

## CHAPTER THREE

### CONCLUSION

After analyzing the social conflicts in Jean Kwok's *Girl in Translation*, I would like to draw some conclusions in this chapter. The protagonist of the novel is Kimberly Chang. She and her ma are Chinese immigrants moving from Hong Kong to the United States to look for a better life. Moving to the U.S., Kimberly experiences some social conflicts which happen because her efforts to reach her dream of having a better life are against the traditional Chinese values that are held by the people around her. There are four social conflicts discussed in the previous chapter.

The first social conflict happens between Kimberly and her ma when Kimberly discovers the fact that the apartment where they currently live is about to be demolished by the government. Kimberly sees this event as a chance for her and her ma to run away from Aunt Paula and build their own better life, but ma refuses Kimberly's idea as she thinks they need to repay Aunt Paula's kindness of helping them move to the United States in order not to be seen as ungrateful and lose their honor. In the end, this conflict is solved. Kimberly decides to obey her

ma and stay with Aunt Paula for a while as she cares about her ma's thought and cannot force her ma to do what she wants to do.

The second social conflict happens between Kimberly and Aunt Paula when Aunt Paula hears the news that Kimberly gets accepted in Yale. During her senior year in high school, Kimberly applies for a scholarship to Yale without asking for Aunt Paula's permission or opinion. Kimberly knows that Aunt Paula will hinder her from going to college and getting a better future, so she does not tell her on purpose. This causes Aunt Paula to become furious as she feels that Kimberly is not supposed to decide anything without her permission as the figure of authority in the family. Moreover, Aunt Paula thinks she has the right to interfere with Kimberly's life decisions as she is the one who guarantees Kimberly's life in the United States. In the end, this conflict is solved when Kimberly chooses to stick to her dream and continue her study to Yale despite Aunt Paula's prohibition. Kimberly also decides to break family ties with Aunt Paula one-sidedly.

The third social conflict, of which the issue is actually the continuation of the first conflict, happens between Kimberly and Aunt Paula. In an argument with Aunt Paula, Kimberly shows her intention to live independently with her ma and be free from Aunt Paula's tyranny for good so that they can lead a better life. However, Aunt Paula is not willing to let Kimberly and Kimberly's ma out of her control as she feels that they are indebted to her for life. In the end, this conflict is solved when Kimberly and her ma really leave Aunt Paula's apartment and factory and break their family ties with Aunt Paula.

The fourth social conflict happens between Kimberly and her boyfriend Matt Wu. Kimberly wants Matt to come along to Yale so that they can share responsibilities in taking care of their family while she furthers her study to provide them a better life later. However, Matt does not want to follow Kimberly to Yale as he thinks – as a man – he is the one who should provide for their family. Matt also thinks that it is Kimberly who should follow him and not the other way around. In the end, this conflict is solved when Kimberly chooses to hold on to her dream and go to Yale without Matt. Kimberly does not want to miss the chance to study at Yale because she believes it is the stepping stone to reach her dream of having a better life; she does not want to just be a full-time housewife to Matt. Knowing that Matt will never come with her, Kimberly leaves Matt for Yale and eventually they break up.

After conducting the analysis, I come into conclusion that first, all of the social conflicts that Kimberly experiences happen because the actions that she takes to reach her dream of having a better life are not in accordance with some traditional Chinese values that are held by the people around her. This actually depicts the condition experienced by immigrants all over the world – that sometimes their efforts to reach a better life are against the value of their culture.

Second, the analysis shows that most of the social conflicts are solved because the protagonist chooses to hold on to her dream of having a better life, even if it means she has to break the boundaries of her culture. Out of four social conflicts, there is only one – that is the first social conflict – in which the protagonist seems to give in to the boundaries of her culture. However, this conflict eventually results in another conflict later as the protagonist has not

achieved what she actually desires to do. This situation basically suggests how immigrants sometimes have to be willing to let go of certain values of their culture if they want to survive and achieve their dream of having a better life in the new environment.

In general, I am of the opinion that Jean Kwok has succeeded in providing her readers with a clear picture of the immigrants' struggle in achieving their dream of having a better life. Through the social conflicts experienced by the protagonist, Kwok has also shown that every individual – not just immigrants – needs to have the spirit to fight for what they want to accomplish in their life and be willing to make sacrifices.

