Chinese-American Literature

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Chinese-American Literature

- It is a part of Asian-American Literature, which can be regarded as series of works, written by people of Asian origin, who were born or moved to North America.
- Such works are written based on authors emotions and impressions, and we can see reaction and interpretation of their life in America.
- These works are written in English language and published in USA.
- Represent life experience of 1st, or even more often of 2nd generation of immigrants.
Maxine Hong Kingston  湯婷婷 (Tāng Tíngtíng)

- October 27, 1940 (age 74)
- Born in Stockton, California, 2nd generation Chinese
- *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* (1976), awarded the National Book Critics Circle Award for Nonfiction
- *China Men* (1980), awarded the National Book Award
- In total: three novels and several works of non-fiction about the experiences of Chinese immigrants living in the United States.
The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts (1976)

- It is both memoir about author’s being raised in California by her Chinese immigrant parents, and a non-fiction, full of Chinese folktales and feminist themes.

- There are five chapters in the book -> blend of autobiography with old Chinese folktales. Complex portrayal of the 20th century experiences of Chinese-Americans living in the USA.

- Throughout her childhood, Maxine Hong Kingston listened to her mother's tales of a China where girls are worthless, tradition is exalted and only a strong woman can make her way upwards. Growing up in a changing America, surrounded by Chinese myth and memory, this is her story of two cultures.

- Criticism by American novelist Frank Chin: she had tainted the purity of Chinese tradition in reinterpreting traditional stories and myths. -> she invented a “fake” Chinese-American culture that is more similar to the mainstream.”
Amy Tan
譚恩美 (Tan En Mei)

- February 19, 1952 (age 62)
- Born in Oakland, California. 2nd generation Chinese immigrants
- Her works explore mother-daughter relationships and the Chinese-American experience
The Joy Luck Club
(1989)

- The book focuses on four Chinese American immigrant families in San Francisco who start a club known as The Joy Luck Club, playing Chinese game of mahjong for money while feasting on a variety of foods.
- The book is structured with four parts divided into four sections to create sixteen chapters. The three mothers and four share short and bright stories about their lives. Each part is preceded by a parable relating to the game.
- The accent is made on understanding mother-daughter talks, on their different understanding on surrounding world.
Eric Liu
刘柏川 (Liú Bǎichuān)

• 1968 (age 46-47)
• Born in Poughkeepsie, New York, (parents emigrated from Taiwan.)
• Served as a White House speechwriter and the deputy domestic-policy adviser to President Clinton.
• Liu is a regular columnist for CNN.com and a correspondent for TheAtlantic.com.
• In 2014 he launched the Aspen Institute Program on Citizenship and American Identity to advance national conversation about the core American question: "Who is us?".
• The most recent work - *Guiding Lights: The People Who Lead Us Toward Our Purpose in Life* (2005), about transformative mentors, leaders and teachers
The Accidental Asian: Notes of a Native Speaker (1998)

- It is a collection of author’s memoirs and essays + His search for his cultural and personal identity (To what extent his Chinese heritage has influenced his status and personality in contemporary American society?)

- “You can take a Chinese out of China, but you can't take the China out of a Chinese.”

- The tragedy of assimilation: “the inevitable estrangement between the immigrant father who imagines himself still in exile and the American son who strains to prove his belonging.”

- Criticizes American-Asian Movement: "Unlike blacks, Asians do not have a cultural idiom that arose from centuries of thinking of themselves as a race; unlike Jews, Asians haven't a unifying spiritual and historical legacy; unlike Latinos, another recently invented community, Asians don't have a linguistic basis for their continued apartness." efforts to forge a separatist, monolithic community in a country where most Asian-Americans under 34 are married to non-Asians go against the grain of logic and demography.
David Wong Louie

雷祖威 (Léi Zǔwēi)

- 1954 (age 60–61)
- *The Barbarians are Coming*. (2001)
- “*Pangs of love*” is a collection of 11 stories, where author traces the scales of alienation as he portrays a series of Asian immigrants emotionally imprisoned and isolated, many by their attitudes toward their Asian backgrounds
- ‘Displacement” (awarded the Best American Short Stories 1989). This is a story of Mrs. Chow, a formerly aristocratic immigrant to America who has to work as nursemaid to a disabled old lady. (She tries to find her place in the new world)
Gish Jen
任璧蓮 (Rén Bìlián)

• August 12, 1955 (age 59)
• Born in Long Island, New York
• In her works she tries to answer the question: What does it mean to be an American?
• "As soon as you ask yourself the question, "What does it mean to be Irish-American, Iranian-American, Greek-American, you are American."
• Her goal is not to educate readers about the foreign world of Chinese American culture, but to ask audience to consider the changing face of American identity.
• Mona in the Promised Land (1996).
This book is a sort of a presentation of the Changs’ family efforts to reconcile their sense of a Chinese identity with the demands and challenges of life in the United States.

At first, they cling to their old-world ideas of themselves. But as they begin to dream the American dream of self-invention, they move gradually and ironically from people who disrespect all that is “typical American” to people who might be seen as typically American themselves.

The Chang’s learn how to negotiate and deal with the complex culture that offers lots of opportunities, but also has huge amount of difficulties and social barriers.

The main question author wants to find the answer is “Who is a typical American today?”
Thank you very much for your attention!