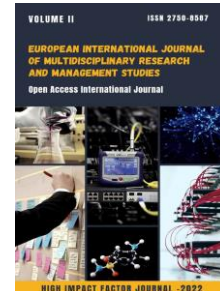


EUROPEAN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY
RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT STUDIES

VOLUME03 ISSUE01

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55640/eijmrms-03-01-20>

Pages: 130-132



CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT IN “THE WOMAN WARRIOR”

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ABOUT ARTICLE

Key words: Autobiography, legendary, femininity, story-telling, self-development.

Received: 19.01.2023

Accepted: 24.01.2023

Published: 29.01.2023

Abstract: Characters are important elements of fiction. They help to open the author’s feelings and interpretation about life with together with other components. No matter how characters are real or unreal, they should effect on reader’s heart. Chinese-American writer Maxine Hong Kingston uses mostly female characters in her memoir “The Woman Warrior”. In this paper most important character are of the novel are going to be investigated. Kingston describes her characters so delicately, that makes a reader believe even in fanciful heroes. Those characters are interrelated each other and tell their life experiences.

INTRODUCTION

“The Woman Warrior” is considered an unusual autobiographical novel by Maxine Hong Kingston because of her remarkable writing style. Kingston is a narrator and a main character in the novel. However, she sometimes disappears fully in some stories of the novel such as the story of Fa Mu Lan. “The Woman Warrior” differs from other traditional memoirs with its mixture of true and unreal stories and character development. Kingston changes main characters when she tells a new story. This paper aims to analyze how she evolves characters and her own self-development through the novel. She takes on so many voices and people that it is a bit hard to pin down a list of character fold.

Initially, it is important to point out that Kingston wrote this novel to show us how she constructs her identity as a brave woman and she tells all truth about herself. Throughout the novel she is seen sometimes as seditious, vocally lashing out against her mother as a teenager daughter, at times

inquisitive and imaginative, discovering scenarios about her unnamed aunt in "No-Name Woman", permitting her racist bosses walk all over her in "White Tigers" and at times brutal, torturing a poor silent girl in her school. We can see, though, wide changes in Kingston's character such as, growing individually that does make the text seem, at times, more like a traditional autobiography. Kingston overgrows from a girl who can barely speak to a woman who finds way for her words on paper. She turns from someone scared by the ghosts of her mother's talk-stories into a person who can peer into the dark corners of her antecedent. Maxine Hong Kingston as both the writer and the main character writes about her childhood struggles with her parents' expectations of her as a culturally Chinese girl in an American society. Her mother's description about femininity differs from Kingston's. She accepts her mother's belief of white people as different types of ghosts, and remarks herself as a warrior, imagining herself in the character of the legendary Fa Mu Lan. She decides to be a writer, despite the fact that her parents disapprove her opinion that writing is not suitable career for a woman and despite their expectance she get married and have children.

The nearest character to Kingston in the novel is Brave Orchid who is mother of her. She is educated woman in the medical and midwifery school in China and works as a doctor for a while. However, while living in America she works in her husband's laundry. As a Chinese woman and mother Brave Orchid expects her children continue cultural living style of Chinese people. Brave Orchid's personality differs from her sister Moon Orchid. As her name phrases, she is brave woman and she encourages her sister to struggle for saving family. However, circumstance of this fighting is not auspicious. Moon Orchid gets irrecoverable illness. Brave Orchid is also censorious for herself. Because she wants look like younger she colors her hair.

She nurtures her children by telling stories and tries to prevent them white people whom she considers ghosts. We cannot say exactly she is a good or bad mother but it is obvious that her role in Kingston's life is great. Even though she studied science she tells stories a lot about ghosts especially Sitting Ghosts. She is dutiful and strict mother for her children. Brave Orchid feels it's her duty as a parent to tell her daughter how to live a relatively easy life. Kingston opens the novel with her demanding "You must not tell anyone what I am about to tell you". Most of her knowledge about Chinese woman built up with her talk-stories. As we see the novel begins with the story of Moon Orchid and ends with of Kingston's own story. From this point, it's clear that Kingston's love for storytelling comes straight from Brave Orchid. Her mother teaches her to tell stories. All stories and memoirs Kingston shares with us are inherited to her together with storytelling.

The fourth chapter of "The Woman Warrior" was dedicated to Kingston's aunt Moon Orchid. She is the most complicated character in the novel. Unlike Brave Orchid she is weak and less independent Chinese woman. The true story of Moon Orchid about coming to California to meet her husband who left her for ten years is one of the impressive stories of the writer. Brave Orchid makes her sister come to America to reunite with her husband, even though she does not want to confront with him. However, it is interesting that why she is against to interrupt her husband and how she could live without seeing him for ten years? Is it true to say that she is strong enough? Answer is no. we cannot say she is brave woman. When she faces her husband and ignored by him, she is totally frustrated and disappointed to live. Maybe her insanity is the result of her ten-years loneliness and difficulties. The reason why Kingston tells us this story is to convey us the role of one wife in Chinese family.

The more we analyze and compare characters in the novel, the more we introduce close with Chinese society and role of women there. Another interesting character in "The Woman Warrior" is Kinston's aunt whose name unknown for her. She is the first person Kingston tells a story about in the novel. She is a relative of Kingston who all family members forget her because of her disgrace. Though, destiny of her aunt impresses Kingston deeply. She never tries to forget her. She understands her feelings and justifies her. This story is told to Kingston by her mother Brave Orchid in order to give didactic care to her daughter. It is her mother's method as Kingston says "Whenever she had to warn us about life my mother told stories that ran like this one". When Kingston heard this story of her aunt for the first time she was young to understand situation of the family. Besides that, she has never live in China. She lives in America where differs completely from China. As she has American overview she cannot accept attack of villagers of her father for mistake of his sister. However, when she grew old she better understood the stories of her mother and decided to write her own story about her aunt named "No Name Woman".

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