

THE SUBLIME ELOQUENCE OF SELECTED ASIAN AMERICAN WRITERS: A
RHETORICAL STUDY OF JOHN OKADA'S *NO-NO BOY*, MAXINE HONG
KINGSTON'S *THE WOMAN WARRIOR: MEMOIRS OF A GIRLHOOD*
AMONG GHOSTS, AND LISA SEE'S *SNOW FLOWER AND*
THE SECRET FAN

A DISSERTATION
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BY
ELAINE EUN JU CHO, B.S., M.A.

DENTON, TEXAS

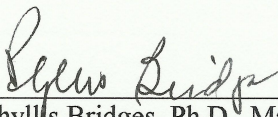
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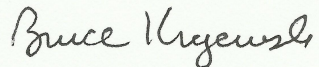
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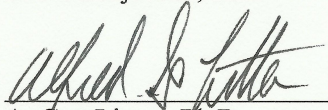
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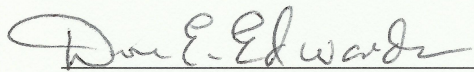
I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Elaine Eun Ju Cho entitled: "The Sublime Eloquence of Selected Asian American Writers: A Rhetorical Study of John Okada's *No-No Boy*, Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*, and Lisa See's *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*." I have examined this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Rhetoric.


Phyllis Bridges, Ph.D., Major Professor

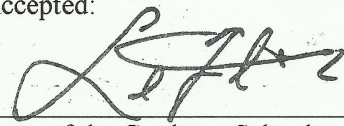
We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:


Bruce Krajewski, Ph.D.


A. Guy Litton, Ph.D.


Special Assistant to the Provost

Accepted:


Dean of the Graduate School

DEDICATION

For my beloved family, friends, and teachers

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ABSTRACT

ELAINE EUN JU CHO

THE SUBLIME ELOQUENCE OF SELECTED ASIAN AMERICAN WRITERS: A
RHETORICAL STUDY OF JOHN OKADA'S *NO-NO BOY*, MAXINE HONG
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This study examines selected literary works that contribute to the emerging field of Asian American literature. Asian American writers explore a broad spectrum of topics that represent the “constant state of transition” between rhetorical borderlands (Anzaldua 25). They negotiate rhetorical borderlands that transition between East and West or West and East to address social and cultural issues of the past and/or present while providing hope for the future. They also incorporate various styles of eloquence, as well as their own eloquence, that are connected to the five sources of sublimity: “power to conceive great thoughts,” “strong and inspired emotion,” rhetorical figures, diction, and “dignified and elevated word-arrangement” (Longinus 350). This study conveys that the diverse styles of eloquence in West Coast writers John Okada's *No-No Boy*, passages in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*, and Lisa See's *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* are represented in the diction, word usage and arrangement, rhetorical figures, persuasive appeal of pathos, and folkloric elements

reflecting the argument of Longinus: “it is our nature to be elevated and exalted by true sublimity” (350).

The first chapter of this study includes an introduction to Asian American literature. Although Asian American texts have been major components of American literature and have been composed in many areas of the country, the focus of this study is the works of writers from the West Coast of the United States. These writers elevate their works to a level of sublimity, and the three styles of eloquence from the classical rhetorical tradition are explained in the second chapter. The third chapter is an analysis of selective rhetorical figures as proofs of argument in all three works. The following chapters include an analysis of folklore in selective passages from each book and its connection to the rhetorical arguments.

Folklore reveals the values as well as exposes the contradictions that arise from binary oppositions associated with values placed in social and cultural contexts. This study concludes that the 21st century is an opportune time for Asian American literature because it continues to grow exponentially with talented and gifted writers who produce sublime works of literature.

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CHAPTER I

AN INTRODUCTION TO ASIAN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Asian American literature is an emerging field of study. In their 1992 publication of *Reading the Literatures of Asian America*, editors Shirley Geok-lin Lim and Amy Ling asserted, “In the past twenty years, Asian American literature has burgeoned into a recognized body of texts that must be taken seriously as a rich contribution to the pluralistic culture of the contemporary United States” (3). Since 1992, Asian American literature has continued to flourish. According to Elaine H. Kim, Professor of Asian American Studies at the University of California, Berkeley and author of *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context*, “Present-day Asian American writers are experimenting with colloquial language that expresses their unique sensibilities with combinations of genre forms that blend drama with poetry, prose with poetry, fiction with non-fiction, and literature with history” (214). Alongside African American literature, Asian American literature is consistently attracting serious consideration in the field of American literature. Before it was recognized as Asian American literature, the field was categorized as ethnic literature, which generalizes the area and alienates it from American literature. From *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture*, Werner Sollors explains that ethnic writers in America were already involved in the literary movements before they were recognized by the mainstream culture and categorized into ethnic literature: “Because of their close

connections to other cultures or international reading matter, American ethnic writers sometimes participated in literary innovations of other national literatures before such innovations became more widespread in America” (247-48). Asian American literature became more widespread in America by struggling to establish its presence in American literature; therefore, the emergence of Asian American literature is progressively establishing its reasons to belong in American literature instead of alienating itself as if it is not part of American society. By celebrating its cultural diversity in American society, Asian American literature, according to scholar Qun Wang, “reclaims Asian Americans’ sense of history and identity. It also democratizes American literary expression by (re)presenting what has been mis(sing)-represented and by giving voices to the voiceless. In these ways, Asian American literature is crucial for building the multicultural society that American identities are destined to create” (“Mother Tongue, Father Country” 590). In *Asian American Issues*, authors Mary Yu Danico and Franklin Ng affirm that the initial recognition of Asian American literature came with some misunderstanding: “When Asian American literature as a phrase was coined in the 1960s and 1970s, it was commonly misunderstood. Some people thought that writings about Asia comprised Asian American literature, whereas others believed that writings by Asians in Asia were part of Asian American literature” (65). Subsequently, “this misunderstanding stemmed from the belief that people of Asian descent living in America were no different from Asians in Asia” (Danico and Ng 65). In reaction to the misunderstanding, “the Asian American movement was fueled by students and community activism at San Francisco State University and the University of California, Berkeley, in the 1960s and 1970s”

(Danico and Ng 66). During this time period, especially “in the 1970s, it was immensely difficult for Asian Americans to find venues for their writings, particularly if this work challenged the dominant culture” (Kim, *Reading the Literatures* xii). This difficulty was challenged by existing stereotypes of Asian Americans. Consequently, “it is no coincidence that *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian American Writers* (1974) was published by Howard University Press or that many Asian American writings of 1970s were brought out by presses like Third World Communications, Kearney Street Workshop, and Bamboo Ridge” (Kim, *Reading the Literatures* xii). Since many Asian American writers were confronted with cultural and social challenges in the mainstream culture, “it is within this context that the pioneering work of the members of the Combined Asian Resources Project (CARP)—Frank Chin, Jeffrey Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, Nathan Lee, Benjamin R. Tong, and Shawn Hsu Wang—takes on such importance” (Kim, *Reading the Literatures* xii). According to Danico and Ng, the members of CARP “were screaming to attract notice from the public to recognize that there was a body of writing known as Asian American literature” because “they wanted people to know that there were talented Asian American writers who had produced a body of creative work that was drawn from the lives and experiences of Asian Americans” (66). In the 1974 publication of *Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Asian-American Writers*, editors Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Hsu Wong affirmed the importance of recognizing Asian American literature in mainstream culture: “Asian America, so long ignored and forcibly excluded from creative participation in American culture, is wounded, sad, angry, swearing, and wondering and

this is his AIIIEEEEE!!! It is more than a whine, shout, or scream. It is fifty years of our whole voice” (viii). In essence, “they were concerned about the issue of representation, or how Asian Americans were depicted in the media, literature, and pop culture” (Danico and Ng 67). Qun Wang claims that Asian American literature was introduced to the general reading public in America by the second-generation of Asian American writers: “Because American-born Asian writers did not have the kind of language problem their parents struggled with, many of them adopted the role of the “translator” for their ethnic cultural heritage” (588). Furthermore, “members of CARP pressed for the revival and reprinting of Asian American classics, including works by Carlos Bulosan, Louis Chu, John Okada, Bienvenido N. Santos, and Monica Sone. They established an archive of materials based on interviews of Asian American actors and writers, organized literature conferences in Oakland and Seattle, and breathed life into Asian American theater” (Kim, *Reading the Literatures* xii-xiii). For Asian Americans living in the United States, they “needed a literature that described their lives and feelings. Literature and the arts were vehicles for expression and creativity, modes of demonstrating that Asian Americans had their own cultural identity and artistic sensibility” (Danico and Ng 66). Elaine H. Kim’s argument, which was stated in 1982, best represents today’s argument for acknowledging Asian American literature: “Asian American literature is our voice to the rest of the world. It encourages our humanity and our interconnections. It helps us define our identity, culture, and community, our unity and our diversity. As such it has the potential to contribute to our sovereignty and the preservation of our cultural integrity” (*Asian American Literature* 278). The acknowledgment of Asian American literature as a field

of literary study shapes the identities of the Asian American communities and individuals in the American society, and it helps bring an understanding to the importance of the emerging field in American literature and culture. The West Coast movement of Asian American activists and writers has paved the way for other Asian American writers from across the nation to be acknowledged as part of mainstream culture. Therefore, Asian American literature continues to establish its own identity in American literature.

Since the development of Asian American literature and its recognition as a field of American literature, the dichotomy of representation in Asian American literature continues to divide the opinions of literary scholars and critics. At the beginning, those who advocated for the recognition of Asian American studies wanted to include literature that was written by Asian American authors who shared their Asian American experience. Consequently, some literary scholars and critics argue that Asian American literature should represent the Asian American experience. Elaine H. Kim contends, “By studying Asian American literature, readers can learn about the Asian American experience from the point of view of those who have lived it” (*Asian American Literature* xviii). However, Kim also contends, “At the same time, it is important to remember that Asian Americans who write are not necessarily “typical” or “representative” of their nationality or racial group” (*Asian American Literature* xviii). For example, “no one expects John Steinbeck or Herman Melville to represent or typify all white Americans or even all German Americans or Anglo-Americans, but because Asian Americans have been unfamiliar to most American readers, their visions and expressions are sometimes erroneously marginalized” (Kim, *Asian American Literature* xix). On the contrary,

“some activists believe that Asian American literature should be a mirror of the community and serve its people. This can be accomplished if Asian American literature has a positive portrayal of the Asian American community and helps to puncture negative stereotypes” (Danico and Ng 67). Asian American writers “not only told stories about their own lives but also served as bridges connecting their ethnic cultures with the mainstream culture in America” (Wang 588). For some activists and scholars, the representation of Asian American experience is part of what constitutes the identity of Asian American literature.

On the other hand, Asian American writers should not be responsible for representing the Asian American experience. Instead, they should have the freedom to create their work without the social and cultural pressures to represent the Asian American experience. For instance, Danico and Ng contend, “others differ and believe that writing itself is a creative and artistic act, and that Asian American literature should not be constrained by social goals” (67). According to Amy Ling, “the ethnicity of an author should be Asian and the subject matter Asian or Asian American to fit [the] definition of an Asian American text” (“Teaching Asian American Literature”). Besides representing the Asian American experience, Asian American literature also represents literature written by Asian American authors who celebrate writing as a creative and artistic process.

More importantly, Asian American literature includes various genres of literature written by Asian American writers. Asian American literature “encompasses many categories ranging from fiction to non-fiction, prose to poetry, adult literature to

children's literature, and novels and short stories to plays and dramas" (Danico and Ng 65). It is a field that is progressively including Asian American writers who are exploring various genres of literature: autobiography, journals, novels, short stories, essays, poetry, and plays. In 1982, Elaine H. Kim declared, "At the moment, we are experiencing the start of a golden age of Asian American cultural production" (*Asian American Literature* xi). Within this growing field of Asian American literature, scholars and critics of Asian American literature agree that the field of Asian American literature is divided into two periods. In his essay, "Mother Tongue, Father Country: Asian American Identities," Qun Wang describes the division of Asian American literature:

In exploring how Asian influences have affected American identities, it is important to note that the development of Asian American literature can be divided into two periods. The first period lasted for more than a century. It started with first-generation Asian immigrants' using their native language to describe their experiences in the United States...It was, however, the second-generation Asian American writers who introduced Asian American literature to the general reading public in America. (588)

Wang contends that Asian American literature began with the first generation or Asian immigrants who wrote about their experiences in America. For the "first-generation Asian immigrants using their native language to describe their experiences in the United States, some of these writings were published in Asian language newspapers and some were later translated, collected, and published in anthologies" (Wang 588). Between 1910 and 1940, "poems in Chinese" were "carved into the walls of the barracks on Angel

Island” (Kim, *Asian American Literature* 23). In 1906, Hamilton Holt, editor of *The Life Stories of Undistinguished Americans*, collected “autobiographical information about a Japanese house servant and a Chinese merchant” (Kim, *Asian American Literature* 23). Then, there were Asian immigrant writers who were literate in English; “foreign students, scholars, and diplomats, who were, together with merchants, exempted from the Asian exclusion laws and who generally received better treatment in America than did Asian laboring people, comprise a disproportionately large part of the early Asian American literary voice” (Kim, *Asian American Literature* 24). One of the earliest writing is from Lee Yan Phou; he wrote *When I Was a Boy in China* in 1887 to introduce the westerners to Chinese customs, folktales, games, etc (Kim, *Asian American Literature* 25). Lin Yutang’s book, *My Country and My People* (1937) introduces Americans to Chinese culture, and “Etsu Sugimoto’s *A Daughter of the Samurai* (1925) appeared only one year after the passage of laws prohibiting Japanese immigration to the United States” (Kim, *Asian American Literature* 25-26). In contrast, Amy Ling contends, “Chinese American literary history begins with two Eurasia sisters who responded to racism in divergent ways in their writings”: Edith Eaton and Winfred Eaton (“Chinese American Women Writers” 65). The Eaton sisters and the rest of their family “immigrated from England to America” (Ling, “Chinese American Women Writers” 65). Therefore, the first period of Asian American literature included both first and second-generation Asian Americans writers.

Additionally, literature written about viewing America from an Asian immigrant’s eyes or perspective was popular during the first period of Asian American literature: Park

No-Yang's *An Oriental View of American Civilization* (1934), Wu Tingfang's *America through the Spectacles of an Oriental Diplomat* (1914), Huie Kin's *Reminiscences* (1932) (Kim, *Asian American Literature* 30-31). Kim argues that the literature was written from an aristocratic immigrant's perspective, and "they focused their attention on the problems of the Chinese laborer attributed most of the blame for discrimination against them to the laborer themselves" (*Asian American Literature* 31). Also, there was literature from an Asian immigrant's perspective that transitioned to an Asian American perspective.

Carlos Bulosan, a self-taught immigrant from the Philippines, is a well-known first generation Filipino American writer. Bulosan's works were published in 1940, "but it was during the war years that he attracted nationwide attention for his literary efforts: *Letter from America* (1942), *The Voice of Bataan* (1944), *Laughter of My Father* (1944, a collection of short stories first serialized in the *New Yorker*), *The Dark People* (1944), and *America Is in the Heart* (1946), the autobiography that has been considered his key work" (Kim, *Asian American Literature* 45). From an aristocratic Korean family, Younghill Kang traveled to America as a student and published two novels in America: *The Grass Roof* (1931) and *East Goes West* (1937). The former novel explains Kang's departure from Korea during the Japanese rule, and the latter novel describes Kang's experiences in America (Kim, *Asian American Literature* 33). Immigrant writers, also known as first generation Asian American writers, such as Carlos Bulosan and Younghill Kang, traveled to America with the intention of going back to their homeland; but their writings "illustrate the transition from authors who view themselves as guests or visitors

to those who want to find a place for themselves in American society” (Kim, *Asian American Literature* 32).

The second period of Asian American literature includes a mixing of literary genres; however, the actual time period for this second wave of Asian American literature is also debatable. According to Elaine H. Kim, the second-generation of Asian American authors made its appearance as early as the 1920s: “Since the 1920s and 1930s, a substantial amount of Japanese American *nisei* writing has been produced” (*Asian American Literature* 73). The earliest publication from a *nisei* or second-generation Japanese American was published almost a decade later. “During World War II, however, Chinese American loyalty and success were carefully distinguished from Japanese American perfidy and disloyalty, and Japanese American writing was suppressed or confined to the ‘underground’—internment camp—journals” (Kim, *Asian American Literature* 73). Also, due to political and social conflicts during World War II, Toshio Mori’s *Yokohama California* scheduled publication year of 1941 was delayed until 1949 (Kim *Asian American Literature* 73). Another acknowledged Japanese American writer is John Okada, who is the author of *No-No Boy* (1957). John Okada’s *No-No Boy* was virtually unknown until a group of second-generation Asian American writers in the 1970s revived the publication of the book. Published in 1943, Pardee Lowe’s *Father and Glorious Descendent* “is the first published book-length literary piece by an American-born Chinese in English” (Kim, *Asian American Literature* 59). Following Lowe’s book is Jade Snow Wong’s *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (1945 and 1950). In addition, there is literature from Asian American writers who are rarely mentioned by

literary scholars because of its questionable content of representing Asian Americans. In the 1974 publication of *Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Asian-American Writers*, the editors asserted that literary works such as “Lin Yutang’s *A Chinatown Family* (1948) and C.Y. Lee’s *Flower Drum Song* affected our sensibilities but did not express it” because “their writing is from whiteness, not from Chinese America” (Chin et al. x). According to Kim, it was not until “beginning around 1983 and continuing into the present, Asian American writers of diverse ancestries have burst onto the U.S. cultural scene with novels, poetry, plays, short stories, and book-length critical studies written from a wide array of perspectives that reflect the increasing heterogeneity of contemporary Asian American communities” (*Reading the Literatures* xi). In contrast, Wang contends, “The second period of Asian American literature started in the mid-1970s and eventually came to be known as the Asian American Renaissance” (589). Wang also claims that during this period, Asian American literature was “heralded by Chinese American writer Maxine Hong Kingston’s two celebrated autobiographical novels, *The Woman Warrior* (1975) and *China Men* (1980), this period witnessed two notable changes in Asian American literature; both are related to diversity” (589). The first notable change occurred when the “autobiography ended its reign as the predominant form of expression in Asian American literature. Asian American writers in this period became more interested in experimenting with various literary genres and styles in search of a medium that would reflect and depict their feelings accurately” (Wang 589). Simultaneously, “this period was marked by an increase in the publication of short stories and poems” (Wang 589). During this period, Asian American writers such as Maxine Hong Kingston, Amy Tan,

and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha experimented with various literary genres. Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*, which received the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1976, is a combination of non-fiction and fiction that is interwoven with elements of folklore, cultural values of China and America, and English translations of the Romanized Chinese words. Another one of Kingston's well-known novels that is also part nonfiction and part fiction is *China Men*, and it was runner up for the Pulitzer Prize. Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), a *New York Times* bestseller and later adapted into film in 1993, is also semi-autobiographical and fictional; the novel provides a series of short stories that are reflective vignettes, and the novel also includes a combination of folkloric elements and cultural values from China and America. For the second notable change, "writers from ethnic groups other than Chinese, Japanese, or Filipino started to make waves" (Wang 589). Literature from the second wave of Asian American writers "contributed to the democratization and canonization of Asian American voices," and they presented "a more colorful and pluralistic interpretation of Asian American experiences. Asian American writers of Korean, South Asian, and Southeast Asian descent became more productive and ready to take on the challenge to diversify both approach and voice in the portrayal of the Asian American experience" (Wang 589). Cathy Song, a Korean American writer, "demonstrated her talent as both a storyteller and a poet with short stories such as "Beginnings" (1976) and poems collected in *Picture Bride* (1983)" (Wang 589). Similar to the unique writing styles of Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan, but with different mix of genres, Korean American writer Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée* (1982)

includes a hybrid of texts and images that are interconnected with non-fiction, fiction, and poetry in a mix of English and French languages with each chapter dedicated to the Greek muses. In 1989, “Indian American writer Bharati Mukerjee’s *Jasmine* and Vietnamese American writer Le Ly Hayslip’s *When Heaven and Earth Change Places* were published” (Wang 589). Le Ly Hayslip “is one of the first Asian American writers from Southeast Asia to be published in the United States” (Wang 589). Interestingly, in 1991, there were five major novels published by Chinese American writers: Amy Tan’s *The Kitchen God’s Wife*, Gish Jen’s *The Typical American*, David Louie Pangs of *Love*, Frank Chin’s *Donald Duk*, and Gus Lee’s *China Boy*. The second period of Asian American writers contributed to the developing and impressive body of Asian American literature that includes literary genres beyond autobiography.

In addition to writing novels, short stories, and poetry, Asian American writers also explored playwriting. Several Asian American playwrights wrote plays for the American theater. For example, Chinese American playwright David Henry Hwang’s play *M. Butterfly* opened in Washington, D.C. in 1988. It received the Tony Award for the year’s best play (Wang 589). Other emerging playwrights in the 1980s were Wakako Yamauchi, Jessica Hagedorn, and Laurence Yep. Their plays are published in *Between Worlds: Contemporary Asian-American Plays* (1993). These pioneer Asian American playwrights opened the doors for future Asian American playwrights to continue making their presence in American drama.

Besides gaining recognition from the general American society, Asian American communities are also acknowledging the importance of preserving and developing Asian

American literature. In 1982, Elaine H. Kim claimed, “Today’s Asian American communities are coming to understand the importance of affirming a uniquely Asian American culture” (*Asian American Literature* 278). More than 30 years later, Kim’s claim continues to echo the goal of acknowledging the diversity of Asian American literature and its presence in American literature. In 1992, Shirley Geok-lin Lim and Amy Ling also argued for the recognition of Asian American literature as part of American literature and American culture:

In the decade since Elaine H. Kim introduced Asian American literature in her ground-breaking book, *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Social Context* (1982), Asian American writers have been extremely productive, often garnering national awards and international recognition. Scholars of Asian American literature have been raising important questions –concerning immigration history, assimilation and acculturation, the minority model status, stereotypes, gender conflicts, the relations between Asian American and mainstream American literature – that provide historical and cultural contexts and problematize the entire notion of an Asian American cannon. (3)

Asian American literature continues to flourish in America by representing issues that are relevant to Asian Americans and others living in the United States, and it continues to delve into historical and cultural contexts of American history and its connection to American literature. “In former years, Asian American writers expressed an intense desire to belong to and to participate fully in the main currents of American life and

culture. Today's writers are still concerned with defining their identity and roots in American society" (Kim, *Asian American Literature* 278). Despite the emergence of Asian American literature, Asian American writers continue to struggle for their representation in American literature and in American society, "but their increased awareness of the value and legitimacy of the multicultural, multiracial elements that combine to comprise American society has given rise to many new and hopeful voices as well as diverse tendencies that reflect a wide range of concerns" (Kim, *Asian American Literature* 278). As a result, "contemporary Asian American writers are in the process of challenging old myths and stereotypes by defining Asian American humanity as part of the composite identity of the American people, which, like the Asian American identity, is still being shaped and defined" (Kim, *Asian American Literature* 279). In addition to more common and well-known contemporary Asian American writers, such as Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan, other emerging contemporary writers across the United States include Chang Rae-Lee (recipient of the PEN/Hemingway Award for his first novel *Native Speaker*), Ha Jin (recipient of the 1999 National Book Award and 2000 PEN/Faulkner Award for his novel *Waiting*), Leonard Chang, Sung J. Woo, Jhumpa Lahiri (recipient of the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for her novel *Interpreter of Maladies*), Chitra Divakaruni (recipient of the American Book Award), Lisa See (author of five *New York Times* bestsellers), Helie Lee, Eugenia Kim (recipient of the 2009 Borders Original Voices Award for her novel *The Calligrapher's Daughter*), Bich Minh Nguyen (recipient of the American Book Award for her novel *Short Girls* and the PEN/Jerard Award for her memoir *Stealing Buddha's Dinner*), Catherine Chung, Gene Luen Yang (recipient of the

Michael L. Printz Award for his graphic novel *American Born Chinese*), and many more Asian American writers continue to contribute to the emerging field of Asian American literature. “In reality, there is a large body of writing by Asian American authors, poets, and playwrights that is acknowledged as Asian American literature” (Danico and Ng 65). From West Coast to East Coast, Asian American literature is a field that is emerging with Asian American writers who are exploring various genres of literature: autobiography, journals, novels, short stories, poetry, and plays.

In addition to the flourishing genres of Asian American literature, literary criticism of Asian American literature also made and increased its appearance in literary studies. Kim explains that literary criticism of Asian American literature appeared as early as the 1970s:

Since 1970, some Asian American literary history and criticism has been published, notably by Ronald Tanaka of Sacramento State University and Bruce Iwasaki of the Asian American Studies Center at UCLA. Several anthologies of Asian American literature contain introductory essays of a general nature. The best known of these are in *Asian American Authors* (1972), edited by Kai-yu Hsu and Helen Palubinskas, and *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian American Writers* (1974), edited by Frank Chin, Jeffrey Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Hsu Wong. (*Asian American Literature* xiv)

Elaine H. Kim’s *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context* (1982) is the first book that included literary criticism on Asian American

literature. The author herself admits, “As far as I know, however, mine is the first attempt to integrate the Asian American literary voice in one book-length study” (Kim *Asian American Literature* xiv). In 1992, Shirley Geok-lin Lim and Amy Ling edited *Readings of Asian America*, which included essays that explored comparative studies, gender studies, and cultural studies of selected literary works from Asian American writers. Harold Bloom has edited two books on Asian American literature criticism that featured various essays and articles from scholars: *Asian-American Writers (Bloom’s Modern Critical Views Series)* in 1998 and *Asian-American Writers* (2009). Literary critic and scholar, E.D. Huntley has written books on specific Asian American authors such as Amy Tan and Maxine Hong Kingston: *Amy Tan: A Critical Companion* (1998) and *Maxine Hong Kingston: A Critical Companion* (2000). The *Journal of Asian American Studies* also features essays on literary criticism of works from Asian American writers. Since Asian American literature is an emerging field of study, literary scholars and critics continue to offer new evaluations on selected works by Asian American writers.

Furthermore, the writing style of selected Asian American writers is richly layered with complex diction, distinctive word arrangement, various elements of folklore, contrasting values, representation of persuasive appeals, and rhetorical figures. Reflected in the literary voice of the selected Asian American writers, they address various cultural, historical, and/or social issues pertaining to Asia America and/or Asia that would have not been depicted by non-Asian American writers. These issues are proofs of argument that are expressed in various styles of eloquence, which are attributed to the successful

works of renowned rhetoricians such as Longinus and Cicero. Hence, a rhetorical analysis of certain concepts identified in modern Asian American literature provides a closer examination and analysis of the various cultural, historical, and/or social issues presented by the Asian American authors. In *De Oratore*, Classical rhetorician Marcus Tullius Cicero explains, “a knowledge of very many matters must be grasped, without which oratory is but an empty and ridiculous swirl of verbiage; and the distinctive style has to be formed, not only by the choice of words, but also by the arrangement of the same, and all the mental emotions, with which nature has endowed the human race” (291). In addition to developing their own style of writing, the writing style of selected Asian American writers may vary from plain to grand style, and an explanation of each style appears in Cicero’s *Orator* and *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. In *Copia: Foundations of the Abundant Style*, Renaissance rhetorician Desiderius Erasmus stated, “Quintilian, for example, among other virtues which he attributes to Pindar, especially admires his magnificently rich style, manifested both in subject matter and expression” (598). This grand style of eloquence is also evident in the subject matter and expression in Asian American literature. According to Longinus, “sublimity is a kind of eminence or excellence of discourse. It is the source of the distinction of the very greatest poets and prose writers and the means by which they have given eternal life to their own fame” (347). The writing style of selected Asian American writers is attributed to their own eloquence, and a literary work of eloquence is connected to sublimity and its five sources: “power to conceive great thoughts,” “strong and inspired emotion,” rhetorical figures, diction, and “dignified and elevated word-arrangement” (Longinus 350).

Writers of Asian American literature “work their way from speechlessness to eloquence not only by covering the historical stages women [and men] writers have traveled—from suffering patriarchy, to rebelling against its conventions, to creating their own ethos—but also by developing a style that emerges from their respective cultures” (Cheung 163). By developing their own style, Asian American writers rely on their values to convey their argument. In order to gain audience adherence, the values are enhanced by the concept of presence because it “acts directly on our sensibility” (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 116). By acting directly on the audience’s sensibility, presence is closely connected to audience persuasion by appealing to the audience’s emotions, one of the elements of sublimity. For instance, eloquence is evident in fiction that is based on an important event in Asian American history. In *No-No Boy*, even though the author John Okada does not fully identify himself with the main character who suffers from the consequences of not enlisting in the U.S. military, he writes about the Japanese American experience after World War II from different perspectives. John Okada eloquently describes the internal conflict of a young man and the social and cultural conflicts that surround him. The main character, Ichiro Yamada, is confronted with dualities and contradictions that stem from the values of Japanese and American cultures.

Also, Asian American literature can be a representation of mixed genres of literature in order to bridge eastern and western concepts. In *The Woman Warrior*, Maxine Hong Kingston writes about the Chinese and Chinese American experience and brings to light two contrasting cultures with shared similarities. Kingston intertwines part non-fiction and part fiction with Chinese folklore in a grand style that elevates the

eloquence of her text. On the other hand, an Asian American writer may focus on writing about a particular Asian experience instead of an Asian American experience. For example, Lisa See writes about the lives of Chinese girls and women before the Chinese Communist revolutionary movement and during the culturally accepted practice of footbinding in her novel *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*; and she presents the narrative in which the narrator, Lily, is biased and claims to have discernment. As the story progress, Lily is confronted with dualities, contradictions, and paradoxes; and she learns to discern a two-part reality. Lisa See's *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* eloquently expresses elements of western rhetoric to illustrate a story of two women during a time in China when footbinding and Confucian values were central parts of their lives.

John Okada, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Lisa See are aware of their audience; and they rely on their eloquent writing style to depict the Asian American and/or the Asian experience in order to reveal the dualities and contradictions of social and cultural values and to persuade the audience to adhere to their argument because "Asian American literature has several purposes: to remember the past, to give voice to a hitherto silent people with an ignored and therefore unknown history, to correct stereotypes of an exotic or foreign experience and thus, as Hong Kingston says, to claim America for the thousands of Americans whose Asian faces too frequently deny them a legitimate place in this country of their birth" (Ling, "Teaching Asian American Literature"). According to Amy Ling, who seems to be referring to Emmanuel Kant's theory on enlightenment, "writing is an act of self-assertion, self-revelation, and self-preservation" ("Chinese American Women Writers" 63). Whether or not their writing reflects Asian American or

Asian experience, the sublime literary works from Asian American writers such as John Okada, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Lisa See reflect an act of self-assertion, self-revelation, and self-preservation of their individual creative and artistic expression in the emerging field of Asian American literature.

CHAPTER II

ADDRESSING THE DIVERSE STYLES OF ELOQUENCE AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE TO SUBLIMITY

The eloquence of Asian American writers such as John Okada, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Lisa See is evident in their diverse writing styles. Their literary works of eloquence range through different styles: plain, middle, and grand. These varying styles are also connected to Longinus's five sources of sublimity. These writers are able to incorporate one or more of the three styles while expressing their own style of eloquence. Prior to an analysis of how the eloquence of John Okada's *No-No Boy*, Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, and Lisa See's *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* are connected to sublimity, one must address the diverse styles of eloquence.

Before the Classical Roman rhetorician and philosopher Marcus Tullius Cicero was famously known for teaching the five canons of rhetoric, the well-known Classical Greek rhetorician and philosopher Aristotle taught the canon of style to his students. However, Cicero further illustrated the importance of style by providing an explanation and examples of three styles. In Book III of *The Art of Rhetoric*, Aristotle claims that style is one of the "three things which require special attention in regard to speech" (343). Aristotle also explains that style is ubiquitous and is included in rhetoric and other parts of the orator's education: "in every system of instruction there is some slight necessity to pay attention to style; for it does make a difference, for the purpose of making a thing

clear, to speak in this or that manner; still, the difference is not so very great, but all these things are mere outward show for pleasing the hearer” (347-49). In *De Oratore*, Cicero explains the Romans’ advantage of learning from the Greek rhetoricians and appreciating eloquence as a form of style: “They used to attain what skill they could by means of their natural ability of reflection. But later, having heard the Greek orators, gained acquaintance with their literature and called in Greek teachers, our people were fired with a really incredible enthusiasm for eloquence” (291).

The word eloquence comes from the Latin word *elocutio*, which means style. One of the five canons of rhetoric that best represents sublimity is style or *elocution*. In his article, “From Elocution to New Criticism: An Episode in the History of Rhetoric” from *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric*, Thomas Sloane contends that style “had been used for centuries in rhetorical studies to mean style, the third of five offices of composition: invention (*inventio*), arrangement (*dispositio*), style (*elocutio*), memory (*memoria*), delivery (*actio, pronunciatio*)” (301). According to Thomas Sloane, *elocutio* is also associated with delivery: “Elocution as a word for rhetorical delivery came from the Latin term *elocutio*, itself a derivative of *eloquor*, meaning to simply express oneself” (301). For the purposes and applications in this dissertation, the focus on *elocutio* will be on the diverse styles of eloquence.

Defining Cicero’s specific style is complex because Cicero is the master of diverse styles of eloquence. Since Cicero is able to master both styles, Asiatic and Attic, in addition to his own style, some scholars argue that it is unfair to identify Cicero’s style as either Asiatic or Attic. In her essay, “Lipsius and the Art of Letter-Writing,” E.

Catherine Dunn defines the Attic style to be “associated with the *genus humile* or plain style...often referred to the purity of diction—good Greek or good Latin—and was separable from connotations of simplicity or grandeur, as Cicero himself attempted to show in the *Orator*” (145). From their 2nd edition of *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*, editors Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg explain that the Atticists “argued for the purity of diction and simplicity of syntax that they found in the early Greek eloquence of the Ten Attic Orators, especially Lysias. Atticists wished to establish a standard of Latinity for Roman oratory that would enforce similar purity and simplicity. They would resolve questions of grammar and usage by referring to the earliest Latin authors” (284). In contrast, the Asiatic style is known for its “floridity and sophistic” qualities (Dunn 145) because it “sought epigrammatic terseness or florid emotionalism after the manner of the Greek Sophistic Movement as it had prospered and evolved in Asia Minor (Bizzell and Herzberg 285). Even though both styles are distinct, attributing one style to Cicero would be unfair because some scholars argue that Cicero had his own distinct style that was developed from learning and mastering the Asiatic and Attic styles. In *Cicero’s Style: A Synopsis: Followed by Selected Analytic Studies*, author Michael von Albrecht contends, “Thanks to the variety of his style, Cicero belongs to neither group and defies classification. In his view the perfect orator must avoid both extremes, and what is more, avoid monotony” (127). Albrecht’s point is that Cicero’s style should not be categorized as either Asiatic or Attic because his style is developed from the combination of both styles: “trying to combine the severe taste of the ‘Atticists’ with the brilliancy and fullness of the ‘Asiatics,’ Cicero is the best of Atticists and the

best of Asiatics; once mastery has been attained, differences of method lose some of their importance” (127). In agreement with Albrecht, Grant Showerman, author of “Cicero the Stylist: An Appreciation,” asserts that Cicero’s style “is neither Asian nor Attic, but each in turn, and both together –or, rather neither of them; for perfect oratory belongs consistently to itself. Cicero’s oratory, like his philosophy, is eclectic. His style belongs to no school; it represents the assimilation of the best qualities of both schools by a nature well tuned to the harmonies of thought and sound” (190). So, Cicero’s style is unique and not solely representing Asiatic or Attic style; instead, “the essential characteristic of Ciceronianism, then, is fluency –fluency of mental process, and fluency of expression secured by fullness of vocabulary, grace of transition, sonorous good, and rhythmical movement. The style of Cicero is an easily gliding stream, calm, and noiseless, but sweeping and powerful” (Showerman 189). Since Cicero is “an eclectic whose style is compounded of the best elements of more than one school” (Showerman 191), his style should not be limited to one type of style but expanded to encompass diverse styles of eloquence.

Furthermore, the evidence of Cicero’s diverse styles of eloquence is neither simple nor complex; instead, it ranges from simple to complex. An eloquent orator “can discuss commonplace matters simply, lofty subjects impressively, and topics ranging between in a tempered style” (Cicero, *Orator* 343). An experienced orator is able to apply eloquence to various styles depending upon the subject and audience. From the

Orator, Cicero explains that the style of eloquence is abstract because it can range from simple to complex:

For it is not an eloquent person whom I seek, nor anything subject to death and decay, but that absolute quality, the possession of which makes a man eloquent. And this is nothing but abstract eloquence, which we can behold only with the mind's eye. He, then, will be an eloquent speaker – to respect my former definition – who can discuss trivial matters in a plain style, matters of significance in the tempered style, and weighty affairs in the grand manner. (343)

Cicero asserts that an orator should be able to incorporate different styles to express his eloquence for a particular subject to an audience. Thus, the orator is able to adjust his speech with diverse styles of eloquence.

During the Classical rhetoric period, Cicero classified three types of style: plain, middle, and grand. In order for the man of eloquence “to prove, to please, and to sway or persuade” his audience, he must know the three styles (Cicero, *Orator* 339). In *Orator*, Cicero describes the three different styles of eloquence in detail. Cicero begins with an explanation of plain style. This style represents a different style of eloquence that sets it apart from the other two styles because “the orator of the plain style, provided he is elegant and finished, will not be bold in coining words, and in metaphor will be modest, sparing use of archaisms, and somewhat subdued in using other embellishments of language and of thought” (Cicero, *Orator* 340). The eloquence of the plain style is not so ornate or elaborate as the other two styles: “The foremost aim of the plain style is to

inform one's audience" (Albrecht 22). Albrecht explains that the "characteristic features of this style, in which the subject matter is more important than the words, are insertions, short sentences, normal word order, parataxis, and direct speech" (23). The plain style is concise and to the point. Before Cicero defined plain style, Aristotle had explained the importance of plain style: "In regard to style, one of its chief merits may be defined as perspicuity. This is shown by the fact that the speech, if it does not make the meaning clear, will not perform its proper function; neither must it be mean, nor above the dignity of the subject, but appropriate to it" (351). Aristotle also argued that the perspicuity or clear expression of plain style is evident in the use of metaphors. For instance, "it is metaphor above all that gives perspicuity, pleasure, and a foreign air, and it cannot be learnt from anyone else; but we must make use of metaphors and epithets that are appropriate" (Aristotle 355). The metaphors in plain style give eloquence. In agreement, Cicero explains, "metaphor he may possibly employ more frequently because it is of the commonest occurrence in the language of townsman and rustic alike" (*Orator* 340). Thus, the inclusion of a metaphor "will be secured by observing due proportion; otherwise there will be lack of propriety, because it is when placed in juxtaposition that contraries are most evident" (Aristotle 355). In addition, plain style may include repetition of certain words, inclusion of wit and humor, and/or other figures of speech besides metaphors that represent the "commonest words" (Cicero, *Orator* 340). By using the commonest words, the orator can achieve the goal of leading the audience, for "ordinary language can help to promote agreement on the ideas" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 153). The eloquence of plain style is represented in the use of common

words and figures of speech, which are elements of sublimity. The plain style is not so ornate as the middle and grand style, but its eloquence is in the function of informing or teaching the audience about a subject in simple or colloquial language.

The second eloquence of style is the middle style, and its function is to interest or to please the audience. Whereas the first style informs the audience, “the second style is fuller and somewhat more robust than the simple style just described, but plainer than the grandest style,” and “there is perhaps a minimum of vigour, and a maximum of charm. For it is richer than the unadorned style, but plainer than the ornate and opulent style” (Cicero, *Orator* 341). The middle style is less ornate than the grand style, but it presents itself as an ornate style when compared to the plain style. Besides metaphors, Cicero includes transferred words which are “words transferred by resemblance from another thing in order to produce a pleasing effect, or because of lack of a proper word” (Orator 341). The transferred words are known as metonymy “because nouns are transferred” (Cicero, *Orator* 342). Also, “when there is a continuous stream of metaphors, a wholly different style of speech is produced; consequently the Greeks call it ἀλληγορία or allegory” (Cicero, *Orator* 342). In addition to metaphors, Cicero argues that other figures of speech such as metonymy and allegory contribute to the eloquence of the middle style. The figures of speech and figures of thought in the middle style are also representative of sublimity. Accordingly, metaphors, metonymy, and allegory are representative elements of the middle style.

The third classification of eloquence is the grand style, and its function is to persuade or to move the audience. For the grand style, “this eloquence has power to

sway men's minds and move them in every possible way. Now it storms the feelings, now it creeps in; it implants new ideas and uproots the old" (Cicero, *Orator* 342). The grand style is associated with pathos and logos because it stimulates the mind and emotions on a level that is separate from the other two styles. In *Rhetoric*, Aristotle asserts that orators who do not pay attention to style are "those who employ poetic language by their lack of taste make the style ridiculous and frigid, and such idle chatter produces obscurity" (365); therefore, "style expresses emotion, when a man speaks with anger of wanton outrage; with indignation and reserve, even in mentioning them, of things foul or impious; with admiration of things praiseworthy; with lowliness of things pitiable; and so in all other cases" (Aristotle 379). The orator's ability to stir the audience's emotions separates grand style from the plain and middle styles. In Book II of *De Oratore*, Cicero explains the connection between pathos and eloquence:

This is because the hearer's mentality corroborates the proof, and not sooner is it uttered than it is sticking in his memory, whereas that passionate style searches out an arbitrator's emotional side rather than his understanding, and that side can only be reached by diction that is rich, diversified, and copious, with animated delivery to match. (334)

In this passage, Cicero's emphasis on the emotions of the audience is connected to pathos and one of the sources of sublimity, "strong and inspired emotion" (Longinus 350), which contribute to the eloquence of grand style.

The three styles also appear in *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. In Book IV of *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, "the three kinds of style, called types" are categorized with the following

description: “the Middle type consists of words of a lower, yet not of the lowest and most colloquial, class of words. The Simple type is brought down even to the most current idiom of standard speech,” and the Grand style includes “impressive thoughts” that “are chosen, such as are used in Amplification and Appeal to Pity” and “figures of thought and figures of diction which have grandeur” (248). Even in *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, the appeal to pity or pathos is an element of grand style. In addition, “each type of style, the grand, the middle, and the simple, gains distinction from rhetorical figures” (*Rhetorica ad Herennium* 251). The three styles in *Rhetorica ad Herennium* share the same characteristics of Cicero’s explanation of three eloquent styles; however, the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* includes detailed information on the figures of thought and figures of diction.

Furthermore, each of the three styles has a separate function. In his article, “Cicero’s Conception of Literary Art,” Arthur Patch McKinlay explains that “Cicero repeatedly divides the function of the orator into three parts: to inform, to interest, and to persuade” (245). If the orator is able to incorporate all three parts, then he or she is able to understand the fluidity of eloquent style or the diverse styles of eloquence. For instance, “In Cicero’s practice, plain and middle style overlap” (Albrecht 23). Similar to Cicero’s practice in incorporating diverse styles of eloquence in his speeches, the orator is also capable of combining the styles. According to McKinlay, “To him [Cicero] an orator is not worthy of the name, unless he has a graceful and elegant style, distinguished by a peculiar artifice and polish. He groups grace with propriety as the two essential elements of eloquence” (249). Consequently, Cicero “devotes a large portion of the *De*

Oratore and most of the *Orator* to the ornamental phase of style” (McKinlay 250). In order to emphasize the diverse styles of eloquence, “Cicero defines oratory as language of power and elegance accommodated to the feelings and passions of mankind, and he often speaks of the oratorical art” (McKinlay 252). In *De Oratore*, Cicero claims, “I hold that eloquence is dependent upon the trained skill of highly educated men” (290). Among the highly educated men, Cicero explains that their distinctive style should reflect knowledge of certain things, and they are connected to the five sources of sublimity that are described in Longinus’s *On the Sublime*:

To begin with, a knowledge of very many matters must be grasped, without which oratory is but an empty and ridiculous swirl of verbiage: and the distinctive style has to be formed, not only by the choice of words, but also by the arrangement of the same; and all the mental emotions, with which nature has endowed the human race, are to be intimately understood, because it is in calming or kindling the feelings of the audience that the full power and science of oratory are to be brought into play. (*De Oratore* 291)

Each source of knowledge reflects the orator’s style through diction, word arrangement, figures of speech or rhetorical devices, the power to conceive great thoughts, and the persuasive appeal of pathos.

When it comes to differentiating style for either speech or literature, Cicero contends that style matters for both the orator and poet. In the following passage, Cicero draws a connection between orator and poet:

The truth is that the poet is a very near kinsman to the orator, rather more heavily fettered as regards rhythm, but with ampler freedom in his choice of words, while in the use of many sorts of ornament he is his ally and almost his counterpart; in one respect at all events something like identity exists, since he sets no boundaries or limits to his claims, such as would prevent him from ranging whither he will with the same freedom and license as the other. (*De Oratore* 299)

Both the orator and poet rely on words to express their own style of eloquence in order to persuade the audience. “The orator however by his words greatly magnifies and exaggerates the grievousness of such things as in everyday life are thought evils and troubles to be shunned, while he enlarges upon and beautifies his eloquence whatever is commonly deemed delectable and worthy to be desired” (Cicero, *De Oratore* 313). In addition, “Words are chosen by the stylist not for their meaning alone, but for the charm of their vowel and consonantal qualities, and for their rhythmical composition. The modern ear is more or less unappreciative of the magic of harmonious sound in prose” (Showerman 186). Another element of sublimity is “dignified and elevated word-arrangement” (Longinus 350). According to Aristotle, “Of nouns and verbs it is the proper ones that make style perspicuous, all the others which have been spoken of in the *Poetics* elevate and make it ornate; for departure from the ordinary makes it appear more

dignified. In this respect men feel the same in regard to style as in regard to foreigners and fellow-citizens” (351). Consequently, the orator and poet rely on words to express diverse styles of eloquence.

In addition to the Classical Greek and Roman rhetoricians, the Renaissance rhetoricians or humanists also valued eloquence as a style. As noted in Hannah Gray’s article “Renaissance Humanism: The Pursuit of Eloquence,” “True eloquence, according to humanists, could arise only out of a harmonious union between wisdom and style; its aim was to guide men toward virtue and worthwhile goals, not to mislead them for vicious or trivial purposes” (499). In “Copia Foundations of the Abundant Style,” an impressive work on rhetoric, Renaissance rhetorician Desiderius Erasmus explains that “the speech of man is a magnificent and impressive thing when it surges along like a golden river, with thoughts and words pouring out in rich abundance” (597). In *The Book of the Courtier*, Italian humanist and rhetorician, Baldesar Castiglione also places importance on the word for the sake of style: “Now it is the words themselves that make the greatness and magnificence of an oration” (666). Hannah Gray argues that “the humanists’ stand on eloquence implied an almost incredible faith in the power of the word,” and “the sweeping claims which ancient writers on rhetoric had made for the impact of oratory were reiterated by the humanists for the written as for the spoken word” (503). The humanists also agreed that there was an important connection between classical rhetoric and literature, and “the classical precepts governing the art of oratory were now applied to all forms of literature” (Gray 503). For this reason, “the process of merging rhetoric and literature within a generalized view of eloquence had been initiated

already in later antiquity, and the humanists continued and extended this development. For them, after all, the existing models of eloquence were precisely the surviving texts” (Gray 503). Hence, the style of eloquence during the Renaissance is influenced by eloquent styles of the past.

On the other hand, an Enlightenment philosopher John Locke claims eloquence to be connected to deception because “all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment” (827). In contrast to Locke’s philosophical stance on eloquence, Enlightenment rhetoricians David Hume and Giambattista Vico argue that the importance of eloquence is to persuade the audience. According to David Hume’s *Of the Standard of Taste*, “the object of eloquence is to persuade, of history to instruct, of poetry to please by means of passions and imaginations” (836). In agreement with Hume, Vico defines “the role of eloquence to persuade; an orator is persuasive when he calls forth his hearers the mood which he desires” (*On the Study Methods of Our Time* 873). Despite Locke’s distrust of eloquence, he conveys his argument with his own style in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* that closely resembles Cicero’s description of plain style. Also, “whether in oration, essay, or formal epistle, Ciceronian eloquence is a full-flowing, unceasing current. It streams –smoothly, steadily, reposefully” (Showerman 181). In *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, Enlightenment rhetorician Hugh Blair explains that “among nations in a civilized state, no art has been cultivated more than that of language, style, and composition” (951) because “he who speaks, or writes, in such a manner as to adapt to all his words most

effectually to that end, is the most eloquent man (970). Thus, the eloquence of “Ciceronian fluency of thought finds a perfect medium of expression in Ciceronian fluency of language. The full, streaming, logical process is clothed in full streaming, verbal dress” (Showerman 182). According to Hugh Blair, “Whatever then the subject be, there is room for eloquence; in history, or even in philosophy, as well as in orations” (*Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Letters* 970).

Literature embodies the human expression with diverse styles of eloquence that are expressed by a verbal interplay of words, thoughts, and ideas. Throughout the rhetorical tradition, rhetoricians have praised the importance of eloquence, and “the classical precepts governing the art of oratory were now applied to all forms of literature” (Gray 503). According to Cicero, “he in fact is eloquent who can discuss commonplace matters simply, lofty subjects, impressively, and topics ranging between in a tempered style” (*Orator* 343). In the area of literature, a writer who is able to balance the diverse styles of eloquence presents a literary work of sublimity. Thus, in the area of Asian American literature, eloquence and sublimity are apparent in the literary works of Asian American writers.

Modern Asian American literature encompasses diverse styles of eloquence that are connected to the five sources of sublimity: “power to conceive great thoughts,” “strong and inspired emotion,” rhetorical figures, diction, and “dignified and elevated word-arrangement” (Longinus 350). All writers reflect rhetorical patterns. Modern Asian American writers such as John Okada, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Lisa See follow these patterns. Each Asian American writer included in this dissertation has a

style of his or her own. Ranging from the plain style to grand style, each author may incorporate Cicero's style(s) as well as developing his or her own style over time. In the novel, *No-No Boy*, John Okada informs, pleases, and persuades his audience. Okada informs his readers about a crucial but delicate moment in American history that changed the lives of many Japanese Americans. On the surface, Okada's writing style is representative of plain style; however, the middle and grand style begin to take form in the novel's characterization and plot. As the plot gradually unfolds, Okada's diverse styles of eloquence inform, please, and persuade the audience. Similar to John Okada, Maxine Hong Kingston elevates *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* to the level of sublimity because of the varying styles of eloquence in each section of the work. Each chapter of Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* functions to inform, to please, and to persuade the audience. Kingston manages to incorporate grand style with pathos, and she includes various rhetorical figures in order to introduce her audience to different cultures, the supernatural or fantasy, and foreign words. Also, Lisa See's novel, *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*, functions to inform, to please, and to persuade the audience. See introduces her audience to an old Chinese custom in a traditional Confucian culture that is dramatically different from the current American culture; she informs her audience of a world within a culture that once viewed women as objects in a Confucian system of strict societal roles. All three of these Asian American writers present their novels in diverse styles of eloquence that range from plain to grand style.

At the same time, each writer transcends his or her own style by creating a literary bridge between concepts from the East and West in the canon of Asian American

literature. When the words in the text are exposed to an audience, they no longer belong solely to the writer because the audience has the capability of determining how they want to perceive the meaning of the words. Hence, there is a verbal communication established between the writer/narrator and the audience, and “a word in the mouth of a particular individual person is a product of the living social interaction of forces” (Volosinov 41). The writer is aware of his or her audience, and the writer relies on the eloquence of his or her writing style to bring the human expression into life in order to inform, to interest, and to persuade the audience to accept his or her argument. According to Longinus, sublimity is “a kind of eminence or excellence of discourse. It is the source of the distinction of the very greatest poets and prose writers and the means by which they have given eternal life to their own fame” (347). The diverse styles of eloquence are represented in the diction, word usage and arrangement, rhetorical figures, persuasive appeal of pathos, and folkloric elements in John Okada’s *No-No Boy*, Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior*, and Lisa See’s *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*. Their diverse styles elevate all three novels to a level of sublimity.

CHAPTER III

SELECTIVE RHETORICAL FIGURES IN JOHN OKADA'S *NO-NO BOY*, MAXINE HONG KINGSTON'S *THE WOMAN WARRIOR*, AND LISA SEE'S *SNOW FLOWER AND THE SECRET FAN* AND THEIR CONNECTIONS TO SUBLIMITY

The expression of rhetorical figures is evident in the diction and word arrangement of John Okada's *No-No Boy*, Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, and Lisa See's *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*. In *On the Sublime*, Longinus emphasizes the significance of rhetorical figures as one of the sources of sublimity since they are "natural allies of sublimity and themselves profit wonderfully from the alliance" (Longinus 358). Also, rhetorical "figures may be divided into figures of thought and figures of speech" (Longinus 350). Longinus argues that rhetorical figures used by themselves will bring about suspicion; however, when they are presented with sublimity and emotion, the rhetorical figures are less suspicious (358). The expression of rhetorical figures depends on the writer's diction and word arrangement, which are also sources of sublimity. Hence, the sublimity of rhetorical figures contributes to certain styles of eloquence. For example, the sublimity of the rhetorical figures that contributes to the grand style "consists of a smooth and ornate arrangement of impressive words" (*Rhetorica ad Herennium* 248). In *The Book of the Courtier*, Renaissance rhetorician Baldesar Castiglione compares the orator's speech, which

includes a careful selection and organization of words, presented to an audience to an artist's work placed on display for an audience:

Now it is the words themselves that make the greatness and magnificence of an oration; for if a speaker uses good judgment and care, and understands how to choose those words which best express what he wishes to say; and if he elevates them, and shapes them to his purpose like so much wax, he can give them such a disposition and an order such as to cause them to reveal at a glance their dignity and splendor, like paintings when placed in a good and natural light. (666)

The orator's careful selection and arrangement of the words are shaped and molded into rhetorical figures that are eloquently expressed to a level of sublimity. Therefore, rhetorical figures such as presence, metaphor, *pysma*, *anaphora*, and *accusatio* are proofs for an argument and are sources of sublimity that elevate John Okada's *No-No Boy*, Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, and Lisa See's *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* to a level of eloquence.

One of the prominent rhetorical figures in selected works of Asian American literature is the figure of thought that evokes emotions from an audience. Longinus explains that *phantasia* is a figure of thought: "The term *phantasia* is used generally for anything which in any way suggests a thought productive of speech; but the word has also come into fashion for the situation in which enthusiasm and emotion make the speaker see what he is saying and bring it visually before his audience" (*On the Sublime* 356). The concept of presence, expressed by Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-

Tyteca in *The New Rhetoric*, is connected to Longinus' three sources of sublimity: "the power to conceive great thoughts," "strong and inspired emotions," and "certain kinds of figures" (*On the Sublime* 350). According to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, "presence acts directly on our sensibility," so "the thing that is present to the consciousness assumes thus an importance that the theory and practice of argumentation must take into consideration" (116-17). They also contend, "it is not enough indeed that a thing should exist for a person to feel its presence" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 117). Instead, "one of the preoccupations of a speaker is to make present, by verbal magic alone, what is actually absent but what he considers important to his argument or, by making them more present, to enhance the value of some of the elements of which one has actually been made conscious" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 117). The verbal magic of words and the values placed on the presence of the object or idea depend on the culture of society and the conflicts that arise from it. So, "it should also be observed that the effort to make something present to the consciousness can relate not to real objects, but also to a judgment or an entire argumentative development" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 118). The concept of presence in *The New Rhetoric* is similar to Longinus' concept of *phantasia* and is associated with the three of the sources of sublimity. The concept of presence as a rhetorical figure is represented in John Okada's *No-No Boy*, Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, and Lisa See's *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*.

The rhetorical figure of presence appears in John Okada's *No-No Boy*. In the preface of the novel, the narrator describes the conflicts of the Nisei, second generation Japanese Americans, such as the questioning of their place in America at the time of

World War II and the U.S. government abruptly placing them in isolation and displacement in their own country:

The indignation, the hatred, the patriotism of the American people shifted into full-throated condemnation of the Japanese who blotted their land.

The Japanese who were born Americans and remained Japanese because biology does not know the meaning of patriotism no longer worried about whether they were Japanese-Americans or American-Japanese. They were Japanese, just as were their Japanese mothers and Japanese fathers and Japanese brothers and sisters. The radio had said as much. (Okada viii-ix)

In plain style, the narrator describes the dichotomy of being an American as an unsettling issue for Japanese Americans during World War II. The narrator also describes the unsettling issue of racism because their Asian race cannot hide the fact that they will be judged in their own country. The brief summary of the radio announcement foreshadows the oncoming racism and displacement of many Japanese Americans. At the beginning of the announcement, the narrator depicts the conflict with a past tense verb to show that a pre-existing social tension was superseded by Japan's bombing of Pearl Harbor. The radio announcement is also a precedent to President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066 that authorized the internment of over 120,000 Japanese Americans:

Whereas the successful prosecution of the war requires every possible protection against espionage and against sabotage to national-defense material, national defense premises, and national defense utilities...,

Now, therefore, by virtue of the authority vested in me as President of the United States, and the Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy, I hereby authorize and direct the Secretary of War, and the Military Commanders whom he may from time to time designate, whenever he or any designated Commander deems such action necessary or desirable, to prescribe military areas in such places and of such extent as he or the appropriate Military Commander may determine, from which any or all persons may be excluded, and with respect to which, the right of any person to enter, remain in, or leave shall be subject to whatever restrictions the Secretary of War or the appropriate Military Commander may impose in his discretion. The Secretary of War is hereby authorized to provide for residents of any such area who are excluded therefrom, such transportation, food, shelter, and other accommodations as may be necessary, in the judgment of the Secretary of War or the said Military Commander, and until other arrangements are made, to accomplish the purpose of this order. The designation of military areas in any region or locally shall supersede designations of prohibited and restricted areas by the Attorney General under the Proclamations of December 7 and 8, 1941, and shall supersede the responsibility and authority of the Attorney General under the said Proclamations in respect of such prohibited and restricted areas. (Candela 550)

The beginning of Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066 clearly discriminates the Japanese Americans as the enemy because it was made to protect "against espionage and against sabotage to national defense" etc. By presenting this order to the American public and isolating many of the Japanese Americans within short notice, the U.S. government alleges the Japanese Americans to be the enemy, the Japanese. The Executive Order 9066 questions the patriotism of Japanese Americans and takes away their freedom by displacing them in their own country. Similar to the Executive Order 9066, the narrator's brief description of a radio announcement delineates that an alleged perfidy has been committed by Japanese Americans.

Presence is also represented in the description of some of the Japanese Americans who were affected by the war in different ways. The main character, Ichiro Yamada, recalls other Japanese Americans who were also affected by the war:

I remember Kenzo, whose mother was in the hospital and did not want him to go. The doctor told him that the shock might kill her. He went anyway, the very next day, because though he loved his mother he knew that she was wrong, and she did die. And I remember Harry, whose father had a million-dollar produce business, and the old man just boarded everything up because he said he'd rather let the trucks and buildings and warehouses rot than sell them for a quarter of what they were worth. Harry didn't have to stop and think when his number came up. Then there was Mr. Yamaguchi, who was almost forty and had five girls. They would have never taken him, but he had to go and talk himself into a

uniform. I remember a lot of people and a lot of things now as I walk confidently through the night over a small span of concrete which is part of the sidewalks which are part of the city which is part of the state and the country and the nation that is America. It is for this that I meant to fight, only the meaning got lost when I needed it most badly. (Okada 34).

Ichiro depicts three different scenarios of Japanese Americans affected by the war. The first scenario is about a Japanese American son leaving his dying mother and going against her wishes. Even though Ichiro does not specify whether or not Kenzo left his dying mother to join the U.S. military, the audience may assume he did. The second scenario involves a Japanese American businessman and father forced to leave his own business, and his son is left facing a decision to be a yes-yes or no-no boy. The third scenario involves a Japanese American man leaving his wife and children to join the U.S. military. The separation of family and making difficult decisions are inevitable in dire situations. All three scenarios are different, but they have one thing in common: trying to survive World War II as a Japanese American. Besides the Yamada family, many Japanese American families were confronted with various issues during the war.

Presence is represented in Ichiro Yamada's own issues. The war affected his perception of the world. Ichiro Yamada reminisces about the days when he was a college student and living a content life:

If only I had pictured it and felt it in my hands, I might well have made the right decision, for the seeing and feeling of it would have pushed out the bitterness with the greenness of the grass on the campus and hardness of

the chairs in the airy classrooms with the blackboards stretched wall-to-wall behind the professor, and books and the sandwiches and the bus rides coming and going. I would have gone into the army for that and I would have shot and killed, and shot and killed some more, because I was happy when I was a student with the finely calculated white sword at my side. But I did not remember or I could not remember because, when one is born in America and learning to love it more and more every day without thinking it, it is not an easy thing to discover suddenly that being American is a terribly incomplete thing if one's face is not white and one's parents are Japanese of the country Japan which attacked America. It is like being pulled asunder by a whirling tornado and one does not think of a slide rule though that may be the thing that which will save one. No, one does not remember, and so I am not really to blame, but—and still the answer is there unchanged and unchallenged—I did not remember and Freddie did not remember. But Bob did and his friend, who talks of Bob's dying because the father wishes it, did, and so did a lot of others who had no more or no less reason than I. (Okada 53-54)

Due to the conflicts caused by Japan's sudden attack on Pearl Harbor and World War II, Ichiro realizes how much he missed being a college student before the war. He contemplates about the possibility of continuing his education if he had joined the U.S. military, but he argues that it did not occur to him that he could return to college after serving in the U.S. military. Instead, he reminisces about the past when he was a college

student and enjoying his life as an American: “I was happy when I was a student with the finely calculated white sword at my side” (Okada 54). The transition from Ichiro’s depiction of innocence to guilt for not joining the U.S. military allows Ichiro to question his decision and the decision that he did not make. However, Ichiro also realizes that if he did join the military and fight in the war, he could have died like his friend Bob and never returned to enjoy his American education. Either way, Ichiro feels stuck because a decision does not guarantee anything for a young Japanese American man who decides to join the U.S. military or to go to federal prison. At the same time, Ichiro discovers something about himself and society. He encounters issues with racism and realizes his displacement in society when he is labeled as a no-no boy. His decision conflicts with the conforming principles of American society because his race and decision work against him after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the beginning of WWII. According to Ralph Waldo Emerson, “For nonconformity the world whips with you displeasure” (“Self-Reliance”). Ichiro’s nonconformity results in a social and cultural conflict because he is “being pulled asunder by a whirling tornado and one does not think of a slide rule though that may be the thing that which will save one” (Okada 54). Hence, Ichiro Yamada and many Japanese Americans during WWII encountered severe repercussions.

Another expression of the rhetorical figure presence appears in the narrator’s description of Ichiro’s mother’s dead body. The description is in grand style because it creates a vivid thought or image and evokes the emotions from the audience. When

Ichiro returns home after delivering the news of his friend Kenji passing away to Kenji's father, Mr. Kanno, he discovers his mother's lifeless body in the bathtub:

She was half out of the tub and half in, her hair of dirty gray and white floating up to the surface of the water like a tangled mass of seaweed and obscuring her neck and face. On one side, the hair had pulled away and lodged against the overflow drain, damming up the outlet and causing the flooding, just as her mind, long shut off from reality, had sought and found its erratic release. (Okada 185)

In this depiction, part of Mrs. Yamada's hair is free flowing on the surface of the water, and the other part of her hair is preventing the water from flowing down the drain. This part of Mrs. Yamada's hair is immersed in a natural element that is known to give life and to take away life. Similar to living her life in part reality and part fantasy, she is caught between two elements, air and water. Both elements sustain life, but she chooses to drown herself in water, which allows fluidity and chaos, and cuts off the air that she once breathed with partial despair and confusion. Mrs. Yamada, who was in denial of Japan's losing the war, who was proud that her eldest son did not join the U.S. military, and who controlled chaos by aggregating the cans from the shelf and placing them back in order, could no longer control her fantastic reality of pipe dreams. Mrs. Yamada's sister's letter of truth, her second son Taro's joining of the U.S. military, and her eldest son Ichiro's resentment intercepted her fantasy (pipe dreams); and in the act of desperation and defeat, she commits suicide to disassociate herself from reality. So, Mrs. Yamada's pipe dreams end when "her mind, long shut off from reality, had sought and

found its erratic release” (Okada 185). The description of the deceased mother depicts the desperate act of a Japanese American woman who was unable to endure more emotional and mental hardships, at home and in society, after World War II.

At the end of the novel, Ichiro “walked along, thinking, searching, thinking, and probing, and, in the darkness of the alley of the community that was a tiny bit of America, he chased that faint and elusive insinuation of promise as it continued to take shape in mind and in heart” (Okada 251). The narrator visually describes the main character’s trying to keep some hope for a better tomorrow. The narrator uses gerunds at the beginning of the sentence to present a visual image of Ichiro’s hope instead of stationary despair. The words “thinking,” “searching,” and “probing” are verbal expressions, which indicate the possibility of the next stage of discovery and maturation for young Ichiro (Okada 251). The description of the “darkness of the alley of the community that was a tiny bit of America” indicates that what has happened to the Japanese Americans during and after the war is a dark past of American history (Okada 251). The phrase, “the community that was a tiny bit of America,” foreshadows how the treatment of the Japanese Americans during and after the war becomes a tiny bit of American history until it gained recognition in some American history classes and textbooks several decades later, and the first and second generation Japanese Americans broke their silence about their experience until the 1960s. In the “Japanese Americans: Internment Camps” section of the *Asian American Folklore Encyclopedia*, Rachel Endo explains, “during the Asian American and civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s, many camp survivors and their descendants began forging solidarities with plans

to educate the public about the injustices that Japanese Americans endured during World War II” (609). On the other hand, hope is conveyed at the end of the narrator’s statement when Ichiro is described as chasing “that faint and elusive insinuation of promise as it continued to take shape in mind and heart” (Okada 251). The narrator’s closing statement leaves the reader with a sense of pity and hope for Ichiro and for the many Japanese Americans who endured the social and cultural displacement during World War II.

In Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior*, there are several expressions of presence. In the first chapter, “No Name Woman,” the narrator, whose mother taught her to fear dead and live ghosts, describes the ghost of her no name aunt: “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” (Kingston 16). The narrator’s description of the displaced ghost invites the audience to feel pity and fear for the no name woman. The narrator conjures the ghost of her dead aunt and other displaced female ghosts by describing the ghost with vivid details. She uses adjectives such as “weeping,” “wet,” “hanging,” and “bloated” to place the vision or thought of the ghost in the reader’s mind (Kingston 16). Then, the narrator elevates the present consciousness of the reader’s thoughts and emotions by selecting specific nouns to accompany them. She describes the ghost with distinct characteristics: “weeping ghost,” “wet hair hanging,” and “skin bloated” (Kingston 16). The description of the ghost continues to draw the reader’s consciousness by the verbal expression of an infinitive: “to pull down a substitute” (Kingston 16). The narrator has allowed the reader to visualize

the ghost of the past; and at the same time, she has shared her pity and fear of the displaced ghost with her reader.

Another figure of presence is expressed in the chapter entitled “Shaman.”

The narrator recounts her mother’s story about an encounter with a sitting ghost:

Cringes of fear seized her soles as something alive, rumbling, climbed the foot of the bed. It rolled over her and landed bodily on her chest. There it sat. It breathed airlessly, pressing her, sapping her. “Oh, no. A Sitting Ghost,” she thought. She pushed against the creature to lever herself out from underneath it, but it absorbed this energy and got heavier. Her fingers and palms became damp, shrinking at the ghost’s thick short hair like an animal’s coat, which slides against warm solidity as human flesh slides against muscles and bones. She grabbed clutches of fur and pulled. She pinched the skin the hair grew out of and gouged into it with her fingernails. She forced her hands to hunt out eyes, furtive somewhere in the hair, but could not find any. She lifted her head to bite but fell back exhausted. The mass thickened. (Kingston 68)

The narrator describes her mother’s haunting experience with sensory details such as sound, sight, and touch. Despite her mother’s fear of the ghost, the narrator explains that her mother was also determined to confront the ghost. The mother’s determination to fight off the sitting ghost is expressed with the verbs “pushed,” “grabbed,” “pulled,” “pinched,” “gouged,” “forced,” and “lifted” (Kingston 60). These verbs describe the actions of force and aggression. In this following statement, the narrator describes her

mother's very close encounter with the ghost by enhancing the sensory details of sight and touch: "Her fingers and palms became damp, shrinking at the ghost's thick short hair like an animal's coat, which slides against warm solidity as human flesh slides against muscles and bones" (Kingston 60). The vivid description of the ghostly encounter is expressed in grand style in order to evoke the emotions of the reader by inviting the reader to share the narrator and mother's fear of the sitting ghost.

Presence also appears in the chapter of "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe." In this chapter, the narrator confronts a young classmate and tries aimlessly to force her to talk; and in doing so, she uses physical and verbal violence. The narrator is disgusted with the girl's silence and refusal to comply with her demands:

I looked right at her. "I know you talk," I said. "I've heard you." Her eyebrows flew up. Something in those black eyes was startled, and I pursued it. "I was walking past your house when you didn't know I was there. I heard you yell in English and in Chinese. You weren't just talking. You were shouting. I heard you shout. You were saying, 'Where are you?' Say that again. Go ahead, just the way you did at home." I yanked harder on the hair, but steadily, not jerking. I did not want to pull it out. "Go ahead. Say 'Where are you?' Say it loud enough for your sister to come. Call her. Make her come help you. Call her name. I'll stop if she comes. So call Go ahead."

She shook her head, her mouth curved down, crying. I could see her tiny white teeth, baby teeth. I wanted to grow big strong yellow teeth.

“You do have a tongue,” I said. “So use it.” I pulled the hair at her temples, pulled the tears out of her eyes. “Say, ‘Ow,’ ” I said. “Just ‘Ow.’ Say, ‘Let go.’ Go ahead. Say it. I’ll honk you again if you don’t say, ‘Let me alone.’ Say, ‘Leave me alone,’ and I’ll let you go. I will. I’ll let you go if you say it. You can stop this anytime you want to, you know. All you have to do is tell me to stop. Just say, ‘Stop.’ You’re just asking for it, aren’t you? You’re just asking for another honk. Well then, I’ll have to give you another honk. Say, ‘Stop.’ ” But she didn’t. I had to pull again and again.

Sounds did come out of her mouth, sobs, chokes, noises that were almost words. Snot ran out of her nose. She tried to wipe it on her hands, but there was too much of it. She used her sleeve. “You’re disgusting,” I told her. “Look at you, snot streaming down your nose, and you won’t say a word to stop it. You’re such a nothing.” I moved behind her and pulled the hair growing out of her weak neck. I let go. I stood silent for a long time. Then I screamed, “Talk!” I would scare the words out of her. If she had had little bound feet, the toes twisted under the balls, I would have jumped and landed on them—crunch!—stomped on them with my iron shoes. She cried hard, sobbing aloud. “Cry, ‘Mama,’ ” I said. “Come on. Cry, ‘Mama.’ Say, ‘Stop it.’ ” (Kingston 177-78)

This description of the narrator as a young girl harassing one of her classmates is in a dialogue form, but only the narrator is speaking words and the young classmate does not

Speak in words but responds with tears and sobs. The narrator grows increasingly annoyed and frustrated with the classmate, so she resorts to physical violence when the classmate does not respond in speech. This depiction of a “mean girl” scenario, in which a mean girl tries to force another young girl to comply with her demands in a bully like manner, is visually presented to the audience in the description of the dialogue and action. For example, when the narrator does not receive a verbal reply, she begins to yank the classmate’s hair: “Say that again. Go ahead, just the way you did at home.” I yanked harder on the hair, but steadily, not jerking. I did not want to pull it out” (Kingston 178). The narrator’s fears are placed on the classmate because she sees herself in the young classmate. In a strange way, the narrator is warning the classmate that speech is important in order to be human. In this Lacanian mirror stage, the narrator begins to notice her own past and present weaknesses and fears because she thinks she sees them in someone else, so she confronts them by verbally and physically abusing the classmate. Then, in the moment of desperation, the narrator breaks down and informs the girl that it was for her benefit:

“Why won’t you talk?” I started to cry. What if I couldn’t stop, and everyone would want to know what happened? “Now look what you’ve done,” I scolded. “You’re going to pay for this. I want to know why. And you’re going to tell me why. You don’t see I’m trying to help you out, do you? Do you want to be like this, dumb (do you know what dumb means?), your whole life? Don’t you ever want to be a cheerleader? Or a pompon girl? What are you going to do for a living? Yeah, you’re going

to have to work because you can't be a housewife. Somebody has to marry you before you can be a housewife. And you, you are a plant. Do you know that? That's all you are if you don't talk. If you don't talk, you can't have a personality. You'll have no personality and no hair. You've got to let people know you have a personality and a brain. You think somebody is going to take care of you all your stupid life?" (Kingston 180)

Instead of scolding herself, the narrator seeks out an innocent classmate who reminds her of her own weaknesses and fears. In his book *Minor Re/Visions: Asian American Literacy Narratives as a Rhetoric of Citizenship*, author Morris Young contends that the narrator is listing "all the characteristics of being American, and silence is not among them. Silence becomes the marker of Asian American citizenship, or perhaps of being just 'oriental'" (107). In addition to listing the American characteristics, the narrator is attempting to teach the classmate to conform by forcing her to speak at her command. The narrator's confession for the reasons why she is torturing the young girl creates an emotional presence of fear, aggression, and resentment.

The rhetorical figure of presence appears in Lisa See's *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* when the narrator illustrates the footbinding requirements. The illustration is expressed in plain and grand styles. Lily's detailed description of the Chinese foot

binding requirements creates a presence in the mind of the audience and evokes emotion from the audience:

All I knew was that footbinding would make me more marriageable and therefore bring me closer to the greatest love and greatest joy in a woman's life—a son. To that end, my goal was to achieve a pair of perfectly bound feet with seven distinct attributes: They should be small, narrow, straight, pointed, and arched, yet still fragrant and soft in texture. Of these requirements, length is more important. Seven centimeters—about the length of a thumb is the ideal. Shape comes next. A perfect foot should be shaped like the bud of a lotus. It should be full and round at the heel, come to a point at the front, with all weight borne by the big toe alone. This means that the toes and arch of the foot must be broken and bent under to meet the heel. Finally, the cleft formed by the forefoot and heel should be deep enough to hide a large cash piece perpendicularly within its folds. If I could attain all that, happiness will be my reward.

(See 25-26)

The visual description of the appearance of bound feet is objective but evokes emotions from the audience. There was a time in Chinese history when bound feet were praised as an achievement for young girls in order to marry well, to have baby boys, to secure a good position in the husband's family household, and to attain happiness. The objective and detailed description of the broken and tiny bound feet is visually unappealing to the audience; and at the same time, the narrator describes the bound feet of beauty as an

attainment of happiness. The objective description of the ideal size of a bound foot at seven centimeters, equivalent to 2.76 inches, elicits an emotional reaction from the audience because it reflects physical pain. The concept of forcefully breaking the arch of a foot to bend it to the point where the toes are tucked under to touch the heel conveys excruciating pain and shock. For the narrator, the foot binding process is her ticket to happiness. For the modern audience reading the description of the bounded feet, the process seems visually and physically appalling and painful.

In grand style, presence is also expressed in the chapter “Catching the Cool Breezes.” Adolescents Lily and Snow Flower recite the poems in *nushu* and discover their female bodies:

I licked my finger and looked at the whiteness of Snow Flower’s skin. When my wet finger touched her stomach just above her belly button, I felt her intake of breath. Her breasts rose, her stomach hollowed, and goose bumps shimmered across her flesh.

“I,” she said. This was correct. I wrote the next character below her belly button. “Think,” she said. Then, I followed exactly what she had done and wrote on the flesh adjacent to her right hip bone. “Light.” Now her left hip bone. “Snow.” She knew the poem, so there was no mystery to the words, just the sensations of writing and reading them. I had followed every place she had written on my body. Now I had to find a new spot. I chose the soft place where two sides of her ribs came together above her stomach. I knew from own body that this area was

sensitive to touch, to fear, to love. Snow Flower shivered beneath my fingertip as I wrote. “Early.”

Just two more words to the finish the line. I knew what I wanted to do, but I hesitated. I let my fingertip float along the tip of my tongue. Then, emboldened by the heat, the moonlight, and way her skin felt against my own, I let my wet finger write on one of her breasts. Her lips parted and her breath came out in a tiny moan. She did not speak the character and I did not demand one. But for my last character in the line, I lay on my side next to Snow Flower so I could see up close the way her skin would respond. I licked my finger, wrote the character, and watched her nipple tighten and pucker. We stayed completely still for a moment. Then, with her eyes still shut, Snow Flower whispered the complete phrase: “I think it is the light snow of an early winter morning.” (See 86)

This description paints a picture of two girls in their adolescent years, expressing the *nushu* they had learned since they were little girls. They practice their *nushu* and recite a poem by using their bodies as a canvas or tablet. With each stroke of Lily’s finger, resembling a bamboo brush dipped into ink, Snow Flower guesses the *nushu* character. With each single character or word, Lily writes on the different parts of Snow Flower’s body: “Then, emboldened by the heat, the moonlight, and way her skin felt against my own, I let my wet finger write on one of her breasts” (See 86). With each graduating body part, leading up to the description of the maturing female body, Snow Flower is able to decipher the entire line of the poem. The graduated maturity of the learning and

discovery of each other's bodies as canvases or tablets for poem recitation leads to discovering each other as women. By discovering the curves of their maturing female bodies, they are also practicing their *nushu* characters, which "are italicized versions of men's characters" (See 86), and reciting lines of a poem by following the curved strokes of the finger. The description is sensual and innocent because it depicts two young women maturing from the days they were little girls learning *nushu* and enduring the pain of the footbinding days.

In a letter to Lily, Snow Flower describes her sorrow for the death of her stillborn daughter:

Lily,

My daughter was born dead. She left without planting roots, so she knew nothing of the sorrows of life. I held her feet in my hands. They would never know the agony of footbinding. I touched her eyes. They would never know the sadness of leaving her natal home, of seeing her mother for the last time, of saying goodbye to a dead child. I put my fingers over her heart. It would never know pain, sorrow, loneliness, shame. I think of her in the afterworld. Is my mother with her? I don't know either of their fates. (See 165)

The anguish and sorrow of a mother losing her child is expressed in Snow Flower's letter. Even though the Chinese society at the time devalued female babies, Snow Flower still weeps for her dead female child. In her letter to Lily, Snow Flower describes her brief bonding moment with her daughter: "I held her feet in my hands...I touched her eyes...I

put my fingers over her heart” (See 165). The physical and emotional bond between the mother and child is brief, but the loss takes a greater toll on Snow Flower. The visual expression of Snow Flower’s touching her dead baby’s feet, eyes, and heart, enhances the presence. The baby’s feet, eyes, and heart represent suffering and heartache; and Snow Flower knew this very well because she has also endured the physical and emotional suffering of being a female. Even though female babies are not praised as male babies, Snow Flower still mourns the loss of her daughter; and she is left with an abject conscience. She knows that her deceased baby girl will not be forced to endure pain and loss like her mother. Snow Flower wonders if the afterlife is available for females such as her daughter and her mother. Snow Flower’s letter depicts an image of a mother’s painful loss of her child, and it elicits emotions from the audience.

Another rhetorical figure that is also an ally of sublimity is the metaphor. A metaphor is a comparison of two unlike things that is expressed as a rhetorical figure, and it is a figure of speech and a figure of thought that evokes the emotions as well as the senses. In Book III of *Rhetoric*, Aristotle praised the metaphor to be “above all that gives perspicuity, pleasure, and a foreign air, and it cannot be learnt from anyone else” (355). Aristotle argued, “metaphors should also be derived from things that are beautiful, the beauty of a word consisting, as Licymnius says, in its sound or sense, and its ugliness in the same”; therefore, they “should be derived from what is beautiful either in sound, or in signification, or to sight, or to some other sense” (359). According to *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, “metaphor is used for the sake of creating a vivid mental picture” (268). In a concise definition, Richard Lanham, author of *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*,

describes the metaphor as “changing a word from its literal meaning to one not properly applicable but analogous to it” (100). Metaphors enhance the description of the image by comparing it to something or someone in order to capture the audience’s attention and emotion.

In *No-No Boy*, John Okada uses metaphors in plain style to create a visual image of Ichiro’s conflict with man and society. When confronted by his friend Eto, a Japanese American who had joined the U.S. military during World War II, Ichiro views him as “God in a pair of green fatigues, U.S. Army style. They were the legs of the jury that had passed sentence upon him” (Okada 4). During the conflict between Ichiro and Eto, Ichiro perceives Eto to be his accuser, the one who judges him because he did not join the U.S. military. Eto’s legs, which stand in judgment, are compared to God and the jury. For Ichiro, the judgment reminds him of his decision, which sent him to federal prison for two years. Ichiro is too ashamed to face Eto when he reaches for his suitcase because in some strange way, Ichiro thinks he deserves the judgment and punishment from Eto. The friendly emotion of two friends seeing each other again after the war is quickly turned into a negative emotion of social separation and dissolving friendship.

In another metaphorical description, Ichiro compares his mother Mrs. Yamada to a rock. Ichiro thinks to himself, “Ma is the rock that’s always hammering, pounding, pounding, in her unobtrusive, determined, fanatical way until there’s nothing left to call one’s self” (Okada 12). Instead of comparing his mother to a rock that represents stability and strength, Ichiro compares his mother to a rock with aggressive and intrusive characteristics, which reflect his mother’s determination to keep her children loyal to her

home country of Japan. The gerunds, “hammering,” “pounding,” describe Mrs. Yamada to be an intrusive mother who interrupted her son’s life because Ichiro explains that “there’s nothing left to call one’s self” (Okada 12). Ichiro’s emotionally charged description of his mother provides a glimpse into his ill-fated relationship with his mother.

Also, in plain style, Maxine Hong Kingston uses metaphors to depict comparable images. In the “Shaman” chapter of *The Woman Warrior*, the narrator compares her mother to animals: “That night she was a sad bear; a great sheep in a wool shawl” (Kingston 100). This short but descriptive metaphor presents the image of the narrator’s mother as sad bear. Bears are known to be big and fierce, and the narrator once perceived her mother to have such characteristics. In the later years, the narrator views her fierce mother as a defeated person like a sad bear. The mother is also compared to a sheep wrapped in its own wool. By comparing her mother to an animal, the narrator’s descriptive comparisons include metaphors that are representative of shapeshifting. For example, the narrator states, “My mother would sometimes be a large animal, barely real in the dark; then she would become a mother again. I could see the wrinkles around her big eyes, and I could see her cheeks sunken without her top teeth” (Kingston 101). The narrator realizes her mother is aging when she refers to the wrinkles and sunken cheeks. Similar to metaphors, in which the representation of the words shift in order to compare two unlike things, the images shift to express a figurative meaning.

In *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*, Lisa See uses metaphors in plain and middle style to depict the hardships of the females in a Confucian society that devalued females.

The following metaphor is expressed by Lily's explanation of how girls are compared to useless branches:

As girls we are told that we are useless branches, because we will not carry on our natal family names but only the names of the families we marry out to, if we are lucky enough to bear sons. In this way, a woman belongs to her husband's family forever, whether she is alive or dead. All of this is true, and yet these days my contentment comes from knowing that Snow Flower's and my blood will soon rule the house of Lu. (See 252)

The image that is depicted in this description is a comparison of the females to tree branches. They are useless branches because society has taught them to believe that they are the inferior sex and that they are responsible for having a male child. Also, once they are married, they belong to the in-laws. A married woman does not own her own body because "a woman belongs to her husband's family forever, whether she is alive or dead" (See 252). At the same time, the family lineage could not continue without the existence of the woman. Similar to the branch of tree growing, the woman is needed to continue her husband's family lineage by producing sons. The woman is just as important, but society teaches girls to believe their only mission is to marry and bear a son. The metaphor reflects the frustrating contradictions in the standards of a Confucian society that devalues women, yet women are crucial to the reproduction of society, particularly producing sons.

More than one metaphor is represented in the following statement made by Lily:

You and I were matched as a pair of mandarin ducks. I always remained true, but you've shunned me to embrace sworn sisters. A girl sends a fan to one girl, not writing new ones to many. A good horse does not have two saddles; a good woman is not unfaithful to her *laotong*. Perhaps your perfidy is why your husband, your mother-in-law, your children, and, yes, the betrayed old same before you, do not cherish you as they might. You shame us all with your girlish fancies. If my husband came home today with a concubine, I would be thrown from my bed, neglected, dismissed from attentions. I—as all the women here—would have to accept it.

But...from...you...(See 229)

In Lily's emotionally-charged speech that accuses Snow Flower of infidelity in their *laotong* relationship, the progressive metaphors start from the comparison of a *laotong* relationship with mandarin ducks, to a horse with two saddles, and to a husband's adultery. Unlike a marriage that is not made by choice, "a *laotong* relationship is made by choice for the purpose of emotional companionship and eternal fidelity" (See 43). Lily begins her speech by comparing their *laotong* relationship with two mandarin ducks because they are loyal to one partner and mate for life. In her essay, "From Daughter to Daughter-in-Law in the Woman's Script of Southern Hunan," Cathy Silber contends, "one of the most common metaphors used to describe the *laotong* relationship in these letters is *yidu yuanyang* (a pair of mandarin ducks), which Han culture, connotes a happily married couple" (53). But, the *laotong* relationship between Lily and Snow

Flower is disrupted because Lily accuses Snow Flower of seeking emotional comfort from the sworn sisters instead of her *laotong*. Then, the next comparison depicts a horse that has two saddles instead of one saddle. Their *laotong* relationship is compared to a horse because it is the Chinese horoscope sign that both Lily and Snow Flower are born under, which is also one of the eight characters that sealed their *laotong* match. The third comparison depicts a husband committing adultery. Similar to a marriage, the *laotong* relationship is a committed relationship between two females from childhood to adulthood; however, Lily explains that infidelity or disloyalty is unacceptable for a *laotong* relationship. Lily places Snow Flower in the male role in which the husband commits adultery by seeking another female companion. The comparisons of disloyalty and betrayal in a *laotong* relationship are expressed in middle style with multiple metaphors to illustrate Lily's resentment of Snow Flower's alleged betrayal.

The third rhetorical figure that appears in all three novels and provides proof for argument is *pysma*, which are rhetorical questions that result in varying answers. Richard Lanham defines *pysma* to be "asking many questions that require diverse answers" (128). According to the Brigham Young University website "Silva Rhetoricae," *pysma* is "the asking of multiple questions successively (which would require a complex reply). A rhetorical use of a question." Rhetorical questions invite the audience to delve into the mind of the main characters or narrators. They also present an image as well as to evoke emotions from the audience. Rhetorical questions appear in all three novels; they target certain issues and invite the audience to participate in their inquiries.

In John Okada's *No-No Boy*, after World War II, Ichiro Yamada questions his place in American society:

Why is it then that I am unable to convince myself that I am no different from any other American? Why is it that, in my freedom, I feel more imprisoned in the wrongness of myself and the thing I did than when I was in prison? Am I really never to know again what it is to be American? If there should be an answer, what is it? What penalty is that I must pay to justify my living as I so fervently desire to? (82)

Knowing that there is no definite answer for his self conflict, Ichiro reflects his thoughts in a chain of questions that also affect many Japanese Americans after the war, particularly the Japanese American men who were imprisoned for choosing not to join the U.S. military. The answers to Ichiro's rhetorical questions are not simple because they are layered with complexities that involve multiple issues before the war. After asking the questions, Ichiro concludes, "There is, I am afraid, no answer. There is no retribution for the one who is guilty of treason, and that is what I am guilty of. The fortunate get shot. I must live my punishment" (Okada 82). Ichiro accepts his guilt reluctantly, and his rhetorical questions continue to eat away at his existence throughout the novel. Because Ichiro was sentenced to federal prison for being guilty of not joining the U.S. military and answering "no" to two significant questions, he struggles to understand why he was treated with such injustice when he did not start the war. Unfortunately, many innocent Japanese Americans, with limited rights placed on them by

the government, were forced to make decisions that placed them in the middle of a social injustice because their race could not alleviate the fear of the U.S. government.

In Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, the narrator questions what and who is Chinese, particularly Chinese American: "Chinese-Americans, when you try to understand what things in you are Chinese, how do you separate what is peculiar to childhood, to poverty, insanities, one family, your mother who marked your growing with stories, from what is Chinese? What is Chinese tradition and what is the movies?" (Kingston 5-6). There are no quick and easy answers for the narrator's rhetorical questions; therefore, the narrator struggles to find her identity as a Chinese American because the questions require complex answers. The questions are also directed to the audience, particularly Chinese Americans who share a similar cultural background. The narrator invites the audience to participate in her rhetorical questioning of the Chinese American identity by addressing "Chinese-Americans" at the beginning of the first question (Kingston 6). The narrator shares her conflict with the audience in order to express her frustration of deciphering what constitutes the Chinese part of being a Chinese American. She wants to know what is authentic and what is false by asking, "What is Chinese tradition and what is the movies?" (Kingston 6). Even though the narrator is directing the questions to Chinese Americans, the questions can be applied to a broad audience made up of different races and ethnicities because they target the universal theme of searching for one's identity. The narrator's rhetorical questions represent the Chinese American identity conflict that borders between two different cultures and traditions.

In Lisa See's *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*, certain rhetorical questions invite the audience to question the double standard between men and women and to recognize how social and cultural standards can be questioned when human rights, particularly women's rights, are involved. In the novel, Lily questions the woman's place in a Confucian society: "If a man does not value his wife upon marriage, why would he treasure her after? If he sees his wife as no better than a chicken who can provide an endless supply of eggs or a water buffalo who can bear an endless amount of weight upon its shoulders, why would he value her any more those animals?" (See 253). Lily's rhetorical questions pinpoint the divided social values of women and men that represent a certain culture. Lily's questions also provide comparable images to explain the reasoning behind her questions. She compares the wife who is expected to produce sons to "a chicken who can provide an endless supply of eggs" (See 253). Then, she compares a wife who is expected to endure ill treatment from her husband and in-laws to "a water buffalo who can bear an endless amount of weight upon its shoulders" (See 253). Each comparison is referencing an animal because Lily is arguing that women are viewed as disposable property or objects of reproduction and abuse. She questions why women have no value when men depend on them to reproduce and maintain the domestic realm. These questions defy Confucian principles for women. As mentioned in the novel, the women are required to adhere to the Three Obediences: "When a girl, obey your father; when a wife, obey your husband; when a widow, obey your son" (See 24). According to the Three Obediences, a female is the inferior sex, and she is to be under

constant control of a male. Lily's rhetorical questions invite the audience to participate in her quest to question the unequal standards placed on women.

Repetition is also a figure of thought. When the first word is repeated at the beginning of a clause or sentence, the rhetorical figure is *anaphora*. In Richard A. Lanham's second edition of *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*, *anaphora* is defined to be a "repetition of the same word at the beginning of successive clauses or verses" (11). In *The New Rhetoric*, Chaim Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca claim, "the simplest figures of increasing feeling of presence are those depending on repetition" (174). A repetition of a word or phrase may also build a common ground to capture the audience's attention. In all three novels, Okada, Kingston, and See include repetition, particularly *anaphora*, to enhance presence and evoke emotions.

In Okada's *No-No Boy*, after Ichiro asked his mother what will happen if decides he will no longer be Japanese and join the U.S. Army, Mrs. Yamada responds, "I will be dead when you decide to go into the army of the Americans. I will be dead when you begin to cease to be Japanese and entertain whose ideas which will lead you to your decision which will make you go into the army of the Americans. I will be dead long before the bullet strikes you" (Okada 42). Mrs. Yamada begins each statement with "I will be dead" (Okada 42). In an inductive pattern of reasoning, Mrs. Yamada provides an explanation of what will cause her to die for each statement. With each repeated phrase, she is relying on the thought of her son's betraying her and her home country of Japan. Mrs. Yamada concludes that she will be dead before her son is shot to death.

During World War II, many Japanese American college students were removed from the higher education institutions and forced to relocate to the internment camps, and the males had to choose between being drafted into the U.S. military or sent to jail for not joining the U.S. military. At the time of the war, Ichiro was attending college. He valued education, and he valued it more when the war started because he was one of Japanese Americans who were relocated to an internment camp and he also refused to join the U.S. military. Undoubtedly, he had two strikes against him: race and answering “no” to two specific questions. Ichiro says, “To be a student in America was a wonderful thing. To be a student in America studying engineering was a beautiful life” (Okada 53). The phrase, “To be a student in America,” expresses the simplicity of being a college student and striving for a better life in America. Ichiro repeats the phrase, “To be a student,” to emphasize the importance of education by adding a reason for each repeated phrase in a pattern of inductive reasoning. He begins with explaining that being a student is a wonderful thing. Then, he specifies what he was studying before the war and how wonderful it was. Finally, Ichiro concludes that being a student in America equates freedom and hope for a better life. During World War II, Ichiro was forced to leave college because the government placed him in a relocation camp for two years and prison for two more years. Many Japanese American students like Ichiro Yamada were forced to withdraw from college. In *Storied Lives: Japanese American Students and*

World War II, author Gary Okhiro explains that during the war, some Japanese American college students were able to relocate to other colleges:

In February 1943, Margaret T. Morewood, with the assistance of Florence Scott, undertook a review of the first 402 students relocated to colleges and universities during the fall of 1942. A few of those students arrived on campus during the winter term of 1943. Using the Council's files, Morewood and Scott provided a profile of that first group. There were 269 men and 133 women among that group, clustered around the ages of eighteen and twenty-two. The vast majority of those students were already in college at the time of their removal from the West Coast: 25 percent were high school seniors; 21 percent were first-year college students; 19.5 percent, sophomores; 20 percent, juniors; and 3.25 percent, seniors. There were 34 graduate students or 8 percent of the total. (46)

The students who were transferred to colleges and universities in the Midwest or on the East Coast were known as the elite group because they were able to negotiate the bureaucracy and “possessed the necessary financial support to gain release from detention camps and attend college” (Okhiro 46). In Ichiro Yamada's case, continuing college was not an option. Perhaps, he did not know how to negotiate the bureaucracy or have the financial means to attend college elsewhere. Unfortunately, Ichiro has difficulty thinking about re-enrolling college after the war because his perspective on life has changed due to the displacement and despair. When Ichiro was a student, he had a dream. After Ichiro's stay in the internment camp and federal prison, his dream is no

longer as simple as being a student. Instead, other complications have taken hold of his life, and Ichiro is left reminiscing a past that he took for granted.

While Ichiro wonders about his place in American society, he also wonders what it means to be Japanese. Even though he and his brother Taro were raised with Japanese values, he still does not recognize his Japanese heritage because he has minimal knowledge about his mother and her life in Japan. So, Ichiro expresses his thoughts in imperative sentences that present a command and a desperate request to connect with his mother:

Tell me now so that I can begin to understand. Tell me about the house in which you lived and of your father and mother, who were my grandparents, whom I have never seen or known because I do not remember your ever speaking of them except to say that they died a long time ago. Tell me everything and just a little bit and a little bit more until their lives and yours and mine are fitted together, for they surely must be.
(Okada 104-05)

By stating, “Tell me,” at the beginning of each sentence, Ichiro is requesting more information about his Japanese heritage. He wants to know more about his mother, his grandparents, and about himself. With the requested information withheld from Ichiro and his brother Taro, they grew up knowing more about their American culture than their Japanese heritage. Ichiro wants to know where the values that his mother placed on them came from, so he can see how he and his mother are able to connect and to understand each other. The repetition of “tell me” is Ichiro’s commanding yet pleading statement

because he wants to understand what part of him is Japanese other than the biological part.

In Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, the narrator makes several confessions to stop a pain in her throat and alleviate her guilty conscience. The narrator admits to having thirty-six items on her list of confessions, which she plans to share with her mother:

How I prayed for a white horse of my own—white, the bad, mournful color—color and prayer bringing me to the attention of the god of the black-and-white nuns who gave us “holy cards” in the park. How I wanted the horse to start the movies in my mind coming true. How I had picked on a girl and made her cry. How I had stolen from the cash register and bought candy for everybody I knew, not just brothers and sisters, but strangers too and ghost children. How it was me who pulled up the onions in the garden out of anger. How I had jumped head-first off the dresser, not accidentally, but so I could fly. (Kingston 197)

At the beginning of each confession, the narrator begins with the word “how.” For each confession, the narrator explains why she participated in each act. On the other hand, the narrator does not explain how each act was conducted. Each confession creates a presence of guilt that has haunted the narrator since childhood.

Anaphora also appears in Lisa See's *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*. The following passage represents the rhetorical figure of *anaphora* because "we" is stated at the beginning of the following sentences:

All women in this room know hardship. As girls, we are raised as useless branches. We may love our families, but we are not with them for long. We marry out into villages we do not know, into families we do not know, to men we do not know. We work endlessly, and if we complain we lose what little respect our in-laws have for us. We bear children; sometimes they die, sometimes we die. (See 228-29)

Anaphora is presented in a deductive reasoning after a statement of generalization or conclusion: "All women in this room know hardship" (See 229). The main character Lily is referring to the audience by associating herself to a group of women. "We," a first person pronoun plural, is emphasized to illustrate a collective suffering of women in the traditional Chinese society. For each supporting statement, Lily explains how each woman has suffered hardship. She also explains how a woman's life with her natal family has to end in order to begin a new life with her husband's family. Lily is describing the emotional and physical displacement of married women and their fears for marrying men they have not met until the wedding day. By repeating each statement with "we," Lily is referring to herself and the women who have endured many hardships in a male-dominated society.

The last rhetorical figure that is represented in all three novels is *accusatio*, also known as *categoria*. *Accusatio* is a rhetorical figure that represents an accusation or

“opening the secret wickedness of one’s adversary before his face” (“*categoria*”). This figure of speech can be found in Cicero’s courtroom speeches, in which he is well-known for incorporating *accusatio* to persuade his audience. This rhetorical figure is represented in epideictic speeches for blame instead of praise.

In Ichiro’s *accusatio*, he accuses his father of not seeing what is wrong: “You’re a Jap. How can you understand? No. I’m wrong. You’re nothing. You don’t understand a damn thing. You don’t understand about me and about Ma and you’ll never know why it is that Taro had to go in the army. Goddamn fool, that’s what you are, Pa, a goddamn fool” (Okada 115). In this direct and caustic accusation, Ichiro pinpoints his father to be the enemy by calling him “Jap” and a “Goddamn fool” (Okada 115). Even though Mr. Yamada is not the direct source of the family’s issues, he becomes the scapegoat for the family. Ichiro takes out his frustration and anger and places them on his father, who endures the verbal abuse from his son. The emotional breakdown of the Yamada family is due to multiple issues, and Mr. Yamada is the target of Ichiro’s verbal accusations despite the fact that he blames his mother in his thoughts.

Ichiro Yamada’s thoughts of resentment and frustration toward his mother are expressed in the form of *accusatio*. When Ichiro finds his dead mother lying in the bathtub, his long chain of thoughts are the words he wanted to express to his mother when she was alive. In his thoughts, Ichiro accuses his mother for making mistakes and explains how those mistakes have affected the family:

You who gave life to me and to Taro and tried to make us conform to a mold which never existed for us because we never knew of it, were alive

to us in the way other sons and daughters know and feel and see their parents. But you made so many mistakes. It was a mistake to have ever left Japan. It was mistake to leave Japan and to come to America and to have two sons and it was mistake to think that you could keep us completely Japanese in a country such as America. With me, you almost succeeded, or so it seemed. Sometimes I think it would have been better had you fully succeeded. You would have been happy and so might I have known a sense of completeness. But the mistakes you made were numerous enough and big enough so that they, in turn, made inevitable my mistake. (Okada 186)

Ichiro's piercing words to his deceased mother are accusatory because he places the blame on his mother. Ichiro blames his mother for his displacement in the family, in the community, and country; Ichiro views his mother as his adversary. Despite the fact that Ichiro is placing blame on his mother, later in the novel, he acknowledges that his mother is not at fault for the war, the dysfunctions of the family, his own resentment, and the social injustice.

In *The Woman Warrior*, the narrator accuses her mother for not disclosing if her stories are either fiction or non-fiction. The narrator vehemently states, "you lie with stories. You won't tell me a story and then say, 'This is a true story,' or, 'This is just a story.' I can't tell the difference. I don't even know what your real names are. I can't tell what's real and what you make up. Ha! You can't stop me from talking. You tried to cut off my tongue, but it didn't work" (Kingston 202). Unable to decipher what part of

her mother's story is the truth or a lie, the narrator grows increasingly annoyed and frustrated with her mother. From this experience, the narrator learns to embrace her mother's style of storytelling that blends fiction with non-fiction.

In the "Letter of Vituperation" chapter of *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*, Lily's song of vituperation toward her *laotong* Snow Flower is expressed with *anaphora* and *accusatio*:

This woman who was your neighbor does not keep a clean house. Her husband carries on a polluted business, killing pigs on a platform outside her front door. This woman who was your neighbor had many talents, but she squandered them, refusing to teach the women in her husband's household our secret language. This woman who was your neighbor lied about her circumstances as a girl in her daughter days, lied as a young woman in her hair-pinning days, and continues to lie as a wife and mother in her rice-and-salt days. She has lied not only to all of you but to her *laotong* as well. (See 230)

Lily expresses her frustration and accuses Snow Flower of betrayal and disloyalty to her family, to her *laotong*, and to the women of the village. Lily's audience includes Snow Flower and the sworn sisters. She repeats each statement with "This woman who," which accuses Snow Flower of being the bad person. Lily accuses Snow Flower of not keeping her domestic realm in order, and she accuses Snow Flower of telling lies.

There are many more rhetorical figures in all three novels; however, these particular rhetorical figures will suffice to document in the sublimity of the selected

novels. The sublimity of rhetorical figures such as presence, metaphor, *pysma*, *anaphora*, and *accusatio* are expressed in John Okada's *No-No Boy*, Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, and Lisa See's *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*, and they contribute to the eloquence of all three novels.

CHAPTER IV

FOLKLORE AND ITS RHETORICAL APPROACH TO ARGUMENT

Social and cultural issues are represented in novels written by Asian American writers including John Okada, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Lisa See; and folklore provides an insight to the binary oppositions represented in the novels. In addition to identifying and analyzing rhetorical figures in Asian American literature, one should consider identifying and analyzing certain elements of folklore to identify the issues that are explored by some Asian American writers. Depending on the values placed on them, cultural, historical, and social issues vary from one society to the next. Also, William Edward Burghardt Du Bois's concept of double-consciousness adds to the analysis of these issues represented in Asian American literature. The identification and analysis of folklore in John Okada's *No-No Boy*, Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*, and Lisa See's *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* reveal binary oppositions and contradictions as proofs of rhetorical argument.

Folklore encompasses the lore of the folk. It provides a connection to the past and reveals traditions to help understand the ways of the present. It also provides answers to understanding cultural traditions and patterns that are taboo or similar to other cultures. Furthermore, it connects universal themes between cultures. From *Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend*, MacEdward Leach defines folklore to be "the generic term to designate customs, beliefs, traditions, tales, magical

practices, proverbs, songs, etc” (401). These elements of folklore can be further explored in literature. Aurelio M. Espinosa explains, “As folklore approaches the level of the literate and literary, it tends to become more elaborate and self-conscious in expression, to shape about itself a formal tradition with prestige value, and to be become absorbed into the main stream of culture” (399). According to American folklorist Jan Brunvard, “the study of American folklore should, in short, reveal how individuals project and reflect upon and even modify the ethos of their own culture by means of that unofficial, traditional, and ever-varying part of culture which we loosely call folklore” (“New Directions” 35). Folklore plays an important role in identifying and understanding various cultures. From *The Meaning of Folklore*, American folklorist, Alan Dundes, contends, “Folklore as a mirror of culture frequently reveals the areas of special concern. It is for this reason that analyses of collections of folklore can provide the individual who takes advantage of the opportunities afforded by the study of folklore a way of seeing another culture *from the inside out* instead of *from the outside in*” (55). Thus, the study of folklore provides an understanding of people and their various cultures, traditions, etc.

The study of folklore within literature exposes the binary oppositions and contradictions of the socially and culturally constructed contexts in literature. In *Epic Laws of Folk Narrative*,” Danish folklorist, Axel Olrik, explains the law of two and law of contrast are two of the epic laws of folk narrative: “the Law of Two to a scene is correlative to the important Law of Contrast,” and “this very basic opposition is a major role of epic composition: young and old, large and small, man and monster, good and evil” (135). Olrik explains that binary oppositions are part of folk narrative because one

term cannot exist without the other. For instance, “The *Sage* would include myths, songs, heroic sagas, and local legends” (Olrik 131), and “The Law of Contrast works from the protagonist of the *Sage* out to the other individuals, whose characteristics and actions are determined by the requirement that they be antithetical to those of the protagonist” (Olrik 135). Binary oppositions exist in folk narrative because the protagonist is the opposite of the antagonist and vice versa. Thus, binary oppositions represent rhetorical arguments in the folk narrative.

Long before the well-known French philosopher Jacques Derrida closely studied and scrutinized the metaphysics of binary oppositions, a Greek philosopher of the 6th Century BCE, Heraclitus, studied the significance of the binary oppositions and contraries. From the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* website, Brigham Young University Professor Daniel W. Graham explains that Heraclitus viewed contraries as “they are the same by virtue of one thing changing to another,” so “subjects do not possess incompatible properties at the same time, but at different times.” The opposites are interchangeable due to human experience. In *The Fragments of Heraclitus*, Heraclitus used folklore to make his argument of the contraries; he presented proverbs with binary oppositions, which revealed contradictions. Heraclitus’s approach to studying the opposites is a rhetorical argument, which philosophers such as Socrates and Plato would have denounced as sophistry. The study of folklore has connections to earlier concepts of rhetoric.

The study of folklore and binary oppositions also has connections to Classical rhetoric. In the *Dissoi Logoi*, the anonymous author presents opposing arguments with

binary oppositions. In the explanation of what is seemly and shameful, the *Dissoi Logoi* arguments use folklore as a reference to reveal the contradicting binary oppositions. *Dissoi Logoi* explains that what is practiced in one culture is seemly, but the same practice in another culture is shameful:

Among Thessalians it is seemly for a man first to select the horses from the herd and then train them and the mules himself, and seemly for a man first to select a steer and then slaughter, skin, and cut it up for himself; in Sicily, however, such activities are shameful, and the work of the slaves. To Macedonians it appears to be seemly that girls should love and have intercourse with a man before marrying a man, but shameful to do this once they are married. To Greeks both practices are shameful. The Thracians count it an adornment that their girls tattoo themselves, but in the eyes of everyone else tattoo-marks are a punishment for wrongdoers.

(50)

These binary oppositions and contradictions between what is seemly and shameful are based on the social and cultural constructions that are connected to certain values because “values enter, at some stage or other, into every argument” (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 75). In a social system of values, hierarchies are inevitable. In *The New Rhetoric*, Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca argue, “Value hierarchies are, no doubt, more important to the structure of an argument than the actual values;” and “values may be admitted by different audiences, but the degree of their acceptance will vary from one audience to another” (81). The higher degree of value is placed on what is accepted as

seemly, and the lower degree is placed on what is shameful. The *Dissoi Logoi* arguments contend that the hierarchical values placed on the binary opposition between what is seemly and shameful can differ depending on the social and cultural contexts and connections to folklore. As a result, the values associated with the binary oppositions reveal certain hierarchies. If certain values in a particular culture are accepted as truth or the normative, then the binary oppositions reveal hierarchical implications. When they are challenged, the binary oppositions become unstable and indeterminate in meaning. When they are examined alongside folklore, the connection to the past brings an understanding to the present. There is a close connection between folklore and rhetoric.

In addition to Classical rhetoric, the study of folklore has connections to Renaissance rhetoric. Renaissance rhetorician Erasmus once argued that “the eleventh method of enriching our style depends on the accumulation of proofs and arguments” (*de Copia* 614), which include illustrative examples such as “fables, proverbs, opinions, parallels or comparisons, similitudes, analogies, and anything else of the same sort” (*de Copia* 615). These folkloric examples of proofs and arguments are connected to rhetoric because they are illustrative examples representing “things done or said in the past, or be derived from the customs of various nations” (Erasmus 616). According to Erasmus, “One should therefore apply as many different illustrations as possible at each point, derived not only from the whole range of Greek and Latin literature, but also from the history of other nations,” and “In fact each nation, each class of person prefers what is his own, or else something that makes him feel superior, such as anecdotes about women,

children, slaves, and barbarians” (616). Therefore, folklore played an important role in Renaissance rhetoric and its intellectual movement of humanism.

Folklorists contend that folklore and rhetoric are closely connected. According to American folklorist Roger D. Abrahams, folklore is a rhetorical argument:

As the rhetorical approach considers techniques of argument, it assumes that all expression is designed to influence, and that we must simply discover the design. Folklore, being traditional activity, argues traditionally; it uses arguments and persuasive techniques developed in the past to cope with recurrences of social problem situations. (146)

Folklore includes rhetorical techniques to present an argument, and it also exposes the ideologies associated with the social and cultural values. Folklore is a vehicle of rhetorical analysis, and it reveals arguments that expose the social and cultural values from the past in relation to binary oppositions.

As a branch of American folklore, the emergence of Asian American folklore explores the historical, social, and cultural contexts of the Asian American experience. In 1966, University of California Berkeley Professor and distinguished folklorist Alan Dundes had predicted the emergence of American immigrant or ethnic folklore. In his article, “The American Concept of Folklore,” Alan Dundes contends, “It is probably American immigrant folklore which offers the greatest challenge to the American folklorist, and it is important to realize that this type of folklore is bound to result in changes in American concepts of folklore” (231). Almost 50 years later, in their article, “Asian American Folklore: Disciplinary Fissions and Fusions,” Jonathan H. X. Lee and

Kathleen M. Nadeau explained the importance of acknowledging Asian American folklore in America:

Asian folklore encompasses the narrative history of those of Asian origin in the United States. Asian American folklore is part and parcel of the interplay of Asian material cultures, religious traditions, performances, celebrations, healing techniques, superstitions, taboos, and cultural understandings employed to produce individual and collective Asian American identities and communities. (xii)

The emergence of Asian American literature inevitably includes the increasing collection of Asian American folklore. According to Lee and Nadeau, “Asian American folklore studies as a discipline must draw on Asian American history, yet not ignore its Asian origins” (xiv). Also, “Asian American folklore bridges Asia to America with tales employed by elders and parents to transmit cultural mores, ethics, and pride to Asian American youth” (Lee and Nadeau xxxvii). The tradition of elders and parents transmitting cultural lessons via tales is apparent in *No-No Boy* and *The Woman Warrior*; the mothers of the main characters provide folktales from their heritage in order to instruct moral values to their Asian American children.

Folktales are represented in Asian American literature as a means of transmitting stories by memory from one generation to the next. “Asian American folklore relies on the transmission of cultural memory through family frames” (Schlund-Vials 7). In order to bridge two different traditions and cultures to understand their own lives, the main characters in *No-No Boy* and *The Woman Warrior* rely on their memories of the past and

revisit the folktales told by their mothers. However, in *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* the main characters learn to recite *nushu*, women's secret language, by relying on the memories of their mothers, aunts, and sworn sisters, who shared folktales of the past. All three novels incorporate folktales to transmit cultural memory from one generation to the next.

In addition to folklore, one should consider W. E. B. Du Bois's concept of double-consciousness to understand the binary oppositions in relation to the socially and culturally constructed values. In his profound and insightful essay, "Strivings of the Negro People," W.E.B. Du Bois explains that the concept of double-consciousness is "to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wished neither of the older selves to be lost" (1). The Asian American person also struggles with connecting two or more cultures. The Asian American views himself or herself in relation to how others view him or her. Thus, "It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (Du Bois 1). In "Strivings of the Negro People," Du Bois explains how an African American struggles with two different views of himself: "One feels his twoness, - an American, a negro; two souls two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (DuBois 1). Similar to the African American with two souls, the Asian American has two warring ideals in one body, and these warring ideals can be closely examined by analyzing their connection to folklore.

Furthermore, there is a connection between Du Bois's argument of the African American's double-consciousness and the Asian American's double-consciousness. In the literary works of Asian American authors, the dualities and contradictions are represented in the Asian American experience or Asian experience in connection with certain elements of Asian and/or Asian American folklore. Maxine Hong Kingston and John Okada's narrators are confronted with dualities and contradictions that reside in two different cultures and societies. Lisa See's narrator is confronted with the dualities and contradictions of the traditional Chinese society that is based on Confucian values. In John Okada's *No-No Boy*, Ichiro Yamada is constantly reminded that he is Japanese even though he was born and reared in America. As a Chinese American, the narrator in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* is also constantly reminded of her Chinese heritage. Both narrators are confronted with two different cultures that create the warring ideals. This twoness can also be applied to Lisa See's *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*. The female main characters, Lily and Snow Flower, live in a society where the double standard between the sexes is evident, and certain binary oppositions are challenged when both female characters, practicing the Three Obediences and Four Virtues, end up in different situations.

Since the binary oppositions are either socially and/or culturally constructed, they are viewed differently depending on the social and cultural contexts. An analysis of the social and cultural contexts of the binary oppositions will result in contradictions because the terms are constantly contradicting each other due to the values placed on them. In order to examine the values, one must address certain elements of folklore to reveal the

social and cultural construction of the binary oppositions. According to Lee and Nadeau, “Asian American folklore and folklife is the consequence of transplantation, accommodation, transformation, and (re) invention of cultural traditions, material and ideological, of the Asian subjects and communities in the United States” (*Encyclopedia of Asian American Folklore and Folklife* xxxix). Analyzing certain elements of folklore in Asian American literature uncovers the changing values, contradictions, and binary oppositions represented in John Okada’s *No-No Boy*, Maxine Hong Kingston’s, *The Woman Warrior*, and Lisa See’s *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*.

CHAPTER V

MOMOTARO IN AMERICA: THE RHETORICAL *ORIGAMI* OF THE JAPANESE AMERICAN IDENTITY IN JOHN OKADA'S *NO-NO BOY*

In John Okada's novel, *No-No Boy*, the characters face the challenge of rebuilding their lives after World War II. The novel is centered around Japanese American characters who were forced to live in internment camps, who were drafted and fought in the war for the U.S, and those who were imprisoned for refusing the draft. After Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, "the United States Government incarcerated 120,313 Japanese Americans during World War II, placing the majority of them in 10 concentration camps run by the War Relocation Authority or in other camps or centers of detention run by the Justice Department or other government agencies" ("Mass Incarceration"). John Okada's *No-No Boy* introduces the audience to a time period in American history that reflects the displacement of many Japanese Americans and their continuous social and cultural conflicts after World War II and the enforcement of internment camps. Okada challenges the audience to delve into a mind of a young Japanese American man, also known as a *Nisei* (second generation Japanese American), in order to observe how the war has affected him, his family, his friends, and the community. He also invites the audience to question history and its cultural and social conflicts in order to express issues pertaining to the U.S. government's treatment of the Japanese Americans during World War II. There are also universal issues that are expressed in the novel that question the purpose of war and how it affects an individual, a

family, a community, and a country, while disrupting relationships and leaving everyone to divert from their usual expected course in life.

After four decades, the treatment of Japanese Americans during WWII was still unknown to most Americans. It took almost four decades later for the U.S. government to recognize the injustice against Japanese Americans. In the article, “Japanese Americans: History, People, and Culture” from the *Encyclopedia of Asian American Folklore and Folklife*, author Cherstin M. Lyons explains, “In 1988, the Civil Rights Act was passed acknowledging that the U.S. government had committed a grave injustice against all those who were interned. Each surviving individual received a check for \$20,000 as a token payment for the losses incurred because of their internment” (574). In reaction to the U.S. government’s payment for the losses, “some people returned the checks out of protest, arguing that money could never repay them for all that they lost. One of the most significant outcomes of redress was the resurgence of stories about camp” (Lyons 574). With the support and encouragement from the new generations of Japanese Americans and others who wanted the public to acknowledge a part of America’s past, literary works and archival collection and research flourished. When John Okada’s *No-No Boy* was published in 1957, it was met with resistance because the Japanese Americans did not want to be reminded of the tragic past. Without the encouragement and support of the Japanese American community, John Okada wrote and published *No-No Boy* when certain topics pertaining to internment camps, enlistment, and the rebuilding of the Japanese American community were sensitive topics to most Japanese Americans who were recovering from the war.

In order to discover rhetorical arguments in John Okada's *No-No Boy*, one must consider folklore because it provides explanations for the hierarchy of values in social and cultural contexts. Different aspects of folklore can be studied in reference to World War II and its effects on American culture and society. The treatment of Japanese Americans during and after World War II is part of American history; and from this part of history, folkloric elements that represent Japanese American culture have emerged. According to Lyons, "In the camps, Japanese Americans found strength, endurance, and resistance in the form of cultural and folk practices that in some cases were unique to the camp experience and in some cases resonated with Japanese traditions reinvigorated during this time of stress and trial (573). Many Japanese Americans experienced social and cultural conflicts during this time period. From these conflicts, certain issues expressed opposite terms, also known as binary oppositions, with multiple meanings. The identification and analysis of folklore in Okada's *No-No Boy* provide explanations for the values placed on binary oppositions and their contradictions. The internment camps, labeling of no-no boy, myth of the model minority, and the folktale of *Momotaro* are part of the Japanese American culture, which are also part of Asian American folklore.

While struggling to find a balance between two different cultures, Japanese and American, in the aftermath of World War II, the main character Ichiro Yamada is confronted with his internal and external conflicts, which reflect binary oppositions and contradictions. Before Ichiro is sent to federal prison, the judge asked Ichiro to answer two questions with either a "yes" or "no" for each question. Ichiro answers "no" to both

questions, and he is thus labeled a no-no boy. Internees were required to answer loyalty questionnaires, but two questions targeted Japanese American males who were 17 years old and older:

The questionnaires had two purposes: (1) to enable camp authorities to process individual internees for work furloughs as well as for resettlement outside of the restricted zones, and (2) to register Nisei for draft. Question 27 asked the draft-age males: Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty, wherever ordered? Question 28 asked all internees: Will you swear unqualified allegiance to United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, or any other foreign government, power, or organization? (Takaki 397)

The “yes” or “no” answers to the two questions, given by the U.S. War Department and War Relocation Authority, represent a binary opposition of yes/no. In this case, the answer “yes” is considered an answer of higher value than an answer of “no.” If the Japanese American internee answers “yes” to both questions, then the person is loyal to America. However, if the Japanese American answers “no” to both questions, then the person is seen as a threat and associated with the enemy, Japan. The “yes” answer for both questions represents a confirmation of loyalty to America. The “no” answer for both questions represents a confirmation of disloyalty to America and an alleged loyalty to Japan. By answering “no” to both questions, there is a contradiction in question no. 28. This question is implying that the person in question has had allegiance to Japan and

is willing to forfeit the allegiance by answering “no.” For instance, “Some Nisei perceived question #28 as a trick question. A ‘yes’ response could be interpreted so as to suggest that the respondent had prior loyalty to Japan. In other words, to ‘forswear’ allegiance to the Japanese Emperor suggests that the respondent had loyalty to the Emperor. At the same time, a ‘no’ response could be interpreted as an explicit disloyalty to the United States.” (“Reading: The Question of Loyalty”). For question no. 28, Ichiro answers “no” to the first part of the question. However, for the second part of question no. 28, Ichiro really does not have an answer because he never swore allegiance to Japan in the first place. By answering “no” to question no. 28, Ichiro is answering “yes” to the second part, which creates a contradiction. This contradiction in question no. 28 was noticed by a second generation Japanese American, Frank Emi, at Heart Mountain; and a committee was formed to protest the questionnaire (Takaki 398). As a result, the binary opposition of yes/no exposes the hierarchical value placement of the replies, and it is also a contradiction because answering “no” for question no. 28 results in a contradicting answer.

After the war, Ichiro Yamada’s internal conflict becomes a battleground for his anger, frustration, fear, desperation, and resentment. He wants to be acknowledged as an American, but the war and his refusal to join the American military labels him to be a no-no boy. Ichiro begins to feel un-American, and he no longer accepts his Japanese heritage as though he was the obedient child of Japanese immigrant parents. After the war, Ichiro’s double consciousness is mirrored from the reactions of the non-Japanese Americans and the Japanese Americans. He experiences racism and intra-racism. He

grew up looking at himself from his mother's point of view. As an adult, Ichiro is constantly looking at himself through the eyes of others, and at the same time, he rejects his mother and blames her for his predicament. Ichiro wants to be himself, but his double consciousness is a constant reminder that he continuously assesses his identity by how others view him. At the beginning of the novel, Ichiro expresses his conflicted thoughts of being American are separated into Japanese and American: "but it is not enough to be American only in the eyes of the law and it is not enough to be only half an American and know that it is an empty half. I am not your son and I am not Japanese and I am not American" (Okada 16). After being imprisoned in the internment camps for two years and in the federal prison for two more years, Ichiro refuses to label himself as either Japanese or American. Also, he refuses to label himself as his mother's son. In the essay "Momotaro's Exile," Gayle K. Fujita Sato argues that *No-No Boy* attempts to affirm "Japanese American through a character who rejects everything Japanese" (239). Ichiro, in an abject condition, rejects the labels to argue that he should be accepted for being himself; but in the eyes of others, he is constantly being labeled. According to Sato, Ichiro's struggle is also a journey of redeeming himself: "Although the self-destructive potential of his "dual identity" is exemplified in Ichiro Yamada's struggle, the same binary opposition ultimately defines his redemptive journey" (239). By rejecting the labels that society places on him, Ichiro Yamada begins to discover his own self by rediscovering his dimorphic identity.

Furthermore, Ichiro's internal conflict is affected by the conflict he has with society and his mother. Ichiro despises war, and he does not understand why people have to choose to fight and to kill in a continuous cycle:

I wish with all my heart that I were Japanese or that I were American. I am neither and I blame you and I blame myself and I blame the world which is made up of many countries which fight with each other and kill and hate and destroy but not enough, so that they must kill and hate and destroy again and again and again and again. (Okada 16)

Ichiro's statement reveals the ongoing struggle of a person who must choose to fight one or the other when in the end, the cycle of war destroys everyone because each side makes a sacrifice. Ichiro had to choose between the loyalty for his parents' country and the loyalty for the country he was born in. In other words, Ichiro had to choose if he is either Japanese or American because there is no middle ground according to his mother and the American society. Hence, the binary opposition of American/Japanese represents a contradiction and instability. It is unstable because the meanings vary depending on the social context. Within this binary opposition, another binary opposition arises, loyalty/disloyalty, which also represents a contradiction depending on the social context. By choosing not to join the American military to fight Japan, Ichiro is ostracized for being disloyal to America. However, when questioned, Ichiro never announced he rejected America. He simply did not want to be drafted into the U.S. military and displease his mother. On the other hand, Ichiro's decision is a pendulum; depending on the perceptions of others, it either swings one way or the other. Ichiro's perceived

disloyalty to America results in a perceived loyalty to his parents and Japan. By being a dutiful son to his mother, Ichiro's loyalty does not prevent him from being viewed as a non-loyal individual and son when he returns home after being confined to two years in an internment camp and two years in federal prison for deciding not to join the American military. By being labeled as a no-no boy by the U.S. government, Ichiro is perceived to be on the enemy's side, Japan; and he is associated with a collective society or community instead of an individual, which emphasizes the eastern concept that community is placed at a higher value than the individual. Due to Japan's involvement in the war, the label of the no-no boy is associated with the lower valued term, Japan, which represents the east and its values: "In Japan, the well-being of the community and family are valued over the individual, with emphasis placed on behaviors such as conflict-avoidance, group harmony, and filial piety" (Endo 590). By not joining the American military, the no-no boy label associates Ichiro with the Japanese society. Also, Ichiro's individual decision affects his collective society at home. For example, "Japanese parents, particularly mothers, have played a central role in socializing their children to maintain moral fidelity between the *uchi* and *soto* (inside/home and outside)" (Endo 590). At home, Ichiro was raised with Japanese values; outside of the home, Ichiro grew up with American values. By being loyal to his mother and following the Japanese cultural norm, he is betraying his country but not his mother's home country. Similar to DuBois' explanation that "One feels his twoness, - an American, a negro; two souls two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder," Ichiro struggles to reconcile two different

cultural representations of himself. Ichiro acknowledges the twoness, an American and a Japanese; but he has difficulty reconciling with one or the other after the war. Ichiro's loyalty to his parents results in self-turmoil, the breakdown of the Yamada family structure, conflicts within the Japanese American community, and questions about how war separates families and communities.

In addition to racism, *No-No Boy* explores the intra-racism within the Japanese American community that further complicates the binary opposition of American/Japanese. According to Elaine H. Kim, "No-No Boy explores creatively the effects of racism on the Japanese American community and on the individual Japanese American psyche" (*Asian American Literature* 156). When another Japanese American, Eto, finds out that Ichiro did not join the American military to fight against Japan, he calls Ichiro names such as "rotten bastard" and "no-good bastard" (Okada 4). Then, Ichiro realizes while lifting his luggage that "a wet splattered over his hand dripped onto the black leather," and "the legs of the accuser were in front of him. God in a pair of green fatigues, U. S. Army style. They were the legs of the jury that passed sentence upon him" (Yamada 4). Eto, a Japanese American man dressed in U.S. military uniform, views Ichiro, who is also a Japanese American man, as the enemy. Due to the different decisions made by both Japanese American men, Eto emits an attitude of hierarchy over Ichiro because he, the one who served in the U.S. military and fought against the Japanese, asserts himself as the loyal American and views Ichiro as the disloyal Japanese. Even in the physical position, the hierarchy of up/down is established. Eto is standing above Ichiro, looking down and spitting on the enemy, while Ichiro is bending down and

picking up his luggage and struggling not to look into the eyes of the punisher. Ichiro does not fight back; instead, he accepts the shame and punishment while Eto is standing and staring down on him. Thus, Ichiro quietly submits to the social abuse. Both Japanese American men are in contradiction because one man recognizes the other as the enemy, Japanese and establishes himself as the American by calling the other man names and spitting on him because of his perceived disloyalty to America. Even after the war, Ichiro, who never announced his loyalty to Japan, is labeled as the enemy because he refused to join the American military, which displaces him in his own community and country.

Throughout the novel, Ichiro struggles to find a common ground for his twoness. He wants to be American and Japanese, but the conflict between Japan and America has dissolved his ideal reality. Similar to the double consciousness of the African American, who “wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without losing the opportunity of self-development” (DuBois 1), Ichiro wants to be accepted as both an American and Japanese. For Ichiro, “the contradictions within himself and within his community also prevail in America. The same America that is abundant, beautiful, and desirable is also an America where racial hatred and injustice flourish. Ichiro realizes that he is not alone after all, not even when he is on the outside looking in, but that almost everyone else is probably on the outside too” (Kim 154). In Ichiro’s case, he simply wishes to be both Japanese and American and to feel welcome in his home country: “In time, he thought, in time there will again be a place for me. I will buy a home and love my family and I will

walk down the street holding my son's hand and people will stop and talk with us about the weather and the ball games and the elections" (Okada 52). Despite the contradictions, Ichiro hopes for a time when he does not have to choose between one or the other. Emi informs Ichiro that it is more difficult for an Asian American to fit into American society: "It's because we're American and because we're Japanese and sometimes the two don't mix. It's all right to be German and American or Italian and American or Russian and American but, as things turned out, it wasn't all right to be Japanese and American. You had to be one or the other" (Okada 91). Emi's explanation supports DuBois' theory on the double consciousness because she is informing Ichiro that everything changes for an Japanese American whose race is conspicuous in a time of war when the enemy is an Asian country. During and after World War II, everything changes for Ichiro because he is confronted with several challenges to identify himself as an American or a Japanese, which is a binary opposition and contradiction.

The Japanese folktale of *Momotaro* or *Peach Boy* also reveals the binary oppositions and contradictions in *No-No Boy*. In the Japanese folktale, Momotaro is discovered immediately before the elderly couple cuts open the peach. According to *Funk and Wagnall's Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology*, "In Japan the peach is a symbol of fertility" ("peach" 849). Since the elderly couple was unable to have children, the peach represents fertility for them. Unaware of the child's being inside the peach, "the old woman brought a big knife from the kitchen and got ready to cut the peach in half. But just then a human voice called out from inside the peach" (Sakade 6). At this moment, the peach splits open and a boy emerges from the peach. The

significance of the splitting peach parallels the dichotomy of Ichiro's life that results in a war at home and in society and the binary oppositions associated with his conflicts. Interestingly, the mother in the folktale is the one who found the peach, and she is also the one who plans to cut the peach in half. In *No-No Boy*, Ichiro's mother is the one who gives birth to Ichiro, and she is also the one of the main reasons that Ichiro does not join the American military. Therefore, Ichiro's decision leaves him to reconcile with values from two different cultures, a decision which parallels the split peach. Sato also contends, "The novel's binary opposition of Japan and America can be analyzed through two subtexts – the loyalty oath and Momotaro" (239). Not everything is black and white, and Ichiro is confronted with the double-consciousness between being Japanese and American, loyal and disloyal. The Japanese folktale of *Momotaro* is about the loyalty between a child and his parents. The folktale represents the folkloric function of education. Momotaro is educated to stay loyal to his parents and to defend them against the enemies. In Ichiro's case, his choice not to join the American military affirms his loyalty to his parents, particularly his mother. The Japanese folktale is briefly mentioned in the novel to allow the reader to understand Ichiro's loyalty to his parents and their home country:

There was a time that I no longer remember when you used to smile a mother's smile and tell me stories about gallant and fierce warriors who protected their lords with blades of shining steel and about the old woman who found a peach in the stream and took it home and, when her husband split it in half, a husky little boy tumbled out to fill their hearts with

boundless joy. I was that boy in the peach and you were that old woman and we were Japanese with Japanese feelings and Japanese pride and Japanese thoughts because it was all right then to be Japanese and feel and think all the things that Japanese do even if we lived in America. (Okada 15)

As a child, Ichiro did not see anything wrong with living in America while expressing their Japanese culture at home. The folktale taught Ichiro to obey his parents and to stay loyal to his parents' home country; it was also used to teach the Japanese cultural values. The Japanese folktale of *Momotaro* or *Peach Boy* is a folktale that Ichiro is unable to mirror fully because it does not represent the reality of life's various issues. Instead, it represents an allegory. The folktale also represents the folkloric function of validation and conformity. The folktale explains Ichiro's reason for staying loyal to his parents and for conforming to their values. By staying loyal to his parents, Ichiro's place in the family as the first son is secured; however, he is regarded as a traitor by the U.S. government and sent to federal prison for choosing to be a no-no boy as an adult. The folktale explains the Japanese values and culture that Ichiro's parents raised him with. The Japanese folktale of *Momotaro* or *Peach Boy* represents William Bascom's four functions of folklore: escape or entertainment, validation of culture, education, and conformity ("Four Functions of Folklore"). On the other hand, Ichiro's loyalty to his parents is also his disloyalty to the country he was born in, which results in a binary opposition between loyalty and disloyalty. Also, it creates a contradiction for Ichiro. William Bascom argues that "the basic paradox of folklore" is that "while it plays a vital

role in transmitting and maintaining the institutions of a culture and in forcing the individual to conform to them, at the same time it provides socially approved outlets for the repressions which these same institutions impose on him” (349). The values placed on the concept of loyalty vary depending on the social and cultural contexts.

Another folkloric element that is represented in the novel is the model minority myth. After World War II, the Japanese Americans had to undo stereotypes by restarting their lives in America and re-assimilating into American society. During this restart process, the Japanese Americans were stereotyped with the concept of the “model minority,” which was first introduced by a sociologist, William Peterson. According to Danico and Ng, the concept of the model minority was described in William Peterson’s article, “Success Story: Japanese American Style,” which appeared “in the January 9, 1966 issue of *New York Times Magazine*” (23). The concept of the model minority is a two part, *yin* and *yang*, double sided coin, or an abstract metaphor that seems to haunt most Asian Americans living in the U.S. The double consciousness of being an Asian American in the American society is constantly challenged. For instance, “The term model minority is an interesting one. The phrase suggests that a minority group is somehow exemplary when compared with other groups. Its experience and performance contrast favorably when compared with that of other groups in American society” (Danico and Ng 23). The myth of the model minority, despite its stereotypes, is part of Asian American folklore. From the *Encyclopedia of Asian American Folklore and Folklife*, Rachel Endo explains, “The model-minority stereotype, or the idea that Asian Americans are hardworking minorities who succeed in society, has largely been fueled by

assimilationist theories that Japanese Americans will give up their cultural identity to gain acceptance from the dominant culture” (“Japanese Americans: Identity” 604). Also, “Portrayed by the mainstream media in contrast to their African American and Latino counterparts, Asian Americans were reported to refuse assistance from federal relief programs such as welfare, have strong morality and cultural values because of ‘traditional’ Asian reverence for learning, and show a natural inclination for hard work and thrift” (Tu 70). Both stereotypes that are associated with the concept of the model minority either favor the Asian American or create havoc for the Asian American.

Okada’s *No-No Boy* reveals that the concept of the model minority is false. In the article published in the *Phylon* journal, “Japanese American Internees Return, 1945 to 1955: Readjustment and Social Amnesia,” author Tetsuden Kashima contends, “the years between 1945 and 1955, instead of being seen as a transition period, should be viewed as a crisis period” (108). After World War II, the Yamada family silently tries to rebuild their lives. The silence becomes a hindrance because Ichiro’s loyalty to his mother stirs anger and resentment inside of him because of the way he and his family were being treated during and after the war. The Yamada family does not talk about their experience in the internment camps, and no one asks Ichiro about his experience in prison. There is a loud silence that seems to linger in the Yamada family. On the outside, the Yamada family appears to be recovering from the war; the parents are busy working in their store, and their sons are home. According to Kashima, “this appearance of normalcy was achieved by forgetting the evacuation experience. Thus, for some years after the release from camp, a state of social amnesia sets in” (113). In agreement,

Rachel Endo explains, “after World War II ended and Japanese American families reintegrated into mainstream society, many camp survivors elected to downplay or silence their memories to the younger generations because they hoped that forgetting the past could expedite their recovery” (“Japanese Americans: Internment Camps” 609). However, on the inside, each member of the Yamada family is displaced: the father turns to alcohol to relieve his problems at home; the mother is severely depressed and in denial; the second son, Taro, is angry and resentful; and the first son, Ichiro, is lost and resentful. The dysfunctional family is unable to reconcile with each other because each member of the family is dealing with a social and cultural change that has each of them questioning his or her place in the family, community, and country. No one speaks about what has happened in the past. Mr. Yamada tries to speak to his son Ichiro, but Ichiro pushes his father away. In the case of the “model minority,” it is not shown in the Yamada family because “this crisis of readjustment leads to another important social question. This is the problem of group definition-the question of who the Japanese Americans are and how they fit into American society” (Kashima 115). Okada’s unveiling of the dysfunctional Yamada family shows that the concept of the model minority can fail. By associating model minority with the Japanese Americans, other important issues are being ignored by the family, the community, and the country. By picking back up where they left off before the war and internment camps, Japanese Americans are heralded as the model minority. Their silence becomes a social and cultural acceptance in American history and culture. Issues within the individual and the family are ignored by the general American society. The unresolved past becomes part

of the present and future. As a result, the once displaced Japanese Americans are expected to move on with rebuilding their lives without receiving help for dealing with their loss and pain:

Social amnesia is not a psycho-logical pathology; it is a group phenomenon in which attempts are made to suppress feelings and memories of particular moments or extended time periods. It is a conscious effort, an attempt to cover up less than pleasant memories. It does not mean that the past is repressed, in the psychoanalytic sense; rather more simply that they are suppressed and are difficult to bring up to the surface consciousness. In the 1950s, the Japanese Americans' discussions about camp, when they occurred with those sharing common experiences, revolved around the trivial, the humorous or the non-threatening moments. (Kashima 113)

In the case of the Yamada family, their feelings and thoughts are suppressed. When Mrs. Yamada sees Ichiro for the first time after the war, she expresses, "I am proud that you are back...I am proud to call you my son" (Okada 11). By confirming that Ichiro has done the right thing, Mrs. Yamada is content with the result, and she does not bring up the past. On the other hand, the father, Mr. Yamada, tries to talk to his son about his experience in federal prison. Mr. Yamada asks, "Was it very hard?" (Okada 10). Ichiro coldly replies with sarcasm, "No it was fun...I'm okay, Pa. It's finished. Done and finished. No use talking about it" (Okada 10). Ichiro's sarcastic reply indicates to his father that he chooses to suppress his thoughts about the past. Mr. Yamada yields to his

son's reply and confirms, "True, it is done and there is no use to talk" (Okada 10). Even though he does not want to talk about the past, Ichiro is not content with the results. By obeying his mother, Ichiro has encountered the rejection from the country, his brother Taro, and fellow Japanese American men who fought in the war, and society. He blames his mother for society's reaction to his choice. In his essay, "You Had to Be One or the Other: Oppositions and Reconciliation in John Okada's *No-No Boy*," Stan Yogi argues, "Ichiro sees nothing to celebrate in his homecoming from prison. Mrs. Yamada, however, sees much to rejoice over, for to her Ichiro's wartime actions are a source of pride; they affirm, in her mind, his choice as Japanese" (65). Thus, the war continues at home and in society. The war is no longer a single war; instead, it is divided into two wars for Ichiro: the war at home and the war in American society.

At home, Ichiro resents his mother the most:

For me, you have been dead a long time, as long as I can remember. You, who gave life to me and to Taro and tried to make us conform to a mold which never existed for us because we never knew of it, were never alive to us in the way that other sons and daughters know and feel and see their parents. But you made so many mistakes. It was a mistake to have ever left Japan. It was mistake to leave Japan and to come to America and to have two sons and it was a mistake to think that you could keep us completely Japanese in a country such as America. (Okada 186)

When Ichiro is confronted with his mother's dead body, he begins to scold and to blame his mother for his misfortunes. Ichiro expresses his anger and resentment when his

mother is dead because he was afraid or worried to do so while his mother was alive.

“With Ichiro positioned against his mother, the novel demonstrates how such politicized generational conflict becomes a justifying ideology for the false dichotomy in Japanese American identity enacted in the internment camps and for the subsequent deterioration of the traditional family bonds crucial to the Japanese American community” (J. Ling 369). The depiction of the strained relationship between mother and son proves that the model minority can fail and that the *Momotaro* folktale provides a reason for Ichiro’s undeniable loyalty to his mother before he came home from prison.

Furthermore, the concept of the model minority becomes part of Asian American folklore, particularly for the Japanese Americans. Since the concept was first mentioned as a reference to the Japanese Americans rebuilding their lives after WWII, the younger generations of Japanese Americans may or may not be aware of the concept. This concept, of course, is also applied to other Asian American ethnic groups as well. According to Dawn Lee Tu, “This stereotype has also become part of how Asian Americans are perceived in the United States and contemporary Asian American folklore” (69). In the case of Ichiro Yamada, he is confronted with the *Momotaro* folktale and the concept of the model minority. By rebuilding his life, Ichiro is becoming the model minority. On the other hand, what changes his road to readjustment as the model minority is that he does not accept the job offer from Mr. Carrick, and he continues to question the concept of racism in America. As a result, the model minority stereotype “also functions as a disciplining agent for Asian Americans to be ‘good’ national subjects if they want to retain their privileged status” (Tu 71). The rebuilding of

the Yamadas' family is slow and uncertain. The dysfunctional family represents the pitfalls of placing stereotypes on a certain race and ethnic group.

Discovering rhetorical arguments in John Okada's *No-No Boy* has connections to folklore because it provides explanations for the hierarchy of values in social and cultural contexts. Folklore can be studied in reference to World War II and its treatment of Japanese Americans during and after World War II. Many Japanese Americans experienced social and cultural conflicts that resulted in binary oppositions and contradictions. The internment camps, labeling of no-no boy, falseness of the model minority, and the *Momotaro* folktale are part of Japanese American culture. In addition, folklore reveals the contradictions in binary oppositions that depend on the ideologies that are associated with such value placements in social and cultural contexts. Many Japanese Americans who were affected by World War II were able to survive a tragic period in American history. Their resilience can be compared to the Japanese paper folding art known as *origami*. According to Murguia, "the most common material used for origami is known as *washi*, or a paper made from various types of wood pulp. This *washi* is malleable, especially when dampened, and is used to create a variety of figures including animals, insects, and everyday objects" (629). The dampening of the malleable paper represents the social and cultural challenges that were encountered by many Japanese Americans during and after World War II. The different figures that can be made by folding paper represents the resilient nature of Japanese Americans who were forced to adapt to adverse situations; however, Okada's *No-No Boy* shows that not everyone can survive such challenges. Despite the tragic suicide of Mrs. Yamada, the

rest of the family continues to make the best of what they have in life. Taro leaves home and joins the U.S. Army. Mr. Yamada continues to run his business, and Ichiro realizes that he can no longer conform to the expectations of his family, the Japanese American community, and the American society. Instead of constantly conforming to the social origami of being accepted into a society, Ichiro's identity begins to take shape and form in his own society. The sublimity of John Okada's *No-No Boy* is represented in the eloquence of incorporating folklore, social and cultural issues, and binary oppositions to form rhetorical arguments that expose a crucial period in American history.

CHAPTER VI

THE HYBRID CHINESE FORTUNE COOKIE: A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF SELECTIONS FROM MAXINE HONG KINGSTON'S *THE WOMAN WARRIOR*: *MEMOIRS OF A GIRLHOOD AMONG GHOSTS*

The sublimity of Asian American literature relies on the rhetorical infrastructure of the Asian American writers' eloquence to reveal issues pertaining to Asians and/or Asian Americans. In addition to focusing on Asian American culture, Asian American writers may also focus on one Asian culture or two or more cultures. John Okada's *No-No Boy* exposes the social and cultural issues for Japanese Americans during a crucial time in American history by focusing less on Japanese culture and focusing primarily on how World War II impacted the lives of many Japanese Americans in order to recognize them as Americans. The unlawful displacement of Japanese Americans who were yet to be recognized as Americans resulted in a recognition of a hybrid culture: Japanese American. On the other hand, Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* focuses more on Chinese culture to reveal the social and cultural issues between two contrasting cultures, Chinese and American, in order to recognize a hybrid culture: Chinese American. Whereas the main character, Ichiro Yamada, in Okada's *No-No Boy* is unable to share many aspects of his Japanese heritage, a narrator in *The Woman Warrior* is able to share many aspects of her Chinese heritage. Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* is a key piece that fits into this puzzle of identifying Asian American literature as a collection of different perspectives and genres. It is the

bridge between what some scholars may argue that Asian American literature is about Asian culture and what other scholars argue that Asian American culture is about. *The Woman Warrior* is an excellent representation of both sides of the spectrum because it expresses Chinese, American, and Chinese American cultures while implementing Longinus's five elements of sublimity: "power to conceive great thoughts," "strong and inspired emotion," rhetorical figures, diction, and "dignified and elevated word-arrangement" (*On the Sublime* 350). In grand style, *The Woman Warrior* informs, pleases, and persuades the audience. According to Cicero, "this eloquence has power to sway men's minds and move them in every possible way. Now it storms the feelings, now it creeps in; it implants new ideas and uproots the old" (*Orator* 342). *The Woman Warrior* rightfully moves the minds and emotions of the audience with all five elements of sublimity. It is a literary work that cannot be categorized into one genre, a pattern which is similar to the narrator's struggle between two different cultures, because it is a combination of multiple genres. Kingston's eloquence ranges from plain to grand style, but overall, grand style is most evident in *The Woman Warrior*. Similar to Cicero, Kingston also forms her own style of eloquence, which is expressed in her sublime literary work of *The Woman Warrior*.

Scholars and critics argue that Kingston's work is hard to categorize as a single literary genre because it is presented in fragments of multiple genres, which creates confusion for some readers. However, the fragments are the key to the puzzle because they reflect the soul of a bicultural narrator who is constantly negotiating rhetorical borderlands that are reflected in the binary oppositions such as truth vs. false, Chinese vs.

American, speech vs. silence within more than one language, culture, and persona. In her highly acclaimed work, *The Woman Warrior*, Maxine Hong Kingston presents a hybrid of non-fiction, fiction, folklore, and fantasy. Even though most scholars agree that *The Woman Warrior* is a combination of nonfiction and fiction, some scholars reference the narrator as Kingston herself. In her book, *Maxine Hong Kingston: A Critical Companion*, E. D. Huntley explains that “*The Woman Warrior* has been labeled both fiction and nonfiction, because the work resembles neither traditional autobiography nor conventional novel, the literary debates over its genre have resulted in no clear consensus” (39). Despite Huntley’s statement, she refers to the narrator as either Maxine or Kingston in her critical analysis on *The Woman Warrior*. Another literary critic, Michelle M. Tokarczyk, references the narrator as either Maxine or Kingston in her book *Class Definitions: On the Lives and Writings of Maxine Hong Kingston, Sandra Cisneros, and Dorothy Allison*. In a published conversation with Phyllis Hoge Thompson, Maxine Hong Kingston verifies that the narrator in *The Woman Warrior* is a fictional character: “Oh, that narrator girl. It’s hard for me to call her me, because this is an illusion of writing. She is so coherent and intense always, throughout. There’s an intensity of emotion that makes the book come together. And I’m not like that. It’s impossible for a real human be to be that coherent and that intense day after day” (“This Is the Story I Heard” 6). The intensity of emotion is what contributes to the sublimity of *The Woman Warrior* because “strong and inspired emotion” is one of the key elements of

sublimity (Longinus 350). In an interview with Kay Bonetti, Kingston explains that the narrator is part of her as well as part of her imagination:

Well, the way I saw it, too, was that *The Woman Warrior* is this story of a young person, a young woman, and being young, she is still creating herself, and she is usually a first-person narrator...I tell the imaginative lives and the dreams and the fictions of real people. These are the stories of storytellers...So what I've written are biographies of imaginative people, and this is culturally correct, because this is the way my people are, my family. People come together and they tell each other their lives, and they make up the stories of their lives. Some of the stories they tell to the immigration officials, and some are heroic stories to make themselves look better. So it's part of the Chinese American culture, to make fictive lives. As a writer, I'm just part of that. (36-37)

In order to capture the diverse attention of her audience, Kingston ingeniously combines two different cultures, Chinese and American, that meet at different points in the novel, while incorporating fiction, non-fiction, diverse styles of storytelling, fantasy, imagination, and rhetorical arguments. For each section of *The Woman Warrior*, Kingston creates a narrator with a different persona. Similar to the constant switching of the narrator's persona from daughter to mother, the linguistic ability of the bilingual narrator's code-switching reflects two different cultures separating and coming together, which include different traditions and perspectives on various issues in life. Each section of *The Woman Warrior* focuses on two different traditions and cultures separately and

together, and the stories from the mother and daughter are separate and together. Their stories are represented best in the first and last sections of *The Woman Warrior* because they reveal how the narrator struggles to understand her Chinese culture while learning to adapt to the American culture to form her Chinese American identity. Kim explains, “*The Woman Warrior* is about women, but it is primarily about the Chinese American’s attempt to sort fact from fantasy in order to come to terms with the paradoxes that shape her life as a member of a racial minority group in America” (*Asian American Literature* 199). As a representation of sublime literary work, each section of *The Woman Warrior* is a tapestry of folklore, imagination, fantasy, binary oppositions, contradictions, creative styles of storytelling, and rhetorical arguments. For this chapter of the study, selected passages from the first and last sections of Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* will be examined alongside the rhetorical figure of LuMing Mao’s Chinese fortune cookie and folklore to uncover rhetorical arguments in social and cultural contexts, while also revealing the binary oppositions and contradictions of two cultures: Chinese and American.

With the growing interest and the emergence of Asian American literature, Asian American rhetoric is also making a presence in the area of Postmodern rhetoric. One leading scholar of Asian American rhetoric, particularly in the field of Chinese American rhetoric, is LuMing Mao. In his breakthrough book for Asian American rhetoric, *Reading Chinese Fortune Cookie: The Making of Chinese American Rhetoric*, LuMing Mao contends, “Chinese American rhetoric as emergent rhetoric cannot be treated only as an oppositional discourse, because it is always in the state of constant negotiation and

adjustment and because it is always attended by this fluid dynamic process” (32-33).

Hence, Asian American literature is also in constant negotiation and adjustment between two or more different traditions and cultures. According to Lu Ming Mao, “the making of Chinese American rhetoric as an emergent hybrid involves and embodies two different traditions. However, these two traditions have also established an emergent joint membership in a space that is inhabited by asymmetrical power relations, crisscrossing movements, and co-existing but divergent voices” (35). In the first and last sections of *The Woman Warrior*, Kingston depicts the crisscrossing movements between two power relations by expressing the narrator’s mother’s talk-story and the narrator’s own talk-story while representing two different traditions and cultures. In her book *Maxine Hong Kingston: A Critical Companion*, E. D. Huntley explains, “China is a construct of myth and tradition, perpetuated by talk-story: a country whose inhabitants tell stories about the dragons who live in caves, mountains, lakes, even the sky; a culture whose layers of tradition govern the lives of Chinese, even when they are far away in America: a psychological geography shaped by paradox, intuition, inexactness, and indirection” (Huntley 90). In his groundbreaking and influential book, *Orientalism*, Edward Said explains the western concept of the Orient or the East: “The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences. Now it was disappearing; in a sense it had happened, its time was over” (Said 1). In *The Woman Warrior*, Maxine Hong Kingston includes talk stories beyond the usual references to nature in order to depict two different cultures and to breakdown the stereotypes of the eastern culture.

Even though their voices are different, both voices of the mother and daughter co-exist throughout the book. Consequently, the dual voices of mother and daughter represent a perfect rendition of two traditions and two cultures trying to co-exist at the same time; and they also reveal the challenges and friction between the two traditions and cultures.

The rhetorical figure of the Chinese fortune cookie can be examined alongside Asian American and/or Chinese American literature to analyze the rhetorical borderlands of two different traditions and cultures. According to LuMing Mao, there is a connection between the Chinese fortune cookie and Chinese American rhetoric:

I cannot help but submit that the making of Chinese American rhetoric bears an unmistakable resemblance to the birth of the Chinese fortune cookie—a resemblance stemming not so much from any shared essence between them as from the associations they invoke with both Chinese and European American traditions...Like the Chinese fortune cookie, the making of Chinese American rhetoric is born of two rhetorical traditions, and made both visible and viable at rhetorical borderlands as a process of becoming. (18)

LuMing Mao's argument connects the Chinese fortune cookie to acknowledging Chinese American rhetoric and its rhetorical borderlands as a hybrid of two traditions.

The history of the Chinese fortune cookie began in the United States because “the fortune cookie was not introduced to China until 1990s and at that time it was advertised as ‘Genuine American Fortune Cookies’” (Li 276). Inside the curved or moon shaped, Chinese fortune cookie, a message, in a form of a small strip of white paper, appears on

both sides of the paper. The English translation appears on one side, and the Chinese translation appears on the other side. The same message is not translated in both languages. On one side of the paper, there is a fortune stated in English; on the other side of the paper, there are Chinese characters and Romanized Chinese for those who are interested in learning Chinese. Sometimes, lottery numbers are placed on the side of the Chinese message. According to Jing Li, the “early fortunes featured biblical sayings,” but “today’s messages are much less serious. They are usually mystifying and sometimes funny, including among other things, sage advice, recommended lottery numbers, Chinese-language studying, and smiley faces” (277). Consequently, many Americans have grown to accept the Chinese fortune cookie as part of the Chinese American food culture. According to LuMing Mao, the concept of a pastry with a message is representative of an old Chinese tradition, and the cookie is representative of American tradition because dessert is served after a meal:

On the one hand, the fortune cookie represents a centuries-old Chinese tradition of using message-stuffed pastry as a means of communication—a tradition that started in the fourteenth-century China as a covert means to share information and to get organized without being detected by the authorities. On the other hand, serving dessert at the end of a meal is a European American tradition, because the Chinese traditionally do not eat dessert at the end of a meal. That is why we do not find fortune cookies in restaurants in mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, or Europe at all—and

we don't feel cheated either for not eating them at the end of such a meal over there. (18)

Thus, it is an American tradition to serve dessert after a meal, so Chinese fortune cookies are usually served to customers after a meal at Chinese American restaurants. Without the Chinese fortune cookie, the Chinese American dining experience is missing something, and some customers do take notice. The Chinese and American “traditions are allowed to co-exist with each other in every single Chinese fortune cookie, which in turn has served its dual function faithfully—both to initiate a fortune-sharing communicative activity and to remind its participants that it's time to pack their bags” (Mao 18). In the first and last sections of *The Woman Warrior*, some of the stories are from the mother, the Chinese side, and the other stories are from the daughter, the American side. Together, the stories represent the Chinese American side, which also represent the whole Chinese fortune cookie. Even though both mother and daughter do not provide the same stories or messages, they somehow make it necessary for both of their talk stories to co-exist at the same time. Thus, LuMing Mao's concept of the Chinese fortune cookie as part of Chinese American rhetoric serves as a rhetorical figure in first and last sections of Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* in which the talk stories are the messages in the fortune cookie.

In his explanation of the significance of the Chinese fortune cookie in Asian American literature, LuMing Mao contends, “I want the Chinese fortune cookie to be represented not as some detached, exotic artifact, but as an example of cultural hybrid that is both unified and contradictory” (32). Thus, the Chinese fortune cookie is as

contradicting and dualistic as the narrator's double-consciousness in the first and last sections of *The Woman Warrior*. In her book *Class Definitions: On the Lives and Writings of Maxine Hong Kingston, Sandra Cisneros, and Dorothy Allison*, Michelle M. Tokarczyk contends, "Gayle K. Fujita Sato implicitly compares the Chinese-American experience to the double consciousness Du Bois finds in African Americans" (64). In the 1897 publication of *The Atlantic Monthly*, a well-known American Civil Rights activist and scholar, William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, defined the concept of double-consciousness in his article entitled "Strivings of the Negro People." According to W. E. B. DuBois, "It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" ("Strivings of the Negro People" 1). In *The Woman Warrior*, the narrator's double-consciousness, in different forms of persona, represents a Chinese American growing up and living in a country where she learns to see herself through others; and eventually, the narrator embraces the contradictions of the cultural binary oppositions as part of her life in order to discover her own identity. E. D. Huntley explains, "As a child who is both Chinese and American, she learns about the woman warrior and about the oppressive culture that enjoins women to docility, while she tries to please teachers who command her to be outspoken; she is a girl who knows that girls are despised unless they grow up to become swordswomen. As a grown woman, she understands that she must construct her own identity out of the fragments of her heritage" (83). The narrator learns to find her own voice and identity in a world of different traditions and cultures.

In the first and last sections of *The Woman Warrior*, the narrator is confronted with a double-consciousness of seeing herself through others. The narrator's double-consciousness helps form her voice and identity as a Chinese American. In her book, *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context*, Elaine H. Kim argues, "The narrator of *The Woman Warrior* sees double almost all the time: she has two vantage points, and the images are blurred. Continually confronted with dualities, contradictions, and paradoxes, she struggles to discern what is real from what is illusory by asking questions, trying to name the unnamed, and speaking the unspeakable" (199). Even though the narrator is confronted with dualities and contradictions, she learns to acknowledge her double-consciousness of being Chinese and American by retelling her mother's talk-story and devising her own talk-story. Kim contends, "*The Woman Warrior* is also a landscape of the consciousness and experience of the contemporary American-born daughter of Chinese immigrant parents" (199). The narrator illustrates her consciousness and experience through talk-story. In the first and last sections, the narrator becomes conscious of her dual identity and examines the contradictions between the Chinese and American cultures.

In addition to the application of the Chinese fortune cookie, revealing the binary oppositions and contradictions with the identification and analysis of folklore in *The Woman Warrior* provides insight into the narrator's struggle with double-consciousness as a Chinese American. *The Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage* defines talk-story to be "an informal chat" or "to chat informally" from the Hawaiian origin. Through talk-story, the narrator "is able to mediate the conflicting elements of her

identity; she is able to recognize that the heroic Brave Orchid and the disenfranchised immigrant nonentity are the same woman. Ultimately, Maxine is finally able to understand and reconcile her own dual identity as a fact of life” (Huntley 83). She also recounts stories about the social injustice of silenced women in “No Name Woman” and the story about Moon Orchid’s struggle in America. Elaine H. Kim contends, “One of the most critical contradictions facing the Chinese American woman in *The Woman Warrior* is the relationship between her perceptions of her Chinese heritage and American realities. This contradiction is explored primarily through the question of the women’s status and role in both only obliquely understood societies” (*Asian American Literature* 201). The narrator explains that her mother told her stories to acknowledge her Chinese heritage in a new world that clashed with her Chinese values. According to Lee and Nadeau, “Asian American folklore bridges Asia to America with tales employed by elders and parents to transmit cultural mores, ethics, and pride to Asian American youth” (*Encyclopedia of Asian American* xxxvii). Even though the narrator lives in America with her Chinese immigrant mother, she reveals that she has had difficulty distinguishing what is Chinese tradition versus what is stereotyped about the Chinese because she is confronted with dualities and oppositions between the social ideologies that are accepted in the Chinese and American societies. Hence, the dualities, oppositions, and contradictions become part of the Chinese American narrator’s life. Instead of running away from them or denouncing them, the narrator learns to embrace them through talk-story.

A rhetorical analysis of folklore and LuMing Mao's rhetorical figure of the Chinese fortune cookie unveils the binary oppositions and contradictions in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*. In the first section, "No Name Woman," the narrator takes on the persona of her mother when revealing a story about one of her Chinese relatives; and at the same time, the narrator interjects her own talk-story to implement her culture and to express how it makes no sense to her why the village repudiated her aunt with harsh punishment. The narrator, in the persona of an adolescent female and a mature female, includes her own interjections of the ostracized aunt's story. Before the young narrator interrupts her mother's talk-story with her own version of how her aunt became pregnant, she shares her mother's story of her nameless aunt when she enters womanhood. At the beginning of "No Name Woman," the narrator takes on the persona of the mother to reveal her mother's talk-story and begins the story with the following statement: "You must not tell anyone" (Kingston 3), as though she was speaking to an adolescent. In this first section, Kingston has placed quotation marks around the mother's words to distinguish the mother's talk-story from the daughter's talk-story. Kingston's punctuation strategy guides the audience to distinguish the two different talk stories and personae. Even though the narrator in the persona of an adolescent, who is entering womanhood, does not understand the treatment of her aunt, she understands the Chinese superstitions of ghosts, which were taught by her parents. However, she begins her own tradition, her Chinese American tradition, by revealing the aunt's story to keep her distance from her aunt's ghost. After the narrator states, "My aunt haunts me," she states that she will tell on her aunt (Kingston 16). She fears the ghost because of the

Chinese superstition; and at the same time, she denounces the ghost by revealing her aunt's story. The narrator makes her own tradition by writing about the nameless aunt.

Told from the narrator's perspective by taking on the mother's persona, she discredits menstruation as punishment and shame by connecting it to the aunt's story: "Now that you have started to menstruate, what happened to her could happen to you. Don't humiliate us. You wouldn't like to be forgotten as if you had never been born. The villagers are watchful" (Kingston 5). The mother's talk-story sets the moral standard for her daughter as she enters womanhood; she warns her daughter of the dangers of her sex and what could happen if a woman is unfaithful. For the Chinese American daughter, the social and cultural codes of the Chinese village do not comply with the American culture. She is also baffled by the treatment that her aunt receives for having an illegitimate child. In a Confucian society, a person's actions affect not only the individual but also the entire family or clan. In *Confucianism*, authors Ch'u Chai and Winberg Chai explain the concept of collectivism and how one's action affects others: "As a natural feeling of the human heart, *jen* has to be expressed in man's exterior conduct in his relations with other men, maintaining order and harmony in society. For man cannot live by himself, he has to relate to other men, and thus must follow appropriate rules governing human action and communication" (41). However, the repercussions for one's actions differ because the females are considered inferior to the superior males. According to Sin Yee Chan, "Given her domestic role, a woman, on the other hand, is a mere dependent on males, either her father, or if she is married, her husband" ("Gender and Relationship" 120). The woman's dependence on man shows

that females are inferior to males. In *The Woman Warrior*, instead of finding and punishing the man who was responsible for aunt's pregnancy, the villagers punish the nameless aunt and her family. The narrator's version of how her aunt became pregnant opposes the Confucian principles for a woman, and she provides a voice for her silenced and ostracized aunt by presenting her own version of how her aunt became pregnant. In her essay, "Power and Discourse: Silence as Rhetorical Choice in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*," Jill M. Parrott contends, "She turns the expected obedience of her culture and family into a rhetorically powerful strategy, simultaneously embracing, rejecting, and manipulating it into her version of the story" (386). By providing her own version of how her aunt became pregnant, the narrator takes on two different personae, a young woman and a mature woman, in different parts of the narrator's talk-story. As a young woman or adolescent female, the narrator shows different scenarios of how her aunt became pregnant:

Perhaps she had encountered him in the fields or on the mountain where the daughters-in-law collected fuel. Or perhaps he first noticed her in the marketplace. He was not a stranger because the village housed no strangers. She had to have dealings with him other than sex. Perhaps he worked an adjoining field, or he sold her the cloth for the dress she sewed and wore. His demand must have surprised, then terrified her. She obeyed him; she always did as she was told. (Kingston 6)

In plain style, the narrator provides different scenarios with no full explanations or extended examples. Instead of illustrating what happened in each scenario, the narrator

only informs the audience by jumping from one scenario to the next. The young narrator's description is brief because her sentences are simple, to the point, and with third person pronoun references of "he" and "she" as if the narrator is creating a distance between the characters in the story and the audience. In this following passage, the narrator, in the persona of a mature woman, expresses her American culture by describing her aunt as an independent woman who owns her sexual power, which is inappropriate for a traditional Chinese woman:

But perhaps my aunt, my forerunner, caught in a slow life, let dreams grow and fade after some months or years went toward what persisted. Fear at the enormities of the forbidden kept her desires delicate, wire and bone. She looked at a man because she liked the way the hair was tucked behind his ears, or she liked the question-mark line of a long torso curving at the shoulder and straight at the hip. For warm eyes or a soft voice or a slow walk—that's all—a few hairs, a line, a brightness, a sound, a pace, she gave up family...It could very well have been, however, that my aunt did not take subtle enjoyment of her friend, but, a wild woman, kept rollicking company. Imagining her free with sex doesn't fit, though. (8)

The narrator's persona of the young woman or adolescent female is not present in this part of the talk-story because it includes language that a mature woman would use, someone who is comfortable with her sexuality and/or familiar with sex instead of at the beginning stage of recognizing the opposite sex. Instead of referring only to "he" or "she," the narrator also mentions "aunt" and "man" with descriptive details of each

character's sexuality. The narrator's sentences are complex rather than simple; they include subjective description with close attention to sensory details of touch and sight. In middle style, the narrator in the persona of mature woman illustrates her talk-story to please the audience.

While interjecting her own talk-story, the narrator does not avoid the Chinese superstition of ghosts, particularly of the dead and ostracized family members such as her nameless aunt. The narrator resolves the issue by revealing her aunt's story as a reverse ancestor worship, which does not exist in Chinese culture. The narrator breaks the silence by retelling the story of her forgotten aunt. The narrator acknowledges that her mother told her stories from Chinese culture to instill beliefs and values in her American-born children. The young narrator explains, "Whenever she had to warn us about life, my mother told stories like this one, a story to grow up on. She tested our strength to establish realities" (Kingston 5). After listening to her mother's stories, the narrator switches to a persona of a mature woman and explains, "Those of us in the first American generations have had to figure out how the invisible world the emigrants built around our childhoods fits in solid America" (Kingston 5). As a Chinese American, the narrator is faced with a challenge to confront two different cultural beliefs and values. The narrator's mother orders her to keep the secret: "Don't tell anyone you had an aunt. Your father does not want to hear her name. She has never been born" (Kingston 15). In the persona of a mature woman, the narrator explains she has lived with the story of her aunt for more than 20 years; and she explains, "But there is more to this silence: they want me to participate in her punishment. And I have" (Kingston 16). This punishment haunts

the narrator for many years, and she has stayed silent for more than twenty years because she feared that something bad would happen to her and her family.

On the other hand, the narrator breaks her silence to break free from the family's secret and fear to acknowledge the separation of two different cultures. Instead of keeping the secret within the family, the narrator writes about it to share with her readers. The narrator claims, "I alone devote pages of paper to her, though not origami'd into houses and clothes. I do not think she always means me well. I am telling on her, and she was a spite suicide, drowning herself in the drinking water" (Kingston 16). By devoting pages to her aunt, the narrator is breaking her aunt's silence and her own silence. Jill M. Parrott argues, "When the aunt whose existence has supposedly been removed has her name taken from her—an act far more destructive than her death—it is Kingston's rhetorical choice to extend existence back to that long-dead relative by telling the story, gaining power for herself and her aunt" (390). The narrator is acknowledging her American culture by setting aside her Chinese superstition and giving a voice to the silenced and nameless aunt. Even though "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" (Kingston 16), the narrator chooses not to be frightened by aunt's ghost. By not believing in this superstition as an American and as a mature woman, the narrator justifies her decision to break the family's silence and to remember her aunt. The narrator explains that "the real punishment was not the raid swiftly inflicted by the villagers, but the family's deliberately forgetting" the aunt (Kingston 16). Also, the narrator has betrayed her mother's request and disobeyed filial

piety. The narrator's recognition of her American culture contradicts her Chinese culture, and she learns to talk-story while recognizing the differences.

At the same time, the narrator is no different from the villagers who punished her nameless aunt for having a baby out of wedlock. After sharing her talk-story about how her aunt became pregnant, the narrator explains, "People who can comfort the dead can also chase after them to hurt them further—a reverse ancestor worship" (Kingston 16). By sharing the story of her nameless aunt with the audience, the narrator has conducted reverse ancestor worship, which is a concept that is made up by the narrator as a Chinese American. As a paradox, the narrator's reverse ancestor worship is no different from the villagers punishing her aunt because she is punishing her aunt by writing about her and sharing her aunt's shame with an unknown audience. Even though she breaks the silence, she is also participating in the punishment. Even though she tries to start her own tradition to defend herself against her aunt's ghost who "remains forever angry" (Kingston 16), she is unable to escape her Chinese heritage. Two cultures rival each other, but they co-exist to show that the narrator takes on multiple personae through talk-story to grapple with two different cultures.

Also, in the first section, the daughter narrator admits that she sometimes wonders if her mother is telling the truth or making up a story. She also wonders if other Chinese Americans feel the same way by asking the following questions: "Chinese-Americans, when you try to understand what things in you are Chinese, how do you separate what is peculiar to childhood, to poverty, insanity, on family, your mother who marked your growing with stories, from what is Chinese? What is Chinese tradition and what is the

movies?” (Kingston 6). The Chinese American daughter struggles to find her own identity between two different cultures. At one point, the narrator is able to distinguish a contradicting claim in her mother’s talk-story. The daughter narrator mentions, “My mother spoke about the raid as if she had seen it, when she and my aunt, a daughter-in-law to a different household, should not have been living together at all. Daughters-in-law lived with husbands’ parents, not their own” (Kingston 7). The narrator is aware that in Chinese culture married daughters live with the in-laws, so she begins to question if her mother is telling the truth or not, which shows that the narrator is acknowledging her Chinese heritage. However, the narrator’s curiosity and questioning of her mother’s credibility shows that the narrator does not fully understand the marriage customs of traditional Chinese culture. Traditionally, the married daughter lives at her natal home and visits her husband’s home for conjugal visits until she becomes pregnant; but in the case of the nameless aunt, she is pregnant and living at her natal home, which does not follow the old Chinese tradition. According to William Chiang, after marriage, a married woman “spends about half her time living with her natal family until her first child is born” (“We Too Know the Script” 35). At home, the narrator is familiar with the Chinese culture but continues to reconcile what is traditional or not.

Based on the social and cultural contexts in Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior*, binary oppositions are inevitable when two different cultures clash. E. D.

Huntley explains the representation of binary opposites in Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*:

Another narrative strategy employed by Kingston with stunning effect is the juxtaposition of opposites – East and West, China and America, silence and speech, the ballad of a warrior woman chanted by a culture that has oppressed women for centuries. These oppositions provide a context for the tensions that shape the narrator's stories and thus her identity, as Maxine compares her own history with the saga of the family's emigration to America, as she dreams of being a woman warrior instead of a worthless female. (83)

The narrator takes on the child persona who is constantly struggling with what is true versus what is false; and at the same time, she becomes aware that two cultures, Chinese and American, have different concepts in communication. While learning to adjust to the American culture, the young narrator learns the binary oppositions and contradictions of speech and silence. In the last section, "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe," from an early age, the narrator had learned that Chinese girls acted differently at American school: "The other Chinese girls did not talk either, so I knew the silence had to do with being a Chinese girl" (167). At Chinese school, the narrator and her classmates "chanted together, voices rising and falling, loud and soft, some boys shouting, everybody reading together, reciting together and not alone with one voice" (Kingston 167). From an eastern perspective, the narrator is comfortable with speaking within a group of speakers because it represents the concept of collectivism. During a memorization exam, the

Chinese teacher would have each student recite the lesson privately by coming up to his desk, “while the rest of the class practiced copying or tracing” (Kingston 167). At Chinese school, the narrator learns that silence means privacy instead of misery. However, at American school, she is confronted with contradicting social and cultural perspectives on speech and silence. The narrator explains that she does not understand why a teacher would call on an individual to speak alone in front of the entire class: “It was when I found out I had to talk that school became a misery, that the silence became a misery. I did not speak and felt bad each time that I did not speak. I read aloud in first grade, though, and heard the barest whisper with little squeaks come out of my throat. “Louder,” said the teacher, who scared the voice away again” (Kingston 166). The narrator’s individual speech is confronted in public instead of private, a situation which conflicts with her Chinese culture. She is asked to speak alone while her teacher and classmates listen, and she is embarrassed of her individual voice in a different language.

In another incident, the young narrator is confronted with speech when her teacher teaches her to pronounce two words, “I” and “here” multiple times. The narrator has difficulty understanding “I” and “here” because “The Chinese ‘I’ has seven strokes, intricacies,” and the consonant for “here” was weak compared to the “two mountainous ideographs” in the Chinese language (Kingston 167). At this stage, the bilingual and bicultural narrator notices the differences between languages; and she has difficulty comprehending how to justify the differences in order to make sense linguistically and culturally. After multiple failed attempts, the young narrator is placed “in the low corner under the stairs again, where the noisy boys usually sat” (Kingston 167). She is silenced

by her non-conforming speech, and she is isolated with the rest of the speech-producing boys. As a child, she becomes aware of the social and cultural differences and how people like her American teacher associate silence as punishment for awkward or non-conforming speech. After she is confronted with a series of incidents challenging her speech, the young narrator realizes why the other Chinese girls remain silent. In contrast, when the Chinese girls were at Chinese school, they “were not mute. They screamed and yelled during recess, when there were no rules; they had fist-fights” (Kingston 167). The narrator notices the social and cultural constructs of the binary opposition of speech and silence and how each culture values them differently. At the American school, the Chinese girls are treated differently because of their silence. From a western perspective, silence is viewed as an anomaly, a behavior which may result in a form of punishment, isolation, and inferiority. Instead of encouraging the Chinese girls to speak up, the American teacher stereotypes the Chinese girls by associating them with silence and disassociating them from the rest of the conforming classmates. The narrator explains, “When my second grade class did a play, the whole class went to the auditorium except the Chinese girls. The teacher, lovely and Hawaiian, should have understood about us, but instead left us behind in the classroom. Our voices were too soft or nonexistent, and our parents never signed the permission slips anyway” (Kingston 167). Even her teacher, who is of Hawaiian descent, stereotypes the Chinese girls as silent non-participants and isolates them from the rest of the students who are socially and culturally accepted to participate in the play. The parents of the Chinese girls also associated them with silence because they did not encourage their daughters to participate in the plays as well. In each

environment, the narrator in the persona of a young girl is either negotiating or adjusting to her environment. Also, in each environment, the narrator struggles to find her own voice because she realizes she is neither full Chinese nor full American. She is either stuck between two worlds or trying to jump from one to another. While being confronted with the rhetorical borderlands, the Chinese American narrator learns about the binary opposition of speech and silence and the contradictions between Chinese and American cultures.

Additionally, the binary opposition of Chinese and American also shows a contradiction in the styles of talk-story. LuMing Mao characterizes Chinese American rhetoric “as a rhetoric of becoming” (33). The narrator is recognizing that she is becoming a good storyteller because she can also talk-story like her mother. In the last section, “A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe,” the narrator explains, “Here is a story my mother told me, not when I was young, but recently, when I told her I also talk story. The beginning is hers, the ending, mine” (Kingston 106). In this last section, the narrator informs her audience which part of the story is hers and which part is her mother’s. In the “No Name Woman,” the narrator begins with her mother’s talk-story and interrupts her mother’s talk-story with her talk-story by adding her own perceptions that are representative of either one or two cultures: American and Chinese. The narrator is representative of two different traditions and cultures because “Chinese American rhetoric is also born of two rhetorical traditions at rhetorical lands, and it becomes viable and transformative not by securing a logical or unified order, but by participating in a process of becoming where meanings are situated and where significations are contingent

upon each and every particular experience” (Mao 5). For the narrator, each experience is carefully observed; and meanings are either understood or misinterpreted because of different traditions or cultures. For example, when the narrator confronts her mother about having her tongue cut out to talk less, the narrator’s mother refutes her daughter’s argument by stating, “I cut it to make you talk more, not less, you dummy. You’re still stupid. You can’t listen right. I didn’t say I was going to marry you off. Did I ever say that” (Kingston 102). The meanings that the daughter has been trying to decode from her mother’s obscure words become a constant struggle for her because she continues to struggle with understanding her mother’s culture. According to the narrator’s mother, Chinese culture teaches people to say the opposite; however, the narrator is taught to say what is not the opposite in American culture. The narrator’s mother explains, “That’s what we’re supposed to say. That’s what Chinese say. We like to say the opposite” (103). Even the mother’s words represent a contradiction, which further complicates the daughter’s understanding of her mother. Then, the narrator explains, “And suddenly I got very confused and lonely because I was at that moment telling her my list, and in the telling, it grew. No higher listener. No listener but myself” (Kingston 104). At this moment, the narrator realizes that her own words become a contradiction for her mother because her mother does not understand why her daughter would say such things. The two different cultures try to co-exist; both the mother and daughter realize that there is friction in their communication. Their words express different meanings based on the social and cultural contexts. Mao contends that even though the Chinese fortune cookie “embodies a happy fusion of two traditions,” there is a “rupture and fission sneaking up

on this fusion” (27). The rupture and fission reveal the dualities of the fortune cookie. *The Woman Warrior* is a talk-story of two different traditions and cultures. In order to learn and to understand talk-story, the narrator recognizes the double meanings and contradictions that are represented in a talk-story. The narrator’s talk-story becomes a fusion of both Chinese and American cultures. She begins to learn talk-story by recognizing the two different cultures and their different meanings. The narrator takes on different personae to express the different viewpoints of each culture. Even though the narrator is raised with Chinese stories in a Chinese culture at home, she does not fully understand her mother. According to LuMing Mao, “The fortune cookie, while it considers America its home, is no less attached to a Chinese tradition, because it is always known as the Chinese fortune cookie” (Mao 27). Likewise, the narrator does not fully fit into American society because she is unable to escape her Chinese heritage. Similar to the Chinese fortune cookie, *The Woman Warrior* is comprised of both cultures. Despite the fact that the narrator was born and reared in America, she cannot escape her Chinese heritage; her mother’s stories are part of her Chinese heritage, which allows her to discover her own voice to create her own talk-story. According to Mao, “Although the fortune inside is regularly written in, and communicated through, American English, their consumption has never been fully disengaged from a (superstitious) Chinese frame of mind operating in the background” (27). In the background of the narrator’s mind is her Chinese heritage. The mother’s stories of China, superstitions, legends, and beliefs from China attribute to the development of the narrator’s talk-story.

Similar to the Chinese fortune cookie representing a signal to the customers that their meal is complete and it is time to depart the restaurant, the narrator informs the audience that she will begin with her mother's talk-story and depart with her own talk-story in the last section of *The Woman Warrior*. The narrator signals, "Here is a story my mother told me, not when I was young, but recently, when I told her I also talk story. The beginning is hers, the ending, mine" (Kingston 206). In "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe," the narrator closes with the legend of Ts'ai Yen, also known as Cai Yan. In the Lu Shang's narrative poem of Cai Yan, also known as *Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute*, there are 18 stanzas. The narrative poem describes Cai Yan's journey from being kidnapped to being returned home. Cai Yan, the only daughter of Cai Yong, is kidnapped by barbarians; and she is forced to live a nomadic life, travelling in extreme weather and on rough terrain. In the fourth stanza, Cai Yan complains about her unfortunate fate and the barbarian "customs, minds unlike-difficult form to deal with" (Shang). She is homesick because she does not understand the barbarian culture and language. In most of the stanzas, Cai Yan expresses her loneliness in comparison to nature. In the eleventh stanza, Cai Yan explains that she is pregnant with the barbarian's children. She "bore him two children" (Shang). Eventually, Cai Yan's ransom is paid. She returns home, but she is forced to leave her barbarian children. Kingston's version of Ts'ai Yen is similar to Lu Shang's poem.

However, the middle part of Kingston's version focuses on the barbarian reeds to express the anguish and loneliness of Ts'ai Yen. In Lu Shang's poem, majority of the middle stanzas also express Cai Yan's anguish and loneliness but there is no mention of

the barbarian reed until stanza 18. When the narrator is ready to tell her own talk-story, she departs from her mother's talk-story. The theme of departure and return is present in Kingston's literary work and the legend of Ts'ai Yen, also known as Cai Yan.

Kingston's eloquence of sublime story telling is shown when the narrator focuses on the significance of the barbarian reeds in the middle part of the talk-story:

The barbarians were primitives. They gathered inedible reeds when they camped along rivers and dried them in the sun. They dried the reeds tied on their flagpoles and horses' manes and tails. Then they cut wedges and holes. They slipped feathers and arrow shafts into the shorter reeds, which becamenock-whistles. During battle the arrows whistled, high whirling whistles that suddenly stopped when the arrows hit true. Even when the barbarians missed, they terrified their enemies with death sounds, which Ts'ai Yen had thought was their only music, until one night she heard music tremble and rise like desert wind. She walked out of her tent and saw hundreds of the barbarians sitting upon the sand, the sand gold under the moon. Their elbows were raised, and they were blowing on flutes. They reached again and again for the high note, yearning toward a high note, which they found at last and held—an icicle in the desert. The music disturbed Ts'ai Yen; its sharpness and its cold made her ache. It disturbed her so that she could not concentrate on her own thoughts. Night after night the songs filled the desert no matter how many dunes away she walked. She hid in her tent but could not sleep through the sound. Then,

out of Ts'ai Yen's tent, which was apart from the others, the barbarians heard a woman's voice singing, as if to her babies, a song so high and clear, it matched the flutes. Ts'ai Yen sang about China and her family there. Her words seemed to be Chinese, but the barbarians understood their sadness and anger. Sometimes they thought they could catch barbarian phrases forever wandering. Her children did not laugh, but eventually sang along when she left her tent to sit by the winter campfires, ringed by barbarians. (208-09)

In the middle of the talk-story, the narrator takes on two different personae and reveals two different cultures. From the persona of the mother, the middle of this talk-story describes a mother's longing to understand the barbarian culture (American). From the persona of the daughter, this part of the story represents her longing to understand her mother's culture (Chinese). The middle of the talk-story is the place two cultures, two voices, and two personae meet in "crisscrossing movements" as "co-existing divergent voices" (Mao 35). Similar to the barbarians understanding the emotions of Ts'ai Yen's singing, the daughter, who is Chinese American, begins to understand her mother's longing to connect to her Chinese heritage. From this connection and understanding of her mother's Chinese culture, the narrator learns to talk-story. Metaphorically, the songs of the barbarian reed pipe are the talk-stories from both mother and daughter that are separate but unified. Also, in this middle part of the talk-story, all five elements of sublimity are present; and the narrator expresses the concept of presence with detailed subjective description that informs, pleases, and persuades the audience. This middle part

of the talk-story best represents the divergence and convergence of two different cultures: Chinese and American.

Instead of retelling the elaborate ending of the Chinese narrative poem, the narrator ends it with her own talk-story. In the persona of the daughter, narrator presents a brief ending of the legend of Ts'ai Yen:

After twelve years among the Southern Hsiung-nu, Ts'ai Yen was
ransomed and married to Tung Ssu so that her father would have Han
descendants. She brought her songs back from the savage lands, and one
of the three has been passed down to us is "Eighteen Stanzas for a
Barbarian Reed Pipe," a song that Chinese sing to their own instruments.

It translated well. (109)

In plain style, the narrator's description is more objective and less subjective. According to LuMing Mao, Kingston "chooses to edit out Cai Yan's anguish and grief at giving up her second (barbarian) home—a key condition for her ransomed release from the tribe" (82) because it "helps Kingston better prepare for her own on-going crossings—crossings that have taken her through a culture that is mythical and ambiguous to a culture that commands a different logic" (83). The less emotional ending indicates to the audience that it is time for the narrator to depart because she has learned to talk-story from her mother, and now she is able to talk-story on her own.

In Hans Frankel's English translation of stanza 18 of *Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute*, the narrator describes the displacement of the Cai Yan and her heartache of leaving her children:

The barbarian reed-whistle came from the barbarians;
Arranged for the zither, the musical pattern is the same.
Though the eighteen stanzas of the song are over
The sound lingers, the longing is ending.
Thus we know that strings and reeds are wondrously subtle –they equal
The work of creation, in every sorrow and joy they follow the human heart
Through all its changes of mood.
Barbarians and men of Han live in different lands with unlike customs,
Heaven and Earth are separate, children in the West, mother in the East.
Bitter is my resentful spirit, greater than the vast sky,
The Six Directions of the universe, though broad, would have no room to
hold it. (Shang)

Cai Yan, who is also a mother, associates her children with the West; and she associates herself with the East. In *The Woman Warrior*, America represents the West, which is associated with the daughter; and China represents the East, which is associated with the mother. The narrator, in the personae of mother and daughter, also represents how two different customs can exist at the same time and live in different places. As for the mother and daughter, two traditions and cultures are able to exist in the same family as well as in the same country. Together, their talk stories, similar to the songs from the

barbarian reed pipe, represent both the West and East. As the song ends, the daughter concludes it with her talk-story. In the last section of “A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe,” the narrator successfully shows how two traditions and cultures can co-exist by beginning the narrative of Ts’ai Yen with the mother’s talk-story, combining two voices in the middle of the talk-story, and ending it with the daughter’s talk-story.

The eloquence of Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* proves that it is a sublime literary work comprised of various genres: nonfiction, fiction, folklore, and fantasy. A rhetorical analysis of the literary work in relation to Chinese American rhetoric and the rhetorical figure of the Chinese fortune cookie reveals the values placed on binary oppositions and their contradictions when two different traditions and cultures converge. While developing her own talk story in *The Woman Warrior*, the narrator is able to discover her own voice by acknowledging the contradictions of binary oppositions in Chinese and American cultures and her double-consciousness as a Chinese American. Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* is not only a contribution to Asian American literature but also to the overall field of American literature. In her 1989 interview with Rabinowitz, Kingston stated, “I felt that I was building, creating, myself and the people as American people, to make everyone realize that these are American people. Even though they have strange Chinese memories, they are American people” (72). Almost 26 years later, Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* continues to hold a compelling presence in American literature.

CHAPTER VII

THE RHETORIC OF *NUSHU*: UNVEILING WOMEN'S LITERACY AND ITS
CONNECTION TO FOOTBINDING IN LISA SEE'S *SNOW FLOWER*
AND THE SECRET FAN

Asian American writers continue to publish literary works that defy previous boundaries and expectations. Both John Okada's *No-No Boy* and Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* focus on Asian American issues; Lisa See's *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* focuses on Asian issues and eastern culture. Asian American writers such as Lisa See are able to translate Asian issues and eastern culture to the western audience. Even though some things may get lost in the translation, Lisa See carefully select words and arrange them to elevate their eloquent writing style to a level of sublimity. Instead of focusing on Asian American culture, Lisa See's *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* focuses on Asian culture by inviting her audience on a literary journey to the East by expanding their knowledge of old Chinese customs and traditions pertaining to women.

In her *New York Times* bestseller, *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*, Lisa See goes beyond the description of footbinding. She describes the livelihood of women, particularly of Jiangyong County of the Hunan Province in Southern China, before the Chinese Communist Revolution. Before the second half of the 20th century, Chinese society expected women to practice footbinding, to adhere to the Three Obediences and

Four Virtues, to tend to the domestic realm of life, and to be rarely exposed to formal education that some of the privileged Chinese men enjoyed during that time period.

The eloquence of Lisa See's writing style in *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* informs, pleases, and persuades. In plain, middle, and grand styles, *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* informs the audience about certain taboos, customs, and social hierarchy of traditional Chinese culture. The novel pleases or entertains the audience by depicting a fictional relationship between two Chinese girls. Also, the novel persuades the audience by presenting rhetorical arguments that show contradictions in the social and cultural contexts of traditional Chinese culture. In addition to writing about footbinding and the oppression of Chinese women, Lisa See acknowledges the significance of the women's role in traditional Chinese society and their contribution to developing their own language. See's *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* unbinds the taboos of Chinese culture by sharing the knowledge of women's literacy with a broad audience. From a dire situation, the acknowledgement of women's writing or literacy proves that there was hope for these women. In the novel, the narrator Lily introduces the modern reader to a world that may be considered taboo or strange, especially from a Westerner's point of view. She also introduces the reader to *nushu*, a special language used by women, which represents the four functions of folklore: education, conformity, validation, and entertainment. Disregarded as insignificant and women's gibberish by men, *nushu* was created for the inner realm or domestic realm of the women's lives; and it provided a means of self-expression through singing, storytelling, and writing. Therefore, the binary opposition of speech and silence represents a contradiction since *nushu* is rhetorically

folkloric because it argues that literacy existed in a time and society for women when they were regarded as illiterate and insignificant. *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* expresses Longinus's five elements of sublimity: "power to conceive great thoughts," "strong and inspired emotion," rhetorical figures, diction, and "dignified and elevated word-arrangement" (*On the Sublime* 350). The sublimity of See's *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* shows that some things from another culture can be translated to a different audience. From the binding of their feet to a binding contract of their *laotong* relationship, a binding of close friendship between two girls has formed; however, there is a separation when the language is misread or read out of context by the narrator Lily. *Nushu* not only proves that women's literacy existed; it also explored the binary oppositions of man vs. woman and speech vs. silence.

In *Snow Flower and Secret the Fan*, a special bond is formed between two girls from Southern China. Lily and Snow Flower, two girls from different villages and economic backgrounds, are considered to be a perfect *laotong* match because of their eight character alignment: "Lily and Snow Flower were born in the year of the horse, in the same month, and, if what both mothers have told me is true, on the same day and in the same hour as well. Lily and Snow Flower have the same number of brothers and sisters, and they are each the third child" (See 40). Also, the third child daughter in each family has passed away. They are "of identical height, of equal beauty, and, most important, their feet were bound on the same day" (See 41). Scholars such as William Chiang and Zhao Liming argue that a *laotong* relationship is a special bond between females. Cathy Silber contends that "there is no evidence to suggest that *laotong*

attachments were the stronger of the two” because anthropologist Benedikta Dorer stated that “one could have more than one *laotong* at the same time,” and one woman told her that she had five *laotongs* (57). However, “Yi Nianhua, one of the last most prolific writers of *nushu*, made an emphatic distinction between *laotong* (old same or old friend) and *jiebaizmei* (sworn sister)” (Silber 50). According to Yi, “*laotong* was a match made between two same-age girls by exchanging small gifts and letters of invitation and reply written in *nushu* on fans whose top border was adorned with a row of flowers” (Silber 50). In the novel *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*, the narrator distinguishes the difference between the *laotong* relationship versus the sworn sisters relationship: “A *laotong* relationship was completely different from a sworn sisterhood. It involved two girls from different villages and lasted their entire lives, while a sworn sisterhood was made up of several girls and dissolved at marriage” (See 22). In Lily and Snow Flower’s *laotong* relationship, they learn *nushu* to communicate their thoughts and experiences from girlhood to womanhood. At the Temple of Gupo, Snow Flower, who was more versed in *nushu*, writes the contract of their *laotong* relationship:

We, Miss Snow Flower of Tongkou Village and Miss Lily of Puwei Village, will be true to each other. We will comfort each other with kind words. We will ease each other’s hearts. We will whisper and embroider together in the women’s chamber. We will practice the Three Obediences and the Four Virtues. (See 50)

In this contract, the *laotong* relationship between Lily and Snow Flower is confirmed in *nushu*. As young girls, they will share a close friendship. As women, they will share

their hardships as daughter-in-laws, wives, and mothers. While learning *nushu*, they explore and learn about themselves and their roles as women in a Confucian society.

In traditional Chinese society, women were in charge of the domestic realm, and men were in charge of the non-domestic realm. Lily explains, “I also knew the difference between *nei*—the inner realm of the home—and *wai*—the outer realm of man—lay at the very heart of Confucian society” (See 24). Even though the women were in charge of the domestic realm, they were viewed as inferior compared to men. In the essay, “Confucianism, Women, and Social Contexts,” author Xinyan Jiang explains, “What has been taken for granted by early Confucianism is the existent sexual division of labor and patriarchal criteria for morality according to which the proper role that women should play is only that of mothers and wives who ought to stay at home and serve their husbands and parents-in-law, and take care of children and housework—which further justifies and intensifies the oppression of women” (234). Women had to follow certain rules, and their obedience was owed to the males in their family. Once they married and lived with their husband’s family, their obedience was owed to their husband and the parents-in-law. From their silence and social inferiority, women used *nushu* to voice their emotions and feelings that could not be shared with their in-laws. They also used *nushu* to learn folktales, folksongs, and to entertain each other.

In her book, *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence*, Cheryl Glenn explains the reason for speech’s being the dominating term as opposed to silence: “In ancient times speech was perceived as a gift of the gods and thus a distinguishing characteristic of humans; therefore, speech became the authorized medium of culture and power, and its seeming

obverse a sign of “animality” (3). Glenn also explains, “Some silence is used for contemplation, for self-improvement, while other silences, shunning for instance, are used as a form of punishment” (18). However, Glenn argues that speech does not dominate silence, and silence is as important as speech. She contends, “After all, speech and silence are inextricably linked and often interchangeably meaningful. Thus silence is not, in itself, necessarily a sign of either domination or subordination; and silencing, for that matter, is not the same as erasing. I have said it before: like the zero in mathematics, silence is an absence with a function” (Glenn 157). Cheryl Glenn’s explanation of the binary opposition of speech and silence is that one term does not dominate the other and vice versa, which is also connected to Jacques Derrida’s argument about the deconstruction of binary oppositions. Both terms depend on each other. However, when values are placed on the words, Glenn contends that “silence can deploy power; it can defer power. It all depends” (18). The result is a binary opposition in which the meanings of speech and silence are reflected in the social and cultural contexts, and application of folklore reveals the values placed on the binary oppositions and their contradictions.

The identification of folklore in Lisa See’s *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* reveals the binary opposition of speech and silence. In addition to bearing the pain of footbinding and learning the domestic arts, Lily and Snow Flower learn to read and write *nushu*, women’s script, as part of their special bond and rite of passage. *Nushu* challenges the binary opposition of speech and silence, and it represents a contradiction for a male dominated culture that strongly believed that literacy is for men. In order for *nushu* to be

invented, silence had to exist. The women were not allowed to express openly their emotions, and they had to follow the Three Obediences and to uphold the Four Virtues. In the novel, Lily explains the rules that the girls had to follow in order to be acknowledged as virtuous women in society:

I also understood that two Confucian ideals ruled our lives. The first was the Three Obediences: “When a girl, obey your father; when a wife, obey your husband; when a widow, obey your son.” The second was the Four Virtues, which delineate women’s behavior, speech, carriage and occupation: “Be chaste and yielding, calm and upright in attitude; be quiet and agreeable in words; be restrained and exquisite in movement; be perfect in handiwork and embroidery.” If girls do not stray from these principles, they will grow into virtuous women. (See 24)

At an early age, young girls are taught the Three Obediences and Four Virtues. In the essay, “Confucianism and Feminist Concerns: Overcoming the Confucian Gender Complex,” author Chenyang Li explains that the origin of the Three Obediences or “the degrading attitude toward women became extreme during the period of Song-Ming neo-Confucianism” (188). In agreement with Li, Xinyan Jiang argues, “it is later Confucianism that overtly proposed that women are inferior to men as *yin* is inferior to *yang*, and that women should follow three kinds of obedience (obeying father, husband, or son)” (234). The women are informed of these rules, so they do not create an imbalance in the home and in society. In *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*, Lily clarifies, “This can be explained by *yin* and *yang*: There are women and men, dark and light,

sorrow and happiness. These things create balance” (See 99). All Three Obediences bind the women to men. All Four Virtues repress women’s self-expression and encourage conformity.

From their repressed speech or silence, women’s speech is expressed in the form of *nushu*, also known as women’s writing. From silence, a particular speech is conveyed and understood. The social values within the Confucian society play a major role in the instructions for women. They set the moral standard for women of China. *Nushu* became their outlet at a time when social oppression of women was accepted as part of tradition and culture. Through *nushu*, women expressed their emotions to other women but not of the same household. The folk practice of *nushu* reveals the binary opposition of speech and silence, and it sets the foundation of recognizing *nushu* as a language and that women who were fluent in *nushu* were literate.

During a time of social oppression and restrictions placed on Chinese women, *nushu* represented women’s literacy in southern China, specifically the Jiangyong county of Hunan Province. In her essay, “From Daughter to Daughter-in-Law in the Women’s Script of Southern Hunan,” Cathy Silber, who has researched and studied *nushu*, explains the significance of *nushu*: “Although it was strictly a local practice, confined to Shanjiangxu township in Jiangyong county and neighboring villages in Dao county, the generic nature of its name, women’s writing, lends itself to resonance with the hopes and dreams of many women engaged in their own struggles against oppression” (47). *Nushu* is recognized as women’s script, and it is a means of expressing women’s thoughts and feelings during a time of oppression in a Confucian society.

Scholars have researched several legends that may have revealed the script's origin. William Chiang reveals two legends. On the other hand, Zhao Liming argues there are three legends that trace the origin of *nushu*. Despite the arguments that there are different legends for the origins of *nushu*, authors See, Liming, and Chiang agree with one of the legends. This legend is about a woman named Hu Yuxiu "from Jintian village in Shangjianxu" who was selected by the emperor Song Zhezong to be his courtesan or royal concubine (Chiang 48). In Lisa See's *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*, Lily's aunt provides more details about Hu Yuxiu: "She was not an entirely worthless branch, for her father had seen to her education. She could recite classical poetry and she had learned men's writing. She could sing and dance. Her embroidery was fine and delicate" (69). When the emperor grew tired of Hu Yuxiu, she became lonely and oppressed. In the novel, the aunt explains, "Poor Yuxiu. She was no match for the palace intrigues. She was lonely and sad but had no way to communicate with her mother and sisters without others finding out" (See 70). Yuxiu was made fun of when her calligraphy was not perfect, "but Yuxiu was not trying to copy men's writing. She was changing it, slanting it, feminizing it, and eventually creating entirely new characters that had little or nothing to do with men's writing. She was quietly inventing a secret code so she could write home to her mother and sisters" (See 70). Yuxiu's creation of *nushu* represents a rhetorical figure of thought and speech. According to Longinus "figures may be divided into figures of thought and figures of speech" (350). In isolation and silence, she began to write secret letters to her family to complain about her life in the court. According to Chiang, Yuxiu "created the Women's Script to write with and gave instructions to her

family that it was to be read in Xiangnan Tuhua at a tilted angle in order to be understood” (48). According to Liming, Yuxiu “used the script to write letters on handkerchiefs, and with instructions, “the characters are to be read on a slant,” and they “should be read in local pronunciation in order to understand them” (44). As Cheryl Glenn comments about how rhetors use silence as an advantage for breaking the silence, Hu Yuxiu used her silence to teach a new language for women and to express her repressed feelings. Glenn argues, “Most of all, rhetors using silence will not be participating in the traditional rhetorical discipline of combat and dominance; they will be sharing perceptions, understandings, and power. They will use silence to embody new ways to challenge and resist domination and hierarchy at the same time that it disrupts and transforms it” (157). In the legend of Hu Yuxiu, she uses her silence to create *nushu* in order to challenge the limited education of women and their restricted roles as women in a social hierarchy that places women in the bottom. Most of the scholars seem to agree with one legend and that is the legend of Hu Yuxiu and her invention of *nushu*. However, William Chiang contends that “there is no evidence on the actual origin of the Women’s Script” (49) because most of the legends are based on unreliable factual accounts. Despite the different legends that trace the origin of *nushu*, See, Chiang, and Liming seem to agree on one legend, and that legend is about Hu Yuxiu and her invention of *nushu*. The legend of Hu Yuxiu and *nushu* are retold or sung in groups and during the learning of *nushu* and to challenge the perception of women’s role in traditional Chinese society.

Borrowed from the traditional Chinese writing system, *hanzi*, *nushu* was adjusted to distinguish itself as a separate language for women. *Nushu* writing featured borrowed characters from *hanzi* as a foundation, and it was adjusted with differences in the position, strokes, and usage of the characters. Chiang explains, “some men refer to it as ant graphs or mosquito graphs because of the extended legs of the graphs. Many people had no specific term for the script” (47). Since it was not recognized as formal language, there was no specific term for the women’s writing or script; so men called it women’s writing or *nushu*. According to Liming, “Many of the characters in the women’s script are related to patterns found in women’s needlework. The influence of the needlework on the script is twofold. First is the geometric features of the graphs, including symmetry...Second is the beautiful curve of the lines, which is related to embroidery, painting, and paper cutting” (47). In the novel, Lily describes men’s writing as “bold, with each character easily contained within a square, while our *nu shu* looks like mosquito legs or bird prints in dust” (See 24). Lily also explains the nature of *nushu*:

Unlike men’s writing, a *nu shu* character does not represent a specific word. Rather, our characters are phonetic in nature. As a result, one can represent every spoken word with that same sound. So while, a character might make a sound that creates the words for pare, pair, or pear, context usually makes the meaning clear. Still much care has to be taken to make sure we do not misinterpret meaning. Many women—like my mother and grandmother—never learn the writing, but they still know some of the

songs and stories, many of which resonate with a *ta dum, ta dum, ta dum* rhythm. (24-25)

Another difference between *hanzi* and *nushu* is that *nushu* is phonetically read, and the person had to be careful when writing and reading *nushu* because context plays a crucial role in understanding the meaning of the word. According to Liming, “The women’s script typically uses a one-character phonetic symbol to record a series of homophonous (or nearly homophonous) words” (46). Each word or character is a sign of a particular sound, and the meaning depends on the context. So, “No cultural sign, once taken in and given meaning, remains in isolation: it becomes part of the unity of the verbally constituted consciousness. It is in the capacity of the consciousness to find verbal access to it” (Volosinov 15). When reading *nushu*, the women had to be careful because “every word must be placed in context” because “much tragedy could result from a wrong reading” (See 69). Also, some of the females who did not read or write *nushu* were able to memorize certain ballads by listening and reciting them. Even though the men disregarded *nushu* as women’s talk, it was invented as a language of separate communication for the women.

Nushu appeared in various genres, and there were certain rules that applied to *nushu*. In the novel, Lily explains “the special rules that govern *nu shu*:”

It can be used to write letters, songs, autobiographies, lessons on womanly duties, prayers to the goddess, and, of course, popular stories. It can be written with brush and ink on paper or on a fan; it can be embroidered onto a handkerchief or woven into a cloth. It can and should be sung

before an audience of other women and girls, but it can also be something that is read and treasured alone. (See 25)

These special rules are passed down from Lily's aunt to Lily. According to Chiang, *nushu* appeared on slippers/shoes, handkerchiefs, quilts, fans, red paper, and booklets. Those who could not read or write *nushu* may recognize *nushu* to be the designs. Also, the *nushu* appeared in third day wedding books, folktales and folksongs, autobiographies, biographies, written prayers to Goddess Gupo, prayer to a dead cousin, letters, narratives of local and historical events, consolation letters and replies, invitations, admonitory texts, and letters of vituperation (Chiang 75-86).

Nushu can also be used to send messages to the in-laws to express the value and worth of the bride. For example, the third day wedding books are written by the bride's female relatives and ritual sisters, and they are presented for the female members of the in-laws on the third day after the wedding (Chiang) also known as the Day of the Big Singing Hall. Lily explains, "The next day, the third day of a marriage, is the one that all brides wait for because the third-day wedding books that family and friends have made are read," and "my *sanzhaoshu* contained all the usual lines about my family's misery now that I would no longer be with them" (See 116). According to Silber, "These books, among the most highly conventionalized *nushu* writing, would be sung aloud among women of the bride's marital home and village, and some of them include a few pleas for leniency and compassion addressed to her mother-in-law" (60). Also, "For the wider audience, these expressions of great loss can be read as a testament to the bride's social value..." (Silber 60). In the novel, Lily explains that such expressions were made in her

third day wedding books: “they extolled my virtues and repeated phrases such as *If only we could persuade that worthy family to wait for a few years before taking you*, or *It is sad we are now separated*” (See 116). The third day wedding books are comprised of testimonials of arguments that presented the bride with value and worth.

Silber contends that in the third day wedding books, “relationships such as mother and sister-in-law are easy enough to recognize in this writing, but peer group relationships such as those of biological sisters and cousins, on one hand, and those of the formalized non-kin relationships *laotong* and *jiebaizmei*, on the other are sometimes nearly impossible to recognize” (61). According to Silber, the reason it is difficult to distinguish the non-kin relationships in the third day books is due to the peers taking turns writing in them, and “it is sometimes difficult to tell where one stops and another begins” (61). Conversely, in the novel, See creatively and seamlessly reveals who is writing what. In the chapter of “Learning,” the narrator describes the process of the writing of the third day wedding books for Elder Sister and each woman’s contribution to the third day wedding books. On the day of Sorry and Worry, each woman chants her lament, and each lament is written into the third day wedding books in *nushu*. The mother chanted, “Elder Daughter, you were a pearl in my hand...My eyes doubly flood with tears. Twin streams pour down my face. Soon there will be an empty space” (See 76). In this chant, the mother’s grief of losing her precious daughter is expressed. Then, aunt chants “following the rhythm” that was started by Lily’s mother: “I am ugly and not so smart, but I have always tried to have a good nature. I have loved my husband and he has loved me. We are a pair of ugly and not so smart mandarin ducks. We have had much

bed fun. I hope you will too” (See 76). Unlike the mother’s chant, the aunt’s chant clearly conveys that it belongs to a woman who is not afraid to speak of intimacy with her husband, and she is not in close relationship with the bride such as a mother would be. The aunt takes the serious matter of intimacy between husband and wife and teases the new bride-to-be in a playful banter. Lily’s chant is more obvious because she expresses her concern as a sibling and a future bride-to-be:

Elder Sister, my heart cries to lose you. If we had been sons, we would not be torn apart. We would always be together like Baba and Uncle, Elder Brother and Second Brother...Everyone needs clothing—no matter how cool it is in summer or how warm it is in winter—so make clothes for others without being asked. Even if the table is plentiful, let your in-laws eat first. Work hard and remember three things: Be good to your in-laws and always show respect, be good to your husband and always weave for him, be good to your children and always be a model of decorum to them. If you do these things, your new family will treat you kindly. In that home, be calm of heart. (See 76-77)

The first part of Lily’s chant is personal and emotional. The second part of Lily’s chant is less personal, and she instructs her Elder Sister on how to behave as the bride in a new family. Lily explains, “wanting to give her the best gift I could, I sang the knowledge I had learned from Snow Flower” (See 77). As a bride-to-be herself, Lily thinks that providing the instructions of being a good daughter-in-law is the best gift she can give her sister because she believes that following the instructions will yield good results.

Even in the instructions of *nushu* writing, there are contradictions. When Lily is older, she learns that not all women who practice the Three Obediences and Four Virtues will encounter good treatment of the daughter-in-law. Sometimes instructions do not guarantee a positive result. Snow Flower, who followed the Three Obediences and Four Virtues, ends up being abused by her mother-in-law and her husband, who later regrets his ill treatment of his wife. At his wife's deathbed, Snow Flower's husband laments, "She gave me a son, who has helped me to do better at my business. She gave me a good and useful daughter. She made my house more beautiful. She cared for my mother until she died. She did everything a wife should do, but I was cruel to her, Lady Lu. I see that now" (See 235). Both Lily and Snow Flower prepared themselves for marriage and motherhood; however, Snow Flower ends up with an unfortunate life. Both young girls believed that footbinding provided a better life for them as future brides rather than being "sold as servants" or "little daughters-in-law—big-footed girls from unfortunate families who are given to other families to raise until they are old enough to bear children" (See 17). Similar to Snow Flower's upbringing, Lily was taught to believe that her fate relied on the perfection of her footbinding:

All I knew was that footbinding would make me more marriageable and therefore bring me closer to the greatest love and greatest joy in a woman's life—a son. To that end, my goal was to achieve a pair of perfectly bound feet with seven distinct attributes: They should be small, narrow, straight, pointed, and arched, yet still fragrant and soft in texture. (See 26)

Lily and Snow Flower were taught to believe that the success of their footbinding would lead to marriage and a son.

Nushu embodies the four functions of folklore, and the first function that *nushu* represents is education. According to folklorist William Bascom, “folklore operates within a society to insure conformity to the accepted cultural norms, and continuity from generation to generation through its role in education and the extent to which it mirrors culture” (“Four Functions of Folklore” 344). In Zhao Liming’s essay, “The Women’s Script of Jiangyong,” the scholar briefly outlines the four folkloric functions of *nushu*. First, learning *nushu* functions as education; a woman in the family who is well versed in *nushu* teaches it to the younger females. In the novel, Lily learned *nushu* from her aunt. Lily explains, “we spent hours practicing them, tracing the strokes with our fingers on each other’s palms. Always Aunt cautioned us to be careful with our words, since by using phonetic characters as opposed to pictographic characters of men’s writing, our meaning could become lost or confused” (See 69). Lily also learned *nushu* from Snow Flower. Snow Flower was already familiar with *nushu* because her mother was fluent in *nushu*. Lily reveals, “Our Aunt continued to teach us *nu shu*, but we also learned from Snow Flower, who brought new characters with her every time she visited. Some she got from sneaking peeks at her brother’s studies, since many *nushu* characters are only italicized versions of men’s characters, but others came from Snow Flower’s mother, who was extremely well versed in our women’s secret writing” (See 69). William Chiang argues that there were two ways of teaching *nushu*. “One was that an older female relative, such as a grandmother, mother, or aunt, would take the initiative and teach the

script to the younger relative” (Chiang 68). The second way to teach *nushu* is “one woman among a group of ritual sisters would teach it to others” (Chiang 68). In the novel, Lily, Snow Flower, Lily’s mother, aunt, Elder sister sang and chanted the folktales and folksongs in *nushu*. In addition to learning folktales and folksongs, “the educational function is revealed in many lively folk riddles and rhymes” (Liming 51). According to Chiang, “some texts were so familiar as folktales and folksongs that the learner could recite them” (Chiang 68). Lily’s mother, who has chanted and sung the folktales and folksongs numerous times, was able to recite the folktales and folksongs even though she was not literate in *nushu*. Therefore, education is one of the folkloric functions of *nushu*.

Second, *nushu* functions as a validation of culture. According to Bascom, “Folklore is an important mechanism for maintaining the stability of culture” (349). *Nushu* reflects “customary and ritual functions as an embodiment of culture” (Liming 50). Hence, “The consolidation of certain rituals and customs allowed the women’s script to develop from an expression of women’s needs into a necessity for the entire community...The ritual function of the women’s script was one of the driving forces behind its longevity” (Liming 50). *Nushu* not only represented women’s writing, it also challenged women’s rights at the wake of the Communist Revolution. Chiang argues that “as the existence of the Women’s Script literacy was related to women’s role in the social structure, so is its demise related to changes in women’s role and other socio-political movements initiated by the Communist government since 1949” (71). The women’s “social history, knowledge, life skills, and moral training could only be obtained orally from the older generation, through their own experiences, and through the appreciation of

folk arts. The women's script served as a writing system and literature, allowing women's intelligence and talents to flourish and nurture others" (Liming 51). Thus, *nushu* represents the folkloric function of culture.

Third, *nushu* functions as conformity. According to Liming, "The women's script served as a tool for social interaction within a group and as a cohesive force" (49). In the novel, Lily explains that before the elder sister's wedding, "the girls came to stay with us for Sitting and Singing in the Upstairs Chamber. Other village women visited to socialize, give advice, and commiserate" (See 76). The women formed a social group to support each other; and they reminded each other of their social duties and obligations as women, wives, and mothers. On the other hand, Lily explains that the women had to adhere to certain restrictions with writing *nushu*:

Our words had to be circumspect. We could not write anything too negative about our circumstances. This was tricky, since the very form of a married woman's letter needed to include the usual complaints—that we were pathetic, powerless, worked to the bone, homesick, and sad. We were supposed to speak directly about our feelings without appearing ungrateful, no-account, or unfilial. Any daughter-in-law who lets the real truth of her life become public brings shame to both her natal and husband's families, which, as you know, is why I have waited until they were all dead to write my story. (See 150-51)

Even though the women were allowed to use *nushu* to express their feelings and emotions, they had to conform to certain restrictions that validated their position as wives

and mothers and daughters-in-law. Bascom explains, “More than simply serving to validate or justify institutions, beliefs, and attitudes, some forms of folklore are important as means of applying social pressure and exercising social control” (346). *Nushu* “was not a tool for communicating with the entire society but, rather, a device used only by ordinary rural women, united by status, fate, emotions, and cultural yearnings. The psychological and cultural traits common to these women, who were all part of the lower classes of society, gave the women’s script a tremendous cohesive power...The cohesive force of the script greatly increased women’s self-awareness and group consciousness” (Liming 49). In the novel, Lily is also aware of two important rules that the women shared when learning *nushu*: “Men must never know that it exists, and men must not touch it in any form” (See 25). By conforming to a group to learn and to share *nushu* with only women, Lily is aware that she must not share the knowledge of *nushu* with men.

Fourth, *nushu* functions in the form of entertainment. In *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*, the learning of *nushu* also involves sharing it with more than one person in a form of entertainment. Sometimes, it involves two close friends or a group. For example, “Friendship with sworn sisters brought them sympathy and understanding, and they found solace in the beautiful spiritual world that they constructed for themselves” (Liming 50). As means of self-expression, “these free interactions and activities allowed the women to vent their feelings of bitterness, depression, and even hopelessness, and to achieve a kind of balance” (Liming 50). In the novel, on Bull Fighting Day, the girls made dumplings and shared *nushu* folktales such as “The Tale of Sangu,” “in which the

daughter of a rich man remains loyal to a poor husband despite the ups and downs until they are rewarded for their fidelity by becoming mandarins” (See 37-38). William Chiang argues that “The Tale of Sangu” also teaches the Three Obediences, which are “demanded of women by Confucianism—follow your father before marriage, follow your husband after marriage, follow your son if your husband dies. The strategy is to cultivate your sons so they will care for you one day” (78). The other story is “The Fairy Carp.” The fish transforms into a beautiful woman and “falls in love with a brilliant scholar, only to have her true form revealed” (See 38). As a form of entertainment, the folktales also represented education, conformity, and culture.

Another folktale that provided entertainment, education, culture, and conformity was “The Story of the Woman and Three Brothers,” which was Lily’s favorite. This story was embroidered on one of Aunt’s handkerchiefs that was from one of her sworn sisters. For this story, the women and girls take turns telling the story by reading and chanting the *nushu* on the aunt’s handkerchief. See uses plain style to show the different scenarios of “The Story of the Woman and Three Brothers.” The aunt begins the story by chanting, “A woman once had three brothers...They all had wives, but she was not married. Though she was virtuous and hardworking, her brothers would not offer a dowry. How unhappy she was! What could she do?” (See 38). After the aunt’s chant, Lily’s mother sings the answer to the question: “She’s so miserable, she goes to the garden and hangs herself from a tree” (See 38). In unison, Beautiful Moon, Elder Sister, Lily, and the sworn sisters recite the chorus, “The eldest brother walks through the garden and pretends not to see her. The second brother walks through the garden and pretends

not to see that she's dead. The third brother sees her, bursts into tears, and takes her body inside" (See 38). Then, the story continues with three different scenarios of how each brother handled the body of the dead sister and how each brother suggested the burial of the dead sister. When the dead sister's body begins to smell foul, "The eldest brother gives one piece of cloth to cover her body. The second brother gives two pieces of cloth. The third brother wraps her in as many clothes as possible so she'll be warm in the afterworld" (See 38). The next two scenarios reveal how each brother suggests the burial of his sister. The elder brother did not want to bury his sister in a box. The second brother offered to "use that old box in the shed," and the third brother offered to "buy a coffin" for the dead sister (See 39). As for the burial, the folktale reveals that the eldest brother suggested that the sister's dead body to be buried by the water buffalo road, "meaning she would be trampled for all eternity" (See 39). The second brother suggested to bury the dead sister's body under bridge, which meant "she would wash away" (See 39). The third brother suggested that they bury the dead sister's body "behind the house so everyone would remember her" (See 39). "The Story of the Woman with Three Brothers" was Lily's favorite because it provided entertainment, education, culture, and conformity:

I loved this story. It was fun to chant with Mama and the others, but since my grandmother's and sister's deaths I better understood its messages.

The story showed me how the value of a girl—or woman—could shift from person to person. It also offered practical instruction on how to care for a loved one after death—how a body should be handled, what

constituted proper eternity garments, where someone should be buried.

My family had tried their best to follow these rules, and I would too, once I became a wife and mother. (See 39)

This folktale is a rhetorical argument because Lily learns that the value of a female differs from person to person. According to American folklorist Roger D. Abrahams, folklore is central to a rhetorical argument:

As the rhetorical approach considers techniques of argument, it assumes that all expression is designed to influence, and that we must simply discover the design. Folklore, being traditional activity, argues traditionally; it uses arguments and persuasive techniques developed in the past to cope with recurrences of social problem situations. (146)

In her own life, Lily learns that her value changes from a little girl to a bride-to-be. When she was a little girl, her Elder brother treated her with kindness and paid attention to her. Lily explains, “Elder Brother, who was six years older than I was, called me to help him with his morning chores. Having been born in the year of the horse, it is in my nature to love the outdoors, but event more important I got to have Elder Brother completely to myself” (See 11). When Lily begins the process of the *laotong* match for her future marriage, she notices that her father begins to treat her differently: “Worst of all, my father never again looked at me the same way. No more sitting on his lap in the evenings when he smoked his pipe. In one instant I had changed from being a worthless girl into someone who might be useful to the family” (See 23). Lily’s value as a female changes from being her father’s little girl who was another mouth to feed to a future

bride-to-be who will marry a man from a wealthy family. On the other hand, Snow Flower's experience is different. The men in Snow Flower's life devalued her with abuse and neglect. When Lily discovers the truth about Snow Flower's misfortune, Snow Flower confesses to Lily that her opium addicted father almost sold her "as a little daughter-in-law" (See 122). After the death of Snow Flower's younger son, her husband "hit her with ferocity that she flew back a couple of meters and landed with a cloud thud onto the hard-packed snow. He proceeded to beat her so badly that she miscarried in a violent gush of black blood that stained the icy slopes" of the campsite (See 207). Snow Flower endured her husband's physical abuse for many years in order to obey the Three Obediences and the Four Virtues. Also, Lily learns that she devalued Snow Flower when she misinterpreted one of Snow Flower's messages in the fan and accused of her being a disloyal *laotong* in front of a group of women. "The Story of the Woman and Three Brothers" is an example of how "values enter, at some stage or other, into every argument" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 75). In the folktale, the value of the sister is a concrete value because it is attached to a living being, and "there is a close connection between what the value attached to what is concrete and to what is unique: by displaying the unique character of something we automatically increase its value" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 77). The folktale also represents the two elements of sublimity: "the power to conceive great thoughts" and "strong and inspired emotion" (Longinus 350). The detailed imagery of how the body of the dead sister is found, handled, and buried inspires emotion and thoughts. The folktale not only provided Lily instructions of how to bury the dead, it also taught her that the value of a woman changes from person to

person, more specifically from man to man. Based on the placement of values on certain words, the social and cultural contexts play a big role in the formation of binary oppositions.

Also, during Sitting and Singing in the Upstairs Chamber, the matchmaker, Madame Wang entertains the girls and women with “The Tale of Wife Wang,” which is about a woman who is married to a butcher. In the story, the wife confronts her husband about killing the animals. Her husband scolds her, and she remains a vegetarian and recites the Buddhist Diamond Sutra. Then, the story continues with the woman’s devotion and transformation:

The King of the Afterworld sent out spirits to look for those of great virtue. They spied on Wife Wang. Once convinced of her purity, they enticed her to visit the afterworld to recite the Diamond Sutra. She knew what this meant: They were asking her to die. She begged them not to make her leave her children, but the spirits refused to hear her pleas. She told her husband to take a new wife. She instructed her children to be good and obey their new mother. As soon as these words left her mouth, she fell to the floor, dead.

Wife Wang experienced many trials before she was brought at last to the King of the Afterworld. Through all her tribulations, he had been watching her, noting her virtue and piety. Just like her husband, he demanded that she recite the Diamond Sutra. Although she missed nine words, he was so pleased with her effort—both during her lifetime and in

the afterlife—that he rewarded her by allowing her to return to the world of the living as a baby boy. This time she was born into the home of a learned official, but her real name was written on the bottom of her foot.

Wife Wang had led an exemplary life, but she was only a woman...Now, as a man, she excelled at everything she did. She attained the highest rank as a scholar. She gained riches, honor, and prestige, but as much as she accomplished she missed her family and longed to be a woman again. At last she was presented to the emperor. She told him her story and implored him to let her return to her husband's home village. Just as had happened with the King of the Afterworld, this woman's courage and virtue moved the emperor, but he saw something more—filial piety. He assigned her to her husband's home village as a magistrate. She arrived wearing full scholar regalia. When everyone came out to kowtow, she stunned the gathering by taking off her manly shoes and revealing her true name. She told her husband—now very old—that she wanted to be his wife again. Husband Wang and the children went to her tomb and opened it. The Jade Emperor stepped out and announced that the entire Wang family could transcend this world for nirvana, which they did. (See 104)

This folktale was told earlier in the novel by the matchmaker Madame Wang to foreshadow Snow Flower's married life. At first, Lily thought the folktale was for her, but she later finds out that it was partially about Snow Flower's married life. This folktale

educates a woman to be obedient no matter what happens because her obedience and virtuous piety will save her and her family and bring them to heaven. The original *nushu* transcript of “The Tale of Wife Wang” does exist; however it is titled “Fifth Daughter Wang.” In his book, *Heroines of Jiangyong: Chinese Narrative Ballads in Women’s Script*, Wilt L. Idema explains, “the legend of Fifth Daughter Wang is the mirror image of yet another master narrative of traditional China, the legend of the monk Mulian. This legend was well known in Jiangyong county, and the women’s script texts refer to it a number of times...The story of Fifth Daughter of Wang spread primarily in the form of ballads, we may assume, in the more private sphere of women’s groups, as it was very much a female narrative” (22). Although the original ballad and See’s version of the folktale are similar, the ending is slightly different. In “Fifth Daughter Wang,” when the coffin is opened, the remains of the woman’s body appears but “the coffin and the corpse dissolved right away” (Idema 157). Then, “the family of four, mother and son, practiced goodness; he did not return to court to protect his king and lord. The Jade Emperor issued an edict informing all four that they would live their lives in the Western Palace. In one life she practiced goodness as a woman, and in the next life she cultivated herself: top of the list! She lives in a dragon palace at the bottom of the ocean, and throughout the world her fame is renowned (Idema 157). Despite the minor differences in the endings of both folktales, both endings praise the wife Wang for her virtuous devotion and piety.

In addition to representing the four functions of folklore, “The Tale of Wife Wang” represents rhetorical arguments. As a woman, wife Wang was unable to be successful even though she could recite the Diamond Sutra successfully. However,

disguised as a man, she was able to succeed because she was given the opportunities and acknowledgment that a woman would not receive. As a man, she proved that she could be a great scholar. Since traditional Chinese culture, placed higher values on men rather than women, women were overlooked in the area of formal education. Another argument is that the ability of Wife Wang's transformation from woman to man and man to woman, or her fluid transformation, is representative of *nushu*. Since *nushu* is developed from *hanzi*, men's writing, it is not valued as a formal language because "men just considered" *nushu* to be "beneath them" (See 153). Later in the novel, Lily provides more details about the differences between *hanzi* and *nushu* to show the validity of the women's writing:

Men's writing has more than 50,000 characters, each uniquely different, each with a deep meanings and nuances. Our women's writing has perhaps 600 characters, which we use phonetically, like babies, to create about 10,000 words. Men's writing takes a lifetime to learn and understand. Women's writing is something we pick up as girls, and we rely on context to coax meaning. Men write about the outer realm of literature, accounts, and crop yields; women write about the inner realm of children, daily chores, and emotions. The men in the Lu household were proud of their wives' fluency in *nu shu* and dexterity in embroidery, though these things had as much importance to survival as a pig's fart. (See 153)

Despite the differences, *nushu* is a language that should be recognized because it is language that has been developed with certain words, meaning, and expression. It has translated several folktales, legends, and songs. It is also used for communication among women. Another difference between *hanzi* and *nushu* is that *nushu* was created by women in a traditional Chinese society that valued men over women; therefore, *nushu* was not recognized as a legitimate language for many years.

The invention of *nushu* creates a binary opposition between *hanzi* and *nushu*. *Hanzi* is the male-dominated language, and *nushu* is the female-dominated language. However, based on social and cultural values, *hanzi* is the dominant language because the men regarded *nushu* as women's gibberish. With a closer look at both languages, *nushu* is not the lesser of two languages. It does not exclude, yet it invites community and harmony, which are Confucian characteristics. Similar to *hanzi* and *nushu*, man is dependent on woman because he will need his wife to bear his son since the son is to bring prosperity and good luck to the family. Man is also dependent on woman to take care of the household and manage the domestic realm. Without woman, man is unable to reproduce and maintain his place in society. Both men and women, *hanzi* and *nushu*, are dependent on each other like *yin* and *yang*. According to Anna M. Hennessey, "As is manifest in the black and white shapes of the *taiji* symbol, early references to *yin* and *yang* describe a binary system in which two elements constantly transform or become one another" ("*Yin and Yang*" 329). Since *nushu* is woman's writing transformed from the man's writing, *hanzi*, it also has a connection to "Chimera," a monster only in myth; in actuality, it is a whole organism containing both female and male" (Olsen 85). The man

and woman are interdependent because they rely on each other. In the novel, both Lily and Snow Flower are loyal to their husbands, give birth to sons, and obey the Three Obedience and Four Virtues; however, Snow Flower becomes a victim of physical and psychological abuse by her husband and mother-in-law. At Snow Flower's deathbed, her husband finally comes to terms with the value of his wife. At the end of the novel, Lily questions the value of a woman: "If a man does not value his wife upon marriage, why would he treasure her after? If he sees his wife as no better than a chicken who can provide an endless supply of eggs or a water buffalo can bear an endless amount of weight upon its shoulders, why would he value her any more than those animals?" (See 253). Lily's rhetorical questions invite the audience to question the value of a woman in a society that oppressed women, yet men needed women to succeed in life.

The narrator Lily is seeking atonement for her wrongdoing. At the end of the first chapter, "Sitting Quietly," Lily explains, "I am writing these pages for those who reside in the afterworld. Peony my grandson's wife, has promised to make sure they are burned at my death, so my story will reach them before my spirit does. Let my words explain my actions to my ancestors, to my husband, but most of all to Snow Flower, before I greet them again" (See 6). Similar to Kingston's narrator in *The Woman Warrior* devoting pages to her nameless aunt, Lily is devoting her story to the memory of Snow Flower. According to Longinus, "Real sublimity contains much food for reflection, is difficult rather impossible to resist, and makes a strong and effaceable impression on the memory" (*On the Sublime* 350). Lily is seeking forgiveness for misreading Snow Flower's message on their fan. Lily's treatment of Snow Flower reflected a gender role

switch. When Snow Flower writes to Lily about her problems in her marriage, Lily encourages Snow Flower to obey the Three Obediences, which was devised by a man. After Lily responds with the same message of obedience, Snow Flower writes the following message to Lily: “I have too many troubles. I cannot be what you wish. You won’t have to listen to my complaints anymore. Three sworn sisters have promised to love me as I am. Write to me, not to console me as you have been doing, but to remember our happy girl-days together” (See 220). Instead of consoling Snow Flower, Lily takes on the male role by chastising Snow Flower for betraying their *laotong* relationship in a form of infidelity. Lily reacted to Snow Flower’s message by thinking, “Now she was tossing me aside? It seemed that Snow Flower—this woman for whom I had deep-heart love, whom I treasured, and to whom I’d committed myself for life—did not care for me in the same way” (See 220). Lily mentions that she did not see this coming until it is too late when Plum Blossom tells her, “But you had too much man thinking in you. You loved her as a man would, valuing her only for following men’s rules” (See 243). Thus, “It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (Du Bois 1). Both women lived according to how others viewed them. They were taught at an early age to obey the “Three Obediences” and the “Four Virtues” because women were inferior to men. Unfortunately for Snow Flower, her life was full of tragedy, abuse, and struggle. When Snow Flower sought comfort from her *laotong*, she was rejected and accused of infidelity because Lily read Snow Flower’s message out of context. Many years later, Lily admits,

“But looking at our secret fan with its messages written between Snow Flower and me over many years, I see that I didn’t value the most important love—deep-heart love” (See 5). Therefore, Lily devotes the pages to the memory of Snow Flower as atonement for singing the Letter of Vituperation against her *laotong*.

Lisa See’s sublime novel, *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*, breaks the long silence of the women of Jiangyong county and introduces the modern audience to a language that went almost unnoticed to the rest of the world. *Nushu* is a testament and rhetorical argument that women, particularly of Jiangyong County, were literate in a male dominated society that allowed mostly men to learn formal writing. According to Lily, “It was to give us a voice. Our *nu shu* was a means for our bound feet to carry us to each other, for our thoughts to fly across the fields as Snow Flower had written” (See 160). By introducing the reader to *nushu* and the literature that reflected the lives of women during a specific time period when women were oppressed by Confucian standards and viewed as insignificant unless they married well and produced a healthy son, Lisa See’s novel echoes Tillie Olsen’s argument for breaking the silence on women writers and their literature. By writing *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* and introducing *nushu* to the 21st century audience, Lisa See has completed a mission that Tillie Olsen describes in her book *Silences*:

You who teach, read writers who are women. There is a whole literature to be re-estimated, revalued. Some works will prove to be, like the lives their human authors, mortal—speaking only to their time. Others now forgotten, obscured, ignored, will live again for us. Read, listen to, living

women writers; our new as well as our established, often neglected ones.

Not to have an audience is a kind of death...Teach women's lives through the lives of the women who wrote the books, as well as through the books themselves; and through autobiography, biography, journals, letters.

Because most literature concerns itself with the lives of the few, and know and teach the few books closer to the lives of the many. (Olsen 44)

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION: *KAIROS* IN THE 21ST CENTURY: THE OPPORTUNE TIME FOR ASIAN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Longinus once stated that “When people of different training, ways of life, tastes, ages, and manners all agree about something, the judgment and assent of so many distinct voices lends strength and irrefutability to the conviction that their admiration is rightly directed” (*On the Sublime* 350). Asian American literature encompasses writers from various cultures, ethnicities, education, customs, etc. Their styles of writing or eloquence vary from one writer to the next. They are faced with rhetorical borderlands of East vs. West or West vs. East. The sublimity of selected literary works proves that Asian American literature continues to flourish with time, and it pushes the boundaries of what was once categorized as Asian American literature. At the same time, Asian American writers address Asian and/or Asian American issues by lending a voice to the silent and unsung communities. John Okada’s *No-No Boy*, Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*, and Lisa See’s *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* represent the versatility of Asian American literature. John Okada’s *No-No Boy* unveils a part of America’s past that involves the mistreatment and displacement of many Japanese Americans. Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* unveils the convergence and divergence of two different cultures, Chinese and American, in order to express the hybridity of Chinese American culture and its challenges. Lisa See’s *Snow*

Flower and the Secret Fan unveils the taboo customs of traditional Chinese culture to reveal an inspiring story of friendship and women's literacy.

Modern Asian American writers, John Okada, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Lisa See, incorporate plain, middle, and grand styles while expressing their own style of eloquence. The diverse styles of eloquence in modern Asian American literature are connected to the five sources of sublimity: "power to conceive great thoughts," "strong and inspired emotion," rhetorical figures, diction, and "dignified and elevated word-arrangement" (Longinus 350). The diverse styles of eloquence in the selected literary works from Okada, Kingston, and See function to inform, to please, and to persuade the audience, which elevates them to a level of sublimity. From the *Orator*, Cicero explains that the style of eloquence is abstract because it can range from simple to complex:

For it is not an eloquent person whom I seek, nor anything subject to death and decay, but that absolute quality, the possession of which makes a man eloquent. And this is nothing but abstract eloquence, which we can behold only with the mind's eye. He, then, will be an eloquent speaker – to respect my former definition – who can discuss trivial matters in a plain style, matters of significance in the tempered style, and weighty affairs in the grand manner. (343)

Therefore, the diverse styles of eloquence in John Okada's *No-No Boy*, Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, and Lisa See's *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* are represented in the diction, word usage and arrangement, rhetorical figures, persuasive

appeal of pathos, and folkloric elements because “it is our nature to be elevated and exalted by true sublimity” (Longinus 350).

Furthermore, selective rhetorical figures such as presence, metaphor, *pysma*, *anaphora*, and *accusatio* are proofs of argument that are evident in all three works. These rhetorical figures are represented in the diction and word arrangement from selected passages of Okada’s *No-No Boy*, Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior*, and See’s *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*. According to Longinus, rhetorical figures are “natural allies of sublimity and themselves profit wonderfully from the alliance” (*On the Sublime* 358) because they aid in the expression of rhetorical arguments. The selective rhetorical figures also represent two other sources of sublimity: “the power to conceive great thoughts” and “strong and inspired emotion” (Longinus 350). The selective rhetorical figures of presence, metaphor, *pysma*, *anaphora*, and *accusatio* elevate all three works to a level of sublimity.

In addition to rhetorical figures, the identification and analysis of folklore in literature reveals binary oppositions and contradictions as proofs of rhetorical argument. Social and cultural issues vary from one society to the next; folklore explains how certain values are placed in certain social and cultural contexts. According to American folklorist Roger D. Abrahams, “Folklore, being traditional activity, argues traditionally; it uses arguments and persuasive techniques developed in the past to cope with recurrences of social problem situations” (“Introductory Remarks” 146). Also, folklore reveals the binary oppositions represented in select passages of John Okada’s *No-No Boy*, Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior*, and Lisa See’s *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*;

however, binary oppositions result in contradictions because values change depending on the social and cultural context. Each of the selected literary works provides a voice for the silenced or unknown. Each narrator confronts contradictions in life; and he or she is faced with a double consciousness: “this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (Du Bois 1). The narrators from all three works encounter social and cultural issues that require conformity, and they question the values placed on them. In Okada’s *No-No Boy*, the narrator, Ichiro Yamada, refers to the Japanese folktale of *Momotaro*, translated as *Peach Boy*, to confront the differing values reflected in the social and cultural context during and after World War II that resulted in binary oppositions of America vs. Japan, yes vs. no, and loyalty vs. disloyalty. Okada’s *No-No Boy* is a literary and rhetorical testament for the many Japanese Americans who suffered during a time in American history that almost went unnoticed for many years had authors such as John Okada not written about it. In Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior*, the narrator takes on multiple personae to reflect the bicultural values of Chinese and American cultures. Selected passages from the first and last sections of *The Woman Warrior* reveal how the narrator, in different personae, relies on Chinese folklore in order to show how two cultures can clash yet be unified between rhetorical borderlands. Lisa See’s *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* focuses on Chinese folklore by using western rhetorical strategies to reveal details of traditional Chinese culture that focuses on the life of girls and women in southern China. The narrator Lily shares information about traditions and customs that are taboo such as, *laotong* match,

footbinding, arranged marriage, and the learning of *nushu*. Folklore reveals the values as well as exposes the contradictions that arise from binary oppositions associated with values placed in social and cultural context.

By continuing to produce literary works in the field of Asian American literature, Asian American writers are contributing to the rich history of Asian American culture. In 1982, Elaine Kim closed her revolutionary book, *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context*, with the following comment: “Contemporary Asian American writers are in the process of challenging old myths and stereotypes by defining Asian American humanity as part of the composite identity of the American people, which, like the Asian American identity, is still being shaped and defined” (Kim 279). In 2014, Asian American writers continue to challenge similar issues, but they are also exploring other issues as well. The sublimity of Asian American literature shows that selected Asian American writers are conscious of presenting certain social and cultural issues to a wide audience. They are also conscious of the past as well as the present and future. Some Asian American writers link the past to the present in order to understand the current issues and to present hope for the future. Their diverse styles of eloquence prove time and time again that Asian American literature is not just about Asia and Asian issues; Asian American writers, John Okada, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Lisa See, challenge the categorized field of Asian American literature. Their sublime literary works contribute to the emerging field of Asian American literature. Although this field of study was not recognized until the 1970s, it continues to grow exponentially with talented and gifted writers who produce sublime works of

literature. Proponents of Asian American literature argue that it should not be isolated; instead, it should be recognized and acknowledged as an important body of literature because “it has potential to contribute to the sovereignty and preservation of our cultural integrity, far from segregating Asian Americans from the rest of American society” (Kim, *Asian American Literature* 278). Selected works in Asian American literature represent rhetorical borderlands that provide transition between East and West or West and East. According to Gloria Anzaldua, “A borderland is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition” (*Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* 25). These rhetorical borderlands are evident in the diverse writing styles of selected Asian American authors, and their works can be studied in the fields of rhetoric, folklore, and literary criticism. Asian American writers will continue to make known their presence in American society. Therefore, the 21st century is the opportune time for Asian American writers because “Asian American literature is our voice to the rest of the world. It encourages our humanity and our interconnections. It helps define our identity, culture, and community, our unity and our diversity” (Kim, *Asian American Literature* 278).

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