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| Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract <p>Tutkielmassa perehdytään yhdysvaltalaisen kirjailijan Maxine Hong Kingstonin (synt. 1940) muistelmateokseen <i>I Love A Broad Margin to My Life</i> (2011) ja erityisesti kirjassa esiintyviin aikakäsityksiin. Kirjailijan kiinalainen syntyperä, aikuisiällä alkanut kiinnostus itämaisia uskontoja kohtaan ja toisaalta Kaliforniassa ja Havaijilla vietetty elämä tarjoavat kiinnostavan lähtökohdan ajan uskonnollisen ja sosiaalisen merkityksen tutkimiselle. Väitän, että Kingstonin muistelmateoksessa esiintyvät aikaan liittyvät uskomukset ovat enimmäkseen buddhalaisia, kun taas ajankäyttöä määrittävissä arvoissa ja normeissa on nähtävissä sekä länsimaisia että buddhalaisia vaikutteita. Tutkielman johdantokappaleessa esitellään yhtäältä länsimaisessa ja toisaalta buddhalaisessa ajatteluperinteessä esiintyviä aikaan liittyviä uskomuksia ja näistä uskomuksista peräisin olevia ajankäyttöön liittyviä arvoja ja normeja. Länsimaisessa ajatteluperinteessä korostuvat ajan lineaarisuus, kvantitatiivisuus ja kehitysusko, jotka ovat peräisin kristinuskosta ja jotka ovat levinneet mm. kristinuskon, teollisen vallankumouksen ja globalisaation myötä. Buddhalaisuus taas näkee maailmankaikkeuden koostuvan erikokoisista sykleistä, ja ihmisen uskotaan syntyvän ja kuolevan lukemattomia kertoja. Nämä aikaan liittyvät uskomukset – ja niistä juontuvat arvot ja normit – ovat omissa vaikutuspiireissään muokanneet ihmisen toimintaa ja suhdetta ympäristöön. Tutkielman kahdessa pääkappaleessa erittelen lähiluvun kautta, kuinka nämä uskomukset, arvot ja normit tulevat esille nimenomaan Kingstonin muistelmateoksessa. Lopuksi arvioin, kuinka ajan olomuotoon liittyvät uskomukset ja ajankäyttöön liittyvät arvot ja normit vaikuttavat ihmisten maailmankatsomukseen ja toimintaan yleisellä tasolla.</p> | | |
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Western and Buddhist Chronemics in Maxine Hong Kingston's
Memoir *I Love a Broad Margin to My Life*

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1 Introduction

1.1 General introduction to the thesis

All humans feel the flow of time. We are aware of growing older and eventually dying. However, different peoples, religions, and philosophies have offered different explanations as to “where” it is we are headed in time, which is ultimately a question of what the physical makeup of the cosmos is believed to be. In addition to such *temporal beliefs*, we also have specific conventions for using and dealing with time in our daily lives, which are based on social values. These conventions vary from culture to culture and individual to individual, and they may be called *temporal norms and values*. Temporal beliefs, norms and values all contribute to what Bruneau (1980) calls chronemics, which is the study of time’s role in nonverbal communication. Based on a close reading of Maxine Hong Kingston's memoir *I Love a Broad Margin to My Life* (2011), I argue that Kingston's temporal beliefs are mainly influenced by Buddhism, while her temporal norms and values are both Western and Buddhist. Therefore, Kingston’s memoir can be considered to exhibit multicultural chronemics, which is not a surprising find, considering the author’s multicultural background.

The structure of this thesis is as follows: in the upcoming sections of this introductory chapter I will introduce the theoretical concept of temporal beliefs (in section 1.3), and more specifically the temporal beliefs common among Westerners (particularly Christians) and Buddhists, as well as the concept of temporal norms and values and what they are for Westerners and Buddhists (section 1.4). Before this, however, I will review Kingston’s biography to clarify what religious and ideological views she has claimed to endorse, and whether a hypothesis can be made as to what temporal beliefs, norms, and values we may expect to identify in her memoir. In the next two main chapters (2 and 3) I will present my analyses of relevant parts of Kingston's memoir, paying attention to the aforementioned chronemic concepts: chapter 2 will focus on how Buddhist and Western beliefs shape Kingston's understanding of time, and chapter 3 will look at how Kingston manages her everyday life according to both Western and Buddhist temporal norms and values. Finally, in the Conclusion, I will reflect on the thesis as a whole and discuss the subject of chronemics in a more general context.

Bruneau (1980) was the first to introduce the term *chronemics* into the field of nonverbal communication studies. He became preoccupied with the study of time-experiencing when writing a paper about the nature and social meanings of silence (1973, 21), which he realized he could not do without inquiry into the question of human time-experiencing. This goes to show that an understanding of the human experience of time is necessary in many different types of contexts. In a later paper about time’s role in communication, Bruneau (1980, 116) offers several time-related

topics for further chronemic study, including the topics of temporal beliefs and temporal values, which I have chosen to apply in my thesis. He defines temporal beliefs as “pertaining to the assumptions held about the nature of time and space,” and temporal values as “concerning valuation and evaluation of tempo, times (events), and timing as they relate to personal, social, and cultural behavior.” It should be remembered that temporal beliefs on the one hand, and temporal norms and values on the other hand, are closely intertwined. This is because the beliefs that people have of time’s nature, or any phenomenon for that matter, influence the way people talk and think about the phenomenon, and vice versa. Because temporal beliefs are largely historical, religious, and cultural products, temporal norms and values, too, are largely historical in nature. Therefore, my thesis may contain some repetition of historical facts when I talk about the development of temporal beliefs and that of temporal norms and values.

For this study, I use Bruneau’s (1980, 116) concepts of “temporal beliefs” and “temporal values” as the base for my own framework for studying Kingston’s memoir. My use of the term “temporal beliefs” will include, in expansion to Bruneau’s definition above, religious/cosmological and cultural beliefs about the nature of time. The most fundamental belief is whether time is understood to be linear or cyclic. To find out what temporal beliefs show up in Kingston’s memoir, I will do a close reading of the portion of text in which a temporal belief appears, analyzing what religious beliefs, etc., may be behind the belief in question. Bruneau’s “temporal values” category will be expanded into “temporal norms and values,” to remind the reader of temporal values’ regulatory effect on temporal behavior, i.e. how time is used and talked about. To analyze temporal norms and values in the memoir, I find it helpful to apply Hall’s (1984, 44) framework of monochronic and polychronic time schemes, which will be clarified in section 1.4.

My use of the term “Western” is quite narrow. For the purpose of this thesis, “Western” should be understood as roughly equal to White Anglo-Saxon Protestant in the United States, unless otherwise stated. This is simply because Kingston was born and has spent most of her life in California and has been socialized into its mainstream society. Of course, the West usually includes Europe and other areas, but for now it will be safest for the reader to visualize a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant society when reading about my accounts of “the West.” The idea I try to convey with “Western” is not only the legacy of Greek philosophy and Judeo-Christian theology, but also the more recent effects of Protestantism and modern industrial capitalism. These four major historical developments are important cornerstones in the birth of Western culture as we know it today, and the temporal beliefs, norms, and values peculiar to this culture will be considered in the chapters to follow. Still, it should be remembered that the “West” is a mere abstraction, an idea with no fixed correspondent in the real world. In addition, with the rapidly “westernizing” world, we encounter more and more Western temporal characteristics in places otherwise far removed from the West.

1.2 Time as a theme in *I Love a Broad Margin to My Life*

Though it does not perfectly correspond to any well-established genre of literature, Kingston's *I Love a Broad Margin to My Life* is most appropriately defined as a memoir. *Broad Margin*, as I will refer to it hereafter, consists of more than two hundred pages of Kingston's life experiences; some of these are from her youth, some from her more recent past, and some are written in a diary-like present tense narrative. It is not always clear which parts are fiction and which are actual events, and how long ago these events happened, if they happened in the real world at all. The time, place and factuality of the recounted events must be inferred, and sometimes Kingston provides very few clues for this. And, unlike more conventional memoirists, Kingston does not recount her most important life experiences in chronological order, starting from the beginning of her life and ending in her current place and time. In an interview (Kingston 2011a), Kingston has stated that the beginning of *Broad Margin* is written in diary form and describes whatever came to her mind during the course of a few days. It is because of this stream-of-consciousness narrative style that the beginning of the book contains the most temporally confusing parts. The second half of the book, however, sees a slight change in style and structure: it is clear that Kingston has set off for a trip to China, where she visits different villages, including the village her parents are from.

Ideas of time are expressed not only through the temporally unconventional structure and form of *Broad Margin*, but also in its subject matter. Time appears as an explicit object of Kingston's wonder, as well as implicitly in many different contexts. In the memoir the word "time" is sometimes meant to denote the duration of an activity, as in "I had to wait for a long time;" sometimes it refers to the dimension we feel we are living in, as in "She moves about in time;" and sometimes it is treated as a resource, as in "I waste my time." Of course, verb tenses and temporal adverbs (e.g. "before" and "after") are also used in *Broad Margin* according to normal English usage, but I will not be analyzing grammar. Most of the appearances of the word "time" in the book go unnoticed because they correspond to our (Western) understanding of time and how time can be talked about in European languages, such as in the above examples.

However, my interest was awakened in particular by Kingston's references to Buddhist and some other East Asian traditions' beliefs of time, such as cyclical time and reincarnation. There are also several parts in the memoir where Kingston talks about time and life as being different in the U.S., her home country, as compared to her ancestral China, where she visits during the course of her memoir. Time as a theme is also present when Kingston talks about her time *use*, e.g. what she feels she should be accomplishing in a certain amount of time. She also makes a lot of reference to her age (65 at the time of writing) and growing old, which makes time an especially interesting topic of study for this book.

1.3 Temporal beliefs in the West and in the East

As noted earlier, temporal beliefs, the study of which is a subcategory of chronemics, are defined by Bruneau (1980, 116) as “assumptions held about the nature of time and space.” Kingston’s memoir, too, contains such assumptions, and one major source of these assumptions is religion. All religions prescribe a certain view of the world’s creation, current state of affairs, and often destruction. Therefore, religions are “temporal and time-constructive systems” in themselves (Betz 2012, 715). Even if we are not religious, most of us still live in societies whose norms and values are to a large extent founded upon a certain religion. The two major religious traditions whose influence can be seen in *Broad Margin*, and which have arguably most shaped Kingston’s worldview, are the Western/Christian and the Buddhist religious traditions. The central temporal beliefs endorsed by these religions will be introduced here, and in chapter 2 their roles in *Broad Margin* will be considered. Some of the temporal beliefs mentioned here are the Western, Christian-based beliefs of linear and quantifiable time, and the Buddhist beliefs of cyclical time and reincarnation.

The view that time takes on a linear course was unique to Judaism, a belief that was carried over into Christianity (White 1974, 3). Time, which God is believed to have created, has an absolute beginning and a conclusion. Time is understood to move forward and to end altogether with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ; when exactly this will happen is not mentioned in the scripture. Another difference between pagan Antiquity and Christianity is that the latter is a historical religion, meaning that great effort has been made to accurately document the central events related to the world’s creation by God, the life of Jesus Christ, and the expected Second Coming of Jesus Christ, a.k.a. Judgement Day (Russell, 1966, 60–61). The purpose of this “objectivity” is to assert that the events told in the New Testament are indeed the truth and not mere myths (ibid.). Until Judgement Day, it is recommended that Christians use their time on earth to “grow in the love of God” and to find joy in labor. According to Hayden (1987, 1285) “History would flow from one prophesied interval to the next until the final judgment. Christianity became an onward religion. [...] Thus the idea of the atomistic individual concerned with growth and progress along the inevitable stream of time becomes apparent.” Similarly to Antiquity, Christianity claims that the temporal human world is separate from the eternal world of God, which is not affected by time (Betz 2012, 720–721). When a person dies, they transcend the temporal human world into the timeless world of God. Today, time is still generally seen as a linear, progressive movement by both religious and secular Westerners. Balslev (1986, 112) notes that linear time without a beginning (creation) or end (Judgement Day) is the secularized version of the Christian idea. Regardless of one’s conviction, or lack thereof, advocates of linear time believe that each event is unique, even if it happens over and over again. For example, springtime comes every year, but each year it is a unique event, instead of a recurrence of

the previous year's spring. This example demonstrates the idea of the Western belief of progression, an onward movement of time. As an onward religion, an important concept in Christianity is Advent, or the expectation of the birth of Jesus Christ and of his Second Coming. Advent reveals one of the main temporal beliefs of Christianity, a belief which has had far-reaching repercussions for Western temporal norms and values, namely the belief in a better future. The Latin root word *adventus*, which means "coming," implies the idea of expectation.

Advent literally contains the implication that the future is something to "look forward to," but this is not the only way in which religions attach unequal value to different times. King (1968, 217–221) draws attention to the Christian ideology of regarding the present time as profane and even "evil" compared to a glorified past, e.g. in the Garden of Eden before the Fall of Man, and the future, when Jesus Christ returns and frees people from profane time into Heaven, as discussed. This depreciation of profane, worldly time is arguably present in all religions, including Hinduism (Creel 1953, 189). An exception is Zen Buddhism, which contrastively emphasizes not only earthly life, but also the present moment, as the only true time. This is a topic that will be discussed further in chapter 2.

There is another, more practical, connection between Christianity and time besides the linear belief, namely that timekeeping as we know it today has its roots in the Judeo-Christian tradition. The Old Testament (Genesis 1–2) has often been interpreted as stating that the duty of humankind is to gain dominion over nature, an ideology which spawned many kinds of technological developments for the control and cultivation of the environment (e.g. Fraser 1986, 9; White 1974, 5). One of these innovations was the weight-driven mechanical clock of the early 14th century (White 1974, 2). The view that time is an object of nature was further reinforced by Newton's theory of absolute time, which states that time is a linear, unidirectional, and objectively measurable property of the universe. Although this theory has since been discredited by Einstein's theory of special relativity, the Newtonian view of time still underlies Western time conception (Benabou 1999). It could be argued that Christian societal values were conducive not only for the invention of clocks, but also for a lifestyle that depended on them. According to Mumford (1934, 12–14), the harnessing of clocks and schedules to organize people's daily lives originated in the Benedictine monasteries of Medieval Europe: "the bells of the clock tower almost defined urban existence. Time-keeping passed into time-serving and time-accounting and time-rationing." Macey (1986, 96–97) describes the years from 1660 to 1760 as "the British horological revolution," a period that saw unprecedented developments not only in watchmaking, but also in time-related language use. Working according to standard clock time was a prerequisite for the birth of industrial capitalism, and there is still a strong connection between capitalist society and standardized time management (e.g. Thompson 1967). Fraser (1966, 138) rephrases Knapp's (1958, 426) observation by pointing out that there is also a correlation between "the rise of time measurement as a serious concern" and what Knapp calls the "Puritan

pragmatic syndrome,” which in turn formed ideal conditions for the rise of a capitalistic economic system. Knapp’s idea is reminiscent of Weber’s classic concept of the Protestant work ethic, which Weber claims to have caused the triumph of capitalism in 16th-century Europe (Weber 2002). Both Weber and Knapp’s concepts highlight the connection between Christianity and a highly disciplined, progress-oriented work ethic. In summary, it is evident that standardized and precise timekeeping is in the very foundations of capitalist Western culture, and thus we still rely heavily on clocks and schedules to keep the structures of our societies functioning.

Hinduism and Buddhism, which share geographical and historical roots, have had a different course of history regarding the development of temporal beliefs and practices, as compared to Christianity. First it is important to note that Hindus and Buddhists see the universe on a much larger scale than Westerners. In the Hindu-Buddhist tradition, the universe consists of billions of repetitive time cycles, each cycle consisting of billions of eons. To illustrate the breadth of one eon, Kalupahana (1974, 181–182) quotes a Buddhist saying: "If there were to be a great mountain, one league in width, one league in length and one league in height, a solid mass without chasms or clefts, and a man at the end of every hundred years, were to strike it once each time with a silken cloth, that mountain will sooner be done away with than would an aeon." Events are believed to recur after each eon, but there are smaller cycles as well. To reapply the earlier example, springtime occurs every year, and it is always the same event that has recurred, i.e. the yearly cycle has gone around one time. Some advocates of cyclic time allow for the reversibility of events, i.e. that a future event is also a past event and vice versa; others believe that the order of events is irreversible (Balslev 1986, 109).

Cyclic temporal beliefs would seem to be incompatible with linear ones. This is why the Christian myth of creation, imported by Jesuit missionaries, was rejected by Chinese intellectuals in the 17th century (Zürcher 1995, 132–133). In Chinese thought, be it Confucian, Buddhist, or Taoist, the origin of the cosmos and of humanity was not a question worth bothering with. However, the belief that time had a beginning was out of the question, since the world could not possibly have been created *ex nihilo* by a supreme being (ibid.). According to Hayden (1987, 1284), the belief in vast cycles of time entails a feeling that human life and history are quite insignificant, which in turn has had a great impact on the whole social and economic order of cyclic time societies. For example, Adams and Woltemade (quoted in Hayden 1987, 1284) explain that when the world and time are viewed in terms of recurring cycles, “the notion that a society might advance systematically in any way (i.e., the concept of progress) does not naturally present itself.” Hu (1995, 329) states that the idea of a linear, progressive world history only entered the Chinese collective consciousness in the early 20th century as a result of increased international contact and competition.

Even though many cyclic time societies, such as those of Antiquity and ancient China, had very sophisticated knowledge of science and mechanics well before the Common Era, they did not

harness this knowledge for large-scale industrial purposes, as was done in Christian Europe. For example, Haber (1986, 79) notes that the ancient Romans viewed science as a knowledge of nature, instead of as a means to gain dominion over nature; the latter idea gained prominence only through the spread of Christianity in the Middle Ages.

A society's temporal beliefs, whether linear or cyclic, influence that society's use of time. Whereas clocks were used in the growing cities of the early modern West to synchronize labor and other activities, Landes (1983, 44) illustrates the different kind of value assigned to timekeeping in China: calendar dates were considered important for daily life, but precise clock time was irrelevant. The function of the Chinese calendar, which was based on divination, was to determine the most auspicious moment to undertake a particular activity. This kind of "qualitative timekeeping" was very different from the newly emerging timekeeping conventions of the Western world, where portable timepieces became the norm in the 15th century (Landes 1983, 87).

There is no definite distinction between temporal beliefs, as discussed so far, and temporal norms and values, our next topic. Both influence each other. The causal relationship is perhaps more discernible in one direction than the other – for example, the emergence of the temporal value of progress (which will be discussed in the next section) is easily seen as stemming from the Christian temporal belief which implies that a person should use their time for preparing themselves for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. It is also important to remember that even though these beliefs' Judeo-Christian roots are unacknowledged by many people, they still underlie the temporally standardized realms of international and public life in the West and the westernized world, as Hayden (1987, 1286) and White (1974, 3) imply. These temporal beliefs have far-reaching implications, many of which are unacknowledged due to the fact that they are so deeply embedded in Western culture that they are common sense to us. These implications can be observed in the temporal norms and values, which will be introduced next.

1.4 Temporal norms and values

Whereas temporal beliefs are rather cosmological and metaphysical in nature, temporal norms and values are more directly tied to everyday life. Even so, they can be hard to identify in people's behavior, and are mainly acknowledged only when we encounter someone with differing temporal norms and values – and thus differing chronemic behavior – from our own. A typical example is when a person used to punctuality is kept waiting by another person, usually from a different temporal culture, who places less importance on exact clock time (e.g. as demonstrated by Hall 1983, 47–48). Temporal norms, such as observing (or not observing) schedules, are related to temporal values. I have found Hall's (1983, 44) framework of *monochronic* and *polychronic* time schemes to be useful

in identifying what temporal norms and values are at play in Kingston's memoir. These time schemes can be thought of as sets of norms and behavior patterns that govern a society's or an individual's temporal behavior. They can also be considered *objective* and *subjective* time, respectively, since the central idea of the distinction is that one is externally imposed by society and standardized by clocks, while the other is regulated mainly by personal feeling and the needs of the circumstances (Bruneau 1980, 103–104).

1.4.1 Monochronic and polychronic time

The literal meaning of monochronic time, or monochronicity, is doing one thing at a time with no interruptions, and polychronic time, or polychronicity, literally means doing several things at once. There is much more to monochronicity and polychronicity than this, however. In fact, the example in the previous paragraph illustrates one typical difference between the two time schemes: Monochronic people are used to giving much priority to schedules and to being “on time,” whereas polychronic people are more likely to take as much time as they feel is appropriate to complete an activity. According to Hall and Hall (2008, 254), monochronic people perceive time as a linear structure extending from the past into the future, a structure that can be segmented into standardized units of various sizes: years, months, days, hours, minutes, etc. These units are used to order everyday life, and they are observed and planned with timekeeping devices, e.g. clocks and calendars. Time is thus understood as a tangible object that can be used, spent, budgeted, invested, squandered, and in some cases even borrowed or stolen. Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 8–9) draw attention to these and other metaphors that Western people have of “time,” noting that they are all based on the Western idea that time is a scarce and valuable commodity. People who waste this commodity – or worse, that of others – flout the temporal value that time, like other commodities, should not be squandered. When wasting others' time, an additional value that is being flouted is depriving others of their possessions, as commodities such as time have the status of possessions.

Monochronicity, or objective time, is a rather recent social phenomenon in human history, being a product of the Industrial Revolution and capitalism; it is therefore acquired rather than an intrinsic human disposition (Hall and Hall 2008, 255; Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 8–9). The saying “time is money” quite aptly summarizes the ideology behind monochronic time use, as it equates time with another valuable resource and thus gives it the status of a tangible object. The phrase is often attributed to Benjamin Franklin, whose quintessentially monochronic way of life will briefly be discussed in chapter 3. Opposition to industrial capitalism and related norms, e.g. monochronicity, often includes temporal resistance, which means flouting monochronic norms and opting for a more schedule-independent lifestyle (Thompson 1967, 95).

Polychronic people, on the other hand, emphasize interpersonal relationships more than being temporally “organized.” Hall and Hall (2008, 255) describe polychronic time as less tangible, because the actual events and activities themselves are given more priority than the abstract segment of time they should be completed in. Because of this, cutting short a conversation in order to be on time for the next appointment is considered breaking a temporal norm in a polychronic culture. The temporal value that the hurried person is seen as flouting is that of fostering interpersonal relationships. Another feature of polychronic time is fluidity: time is experienced rather as a single point than as a linear road (ibid.), which makes polychronic time less tangible and more difficult to segment. Whereas monochronic time is imposed on people by standardized clocks, polychronic time is qualitative and contextual (ibid.).

Hall (1983, 48–49) lists Latin America, the Middle East, and Mediterranean Europe as examples of predominantly polychronic areas, and North America and the northern half of Europe as monochronic. Still, there is considerable internal variation within these geographical areas, and even within an individual person’s behavior. Among monochronic people, for example, temporal behavior varies according to the situation: in formal situations and public life, it is mandatory to be on schedule (i.e. to observe the monochronic time scheme), while in more informal settings, polychronicity and flexibility are accepted to varying degrees.

1.4.2 Looking ahead or honoring the past?

Even though historiographical accuracy has been valued in the Christian tradition, Western culture on the whole is future-oriented. This means that people look forward to and plan for the future, in contrast to many other cultures that place higher value on history (Hall 1973, 7). According to Meyerhoff (1955, 108), future-orientation, like monochronicity, stems from the Industrial Age during which people learned to manage time in ways that maximized productivity, but earlier roots can be found in the Christian belief of Advent, as discussed in the previous chapter. Time, according to the emerging standards of industrializing Europe of the 18th and 19th centuries, was considered useless as soon as it was gone. Looking back on oneself and history was deemed as unproductive and a “waste of time,” and supposedly only “scholars, cranks, and reactionaries” were interested in studying the past (ibid.). Interestingly, as modern Westerners’ factual knowledge about history has grown over the centuries, their feeling of identity and continuity with it has declined – likely because of the deterioration of fixed social structures that had provided a sense of permanency for pre-industrial Europeans (Meyerhoff 1955, 109).

Progress must be made in order to attain a better future for oneself, and it has indeed been equated with virtue in the Western world of the modern era (Haber 1986, 80; Macey 1986, 93).

Progress is a temporal value on which the monochronic temporal norms of budgeting time, etc., are based. Meyerhoff (1955, 106) attributes the birth of the idea of progress to the “experiences of the radical material changes which occurred in the modern world” as results of the economic and scientific revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and later the industrial and technological revolutions. In turn, these revolutions would not have happened if it were not for the Christian ideology of progress already present in Europe.

Many cultures, such as those of China and India, have traditionally been past-oriented. We saw in section 1.3 that a temporal belief in many religions is that the present, mortal life is inferior to the past (creation), the future (redemption), or both – in Chinese folk religion it is the past that is held in particular reverence (Kluckhohn 1954, 349). This ideology is seen in practice when we consider ancestor worship, which is common in China. It is still widely believed that the past determines the present, for example in the sense that the actions of one’s ancestors are the reason of one’s current state of affairs. This is a theme that Kingston, too, has touched upon in texts such as “No Name Woman” in *The Woman Warrior* (1989), where a relative’s past scandal is believed to cause bad luck for the family. Historiography has also traditionally served different purposes in China than in Western nations: the purpose of history was for moral teaching. Past events were documented to serve as either good or bad examples for present social conduct (Hu 1995, 329), not as evidence of a prophet’s existence. Chinese historiography was based on the assumption that time is cyclical, rather than linear and progressive, and that events repeat themselves. The role and treatment of historical facts in *The Woman Warrior* has been studied before (e.g. Wong 2006), especially regarding Kingston’s use of the “talk-story” as a narrative technique. The role of talk-stories in Kingston’s writing will also be briefly touched upon in this thesis. Now, however, I will present an overview of Kingston’s background to determine some possible sources of her temporal beliefs, norms, and values.

1.5 Maxine Hong Kingston’s background

Maxine Hong Kingston is a first-generation Chinese American, born in Stockton, California in 1940. Even though her mother practiced some form of East Asian religion at home in Stockton, and Kingston’s father was an atheist, the family did not explicitly discuss religion or bring Kingston up according to these traditions. Apparently her parents did not attempt to raise her as bilingual, as Kingston is not very fluent in Chinese (e.g. Kingston 2011, 164). Instead, Kingston has said in an interview (Storhoff and Whalen-Bridge 2009, 178) that her parents allowed her to attend a Christian Sunday School with her Chinese American friends, and so Christianity became her "default" understanding of religion. Her first knowledge of Buddhism came from Beat authors and D. T.

Suzuki, all of whom contributed to the popularization of Buddhism in the U.S. in the 1950s. This further proves that Kingston's parents did not raise her according to any particular conviction, which suggests that Kingston has grown up surrounded by Western norms and values. Only as an adult did Kingston begin to show interest in East Asian religions, most notably Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Chinese folk religion, which has elements of all of the former. Today, Kingston is known to be affiliated with Buddhist churches in Hawaii and San Francisco (ibid. 179–180).

A central theme in many of Kingston's works is living between two sets of beliefs, norms, and values. One such set is that of the Chinese American community in California, often including Kingston's immigrant parents. These beliefs are challenged by more mainstream American ones, setting up a conflict for the story's main character, which is often an alter ego of Kingston herself. Judging by the semi-autobiographical stories in *The Woman Warrior*, first published in 1975, Kingston's adolescence may be characterized by a conflict between her parents' worldview and her emerging American self. One of the stories in *The Woman Warrior*, "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe," depicts Kingston's teenage rebellion against her mother, whose values and ways of thinking have become too alien for Kingston. The next passage is part of an argument between Kingston and her mother, whom Kingston has just accused of planning to marry her off to a Chinese American boy Kingston cannot stand. The argument escalates beyond the marriage, though, as Kingston makes her own values and ambitions clear:

Do you know what the Teacher Ghosts say about me? They tell me I'm smart, and I can win scholarships. I can get into colleges. [...] I'm going to get scholarships, and I'm going away. And at college I'll have the people I like for friends. I don't care if their great-great-grandfather died of TB. I don't care if they were our enemies in China four thousand years ago. [...] And I'm not going to Chinese school anymore. I'm going to run for office at American school, and I'm going to join clubs. [...] And I don't want to listen to any more of your stories; they have no logic. They scramble me up. 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.

(Kingston 1989, 201–202)

Whether or not this scene really happened like this in Kingston's youth, it illustrates how inevitably Kingston came to be immersed in the American social environment and its temporal norms and values. The above excerpt implies that her mother tried to teach her about the importance of ancestry, a tradition which Kingston finds difficult to comprehend. The westernized Kingston finds centuries-old grudges to be irrelevant when making new friends, because in her view, each person is an individual in charge of their own destiny, instead of a continuation of a line of ancestors. Her mother,

on the other hand, represents traditional past-oriented Chinese thought, emphasizing the past's relevance to the present.

The stories Kingston talks about at the end of the passage refer to the tradition of “talk-stories,” an oral tradition of storytelling that Kingston grew up on. Her mother’s talk-stories gave Kingston not only her first knowledge of China, but also much inspiration for her writing, in which her Chinese heritage is a major theme (Wong 2006, 7). However, “A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe” shows that as a teenager, Kingston was opposed to her mother’s talk-stories, because they were part of the Chinese tradition she did not want to be associated with at the time. In the above passage she expresses particular annoyance at the talk-stories’ ambiguity regarding historical facts, proving that she has adopted the Western norm of factual reliability. As an adult, however, Kingston embraces the talk-story tradition by incorporating them into her own writing, using the same technique of blending fiction and nonfiction. *The Woman Warrior* itself is a collection of such stories, as is *Broad Margin*. At the end of chapter 3 we will briefly return to the talk-story topic and see what the fact/fiction distinction implies for *Broad Margin*.

The self-aware stories of *The Woman Warrior* prove that Kingston has, at some point in her youth, experienced the conflicts of growing up between two cultures. Even if the previous excerpt from "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe" suggests that she, or her younger, fictional self, preferred the American way of life at one point, she nevertheless understands that the American way of thinking is not necessarily better or worse than that of her Chinese parents. Soon after her outburst, Kingston, now switching to her adult narrative voice, reflects on her young self:

I had to leave home in order to see the world logically, logic the new way of seeing. I learned to think that mysteries are for explanation. I enjoy the simplicity. Concrete pours out of my mouth to cover the forests with freeways and sidewalks. Give me plastics, periodical tables, t.v. dinners with vegetables no more complex than peas mixed with diced carrots. Shine floodlights into dark corners: no ghosts.

(Kingston 1989, 204)

This is the part where Kingston starts to realize the implications of her assimilation into American culture. While she has gained the self-efficacy and ambition to pursue the type of life highly valued in America, with a scientific education as its base, she has lost her connection with her ancestral culture. We may notice that in the above passage Kingston associates her rapidly westernizing self with concrete, plastics, and a man-made environment, all characteristics of industrialization and urbanization. Freeways and standardized, ready-made meals highlight the speed and efficiency of Western and especially urban American culture. In order to become a part of this culture, she has to

leave the home of her Chinese family whose way of life is incompatible with the new American way. As an adult, she comes to value her Chinese heritage and uses her mother's stories (and her juvenile aversion to them) as inspiration for works such as *The Woman Warrior*, *Tripmaster Monkey*, and most recently *I Love a Broad Margin to My Life*.

The mix of Eastern and Western beliefs – including American Christian, Chinese folk religion, atheism, and even Zen Buddhism, which gets sporadic mention in *Broad Margin* – sets up an interesting premise for studying Kingston's writing. In the next two chapters I will be guiding the reader through close readings of relevant excerpts from Kingston's memoir, paying attention to how temporal beliefs (in chapter 2), and temporal norms and values (in chapter 3) are evident. Note that when I speak of "Kingston," I do not necessarily mean Kingston as a person, but merely the ideas expressed in her writing. We cannot make any claims regarding Kingston's actual thoughts and intentions, but to keep my own text as concise as possible, I often use "Kingston" as a sort of metonym for the ideas expressed in her memoir.

2 Temporal beliefs in *I Love a Broad Margin to My Life*

This chapter identifies and analyzes the parts in Kingston's memoir that reveal certain temporal beliefs, i.e. beliefs about time's nature. Based on what we just learned from Kingston's biography and the excerpts from "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe," we may expect to find some multifaceted, multicultural temporal beliefs (and probably such temporal norms and values) in *Broad Margin*. Some of the temporal beliefs found in Western (Christian-based) thought and those of the Buddhist tradition were discussed in the Introduction; these beliefs are mainly linearity of Western time and cyclicity of Buddhist time, along with related temporal notions such as past, present, and future-oriented thinking. However, this chapter will not be divided into separate Western and Buddhist sections; instead, the division into subchapters will be made according to a specific temporal topic. My main argument for this chapter is that Buddhist and other non-Western temporal beliefs are dominant in the memoir, which I will prove by identifying, analyzing, and comparing relevant excerpts.

2.1 Cyclic time or linear time?

The first and most obvious topic related to temporal beliefs is the assumed "shape" of time. As we saw in the Introduction, people in the West typically see time as a linear, progressive structure, while cyclical structures are more common in Buddhism and other Asian traditions. The kind of time one believes in affects other temporal beliefs, such as the possibility of reincarnation. In *Broad Margin*, we encounter such cyclic beliefs of time in parts where Kingston talks about a next or a previous life, referring, in effect, to reincarnation. The following examples demonstrate quite clearly that Kingston finds the idea of reincarnation plausible, which in turn suggests a cyclic temporal belief:

3 times

I slipped into lives before this one.
I have been a man in China, and a woman
in China, and a woman in the Wild West.
[...] I've been married
to Earll for 3 lifetimes, counting
this one. [...] Earll won't believe

in reincarnation, and makes fun of it.

The Dalai Lama in *How to Expand Love*

says to try “the possibility that past
and future rebirth over a continuum
of lives may take place.” We have forever.

(Kingston 2011, 26–27)

Kingston has stated in an interview (Storhoff and Whalen-Bridge 2009, 179) that along with the beliefs of Buddhism and reincarnation, she has inherited from her father the atheist belief that there is only this life. However, the idea of reincarnation is so prevalent in *Broad Margin* that it is appropriate to conclude that it is, at least, an important source of inspiration for Kingston’s writing. Sometimes *samsara*, i.e. the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, gets positive connotations in Kingston’s text, which is not congruent with the Buddhist assumption that *samsara* is in fact a negative thing. The Buddhist belief is that this cycle should be escaped into the timeless state of Nirvana. This might be the case in the above passage: “We have forever” suggests a positive sense of *samsara*, because in a way it provides Kingston with more time to be with her husband. Whether this is a positive, neutral, or even negative thing is up to the reader to decide. I, however, notice a slightly positive note in “We have forever,” because Kingston suggests that “forever” can be used to pursue positive experiences, such as expanding love. Creel (1953, 188) implies that the idea of living in a cycle of everlasting time and multiple lives might initially seem desirable for those unfamiliar with the religions that include this belief, but goes on to note that *samsara* is regarded as a burden in these religions. The modern Westerner, who is conditioned to viewing time as a scarce resource that is always running out, might therefore find the idea of endless time appealing. Furthermore, if one is already very content with life, they might easily want to relive it over and over again. There is only one instance, at the end of this next example, in which Kingston implies that she would like to escape *samsara*, a.k.a. the wheel of time. This is more in line with the traditional Buddhist view that *samsara* can, and should, be transcended:

I feel as I felt in Hawai’i, as I felt in Eden.

A joy in place. Adam and Eve were never
thrown out; they grew old in the garden.

They returned after travels. So, I,

like the 14th Dalai Lama, have arrived

at my last incarnation? I don’t feel a good

enough person to be allowed off the wheel. (Kingston 2011, 28)

Although it is unclear whether Kingston considers samsara as more of a positive or negative phenomenon (likely both, based on the two excerpts), she clearly endorses the cyclic belief. The previous excerpts are only two out of several examples of how Kingston's belief in cyclic time is evident. There are several such examples throughout the memoir, all of them conveying this same temporal belief in cyclicity and samsara.

As for linear time, there is little evidence in *Broad Margin* of Kingston endorsing this belief. The first half of the above example (28) does contain biblical imagery, which is interestingly combined with Buddhist cyclicity and the Dalai Lama. The reference to Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden suggests at least an acknowledgement of the Christian myth of creation. (In Buddhism, the question of the world's origin is left unanswered, because it is considered irrelevant for enlightenment.) If Kingston believes in the Christian creation myth, she might also be expected to believe in the other Christian temporal beliefs, e.g. linearity. However, this passage sees Kingston taking the Christian myth of creation and modifying it to be compatible with her Buddhist and other non-linear, non-creationist beliefs, instead of negating the Christian myth altogether. And, according to this new, integrated view of the beginning of time, Adam and Eve were not punished by God or thrown out of the Garden. This is in line with the benevolent attitude that Kingston is often seen to show towards living beings throughout *Broad Margin*.

Kingston seems to be very conscious of the fact that the Western world, at least the American society she is part of, believes in linear time as opposed to cyclic time. In the following example she considers this difference between her two home countries, describing her time perception in each country in terms of a specific type of motion:

Time spirals in China. In America, it shoots
straight out, like the line on the heart monitor
of the dead.

(Kingston 2011, 101)

The assertion here that time in America takes on a linear shape is most likely a reference to the historical linearity, which is the common view of time in the West. On the other hand, there is no other way to explain the notion of time moving in a "spiral" other than to associate it with a cyclical, as opposed to the Western linear, view of time. A spiral-shaped spatialization entails that time goes forward, albeit in a cyclic motion, while a straight line-shaped history would never repeat itself. If history is seen as a linear, non-repetitive process, it would also mean that an individual person's time would also end at death. This is coherent with the Christian belief that after a person dies, they are

never born again, but their existence continues in a timeless, static plane, i.e. Heaven. The memoir contains no mention of Heaven or an afterlife in the Christian sense, and the idea of time simply stopping at death is also a rarely evoked (see next paragraph). Rebirth is thus the most viable temporal belief for Kingston, based on the number of times the idea is mentioned.

The idea of “American” time as conveyed in the above excerpt gets a clearly negative connotation, since it is connected with “shooting.” Although the verb does not refer to the shooting of a gun in this context, the mental image may nonetheless be evoked in the reader, especially as death is mentioned in the next lines. In any case, shooting is an abrupt, violent motion, and when this kind of motion is applied to time, the effect is quite harsh. The passage suggests that time (and life) in America goes by quickly and violently, but *where* time actually “shoots out” is unknown. Death is certain, which the flat line on the heart monitor confirms, but there is no mention of what happens next. This sounds like the Western atheist view of time, which, according to Balslev (1986, 112), is linear but has no beginning or end. In contrast, a spiral-shaped time structure entails that there are several “layers” of time, and each of these layers consists of a new life.

However, the verb “spiral” that Kingston uses to describe the movement of Chinese time does not contain an assumption of time having a beginning or end, since “spiral” only describes the course of the motion itself. A spiral, like a straight line, can either be a segment or an infinite continuum. The previous passage does not tell us which kind of spiral is in question. However, in an earlier section of *Broad Margin* (38), Kingston mentions that “I want to be where no-beginning–no-end,” which would mean at least a desire for this spiraling movement of time to be non-segmented.

Kingston’s discussion of time’s movement brings to mind the notion of the mental timeline, which is a type of mental visualization of time’s “flow” from the past toward the present and future (Bottini et al. 2015). The mental visualization, or “spatial mapping,” of time has to do with temporal reasoning, which is a universal human ability mandatory for everyday life, regardless of the type of society one lives in. All humans use space to conceptualize the idea of time, but there are cultural differences regarding what shape these mental constructions take (e.g. Núñez et al. 2012). The shape of one’s mental timeline may vary according to the time segment depicted; for example, when thinking of one year, it is possible to visualize the twelve months of the year as forming a circle, while thinking of the course of one’s life, the same person may visualize the past and expected future years as forming a line segment.

Whatever the shape, a mental timeline often starts from the left and continues towards the right. It usually has a beginning and an end, though the length and proportion will vary depending on how long a stretch of time it depicts. People from literate, post-industrial societies visualize time as an egocentric line going from one direction to another (Núñez et al. 2012), the direction being influenced by one’s written language (Casasanto and Bottini 2014). Those who read and write from

left to right construct their mental timeline accordingly, i.e. the earliest event on the furthest left and the latest on the furthest right. The opposite direction applies to those who read from right to left, e.g. Israeli Hebrew speakers and Arabic speakers (Fuhrman and Boroditsky 2010). Mandarin Chinese speakers have been found to visualize time not only on a horizontal, left-to-right axis, but sometimes also on a vertical axis, with earlier events “above,” and later events “below” the ego or now-moment (Boroditsky, Fuhrman, and McCormick 2011). This is presumably because Chinese can be written both from left to right and from top to bottom, the latter being the traditional style of writing. This is also reflected in Mandarin speech: in certain contexts, the word 上(*shàng*) is used to mean both “above” and “previous,” depending on the context; similarly, 下(*xià*) may be both “below” and “next.” The shape of these ideograms also suggests verticality. The ego is usually at the center of these mental timelines, although allocentric timelines have also been shown to exist, as with the Australian aboriginal community of Pormpuraaw, who construct an east-to-west mental timeline (Boroditsky and Gaby 2010).

English speakers normally do not speak of events happening from left to right (no one would say that Monday is on the left of Tuesday, although they might mentally visualize it like this), but they do speak of future events as being *ahead of*, and past events as being *behind*, themselves. This is also true for speakers of many other languages, so we cannot conclude that Kingston has a horizontal, left-to-right mental timeline based on her use of temporal deixis, e.g. “6 days *ahead of* birthday” (Kingston 2011, 12), alone. However, as a native speaker of English, and with limited command of Mandarin Chinese, it is most likely that Kingston does have this type of mental timeline. It is unlikely that she would have acquired a vertical timeline, given that her written language is English. The following example gives insight into the way she constructs a mental timeline of her own life, although it is not immediately obvious whether the line she draws is horizontal or vertical:

I’m standing on top of a hill;
I can see everywhichway –
the long way that I came, and the few
places I have yet to go.
(Kingston 2011, 26)

Because Kingston is talking about a hill here, this example could at first glance be interpreted as exhibiting a vertical mental timeline, which is common for Mandarin speakers. She has climbed the hill, and can now see the slope extending from the peak down to the ground. However, this interpretation falls short when we consider the fact that the Mandarin speaker’s timeline would have

started at the top of the hill and continued down towards the ground, and not the other way around. Besides, “the long way that I came” is more likely a reference to a horizontal road or path that she has walked along, and not climbed up, as humans tend to move horizontally instead of vertically. The hill metaphor is also typically egocentric in that she herself is standing on the hill, which is the spatial representation of the present moment. Although she does not explicitly mention it, we may guess that Kingston would have situated the long way that she came on the left of her mental timeline, and the places she has yet to go on the right side, as is common for those whose mental timelines flow from left to right (e.g. English speakers).

We may conclude that cyclic time is a much more prominent belief in *Broad Margin* than is the belief of linear time. Linearity is seen mainly in the construction of the mental timeline, even though it is impossible to know for certain whether Kingston actually visualizes her time as a horizontal, left-to-right line. Reference to linear time is also made for the purpose of comparing Chinese and American temporal beliefs, which suggests an awareness of the competing beliefs on the part of Kingston.

2.2 Interconnectedness

As Balslev (1986, 109) notes, some advocates of cyclic time posit that history is in effect meaningless, because in the cycle of time, a past event is also a future event, and vice versa. This line of thinking leads to one of the many paradoxes of time, namely that of temporal order. If it is assumed that time moves in a spiraling motion and events recur in a cycle, how are irreversible processes, such as evolution, explained? According to Buddhist scripture, such questions pertaining to time’s “actual” nature are listed among the “unanswerable questions,” the speculation on which is considered irrelevant for reaching enlightenment. I, too, will ignore the paradox in the following passage, analyzing only the temporal belief behind it, and especially the reason why this belief is important for Kingston.

Oh, but the true poet crosses eternal
distances. Perfect reader, come though 1,000
years from now. Poem can also reach
reader born 1,000 years *before*
the poem, wished into being. Li Bai
and Du Fu, lucky sea turtles,
found each other within their lifetimes. (Kingston 2011, 18)

It is usual that poems are read years after their moment of writing, but the assertion that an existing poem might be read by *past* readers violates the direction of the so-called arrow of time. The arrow of time simply means that time has an irreversible direction and that past events may not be altered.

However, Kingston does not say that the past readers, who were born a thousand years before the poem, necessarily *read* the poem, but merely “wished [it] into being.” Even so, this passage depicts an unconventionally ordered chain of cause and effect. I believe that the passage should be interpreted neither in terms of its logicity or illogicity, nor in terms of the likelihood of such an event actually happening. Instead, the idea I believe Kingston is trying to convey is that of people being connected regardless of their location in time and space. Consider the part where Li Bai and Du Fu, revered Tang dynasty (618–907) poets who often collaborated with each other, are mentioned: it was a lucky coincidence that they were alive at the same time and in the same place, but according to Kingston, they probably would have influenced each other regardless.

The belief of interconnectedness of living beings is also depicted in a passage where Kingston describes her experience of planting rice with other villagers during her China visit. Note that here she is speaking in the narrative voice of Wittman Ah Sing, her male alter ego. Wittman, the protagonist of Kingston’s 1989 novel *Tripmaster Monkey*, appears in a large portion of *Broad Margin*. His fictional life is parallel to Kingston’s (e.g. both are married and have a son; both attended Berkeley in the 1960s). It is not always clear whether Kingston is writing about herself or about Wittman, or whose narrative voice is being used in the memoir. However, because Wittman is a product of Kingston’s imagination and has a lot in common with his creator, I find it reasonable to interpret Wittman’s narration as essentially the same as Kingston’s. For clarity, I will refer to the narrator as Kingston and not Wittman.

Hour after hour, eon after eon,
doing the same thing, plant, plant,
sink, loft, into water, into sky,
I am one of the human race that has always
done this work.
(Kingston 2011, 94)

Kingston sees time on a very large scale (eons) in this passage, and due to this she also thinks less individualistically. The belief in such a vast universe entails, according to Hayden, a way of thinking in which the individual life of a person seems quite insignificant (1987, 1284). In the beginning of the memoir, which depicts events in California, Kingston talked a lot about how time affects her own life. For example, she often thought about her upcoming birthday (e.g. pages 3 and 9 in *Broad*

Margin), and asked “Am I pretty at 65?” (4). The second half of the book, which takes place in China, contains more examples of collectivism and interconnectedness. It seems that her visit to rural China, where she participates in an ancient agricultural activity with her native people, has enabled her to see her life from a different perspective. She now sees herself as part of a never-ending continuum of rice farmers who have a static, yet important, place in the world. Meyerhoff (1955, 104) talks about the appeal of cyclic theories of time among Westerners, explaining that such theories may provide a feeling of unity with the world. Kingston is likely drawn to this idea of unity and continuity, judging by the way she describes the rice planting: “I am one of the human race that has always done this work.” Here she emphasizes her place as part of a larger whole, a “race” of which she is but one individual. Being described as a collectivistic activity, rice planting becomes a way for Kingston to get in touch with a natural, pre-industrial mode of living, and perhaps to also feel a unity with her ancestors, who presumably were rice planters as well. Planting rice is done in accordance with seasonal variation, meaning that a type of cyclical time pattern is followed. Farmers thus synchronize their time with natural processes, e.g. the growing of rice, instead of with clocks, as is done in industrial, monochronic societies. However, this natural, cyclical tempo is not necessarily easier to follow than clock time, and farmers must work hard to plant and harvest their crops. The success of the work is not guaranteed, since farming is highly dependent on the weather. Still, the rice planting passage paints a romanticized picture of farm labor by drawing attention to its ancient roots and its perceived ability to “connect” farmers across time. When Kingston sees rice planting as having an eons-long history, taking part in the activity gives her a sense of purpose and importance. Continuing the description of her farm work, Kingston writes:

Now that I’ve found this lost possible self – Chinese
rice farmer – let me stay with it. Keep
doing this most basic human task
til satisfaction. When used to this life
and don’t *see* it anymore, then leave.
(Kingston 2011, 94–95)

Based on this passage, rice farming has the appeal of novelty for Kingston. Only a few lines before this passage, Kingston spoke of rice farming as a primitive yet noble activity and herself as “helping to feed a fifth of the world’s people” (94). Now she changes back to an individualistic, hedonistic mindset by focusing more on what rice farming can do for her, instead of what she can do for rice farming. The farm work thus becomes an exotic experience for Kingston, one that she can leave

behind whenever she grows tired of it. Most farmers would not have this choice, and for them, planting rice might be arduous, physical labor rather than a way to feel as one with the world.

2.3 Valuation of the present

There is a belief in many religions, as mentioned in the Introduction, that present, worldly time is profane and should be transcended. For example, in Christianity this mundane, present era is seen as inferior to the beginning of time in the Garden of Eden, before some evil force brought sin and suffering to the world. The future is also regarded as a better time, since Jesus Christ is expected to liberate people from the mundane, temporal world. The same is true for most branches of Buddhism, the practitioners of which look forward to a future enlightenment that will allow them to “be allowed off the wheel,” as Kingston (2011, 28) puts it. Those observing the Hindu-Buddhist tradition also aspire to transcend their current state and achieve Nirvana, a timeless state of mind. Zen Buddhism, a branch of Buddhism originating in China with Taoist influences, rejects the distinction between a profane present and a holy, enlightened future, because such distinctions make one depreciate the present moment (King 1968, 221–222). And according to Zen teachings, the present moment, or the “here-now,” is the only reality there is, and the only time when enlightenment can occur. It can thus be said that Zen Buddhists also want to transcend time, but in a very different way from other religions: the goal of Zen practice is “the existential realization of time’s irrelevance” King (1968, 223).

Kingston has expressed her belief in Buddhist cyclic time on many occasions, and transcendence into Nirvana at least once (Kingston 2011, 28), but a Zen-like acceptance of only the present time is seen in *Broad Margin* only rarely. Zen Buddhism is mentioned a few times, but not in direct relation to Kingston herself. One such example is the following:

I feel time. It’s like a wind
Cutting through my skin and insides. When
I was your age, time and I moved
at the same rate. I was *in* time. I went
with the music. [...]
Chan / Zen has been working for 2,500
years to stop time – get that now-moment
down. I want to be where no-beginning – no-end.
(Kingston 2011, 38)

Zen is quite suddenly introduced here, Kingston probably getting the idea from having thought about having been “*in time*” in her younger years. The phenomenon Kingston is likely describing here is the perception of time’s “speed” increasing with age, which happens because of the increased repetition of events year after year. It is common to feel that time moved more slowly in one’s younger years, and that as one gets older, time slips away (Block, Zakay, and Hancock 1998). In the above example, which is in fact told in the voice of Wittman again, Kingston reflects on her changed time perception. The beginning of the excerpt sees time as a destroyer, “cutting through” one’s body. In contrast, time was felt more positively, if felt at all, when Kingston was young: time is likened to music, and Kingston had no problem keeping up with its rhythm. The later part of the excerpt suggests that Zen is the answer for those who want to get back into the present moment, to “stop time.” A possible fear of time, and Kingston’s preferred coping mechanism, is seen in the following example:

I am afraid, and need to write.
Keep this day. Save *this* moment.
Save each scrap of moment; write it down.
(Kingston 2011, 26)

Writing, instead of Zen practice or meditation, seems to be Kingston’s way to capture the present moment. Especially in this excerpt, there may be some suggestion of a fear of time running out, which is an appropriate interpretation here because Kingston has again just been discussing her birthday. Writing allows the present moment to be documented and thus, in a way, saved. Zen practice and meditation do not have this feature, even though they are known to expand the mind in a way that makes time appear to have passed more slowly, when evaluated in retrospect (e.g. Wittmann 2015). And unlike writing, Zen practice will not distract one from experiencing the present moment, which is something Kingston seems to worry about. The collecting of events for later reminiscence is, according to Bruneau (1974, 660) a sort of quest for a “tangible permanence.” We collect memorabilia of our present and past in order to feel a sense of unity and belonging to a certain time and place. Telling family histories and accounts of one’s ethnic origin are also part of this same phenomenon (ibid.), as is writing down one’s memories and experiences, which Kingston admits to doing above.

Writing is discussed again later in the memoir, when Kingston writes about poetry in traditional Chinese culture: she explains how ancient poets would carve their writing on rocks so that it would endure the decaying effect of time. She sees a similarity between these Chinese poets and herself, and recalls that Shakespeare, too, wanted to defy death with his poetry:

That my writing give life,
to whomever I write about, as Shakespeare
promised. Chinese are mad for long life.
Quest and wish for time, more time,
more, yet more.
(Kingston 2011, 205)

Because no one can live forever, we seek to create a “tangible permanence,” a legacy by which we will be remembered. The above excerpt contains a reference to Shakespeare’s Sonnet Number 60, which is about the destructive power of time and how poetry can “give life” to whomever it is written about. Stuart-Smith (2003, 219) talks about this theme in Shakespeare’s and other European writers’ works, reminding us that the desire to create something that outlives the creator has been a motive for art, probably since the beginning of time. The same idea is known among Buddhists, who believe that an artist’s karma or spirit can be preserved in their art (Suzuki 1963, 208–209). At the very end of her memoir (221), however, Kingston says she will give up writing in order to live life more in tune with her surroundings, with no pressure to document every experience for later reminiscence.

2.4 Conclusion to chapter 2

I have so far extracted from Kingston’s memoir several themes that characterize the narrator’s temporal beliefs, i.e. beliefs regarding the nature of time and a person’s place in time. These themes were, in accordance with this chapter’s division, cyclic/linear time, interconnectedness, and valuation of the present time. These are also central themes in *Broad Margin* as a memoir, since such temporal topics get quite a lot of attention. This is not surprising, considering the genre and style of *Broad Margin*: it would be difficult to omit any straightforward (let alone implied) contemplation on time when writing a personal text about one’s long, eventful lifetime and the significance of visiting one’s ancestral land.

To conclude this chapter, we may say that most of the temporal beliefs that were found in Kingston’s memoir are influenced by Buddhism and probably other forms Eastern thought as well, e.g. Chinese folk religion. Buddhist temporal beliefs traditionally include cyclic time and reincarnation, and interconnectedness of beings. In the Zen branch of Buddhism, the past and future are regarded as mostly irrelevant for the present moment. These temporal beliefs were seen in Kingston’s memoir in excerpts dealing with the perceived shape of time, and excerpts dealing with the idea of previous and next lives.

Western temporal beliefs were not altogether absent from the memoir, even though they do not get as much explicit reference. For example, references to cyclical time and reincarnation are mentioned more often than a perceived linearity of time. This is likely because cyclic and linear beliefs are mutually exclusive; if one is a firm believer in the former (as Kingston seems to be, judging by my analyses), one cannot be a believer in the latter. The circumstances in which Western linear time *does* get mentioned is when Kingston knowingly compares the two ways of visualizing time: “Time spirals in China. In America, it shoots straight out [...]” (Kingston 2011, 101). Another case of linearity that was considered was in discussion of the mental timeline. However, it is unknown to me whether the linear mental timeline that Kingston (ibid. 26) depicts of her life, using the hill metaphor, has any connection with the Judeo-Christian notion of historical linearity.

3 Temporal norms and values in *I Love a Broad Margin to My Life*

In this chapter I will apply Hall's (1983, 44) framework of monochronic and polychronic time schemes in order to determine which temporal norms and values are found in *Broad Margin*. What we know about Kingston's personal background suggests a mixture of monochronic and polychronic norms and values: she has grown up in California and taken part in working life in an urban setting, which would require an ability to manage time in a systematic, monochronic way. However, she is also the child of Chinese immigrants, who can be assumed to be polychronic (e.g. Xu-Priour, Truong, and Klink 2014, 268). Furthermore, she lived in Hawaii for seventeen years, where the tempo can be felt to be slower. Although the society around her, at least in those parts of the memoir that are set in the U.S., can be assumed to be monochronic, Kingston nevertheless seeks a more natural, polychronic way of life in which a different set of values dictates time use, as will be shown in section 3.2. My aim in this chapter is to demonstrate, through close reading and analysis, ways in which both monochronic and polychronic temporal norms and values show through in Kingston's text. Of course, my analysis does not examine all the possible examples from the memoir that display a temporal norm or value – I have merely gathered certain excerpts in which a monochronic or polychronic norm or value is depicted particularly strongly.

3.1 Monochronic norms and values

3.1.1 Monochronic language

Our first topic of discussion is not strictly speaking a temporal *norm* of behavior, but a linguistic convention. There are not many particularly interesting examples in *Broad Margin* that depict monochronic behavior, (e.g. observing schedules), likely because of the subject matter and genre of *Broad Margin*: the memoir does not depict people's actions as much as Kingston's own thoughts. But the language Kingston uses does contain several examples which monochronic norms show through. Therefore, we will look at some examples that show how Kingston sometimes treats the topic of time in her writing, paying attention to the monochronic tendencies to quantify and commodify time, treating it as if it were an object.

It is very typical for people to talk about time as if it were a tangible object that can be gained and lost, wasted and made up, etc. This is because English-speakers, along with many other people

mainly in the Western world, are what Hall (1984, 44) calls monochronic people. Due to historical and social reasons discussed in the Introduction, monochronic people have a tendency to view time as a valuable resource and have certain norms regarding the way it should be used.

The first and most explicit instance in which Kingston exhibits this kind of view of time is seen in the opening lines of *Broad Margin*:

In 2 weeks I will be 65 years old.

I can accumulate time *and* lose
time?

(Kingston 2011, 3).

The overt message of the second sentence is to highlight an apparent paradox of time: as a person gets older, they can be viewed as accumulating time or, more precisely, memories and history. But the more time one accumulates, the closer one moves to the end of one's life, provided that one is aware of approaching death, i.e. an "end" of time. Awareness of an approaching end-point gives one the impression of "running out of" or "losing" time. However, the covert – but for the purposes of this section of the thesis a more relevant – message of the lines is that Kingston is influenced by a monochronic time system. She has a disposition to think of time as a commodity that can be accumulated and lost, bringing to mind Lakoff and Johnson's (1980, 8–9) account of English metaphors and collocations that suggest the commodification of time, e.g. "time is money." In addition, Kingston seems to be quite preoccupied with counting down to her birthday, being quite precise in her use of time units (weeks, years), as if keeping close account of how much time she has left. Calculating and "keeping track" of time in this way is a typical example of the tendency to quantify time in everyday life, a tendency without which modern life would be quite impossible.

It may also be noted that Kingston's phrase to "lose time" may be inferred to have two different meanings, depending on which of the several connotations of "lose" and "time" one adopts. I myself interpret the phrase as meaning simply to approach the end of one's lifespan. I justify this reading on the basis of Kingston just having brought up her 65th birthday, indicating that she is discussing her lifespan in this part of her text. Accumulating time is hence intended to mean something like having spent many years on earth; therefore losing time, which is clearly juxtaposed with "accumulating," would be intended to mean the opposite, i.e. to have fewer years left to live on earth. Kingston even creates a new way of stating her age: she is not only 65 years old, i.e. has accumulated 65 years of past time, but is also "35 years-to-go," assuming she will live to be a hundred like her mother and grandmother (ibid. 6–7). As one's past time grows longer, one's future time grows shorter – this, I believe, is Kingston's core message in her opening lines. Another reading

of the phrase “I can accumulate time *and* lose time?” would involve a different interpretation of what it means to “lose time.” It is possible to interpret this as something like becoming indifferent or oblivious to the lapse of time. This interpretation of Kingston’s phrase is unlikely, but not completely irrelevant, because “losing time” in the sense of becoming indifferent to the lapse of time is also a theme in *Broad Margin*. This theme will be discussed in section 3.2.

Commodification of time is seen in an excerpt (which I will further analyze in the next subsection) where Kingston talks about time being wasted and spent in the same way as money and other commodities. In this example she says that playing sudoku for many hours is a “waste” of time, and because she does not finish the game, she has nothing to show for her “expenditures” of time (ibid. 7). In this way, time is treated quite literally as a commodity, which can be thought of as stemming from the European industrial tradition where time started to be likened to money. The temporal value then and now is that time is a valuable commodity and it should not be wasted. If Kingston invests a lot of time into sudoku, for example, she expects to get some sort of return on her investment.

The examples we have so far been discussing are indicative of a representational model of time that treats time as an object, often with a sense of scarcity, which is common in many languages including English (Evans 2004, 183). Therefore, I interpret Kingston’s monochronic thinking and language as simply a result of her growing up in the U.S. and speaking English, even though she might not otherwise be a very monochronic person. (In section 3.2 we find that Kingston’s text suggests in fact a more polychronic disposition.)

3.1.2 Progress and profit values

If Kingston, influenced by a monochronic way of viewing time, sees time as a commodity, she will also want to “manage” this commodity to ensure it does not go to waste. This brings us to our discussion of temporal values (which somewhat overlap with temporal norms), which are progress and profit. In the Introduction (page 9) I mentioned that progress is a value on which the monochronic temporal norms of “budgeting” time is based on, and in the next example we will see both the value and the norm in use.

Filling one’s time with meaningful activities that help achieve one’s goal, i.e. to make “progress,” is the ideal for monochronic people (Hall 1983, 84). Personal time management, in the sense of harnessing clocks and other time measurement devices to accurately plan one’s activities, has its origins in Renaissance Europe, and hence it can be considered a Western temporal norm (Landes 1983, 89). The purpose of personal timekeeping is personal achievement, or fulfilling one’s goal (ibid.), which requires a future-oriented mindset. The following excerpt from Kingston reveals

this type of thinking. We may identify not only a commodification of time (“I *waste* my time with sudoku”), but also the temporal value of progress and goal-orientation, and the temporal norm of budgeting time and planning for the future:

Lately, I’ve been
writing a book a decade; I have time
to write 3 more books. Jane Austen
wrote 6 books. I’ve written 6 books.
Hers are 6 big ones, mine
4 big ones and 2 small ones.
I take refuge in numbers. I
waste my time with sudoku.
(Kingston 2011, 7)

Immediately before this excerpt Kingston has calculated that she still has approximately thirty-five years to live, as noted earlier, and now she rationalizes that this is enough time to write three more books. This is an example of planning for the future, which must be done in a quantitative fashion. By raising Jane Austen as a role model, she assures herself that six books will suffice if she wants to be deemed a respectable writer. This has to do with the value of making progress, or of being a goal-oriented person who aspires to improve themselves over time. To be like Jane Austen is the goal for Kingston, and to reach this goal, she makes a schedule. She divides her remaining time (thirty-five years) into segments (decades), which also demonstrates the perceived tangibility of time, and concludes that this time will be enough to reach her goal.

The next excerpt illustrates the same value of making progress, and also the value of using one’s time wisely. As we have now seen, time sometimes gets the status of a commodity in Kingston’s writing, and the next excerpt is emphatic about not wasting this commodity.

Day dawns, I am greedy, helpless
to begin 6-star difficulty
sudoku. Sun goes
down; I’m still stuck for that square
that will let the numbers fly into place.
What good am I getting out
of this? I’m not stopping time. Nothing
to show for my expenditures. Pure nothing. (Kingston 2011, 7)

We notice that Kingston is spending a relatively long stretch of time engaged in a leisure activity. Reading this passage I, and surely other readers as well, intuitively project a feeling of guilt onto Kingston because we feel she is using her time in an undesirable way. According to Western norms, “greedy” and “helpless” are unreasonably strong emotions for an adult to feel towards starting a game of sudoku. It is one thing to want to begin the game with such vehemence and at the dawn of day, but to continue playing until the evening without finishing the game is an even more serious waste of time, as the excerpt itself implies. However, nowhere in the passage does Kingston present any overtly negative or guilty feelings toward her “[wasting] time with sudoku.” The reader is still likely to sense frustration, self-deprecation or other negative emotions in Kingston’s narrative voice because of the description of day turning into night with *still* no resolution to the game. The rhetorical question “What good am I getting out of this?” and its negative “answer” imply that Kingston was expecting better from herself. “Nothing” also has a negative connotation in the English language, and when repeated and emphasized with “pure nothing,” the narrative voice gets a rather exasperated quality to it. Whether or not Kingston actually feels frustration or guilt at her abnormally long sudoku session is in fact unclear, even though the language of the above passage suggests she does: She may in fact be satirizing the temporal norm of using time wisely.

“I’m not stopping time” is, for me, rather surprising in this situation. Saying it here suggests that “stopping time” would have been the desired outcome of the sudoku session, the thing to be “gotten out of” playing the game. A more likely reason why people usually play sudoku is to exercise the mind or to avoid boredom. Stopping time is an unusual reason, but perhaps it can be interpreted as losing awareness of time for the length of the game.

Another part where temporal (and closely related) norms and values become apparent is where Kingston depicts a scene in which she is having breakfast with her writer-friend, Mary Gordon. Kingston relates their dialogue as follows:

7 days before my birthday, I had breakfast with
Mary Gordon, who’s always saying things
I never thought before: “It’s capitalistic
of us to expect any good from peace demonstrations,
as if ritual has to have use, gain, profit.”
I agreed, “Yes, it’s Buddhist to go parading
for the sake of parading.”
(Kingston 2011, 9)

The Western capitalist idea that all activity should induce profit or some other favorable outcome is applied, according to Kingston's friend Mary, even to peace demonstrations. By pointing this out, Mary implies that the peace demonstration can, and should, be considered sufficient in itself. This profit mentality that Mary is questioning in this example is present in people brought up in average monochronic surroundings, where some sort of gain is expected not only in business but also from peace demonstrations. It is not hard to imagine that time, in the sense of one's time alive on earth, would also be seen as a project that should generate something profitable or otherwise "meaningful" according to the standards of one's society. The fact that Mary's idea had not occurred to Kingston before, as she admits, suggests that Kingston probably joined the peace demonstration expecting to generate some visible profit or outcome, such as recognition by the media or an official statement by the politicians they were criticizing. While this may have been her initial, subconscious motive for the parade, she nevertheless concurs with Mary: "Yes, it's Buddhist to go parading for the sake of parading." The outcome of the peace demonstration indeed does not generate any immediately observable profit; on the contrary, Kingston and the other activists end up in jail.

Kingston also raises Buddhism as the opposite of the "capitalistic" mentality referred to by her friend Mary Gordon, implying that Buddhist thought does not encourage profit-seeking. Whether or not most Buddhists actually expect any profit from peace demonstrations or any other activity is not entirely relevant here, because what matters is Kingston's own understanding of what Buddhist behavior is. I argue that the point Kingston is trying to make is not so much what Buddhism is about, but what Buddhism is about for *her*. She is entertaining the novel idea she has learned from Buddhism that not all activity has to have "use, gain, profit," a thinking pattern that is not automatic for her because it is explicitly mentioned so many times in the book. The unresolved game of sudoku was fundamentally about the same internalized thought pattern: "What good am I getting out of this?"

On the basis of this analysis, I argue that Kingston's text brings out the progress and profit-orientation common in monochronic people who tend to "invest" their time into activities, e.g. peace demonstrations and sudoku, expecting to get a profitable outcome. As the peace demonstration dialogue shows, profit-mentality is the automatic, internalized manner in which Kingston undertakes activities, not always noticing this temporal norm in her behavior until someone points it out. However, I also argue that when this temporal norm *is* pointed out, Kingston remembers that the norms and values based on a monochronic, profit-driven time scheme are not the only possible norms and values to live by. In fact, there are many parts in *Broad Margin* that suggest a desire to escape the monochronic society and opt for a more relaxed way to live in time.

3.2 Polychronic norms and values

In this chapter I will show how polychronicity, or more broadly, subjective time, is present in *Broad Margin*. Polychronicity, the other time scheme in Hall's (1983, 44) framework besides monochronicity, is the more natural of the two. What is meant by natural is that polychronicity is the automatic temporal pattern for pre-industrial societies, whereas monochronicity is heavily dependent on relatively precise, objective timekeeping norms (e.g. using a clock or calendar to organize one's daily activities). The polychronic norms and values identified in *Broad Margin* can be grouped into three categories, each of which conveys a certain polychronic theme. These categories are qualitative measurement of time, temporal anarchy, and certain structural elements in the memoir itself.

3.2.1 Qualitative measurement of time

Time in *Broad Margin* is sometimes quantifiable, tangible, and has commodity value, as seen in section 3.1.1, but there are also several parts where time is not described in terms of the standard quantifiers, e.g. hours, weeks, and years (or birthdays). Polychronic people tend to place less importance on standard clock and calendar time in daily time management, and sometimes these timekeeping devices are absent altogether. It is true that clocks and calendars have been known to exist in China since ancient times, but the purpose of these has mainly been divination (Landes 1983, 44), which is probably the most qualitative type of timekeeping practice there is. There are no significant mentions of such qualitative timekeeping in *Broad Margin*, but the next example may be interpreted as a reference to some sort of qualitative time. The "clock" in the excerpt is nature itself, in this case the maturing of rice, and it is more qualitative than a regular clock. This is because the natural process of growth is an event in itself, not just an abstract unit of measurement, e.g. a minute, hour, or calendar year.

The ancestors say: In China,
time moves slow like yearly rice, andante.
(Kingston 2011, 38)

The growing of rice functions as a sort of timekeeper for Chinese farmers, according to one interpretation of the above excerpt. Of course, it may be the case that there is no relationship between time's "movement" and the maturing of rice, other than the fact that they are both perceived by Kingston as slow processes. In either case, this is only what Kingston's ancestors have said, and therefore the excerpt cannot be counted as evidence of Kingston's own use of qualitative, polychronic

time, especially as she would not normally follow natural or agricultural time patterns when living in the city.

On page 7 of the Introduction I mentioned that divination is probably the most important form of “timekeeping” in traditional Chinese folk religion (which incorporates Buddhist core elements). There are, however, no significant parts in *Broad Margin* that point to divination practice on the part of Kingston, such as valuing a certain date or time as more auspicious than another. The ancient Chinese divination manual *I Ching*, also known as the *Book of Changes*, is mentioned once, but there is nothing that clearly points to Kingston believing in divination herself. The tradition is no longer as widespread as in imperial times, and someone from a Western culture would probably not find much use for it. However, a qualitative way of speaking about history can be observed when Kingston tells about the Opium Wars:

Only 3 grandmothers ago,
BAT, British American Tobacco,
forced our people to buy opium [...].
(Kingston 2011, 109)

Instead of using the commonplace, quantitative means of referring to past events (e.g. stating how many years ago the event happened), Kingston estimates the remoteness of the event by how many grandmothers ago it happened. Even though this usage is technically quantitative, the idea that is conveyed by this usage is a qualitative one: the Opium Wars become more relevant and connected to Kingston’s present life because an ancestor, and a relatively recent one for that matter, has been directly affected by them. The number of years is not as important as the grandmothers directly or indirectly involved. This usage of qualitative time is also related to the temporal belief of interconnectedness, as discussed in the previous chapter, because ancestry is emphasized. The above example, however, could just as easily be used by a believer in linear time, especially if the speaker wanted to emphasize the historical event’s proximity and relevance to the present time, and to remind that real people were affected.

3.2.2 Temporal anarchy

An important source of inspiration for Kingston’s memoir comes from Henry David Thoreau, who may be described as an escapee of a monochronic society. *Broad Margin* contains a section that is parallel to an excerpt from the chapter “Sounds” in Thoreau’s *Walden*, from which the title of Kingston’s memoir is also borrowed. The following excerpt contains a direct quote from *Walden*, in

addition to the clear parallels to Thoreau's language: There are similarities in e.g. the description of plants, animals, and sounds:

Come to think of it, Thoreau doesn't make me laugh. A line from *Walden* hangs over one of my desks: I love a broad margin to my life. Sitting here at this sidewalk café with Mary, deliberately taking time off from writing and teaching duties, I am making a broad margin to my life. The margin will be broader when we part, and I am alone. Thoreau swam, then sat in the doorway of his "Shelter," "large box," "dwelling house," alone all the summer morning, rapt in the sunlight and the trees and the stillness. Birds flitted through the house. "...Until by the sun falling in at my west window, or the noise of some traveller's wagon on the distant highway, I was reminded of the lapse of time." I have a casita of my own, built instead of a garage after the Big Fire. Its width is the same as Thoreau's (10 feet), its length a yard longer; he had a loft; I have a skylight. I want to be a painter. Sometimes, I hear the freeway, now and again the train, and the campanile. Thoreau hears the band playing military music; his neighbors were going to war against Mexico. He made up his mind not to pay taxes. Trying broad-margin meditation, I sit in the sunny doorway of my casita, amidst the yucca and loquats and purple rain birches. Some I planted, some volunteered. Birds—chickadees, finches, sparrows, pairs of doves, a pair of towhees, and their enemy, the jay. Hawk overhead. Barn swallows at twilight. I know: Thoreau sat with notebook and pencil in hand. Days full of writing. (Kingston 2011, 10–11)

Lorre-Johnston (2013, par. 19) notes how Kingston simulates Thoreau's use of time by relocating from the city to her own "casita," much like Thoreau relocated from Concord to Walden Pond. Kingston shares Thoreau's temporal value of "natural" time, which does not need to be regulated by clocks or even given any thought to. As Lorre-Johnston (2013, par. 20) also points out, the lapse of time can be forgotten at Walden Pond or at Kingston's casita, since they are not dependent on the schedules of urban society. Kingston lists the freeway, train, and campanile as her reminders of the lapse of time in the monochronic urban world. In contrast to these, the natural elements (trees, plants, and birds) at Kingston's casita represent a way of life that does not rely on externally imposed timekeeping.

According to the above excerpt, Kingston is "deliberately" taking time off from the duties of her monochronic public life in order to meet her friend, meaning that she needs to make an effort to switch from a monochronic to a polychronic time scheme. This is probably not uncommon for people living in monochronic societies: living according to a schedule can become uncomfortable for some, even if the duties themselves are manageable. In such cases, one may wish to "take time off" and live

according to one's own subjective clock. (Of course, this is often difficult in working life.) Only within a polychronic time scheme, where duties and schedules are not organizing her life, can Kingston create a broad margin to her life.

To get a better understanding of what exactly Kingston means by "broad margin," it is necessary to consider how Thoreau, as a sort of role model for Kingston, uses the phrase when describing his work ethic at Walden Pond: "There were times when I could not afford to sacrifice the bloom of the present moment to any work, whether of the head or hands. I love a broad margin to my life" (Thoreau 1999, 102). On the basis of Thoreau's usage, the motif "broad margin" can be interpreted as the option to diverge from the duties and temporal restrictions of monochronic working life. I wish to emphasize *option* because Thoreau does not necessarily want to avoid doing the "work [...] of the head or hands;" instead he is happy to engage in the work at a time more suitable for him, provided that he finds the work meaningful in the first place. Thoreau's use of "broad margin" can also be associated with the phrase "margin for error": The broader the margin, the more liberally one can depart from the normal work-leisure distinction while still getting the work done in the end. Kingston, too, has the option of taking time off from her teaching and writing duties and thus has a broad margin to her life.

Withdrawing to a secluded place in the middle of nature is a form of resistance to imposed temporality, according to Bruneau (1974, 664). What Bruneau means by imposed temporality here is in effect the monochronic temporal norms of punctuality and clock time, which are the norm in societies organized according to a standard time system. However, not all cities are monochronic, and not all polychronic societies are automatically rural. Therefore, it is reasonable to ask whether Kingston and Thoreau would have been just as happy retreating to a polychronic city as to the natural settings of Walden Pond and Kingston's casita. In other words, would it have been enough for them to experience living in a more flexible, albeit urban, environment, or was the seclusion from other people the main motive for their retreats? Thoreau certainly shows contempt for monochronic time, as evident from the chapter "Sounds" in *Walden*:

My days were not days of the week, bearing the stamp of any heathen deity, nor were they minced into hours and fretted by the ticking of a clock [...]. This was sheer idleness to my fellow-townsmen, no doubt; but if the birds and flowers had tried me by their standard, I should not have been found wanting. (Thoreau 1999, 103)

Thoreau is conscious of the temporal norms and values of his fellow townsmen, and he knows that his alternative temporal norms would not have been appreciated in the city. Defying the clock, as Thoreau is doing, is considered by certain members of technologically advanced societies as a kind

of temporal anarchy (Bruneau 1980, 104). Thompson (1967, 95) talks about the same phenomenon when he states that flouting respectable temporal norms has been a way for “bohemians and beatniks” to rebel against industrial capitalism. Thoreau, too, would have been a violator of the temporal value of organization, since he does not organize his life according to the objective standard time, i.e. clocks and weekdays, etc. In the earlier quote from *Walden*, Thoreau violates the monochronic temporal norm of uninterrupted work time (Hall 1983, 51), because he lets “the bloom of the present moment” distract him from his work.

Of course, Thoreau wanted to depart not only from the temporal norms of his hometown, but also from urban life in its entirety. After all, the goal of his life in the woods was to be as self-reliant and independent as possible, without the material comforts of the city. He also raises the organic rhythm of birds and flowers as his ideal time scheme, which is the most primitive form of polychronicity. Therefore, I would argue that for Thoreau, escaping the city itself was most important, and that he would not have gained the Transcendental experience in a city operating by a polychronic time scheme. Kingston, on the other hand, does not seem to need to depart as extremely from city life as Thoreau. *Broad Margin* has no obvious examples of contempt toward monochronicity or urban areas. For Kingston, broadening the margin does not require much more than occasionally “taking time off” and living according to a more relaxed, polychronic time scheme, giving priority to meeting friends and occasional alone-time. As we saw in chapter 2, she seems to have no problem conforming to the temporal norms of her monochronic, American society. This was seen in the sudoku excerpt, in which she exercises unacknowledged self-regulation by reprimanding herself for wasting time. Because she does not go to extreme lengths, like Thoreau does, to escape monochronic temporal norms and the city which imposes them on her, Kingston is not a temporal anarchist to the same extent as Thoreau.

It is worth noting here that among those people who are so privileged as to choose how they manage their time, not everyone chooses to give up a highly monochronic lifestyle. Other thinkers, perhaps most famously Benjamin Franklin, thought it better to “mince” their days into hours and live according to a precise schedule, keeping the margin deliberately narrow. In his *Autobiography* (2005, 66.), Franklin lists Order as one of the precepts for his “Plan for Attaining Moral Perfection,” and devises an organized and somewhat ambitious schedule (ibid., 70) for carrying out each day’s activities. The precept of Order, which reads “Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time,” is a prime example of monochronic time management, going so far as to declare the adherence to a schedule a moral virtue. Organization of space (“things”) is also valued. However, Franklin admits that living up to his time management goals is impossible for him, due partly to unexpected business meetings and partly to his simply being a “disorganized” person. Since monochronicity is not a natural human tendency, and since life is often unpredictable and hard to

plan, it is no surprise that Franklin finds it difficult to adhere to such a punctual lifestyle without external pressure or supervision.

3.2.3 Form and structure

Another place where polychronicity is present in Kingston's memoir is in the structure of the memoir itself. As briefly noted in the Introduction, *Broad Margin* does not adhere to genre-specific conventions and is "disorganized" in many other ways as well. Here we may recall the literal definition of polychronicity, i.e. doing several things at once, and notice that Kingston is doing just this over the course of *Broad Margin*. The book is most often labeled as a memoir (e.g. by the San Francisco Book Review, Vintage Books, and NPR), although there is a considerable amount of text which is atypical for the genre. The *in medias res* beginning of the book is hardly surprising for readers, but when the "*res*" seems to be absent altogether, the narration becomes difficult to follow: the reader cannot grasp what sort of text they are reading, as the style and subject matter undergo sudden changes from the beginning. For example, the memoir begins with a reasonably conventional topic: Kingston's upcoming birthday, which communicates to the reader that the theme being discussed is ageing. However, after a few lines the subject matter changes to a memory of Kingston's mother writing poetry to her late husband. After a few such changes of topic within the first pages of the book, the reader may conclude that they are reading a text written in a stream-of-consciousness style. However, this style does not continue throughout the whole course of the memoir, either.

Kingston's language, even the more "poetic" parts, is mostly quite conventional, although her style often switches between poetry and prose. In contrast, Thoreau's *Walden* is a more traditional memoir, since it depicts actual events and is written in the first person singular with Thoreau himself as the implied narrator. It is also structured coherently, each chapter having a certain theme. None of these characteristics appear consistently in *Broad Margin*, which defies generic categorization. However, there are titled sections, or chapters, in *Broad Margin*, which help the reader organize the memoir's events into chronological order. The first two chapters are called "Home" and "Leaving Home" and they depict events and thoughts that occurred in California. After this there are several chapters taking place in China, and the book's final chapter is called "Home Again." In this sense there is a chronological structure in the book, even though the content of these chapters often jumps from e.g. factual description of an actual place to a fictional dialogue between Wittman and his wife. This may create in the reader a feeling of uncertainty about what they are reading. This kind of breaking of generic boundaries can be likened to polychronicity, even though temporal norms are not directly in question. The main idea is still the same: Kingston has chosen not to fully conform to an externally imposed mode of behavior, be it the temporal norms or literary norms.

One prominent structural feature that expresses polychronicity is the blending of fiction and nonfiction, a technique also encountered in Kingston's earlier works, e.g. *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men* (first published in 1980). A significant portion of *Broad Margin* features Wittman Ah Sing, a fictional character from *Tripmaster Monkey*. He appears in the memoir sometimes as narrator, sometimes as fictional protagonist referred to in the third person. Even so, it is likely that at least most of the events depicted in the memoir have in fact happened to Kingston herself, regardless of the blurred line between fiction and nonfiction. This is because the memoir, as typical for the genre, is mostly based on actual events. For example, the trip to China that much of the book focuses on is possibly based on a trip which Kingston talks about in Whalen-Bridge's interview (Storhoff and Whalen-Bridge 2009, 178–179), and several other events and people that appear in the memoir (such as the peace demonstration) can easily be identified as factual, especially for those familiar with Kingston's biography. The fictional features are mostly due to the integration of Wittman (and other elements from *Tripmaster Monkey*) into Kingston's nonfictional narration. Preparing for the trip to China, Kingston writes:

Wittman is going to China for the first time.

I have been 12 times, counting Hong Kong and Taiwan as China.

(Kingston 2011, 49–50)

These lines begin a nearly hundred-page account of Wittman's travels in Chinese villages, narrated in a highly focalized third-person style. However, it is easy to forget that Wittman is the protagonist of this section of the book, because the reader knows that the depicted events are really happening to Kingston. This is because we know we are reading a memoir, and we have reason to believe that the trip to China is not a fictional one. The above lines illustrate how Kingston often juxtaposes Wittman with herself, reminding the reader that both are involved in the story. At the end of the hundred-page section, Kingston "parts" with Wittman and continues the trip alone. Therefore, this part of the book is fictional in that it features fictional characters and dialogues of ambiguous veracity; yet nonfictional in that we know Kingston to really have taken this trip and been to these villages. The critics' acclaims at the beginning of the book describe the style of *Broad Margin* as "dreamlike, impressionistic" (The Boston Globe) and "blurring the lines among poetry, fiction, and memoir" (Los Angeles Times).

Not all critics are as willing to praise Kingston's writing style, however. In the New York Times Sunday Book Review, Orr (2011) writes that Kingston's text is disorganized and cumbersome to read because of the text's free-verse style and arbitrary line breaks. He then lists some "acceptable" techniques of writing poetry, e.g. deploying a regular rhyme scheme and stanza division. Orr's dismay

at Kingston's disorganized text may be interpreted as stemming from a monochronic desire for order and logic, which *Broad Margin* lacks due to its form and structure. Orr feels that the unconventional poetic form of *Broad Margin* is exacerbated by its mystical subject matter, creating a very confusing whole: "[...] if you're going to be talking about vast images out of "Spiritus Mundi," you have to be a master technician; you can't afford to sound like a stoner at the Pink Floyd laser show" (Orr 2011). The parts in which Kingston touches upon Buddhist temporal beliefs (reincarnation, interconnectedness of living beings, etc.) are deemed "gooey mysticism" by Orr. These themes seem to be difficult for Orr, and perhaps many other Western readers, to comprehend, especially when they are communicated through the unconventional free-verse form. In short, *Broad Margin* does not provide the reader with many clues as to how the book should be understood and categorized. As a book, *Broad Margin* may be felt to be flouting the temporal, or associated, norm of organization and historical accuracy.

If we now recall the teenaged Kingston from "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe," rebelling against her mother's talk-stories, we notice how her values have changed over the years. You lie with stories. Kingston would say: "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" (Kingston 1989, 202). Now she tells her own stories in the same way as her mother did, emphasizing the story's themes and content, not its factuality or structural consistency.

3.3 Conclusion to chapter 3

I have done my best to apply Hall's (1983) concepts of monochronic and polychronic time to identify and analyze temporal norms and values in Kingston's *Broad Margin*. What may be concluded on the basis of this analysis is that elements of both monochronic and polychronic time schemes are present in the memoir. Monochronic norms and values were found in contexts where time was quantified and treated as a commodity, which is expressed by language. It is difficult to say whether the linguistic conventions of concretizing time (as seen in phrases such as "to *spend* time" or "an *amount* of time") have led to the treatment of time as a commodity, or vice versa, in that time was first commodified and the linguistic conventions developed as a result of this. Either way, the English language happens to be one that treats the lexeme "time" in a similar way as money, for example.

It is true that English-speakers are by no means the only group to commodify time. Chinese-speakers, as well as people from other polychronic cultures, also have expressions such as "to spend time" (Mandarin: hua shijian), but neither Hall (1983), Evans (2004) nor Lakoff and Johnson (1980) discuss this fact. Could it be that such expressions have spread to other languages, e.g. Chinese, from European languages? And has this potential spreading changed the way polychronic people think

about time? This might make an interesting topic for further study. The relationship between language and thought is a complex one, and something we will not delve into any further in this study.

Polychronic norms and values found in Kingston's memoir were seen in parts, which were quite few, in which she describes time qualitatively. A more prominent display of polychronicity was through temporal anarchy, or resistance to monochronic norms. Because such a resistance is a conscious choice, it seems that Kingston prefers the polychronic time scheme to the monochronic one. Finally, the form and style of the memoir, including the blending of fiction and nonfiction, contributes to a polychronic reading of *Broad Margin*. As seen especially in this last section of analysis (3.2.3), monochronicity and polychronicity are much more than time management preferences – they are almost like two distinct operating systems that control not only temporal norms and values, but also values regarding facts and history.

4 Conclusion and discussion

“Tell me what you think of time and I shall know what to think of you,” a quote by prominent time scholar Julian T. Fraser (1966, xix), captures the essence of my thesis. What Fraser means by this is basically that a person’s understanding of time tells much about the kind of cultural background that person is from, and perhaps even something about the lifestyle, goals, and values they have. But what does Fraser mean by “time?” In this thesis I chose to operationalize, i.e. make more concrete, the elusive concept of time with the help of Bruneau’s chronemics, the study of temporal beliefs, norms, and values (among many other aspects of human temporality). This way, “time” becomes a more tangible object of study.

By the integration of Bruneau’s framework, my thesis hopefully contributes to the discussion of Bruneau's (1980) chronemics, and more specifically to the discussion of Hall's (1984) monochronic and polychronic time schemes. Through these frameworks, I have found several temporal norms and values at play in Kingston's memoir. In addition, certain temporal beliefs, as discussed in chapter 2, were also identified in the memoir and analyzed in my thesis. To my knowledge there is no significant body of literary analysis that has incorporated this type of chronemic framework, even though the topic of time has otherwise been widely studied in the realm of literary studies. I believe the reason is that Bruneau's chronemics and Hall's monochronic and polychronic time schemes are more relevant for communications studies and anthropology, the frameworks' original birthplaces. In literary studies, the study of time seems most often to mean studying temporality as a narrative device (e.g. Mendilow in *Time and the Novel*, 1952), or how the paradoxes of time-experiencing are handled in literature (as studied by Ricoeur in *Time and Narrative*, 1983). Therefore, a more fruitful study of mono- and polychronicity might have been conducted if the object of analysis would have been e.g. Kingston herself, instead of the text she has produced. Still, I dare say that my analysis of Kingston’s memoir with the chronemic frameworks in question did yield interesting findings regarding the perceived nature and use of time.

In light of my findings regarding temporal beliefs in *Broad Margin*, it can be concluded that Kingston’s memoir contains influences from more than one culture and religion. As mentioned in previous chapters, temporal beliefs is one category of beliefs and associated behaviors that is to a large extent influenced by religion, even if the person holding these beliefs is not particularly religious (e.g. Hayden 1987, 1286). As seen in chapter 2, most of the temporal beliefs identified in *Broad Margin* are related to the Hindu-Buddhist notion of cyclic time, which includes the belief in reincarnation and that all living beings are interconnected. The cyclic belief, and especially the belief

in samsara and reincarnation, is so profoundly present in the memoir that we can conclude that it is a major source of inspiration for Kingston. After all, *Broad Margin* is a very personal text, at times even a sort of diary, and Kingston would have written down anything she felt was important to her. Buddhist terminology is also prevalent throughout the memoir, suggesting a strong affiliation with the worldview of this religion.

The Christian linear belief of time does not get nearly as much allusion in the memoir as the Buddhist cyclic belief does. Still, Christian-based thought is not completely absent from *Broad Margin*. According to my analysis, Christian temporality is mostly found in the form of temporal norms and values, and less in the form of temporal beliefs. Monochronicity, the time scheme associated with the Western world based on industrial capitalist norms and values, was evident in Kingston's way of managing her daily time use. This was seen in the way she sometimes treats time as a commodity and resource, assigning it positive value. It is a stereotypically Western, especially northern European and American, way to view time, as explained by Hall (1983, 44–46). Monochronic norms and values, e.g. observing standard clock time and budgeting time, are such a fundamental part of Western society that they are rarely questioned or even noticed, even though we frequently express these norms and values through common phrases such as “a waste of time” or “to save time.” The difference between Buddhist chronemics and Western, or Christian, chronemics as they appear in *Broad Margin* is that the former is explicitly acknowledged by Kingston, while the latter shows up more covertly, between the lines. I believe the reason for this difference is that Kingston is very conscious of the Buddhist understanding of time since she has willingly subscribed to it in her adult years. The Western view of time, on the other hand, is the one she has been socialized into, and although she has adopted Buddhist and other Eastern beliefs, Western temporal norms are very difficult to completely eradicate.

Something that may be considered is how compatible these different temporal beliefs, norms, and values are with each other. It would seem quite clear that a person such as Kingston, who believes that the universe consists of recurring cycles, would not believe in a linear progression of time with a beginning and an end. However, there are parts in Kingston's text that are suggestive of linear beliefs, even though references to cyclic time are most ubiquitous, as we saw in chapter 2. One such hint at linear time (or at least to the Old Testament, which is the “birthplace” of the idea of linear time) was the Garden of Eden allusion, analyzed on page 14. Even though Kingston devised a different ending to Adam and Eve's story, the acknowledgement of creation, which entails linearity in the Christian sense, is still there. Part of my initial hypothesis for this study was that *Broad Margin* would have contained slightly more linear beliefs of time because Kingston has lived her life as part of mainstream American society and has probably been a progress-oriented individual, given her prolific teaching and writing career. The “Barbarian Reed Pipe” excerpts certainly supported this

hypothesis, as they showed the teenaged Kingston's drive to achieve worldly success. Perhaps these linear beliefs are still there, unacknowledged, as suggested in my analysis of the mental timeline (page 15), but this we will never know based on Kingston's writing alone. It nevertheless is quite clear that cyclic time is something that Kingston deliberately chooses to believe in.

This brings us to the question of choosing one's beliefs. I have suggested in my thesis (e.g. on pages 10–12) that Kingston is by default a product of the Western, Christian environment and, through her socialization process in the U.S., has acquired Western chronemics. Why, then, has she found Buddhist beliefs, norms, and values, including Buddhist chronemic values, more appealing to herself as an adult? Meyerhoff (1955, 79; 104) has written about the significance of cyclic beliefs, as endorsed by Buddhism and other religions, in creating a sense of unity with the world and humanity as a whole. In addition, it might be easier for some, as it was for the ancient Greeks and many other societies, to conceive of time as taking a cyclic shape, instead of the world having been created at some sort of primordial beginning point. Perhaps the popularity of Buddhism and other non-theistic, non-creationist religions in the West has something to do with the chronemics of these religions, especially their temporal beliefs. Perhaps Kingston, too, finds life more meaningful if she believes that what she does in this life affects her next life, and the lives of those people around her in the present, future, and even the past. Some of the temporal beliefs we discussed in chapter 2 (e.g. page 19, regarding the poet's ability to cross eternal distances) were paradoxical and physically impossible, but they create a feeling of purpose and continuity. This is arguably the purpose of religion and spirituality in general, and Buddhism, in some way, serves this purpose better than Christianity, due to the former's cyclic view of time. Of course, Christianity too promises eternal life for believers, but perhaps the idea of having only one earthly life to live generates a more individualistic outlook on life.

The temporal norms and values associated with Christianity and Buddhism, or more broadly, the West and the East, also characterize two different lifestyles. The Christian West has been oriented towards progress and control over nature since the Middle Ages, resulting in the monochronic time scheme we still live by. As we have learned, the monochronic time scheme is much more than punctuality: it also encompasses such linguistic and behavioral conventions as commodifying time ("time is money"), norms dictating appropriate activities to "spend" time on, and the ability to make long-term plans using tools (e.g. calendars) to concretize and control time. If we adopt a large-scale viewpoint for determining which sociohistorical factors have caused the modern Westerner to live life according to the aforementioned norms and values, we can see that religion, scientific development, industrialization, and capitalism have had the greatest roles. These developments are, as I and many others have suggested, closely intertwined. Of course, this viewpoint is very general, and one must be careful not to reduce complex phenomena, such as chronemics, to being merely a

result of these abstract social processes. However, the prevailing religions and mode of production of any given society are such inescapable forces that they must be considered when analyzing chronemics.

I also hope that my thesis contributes to the body of literary analysis by offering a fresh viewpoint for reading and analyzing books. Literature is always a product of a certain time and place, and as reader of literature, it is necessary for us to acquire knowledge of the beliefs, norms, and values of the time and place in order to fully appreciate the work. I chose to look into beliefs, norms, and values regarding, in particular, time, because temporality is one of the most fundamental modes of human experience, as Kant said. On a more practical level, I set out to clarify some of the elements in *Broad Margin* that were dismissed by Orr (2011) as “gooey mysticism,” and thus to make more accessible the poetic expression of a great American author.

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