

Fine Cut Edit Script

Episode: #16

Title: **The Search For Identity**

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Produced by Oregon Public Broadcasting for
Annenberg/CPB

Timecode	Audio
01:00:00	A/CPB ANNOUNCER:
01:00:26.18	NARRATOR: AFTER THE VIETNAM WAR, WRITERS EMERGED FROM THE MARGINS OF SOCIETY TO THE FOREFRONT OF AMERICAN LITERATURE. AMONG THEM, WERE WOMEN WHO CHALLENGED SOCIAL DEFINITIONS AND EXPLORED THE COMPLEXITIES OF A FLUID IDENTITY.
01:00:43.06	GREG SARRIS: Because if indeed the definitions are fixed, as we might think they are, you're doomed because then something's wrong with you. You can't move. And these authors are saying, in the great American tradition, I can make myself, I can make anew.
	THEME MUSIC
01:01:22	PROTEST FILM CLIPS:
01.01.30.26	NARRATOR: BUILDING ON THE MOMENTUM OF THE 1960's SOCIAL RIGHTS MOVEMENTS... ... AND TURMOIL CREATED BY THE VIETNAM WAR, THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT OF THE 1970's WAS A CRUCIAL TURNING POINT IN THE LIVES OF MANY AMERICAN WOMEN.

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01:01:50.00	<p>DOROTHY ALLISON: I was raised to make babies and take care of some wounded, broken man, whether I loved him or not. I was raised to work in a mill or work waitress. I was raised to live in a trailer park. I walked into the Women's Center in Tallahassee, Florida and here were grown women talking about books. Here were adults trying to plan their lives as if they actually had control over what they could do.</p>
01.02.21.00	<p>GREG SARRIS: The Women's Movement and the Civil Rights Movement all opened the door for people to begin to, first of all, legitimize who they were.</p>
01.02.32.18	<p>NARRATOR: MANY WOMEN LOOKED TO WRITERS FOR ANSWERS TO COMPLICATED QUESTIONS ABOUT WHAT IT MEANT TO BE AMERICAN.</p>
01.02.42.20	<p>MARY PAT BRADY: Women's reading shoots up in terms of numbers so what begins to happen, not surprisingly, is that writers like Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, Joan Didion, Susan Sontag, these writers begin to be bought in such numbers that they appear on the Best Seller List, kind of shaking up New York publishing expectations of what would be purchased and who would buy what.</p>
01.03.02.26	<p>NARRATOR: THE WORK OF WOMEN WRITERS WAS FINALLY TAKEN SERIOUSLY.</p>
01.03.07010	<p>DOROTHY ALLISON: Women in the 30s and 40s were writing great novels. But never...considered serious in the way that men's work considered serious. At this moment in history, it's different. Not to say that there's still not prejudice against women. Um. There is still a way in which women's work is deemed less important, less a</p>

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	part of the cannon.
01.03.29.00	<p>NARRATOR: WITH NEW FREEDOM TO DEFINE THEMSELVES, WRITERS LIKE MAXINE HONG KINGSTON, SANDRA CISNEROS AND LESLIE FEINBERG WROTE ABOUT THEIR OWN EXPERIENCES. EXPERIMENTING WITH LITERARY FORMS THEY PORTRAYED CHARACTERS NEVER SEEN BEFORE IN MAINSTREAM AMERICAN LITERATURE. THEY CHALLENGED MAINSTREAM SOCIETY'S DEFINITIONS OF WOMANHOOD, FEMINISM AND SEXUALITY, EXPLORING IDENTITY IN NEW WAYS.</p>
01.03.59.00	<p>LESLIE FEINBERG: I don't think of identity as a brass ring on a merry-go-round that you can grab and then you've got it. I think about identity like I think about coming out, but it is not a single act; it's a process.</p>
01.04.15.00	<p>NARRATOR: LIKE MANY POSTMODERN VISUAL ARTISTS WHO COMBINED SEEMINGLY INCOMPATIBLE ELEMENTS AND STYLES, MANY POSTMODERN WRITERS EXPERIMENTED WITH FORM.</p> <p>IN TONI MORRISON'S WORDS THESE WRITERS "RE-MEMBER" THE PAST, CREATING A COLLAGE OF PERSONAL AND COLLECTIVE MEMORIES.</p> <p>WRITERS BEGAN TO BLUR GENRES, MIXING FICTION, AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND HISTORY TO TELL STORIES ABOUT THEIR LIVES.</p>
01.04.49.00	<p>GREG SARRIS: They're constantly messing with that borderline and saying, whether this is fiction or autobiography isn't the</p>

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	point. What I'm giving you is a glimpse into me as I'm forming and taking bits and pieces of my experience to create an identity.
01.05.13.00	NARRATOR: IN HER 1976 BOOK, THE WOMAN WARRIOR: MEMOIRS OF A GIRLHOOD AMONG GHOSTS, MAXINE HONG KINGSTON FICTIONALIZED HER OWN LIFE EXPERIENCES TO QUESTION THE BELIEFS OF BOTH THE AMERICAN DOMINANT CULTURE AND HER CHINESE-AMERICAN COMMUNITY.
01.05.33.00	KINGSTON READER: <i>When you try to understand what things in you are Chinese, how do you separate what is peculiar to childhood, to poverty, insanities, one family, your mother who marked your growing up with stories. From what is Chinese? What is Chinese tradition and what is the movies?</i>
01.05.57.20	MARY PAT BRADY: Part of her struggle is the untranslatability, the...difficulty of moving between English and Chinese, the difficulty of moving between, um, the experiences of her...family...her parent's experience of growing up on mainland China and their experience of trying to raise children in Stockton, California
01.06.18.06	NARRATOR: THE OLDEST CHILD OF CHINESE IMMIGRANTS, MAXINE HONG KINGSTON GREW UP IN STOCKTON, CALIFORNIA DURING THE 1950's. MUCH OF KINGSTON'S MEMOIR IS BUILT ON CHILDHOOD STORIES RELATED BY HER MOTHER, BRAVE ORCHID.
01.06.35.00	KINGSTON READER: <i>In China your father had a sister who killed herself. She jumped into the family well. We say that your father has all brothers because it is as if she had never been born.</i>

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01.06.49.00	<p>PATRICIA CHU: This book begins with Brave Orchid taking the author, as a girl, aside. She tells her story about an ancestor who, um, had been married to a man who went off to America, just as Brave Orchid herself had been, um, and in the absence of her husband conceived a baby, was pregnant. The village notes it, the village attacks. Um. And it ends tragically and this is a cautionary tale, and this is...this is supposedly the mother's way of telling the daughter, okay, you're a woman now. Don't get yourself in trouble.</p>
01.07.27.26	<p>KINGSTON READER: <i>Whenever she had to warn us about life, my mother told stories like this one, a story to grow up on. Those of us in the first American generations have had to figure out how the invisible world the emigrants built around our childhoods fits in solid America.</i></p>
01.07.54.20	<p>PATRICIA CHU: Kingston begins by saying, this is how my mother taught us. She would tell us stories and then we had to figure out what to do with them. Um. We had to understand, um how to interpret these stories about China in America.</p>
01.09.08.10	<p>MARY PAT BRADY: The...narrative gives us a kind of...some really blunt and difficult moments around what...mother-daughter relationships are, um, how it is that, um, mothers perpetuate, ah...patriarchy and...but also I think that Kingston wants us to...struggle with contradiction</p>
01.08.28.28	<p>NARRATOR: USING DREAMS, FANTASIES, MYTHS, AND HER OWN EXPERIENCES IN A NON-LINEAR, EXPERIMENTAL STYLE, KINGSTON RETELLS HER</p>

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	MOTHER'S STORIES...
01.08.41.07	<p>GREG SARRIS: She's using different narrative techniques and forms to negotiate this identity. She's just not using all fantasy or the book doesn't go "I was born here," and then this is what happened in the middle and then this is what happened. She goes here's a story that runs through my head, here's something else that runs through my head, these are the questions I'm always thinking about, this is what my mother told me, and somehow this adds up to me.</p>
01.09.05.28	<p>PATRICIA CHU: The story culminates in a kind of argument between the two competitive talkers, um, Maxine and her mother, um, and it's a confrontation which leads to understanding what she has to do with...all these stories.</p>
01.09.23.00	<p>KINGSTON READER: <i>'I didn't say you were ugly.'</i> <i>'You say that all the time.'</i> <i>'That's what we're supposed to say. That's what Chinese say. We like to say the opposite.'</i> <i>It seemed to hurt her to tell me that. Another guilt for my list to tell my mother I thought and suddenly I got very confused and lonely because I was at that moment telling her my list and in the telling it grew. No higher listener, no listener but myself.</i></p>
01.09.52.20	<p>PATRICIA CHU: Up to then that whole section of the book is about how she's looking for validation from her mother. Um. And then finally here she says, "My mother's not going to give me what I'm looking for. I have no higher listener. I have to validate my own truths." Um. And that's adulthood.</p>
01.10.13.20	<p>GREG SARRIS: She doesn't really have the answer at the end except the notion of translation. You have to translate.</p>

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	You have to negotiate the different stories and the different strengths from different cultures and points of view. The issue here is integration and not assimilation.
01.10.38.15	NARRATOR: CRITICS PRAISED <i>THE WOMAN WARRIOR</i>, BUT KINGSTON FACED CRITICISM WITHIN HER OWN COMMUNITY. CHINESE-AMERICAN MALES WERE MOST UPSET... THEY ATTACKED KINGSTON'S CRITIQUE OF MISOGYNY AND PATRIARCHY IN CHINESE-AMERICAN CULTURE.
01.10.55.00	PATRICIA CHU: Kingston has gone through a problem that many ethnic women writers go through of being asked to, um, tell a good story about her community group. But then if you are a creative writer you cannot only write about, positive images of your group because that's not human reality.
01.11.18.00	NARRATOR: OTHER WRITERS GRAPPLING WITH ISSUES OF IDENTITY HAVE LOOKED TO THE WOMAN WARRIOR AS AN EXAMPLE.
01.11024.00	SANDRA CISNEROS: Maxine Hong Kingston gave me permission to write <i>House on Mango Street</i> ... I liked that it was basing itself on her...place of otherness, that she was going to her roots and going into her culture and pulling things out that I'd never seen on the page before. So that gave me permission.
	NARRATOR: THE 1980'S WERE AN ERA OF GREAT TURMOIL IN WHICH RACIAL STRIFE INCREASED.
01.11.50.18	MARY PAT BRADY: It's an era in which, um, the war on drugs becomes, um...begins to...really gather steam and...um, African-American men and Latino men are beginning to be imprisoned at

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	<p>even...higher percentages than ever. That kind of violence naturally had an impact on options for people. As men are being put in prison, families are broken apart. That...derailed some of the kind of growth in activism among African-American and Latino communities.</p>
<p>01.12.20.00</p>	<p>NARRATOR: MANY WOMEN OF COLOR FELT ALIENATED BY A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE THAT DIDN'T ALWAYS INCLUDE ISSUES IMPORTANT TO THEM.</p> <p>IN 1981, GLORIA ANZALDUA AND CHERRIE MORAGA PUBLISHED <i>THIS BRIDGE CALLED MY BACK: WRITINGS BY RADICAL WOMEN OF COLOR.</i></p> <p>IN THE INTRODUCTION TO THE ANTHOLOGY, THEY WROTE, "WE SEE THIS BOOK AS A REVOLUTIONARY TOOL. WE HOPE IT WILL RADICALIZE OTHERS INTO ACTION."</p> <p>FOR MANY WOMEN FROM MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES, "ACTION" WAS THE PROCESS OF TELLING THEIR STORIES</p>
<p>01.13.04.00</p>	<p>PATRICIA CHU: They don't buy into the idea that I'm an isolated subject, I'm a lone genius. They feel intensely connected to their community and they're looking at their communities and they're saying, um, wow, there's a lot of damage here.</p>
<p>01.13.28.00</p>	<p>NARRATOR: LIKE KINGSTON, SANDRA CISNEROS FIGHTS HER OWN CULTURE'S OPPRESSION OF WOMEN. IN HER 1983 NOVEL <i>HOUSE ON MANGO STREET...</i> AND IN HER SHORT STORY COLLECTION, <i>WOMAN HOLLERING CREEK</i>, CISNEROS' CHARACTERS CREATE NEW IDENTITIES.</p>

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01.13051.13	<p>GREG SARRIS: Sandra Cisneros says, a Mexican woman's supposed to be passive, They want their women to be weak- She says, "I don't want to be weak. I don't want to be somebody's wife. I don't want to wake up with the tortillas star in the morning." Right? I wanta...I wanta have agency. And so she says, "How can I be Mexican, retain my cultural identity, and yet form something new?"</p>
01.14.18.00	<p>NARRATOR: SANDRA CISNEROS BEGAN WRITING IN HER EARLY TWENTIES WHILE TEACHING AND COUNSELLING HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS. CISNEROS WAS FRUSTRATED BY THE DESPERATION SHE SAW IN HER STUDENTS.</p>
01.14.30.20	<p>SANDRA CISNEROS: I felt very impotent as a teacher and I was a terrible counselor. I would cry with them—you know pass some Kleenex and I'd cry too. Well, that's not going to help you. Your counselor's crying too. But I didn't know what else to do so... And the weekend would come and these stories would stay with me. I'd just write them down and add them to this goulash I was writing, you know, that had started from an autobiographical place but by the time I finished it was...composite of mishmash of stories from my present mixed with my past... .. I didn't have an out for Esperanza other than the arts because at that time as a young woman I didn't know another way to be.</p>
01.15.11.00	<p>NARRATOR: TEN YEARS LATER, SHE FINISHED HOUSE ON MANGO STREET. THE MAIN CHARACTER, ESPERANZA IS A GIRL SEARCHING FOR HER PLACE IN THE WORLD.</p>

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01.15.22.00	<p>GREG SARRIS: What you have in <i>The House on Mango Street</i> is a...young, Mexican-American girl living in Chicago, in a lower income, blue collar neighborhood, largely Hispanic, asking the big question: Who do I want to be when I grow up? How do I want to be? How do I want to be a woman? I don't want to be just someone who's simply named Esperanza.</p>
01.15.51.00	<p>CISNEROS READER: <i>In English, my name means "hope." In Spanish, it means too many letters... I would like to baptize myself under a new name, a name more like the real me, the one nobody sees... Esperanza as Liasandra or Maritza or ZeZe the X. Yes, something like ZeZe the X will do.</i></p>
01.16.10.00	<p>NARRATOR: THROUGH THE COURSE OF THE NOVEL, ESPERANZA LOOKS TO HER FRIENDS AND THE ADULT WOMEN IN HER NEIGHBORHOOD AS POSSIBLE ROLE MODELS.</p>
01.16.19.00	<p>GREG SARRIS: She sees oppressed women, women with their elbows in windows, women stuck in homes, women abused by men, women left by men, all kinds of bad examples. And she doesn't want to be one of those.</p>
01.16.36.20	<p>NARRATOR: ESPERANZA'S OWN MOTHER IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE LIFE THE GIRL HOPES TO ESCAPE.</p>
01:17:10	<p>PATRICIA CHU: There's a question there. I'm smart, my mother is smart, what happened to all this possibility?</p>
01.16.49.20	<p>CISNEROS READER: <i>Today while cooking oatmeal she is Madame Butterfly until she sighs and points the wooden spoon at me. I</i></p>

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	<i>could've been somebody, you know? Esperanza, you go to school. Study hard...You want to know why I quit school? Because I didn't have nice clothes. No clothes, but I had brains. Yup, she says disgusted, stirring again. I was a smart cookie then.</i>
01:17.10.20	SANDRA CISNEROS: I think Esperanza's looking for feminist identity—that's what I see—and I was inventing my feminist identity as I went along, you know. I was trying to say, no, this isn't it. That's not an option. I don't want to wind up like this young woman. That... Not that door. Don't go there! But I didn't know exactly where to go so by process of elimination, you know, I was writing my way through this maze for my students and for myself because I was a young woman finding my own feminist identity.
01:17.41.05	NARRATOR: WHEN ESPERANZA BECOMES A YOUNG ADULT, SHE DECIDES TO LEAVE MANGO STREET TO PURSUE HER DREAM OF BECOMING A WRITER.
01:17.50.20	CISNEROS READER: <i>Friends and neighbors will say, What happened to that Esperanza? Where did she go with all those books and paper? Why did she march so far away? They will not know I have gone away to come back. For the ones I left behind. For the ones who cannot out.</i>
01:18.06.0	PATRICIA CHU: It's a kind of, ah, pure victory, right, because she's going to come out and she's going to become a writer. She'll go back. It's important. It's a responsibility for the ethnic writer to go back and speak for the ones who cannot out. But she can't actually rescue them. She can only speak for them.
01:18.24.03	MARY PAT BRADY: She also I think wants us to understand that what some would

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	<p>see as an escape is not an...is not abandonment, that she understands that by becoming a chronicler of her of her barrio ah...a storyteller who is committed to the validity of the people that she...grows up with. That she is not escaping but that she is providing another kind of model for living.</p>
01:18.51.00	<p>NARRATOR: LIKE KINSTGON, CISNEROS EXPERIMENTED WITH FORM. HOUSE ON MANGO STREET IS A NOVEL MADE UP OF SHORT VIGNETTES.</p>
01:19.00.00	<p>MARY PAT BRADY: Cisneros tells her story by giving us what she once called "lazy poems," a series of "poentos" or histories. They're very short and that are...interconnected.</p>
01:19:10.00	<p>SANDRA CISNEROS: My model was, ah, Jorge Luis Borge's <i>Dream Tigers</i> book which has these poetry and prose, and I was more taken with the, ah, vignettes which are "fablesque." Ah. There's something very, ah, poetic about them in that they end with a resonating last line, last line that has a beautiful image the way a poem might end.</p>
01.19.45.15	<p>NARRATOR: THOUGH ISSUES OF ETHNIC IDENTITIES ARE A COMMON THEME IN POSTMODERN LITERATURE, SOME STORIES EXPLORE OTHER KINDS OF IDENTITY.</p> <p>LESLIE FEINBERG RECORDING:</p> <p>NARRATOR: LESLIE FEINBERG BRINGS ISSUES OF GENDER AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION TO THE PAGE IN HER 1993 NOVEL, <i>STONE BUTCH BLUES.</i></p>

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01.20.24.21	<p>LESLIE FEINBERG: There was a debate going on in the young lesbian community about butch-fem identities, and I heard people talking about... they weren't trying to be superficial, but they were saying, "Well, you know, my shirt's butch, but my shoes are fem," and or, "My partner's a fem and she's always late, she's always shopping, ha, ha, ha." And I thought, "No, this—we need to have a different level of discussion about gender expression and gender oppression."</p>
01.20.57.00	<p>NARRATOR: LESLIE FEINBERG IS A BUTCH OR MASCULINE LESBIAN WHO CAME OF AGE DURING THE 1960's. THE DAUGHTER OF WORKING-CLASS, JEWISH PARENTS, FEINBERG GREW UP IN A BLUE COLLAR NEIGHBORHOOD IN BUFFALO, NEW YORK.</p> <p>FROM THE TIME SHE WAS A CHILD, FEINBERG KNEW SHE WAS DIFFERENT AND TRIED UNSUCCESSFULLY TO ASSIMILATE. IN HER NOVEL <i>STONE BUTCH BLUES</i>, FEINBERG'S CHARACTER JESS STUGGLES WITH MANY OF THE SAME ISSUES FEINBERG HERSELF FACED GROWING UP.</p> <p><i>STONE BUTCH BLUES</i> IS A NOVEL, WHICH AT FIRST GLANCE SEEMS TRADITIONAL IN FORM.</p>
01.21.44.18	<p>GREG SARRIS: The language is unadorned. It's straightforward. And it's deliberate. How can it be anything but when you're talking about a subject matter that is already so exotic and adorned. You have to deliver it I think in a very straightforward and human way. And the book is framed by a letter to her ex-girlfriend saying, "I really loved you but because I didn't love myself I couldn't love you the way you needed and we all needed to be loved. Let</p>

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	me show you what happened to me and went...I went through in hopes of forgiveness."
01.22.23.10	FEINBERG READER: <i>I think you knew it wasn't you I was keeping myself safe from. You treated my stone self as a wound that needed love and healing.</i>
01.22.33.14	NARRATOR: THE NOVEL SPANS FOUR DECADES OF JESS'S LIFE, DEPICTING THE TRAUMATIC ENCOUNTERS WITH THE DOMINANT CULTURE THAT LED TO HER TRANSFORMATION INTO A STONE BUTCH.
01.22.48.00	GREG SARRIS: A stone butch is a butch woman, a...mannish, masculine woman, who is stoned—who has been made to stone—who can give sex but can't receive it, cannot be vulnerable—emotionally, sexually, or otherwise. They're shut down for protection.
01.23.10.26	NARRATOR: JESS CANNOT MEET SOCIETY'S EXPECTATIONS OF WOMANHOOD. WHEN SHE IS RAPED BY MEMBERS OF THE HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL TEAM, SHE LEARNS THE CONSEQUENCES FOR THOSE WHO FAIL TO FULFILL SOCIETY'S NORMS.
01.23.30.00	FEINBERG READER: <i>Jeffrey grabbed my hair and yanked it back so hard I gasped. He fucked me harder. "You dirty Kike bitch, you fucking bulldager." All my crimes were listed. I was guilty as charged.</i>
01.23.45.10	GREG SARRIS: It's their form of power. This is what a man does and this is what a woman does and we're going to force this on you, and that's what that rape was so much about.

#16-Search for Identity

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01.28.25.00	End