

Analysis of "Chinese Woman in Manhattan" from the Perspective of Chinese Diaspora Literature

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Abstract

This paper takes the Chinese diaspora literary work "Chinese Woman in Manhattan" as the research object. Through in-depth analysis of its content, theme, and writing style, it discusses issues such as the living conditions, cultural conflicts and integration, and identity recognition of Chinese people overseas. The work shows the protagonist's struggle in the United States in the form of autobiography and has a certain epitome and imprint of the times. This work not only reflects the hardships and achievements of Chinese people in foreign countries but also reveals the important value and significance of diaspora literature in cross-cultural exchanges. It has important reference significance for the study of Chinese diaspora literature today.

Keywords

Chinese diaspora literature; "Chinese Woman in Manhattan"

1. The Concept of Diaspora Literature

The term "diaspora" has then extended to global migration and relocation phenomena. The formation of each diaspora phenomenon always accompanies and affects the derivation and development of the history and culture of one's own nation. [4] Chinese diaspora literature belongs to a category of literature and mainly records the daily life, emotional experience, and self-identification of Chinese groups overseas. The development of Chinese American diaspora literature began with the large-scale wave of Chinese immigration in the 19th century under the influence of globalization. In the 20th century, Chinese American writers created a large number of excellent autobiographical works while adapting to the environment and struggling to survive. From the early stage of blindly pursuing authenticity but lacking literary and artistic qualities to being recognized by mainstream American culture in the later stage and truly making the voices of Chinese groups heard, Chinese writers explored step by step and developed a brand-new autobiographical diaspora literature with Chinese and Western characteristics. Diaspora literature has a certain temporality. [1] And the work "Chinese Woman in Manhattan" is one of the important works in this literary category. It vividly depicts the life picture of a Chinese woman in New York with real and vivid brushstrokes. This paper aims to deeply analyze this work and discuss the characteristics and social values of Chinese diaspora literature and the attached feminism contained in it.

2. Overview of the Work "Chinese Woman in Manhattan"

2.1. Author and creative background

The author of "Chinese Woman in Manhattan" is Zhou Li. She created this work based on her own personal experience. In the early 1980s, at the beginning of China's reform and opening up, many people went overseas to seek development opportunities with dreams. Zhou Li was one of them. The work is described from the first-person perspective and tells about her

struggle in New York full of challenges and opportunities. This work is not only a record of her personal experience but also an epitome of Chinese immigrants at the beginning of reform and opening up in that era. In the early 1990s, the upsurge of reform and opening up also set off a new round of study abroad fever and "gold rush." These upsurges released people's long-suppressed primitive vitality and life impulse. As a literary work, the creation of "Chinese Woman in Manhattan" is successful. Its success lies in the fact that Ms. Zhou Li has added a new typical figure to our contemporary literary gallery. Such an image of a female capitalist growing from an educated youth going to the mountains and the countryside and having the characteristics of the times and China is unprecedented in our literature. It is precisely because of the novelty and depth of this character image that many readers have a new look at this work. [7]

2.2. Brief description of the work's content

The book consists of six modules: "Business Turmoil in New York," "Childhood," "First Love of a Young Girl," "Cabin in the Great Northern Wilderness," "Studying in the United States," and "Chinese Woman in Manhattan." The book describes the life changes of "I" from China to the United States, including the years as a educated youth in the Great Northern Wilderness, the hardships of studying in the United States, and the struggles in the business world of Manhattan. Through these experiences, it shows her growth, struggle, and emotional entanglements in different cultural environments.

Autobiographical writing by Chinese Americans is rooted in a specific historical context and is influenced by the identity and cultural environment of special ethnic minorities. The transformation of autobiographical writing styles in the late 20th century also shows the special historical imprints of postmodernism and non-fiction novel trends. In addition to the common characteristic of literature being influenced by historical factors, the writing of personal experiences and the exploration of ethnic identity are also important means and eternal themes of autobiographical writing in Chinese American diaspora literature in the 20th century. In July 1992, "Chinese Woman in Manhattan" was published in the name of documentary literature. The book tells the life legend of "Zhou Li" in the way of self-narration by the protagonist. Its American business experience was fresh at that time, and the domestic growth experience evoked the memories of contemporaries. The "love story" mixes the sentimental sentiment of educated youth novels and romance novels. The exotic love is full of sensuality and sensationalism, extremely eye-catching. The book highly praises "the grandeur, luxury, generosity of the United States and the majesty of the golden empire." The prose recording travels unfolds various exotic flavors. While worshipping American wealth and values, the heroine never forgets to hold high the banner of patriotism and tries to speak for the value and significance of a generation. [3]

3. The Embodiment of the Characteristics of Chinese Diaspora Literature in "Chinese Woman in Manhattan"

3.1. Conflicts and adaptations between different cultures

The work deeply depicts the conflicts and struggles of "I" between Chinese and American cultures. When first arriving in the United States, "I" faced problems such as language barriers and value differences. But through continuous efforts and learning, "I" gradually adapted to the new environment. After experiencing a series of business challenges and successes, "I" deeply reflected on and summarized my experiences. Recognizing the limitations of Chinese thinking and actively seeking changes to better integrate and adapt to the business world of Manhattan. As the text says. The business world is like a battlefield. Once engaged in business, it is like being tied to a roaring and speeding train. From the signing to the completion of a contract, it is hard

to predict where something might go wrong. Your nerves must always be in a state of tension like walking on a tightrope. No wonder American business people say that doing business requires nerves like steel cables. [6]

3.2. Confusion and construction of self-identity

The experience overseas makes "I" confused about my identity. "I" in the text not only has a deep affection and identification with Chinese culture but also unconsciously integrates into American society in daily life. This duality of identity is delicately shown in the work. This is a common phenomenon in Chinese diaspora. Continuously looking for one's position in two cultures and trying to construct a unique Chinese identity to achieve a recognition of one's self-image. In the text, when first arriving in Manhattan, "I" faced a cultural environment, values, and lifestyle completely different from those in China. This strong cultural shock made her doubt her original identity recognition and not know how to position herself in the new cultural context. The surrounding social environment may be full of stereotypical impressions that conform to a certain "Chinese."

In the process of confusion, "I" also actively constructs a new self-image. By actively contacting and learning Manhattan's culture while adhering to my Chinese cultural roots, I try to integrate the essence of the two cultures into my thoughts and behaviors to form unique personal characteristics. "I" strive to succeed in the business field and gain confidence and a sense of achievement. These achievements have become important cornerstones for me to construct self-identification, allowing me to believe that I have the ability to survive and develop in a strange environment. After experiencing various confusions and explorations, "I" also gradually returns to the values that I truly cherish in my heart, such as family, friendship, integrity, etc., and builds a true, firm, and unaffected self-image on this basis.

3.3. Nostalgia for hometown and cultural inheritance

Although "I" am in a foreign country, I still have deep nostalgia for my hometown, China. Through recalling childhood and telling Chinese stories, the book reflects "I"'s inheritance and perseverance of Chinese culture. At the same time, "I" also integrates elements of Chinese culture into my life and career in the United States. The protagonist may often miss the delicacies of hometown. Those familiar tastes become deep concerns in "my" heart. For example, recalling the mountains, rivers, four seasons changes, and unique folk customs of hometown. Perhaps it is the rape flower fields in spring, the golden rice fields in autumn, or the lively bazaars and traditional festival activities. Full of nostalgia for relatives, childhood playmates, and former close friends who stay in hometown. Thinking of the happy times spent with them, those warm companionship and deep emotions are hard to find in a foreign country. Hometown carries the protagonist's childhood and youth. Schools, streets, and corners where she once played. These memories surge in her heart when she is lonely and tired and become spiritual comforts.

3.4. Acceptance and recognition of marriage to foreign men

The United States is an immigrant country. Chinese people in this multi-ethnic country inevitably have to face marriage issues. Interracial marriage is a common topic. In the text, "I" finally chose to marry Mike under his meticulous care. This marriage behavior may be a process that people experience in the situation of Chinese diaspora at that time. This is also one of the phenomena that occur in diaspora literature. "I" in the text sees opportunities for self-growth and expansion in an exotic marriage. By combining with a partner from a different cultural background, one is exposed to new ways of thinking, lifestyles, and social circles, prompting oneself to continuously learn and progress, and thus more approving the positive impact brought by this cross-border combination. At the same time, in daily life, "I" is also gradually

accepted and blessed by the people around. This recognition from society also enhances the acceptance and recognition of exotic marriage, further eliminating inner concerns and worries.

4. Conclusion

"Chinese Woman in Manhattan" is a representative work of Chinese diaspora literature. Through depicting the life experience of the protagonist in Manhattan, it shows the living conditions, cultural conflicts and integration, and identity recognition of Chinese people overseas. With its authenticity, vivid descriptions, and profound themes, the work has attracted many readers and caused a great sensation in China at that time. At the same time, it also has important value and significance for Chinese diaspora groups, the literary field, and cross-cultural exchanges between different countries.

However, due to the narrative perspective and the author's subjectivity, this work also has certain limitations. For autobiographical and documentary works, authenticity is of prime importance. This concerns the author's writing ethics and the operational norms of the publishing industry. "Chinese Woman in Manhattan" is claimed to be an autobiography and a documentary, but it has triggered lawsuits due to the "authenticity" issue. At the same time, particularity cannot represent universality. The particularity of personal experience may not fully represent the situation of the entire Chinese diaspora group. But it is undeniable that it has an important position and positive influence in the field of Chinese diaspora literature. In the future, we look forward to the emergence of more excellent works of Chinese diaspora literature to further enrich and expand the research in this field and make greater contributions to promoting the diverse development of culture.

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