

VIETNAM GENERATION

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GENDER AND THE WAR: MEN, WOMEN AND VIETNAM



"GOING TOWARD WAR" IN THE WRITINGS OF MAXINE HONG KINGSTON

JAMES R. AUBREY

Maxine Hong Kingston's 1989 novel *Tripmaster Monkey* opens with a meditation on suicide by her title character, Wittman Ah Sing. As he imagines putting a pistol to his head and pulling the trigger, the narrator explains that he is not making plans to do himself in. "He was aware of the run of his mind, that's all," and by the end of the first paragraph, Wittman's mind has pondered various techniques for jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge and two articles he has read in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, one about a failed suicide pact and the other describing how "a Buddhist had set fire to himself and burned to death on purpose; his name was Quang Duc. Quang Duc. Remember."¹

Most people old enough to remember 1963 have not forgotten the image of Quang Duc, sitting calmly as flames engulf him before a crowd of surprised onlookers. Before the memorable photograph was taken, Quang Duc had sat down on the asphalt at an intersection in what was then Saigon, had been doused with gasoline by another monk, then had struck a match to immolate himself. Quang Duc's suicide was a protest over the shooting several weeks earlier by soldiers in Hué of nine Buddhist demonstrators who had been marching to protest South Vietnamese President Diem's pro-Catholic, anti-Buddhist policies. The picture of Quang Duc became one of those media representations which, for many Americans, contributed to a changed understanding of events in Southeast Asia.² *Time* carried the photo, and *Life* magazine enlarged it so that the figure of the burning monk filled the eleven-inch page.³ Among the Americans affected by Quang Duc's suicide were U.S. government policy makers, whose loss of confidence in Diem led to his overthrow and to a succession of weak governments, which in turn led to the ultimately disastrous increase of American involvement. Even though Wittman Ah Sing cannot know any of this when he reads the *San Francisco Chronicle* in 1963, Kingston-as-narrator knows and urges us, "Remember."

Tripmaster Monkey is full of allusions to American mass culture, but this opening reference to Vietnam is noteworthy because Kingston's book is, in one important sense, about the impending war there. The book's major plot development is Wittman's successful stage production of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. In this Chinese war epic, "battles are lost and won; kingdoms rise and fall."⁴ The military lore is so extensive, Kingston points out, that it has been a text at West Point, and

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was the favorite reading of Ho Chi Minh.⁵ For Wittman, however, the lesson is not how to fight but not to fight:

He had made up his mind: he will not go to Viet Nam or to any war. He had staged the War of the Three Kingdoms as heroically as he could, which made him start to understand: The three brothers and Cho Cho were masters of war; they had worked out strategies and justifications for war so brilliantly that their policies and their tactics are used today, even by governments with nuclear-powered weapons. And they lost. The clanging and banging fooled us, but now we know—they lost. Studying the mightiest war epic of all time, Wittman changed—been!—into a pacifist.⁶

As a novel examining this change, *Tripmaster Monkey* is simultaneously about war and against war, in that respect like *Catch-22* or *A Farewell to Arms* but, instead of being set in a war zone, set on the "home front" in the San Francisco area, under the specter of a looming war. A reader's awareness of the consequences of such events as the suicide of Quang Duc can help to create sympathy for Wittman's evolving pacifism within the imaginative world of the novel.

The specter of the Vietnam war in *Tripmaster Monkey* illustrates a tendency in Kingston's writing to deal with war, which is evident in all three of her previous books: *The Woman Warrior* (1976), *China Men* (1980), and *Hawai'i One Summer* (1987). War seems to have been a central concern for her long before Vietnam provided a specific focus for her fears. She opens the "Brother in Vietnam" chapter of *China Men* with a childhood memory of a violent scene in a war movie, which she reacts to with such terror that her mother takes her outside, to "divert" her from the vision of war, as Kingston puts it.⁷ She goes on to describe her other, earliest childhood memories, each of which she says "has to do with war"—from a glimpse of blood during the birth of her brother to blackouts, war cartoons, and parades.⁸ She notes in *The Woman Warrior* that she was "born in the middle of World War II" and remembers watching airplanes in fear that the Japanese might be attacking.⁹ In *China Men* she recalls that in the 1940s "all the talk was about war and death," though her family tried to keep the worst horrors from the children.¹⁰ "For the Korean War," she adds, "we wore dog tags and had Preparedness Drill in the school basement."¹¹ She describes a classroom epiphany of the 1950s in a one-sentence paragraph: "'The War,' I wrote in a composition, which the teacher corrected, 'Which war?' There was more than one."¹²

In *Tripmaster Monkey* Wittman, hallucinating on *cannabis*, watches the snow on a television screen and imagines nuclear detonations, then human mutations, then EC comic book grotesqueries.¹³ His thought that "those comic books were brainwashing us for atomic warfare"¹⁴ nicely conveys both the paranoias of drug trips and of Cold War attitudes. If Kingston retained any naive illusions about war into

the 1960s, the Vietnam conflict must have dispelled them for her—as it is sometimes said to have done for American culture as a whole.

Kingston is not unaware that war recurs as a theme in her work, having told an interviewer in 1980, “I look at my writing to see where it is going, and it keeps going toward war.”¹⁵ Her self-critique seems less that of a woman who sees herself consciously choosing to write about war than of an agency through whom war gets written about, almost inevitably—as if she cannot *not* write about war. She seems less than perfectly comfortable in the role. In a 1986 interview for the American Audio Prose Library, Kingston was asked when she first discovered the metaphor of herself as woman warrior. Her answer was surprising:

I don't know that I ever really identify myself completely with the woman warrior. My editor said to name my book *The Woman Warrior*; about a year later he said, “You know that that's you.” My reaction was negative to that. I don't feel that she's me.... I don't really like warriors. I wish I had not had a metaphor of a warrior person who uses weapons and goes to war. In the style, there's always a doubt about war as a way of solving things.... The pen is always problematical, always on the verge of not winning. It's a frustration I feel. Writers have the power to change the world only a little bit at a time; we maybe conquer a reader at a time. We change the atmosphere of the world and we change moods here and there; whereas the people who have the guns and the bombs have so much direct power. We're using images and words against bombs. If only the word had as much power.¹⁶

In spite of Kingston's disclaimer, *The Woman Warrior* reads like a feminist autobiography in which Kingston learns to wield her pen like a weapon. At the conclusion of the chapter “White Tigers”—named after the symbol for the female principle in Chinese philosophy¹⁷—the woman warrior Fa Mu Lan calls herself “a female avenger” and, Kingston observes, “The swordswoman and I are not so dissimilar.”¹⁸ So the editor's association of Kingston with the idea of a woman warrior is by no means far-fetched. It is apparently Fa Mu Lan's violence which Kingston is trying to distance herself from in the interview, much as she takes pains to distance Wittman from the military spectacle of his dramatic production in her conclusion to *Tripmaster Monkey*.

Not just war in general but the Vietnam war in particular is a presence in all four of Kingston's books. She explains that she worked on the first two, *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men*, at the same time, originally having conceived them as one large book, and that the first part she wrote was the chapter for *China Men* called “The Brother in Vietnam.”¹⁹ This chapter tells of her brother's enlistment in the Navy in hope of avoiding the alternatives of Canada or combat, only to find himself on an aircraft carrier in the Gulf of Tonkin.²⁰ Kingston points out that, for the ship's crew, it must have taken “intelligence and imagination

to think that they were in Vietnam in the middle of the heaviest American bombing” when all they could see was water, but her brother does realize that he is not avoiding the war.²¹ By the end of the chapter, he has lost his appetite, but “he had not gotten killed, and he had not killed anyone.”²² His survival story contrasts with the martyrdom of a pacifist in the preceding chapter of *China Men*, “The Li Sao: An Elegy.” Its hero, Ch'u Yuan, a minister of state, advises his king not to fight a popular but a losing war and finds himself banished; when he realizes that he can neither return nor be happy away from his homeland, Ch'u Yuan drowns himself and earns the epithet “the incorruptible” in the last sentence of his chapter.²³ By preceding “The Brother in Vietnam,” “The Li Sao: An Elegy” can be said to introduce the other chapter and, rather than make the Vietnam brother seem unprincipled in contrast with himself, Ch'u Yuan makes the efforts of Kingston's brother to avoid combat seem less futile by associating them with a long antiwar tradition.

Since Kingston wrote *The Woman Warrior* after she wrote this section of *China Men*, the Vietnam war must still have been on her mind. Its presence is less prominent in *The Woman Warrior*, but Kingston refers to the war in “White Tigers,” where she contrasts herself to her brother:

I went away to college—Berkeley in the sixties—and I studied, and I marched to change the world, but I did not turn into a boy. I would have liked to bring myself back as a boy for my parents to welcome with chickens and pigs. That was for my brother, who returned alive from Vietnam.

If I went to Vietnam, I would not come back: females desert families.²⁴

Kingston will strive to be a warrior in her own way. In Kingston's version of the Classical Chinese chant, Fa Mu Lan confronts a fat baron who has drafted her brother, has committed crimes against the women of her village and—not realizing that Fa Mu Lan is a woman disguised as a male warrior—tries to justify what he has done by quoting to her the antifeminist “sayings that I hated” such as “girls are maggots in the rice.”²⁵ Fa Mu Lan takes off her shirt, revealing herself to be a woman at the same time that she also reveals a list of grievances her father has carved onto her back—then beheads the baron.²⁶ Kingston's aim seems to be to turn Fa Mu Lan's violence to nonviolence, her sword into words—even into the book we are reading. When Kingston announces that “the swordswoman and I are not so dissimilar,” she goes on to invite this meta-reading:

What we have in common are the words at our backs. The idioms for *revenge* are “report a crime” and “report to five families.” The reporting is the vengeance—not the beheading, not the gutting, but the words. And I have so many words—“chink” words and “gook” words too—that they do not fit on my skin.²⁷

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As in the case of the baron, the injustices are involved with the language of discrimination. In the same chapter, Kingston has recounted her refusal to work for a white racist employer who uses the word "nigger" and who enjoys subverting a CORE-NAACP boycott.²⁸ And we are reminded with the reference to "gook" words that the war in Vietnam has its racial dimension. Although Fa Mu Lan tells the baron that she is "a female avenger," *The Woman Warrior* is a book-report meant to avenge wider, systemic injustices which include not only unjust treatment of women or racial minorities but also, by implication, an unjust war in Vietnam.

In *Hawai'i One Summer*, Kingston recalls that she and her husband had left Berkeley in 1967, "in despair over the war."²⁹ Instead of escaping the war, however, they found themselves at a crucial transshipment point between the USA and Southeast Asia. "We should have thought of it—hardware and soldiers were sent to Hawai'i, which funnelled everything to Vietnam."³⁰ As her brother and Ch'u Yuan had discovered, you cannot remain in your homeland and avoid its war. So Kingston worked against the Vietnam war at a Hawai'iian sanctuary where "the peace people drilled the AWOL's in history while from outside came the voice of an Army chaplain on a bullhorn, asking them to give themselves up."³¹

Kingston's commitment to the antiwar movement may have led her to create the hero of *Tripmaster Monkey* as an artist-turned-pacifist. Wittman's resemblance to her "brother in Vietnam" suggests that the novel is, like her other books, written in the autobiographical mode Kingston seems to favor, and this attraction to both fiction and autobiography may in turn relate to her typical blurring of the traditional distinction between art and life. Kingston once observed that there's "something about life that's like a theater,"³² and in *Tripmaster Monkey* she makes the same point when she presents Wittman's staged war as if the fireworks have ignited the Chinatown theater and created four-alarm pandemonium:

The audience ran out into the street. More audience came. And the actors were out from backstage and the green room breaking rules of reality-and-illusion. Their armor and swords were mirrored in fenders, bumpers, and the long sides of the fire trucks.³³

In this description, the boundary between stage and audience seems to disappear, but Kingston as narrator reestablishes the illusion of reality as the novel's last chapter begins:

OF COURSE Wittman Ah Sing didn't really burn down the Association house and the theater. It was an illusion of fire. Good monkey. He kept control of the explosives, and of his arsonist's delight in flames. He wasn't crazy; he was a monkey. What's crazy is the idea that revolutionaries must shoot and bomb and kill, that revolution is the same as war.³⁴

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Revolutionary theater, Wittman seems to be demonstrating, can and should take the diverse, even anarchic materials of a culture at war and shape them into art which embraces everything and is meant to liberate everyone.³⁵ Wittman reworks violent materials for a peaceful end: the transformation of a community.

Kingston puts her readers through an experience comparable to the one undergone by Wittman's audience and, within the more private relationship between novel and reader, Kingston may be hoping to effect a similar transformation of her community of readers. As her dislike of "guns and bombs" sets her mind to working on the materials of war, however, her opposition to war may actually be attracting her to the subject. Wittman's production of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, for example, is full of violence:

At the climactic free-for-all—everybody fights everybody everywhere at once. The hundred and eight bandits and their enemies (played by twenty-five actors) knock one another in and out all entrances and exits, sword-fighting up and down the stairs and out amongst the audience, take that and that, kicking the mandarin-duck kick, swinging the jeweled-ring swing, drums and cymbals backing up the punches.³⁶

Even though war and peace may serve to define one another, and even though this representation of violence is ultimately in the service of undoing violence, Wittman's play tends to glamorize violence as it proceeds.

Part of Kingston's attraction to the subject of war may be a recognition that the subject matter is inherently interesting. "It's more difficult to make peace than war," Wittman tells the audience for his play,³⁷ and it is no doubt more difficult to write an interesting book about peace than war. Her books recount exciting war narratives, many of them from Classical Chinese literature, and the female warrior figures Kingston depicts are especially admirable characters whose stories could easily subsume any pacifistic agenda. Fa Mu Lan takes her father's place in battle, fights gloriously, and returns to settle in her village.³⁸ In *Tripmaster Monkey* Lady Sun—a beautiful princess with red hair, blue eyes, and an armory for a bedroom—has beaten all of her father's and brother's knights using their choice of weapons; so she marries an old warrior in order to gain combat experience as she helps him.³⁹ How can readers not admire these characters in spite of their violent behavior? Kingston acknowledges the dilemma in the last chapter of *Tripmaster Monkey*:

Tolstoy had noted the surprising gaiety of war. During his time, picnickers and fighters took to the same field. We'd gotten more schizy. The dying was on the Asian side of the planet while the playing—the love-ins and the be-ins—were on the other, American side. Whatever there is when there isn't war has to be invented. What do people do in peace? Peace has barely been thought.⁴⁰

By suggesting that *War and Peace* is mostly about war, that peace seems to exist as war's absence or war's contrary rather than a state of being in its own right, Kingston expresses awareness and concern that readers may identify with her martial heroes and heroines, may be captivated by the "gaiety" and the fascination of war.

Kingston evidently hopes to use the appeal of violence, not be used by it. At the conclusion of *The Woman Warrior*, Ts'ai Yen is first described as an effective woman warrior who can "cut down anyone in her path during the madness of close combat."⁴¹ When she is held captive in the land of barbarians, Ts'ai Yen at first believes that her captors' only music was the sound of death that the whistles on their arrows produced. However, eventually, as she listens to the sound of their flutes, she finds herself affected and composes her own song to accompany the music. Ts'ai Yen later brings that song back "from the savage lands" to her native Chinese culture where, according to the last sentence of the book, "It translated well."⁴² Having heard the United States described elsewhere in the book as a land of ghosts and barbarians, a reader again senses an identity between Kingston and her woman warrior. Like Ts'ai Yen, Kingston has found her own voice as a writer in what had seemed to her as a child to be two radically different cultures, Chinese and American. But part of the satisfaction and sense of closure a reader feels at the end of *The Woman Warrior* also depends on the fact that Ts'ai Yen has changed from a warrior to an artist, has recognized in the materials of violence and conflict the possibility of peace. Kingston's representations of warfare thus become emblems that teach how to change war into peace, how to transcend conflict through narratives about conflict.

Not only peace, then, but also art is an alternative to war. In *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men* art tends to be the self-liberating, liberal-humanist vision of the High Modern Artist. *The Woman Warrior* is Kingston's portrait of the artist as a young woman, confident in the power of art to transcend local conflict, to "translate well," as she says of Ts'ai Yen's song. *Tripmaster Monkey*, on the other hand, is Postmodern, more like Pynchon than like Joyce, full of local details and references to popular culture, working with the material of the Classical Chinese epic toward a less private, more participatory end. Kingston might be describing her own book when she describes Wittman's play: "To entertain and educate the solitaires that make up a community, the play will be a combination revue-lecture. You're invited."⁴³

If Kingston's view of art seems to be evolving, her interest in warfare has remained a constant in her work. It seems also to have been constant in her life or, at any rate, in the personal history she remembers and writes about. In *China Men* she begins the chapter about the brother in Vietnam with one of her earliest recollections, of seeing a war movie when she was a child:

My mother holding my hand, I went through a curtain into a dark, out of which came explosions and screams, voices shouting

things I did not understand. In a rectangle of light—which grew and shrank according to how close or far away I thought it—men with scared eyes peered over the top of a big hole they were in.... Everyone wore the same outfits. The color had gone out of the world. I stumbled tangle-legged into my mother's skirt and the curtain and screamed with the soldiers.⁴⁴

Kingston goes on to describe her later realization that she had been taken to a war movie as a child, but the passage conveys something of the nightmare-like terror she felt. "I had seen a vision of war," she comments, and it came from behind a curtain. Kingston uses a related image to represent thresholds between worlds in *The Woman Warrior*: Kingston as a child imagines passing through a screen of clouds to become young Fa Mu Lan,⁴⁵ and at school she puts layers of chalk or black paint over her drawings—an act which worries her teachers but which she thinks of as "making a stage curtain."⁴⁶ In *Tripmaster Monkey*, Wittman's television screen is a similar curtain that conceals to reveal, but the important recurrence of the motif in the novel is as literal stage curtains, which frame Wittman's theatrical vision of transformation of kingdoms at war into a peaceable kingdom.

The curtain metaphor seems to represent for Kingston a distinction between art and life similar to that between dreaming and wakefulness—a distinction that helps to clarify her understanding of the role of art. Like a dream, art is part of a deeply important psychological process, with tremendous capacity for revealing and for healing. One may fall asleep into a nightmare of war as readily as into a dream of peace. Also like a dream, however, an artist's executed vision is of distressingly limited force in the world of power relations.

Another way to understand Kingston's "going toward war" as she writes is to imagine that her awareness of analogies between war and other kinds of conflict makes the subject irresistible for the fund of metaphors it provides. She often gives war a metaphorical dimension when she writes about it, so one attraction of war may be the vividness with which it can represent other kinds of conflict important to her. If *The Woman Warrior* is indeed an autobiographical memoir, as the subtitle *Memoir of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* announces it to be, Kingston has felt engaged with conflicts throughout her life—not only the political-military conflicts of World War II, the Cold War, the confrontations at Berkeley, and the Vietnam war, but also—and probably more important to her artistic development—the inevitable conflicts of her daily experiences as she grew up Chinese-American in a national culture dominated by non-Chinese Americans, speaking a different language at school from the one she spoke at home.

More important yet, perhaps, she grew up female in a world where both the dominant and subordinate cultures privileged the male sex. Searching for her personal identity inevitably put her in conflict with traditional ideologies of both Chinese and American culture.

Kingston's way of dealing with this conflict is like her approach to dealing with military conflict: she takes the materials of conflict and shapes them artistically to subvert or improve the conditions which led to conflict in the first place. She tells stories of race, gender, culture, or military conflict in order to resolve such conflicts. Sometimes she uses one kind of conflict as a metaphor for another, as when she appropriates traditional Chinese literature for feminist purposes by borrowing an incident from the story of the male warrior Yueh Fei, whose mother carves words on his back,⁴⁷ to make her female warrior Fa Mu Lan an avenger for her sex—a rhetorical move which makes fairly explicit what Kingston elsewhere has called “the feminist war that's going on in *The Woman Warrior*.”⁴⁸ In both instances she mixes the language of gender conflict and of military conflict.

Using war metaphors to discuss sexual difference is not a new rhetorical strategy, as the “battle of the sexes” indicates in *Lysistrata* or in *The Rape of the Lock*. Martial language can also be useful in discussing relations between cultures, as when Kingston uses the word “aggressive” to describe the relationship Chinatown must maintain with white America to survive.⁴⁹ Indeed, Michel Foucault has suggested that the language of war describes all power relations:

The role of political power...is perpetually to re-inscribe this relation [of forces] through a form of unspoken warfare; to re-inscribe it in social institutions, in economic inequalities, in language, in the bodies themselves of each and everyone of us.⁵⁰

Kingston's attraction to narratives of war may be due partly to her instinctive recognition of this idea, which makes discourse of war and peace available as rich metaphorical discourse about other conflicts between cultures or, within cultures, between competing ideologies about gender.

Kingston may also enjoy retelling stories of women warriors because they represent women in conflict with male-dominant cultural norms, both of Classical China and of contemporary America. Because “woman warriors” are redefining their gender as they fight, the very existence of woman warriors affects discourse of war in a way feminists generally approve.⁵¹ In *Tripmaster Monkey*, when Wittman explains to Tanya her part in his play, how Lady Sun will join her husband in battle “fully armored, silver from head to toe,” Tanya gets “feminist ideas to apply to his backass self” from the story; having saved Wittman from the draft by marrying him, she describes herself with irony as “your beloved lady in shiny armor.”⁵² For a woman to adopt military dress, then, is to cross a boundary into a domain defined as male by traditional discourse of warfare, and her act increases female participation in the circulation of power. Kingston's woman warriors do not dress as males just in order to succeed as men, however. In *The Woman Warrior* Fa Mu Lan also must wear male battle dress in order to disguise the fact that she is female, but

the important outcome is that she changes the nature of warfare. Led by a woman warrior, Fa Mu Lan's army is significantly different from male-led armies, as she explains: “My army did not rape, only taking food where there was an abundance. We brought order wherever we went.”⁵³

The worst aspects of warfare, Kingston implies, are the result of male exclusivity, defined in part by a masculine code of dress. These codes can, perhaps, be unlearned, but they are deeply ingrained. Fa Mu Lan's son is not too young to be impressed with her armor,⁵⁴ and in *China Men*, even Kingston's pacifist brother admits that dropouts who return to high school in uniform “looked more substantial, taller, smoothed out, as if some sort of potential had been fulfilled.”⁵⁵ In *Tripmaster Monkey* Kingston implies that war may be partly the result of such encodings and ideologies: “Women get their wish: War. Men, sexy in uniform, will fight and die for them.”⁵⁶

At her most pessimistic, Kingston seems to imagine that such gender-linked attitudes toward war are inscribed almost beyond hope of change. Wittman proposes cutting off of boys' trigger fingers, not just as a technique for avoiding the draft as it was used in China during World War II⁵⁷ but as an antiwar, cultural ritual:

Cut off the trigger finger instead of circumcision for all the boy babies, and all the girl babies too. Chop. I'll volunteer to have mine done first. On the other hand, the people who love shooting, they'll use their toes, they'll use their noses. It's more difficult to make peace than war.⁵⁸

Like the male impulse toward state violence, or war, a similar impulse toward violence against women promises to be just as difficult to repair: even Kingston confesses to feeling an occasional “urge to destroy nests and females” before coming back to her senses.⁵⁹ But she will work on the problem, as she puts it in her interview, “a reader at a time.”

Kingston seems more hopeful in her books than in her interviews or articles about the possibility of resolving conflicts between men and women, minority and majority cultures, or nations. Her books tell stories of war with peaceful outcomes. In *The Woman Warrior* Fa Mu Lan establishes social order and justice for females, and Ts'ai Yen transcends cultural boundaries with her artistic vision. *China Men* opens with a description of The Land of Women, where there are no wars, like the state of the Tao where “wars were laughable.”⁶⁰ In *Tripmaster Monkey* Kingston compares the attractions of war to the attractions of reading and notes that Wittman, “our monkey, master of change, staged a fake war, which might very well be displacing some real war.”⁶¹ If taken as a comment about art, generally—which it seems to be—Kingston evidently hopes that her writings about war will serve as artistic displacements of actual wars, as celebrations of peace for her individual readers the way that Wittman's play is for the community of his audiences.

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Kingston's faith in the power of art to liberate individuals from oppressive violence is nowhere more concisely stated than in the conclusion to her travel piece for *Ms.* magazine in 1983:

Our planet is as rich and complex as a Balinese painting, which is covered every inch with life. To stop the bombs, to free ourselves—we are nations of hostages—we continue dancing, painting, telling stories, writing....⁶²

The power of literature may be limited to affecting one reader at a time, but if a writer has a large readership, and those readers "remember," her art may bring improved order and justice to cultures too often made up of contesting subcultures, prone to oppression of females and to the glorification of violence—prone, in short, to war.

¹ Maxine Hong Kingston, *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book* (New York: Knopf) 1989: 3-4. Hereafter, *Tripmaster*.

² The Associated Press copyrighted the photo, which was distributed widely. Another well known representation is the photo of the Saigon chief of police holding a pistol to the head of a Viet Cong prisoner whom he is about to execute during the 1968 Tet Offensive. It is easy to imagine that these images, helped to inspire the "Russian-roulette" scenes in Michael Cimino's *The Deer Hunter*, which serve as a visual metaphor for U.S. political self-destruction in Vietnam.

³ "An Angry Buddhist Burns Himself Alive," *Life* (21 June 1963): 24-25; "Trial by Fire," *Time* (21 June 1963): 32.

⁴ *Tripmaster*: 172.

⁵ *Ibid.*: 170.

⁶ *Ibid.*: 340.

⁷ Maxine Hong Kingston, *China Men* (New York: Knopf) 1981: 264. Hereafter, *China Men*.

⁸ *Ibid.*: 263-267.

⁹ Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts* (New York: Knopf) 1976: 93, 96. Hereafter, *Woman Warrior*.

¹⁰ *China Men*: 268.

¹¹ *Ibid.*: 276.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Tripmaster*: 96-98.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*: 98.

¹⁵ Timothy Pfaff, "Talk With Mrs. Kingston," *New York Times Book Review* (15 June 1980): 27.

¹⁶ Kay Bonetti, "Interview with Maxine Hong Kingston," *The American Audio Prose Library*, 1986.

¹⁷ Charles W. Moore, et al., *The Poetics of Gardens* (Cambridge: MIT Press) 1988: 1.

¹⁸ *Woman Warrior*: 43.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*: 53.

²⁰ *China Men*: 283, 296.

²¹ *Ibid.*: 297.

²² *Ibid.*: 304.

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²³ *China Men*: 256-260.

²⁴ *Woman Warrior*: 47.

²⁵ *Ibid.*: 43.

²⁶ *Ibid.*: 35, 43-44.

²⁷ *Ibid.*: 53.

²⁸ *Ibid.*: 48. (CORE stands for Congress on Racial Equality; NAACP is the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.)

²⁹ Maxine Hong Kingston, *Hawai'i One Summer: 1978*, woodcuts by Deng Ming-Dao, (San Francisco: Meadow Press) 1987: 13.

³⁰ *Ibid.*: 14.

³¹ *Ibid.*: 15.

³² Bonetti.

³³ *Tripmaster*: 303.

³⁴ *Ibid.*: 305.

³⁵ Wittman Ah Sing's name may be an homage to Walt Whitman, also a revolutionary in art, whose "Song of Myself" begins with an echo of epic invocations, "I...sing," and which similarly celebrates community in diversity. [Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, ed. Harold W. Blodgett and Salley Bradley (New York: Norton) 1965: 28.]

³⁶ *Ibid.*: 301.

³⁷ *Ibid.*: 335.

³⁸ *Woman Warrior*: 20.

³⁹ *Tripmaster*: 172.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*: 306.

⁴¹ *Woman Warrior*: 208.

⁴² *Ibid.*: 209.

⁴³ *Tripmaster*: 288.

⁴⁴ *China Men*: 264.

⁴⁵ *Woman Warrior*: 20.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*: 165.

⁴⁷ *China Men*: 56.

⁴⁸ Bonetti.

⁴⁹ Maxine Hong Kingston, "San Francisco's Chinatown," *American Heritage* (Dec 1978): 39.

⁵⁰ Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures," in Colin Gordon, ed. and trans., *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* (New York: Random) 1980: 90.

⁵¹ For a contemporary American woman to be a warrior would be a violation not only of cultural norms but also of the laws and related policies known collectively as "the combat exclusion," designed to keep military women out of jobs that would place them in danger—or in a decisively powerful position. For a description of the law, its origins, and the problems it poses for women see Lori S. Kornblum's "Women Warriors in a Men's World: The Combat Exclusion," in *Law and Inequality* 2.35: 353-445. For an argument in favor of an even more rigorous exclusion of women from combat see Brian Mitchell's *Weak Link: The Feminization of the American Military* (Washington, DC: Regnery Gateway) 1989.

⁵² *Tripmaster*: 175.

⁵³ *Woman Warrior*: 37.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*: 45.

⁵⁵ *China Men*: 279.

⁵⁶ *Tripmaster*: 296.

⁵⁷ *China Men*: 269.

⁵⁸ *Tripmaster*: 335.

⁵⁹ Maxine Hong Kingston, "Reservations about China," *Ms.* (Oct 1978): 67-68.

⁶⁰ *China Men*: 1-2, 95.

⁶¹ *Tripmaster*: 306.

⁶² Maxine Hong Kingston, "A Writer's Notebook from the Far East," *Ms.* (Jan 1983): 86.