most precious cultural heritage to the younger generation. Sekky, like other second-generation immigrants, takes this heritage both consciously and unconsciously. As Choy writes in his memoir, “My father’s history had somehow been passed on to me, father to son, however long and circuitous the journey” (317).

However, this heritage is not always positive, and the haunting does not always bear good intentions. In *The Woman Warrior*, the familial haunting turns on a vicious appearance with a wicked claim.

In another story about adultery, Kingston's "No Name Aunt," like Choy's grandmother, got pregnant after her husband went to America. When the villagers raided her house one night, she drowned herself and her newborn baby in a well. This is a family story that Kingston's mother secretly tells her as a warning when she enters adolescence, and then the ghost of her aunt starts to haunt her. "My aunt haunts me—her ghost drawn to me because now, after fifty years of neglect, I alone devote pages of paper to her ... I do not think she always means me well ... the Chinese are always very frightened of the drowned one, whose weeping ghost, wet hair hanging and skin bloated, waits silently by the water to pull down a substitute" (16).

The real face of the spiteful ghost that is haunting Kingston in her Chinatown life is the suffocating Chinese patriarchy. This culture is passed down through her mother's talk-story. "The villagers are watchful," her mother warns (5). The villagers in China are not only watchful of her aunt but also of her—their surveillant eyes have crossed the vast ocean and claimed her obedience. Kingston, although living in America, has never cast off the oppressive ghost of Chinese patriarchy, and constantly fears a possession that may duplicate her aunt's terrible fate.

More unfortunately, this cultural haunting, either positive or negative, operating mostly on a subrational level, is an ethnic mandate for the second generation. The most dreadful aspect of haunting, as Brogan notes, is its "involuntary nature" in that "we cannot always choose our ghosts" (19). It is not only that we cannot choose the ghosts, but also we cannot deny their implicit existence and stubborn haunting. The ghosts that

are forever lurking in the recesses of the second generation's hearts represent a culture and history that they could never erase.

### **The Double Homes**

When sojourners have to resettle in other place because of the impossibility of returning, the sojourn becomes diaspora, which marks lines of deterritorialization, dispossession, and displacement from certain territory and culture. James Clifford notes, "Diaspora is different from travel (though it works through travel practices) in that it is not temporary. It involves dwelling, maintaining communities, having collective homes away from home" (308). According to Clifford, the essential nature that differentiates diaspora from travel is the appearance of a new home away from home. While the diasporic subjects may be physically dispersed within the boundaries of another country, they could remain spiritually part of their original home and culture. In this case, the place where one resides and the place one longs for do not always coincide. The umbilical attachments virtually become the spatial connector between the two homes. The new home is physical, while the old home is metaphorical in that it is reconstructed as a notion. These complex and concurrent associations with double homes become not only a possible but also a common phenomenon in diaspora.

Cultural haunting nicely represents this "double home" crisis in the way that one home is constantly haunted by the other. The ambivalent nature of the ghost indicates the paradoxical relationship that Chinese diasporic people keep with their home of origin.

Through human–ghost reunion, the lost is resurrected. However, the problematic cultural reconstruction and transmission undermines resurrection and makes the revived spirit of the past merely a fantasy. For the first generation, paradoxically, it is this illusory ghost that is real, while the reality of the residential place is fake; the lost past is real, while the ongoing present is fake. The idealized and immobile old home is real, reconstructed as the irreplaceable origin and the ultimate destination. Chinatown, in these circumstances, becomes simply a residential place in a foreign land, a site that reminds them daily of their homeland. In *The Woman Warrior*, Kingston’s mother constantly tells her:

“Someday, 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” (Kingston 98). For most first-generation immigrants such as Brave Orchid, everything in America is false, or transient; only China is the real country, real home, where real flowers are blooming with fine scent.

Nevertheless, because of the problematic cultural reconstruction and transmission, the ghost of the old home that the second generation encounters is not of a single and static nature. First, it is both existent as well as lost; it is at the same time “there” and “not there.” Secondly, the image of the land of origin is both familiar as well as strange. Born in Chinatown, where shadows of the lost homeland hover, they are not unfamiliar with China. However, they have difficulties understanding this old, faraway land that they have never visited. There is always some distance in between that veils their eyes, and keeps them from seeing their land of origin clearly and embracing it wholeheartedly.

Thirdly, the old home that constantly visits them appears both nourishing as well as oppressive. For Choy, his mother's talk-story plants the seed of confidence and optimism in his life: "My perceptions in life grew out of the fables told to me by my mother. Her whispered narratives constructed within me a permanent barrier against pessimism, perhaps even against adversity" (56). Kingston finds "great power" in her mother's stories (20). The story of Fa Mu Lan, the woman warrior, actually becomes her own story. Like a woman warrior, Kingston finally breaks the fetters of both family and society and confidently investigates and builds her diasporic identity. However, sometimes China may also become quite oppressive. In this regard, cultural claim becomes cultural pressure. For both Kingston and Choy, the heavy cultural heritage and the confusing traditional customs may become a burden, to a certain extent, that slows their steps to enter into and succeed in white society. Chinatown, a reservoir of cultural hauntings of the past and the dead, may become a space that traps them, and this cultural fetter is particularly severe for Chinese females in diaspora.

"The ghost is not simply a dead or a missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life" (Gordon 8). This statement is also true with respect to the texts of Kingston and Choy. The presence of ghosts is the sign that tells one a haunting is taking place, and haunting "is a very particular way of knowing what has happened or is happening" (8). Those seething absences pave a way to the hidden world curtained by the muted presences. In the case of Chinese diaspora literature, the familial haunting is the signifier of the

paradoxical connection and disconnection between the people in diaspora and a gleaming land that might be thought of as home. Sometimes the trauma of the loss may repress the memory of it. However, ghosts “do not always care for silence, and will not stay unremembered” (Choy, *Paper* 307). They have never stopped haunting the diasporic subjects with their ethnic claims. For both first and second generations, this cultural haunting becomes a part of their lives that cannot be ignored, which constantly negotiates their sense of belonging and shapes their diasporic identity.

## Chapter Two

### A Haunted Home: Racial Haunting

How do we know that ghosts are the  
continuation of dead people? Couldn't ghosts be  
an entirely different species of creature? Perhaps  
human beings just die, and that's the end.

— Maxine Hong Kingston

“Couldn't ghosts be an entirely different species of creature?” ponders Kingston's mother, Brave Orchid. Yes, they could be, at least in the case of Chinese diaspora. Brave Orchid complains daily that America is a land populated by this type of ghost. They are not the “continuation of dead people” like Chinese ghosts, insubstantial and intangible, but are of a completely new species, with flesh and bones. She calls these ghosts “*bak kwei*,” translated by Kingston as “white ghosts.”

Similarly, Chinatown residents in Wayson Choy's memoir also notice this variety of ghosts. Besides the “harmless and familiar” Chinese ghosts, there are beings from the second category—the *bak kwei*—designated by the same name (31).

While Chinese ghosts follow immigrants like shadows, the white ghosts haunt them like huge stones pressing on their chests. What's more, they crowd around and even permeate the survival space of Chinese immigrants. Kingston painfully recalls, “Once upon a time the world was so thick with ghosts, I could hardly breathe; I could hardly walk, limping my way around the White Ghosts and their cars” (97). All kinds of ghosts



invade everyday life in Chinatown, as she narrates:

For our very food we had to traffic with the Grocery Ghosts, the supermarket aisles full of ghost customers [...] we were regularly visited by the Mail Ghost, Meter Reader Ghost, Garbage Ghost. Staying off the streets did no good. They came nosing at windows—Social Worker Ghosts; Public Health Nurse Ghosts; Factory Ghosts recruiting workers during the war; two Jesus Ghosts who had formerly worked in China. We hid directly under the windows, pressed against the baseboard until the ghost, calling us in the ghost language so that we'd almost answer to stop its voice, gave up. They did not try to break in, except for a few Burglar Ghosts. The Hobo Ghosts and Wino Ghosts took peaches off our trees and drank from the hose when nobody answered their knocks. (97-98)

Thus, the anticipated land of “gold” becomes the land of “ghosts.” These ghosts, unlike those from China, do not usually have good intentions for Chinese immigrants, though. They are, in Choy’s words, “full of spiteful trickery” (*Paper* 32). In the eyes of early Chinese immigrants, every Caucasian, whether the Grocery Ghost or the Mail Ghost, the “*fay bak-kwei*” or the “*goh bak-kwei*” (the “fat white ghost” or the “tall white ghost”) is a malicious being (Choy, *Paper* 181).

This invasion of ghosts is essentially different from cultural haunting that indicates a mixture of life and death. The “white ghosts” are the ghosts in broad daylight, concrete, tough, and potentially dangerous. They are no longer apparitions of a faraway land, but

flesh-and-blood individuals in the immigrants' residential space. If we say that cultural haunting represents Chinese immigrants' paradoxical relationship with their homeland, then this type of haunting, which I call "racial haunting," is the representation of their ambivalent relationship with their adopted nation. In addition, the minds of early Chinese immigrants project the ghosts from this diasporic space as dehumanized creatures, which is different from the Chinese ghosts that may provoke feelings of nostalgia and loss. If ghosts from China correspond to life, representing a state of afterlife, then ghosts from the host country correspond to being human, indicating a state of being nonhuman.

This chapter will explore Chinese diasporic subjects' relationship with their host country by examining racial haunting. First, I will discuss mutual demonization between the Chinese community and Western society provoked by cultural foreignness and racial violence. Then I will conduct a detailed analysis of the racial haunting in Kingston's and Choy's texts.

### **Bidirectional Demonization**

The translation of the Chinese *kwei* into "ghost," by both Kingston and Choy, is very loose. The difference in meaning between the two words in two different cultural contexts may lead to misunderstandings. More seriously, both Jeffery Chan and Benjamin Tong charge Kingston with mistranslating *kwei* into "ghost" in order to court white readership (Chan 41; Tong 6). *Kwei*, in Chinese context, also can be rendered as "demon," which connotes some level of active malevolence, instead of the Western idea that ghosts are

characterized by unreality or lack of substance. In the texts of Kingston and Choy, the term *bak kwei* adopts the meaning of “demon,” or something evil and cursed. “There were good ghosts and bad ghosts,” as Choy notes, and the white ghosts often belong to the latter category.

When the word *kwei* is used for “demon” in Chinese, it is rather derogatory. In Chinese metaphysics, the positive, immaterial, and celestial aspect of the human soul is termed *sin* (or *shen*); the negative, material, and terrestrial side of the soul is called *kui* (or *kwei*), which is identified with decline, destruction, and death (Wolf 169). In the texts of Kingston and Choy, the Chinese gods and ancestors that haunt immigrants belong to the category of *sin*, while the non-Chinese belong to *kwei*. In addition, *kwei* is usually associated with being nonhuman. In earlier usage, *kwei* was a generic term for animals (174). They were “tangible examples of disorder, or civilized ways in abeyance, and the hassles that arose as a consequence” (McKeown 126). Early Chinese immigrants maintained the dehumanizing nature of *kwei* when they called Westerners *bak kwei*, “white ghost,” always resorting to images of disorder and bestial appetites. According to one of Choy’s uncles, Canada is “the demon place” full of “no-mannered barbarians” who hug or kiss each other in open, and “eat bread and say it’s human flesh” (*Paper* 251, 262).

The designation of foreigners as *kwei* is not the creation of Chinese American or Chinese Canadian immigrants. As David Leiwei Li points out, the usage of *kuei* (*kwei*) for foreigners became a common practice in the mid-nineteenth century when Western

imperial powers invaded the Manchu Empire of China with guns and opium (54). In 1835, this practice particularly distressed one missionary traveling through Canton (the province of the ancestors of Kingston and Choy), here using the word devil rather than ghost: “On passing through the suburbs of Canton, or up and down the river, the cry of ‘foreign devil’ salutes the ear on every side” (Wu 4).

In these cases, the Chinese demonization of Westerners was the result of colonialism, in which their survival space in China was invaded and threatened with violence. This crisis reappeared when early Chinese immigrated to the land of these former colonialists. They continued to use the appellation, but in new circumstances. I argue that the term “white ghost” in both Kingston’s and Choy’s works is the reflection of early Chinese immigrants’ survival predicament—being decentered in diaspora. This type of ghost signifies the threat posed by dislocation, in the way that Chinese diasporic subjects are simultaneously inside and outside Western society.

The negative caricature of Caucasians is a habitual stereotype, passed down from the colonial to the postcolonial era. The metaphor of describing white people as ghosts reveals the problematic diasporic experiences of early Chinese immigrants in America and Canada, and their troubled relationship with the host countries. The dehumanizing picture of white ghosts, on the one hand, indicates foreignness and otherness brought with cultural confrontation. On the other hand, it signifies wickedness and malevolence fashioned by the violence of racism.

According to its etymology, the word *kwei* implies “stranger.” Once a generic term

for animals, it sometimes extends to denote a people or race of alien origin (Wolf 174).

The ghosts in the texts of Kingston and Choy thus demonstrate early Chinese immigrants' confrontations with otherness—they are, in Homi Bhabha's words, "living in other times and other places in the nation of otherness" (291).

For first-generation immigrants like Kingston's mother in *The Woman Warrior*, and Choy's mother in his memoir, *Paper Shadows*, as well as Grandmother and Stepmother in his novels, *The Jade Peony* and *All That Matters*, America and Canada are mysteries. The immigrants do not understand, or, because of their language or knowledge limitations, are unable to cope with the inhabitants of these strange countries. In their eyes, non-Chinese are a complete alien species of people possessing unfamiliar cultural practices. They are the unfathomable ghosts, foreign and barbarian with "big noses and funny names" (Choy, *All* 33). Besides its inhabitants, the society itself is inhuman. Brave Orchid often complains:

This is terrible ghost country, where a human being works her life away [...] even the ghosts work, no time for acrobatics. I have not stopped working since the day the ship landed. I was on my feet the moment the babies were out. In China I never even had to hang up my own clothes. I shouldn't have left [...] (Kingston 104)

In Choy's memoir, his fifth aunt has the same complaint: "Everyone work, work, work—or starve to death! Go crazy with working!" (98). For first-generation immigrants who could only do strenuous labor in America or Canada, even if they were well educated in

China, the adopted country is mechanical and artificial, “full of machines” and flowers with no scent (Kingston 96). The vast space that they have no way to explore and the fast pace that they could never follow make the West very alien and beyond comprehension. It has to be ghostlike, with phenomena that they have never encountered and are unable to decipher. If China is their *gu xiang*, “the original home,” the home of their own, then either America or Canada is *ta xiang*, “the other’s home.”

To regard the adopted country as a ghost country and its citizens as ghosts not only reflects the otherness of the designated objects, but, more significantly, exposes the otherness of the subjects. The term “ghost” that early Chinese immigrants used when referring to foreigners reveals their own foreignness in a country where they do not fit and are not allowed to do so. The damnation of the non-Chinese as ghosts signifies the permanent separation and estrangement of the Chinese from their space of settlement. “Each location creates its own strangers,” Susan Friedman perceives (199). In Chinatown, the strangers are white people; however, Chinatown itself, located inside the territory of the white majority, is the real stranger. The Chinese are the ghosts, the “yellow ghosts.”

From the moment early Chinese immigrants set foot on the North American West Coast, they were marked, in Ronald Takaki’s title, as the “strangers from a different shore” who did not belong. The Orientalist view of the Westerner defined the Chinese as the “Other,” perceiving them not only as different but also as inferior. White settlers and employers regarded them as aliens who were perfect as labor for low-paying jobs but not as social equals. As Choy notes in his memoir, it was only after World War II that the

Chinese received citizenship, even those born in Canada, like him: “I was the Canadian-born child of unwanted immigrants who were not allowed to become citizens. The words RESIDENT ALIEN were stamped on my birth certificate, as if I were a loitering stranger” (136). Politically excluded and legally disenfranchised, early Chinese immigrants were just *in* the adopted country, but they could never be *of* it. Lisa Lowe notes this contradiction of immigration and citizenship in her book, *Immigrant Acts*. She writes, “ ‘Immigrant acts,’ then, attempts to name the *contradictions* of Asian immigration, which at different moments in the last century and a half of Asian entry into the United States have placed Asians ‘within’ the U.S. nation-state, its workplaces, and its markets, yet linguistically, culturally, and racially marked Asians as ‘foreign’ and ‘outside’ the national polity” (8). In terms of citizenship eligibility, early Chinese immigrants became the “foreigner-within,” the significant “Other” to white people (5).

During the time of railroad construction in America and Canada, plenty of cheap labor was needed and the Chinese were regarded as “the indispensable enemy”<sup>2</sup>. However, as soon as construction was finished, the Chinese were shoved aside, threatened, forgotten, deserted by the railroad companies, and betrayed by labor contractors (Choy, *Jade* 17-18). As Peter Li observes, it was no accident that the Dominion government of Canada passed the first anti-Chinese bill in 1885, the same year the transcontinental Canadian Pacific Railway was completed (6). Especially during periods of economic hardship, Chinese immigrants became victims of racial

---

<sup>2</sup> See Alexander Saxton’s *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California*.

discrimination and scapegoating; the white labor force regarded them as a threat, as unwanted outsiders excluded from mainstream society. As revealed by Choy, the “White Labour Only” signs were everywhere, and some were rather insulting, such as “No Dogs, No Chinese Allowed” (*All* 217). In the eyes of the Westerners, the Chinese were dehumanized as animals. During World War II, the young men of Chinatown were discouraged from signing up for the army because of their alien status. They were “not wanted” instead of “not needed” (Choy, *All* 312). The reporter of *Chinese New Republic* wrote, “The loyal gentlemen of B.C. Chinatowns are as undesirable as the dead if they want to fight for this country,” with the headline, “UNWANTED CHINESE GHOSTS” (319).

Being marginalized within a large nationhood, the “unwanted Chinese ghosts” suffered severe ethnic segregation and alienation. They were both voluntary and involuntary sojourners, located outside the cultural, political, and racial boundaries of the nation, even from the very first day of landing.

The newcomers of color were seen as intruders in the white country. They were halted at the door of the nation, detained and humiliated at immigration stations, often undergoing months or even years of arbitrary questioning. Choy describes Stepmother’s bitter experience when she first arrives in Canada. “She had been, for almost three weeks, languishing in the Customs House in Victoria, which everyone called the human isolation coop, the Pig Pen—the Gee-ook—patiently waiting for her official clearance to come into Vancouver” (*All* 41). From the very beginning, Chinese immigrants were treated as being



nonhuman in the “Pig Pen.” After entering, they were forced into segregated areas, reinforcing their sense of alienation. Finally, they still could not escape their marginal status even when they were ill or dead. When Grandmother is ill, she is taken to the basement of St. Paul’s Hospital because it is the only place where the sick Chinese are allowed (*Jade* 151). Even when they were dead, their bones continued to be maltreated and segregated, as described shockingly by Choy in his memoir:

By the onset of the Second World War, the bones of the dead Chinese who never made it back to China—who dies of old age, of despair, of ill-health—languished by the ton in the Bone House in Victoria at Foul Point (Harling Bay), or were tagged and wrapped in gunny sacks piled up in damp warehouses in Nanaimo and in Vancouver [...] If they were buried in Gold Mountain, their coffins were packed into Victoria’s segregated grounds at Ross Bay or triple-buried in the rocky headland at Foul Point. In Vancouver, the dead were interred in poorly drained land reserved “For Chinese Only.”(75)

In Chinese diaspora literature, such as Fae Myenne Ng’s *Bone*, one phenomenon often referred to and sometimes focused on, is the desire of early immigrants’ to send their bones back to China. This homecoming complex is not only associated with a permanent longing for their homeland, but also a result of the racist reality in the adopted country. It demonstrates the longing “for respect,” for a peaceful residence without racial hatred and violence (*Paper* 75).

These physical boundaries are actually the consequence of the invisible boundary—primarily the color line. The drawing of a line in this fashion created a large community of “others” brought together by their history and experience of rejection by the dominant group. Friedman remarks, “the body as a sight of cultural determination first marks someone as ‘the stranger’” (198). In this case, skin color became a sign of foreignness and the ridiculous justification for exclusions and violations. Young men of Chinatown were discouraged from signing up for the army because of their “yellow skin” and “slanty eyes” (Choy, *All* 285). Therefore, the Chinese minority in the West were born to be foreigners even though they lived in the same land as the whites. The color line built an intangible wall that kept the diasporic subjects from joining their adopted country.

As a result, white society treated Chinese immigrants as ghosts, an alien and debased species. Madan Sarup writes, “It seems that one can be more or less a man to the extent that one is more or less a citizen, that he who is not a citizen is not fully a man” (100). Being the Resident Alien, early Chinese immigrants were stripped of their humanity by the country in which they lived, the country where they located their survival space—Chinatown, which also could not escape the fate of being demonized or dehumanized.

The following is part of a reservation page for a “Chinatown Ghost Tour” from a Web site that books activities for tourists:

Tour Name: Chinatown Ghost Walking Tour

Price From: Starting from USD \$24.00 per person

Duration: 1.5 hours

Commences: San Francisco, California<sup>3</sup>

This is a twenty-first-century advertisement for the new Chinatown of San Francisco. As guaranteed in the information about the tour, the “unearthly side” represented by “specters” emerging “just after twilight” in San Francisco’s Chinatown, the oldest and largest Chinese community in North America, will provide tourists with a chillingly “extrasensory” experience. This “Chinatown Ghost Tour” is far from unique to San Francisco. Similar activities can be found in various North American cities with communities of Chinese immigrants such as Chicago and Victoria, home of the oldest Chinatown in Canada.

According to the tour introduction, the haunting contains specters from “decades of Chinatown history,” “ancient Chinese mythology and folklore,” and Chinese customs. That is, the haunting is closely associated with Chinese culture which, in Westerners’ eyes, is submerged in mysterious and indecipherable symbolism, superstitions, and rituals. In other words, the superstitious Chinese culture creates a supernatural Chinatown. Accordingly, the ghosts, which the tour claims do truly exist, are implied to be of Chinese origin, highly exotic, and inscrutable, as well as serving as a perfect Oriental Other for the thrill-seeking Occidental spectators. These Chinese ghosts, as fantasized psychological thrillers originating from an Orientalized and stereotyped culture, represent

---

<sup>3</sup> From an Internet advertisement:

[http://www.affiliate.viator.com/brochure/product\\_show.jsp?ID=1010&PRODUCTID=1016&CODE=3423GHOST&AUID=2148](http://www.affiliate.viator.com/brochure/product_show.jsp?ID=1010&PRODUCTID=1016&CODE=3423GHOST&AUID=2148)

the wretched condition of Chinese people in diaspora whose culture has been appropriated and distorted.

In the tour advertisement, Chinatown is promoted as a site of tourist satisfaction and commerce. To the gawking tourists in quest of titillating but ultimately safe cultural encounters, as Sau-Ling Cynthia Wong argues, Chinatown means “*spectacle*,” a diverting, exotic side-show (253). The tour site boasts about providing a “delightfully ghostly experience” for visitors who are merely searching for an evening of entertainment. However, to the inhabitants, to Kingston and Choy who grew up there, Chinatown is more than a popular shopping, dining, and sightseeing destination, but “*habitation*, permanent home, a locus of familiarity, security, and nurturance,” where people are born, live, raise families, work or return to after work, and eventually die (Wong 253). Hence, the tour advertisement has exoticized and sensationalized Chinatown, and consequently transformed it from a super-populated habitation into an artificial and lifeless spectacle.

The same transformation can also be perceived in the evolution of the designation of the Chinese residence, written about in the following extract from a poem entitled “Translations” by Chinese American poet Wing Tek Lum:

*Tohng Yahn Gaai* was what  
we once called  
where we  
lived: “China-People-  
Street.” Later, we mimicked

Demon talk

and wrote down only

*Wah Fauh* — “China-Town.”

The difference

Is obvious: the people

Disappeared. (72)

As revealed in this provocative poem of two Chinese designations for the ethnic community, “Chinatown,” a term latent with the gaze of white society, is essentially an Orientalized spectacle, altered from “China-People-Street” which signifies habitation, and resulting from the erasure of Chinese people. Not unlike this case, the previously mentioned Chinatown ghost tour is also significantly characterized by the disappearance of people, substituted by the appearance of ghosts.

From the beginning of the twentieth century, when early Chinatown was regarded as “a virtual environment with staged opium dens and tong headquarters that could be seen from the safety of a guided tour on a gape wagon” (Werry 378), the act of reducing Chinatown from a habitation to a cultural sign in the earlier examples was not accidental. More shockingly, this reduction happened to Chinese people in diaspora. The early Chinese women in America, observed by Amy Ling, “were such an exotic curiosity that money could be made by simply putting them on display” (9). Afong Moy was one of these “displays” and reportedly was the first Chinese woman to come to America. She “caused a sensation in New York” in 1834 by just sitting “amidst the exotic Chinese

trappings in vogue at that time” (Yung 17). From the “first Chinese woman” to the twenty-first-century Chinatown, Western society has constantly appropriated the Chinese and their culture as commercial tools for entertainment and profit. In this appropriation, Chinese people were bereft of humanity, reduced to “a specimen of Otherness devoid of individuality and interiority,” like ghosts that are excluded from the human world (Wong 252).

Therefore, we may see that in Chinese diaspora, the act of demonization took place bi-directionally. If Chinese used the relationship of men with ghosts to describe Chinese relations with non-Chinese, white people did the same thing to define their relations with non-white people. The term “white ghost” in the texts of Kingston and Choy implies its counterpart at the other end of the same gaze of otherness: “yellow peril.” In this regard, the concurrence of “yellow” and “white” ghosts makes it doubtful that the haunting is due to a certain culture as demonstrated in the earlier advertisement. The mutual haunting, as I argue, is not the consequence of one single culture but the clash of two cultures. It is not static but relational. David Punter presents a similar idea when he examines the spectral presence in postcolonial texts by noting that “terms like ‘primitivism’ and ‘superstition’ can be subjected to a reversal and seen less as ‘natural’ features of specific colonized cultures than as the outcroppings of primal encounters between cultures” (268). In this confrontation, each side uses their own culture and society as the norm and defines other cultures in comparative terms. Cultural strangeness has the tendency to lead to cultural derogation. The contention between antagonistic traditions of cultural value deteriorated

by cultural ignorance increases mutual alienation and hostility, and further deprives the human target of humanity.

This cultural conflict is often highlighted in the linguistic displacement that people experience in diaspora. Language is embedded in cultural norms. As Agnew points out, the lack of proficiency in the host country's language crystallizes many other forms of cultural estrangement and discomfort (41). In the texts of Kingston and Choy, the Chinese immigrants, especially the first generation, experience this linguistic predicament distinctly. They feel "abandoned in a strange country" in which they are surrounded by a world of English even in Chinatown (Choy, *Paper* 294). To Westerners' ears, Chinese language sounds "chingchong ugly," while to Old China ears like Grandmother's, the English name of her Irish neighbor sounds funny and odd as "Oh-kan-nagh (O'Connor)" (Choy, *All* 33). For most early Chinese immigrants who could not speak English or could only speak broken bits of the language, communication with the white society was difficult. Choy significantly describes Stepmother's encounter with a white postman when he requests an *X* as her signature:

Stepmother took the postman's pencil, and he pointed to the document in his hand. Carefully, Stepmother drew two lines, one crossing over the other. She could have written her name in Chinese ideograms, but the man only wanted an *X*. It was the first time I saw Stepmother write anything in English. *X*. She did not like the way the postman smiled at her. (*Jade* 141)

An individual's signature represents his or her identity. Nevertheless, Stepmother is

deprived of a basic human right when her own language is ignored and substituted with an *X*, the single-letter signature that belongs to the illiterate and alien. By writing “carefully,” she tries to maintain her dignity, but it only intensifies her embarrassment. In the country of others, she has to follow their rules; but according to those rules, she is reduced to an *X*. Using a simple English letter as her signature with awkwardness and bafflement reveals her as a stranger, an outsider, in a land where she does not belong. *X*, the only English letter that Stepmother has written, also indicates enigma. Canada, along with its language and culture, remains a permanent enigma to Stepmother, who, carrying an unaccepted culture, is trapped in severe dislocation. The only thing she can do to comfort herself is to condemn white people as *bak kwei* in her own language, to define the incomprehensible as uncivilized and barbarian, although these labels have already been attached to her.

For early Chinese immigrants, the name “white ghost” not only indicated foreignness, but also evilness. Dehumanization did not merely result from unfamiliarity, but also from threat and violence. Through the mouth of the Canadian-born boy Jung, Choy describes this type of ghosts:

I believed in ghosts, like everyone else in Chinatown, and I knew that sometimes enemies, like hobo runaways from the tent city on False Creek, like Japanese from Japtown and Indians from dark alleyways—like ghosts—could lurk in the woodshed. Fights, muggings, knifings, these were not uncommon. There was treachery in the world. But there were good ghosts



and bad ghosts, and you had to be careful not to insult the good ones nor be tempted by the bad ones. And you had to know a ghost when you saw one.

(*Jade* 75)

From this quotation, we see that this type of ghost is not restricted to white people, but all “enemies”—all non-Chinese who appear threatening to Chinese. They belong to the category of “bad ghosts,” signifying “treachery” and danger. In Chinese tradition, all ghosts considered to be strangers or outsiders are believed to be potentially dangerous, “lying next to an irritation channel or lurking in a dense bamboo grove,” just like the ghosts in Jung’s description (Wolf 171). These ghosts, as the results of breakdowns in moral order, are by no means a spectacle for Chinese immigrants to entertain themselves, but a spiteful threat from which the Chinese cautiously keep a distance. The demonic appearance of ghosts not only comes from a foreign culture, but also, more significantly, from the racial violence that the host society exerted over early Chinese immigrants.

For the Chinese in early diaspora, racism was a daily reality. The land of North America was at once a land of plenty and a land of prohibition, where immigrants of color endured racial violence. As the line between the ethnic subject and the dominant/demonic Other was drawn, so was their antagonistic relationship set within the diasporic space (Li 47). Racism is blatant in the laws that Kingston records in the central chapter of her second book, *China Men*, where she directly lists in chronological order the official laws of discrimination pertaining to early Chinese immigrants. The citing of the laws, without comment, in the middle of Kingston’s account of the quiet heroism of

several generations of Chinese men whose back-breaking labor helped build America, “speaks eloquently for the injustice and the wrong done these men” (Ling 161). Moreover, the insertion of the laws between narrations indicates the ever-present nature of racism reality, ruthless and authoritative, that forcibly permeates into every corner and every minute of Chinese immigrants’ lives. Under Choy’s pen, institutional racism transforms into naked violence: “Years and years ago [...] there had been white mobs in San Francisco that left, some said, three China men, limbs and necks broken, hanging dead from lampposts” (*Jade* 215).

Years later, in Choy’s memoir, he records the violence that happened to his friend Garson when he was a boy. One night in the alley, white people attacked Garson and almost killed him. Mother tells Choy that a white demon attacked him, “a *bak kwei* in the disguise of a grown man” (264). In this case, *bak kwei* becomes the symbol of violence. “There are demons everywhere,” little Choy remembers. At the time when Chinese were regarded as aliens, racial violence was everywhere.

Therefore, we may see that mutual demonization is not established on the same basis. Sau-ling Cynthia Wong writes about this difference when she discusses *The Woman Warrior*:

It is true that in *The Woman Warrior*, the first-generation Chinese Americans are shown as doing their share of splitting and projecting: they refer to non-Chinese as “ghosts” and attribute to them all manner of immoral ideas and outlandish practices. To that extent minority and majority can be said to

share a “universal” defense mechanism. Yet there is a crucial difference between this process—a side effect of relocation to new surroundings—and the one that leads to the formation of the racial shadow. (91)

This unbalanced “defense mechanism” can also be observed in Choy’s works. Due to relocation, Chinese immigrants who arrive at others’ homes become the minority, the subaltern, the Other. Their debasement of the non-Chinese, from the colonial to the postcolonial eras, is a “defense” in its real sense. It is a passive protection from racial violence, and a necessary response to unfamiliar challenges and, more importantly, to the threat of decenterization.

The designation of the non-Chinese as “ghost” reflects Chinese diasporic subjects’ loss of the cultural, social, and political center that resulted from dislocation. Kingston’s two books *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men* both recall that her laundryman father used to mark their family’s laundry with the ideograph “中,” meaning “middle” or “center” in English (*Woman* 137, *China* 15), because the Chinese named their country as “中国,” literally meaning the “middle nation,” or the “central nation.” Even their children sing “I Am a Person of the Middle Nation” in the American streets (*Woman* 136). The designation of their country as the Middle Nation reveals the ethnocentric complex of the ancient Chinese. “We are, in fact, a superior people,” Third Uncle tells Kiam, the first child, in *All That Matters*. However, once they entered “the country of white demons,” they became “undesirables”—“Chinks” (53). Chinese people lost their central position in the land of the Others. As Chen Lok Chua points out, “Chinese who come to America

have misplaced their center and become ‘eccentric,’ ‘Chinese-Americans,’ marginals, hyphenated between the nostalgia and apprehensions of the homeland and the tug of assimilation” (64). Chinatown becomes a self-contained space in which Chinese immigrants try to reconstruct their center. Nonetheless, even though it is usually geographically located at the center of a city, its inhabitants are actually living at the rim of the metropolitan world.

### **Racial Haunting in Kingston and Choy**

Racial haunting does not have a single nature in the texts of Kingston and Choy. In the following section, I will explore the complicated relationships among first-generation Chinese immigrants, second-generation Chinese immigrants, and their adopted country by analyzing the foreign and oppressive ghosts appearing in cultural confrontation.

First-generation Chinese immigrants and Westerners are ghosts to each other. Brave Orchid views non-Chinese as ghosts, but she eventually must acknowledge the fact that to those people, she is the Other, the ghost. Because she has to live in the space where she is the minority, she has lost her discourse and become the outsider who belongs nowhere. As for her older sister, Moon Orchid, the situation is even worse.

Moon Orchid, representing traditional Chinese women who are victims of Chinese patriarchy, is of the “lovely useless type” (Kingston 128). She stayed in China for thirty years, waiting for her husband to come home, while he lives the “American Dream” by becoming a neurosurgeon in California and covertly marrying a Westernized Chinese.

Moon Orchid, instigated by her sister Brave Orchid, tries to assert her right as his wife. Unfortunately, both of them are frustrated during the confrontation at Moon Orchid's husband's clinic. Moon Orchid then lapses into lunacy and eventually dies.

Moon Orchid and her husband respectively represent Eastern and Western cultures. After thirty years of separation, they become strangers and ghosts in each other's eyes. As Kingston comments, "they had indeed entered the land of ghosts, and they had become ghosts" (153). The Westernized husband has become one of the *bak kwei*, foreign and threatening. He who "was smart enough to learn ghost ways" "looked like one of the ghosts passing the car windows" (Kingston 149, 153). Even his new wife is "like the ghosts" since she "wore pink lipstick and blue eyelids" (148). However, in their eyes, Moon Orchid is a ghost from China; she has entered a land with no place for her and become a misplaced ghost. The reason first-generation immigrants like Moon Orchid lost themselves is because they crossed geographical boundaries as well as "boundaries not delineated in space"—such as cultural boundaries (Winsbro 164). Spirited to an alien country populated by ghosts and barbarians, they are confronted with a completely different culture they cannot control. Moon Orchid's paranoia, as Winsbro writes, arises from her inability to communicate with those around her (165). Speaking a language that is indecipherable for Moon Orchid, the non-Chinese are believed to be wicked ghosts plotting to kill her; the "Mexican ghosts" frighten her into chronic agoraphobia. She has lost her sense of safety in a place that she does not comprehend. Only in the mental asylum does she find some peace of mind since she no longer feels like an alien there:

“We are all women here [...] and you know [...] we understand one another here. We speak the same language, the very same. They understand me, and I understand them” (Kingston 160). Moon Orchid finally finds her home in the community of women where they all “speak the same language”—the language of inferiority and submission.

Although the first generation cannot find a place in the land of resettlement, they have a place reserved in the land of origin—they belong back home, even if they have lost it. For their children, though, the situation is much more complicated. They are confronted by not only the threatening and oppressive ghost of white society, but also by a similar type of ghost from their cultural heritage. In other words, they are simultaneously excluded by their birthplace and exiled by their family.

Like their parents, they receive no better treatment from their birth country. Born as the “Resident Alien,” they are still regarded as outsiders even if they are educated in North America; they are the “educated alien,” the “‘educated fool’ in the words of some old China men” (Choy, *Jade* 139). They suffer no less racial discrimination than their parents do: Kingston is openly discriminated against by her employers (Kingston 48-49); little Choy and other Chinese Canadians are humiliated by the tittering brought on by their immigrant accents (*Jade* 177). As a result, Kingston is suffocated by a world of *bak kwei* (Kingston 97-98), and Choy believes that “demons are everywhere” (*Paper* 264).

Unfortunately, for second-generation Chinese immigrants in North America, the adopted country is not the only place with vicious ghosts. Stories of torture and execution in China, letters that make Kingston’s father scream in his sleep, and uncultured actions

and beliefs terrify little Kingston and Choy, and make China the unwanted place “where the ghosts took shapes nothing like our own” (Kingston 99). It is further demonlike under a dominant national culture that not only exoticizes and Orientalizes the Chinese but also dehumanizes them. Most of the time, Kingston and Choy are confused about the bidirectional derogation between their parents and Western culture. Winsbro writes about the bafflement of Kingston:

Looking at the world through “Chinese” eyes, as her parents do, Maxine knows that the American racists and tyrants are barbaric and inhuman; but when looking at the same world through “American” eyes, she cannot help seeing the Chinese as equally barbaric and inhuman. (166)

It is difficult for second-generation immigrants like Kingston to see the real face of either land, to which they have a simultaneous psychological and affective estrangement to a certain degree. Therefore, they confront the foreign ghosts from both cultural and racial oppression.

From another perspective, members of the second generation are foreign ghosts not only to Western society but also to their own people. Julia Kristeva writes, “The foreigner is the other of the family, the clan, the tribe. At first he blends with the enemy [...] he was born on another land, foreign to the kingdom or the empire” (95). From this point, the second generation, born on the new land, cannot help assimilating into the main society and becoming foreigners to their kin. They are not Chinese in the eyes of the Chinese, and not American or Canadian in Westerners’ eyes. They are outsiders to both spaces—

China and North America.

In the texts of Kingston and Choy, the second generation and the previous generations are foreign ghosts to one another. Huntley notes, “Ghosts represent the gulf between Maxine and her mother, the ambiguities in their relationship. They are ghosts to one another, strangers in some fundamental way, each finding the other disturbingly incomprehensible” (96). The cultural barrier represents the gulf between the generations—the traditional Chinese beliefs seem strange to the young, while any defiant behavior that does not conform to traditional Chinese rules looks inhuman to the old.

At various times, the older generations view their descendents as ghosts because they have assimilated into the western culture and are estranged from their original culture. Kingston recalls that her parents withhold family secrets from the children because they “had been born among ghosts,” “were taught by ghosts,” and were themselves “ghost-like” (Kingston 183). They are products of the ghost country, deprived of their Chinese personality, and thus in the eyes of the first generation, also deprived of their humanity. In Choy’s books, they are called “mo-no,” meaning “no-brain,” which indicates “someone raised in Gold Mountain who was thoughtless and mindless of the Old China traditions,” someone who “was Chinese and not-Chinese at the same time, someone doomed to be brainless” (*Paper* 78). Mo-no suggests a kind of ghostlike being, or at least half-ghost since Choy is “Chinese and not-Chinese at the same time” and is born like that.

The members of the second generation are categorized as a kind of ghost, yet



sometimes, whether conscious of it or not, they have the fantasy of turning into ghosts themselves, or are even willing to become the *bak kwei* that once were malevolent to them. “I began to wish I did not look like a Chinese boy,” little Choy fantasizes about his identity when “all the boys in Chinatown wanted to be cowboys,” the Westernized hero (*Paper* 80-81). For Kingston, she also dreams of losing her Chinese identity. She imagines herself as “white” with “red hair,” and longs to be “American-feminine” instead of “Chinese-feminine,” because “normal Chinese women’s voices are strong and bossy” and “chingchong ugly to American ears” (Kingston 171-172). More directly, she imagines herself to be the bloody ghost that haunts humans:

I had vampire nightmares; every night the fangs grew longer, and my angel wings turned pointed and black. I haunted humans down in the long woods and shadowed them with my blackness. Tears dropped from my eyes, but blood dripped from my fangs, blood of the people I was supposed to love.  
(190)

These nightmares reflect Kingston’s internal conflict and agony about her changing identity. She realizes that she has become one of the barbaric ghosts who are not merely strangers to her people, but also exert violence against “the people she was supposed to love.” Alternatively, it is likely that, unconsciously, she is not entirely reluctant to be a ghost; she may transform herself into a monstrous vampire with the purpose of confronting the inhuman Chinese patriarchy and expressing the depth of her anger and resentment. She has to toughen herself up in order to break loose from the cultural fetters

and from repeating former victims' fates. So she imagines herself crossing the racial boundary that differentiates human from nonhuman. This crossing is agonizing, not because she becomes ghostly, but because she stands by the antagonistic side of her race.

This transformation of the second generation is not accidental. Chinatown is not watertight; the ubiquitous Western culture filters through the cultural boundary with models and icons that promote Western masculinity and femininity appealing to young Chinese Americans and Chinese Canadians. The *bak kwei* that haunt the young challenge them to pattern their lives after theirs. Thus, despite their fear of the oppressive ghosts, they also are fascinated by them, and have the urge to imitate their mode of existence. By transcending the racial barrier to live a "normal" North American life, second generation Chinese see China as more foreign and ghostlike, either because of the crazy stories told by former generations, or because of the distorted description of the mainstream mass media. They thus become more estranged from their land of origin.

On the other side, *bak kwei* become less inhuman upon familiarization. This change is well demonstrated in Choy's experience with kindergarten. In his memoir, Choy writes about his very first impression of kindergarten:

I peered through a partially opened doorway, on the other side of the hallway, into a large room: children—*dead children*—were sitting in two semicircles, awkwardly clapping hands to the rhythm of an unseen piano...A white-haired ghost lady came out of the office to greet us...and a tall, dark-haired ghost lady suddenly emerged from the big room. Some of the dead children

turned their heads to see what was going on...The tall Mrs. Montgomery had a broad white face, the face of a *bak kwei*. (109)

The Chinese Mission Kindergarten in little Choy's eyes is haunted and horrifying. He even believes that he becomes dead once he is there. Actually, the school would not seem so ghostly if little Choy had not been influenced by Uncle Gee, who told him that there are "lots of ghosts," "ghosts with wings" in it (108). Another factor that adds to the haunting atmosphere is unfamiliarity. For a child going to kindergarten for the first time, everything is foreign, different from home. However, when Choy begins to participate, the ghosts transform. After playing with the other "dead children" and listening to stories from the "ghost lady," the specters disappear, and Choy writes, "I was having so much fun that, by lunchtime, when Mother came back to get me, I forgot that I had been dead" (114).

Choy's experience with kindergarten parallels the second generation's experience with Western society. Before virtually experiencing it, the image of Western society is pre-stereotyped to be ghostly by the older generations. In other words, the older generations pass down a haunted heritage to their descendents, and this heritage, like a trap, confines the younger generations' cognition. However, they eventually will perceive the outer world on their own; they will confront the dark side of white society like their parents told them they would, but will also learn about the culture that, to some extent, is also nourishing. In the process of their gradual incorporation within mainstream society, their perception of both China and North America are bound to shift, each of which can

be more or less ghostly or human to the extent that it is strange or familiar. Not only that, but their own images are constantly changing to both sides.

Thus, we may see that racial haunting is not static but relational and changeable. It represents the horizontal interaction between the Chinese community and Western society, and also a vertical conflict between generations resulted from this interaction. *Bak kwei* is merely a variation of the racial ghosts, and any group or country that features cultural foreignness or exerts violence on another group has the tendency of turning into this kind of ghost. Furthermore, these relations are not fixed. Under certain transformations, cultural foreignness may be present within the same community; to some degree, cultural haunting and racial haunting may share resemblances. In conclusion, diaspora is an ongoing process, and in this process, the diasporic identity, human or ghost, is under constant negotiation and construction.

## Chapter Three

### The Haunting of Homelessness

Call my name and tell me how to get home.

—Maxine Hong Kingston

In *The Woman Warrior*, Maxine Hong Kingston tells a story of exorcism about her mother, Brave Orchid, when she was in medical school in China. After Brave Orchid had fought the ghosts and wandered in the world of death, her classmates chanted her name along with directions to guide her spirit back “home” to To Keung School. “Come home, come home, Brave Orchid, who has fought the ghosts and won. Return to To Keung School, Kwangtung City, Kwangtung Province [...] Your brother and sisters call you. Your friends call you. Return to us” (71). When Brave Orchid got scared as a child, her mother would hold her and chant her descent line, “reeling the frightened spirit back from the farthest deserts” (75).

Name, home, and descent line are integral in reintegrating one’s self into his or her community. For some diasporic subjects whose name, home, and descent line have become ambiguous, there is the danger of turning into ghostlike beings, who can never come back, have no position in the world, and are forever wandering.

This type of ghost is distinctive from the ghosts in cultural haunting and racial haunting which come from homeland and hostland—they are inside diasporic subjects. Cultural and racial haunting that represent a paradoxical relationship with two lands provoke this internal haunting. In the texts of Maxine Hong Kingston and Wayson Choy,

this type of ghost serves as a metaphor for the identity crisis experienced by Chinese immigrants caused by dislocation in North American diaspora. They no longer denote meanings of insubstantiality or inhumanity, but of homelessness.

Ghosts have no human identity or community. When Adam McKeown examines the ghosts in South China, he writes, “Ghosts were the spirits of individuals whose names and positions had been forgotten, entities who had no relationship with a living human.” He also points out:

Untended souls not properly incorporated into a family line would become ghosts. Ghosts wandered around the world of men, anguished, hungry, and restless, causing trouble and worry to the living. Dying with no sons who could continue the family line, dying in a foreign country, dying by suicide, drowning, or violence were common ways in which men could end up as ghosts. (127)

Arthur P. Wolf writes similarly:

They [ghosts] include the neglected dead—those who have no descendants because they died childless or as children, and those who died away from home and were forgotten—and also those hateful souls who receive no sacrifices because they remain at the scene of death seeking revenge—murder victims, suicides, and the unjustly executed. (170)

Both McKeown and Wolf distinguish ghosts from ancestors who usually appear in cultural haunting—the ancestor is “usually a kinsman,” while the ghost is “always a

stranger” (Wolf 146). In the texts of Kingston and Choy, the ghost is a stranger to both Asian family and Western society, unable to belong to either side entirely.

Laurence J.C. Ma notes that “questions of personal or group identity are essentially questions of identity with one or more places” (11). The relation to places has essential significance in the understanding of human identity. In this chapter, I will explore Chinese diasporic subjects’ identity crises, which is represented as home crises in Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* and Choy’s *Paper Shadows*, *The Jade Peony*, and *All That Matters*. I will first investigate the predicament Chinese diasporic people encountered with regards to the descent line. Then I will examine the potential split identity that Chinese immigrants might experience in the ambivalent diasporic space of Chinatown. Finally, I will discuss Kingston’s and Choy’s “solutions” to the crisis and reveal a possible process from dislocation to relocation.

### **The Lost Descent Line**

“Untended souls not properly incorporated into a family line would become ghosts” (McKeown 127). A descent line guides lost souls home. Brave Orchid’s mother chanted her descent line to prevent her from turning into a frightened homeless ghost. Then Brave Orchid tells her daughter, Kingston, to give her father’s name to any villager if she wants to find their old house in China (76). Being included in the descent line implies comfort, safety, peace of mind, and more importantly, the assurance of being a human. As

Kingston narrates, “I felt safe hearing my name sung with hers [mother’s] and my father’s, my brothers’ and sisters’” (76).

However, for the Chinese immigrants in North America, both the first and the second generations confront the crisis of losing a descent line and turning into wandering ghosts. Having lost a tangible connection to the homeland, the first generation has nothing with which to replace it. They must live, or even worse, die in a foreign geography. After death, they become the “lost China people” waiting for their bones to be shipped back home (Choy, *Paper* 31); for those whose bones cannot reach this ultimate destination, they become miserable ghosts forever wandering and “crying out for his Old China ancestors” (Choy, *All* 163). According to McKeown and Wolf, dying away from home belongs to the improper death that ends with the person becoming a ghost. Thus, for first-generation immigrants who die in a foreign country as foreigners, they become the restless forgotten spirits who find no descent line or home.

Compared with the very early Chinese railway workers in North America, first-generation Chinese immigrants in the families of Kingston, Choy, and Chen have more luck. Early Chinese workers died in multitudes due to accidents, cold winters, illness, and malnutrition. Then they “would be left by the railway and covered up with piles of rocks and earth. No coroner’s inquest was held, as these deaths were never reported” (Lai 32). There are no Chinese faces in celebration photographs and no recorded names on the builders’ lists; the only remains are the bones under the railway. The Chinese who made great contributions to America and Canada were excluded from each nation’s history.



The tragedy does not only lie in large numbers of death, but also in their anonymity. For the anonymous, like those Chinese railway workers, death means disappearance and nothingness. The loss of names throws the dead into oblivion and cuts their ties to the human world.

However, some Chinese diasporic people lost their names even while alive. During the period of the Chinese Exclusion Act, which lasted over sixty years in the United States (1882-1943) and twenty-four years in Canada (1923-1947), Chinese immigration was largely banned. As a result, many Chinese arrived in North America with the “*gai-gee meng*”, the “false-paper names” (Choy, *Paper* 14). Kingston observes, “The Chinese I know hide their names; sojourners take new names when their lives change and guard their real names with silence” (5). As Choy writes in his memoir *Paper Shadows*, his grandfather, grandfather’s second wife, father, and uncle came to Gold Mountain together with “‘bought names’ on false papers” (289). Choy’s mother came to Canada later as a “paper bride.” Choy writes:

She used the birth document of a married woman born in Canada. This woman had died on a visit to China, but her death was never officially noted. Such deaths were rarely reported, as the papers of Gold Mountain residents were invaluable “passports” to be bought or resold. Her birth certificate and travel papers gave Mother the chance to assume the dead woman’s name and to book a “return passage” to Canada. (297)

Traditional Chinese believe that names, especially family names that indicate descent line, are potent and significant. Family names represent the root of families, bond people together to a community, and provide them with a sense of belonging. They embody both individual and communal identity. Choy writes, “In a hostile country like Canada, anyone having the same last name was enough: *we Chinese together*” (*All* 112).

The voluntary desertion of one’s own name and adopting another’s name confused the descent line. Some immigrants changed back to their real names after the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Acts, while some continued to use the adopted names even for their offspring born in North America. The latter have completely lost their original descent line in the process of diaspora. To a certain extent, these false-paper immigrants were living others’ lives, while their true private lives remained hidden. More miserably, to live under a dead man’s name can be regarded as continuing the dead man’s life as a ghost. These immigrants were leading fake lives in “paper-years,” a fake temporality (Choy, *Jade* 49). In *The Jade Peony*, Choy writes, “The *lao wah-kiu*—the old-timers who came overseas from Old China—hid their actual life histories within those fortress walls. Only paper histories remained, histories blended with talk-story” (50). The insubstantiality of the diasporic life indicates ghostliness, losing one’s real name and descent line.

The title of Choy’s memoir *Paper Shadows* implies this intangibility and uncertainty. Paper shadows, as a fake projection and duplication, symbolize the paper identity of the early Chinese immigrants in Canada and foreshadows their elusive lives. Home becomes ambivalent between the unspeakable secrets and false documents, the darkness and

brightness in the shadow. Paper, in Chinese culture, is also associated with death, ghost, and funeral. The living send paper money, paper clothes, paper houses, and other paper things to the dead by burning them. Therefore, a paper life is to a certain extent a ghostly life, artificial and shadowy.

As the descendents of false-paper immigrants, the second-generation diasporic people born far from their land of origin were even farther away from their roots. The previous generations adopted other Chinese names for immigration, while they took English names to survive in the host country. They strayed farther from their descent line by taking foreigners' names—the ghosts' names. The gradual assimilation into the Western society exiled them from their own people. As I note in chapter two, the second generation had the tendency to become strangers to their own families. Hence, it is more complicated for them to locate a place in the family descent line that is already ambiguous.

This crisis in relation to home and identity can be generalized as the “adopted” relationship with both personal family and public society. The adoption happens on three levels in the selected texts of Kingston and Choy. First, Choy is an adopted child in his family in the real sense. Second, Kingston, representing other Chinese females, takes an “adopted” position in a traditional patriarchal family. Third, both the homeland and hostland can consider second-generation immigrants as “adopted children.”

At the age of fifty-six, Choy received a mysterious phone call from a woman who claimed that he was adopted. Uncannily, in his first novel, *The Jade Peony*, Choy creates a character that has experiences similar to his own. Choy writes in his memoir:

I felt trapped between fact and fiction. This real-life drama beginning to unfold, this eerie echo of the life of one of my fictional characters, struck me as the ultimate irony. Suddenly, nothing of my family, of home, seemed solid and specific. Nothing in my past seemed to be what it had always been.  
(280)

“Where should I begin?” he asks (5). As an adopted child, Choy has lost his origin. Without a solid beginning, the past begins to shift and life becomes capricious. The home and family that he took for granted suddenly collapse into shapes and shadows. His biological father takes on a ghostlike appearance: “I suddenly imagined my biological father sing-shouting, moving like a mythic warrior, his eyes outlined in thick black, his face painted in slashes of blood red and ghost white” (281). Choy’s life also takes on ghostlike features because he is the son of a “ghost” father.

The real-life tragedy of adoption makes Choy lose his descent line, while Kingston’s tragedy is to be born as a girl. A girl in traditional China was farther from the descent line than an adopted boy. Traditional Chinese descent line is “patrilineal, a line of fathers and sons;” “a woman, at marriage, is assumed to be removed from her own descent line and assimilated into her husband’s descent line” (Jordan, screen 10). Regarding girls’ relationships with their families, Arthur P. Wolf similarly writes, “From birth on, girls are

meant to belong to other people. They are supposed to die in other people's houses" (149). Choy describes two distinct responses to the birth of a boy and a girl in his novels. "The birth of a boy-baby in Old China would be announced from bedside immediately to a village crowd at the doorway. The father would be praised, the ancestor's names called out one by one" (*Jade* 99). On the contrary, a girl-baby "would never have been given a name [...] and without a name, she did not exist" (*All* 49). According to traditional Chinese values, because a boy can take the family name of his ancestors, it indicates the continuation of the descent line. While a girl, who will eventually accept her husband's name, is born without a name, without a position in the family descent line. In Old China's eyes, the girl child born in North America is not only *mo-no*, or "brainless," but also *mo yung*, or "useless" (*Jade* 32).

Haunted by the Chinese patriarchal tradition, Kingston, like many other Chinese girls, has the feeling of being an adopted child. She feels estranged from her family: "indeed I was getting stranger every day" (190). She feels like an outsider, or a stranger who they would drive away eventually:

I thought every house had to have its crazy woman or crazy girl, every village its idiot. Who would be It at our house? Probably me [...] I was messy, my hair tangled and dusty. My dirty hands broke things. Also I had had the mysterious illness. And there were adventurous people inside my head to whom I talked. With them I was frivolous and violent, orphaned. I was white and had red hair, and I rode a white horse. (189)

Kingston imagines herself to be the abnormal and dehumanized “It” in her family. This reflects the fact that girls are often referred to as useless and repugnant beings, such as “maggots in the rice” (191). Compared with Jung-Sum, the adopted boy in *The Jade Peony* who finally believes that he belongs to the family, Kingston, the biological child of Brave Orchid, feels “orphaned” and homeless at home. In her illusion, she is “white” and has “red hair,” like the white ghosts, a foreigner to her kin.

In the diasporic context, the Chinese second-generation immigrants in North America can be regarded as the “adopted children” of both their homeland and hostland. As I note in the previous chapter, members of the second generation are, to a certain extent, the foreign ghosts excluded from both sides. To their original family—China—the second generation consists of children born in the ghost country, educated by the ghosts, and they themselves are ghostlike, foreign and unfathomable. Because of the problematic cultural transmission, they have become the adopted children of Chinese tradition, with “no brain” to succeed the cultural heritage. At the same time, the second generation is unable to become integral members of the society into which they were born. No matter how involved they are in white society, they cannot escape “being marked as different by virtue of their skin color, their family background, and other ethnic and unassimilated traits” (Radhakrishnan 122). Therefore, to the adopted country, the immigrants have to be the adopted children with strange family names, belonging to the periphery, the Other.

In the texts of Kingston and Choy, there is another act, besides adoption, that destroys the descent line and it is adultery. As I mention in the first chapter, both

Kingston and Choy recount stories of adultery in their memoirs. Kingston's "no name" aunt and the mother of Choy's father committed adultery when their husbands were abroad. Both of them had miserable ends: Kingston's aunt drowned herself and her illegitimate baby in the family's well, while Choy's grandmother was forced to escape to a distant village and was separated from her son.

However, the real tragedy does not lie in the above miseries. As Kingston comments on her aunt, "The real punishment was not the raid swiftly inflicted by the villagers, but the family's deliberately forgetting her" (16). This is shown when Brave Orchid warns Kingston: "Don't tell anyone you had an aunt. Your father does not want to hear her name. She has never been born" (15). Kingston's aunt was driven out of the family line and forever banished. She was deliberately thrown into oblivion and erased from the family memory. As a result, she becomes the "no name woman," which indicates the absolute negation of identity and denial of existence.

Bonnie C. Winsbro notes that "to break that connection (to family, home, and village), to remove one's name, to destroy one's descent line, then, is to relegate a spirit whether that of the living or the dead, to endless wandering" (157). Seen in this light, the "no name woman" has become a wandering ghost, just as the villagers refer to her when they are raiding her house: "Ghost! Dead ghost!" (14) This ghost belongs to the category defined by McKeown and Wolf introduced at the beginning of this chapter. It is the type of ghost that has lost ties with human beings, that finds no place to rest, and is "always hungry, always needing" (16). It has no name, no identity, no descent line, and no home.

Moreover, the children of the adulterous mothers suffer the same tragedy. Kingston writes about the newborn of her aunt:

How would this tiny child without family find her grave when there would be no marker for her anywhere, neither in the earth or the family hall? No one would give her a family hall name. She had taken the child with her into the wastes. At its birth the two of them had felt the same raw pain of separation, a wound that only the family pressing tight could close. A child with no descent line would not soften her life but only trail after her, ghostlike, begging her to give it purpose. (15)

Children from adulterous affairs are born with no descent line. They are the little ghosts of their ghostly mother, doomed to the point of annihilation. Even the identities of previously legitimate children are jeopardized. Choy's father, the legitimate first son still not counted as one of the sons by his father, also confronts the crisis of being excluded from the descent line.

It is not accidental that Kingston finds a resemblance to her aunt in herself. "I see her life branching into mine," Kingston writes (8). Both of them are transgressors. They have "crossed boundaries not delineated in space" (8). As a Chinese woman in diaspora, Kingston has not merely transgressed the boundary of gender, but also race and culture.

In this regard, we observe a resemblance between adultery and diasporic experiences, in particular, assimilation whereby the immigrants "have an affair" with the prevailing culture. In other words, the diasporic subjects, especially the second generation, have the



tendency to “commit adultery” on a cultural level. According to traditional values, both adultery and assimilation are conscious betrayals of the family. Voluntarily deviating from the descent line, both actions defy conventions and undermine the law of the family, the law of “roundness”:

The round moon cakes and round doorways, the round tables of graduated sizes that fit one roundness inside another, round windows and rice bowls—these talismans had lost their power to warn this family of the law: a family must be whole, faithfully keeping the descent line by having sons to feed the old and the dead, who in turn look after the family. (13)

The roundness symbolizes the mechanical and inhuman law of traditional family, so perfect and enchanted that it requires conformity of all family members, especially women. However, Kingston and her aunt break this harmonious roundness by violating cultural norms. Extravagance threatens the contained and rigorous system.

“Adultery is extravagance,” Kingston notes (6). Sau-ling Cynthia Wong defines “extravagance” in relation to “necessity,” another term appearing in *The Woman Warrior*. Wong writes, “The terms *Necessity* and *Extravagance* signify two contrasting modes of existence and operation, one contained, survival-driven and conservation-minded, the other attracted to freedom, excess, emotional expressiveness, and autotelism” (13). In this light, necessity and extravagance, respectively, represent a conventional public life and a transgressive private life. The reason the villagers punished Kingston’s aunt was just “for acting as if she could have a private life, secret and apart from them” (13). “Women in the

old China did not choose” (6). They lived an arranged life with necessity as its ultimate aim. Extravagance signifies individual freedom and the transcendence of a predetermined life. Living extravagantly, Kingston not only chooses a new way to be a woman but also to be Chinese.

The story of the “no name woman” represents the price of extravagance. Due to the similarities between Kingston and her aunt, the crisis of becoming a wandering ghost passes down to the young descendent. As a bold transgressor, Kingston has a severe fear that she may duplicate her aunt’s fate and be exiled and forgotten by her own people.

Both adoption and adultery can serve as diasporic metaphors for Chinese immigrants’ experiences in North America, especially for the second generation. Adoption is a passive bereavement of one’s kin, while adultery is the active deviation from the family. Both actions, representing interactions between diasporic subjects and two nations, signify the severance from the family line. The lost descent line renders the identity of Chinese diasporic subjects problematic. Besides this, the diasporic identity also suffers from the dilemma of being stuck in fierce cultural conflicts.

### **The Split Identity**

Chinatown was the physical home of most early Chinese immigrants in North America. It provided an illusion of home for displaced people separated from their homeland and not yet completely belonging to a hostland. In *The Jade Peony*, Grandmama said, “We in Chinatown. Things different here” (191). Situated at the

cultural and political intersections of geopolitical entities, and simultaneously connected and disconnected to the old land and the new world, Chinatown serves as a third space, a hyphenated space, a limbo of negotiated language, bicultural ambivalence, and between-worlds existence.

Living in the problematic diasporic space, which is a “homeless” home, Chinese immigrants have lost a solid position. They are visited by double hauntings: cultural haunting from the home country and racial haunting from the host country. As Kingston and Choy demonstrate painfully in their memoirs, both the country of origin and the country of residence could become mere “ghostly” locations, and the result can possibly be a double alienation. The anguish in both books is relational; it is not exclusively about China, the United States, or Canada. For the second generation, the home country is not real in its own terms and yet it is real enough to feel the ache of losing it; the present home is materially real and yet not real enough to strike root and feel secure and stable (Radhakrishnan 123). They can neither retrieve the old land nor claim the new one; they have been “bereft of their Chinese identity” yet never emotionally vested in a Western self (Huntley 106).

Chinese diasporic subjects are border dwellers stuck in limbo and trapped within the cracks of in-betweenness. However, different generations of immigrants experience different home crises. For first-generation immigrants who believe that home “was always a village or city in Old China,” the place where they were raised and where they

forever belonged, dramatic ruptures from their native places render them homeless (Choy, *Paper* 31).

The first generation has homes that they can never return to, while those of the second generation, such as Kingston and Choy, have difficulties identifying a home. For them, home, “just as the assimilated and/or unassimilated self, becomes a highly ambiguous reality; it is both/and while it is neither/nor” (Kain 10). They were born into and raised in Chinatown, the contested space of ambivalence and uncertainty. For them, home is “‘NoWhere’—that is, ‘now here’ and ‘no where,’ everywhere and always elsewhere” (Friedman 197). Big Brother Kiam-Kim in *All That Matters* wonders, “Where would I go, with barely any memory of the old country? And where would my two brothers and sister go? Or Jeff and Jenny, who had also been born here? What world did any of us belong to? What world would we fight for?” (Choy, *All* 281) Kingston also asks her mother, “Does it make sense to you that if we’re no longer attached to one piece of land, we belong to the planet?” (107) Since they belong to “nowhere,” they belong to “wherever they happen to be standing,” or “everywhere.”

Besides queries about home and position, questions about identity are frequently puzzling to second-generation immigrants. “Who am I?” is a question constantly posed in the texts of Kingston and Choy. As Chinese-Americans or Chinese-Canadians, they grow up hyphenated, between the old China and the new North America, between two sets of national narratives and cultural myths. They are simultaneously attracted to and repelled by both sides, experiencing cultural synthesis and fragmentation.

As a Chinese immigrant growing up within the Western educational system, Amy Ling recounts her contradictory experience, “It’s extremely difficult and totally confusing to feel American and to look like the enemy, to think myself at home and be asked where I come from, to be a professor of literature and complimented on my good English” (28). This enigma Ling experienced is not unique to the Chinese community and not unique to immigrants who grow up in a hostland. Cultural critic Stuart Hall cogently exposes this pan-ethnic diasporic ambiguity:

I knew England from the inside. But I’m not and never will be “English.” I know both places intimately, but I am not wholly of either place. And that’s exactly the diasporic experience, far away enough to experience the sense of exile and loss, close enough to understand the enigma of an always-postponed “arrival.” (490)

Similarly, being stuck in two cultures, Kingston and Choy are on the verge of becoming ghostlike beings confused about identity and place of belonging. This confusion can be perfectly illustrated in the linguistic shock experienced when they both encounter the English personal pronoun “I” and the Chinese counterpart “我.” In Choy’s Chinese class, he is extremely frustrated by the Chinese word for “I”:

“I”, a killer ideogram, drawn with seven breathtaking strokes. One *upward-dash*; two long, opposite-facing *curves-with-hooks*; and three *criss-crosses*—or was that two *dashes* and three *criss-crosses*? I could never

comprehend the exact number or the exact order for putting them down. It was humiliating. (221)

While on the other side, Kingston has trouble with comprehension in her English class:

I could not understand “I.” The Chinese “I” has seven strokes, intricacies. How could the American “I,” assuredly wearing a hat like the Chinese, have only three strokes, the middle so straight? Was it out of politeness that this writer left off strokes the way a Chinese has to write her own name small and crooked? No, it was not politeness; “I” is a capital and “you” is a lower-case. I stared at that middle line and waited so long for its black center to resolve into tight strokes and dots that I forgot to pronounce it. (166-67)

The two personal pronouns not only represent two distinct cultures but also two modes of existence. Both Kingston and Choy are lost in translation not only on the level of language but of identity; they are lost in the sharp contrast of complexity and simplicity, humbleness and confidence. Confronted with the antithetical interplay, they are baffled to find a proper way to address themselves, or to define a diasporic “subject” properly.

There is another pronoun for Chinese female in Old China noted by Kingston:

“There is a Chinese word for the female *I*—which is ‘slave’” (47). “奴,” translated as “slave” in English, “breaks the women with their own tongues” and represents the fetters that traditional Chinese patriarchy executed on women (47). David Leiwei Li compares “奴” with “I” and writes, “The assertive English ‘I’ has an alien effect on the female bearers of the language, who are barred from such an assured stance that the pronoun

suggests” (504). “奴,” implying inferiority and obedience, moves farther from “I” than “我” does. For Chinese diasporic women such as Kingston, they experience great bewilderment in the distance between these two pronouns, and the transition from “奴” to “I” is bound to be difficult and painful.

The two antithetical cultural systems fracture the personas of Chinese immigrants in North America of both first and second generations. The plight of being pulled between two cultures leads to a split identity. Laurence J.C. Ma offers us excellent insight into this phenomenon:

For one who is culturally sensitive or politically, ideologically or otherwise strongly attached to a home place, his physical and mental whereabouts are rarely spatially fixed. He is frequently psychologically pulled apart by feelings of in-betweenness. He is rarely a complete person as his body and soul may be split, belonging simultaneously to two different places. As such, he is physically and emotionally sometimes here and sometimes there. (11-12)

The following extracts from two Chinese diaspora poems illustrate the split identity and split vision experienced respectively by two generations.

I can hear in your voice  
you were born in one country  
and will die in another,  
and where you live is where you'll be buried,

and when you dream it's where you were born. (Lee 58)

Sometimes I dream in Chinese.

I dream my father's dreams.

I wake, grown up

And someone else. (Chang 20)

Both poems describe separate physical and mental lives experienced by Chinese diasporic people. Dream as a world of fantasy offers a space for the Chinese part of the identity, while the waking time is when the American or Canadian half takes place in diasporic reality. Chinese diasporic life is thus alternately composed of dream and reality, of the ethnic private life and the Western public life. Stuck in the plight of a double life, immigrants must find a way to reconcile the invisible Chinese world with that of a solid North American one.

Having a split identity, Chinese diasporic subjects not only confront the crisis of losing the geographical center, but also the personal center. Pulled by complex opposing forces, Chinese immigrants cannot always locate their identities in dislocation. The first generation, represented by Brave Orchid, cannot find a solid position in the adopted country as they did in their home of origin. They have to come to terms with profound disillusionment and struggle for selfhood in a chaotic and hostile environment. Having been an educated medical doctor in China, Brave Orchid is unable to find a job in America other than menial labor. As Huntley observes, "Having emigrated to the Gold



Mountain, she [Brave Orchid] has to come face to face with the reality concealed beneath the glitter of the legends, and she realizes that she has no defined place in the land of her dreams” (104). If, unfortunately, they do not have the “toughness for the country,” they may lose the center of their selves and become ghosts, like Moon Orchid, whose spirit “scattered all over the world” (Kingston 157).

Moon Orchid, a representation of the Chinese female “I”—“奴”—has lost her home and identity, being displaced from the center of culture and gender. Her insanity indicates her spiritual decenterization. Winsbro writes, “A person goes crazy and may eventually die when his or her spirit wanders or is driven away from the body, gets lost, and cannot find its way back home” (156-57). Stuck in the limbo of Chinatown, Moon Orchid has lost her ties to the spiritual asylum and belongs nowhere.

Chinese women such as Moon Orchid need to first expel the slavish part of their Chinese-female identity. In *The Woman Warrior*, Kingston tries to reconcile her split identity by torturing a silent Chinese girl into speech. The girl can be regarded as Kingston’s alter ego, another representation of “奴.” Joanne S. Frye notes, “Her verbal and physical abuse of the girl is clearly an effort to expunge those parts of her Chinese-female identity which she abhors and to mark out her own possibilities for strength in resisting that identity” (295). This abuse demonstrates an attempted identity transformation from “奴” to “I,” and a transition from ambivalence to assertion.

The identity of the women in diaspora is split on different levels. Besides the oppression from old and new patriarchy, they also experience, like other diasporic

subjects, separation “both from the family and from the world at large by cultural differences and misunderstandings” (Winsbro 166). The later oppression that brings spatial uncertainty and hyphenated identity is crucial in decenterizing diasporic subjects, especially the second generation. Both Kingston and Choy are unable to understand who they are in relation to, “the family” or “the world at large” (166). Thus, Kingston doubts that she might be the crazy one in her family (189); Choy becomes “*mo-no*”—“no-brain”—Chinese and not-Chinese at the same time (*Paper* 78). Both of them are attempting to search for clarity and a synthesizing center out of contradiction and confusion. The questing self might pose questions such as, “How do I sift out all this contradictory and confusing stuff to the kernel that is my center? Is there such a neat, hard kernel or am I all this amorphous and contradictory stuff?” (Ling 122).

### **From Dislocation to Relocation**

The memoirs of Kingston and Choy mark an endeavor to search for a solid center, a complete identity, and a proper name. They are attempting to find a way to bridge the gulf between antithetical cultures and separate halves of identity. The ghosts in their memoirs not only represent the oppression of both ancestry and upbringing, but also signify the diasporic identity crisis, the crisis of losing self in relation to home. In order to liberate themselves from a ghostly existence, they have to overcome the ghosts haunting them. In this aspect, the two memoirs also record a process of tackling ghosts with various features.

However, Kingston and Choy do not exorcise the ghosts, but transform them. Both Kathleen Brogan and Bonnie C. Winsbro notice this point in their study of *The Woman Warrior*. Brogan writes, “Frightening ghosts, however, can sometimes be put to rest, not in the sense of being forever banished, but in the sense of being transformed into memories that usefully guide, rather than overwhelm, the present” (19). Winsbro also notes that Kingston’s intent “is not to destroy those ghosts but to control their power *over* her, thereby gaining power *from* them” (155). Similarly, Choy does not annihilate the ghosts, but lives with them and makes use of them. During their growth, Kingston and Choy experience a process from passive possession to active domination, and finally achieve a harmonious coexistence with the ghosts.

The transformation of the ghosts is crucial in this process. By “ghosts,” both Brogan and Winsbro refer to the ghosts from the cultural haunting, yet for the solid white ghosts, the course of conquering is quite different. For those ghosts that indicate foreignness in racial haunting, familiarization is an effective way to humanize them. The transformation of this type of ghost is determined by the degrees of assimilation, which, for the second generation, is a natural and inevitable process. Observed from Choy’s kindergarten experience that I analyzed in chapter two, this transformation happens without awareness. The more second-generation immigrants identify with the white ghosts, the more human these ghosts become.

For the ghosts in cultural haunting that I mainly talk about in this chapter, the second generation lacks direct contact. Thus, the transformation is a more complicated and

conscious act. Kingston and Choy expel the ghostliness of these insubstantial ghosts by giving them substance. They respectively impart new meanings to the ghosts and give them a positive role in the ongoing diasporic life. The elusive and blurry nature of the ghosts gives the writers the imaginative room needed for reconstruction. Therefore, the heirs as well as the creators retell the stories, either from myth or real life, in a new American or Canadian way, critically negotiating the ambivalent realities in a new context.

Kingston and Choy, under different circumstances, make different revisions to the ghosts. Kingston strengthens the ghosts with power, and Choy refines the ghosts with love. Kingston infuses the spirit of individualism and rebellion into the life of her “no name” aunt, imagining a bold and romantic woman who courageously chose her happiness and defied convention. At the end of Choy’s memoir, in the story of Garson’s childhood experience, the ghost becomes a symbol of love and friendship, a source of comfort and power that draws one from despair and even from death. In *The Jade Peony*, after Grandmother’s death, Sek-lung, the third brother, begins to look to the ghost of his ancient guardian for help: “I only needed to *see* her, in spirit, to know everything would go well next time” (155). Choy transforms the ghosts into a repertory of love, security, and protection that guides the living.

The two writers give power to the ghosts with the purpose of gaining power from them. Kingston obtains the courage of transcending barriers from her aunt, gains female strength and bravery from *Fa Mu Lan*, the woman warrior, and learns the ability of

cultural translation from *Ts'ai Yen*, the ancient poetess who was captured by barbarians and lived with them away from home. In Choy's case, he acquires the force of love, patience, and forgiveness from the cultural and familial ghosts that cures his fear of being an adopted child and gives him a sense of belonging.

The transformation of both the cultural and racial ghosts is achieved along with second-generation immigrants' relocation. Being stuck in Chinatown, the second generation is tangled in the haunting of two cultures. The movement of leaving Chinatown and entering white society enables them to keep a distance from the tradition and to become familiar with the prevailing culture. However, leaving does not mean deserting. The distance merely provides them with an unusual position to observe their tradition independently from a different perspective and to revise the cultural ghosts. Only by leaving Chinatown, the ambivalent homeless home of contradiction and confusion, does Kingston find a ghost-free place. She tells her mother:

When I'm away from here, I don't get sick [...] I don't stand at the windows and watch for movements and see them in the dark [...] I don't hear ghost sounds [...] I've found some places in this country that are ghost-free. And I think I belong there. (108)

The physical separation from Chinatown makes everything solid and normal. Relocation drives away illness, craziness, and ghostliness. While Kingston feels comfortable outside of her family, Choy writes about a boy who is happy and willing to be an "adopted child" of Western society. "I sometimes wished that my skin would turn white, my hair go

brown, my eyes widen and turn blue, and Mr. and Mrs. O'Connor next door would adopt me and I would be Jack O'Connor's little brother" (*Jade* 134). This unavoidable assimilation accords with the fact that Old Chinatown, as a cultural limbo, is a place destined to disappear. This disappearance is characterized by the inevitable aging of the first generation and the second generation's hands waving farewell.

However, Chinatown has never left the second generation, even if they have left Chinatown. Second-generation immigrants extended their Chinatown to the outer world, and that is why Kingston often dreams of "a bigger Chinatown" than the one where she used to live (109). The second generation's relationship with Chinatown thus parallels their parents' relationships with China. After the physical rupture, Old Chinatown will haunt them just as Old China haunted their parents, even if Chinatown, the same as China, has become "a world that would never be the same again" (Choy, *Paper* 274).

Along with geographical relocation, Kingston and Choy also relocate the trajectory of their diasporic identity. By reconstructing the lives of the ghosts, they also construct an identity for themselves, which is not completely located in China or the West, but is articulated across national boundaries. Being Chinese American and Chinese Canadian, respectively, Kingston and Choy find a new way to assert their Chineseness.

The cultural identity of Kingston and Choy is not single and static. Situated in the complex and variable diaspora, their identity is not "an essentialist, but a strategic and positional one" (Hall 3). It is, as Stuart Hall observes, "never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and

positions,” and is “constantly in the process of change and transformation” (4). Similarly, as Ien Ang remarks, “Chineseness is not a category with a fixed content—be it racial, cultural, or geographical—but operates as an open and indeterminate signifier whose meanings are constantly renegotiated and rearticulated in different sections of the Chinese diaspora” (225).

“There were other ways to be Chinese,” Choy writes (*Paper* 242). “Even as a mo-no, someone who would one day lose almost all his first language and live for more than two-thirds his life away from Vancouver’s Chinatown, I always would be, and still am, as Grandfather said, tong-yung—Chinese” (*Paper* 137). In the process of assimilation, Kingston and Choy gradually lose the traits of essential Chineseness, estranging themselves from the community and the culture. However, although their “Chinese-school bag stayed shut,” “life held unlimited possibilities” (Choy, *Paper* 239). Breaking the norms of the “authentic” Chinese way of living, they have learned to be Chinese in their own way, living a reconstructed Chineseness.

Relocation opens up a new space where Kingston and Choy are able to transform the ghosts and construct an identity, balancing the tension of and shuttling between East and West, past and present, human and ghost. Under their new identity, these seemingly contradictory groups of terms are no longer in absolute opposition but constantly in interplay. Kingston and Choy finally find a home that is not free of ghosts, but a ground where they can have positive dialogues with these nonhuman species.

## Conclusion

Ghosts are common visitors to contemporary Chinese diaspora literature in North America. Besides their functions as sensation stimulant and psychological projections, these supernatural beings that proliferate in contemporary ethnic writings primarily serve as social constructs to represent complex social relations. Via the motif of ghosts, personal dilemma is woven inextricably into the crises of a larger community. In this thesis, I investigate the “communal nature” (Brogan 5) of the ghosts that appear in representative works of two North American writers of Chinese origin, Maxine Hong Kingston and Wayson Choy. By questing for the origin of the ghosts and tracking their transformation, I explore the relationship between the phenomenon of haunting and the formation of ethnic identity.

Following the imagery of ghosts to the historical site of Chinese diaspora, I comparatively read Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* and Choy’s *Paper Shadows*, *The Jade Peony*, and *All That Matters* as diasporic texts that portray Chinese American and Chinese Canadian existence. I argue that ghosts, as part of daily immigrant life, serve as various diasporic metaphors. These ghosts designate the ambiguities, complexities, and contradictions provoked by dislocation; in particular, they represent early North American Chinese immigrants’ survival crisis concerning home and identity. These ghosts are not merely the representations of a traumatic history or memory, but emblems of the ongoing predicament in diaspora experiences. In other words, they are situated not in the past, but in the present. Moreover, the ghosts do not originate from certain



superstitious national cultures but are fashioned in cultural displacement as cross-cultural creations, constantly articulating the interactions between an intangible homeland and a tangible hostland.

In this thesis, I study the relationship between a haunted home and the haunting of homelessness. The haunted home is the setting of both Kingston's and Choy's works: Old Chinatown, the survival space of early Chinese immigrants in North America.

Maintaining a paradoxical relationship with both the land of origin and the land of resettlement, Old Chinatown becomes a "homeless" home, simultaneously connected and disconnected to homeland, inside and outside of hostland. This ambivalent nature draws on ghostly beings from two spaces. In consequence, the residents of this problematic space are haunted by the feeling of homelessness and faced with an existential crisis.

I explore three kinds of ghosts that appear in this diasporic space: insubstantial ghosts from cultural haunting, foreign ghosts from racial haunting, and wandering ghosts inside diasporic identity. These three kinds of ghosts represent, respectively, Chinese diasporic subjects' relationship with the land of origin, entanglement with the land of resettlement, and the identity crisis provoked between the two spaces. These different hauntings are not isolated, but intersect with each other. The external haunting, both cultural and racial, induces the internal ghosts. Furthermore, the features of these ghosts are not exclusive, but overlapping. The cultural ghosts may take on a foreign and demonic appearance to the unfamiliar eye; the racial ghosts can be indefinite on account of foreignness; the wandering ghosts that Chinese diasporic subjects are likely to turn

into can be both elusive ghosts that have no solid identity and outsiders who are unable to be completely involved in either culture. The characteristics of a certain type of ghost are not fixed. One type of ghost may transform into another under certain circumstances, as suggested in Choy's assertion that "[u]ntil the last moment, you could never know for sure whether you were dealing with a demon or a spirit" (*Jade* 21).

Most significantly, both Kingston and Choy consciously transform the ghosts. In order to solve the diasporic identity crisis, they do not exorcise ghosts who entice them to fall into ghostly beings, but develop the productive nature of ghosts and gain strength from the revised beings. Therefore, the ghosts, like diasporic identity, are undergoing constant redefinition. Along with the process of redefinition, the memoirs of Kingston and Choy reveal a psychological journey, from passive possession to active domination, from complexity to simplicity, from fragmentation to synthesis.

This journey is essentially based on the transition from dislocation to relocation. Haunting is caused by dislocation, the dilemma of being stuck in two cultures. In dislocation, Chinese diasporic subjects are not merely haunted by Chinese and white ghosts engendered in vertical cultural transmission and horizontal racial interaction, but they themselves are also on the verge of turning into homeless ghosts that wander away from the descent line. In order to avoid a ghostly existence, Kingston and Choy choose to leave Chinatown and enter into white society. This border crossing not only signifies the relocation of geography but, more importantly, the relocation of the trajectory of diasporic identity.

Diasporic identity is never a simple issue. It is not situated in any static culture, but is established through the process of cultural and racial haunting, through the negotiations of the ancestral heritage and the present national culture. Kingston and Choy attempt to construct a North American Chinese identity that transcends conventional barriers of language, race, and culture. They do not live up to the norm of the “authentic” Chinese way of living, but assert Chineseness in a new way. This unique ethnic identity is realized in reconciliation and coexistence with the ghosts, which open a space to balance the will of cultural ghosts and the claim of racial ghosts, and to bridge the visible and the invisible, the past and the present, one culture and another. Moreover, this construction of Chinese diasporic identity is never complete and is always contested from the process of cultural estrangement, persistence, and assimilation.

The selected texts by Kingston and Choy provide diverse versions of diaspora narratives by Chinatown-born or Chinatown-raised children of different age, gender, nationality, sexuality, and family background. Choy’s first novel *The Jade Peony* consists of three narratives by three siblings of the Chen family: Only Sister, Second Brother, and Third Brother; the sequel *All That Matters* is the narrative by the first brother who only appears in the narratives of his siblings in the previous book. Along with the memoirs of Kingston and Choy, these individualized multiple voices, at once independent from and interrelated with each other, construct a multi-layered Chinatown and ethnic identity.

This comparative reading of these narratives first of all reveals the communal characteristics of the diasporic experience of North American Chinese immigrants by

examining the striking similarities among them. Each child is confronted to various degrees with a double haunting, and each of them face the danger of transforming into nameless and homeless ghosts. In the meantime, each narrative demonstrates a process of cognition and growth through struggling in the world of ghosts. However, the North American Chinese diaspora is by no means a homogeneous entity. The juxtaposition of these narratives especially highlights the heterogeneity of Chinese communities in North America. Although each of these narratives has all of the three types of ghosts in common, the degree of haunting and detailed characteristics vary according to Chinese diasporic subjects' "various degrees of identification with and relation to a 'homeland'" and "different extents of assimilation to and distinction from 'majority culture'" in North America (Lowe 66).

In this thesis, I expose the heterogeneous nature of North American Chinese diaspora with an emphasis on comparing the haunting experiences of immigrants of different generations and genders. I study the survival crisis of the first and second generations, who, having "different starting points and different givens," suffer, respectively, the rupture from home and the syndrome of spatial uncertainty (Radhakrishnan 123). Besides generational discrepancy, gender also produces differences in diasporic experiences. For Chinese women in diaspora, who are doubly dehumanized by cultural dislocation and the claims of old and new patriarchies, the ghosts may take on a more wicked and oppressive look.

Chinese diaspora literature often features a bizarre combination of realism and

fantasy. The fantasy is derived from the reality of North American Chinese diaspora, from the dilemma of the ethnic groups in dispersion. These coming-of-age memoirs and novels describe a process from dislocation to relocation, crossing and re-crossing social and cultural borders. The conscious transformation of the ghosts signifies creative cultural translation, which may elevate Chinese Americans and Chinese Canadians to a position where they can comfortably and confidently straddle two cultures. The works of Kingston and Choy turn the silence of ethnic minorities into articulateness and move Chinese Americans and Chinese Canadians from periphery to center, acquiring visibility in the public domain. Most importantly, when confronted with the diasporic identity crisis, Kingston and Choy both ensure themselves the life of a human being, rather than the nonlife of a ghost.

### Works Cited

- Agnew, Vijay. Introduction. *Diaspora, memory, and identity: a search for home*. Ed. Vijay Agnew. Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 2005. 3-19.
- Ang, Ien. *On not speaking Chinese: living between Asia and the West*. London; New York : Routledge, 2001.
- Barthes, Roland. *Camera lucida: reflections on photography*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York : Hill and Wang, 1981.
- Bertman, Stephen. *Cultural amnesia: America's future and the crisis of memory*. Westport, Conn. : Praeger, 2000.
- Bhabha, Homi K., ed. *Nation and Narration*. London ; New York : Routledge, 1990.
- Brogan, Kathleen. *Cultural Haunting: Ghosts and Ethnicity in Recent American Literature*. Charlottesville : University Press of Virginia, 1998.
- Chan, Jeffery Paul. "Jeff Chan, Chairman of SF State Asian American Studies, Attacks Review," *The San Francisco Journal*, 4 May 1977.
- Chang, Diana. "Second Nature." *Breaking Silence: An Anthology of Contemporary Asian American Poets*. Ed. Joseph Bruchac. Greenfield Center, NY: The Greenfield Review Press, 1983.
- Cheung, King-Kok. *Articulate Silences: Hisaye Yamamoto, Maxine Hong Kingston, Joy Kogawa*. Ithaca : Cornell University Press, 1993.
- . " 'Don't Tell': Imposed Silences in The Color Purple and The Woman Warrior."

*PMLA* 103 (1988): 162-74.

Choy, Wayson. *All that Matters : a Novel*. Toronto : Doubleday Canada, 2004.

---. "Interweaving Stories: Wayson Choy." *Tricks with a glass : writing ethnicity in*

*Canada*. Eds. Ro  cio G. Davis & Rosal  a Baena. Amsterdam : Rodopi, 2000.

---. Interview with Don Montgomery. *Asian Canadian*. 2002. 20 Jul. 2008.

<[http://www.asiancanadian.net/waysonchoy\\_interview.html](http://www.asiancanadian.net/waysonchoy_interview.html)>

---. *Paper Shadows : a Chinatown Childhood*. Toronto : Viking, 1999.

---. *The Jade Peony : a Novel*. Vancouver, B.C. : Douglas & McIntyre, 1995.

Chua, Lok Chen. "Two Chinese Versions of the American Dream: The Golden Mountain

in Lin Yutang and Maxine Hong Kingston." *MELUS*. 8.4 *The Ethnic American*

*Dream*. (1981): 61-70.

Clifford, James. "Diasporas." *Cultural Anthropology*. 9.3 (1994): 302-338.

Davis, Roc  o G. "Wayson Choy's *The Jade Peony* as Novella Cycle." *Transcultural*

*reinventions : Asian American and Asian Canadian short-story cycles*. Toronto :

TSAR Publications, 2001. 198-215.

Friedman, Susan Stanford. "Bodies on the Move: A Poetics of Home and Diaspora."

*Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*. Vol. 23, No. 2. (Fall 2004): 189-212.

Frye, Joanne S. "The Woman Warrior: Claiming Narrative Power, Recreating Selfhood."

*Faith of a (woman) writer*. Eds. Alice Kessler-Harris and William McBrien.

*Contributions in women's studies*, no. 86. New York : Greenwood Press, 1988.

Gordon, Avery. *Ghostly matters : haunting and the sociological imagination*.

Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Disapora." *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial*

*Theory: A Reader*. Ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993.

---. "Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity'?" *Questions of Cultural Identity*. Eds. Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay. London : Sage, 1996. 1-17.

Huntley, E.D., *Maxine Hong Kingston : a critical companion*. Westport, CT : Greenwood Press, 2001.

Jordan, David K. "The Traditional Chinese Family and Lineage." 28 May 2008. 3 Jul. 2008. <<http://weber.ucsd.edu/~dkjordan/chin/hbfamilism-u.html#descent>>.

Juhasz, Suzanne. "Narrative Technique and Female Identity." *Contemporary American Women Writers: Narrative Strategies*. Eds. Catherine Rainwater and William J. Scheick. Lexington, KY : University Press of Kentucky, 1985. 173-91.

Kain, Geoffrey. Introduction. *Ideas of home : literature of Asian migration*. Ed. Geoffrey Kain. East Lansing : Michigan State University Press, 1997. 1-17.

Kingston, Maxine Hong. *China Men*. New York : Knopf, 1980.

---. "Cultural Mis-readings by American Reviewers." *Asian and western writers in dialogue : new cultural identities*. Ed. Guy Amirthanayagam. London : Macmillan Press, 1982. 55-66.

---. *The Woman Warrior : Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*. New York : Knopf : distributed by Random House, 1976.



- Kristeva, Julia. *Strangers to ourselves*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York : Columbia University Press, 1991.
- Laguerre, Michel S. *The global ethnopolis : Chinatown, Japantown and Manilatown in American society*. Basingstoke : Macmillan, 2000.
- Lai, Chuen-yan David. *Chinatowns: Towns Within Cities in Canada*. Vancouver : University of British Columbia Press, 1988.
- Lee, Christopher. "Engaging Chineseness in Wayson Choy's *The Jade Peony*." *Canadian Literature* 163 (1999): 18-33.
- Lee, Li-Young. *Book of My Nights*. Rochester, NY: BOA Editions, 2001.
- Lei, Daphne P. *Operatic China : staging Chinese identity across the Pacific*. New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
- Li, David Leiwei. "The Naming of a Chinese American 'I': Cross-Cultural Sign/ifications in The Woman Warrior." *Criticism*. XXX. 4 (1988): 497-515.
- Li, Peter S. *The Chinese in Canada*. Toronto : Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Lim, Huai-Yang. " 'There's Nothing More to Know': Silences, Secrets, and Ghosts in Wayson Choy's *Paper Shadows: A Chinatown Childhood*." *Auto/Biography Studies* 19. 1-2 (2004): 249-57.
- Ling, Amy. *Between worlds : women writers of Chinese ancestry*. New York ; Toronto : Pergamon Press, 1990.
- . "Whose America Is It?" *Weber Studies* 12. 1 (1995): 27-35.
- Lowe, Lisa. *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics*. Durham : Duke

- University Press, 1996.
- Lum, Wing Tek. "Translations." *Expounding the Doubtful Points*. Honolulu: Bamboo Ridge Press. 1987. 71-72.
- Ma, Laurence J.C. "Space, Place, and Transnationalism in the Chinese Diaspora." *The Chinese diaspora : space, place, mobility, and identity*. Laurence J.C. Ma and Carolyn Cartier, eds. Lanham, Md. ; Oxford : Rowman & Littlefield, 2003. 1-51.
- Matsuoka, Atsuko, John Sorenson. "Ghosts and Shadows: Memory and Resilience among the Eritrean Diaspora." *Diaspora, memory, and identity : a search for home*. Ed. Vijay Agnew. Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 2005. 151-171.
- Mckeown, Adam. *Chinese migrant networks and cultural change : Peru, Chicago, Hawaii, 1900-1936*. Chicago : The University of Chicago Press, 2001.
- Morrison, Toni. "The Site of Memory." *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Culture*. Ed. Russell Ferguson. New York, N.Y. : New Museum of Contemporary Art ; Cambridge, Mass. : MIT Press, 1990. 299-305.
- Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire". *Representations*. No. 26. Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory. (1989): 7-24.
- Pandurang, Mala. "Conceptualizing Emigrant Indian Female Subjectivity: Possible Entry Points." *South Asian Women in the Diaspora*. Eds. Nirmal Puwar and Parvati Raghuram. Oxford and New York: Berg, 2003. 87-95.
- Punter, David. "Spectral Criticism." *Introducing Criticism at the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Ed. Julian

- Wolfreys. Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press, 2002. 259-79.
- Radhakrishnan, R. "Ethnicity in an Age of Diaspora." *Theorizing Diaspora*. Eds. Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur. Malden, MA : Blackwell Pub., 2003. 119-32.
- Relph, E. C. *Place and placelessness*. London : Pion, 1976.
- Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands : Essays and Criticism, 1981-1991*. London : Granta Books in association with Viking, 1991.
- Sarup, Madan. "Home and Identity." *Traveller's Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement*. Eds. George Robertson, Melinda Mash, Lisa Tickner, Jon Bird, Barry Curtis, and Tim Putnam. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Sato, Gayle K. Fujita "Ghosts as Chinese-American Constructs in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*." *Haunting the house of fiction: feminist perspectives on ghost stories by American women*. Eds. Lynette Carpenter and Wendy K. Kolmar. Knoxville : University of Tennessee Press, 1991. 193-215.
- Saxton, Alexander. *The indispensable enemy: labor and the anti-Chinese movement in California*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1971.
- Seyhan, Azade. *Writing outside the nation*. Princeton, N.J. ; Oxford : Princeton University Press, 2001.
- Skeldon, Ronald. "The Chinese Diaspora or the Migration of Chinese Peoples?" *The Chinese diaspora : space, place, mobility, and identity*. Laurence J.C. Ma and Carolyn Cartier, eds. Lanham, Md. ; Oxford : Rowman & Littlefield, 2003. 51-69.
- Takaki, Ronald T. *Strangers from a different shore : a history of Asian Americans*.

Boston ; Toronto : Little, Brown, 1989.

Tong, Benjamin R. "Critic of Admirer Sees Dumb Racist," *The San Francisco Journal*, May 11, 1977.

Ty, Eleanor. "'Each Story Brief and Sad and Marvellous': Multiple Voices in Wayson Choy's *The Jade Peony*." *The politics of the visible in Asian North American narratives*. Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 2004. 116-37.

Vycinas, Vincent. *Earth and gods; an introduction to the philosophy of Martin Heidegger*. The Hague, M. Nijhoff, 1961.

Werry, Margaret. "'The Greatest Show on Earth': Political Spectacle, Spectacular Politics, and the American Pacific." *Theatre Journal*. 57.3 (2005): 355-382.

Winsbro, Bonnie C. "Warring with Ghosts: Power through Individuation in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*." *Supernatural forces : belief, difference, and power in contemporary works by ethnic women*. Amherst : University of Massachusetts Press, 1993. 178-81.

Wolf, Arthur P. "Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors," *Studies in Chinese society*. Ed. Arthur P. Wolf. Stanford, Calif. : Stanford University Press, 1978. 131-83.

Wong, Sau-Ling Cynthia. "Ethnic Subject, Ethnic Sign, and the Difficulty of Rehabilitative Representation: Chinatown in Some Works of Chinese American Fiction." *The Yearbook of English Studies*. 24. Ethnicity and Representation in American Literature. (1994): 251-262.

---. *Reading Asian American literature : from necessity to extravagance*. Princeton, N.J. :

Princeton University Press, 1993.

Wu, Ching-chao. *Chinatowns: A Study of Symbiosis and Assimilation*. Ph. D. diss.,  
University of Chicago. 1928.

Yung, Judy. *Chinese Women of America: A Pictorial History*. Seattle: U Washington P,  
1986.

Zhang, Benzi. "Of Nonlimited Locality/Identity: Chinese Diaspora Poetry in America."  
*Journal of American Studies*. 40 (2006): 133-53.