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China Men by Maxine Hong Kingston: An Evocation of Chinese Males' Identity (Re)construction

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ABSTRACT: *This article focuses on Maxine Hong Kingston's semi-autobiographical novel China Men, a poignant portrayal of the experiences of Chinese immigrants in the United States. Its aim is twofold. The first is to show that social problems such as colonialism, racial discrimination and prejudice based on ethnicity and ethnicity and gender are sources of identity crisis. Drawing on postcolonial criticism, particularly the concepts of cultural hybridity and third space, this study examines how the Chinese in the novel negotiate or (re)construct their identity in a complex cultural and social context. This theory is employed to achieve the second objective, which is to reveal that the characters' negotiation of their hybrid masculinity and their resistance to oppression contributes to their emancipation, while reconnecting with their cultural roots cultural roots helps them to reconcile this hybrid identity and develop a stronger sense of self.*

KEYWORDS: Identity Crisis, Hybridity, Masculinity, Postcolonial, Racial Discrimination, (Re)construction

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Introduction

Identity construction and reconstruction have been topics of great interest within the fields of sociology, anthropology, and literary studies. In recent years, many scholars have paid particular attention to the ways in which identity is shaped by historical, cultural and social factors, particularly within multicultural contexts like the one of the United States of America. This article seeks to contribute to this ongoing discussion by exploring the (re)construction of identity among the Chinese minority group via a postcolonial lens, using Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men* as a primary text for analysis. The novel is a semi-autobiographical work that explores the identity and experiences of Chinese men in America. Published in 1980, the book is a follow-up to Kingston's critically acclaimed debut, *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* (1976), which also explored the experiences of Chinese immigrants in America. However, while *The Woman Warrior* focused primarily on the experiences of Chinese women, *China Men* shifts its focus to the experiences of Chinese men, offering a rich and complex exploration of their identities, histories, and struggles.

Indeed, throughout the book, Kingston portrays the struggles and triumphs of Chinese men as they navigate the challenges of immigration, assimilation, and discrimination. She explores the experiences of men who came to America as laborers, sailors, and entrepreneurs, and who faced a range of challenges, from language barriers to xenophobia and racism. She also delves deeply into the ways in which their identities are shaped by the legacies of colonialism and imperialism, as well as the ongoing struggles for social justice and equality.

Entitled "*China Men* by Maxine Hong Kingston: An Evocation of Chinese Males' Identity (Re)construction," the present study intends to provide a comprehensive analysis of Chinese men's identity (re)construction as depicted in the novel. So, the key question is what are the challenges faced by Chinese men in constructing or reconstructing their identity in a multicultural context where they have been marginalized, discriminated against and emasculated ? This question will be approached through examining, on the one hand, the ways in which the experiences of Chinese male characters, in *China Men*, reflect larger issues of power dynamics and marginalization within a multicultural context and how do they negotiate their identity in relation to the dominant culture and its expectations, on the other hand.

1. Chinese Men's Identity and the Issue of Power Dynamics in *China Men*

The subsequent point explores the intricate relationship between Chinese men's identity and power dynamics within the context of immigration. Delving into the pre-immigration Chinese identity, it investigates the foundations upon which Chinese men build their sense of self before migration. Furthermore, it examines how power dynamics, both within China and upon immigration to America, shape and influence the identity of Chinese males. By dissecting these themes, this exploration aims to shed light on the nuanced complexities of Chinese masculinity in varying social contexts.

1.1. Pre-immigration Chinese Men's Identity

The term "identity" is a multifaceted and a complex concept that encompasses various aspects of an individual's sense of self, including his or her personal characteristics, family dynamics, historical factors, and social and political contexts (Beverly Daniel Tatum, 2000, 9). The complex nature of this concept makes it difficult to grasp a complete and precise image from one society to another. This is the case with Chinese society as discussed in *China Men* (Kingston, 1980). Chinese identity, along with China's five thousand years of civilization marked by a succession of dynasties, has constantly evolved to acquire the characteristics that define it today. Joseph Wu, in *Basic characteristics of Chinese Culture,* asserts that "Chinese culture is so substantive in content, so comprehensive in varieties, and has had so long a history that, to its outsiders, it is very similar to the elephant before the blind men in the ancient story" (Joseph Wu, 2).

In the novel, prior to their immigration to the United States of America, the identity of Chinese men was shaped and governed by cultural norms and values such as collectivism and patriarchal norms. These two majors cultural values derived from Confucianism, a behavioral and moral doctrine promoting moral and ethical behavior, fostering social harmony, and cultivating personal and societal virtues (Xinzhong Yao, 2000, 21-22).

As far as collectivism is concerned, it is manifested in the novel through family and community bond. Here, the group of belonging is the main source of the individual's identity. It has the priority over the individual's needs or desires. In so doing, decisions and actions are frequently influenced by the desire to uphold family honor and tradition rather than individual desires. Collectivism appears to be of a great help in time of great adversity to all the community members. This the case in the chapter entitled "The Making of More Americans," where the villagers in the Canton region collectively resist and fight against bandits who threaten their safety and livelihood. Their band together to protect their homes and families, demonstrating solidarity and collective action in the face of external threats. This highlights the interconnectedness and interdependence within Chinese families and communities, but also Chinese two major identity traits long before their arrival to the Unites States of America.

As for patriarchal norms, they are pervasive in the piece of work by Maxine Hong Kingston. Shaped by the teachings of Confucianism, the Chinese society depicted in the novel presents itself as an unequal society, particularly in terms of gender roles. Here, the place of men is predominant compared to that of women. In short, in this society, masculinity determines Chinese identity. Indeed, the birth of a male child is more valued than that of a female one.

At the birth of a boy, the entire village community is happy. This is the case for Kingston's father : "Your little brother is different from any of you. Your generation has no boy like this one" (1980, 16). However, when a girl is born, the community is less enthusiastic : "One family [the grandfather] often visited had had a baby due at the same time as our family [...] Theirs was the loveliest dainty of a baby girl. She lay ignored in a yam basket [...] "Poor girl," he said. "Poor, poor girl" (1980, 18). This masculinity manifests in various forms in *China Men* (1980) such as the warrior, the spiritual, the intellectual, the laborer, and mostly the polygamous: "Many men on my mother's side of the family, even today, even the young men in countries where polygamy has been outlawed, have two wives, two houses, two families. The men in the past had three wives. The first wife, of course, was the important one; the others were "for love" (1980, 86). These different aspects of Chinese identity were constructed in relation to women who were considered inferior.

All in all, before they left their home country, Chinese immigrants identity was, for the most part, made up of major traits and values like connectedness, interdependence on one hand. On the other hand, in the relation to others, particularly women, their identity was made up of traits like manhood. In this society, men occupied, socially speaking, the highest rank. This dynamic will change at their arrival in the United States of America.

1.2. Power dynamics and its Influence on Chinese Males' Identity after Immigration

Michel Foucault, a French philosopher and social theorist, had a complex and multifaceted understanding of power. He approached power not merely as a repressive force wielded by authorities but as a productive and pervasive force that shapes social relations, knowledge, and subjectivity. He saw power as a productive force that operates through networks of relations rather than being possessed by individuals or institutions. In his seminal work *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault describes power as diffused throughout society, operating in various institutional and disciplinary mechanisms: "Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (1979, 93).

After hearing numerous accounts from first immigrants to the United States of America, many Chinese individuals made the decision to leave their homeland in pursuit of a better quality of life for their families. This mass exodus was catalyzed by the discovery of gold in "The Gold Mountain," the nickname bestowed upon the host country by the newly arrived immigrants. In *China Men* (1980), the author narrator reveals that pushed factor at the origin of that massive emigration : "America- a peaceful country, a free country. America. The Gold Mountain. The Beautiful Nation [...] The hungrier the family got, the bigger the stories, the more real the

meat and the gold. And they "did not need to sleep in order to have dreams". It was these Gold Mountain dreams that drew the father to America" (1980, 42-43).

However, shortly after their arrival, the dream would transform into a nightmare for these newcomers. Indeed, they found themselves confronted not only to cultural shock, but also to relational shock, as they faced rejection and exclusion based on racism and cultural stereotypes.

The cultural shock is vividly portrayed in the novel. The very first contact would make Americans appear weird to Chinese in terms of physical appearance: "…their nostrils, which are oval instead of small, neat, and round" (64) like Chinese, in terms of hairstyle: "they had strange haircuts" (98), and in terms of eating manners : "The first day out, the people on the boat, we ate with chopsticks. And then the white people came. We ate with forks. We did not know how" (64). Furthermore, the English language and the customs are disturbing to the newcomers : "Everything was so different here. I spoke the language but couldn't understand the people. The houses were strange, the customs were strange" (1980, 156).

In addition to the disorientation caused by cultural differences, the newcomers also grapple with relational shock, which unveils the underlying power dynamics in the narrative. This shock manifests via instances of rejection, discrimination, and exploitation faced by the Chinese immigrants in their interactions with American society. As far as rejection is concerned, it illustrates the Chinese immigrants' struggle to assimilate into the American society while facing, on daily basis, the constant menace of the law enforcement agents: "He entered town in an unfamiliar place with the sun setting and no wagon in sight. A police demon stopped him, but English phrases had flown out of his mind. The police demon was about to arrest him, runaway chinamen a menace now" (1980, 111). This passage reflects the profound sense of alienation and rejection experienced by the immigrants and highlights the power dynamic where they are marginalized and excluded from mainstream American culture.

As for discrimination, it vividly demonstrates the unequal treatment of Chinese immigrants by the American society. Kingston portrays the pervasive discrimination faced by Chinese immigrants and their families. The discriminatory policies are clearly illustrated, with the Chinese Exclusion Act, enacted by the Congress on May 6th, prominently featured in the novel with the chapter entitles *The Laws* (1980, 152-159). This legislation, which prohibited the immigration of Chinese laborers to the United States and barred Chinese immigrants from becoming naturalized citizens, serves as a poignant reminder of the systemic racism and prejudice endured by the Chinese community during this period: "[The Act] banned the entrance of Chinese laborers, both skilled and unskilled, for ten years. Anyone unqualified for citizenship could not come in … (1980, 154). The enactment also reveals the power dynamic where Chinese immigrants are deprived of the same rights or opportunities as their American counterparts because of their yellow skin.

Finally, the exploitation experienced by Chinese immigrants highlights the imbalance of power and privilege. This exploitation and power imbalance are evident in their roles as workers in sugarcane plantations: "Chinese were the first sugarmakers in Hawai'I" (1980, 91), and their involvement in the construction of the *Transcontinental Railroad*, the highway meant to connect the Eastern and Western parts of the country: "the Central Pacific hired [them] on sight; Chinamen had a natural talent for explosions" (1980, 128). They are viewed as disposable and exploitable labor, subjected to harsh working conditions and receiving low wages.

This situation, reflecting the power dynamic where Chinese immigrants are exploited for their labor while being denied basic rights and dignity, has a profound impact upon their identity. Actually, that experience shapes their perception of themselves and their place within the society, contributing to identity crisis that manifests itself mainly by the way of internalized stereotypes. Defined by Richard Ashmore and Frances Del Boca as the "general beliefs about the characteristics of social groups and their individual members" (1981, 2), stereotypes play a big role in the Chinese male immigrants' low self-esteem and perception of themselves after their immigration to the United States of America.

The internalization of stereotypes such as the Yellow Peril, portraying Chinese immigrants as a threat to Western society, particularly mysterious, inscrutable, and potentially dangerous (Kingston, 1989, 123), the Model Minority stereotype, suggesting they are hardworking, disciplined (Kingston, 1989, 75), and successful,

and the Coolie stereotype, implying they are cheap, expendable laborers (Kingston, 1989, 118), instill in them a belief in their inferiority to white Americans, and crucially, a questioning of their own masculinity. This emasculation is vividly depicted in the chapter "On Discovery," where Chinese immigrants are metaphorically humiliated via the character of Tan Ao, one of Kingston's ancestors. Upon arriving in a foreign land, Tan Ao, previously disrespectful of women in China, finds himself transformed into a woman and relegated to a lower social position: "During the months of a season, they fed him on women's food […] They drew the loops of threads through the scabs that grew daily over the holes in his earlobes […] He served a meal at the queen's court" (Kingston, 1989, pp. 4-5). This feminization of Chinese male immigrants symbolizes the power dynamics at play in the novel. Once occupying a higher social position in China, they are reduced to a lower status in the new land, where they are portrayed as effeminate and weak, contributing to the erosion of their masculinity.

2. Negotiating Identities in a Complex Cultural and Social Context

In the novel, the characters struggle with the intricate task of negotiating their identities within a complex cultural and social context. Against the backdrop of cultural and relational shocks, racial discrimination, and social emasculation, they embark on journeys of self-discovery and identity reconstruction. This section deals with the Chinese immigrants' resiliency and agency in a hostile American environment, particularly through resisting against racism and oppression, and using certain strategies to reconstruct and assert their identity.

2.1. Resistance Against Racism and Exclusion

In the face of systemic racism and exclusion, individuals and communities worldwide have demonstrated resilience and determination in their resistance against hostility and rejection. The stories of African Americans and Chinese Americans in the United States highlight this state of fact. While the former have gone from slavery to racial segregation, the latter have faced racism, xenophobia, and discrimination, particularly during periods of anti-Asian sentiment such as the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882).

In *China Men* (1980) by Maxine Hong Kingston, the author illustrates the Chinese Americans' experience and, most importantly, their resiliency that manifests itself via the resistance against racism and exclusion. This resistance is typically acted through agency and subversion in the narrative. Originating from the root word "agent" meaning "a source of activity, not merely a passive sufferer of the effects of external forces" (Xabier E. Barandiaran et al, 2009, 370), the term agency is of great importance in the novel. Indeed, instead of remaining passive, Chinese men made up their mind to resist discrimination and assert their agency in the face of oppression.

That agency is mainly perceivable across their activism throughout the narrative by, on the one hand, banding together and taking collective action and being solidary against exclusion and challenging the gender norms guiding the overall American society. As far as the collective action and solidarity against exclusion are concerned, these are present via two instances in the novel. First, they group together in solidarity to form unions to resist the unfair treatment administrated by Americans laws voted at the Congress. This episode is located in the section of the book that focuses on the exclusion laws where Chinese men's basic rights were denied and not respected.

China, their home country, encouraged them to resist by leaving the United States of America in protest of the suspension of the Burlingame Treaty: "In protest against this suspension and against the refusal to admit Chinese boys to U. S. Army and Naval academies, China ordered scholars studying in the United States to return home" (1980, 152). The Burlingame Treaty was signed in 1868 and recognized "the inherent and inalienable right of man to change his home and allegiance, and also the mutual advantage of the free migration" (1980, 152). "40, 000 miners of Chinese ancestry were driven out" (1980, 152) when the suspension of twenty years by the American Congress was voted in 1881.

In 1892, when the Congress voted "The Geary Act" intending to extend "The Chinese Exclusion Act" of 1882 for ten years, Chinese men organized themselves in view of resisting that law that "decreed that Chinese

caught illegally in the United States be deported after one year of hard labor" (1980, 155). In so doing, they formed the "Equal Rights League and the Native Sons of the Gold State" in order "to fight disfranchisement bills (1980, 155). They even won some rare court battles despite fighting against the State. To win those battles, Chinese men put money together to fight the various Exclusions Acts they were subjected to. The perfect example is the "*Yick Wo v. Hopkins* case in 1896. The U. S. Supreme court overturned San Francisco Safety ordinances, saying that they were indeed designed to harass laundymen of Chinese ancestry (1980, 155).

Second, they group together in solidarity to form labor unions to resist the unfair treatment administrated by their American employers. In the section of the book that focuses on the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad and entitled "The Grandfather of the Sierra Nevada Mountains", where Chinese men decide to go on strike to fight against exclusion and exploitation at work : "The Chinese Men, then, decided to go on strike and demand forty-five dollars a month and the eight-hour shift. They risked going to jail and the Central Pacific keeping the pay it was banking for them" (1980, 140). That strike lasted nine days even if their claims were not totally satisfied: "The strike ended on the ninth day. The Central Pacific announced that in its benevolence it was giving the workers a four-dollar raise, not the fourteen dollars they had asked for" (1980, 140). This clearly show their activism and sense of solidarity in front of exploitation at work.

Regarding their subversion of gender norms, it can be seen via one main instance, which is the domestic responsibilities. In the novel, traditional norms of masculinity dictate that men should prioritize their roles as providers and protectors outside the home, while women are expected to manage domestic responsibilities. Chinese men go against that principle in the narrative. In fact, instead of fulfilling their roles as men, some Chinese men take on responsibilities traditionally assigned to women, such as cooking, cleaning and giving care to children in the house. One example is that of Ah Goon, Kingston's Grandfather who had many journeys between China and the United States of America. Whenever he was back to China, he was the one under the orders of his wife :

> MaMa was the only person to listen to him, and so he followed her everywhere, and talked and talked. What he liked telling was his journeys to the Gold Mountain. He wasn't smart, yet he travelled there three times. Left to himself, he would have stayed in China to play with babies or stayed in the United States once he got there, but Grandmother forced him to leave both places. 'Make money,' she said. 'Don't stay here eating.' 'Come home,' she said. (1980, 127)

This passage is clearly evocative of the protagonist's inclination to engage in traditionally feminine domestic roles such as caregiving in the house. His attitude completely contrasts with the expectations that men should prioritize financial prosperity and external advancement over domestic responsibilities. The quote also reveals how the narrator grandfather's actions defy the conventional gender norms by putting stress on emotional connection and individual agency within a context of harsh fluidity of gender roles.

Altogether, Chinese Americans, via their mutual support and activism, could assert their humanity and resist discrimination and exclusion in a hostile environment. Through this community, the novel challenges traditional notions of masculinity by depicting male characters who resist racism, exclusion, exploitation and gender conventions in order to explore other forms of identity.

2.2 Towards the Assertion of a Hybrid Cultural Heritage and Identity

Upon reading *China Men* (1980) and analyzing characters in crisis searching for their identity, we observe that Maxine Hong Kingston's novel overall contribute to a certain hybridity. This hybridity takes into account the cultural and identity dimensions. Due to racism, exclusion, and strained relationships with the white American society, Chinese male characters experience an identity crisis. This situation is the main cause of their solitary life, even their associability.

Confronted with the intricate layers of their identities and struggling with the obstacles of assimilating into the American society, Chinese males find themselves resorting to a "Chinese-American" identity performance, blending elements of both cultures to navigate their sense of displacement and assert their true

selves (Chutima Pragatwutisarn, 2005, 24). This fusion of cultural and gendered traits serves as a mechanism for them to negotiate their hybrid identities amidst the complexities of their experiences in America.

In his theorization, Homi Bhabha, the influential cultural and post-colonial theorist, called this performance the "Third space" and describes it as follows : "It is only in the 'interstices' of difference – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference – that the 'partial' representation of the 'other' can emerge" (Bhabha, 1994, 4). Through this quote, Bhabha suggests that it is within these "interstices" or gaps between established categories and identities that we can find opportunities for alternative perspectives and partial representations of the other. In other words, it is in these liminal spaces of ambiguity and overlap that individuals and communities negotiate their identities, creating hybrid forms of expression and understanding that challenge traditional boundaries and binaries: "This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (Bhabha, 1994, 5).

This space appears to be a real alternative to the Chinese minority group in the narrative of the novel by Maxine Hong Kingston. In his article titled *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, Stuart Hall would call that space "The new World" and consider it "as the beginning of diaspora, of diversity, of hybridity and difference" (Stuart Hall, 1996, p. 235). Actually, their hybrid cultural heritage and identity manifests itself mainly through language, particularly their multilingualism on one hand and the claiming of their American identity on the other. As per their bilingualism, this is perceivable throughout the novel, mainly via the act of telling stories. In fact, the novel is structured around the stories and experiences of Chinese men, emphasizing the importance of storytelling and oral tradition in preserving cultural heritage:

> The crucial narrative technique used by Kingston is talk-story, which derives from traditional Chinese storytelling as well as from Asian American immigrant lore…the book combines familial history, personal recollections, and re-elaborations of Chinese myths, as well as elements inspired by classic American literature (Francesca De Lucia, 2023, 1).

This quote from Francesca De Lucia illustrates the way language, and specifically telling stories, serves a means of celebrating bicultural heritage. We understand that language serves as a cultural fusion and as a medium of celebration. It serves as a cultural fusion in the sense that the combination of elements of traditional Chinese storytelling with Asian American immigrant lore reflects the bicultural heritage of the characters, originating from both their Chinese roots and their experiences in America.

Moreover, language serves as a medium of celebration for the characters as it highlights their linguistic diversity and their hybrid identity. In fact, the characters combine both Chinese and English language elements to tell their stories in view of constructing their subjectivities, as Madan Sarup suggests in *Identity, Culture and the Postmodern World* : "Through language we come to know who we are; it is through the acquisition of language that we become human and social beings: the words we speak situate us in our gender and class" (1996, 46).

From this quote, we can infer that bilingualism plays a great role in the Chinese males' self-definition as Chinese, but at the same time Americans. In other words, it is not until Chinese immigrants know how to express themselves in English that they can come to terms with their hyphenated identity. In short, their hybrid cultural identity has to do with speaking both English and Chinese as suggested by Stuart Hall in his article *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* when he talks about cultural identity in terms of "being" and "becoming" : "Cultural identity […] is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture" (1990, 225). For Hall, identity is a complex and ongoing process of negotiation and transformation, shaped by multiple factors and constantly evolving over time. In the case of Chinese male characters in *China Men*, language clearly appears to be one of the factors contributing to the fluidity of their identity. Through their personal recollections and stories, those characters can maintain connections to their cultural heritage while also adapting to their new surroundings.

As far as the claiming of their American identity is concerned, it manifests itself through their integration and cultural engagement on one side and their personal commitment and patriotism on the other. As regard their

integration and cultural engagement, this is seen through via their efforts to become part of mainstream American society in the novel. Indeed, whenever they had a day off, Chinese immigrants used to dress in a western way, adopt American mannerisms and behave in an American way:

> "Most of the men were young enough to have their entire lives changed on a day off. A farmer could come to town, change his name, and become a merchant. Back Goon, [the author's grandfather], met men who had forgotten the names of their Chinese family or the name and location of their Chinese villages. (1980, 106)

Here, one can see the Chinese male characters' efforts to fully assimilate into the American mainstream society by becoming and behave like. The lost of names and even of the names of their village is symptomatic of the desire of some immigrants to be accepted as members of the American society. Additionally to their mannerisms, their professional achievements constitute one reason for them to claim both their Chineseness and Americanness anytime that they visit their country of origin: "Chinese Americans talk about how when they set foot on China, even just Hong Kong, their whole lives suddenly made sense; their youth had been a preparation for this visit, they say. They realize their Americanness, they say, and "you find out what a China Man you are" (1980, 294). To prove their worth as full American citizens, they put forth their active participation to the construction of the *Transcontinental Railroad*. Some young Chinese men in China even consider their forefathers as the pioneers of the Gold Mountain : "In the middle of the work day, young men sat talking about how someday soon they would move to the Gold Mountain, where their ancestors, American pioneers, had gone for hundreds of years" (1980, 87).

As for their personal commitment and patriotism it is mainly revealed by their act of giving Chinese and American names to their boy children and also the acceptance by those children, once adults, to integrate the American army engaged in the second World War. As a matter of fact, Maxine's parents express their hybrid cultural identity by giving the combination of Chinese and American names to their children : "In addition to his American name, this new brother was named Han Bridge like a bridge between Han and here. We're Han people from Han Dynasty […] Baba named [the second boy] Bright Bridge, also translated Severe Bridge" (1980, 265-266). The practice of giving their children both Chinese and American names embodies their cultural syncretism, where the elements of both cultures such as "Bridge," "Bright," and "Han" are combined and reinterpreted to create new names. This kind of name giving reflects the hybrid nature of the Chinese immigrants' cultural identity, shaping their own identities in a context of exclusion.

Once adults, the male children will eagerly demonstrate their commitment to their American homeland by enrolling themselves in the army, showing their patriotism: "The cousins who were not clever enough to evoid the war—in fact some foolhardy ones enlisted—sent pictures from Europe. They looked like good soldiers in the movies (1980, 272). By enlisting in the military and defending American ideals, the characters demonstrate their loyalty and dedication to their new homeland. Military service becomes a means of proving their allegiance to America and contributing to its defense and prosperity.

Overall, the expression of a hybrid cultural identity appears as the best alternative for Chinese male immigrants' self-assertion. That new identity is clearly manifested through their dedication to both of their Chinese and American surroundings and values.

Conclusion

At the end of this study entitled "*China Men* by Maxine Hong Kingston : An Evocation of Chinese Males' Identity (Re)construction", we used the postcolonial approach, particularly the concepts of 'hybridity' and 'Third space' elaborated by Homi K. Bhabha to illustrate how Chinese male characters negotiate or (re)construct their identity within a complex cultural and social context. First, this theory helped to unveil the dynamics of power at play in the novel. Indeed, to prevent Chinese's 'invasion', white Americans implemented discriminatory laws that led these immigrants, who once occupied higher ranks in China, into identity crisis and

even to the loss of their manhood. Second, the theory reveals that resistance against cultural and social biases in the American society, coupled with the acceptance of both Chinese and American values, helps those immigrants to negotiate their new hybrid cultural identity. Ultimately, it helps them to develop a strong sense of self among the characters. After all, one can infer that hybridity increases diversity, but also helps to resist against cultural and social biases in a society where the idea of homogeneity prevails. In the case of the present study, hybridity appears as a good alternative in fighting against exclusion, discrimination and segregation. Finally, a balanced identity (re)construction needs to take into account inclusion and most importantly heterogeneity.

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