

华裔美国女性文学选读

张淑梅 谢立团 申丽红 / 编著

电子科技大学出版社

Selected Readings of Female Chinese American Literature

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序

记得 90 年代初读大学时,英美文学史课主要讲授英国文学史,美国部分稍稍带过。那时老师的解释是:美国文学历史短,大作家不多。几乎所有文学方向的毕业论文都是有关英国作家的作品。我本科的毕业论文就是评论的《简·爱》。仅读过一部美国小说:霍桑的《红字》,而那时大家喜欢的电影却都是美国大片。读硕士时开始认真读美国当代小说,发现其故事主题新颖并且离我们的生活不远,语言也不像 19 世纪小说那样晦涩难懂。从此喜欢读美国小说,尤其是内容丰富的华裔作家的作品,并且把它作为我的研究方向。

本书之所以只选取华裔女作家的作品是因为 90 年代前后登上文坛的美国华裔文学新人大多是出生在 20 世纪 60 年代前后的女作家。这些新涌现的女作家,在美国文坛获得许多殊荣。她们的作品主要涉及中国文化和历史。这些出生在美国,不会讲中文的华裔美国作家以她们独特的视角为读者描绘出一幅幅画卷。不仅让说英语的读者而且也让世界其他国家的读者感受到了她们作品的魅力。

本书的主要目的不仅是让读者领略华裔美国女性作家叱咤文坛的风采,更重要的是让读者更好地了解华裔美国女性文学的发展以及在美国文坛举足轻重的地位,所以除了选取 90 年代前后的作品外,还选取了华裔文学之母水仙女(1865-1914)的作品和在华裔美国文学发展历程中起里程碑作用的作家黄玉雪(1922-2006)和汤亭亭(1940-)的主要作品。本书共节选 10 位女作家的 22 部作品,包括自传、小说和纪实文学作品。作品年度跨越一个多世纪,从 1912 年水仙女的短篇小说集《春香夫人》到 2014 年邝丽莎的《中国娃娃》。这些作品能够代表各个不同历史时期的华裔美国文学,能够让读者了解华裔在美国的生活、工作、婚姻、家庭等各个方面。起到文化交流的作用。

本书适用于英语专业的学生,可以作为文学课的教材,同时也可以作为英

语学习者的阅读材料。

Chapter I - Chapter V 由张淑梅编著

Chapter VI - Chapter VIII 由谢立团编著

Chapter IX - Chapter X 由申丽红编著

张淑梅

2014.5

与河北联合大学

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Chapter I Sui Sin Far

Sui Sin Far (Chinese: 水仙花; born Edith Maude Eaton; 15 March 1865 – 7 April 1914) was an author known for her writing about Chinese people in North America and the Chinese American experience. “Sui Sin Far”, her pen name, is the Cantonese name of the narcissus flower, popular amongst Chinese people. Born in Macclesfield, Cheshire, England, Far was the daughter of Englishman Edward Eaton, a merchant who met her Chinese mother while on a business trip to Shanghai, China. Her mother was Grace “Lotus Blossom” Trefusis, the adopted daughter of English missionaries.

Far was the oldest daughter and second child of fourteen children. In the early 1870s, her family left England to live in Hudson, New York, United States, but stayed there only a short time before relocating to Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Her father struggled to make a living and the large family went through difficult times. Because of their poverty, at a young age, Far left school to work in order to help support her family. Nonetheless, the children were educated at home and raised in an intellectually stimulating environment that saw both Far and her younger sister Winnifred Eaton, who wrote under the pen name, Onoto Watanna, become successful writers.

Eaton began writing as a young girl; her articles on the Chinese people were accepted for publication in Montreal’s English-language newspapers, the Montreal Star and the Daily Witness. She eventually left Montreal to live in the United States, first in San Francisco, then in Seattle, before going to the east coast to work in Boston. While working as a legal secretary she continued to write and although her appearance and manners would have allowed her to easily pass as an Englishwoman, she asserted her Chinese heritage and wrote articles that told what life was like for a Chinese woman in white America. First published in 1896, her fictional stories about

Chinese Americans were a reasoned appeal for her society's acceptance of working-class Chinese at a time when the United States Congress maintained the Chinese Exclusion Act, which banned Chinese immigration to the United States.

Over the ensuing years, Far wrote a number of short stories and newspaper articles while working on her first collection of fiction. Published in June 1912, *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* was a collection of linked short stories marketed as a novel.

Far never married and died in Montreal and is interred in Mount Royal Cemetery.

In 1889, British writer Kipling ever wrote down in his article: "Oh East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet till the sky earth and sky stand presently at God's great judgment seat". These words insinuating the "Orientalism" (Said) prevalent at the turn of the century showed the disparity between eastern and western cultures. However, almost in the same era of Kipling, in America on the other side of the ocean, a female writer under a Chinese pen name of Sui Sin Far, whose fame was far less resounding than Kipling, declared in one of her autobiographic articles with a totally opposing tone, "only when the whole world becomes one family will human beings be able to see clearly and hear distinctly" (Sui 223-224). From a brand new perspective, she reviewed East-West relationship and advocated establishing an ideal society of East-West "one family". However, her unique socio-cultural view had long been ignored in the society ruled by the Whites and was discovered until the 1960s with the abrupt emergence of Asian-American literature especially Chinese-American literature in North America. It is surprising to find that the social ideal advocated by Sui Sin Far nearly a century ago was so ahead of time.

Writers who portrayed Chinese immigrants sympathetically include Edith Eaton, whose pen name was Sui Sin Far. Considered the first Chinese American writer in English, Edith enriched Chinese American literature through her autobiographical account "Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian" (1909) and her short-story collection *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* (1912). In these works, Sui Sin Far exposes the wrongs done to the Chinese in America. Her writings, which consistently mirrored her developing identification with her Chinese roots, probe the humanity of working-class women, the bond of friendship between women against the backdrop of gender-based exclusion laws and fractured families, and many other topics. Sui Sin Far's legacy lies in being "a bridge between two worlds". Her works anticipate the Post-world War II.

The title story of *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* revolves around the title character, a

Chinese woman who moves to Seattle without knowing a word of English and masters the language within five years. Mr. and Mrs. Spring Fragrance live in a Chinese neighborhood but have become, in the word of their contemporary Westerners, "Americanized." The story is especially adept at calling attention to the manipulation, ambiguity, and irony of words and the ways in which people shape situations open to interpretation with the words they choose. Jade Spring Fragrance, for instance, does not so much ask as inform her husband that she will extend a trip so that she can witness American fudge making; her husband then goes on to inform a neighbor that he has asked his wife to extend her trip so that he might have a smoking party. Throughout the story, the couple vacillates between appreciation and disparagement of things American.

Mrs. Spring Fragrance

Sui Sin Far¹

When MRS SPRING FRAGRANCE first arrived in Seattle, she was unacquainted with even one word of her husband, speaking of her, said: "There are no more American words for her learning." And everyone who knew Mrs. Spring Fragrance agreed with Mr. Spring Fragrance.

Mr. Spring Fragrance, whose business name was Sing Yook², was a young curio merchant. Though conservatively Chinese in many respects, he was at the same time what is called by the Westerners, "Americanized." Mrs. Spring Fragrance was even more "Americanized."

Next door to the Spring Fragrances lived the Chin Yuens³. Mrs. Chin Yuen was much older than Mrs. Spring Fragrance; but she had a daughter of eighteen with whom Mrs. Spring Fragrance was on terms of great Friendship. The daughter was a pretty girl whose Chinese name was Mai Gwi Far⁴ (a rose) and whose American name was Laura. Nearly everybody called her Laura, even her parents and Chinese friends. Laura had a sweetheart, a youth named Kai Tzu⁵. Kai Tzu, who was American-born, and as ruddy and stalwart as any young Westerner, was noted amongst⁶ baseball players as one of the finest pitchers on the Coast. He could also sing, "Drink to me only with thine eyes." to Laura's piano accompaniment.

Now the only person who knew that Kai Tzu loved Laura and that Laura loved Kai Tzu, was Mrs Spring Fragrance. The reason for this was that, although the Chin Yuen parents lived in a house furnished in American style, and wore American clothes, yet they religiously observed many Chinese customs, and their ideals of life were the ideals of their Chinese forefathers. Therefore, they had betrothed their daughter, Laura, at the age of fifteen, to the eldest son of the Chinese Government school-teacher in San Francisco. The time for the consummation of the betrothal was approaching.

Laura was with Mrs. Spring Fragrance and Mrs. Spring Fragrance was trying to cheer her.

"I had such a pretty walk today," said she. "I crossed the banks above the beach and came back by the long road. In the green grass the daffodils were blowing, in the cottage gardens the currant bushes were flowering, and in the air was the perfume of the wallflower. I wished; Laura, that you were with me."

Laura burst into tears. "That is the work," she sobbed, "Kai Tzu and I so love; but never, ah, never, can we take it together again."

"Now, Little Sister," comforted Mrs. Spring Fragrance "you really must not grieve like that. Is there not a beautiful American named Tennyson⁷, which says:

"'tis⁸ better to have loved and lost,

Than never to have loved at all?"

Mrs. Spring Fragrance was unaware that Mr. Spring Fragrance, having returned from the city, tired which the day's business, had thrown himself down on the bamboo settee on the veranda, and that although his eyes were engaged in scanning the pages of the Chinese World, his ears could not help receiving the words which were borne to him through the open window.

"'tis better to have loved and lost,

Than never to have loved at all,"

repeated Mrs. Spring Fragrance. Not wishing to hear more of the secret talk of women, he arose and sauntered around the veranda to the other side of the house. Two pigeons circled around his head. He felt in his pocket for a li-chi⁹ which he usually carried for their pecking. His fingers touched a little box. It contained a jade-stone pendant, which, Mrs. Spring Fragrance had particularly admired the last time she was down town. It was the fifth anniversary of Mr. and Mrs. Spring Fragrance's wedding day.

Mr. Spring Fragrance pressed the little box down into the depths of his pocket.

A young man came out of the back door of the house at Mr. Spring Fragrance's

left.

The Chin Yuen house was at his right.

"Good evening," said the young man. "Good evening," returned Mr. Spring Fragrance. He stepped down from his porch and went and leaned over the railing which separated this yard from the yard in which stood the young man.

"Will you please tell me," said Mr. Spring Fragrance, "the meaning of two lines of an American verse which I have heard?"

"Certainly," returned the young man with a genial smile. He was star student at the University of Washington and had not the slightest doubt that he could explain the meaning of all things in universe. "Well," said Mr. Spring Fragrance, it is this:

"'tis better to have loved and lost,
Than never to have loved at all.

"Ah!" responded the young man with an air of profound wisdom. That it is good thing to love anyway-even if we can't get what we love, or, as the poet tells us, lose what we love. Of course, one needs experiences to feel the truth of this teaching."

The young man smiled pensively and reminiscently. More than a dozen young maidens "loved and lost." were passing before his mind's eye.

"The truth of the teaching!" echoed Mr. Spring Fragrance, a little testily. "There is no truth in it whatever. It is disobedient to reason. Is it not better to have what you do not have?"

"That depends," answered the young man, "upon temperament."

"I thank you. Good evening," said Mr. Spring Fragrance. He turned away to muse upon the unwisdom of the American way of looking at things.

Meanwhile, inside the house, Laura was refusing to be comforted.

"Ah, no! no!" cried she. "If I had not gone to school with Kai Tzu, nor talked nor walked with him, nor played the accompaniments to his songs, then I might consider with complacency, or at least without horror, my approaching marriage with the son of Man You¹⁰. But as it is-oh, as it is -!"

The girl rocked herself to and fro in heart-felt grief.

Mrs. Spring Fragrance knelt down beside her, and clasping her arms around her neck, cried in sympathy:

"Little Sister, oh, Little Sister! Dry your tears-do not despair. A moon has yet to pass before the marriage can take place. Who knows what the stars may have to say to one another during its passing? A little bird has whispered to me--"

For a long time Mrs. Spring Fragrance talked. For a long time Laura listened. When the girl arose to go, there was a bright light in their eyes.

II

MRS. SPRING FRAGRANCE, in San Francisco on a visit to her cousin, the wife of the herb doctor of Clay Street, was having a good time. She was invited everywhere that the wife of an honorable Chinese merchant could go. There was much to see and hear, including more than a dozen babies who had been born in the families of her friends since she last visited the city of the Golden Gate. Mrs. Spring Fragrance loved babies. She had had two herself, but both had been transplanted into the spirit land before the completion of even one moon. There were also many dinners and theatre-parties given in her honor. It was at one of the there-parties that Mrs. , Spring Fragrance met Ah Oi¹¹, a young girl who had the reputation of being the prettiest Chinese girl in San Francisco, and the naughtiest. In spite of gossip, however, Mrs. Spring Fragrance took a great fancy to Ah Oil and invited her to a tête-à-tête¹² picnic on the following day this invitation Ah Oi joyfully accepted. She was a sort of bird girl and never felt so happy as when out in the part or woods.

On the day after the picnic Mrs. Spring Fragrance wrote to Laura Chin Yuen thus:

My PRECIOUS LAURA, —May the bamboo ever wave. Next week I accompany Ah Oi to the beauteous town of San José. There will we be met by the son of the Illustrious Teacher, and in a little Mission, presided over by a benevolent American priest, the little Ah Oil and the son of the Illustrious. Teacher will be joined together in love and harmony—two pieces of music made to complete one another.

The Son of the Illustrious Teacher, having been through an American Hall of Learning, is well able to provide for his parents, now that he is assured that your grief at his loss will not be inconsolable. He wishes me to waft to you and to Kai Tzu—and the little Ah Oil joins with him—ten thousand rainbow wishes for your happiness.

My respects to you r honorable parents, and to yourself, the heart of your loving friend,

JADE SPRING FRAGRANCE

To Mr. Spring Fragrance, Mrs. Spring Fragrance also indicted a letter:

GREAT AND HONORED MAN, —Greeting from your plum blossom¹³, who is desirous of hiding herself from the sun of your presence for a week of seven days

more. My honorable cousin is preparing for the Fifth Moon Festival, and wishes me to compound for the occasion some American "fudge"¹⁴, for which delectable sweet, made by my clumsy hands, you have sometimes shown a slight prejudice. I am enjoying a most agreeable sweet, made by my clumsy hands, you have sometimes shown a slight prejudice. I am enjoying a most agreeable visit, and American friends, as also our own, strive benevolently for the accomplishment of my pleasure. Mrs. Samuel Smith, for my accompaniment to a magniloquent lecture the other evening. The subject was "America, the Protector of China." It was most exhilarating, and the effect of so much expression of benevolence leads me to beg of you to forget to remember that the barber charges you one dollar for a shave while he humbly submits to the American man a bill of fifteen cents. And murmur no more because your honored elder brother, on a visit to this country, is detained under the roof - tree of this great Government instead of under your own humble roof. ?? Console him with the reflection that he is protected under the wing of the Eagle, the Emblem of Liberty¹⁵. What is the loss of the hundred years or the thousand times the dollars compared? All of this I have learned from Mrs. ? Samuel Smith, who is as brilliant and great of maid as one of your own superior sex.

For me it is sufficient to know that the Golden Gate Park¹⁶ is most enchanting, and the seals on the rock at the Cliff House¹⁷ extremely entertaining and amiable, There is much feasting and merrymaking under the lanterns in honor your Stupid Thorn.

I have purchased for your smoking a pipe with an amber mouth. It is said to be very sweet to the lips and to emit a cloud of smoke fit for the gods to inhale.

Awaiting, by the wonderful wire of the telegram message, your gracious permission to remain for the celebration of the Fifth Moon Festival¹⁸ and the making of American "fudge," I continue for ten thousand times ten thousand years,

Yours ever loving and obedient woman,

JADE

P. S. Forget not to care for the cat, the birds, and the flowers. Do not eat too quickly nor fan too vigorously now that the weather is warming.

Mrs. Spring Fragrance smiled as she folded this last epistle. Even if he were old-fashioned, there was never a husband so good and kind as hers. Only on one occasion since their marriage had he slighted her wishes. That was when, on the last anniversary of their wedding, she had signified a desire for a certain jadestone pendant, and he had failed to satisfy that desire.

But Mrs. SPRING Fragrance, being of a happy nature, and disposed to look upon the bright side of things, did not allow her mind to dwell upon the jadestone pendant. Instead, she gazed complacently down upon her bejeweled fingers and folded in with her letter to Mr. Spring Fragrance a BRIGHT little sheaf of condensed love.

III

MR. SPRING FRAGRANCE sat on his doorstep. He had been reading two letters, one from Mrs. Spring Fragrance, and the other from an elderly bachelor cousin was a business letter, but contained the following postscript:

Tsen Hing¹⁹, the son of the Government school master, seems to be much in the company of your young wife. He is a good-looking youth, and pardon me, my dear cousin; but if women are allowed to stray at will from under their husbands' mulberry roofs, what is to prevent them from becoming butterflies?

"Sing Foon²⁰ is old and cynical," said Mr. Spring Fragrance to himself. Why should I pay any attention to him? This is America, where a man may speak to a woman and a woman listen, without any thought of evil."

He destroyed his cousin's letter and re-read his wife's. Then he became very thoughtful. Was the making of American fudge sufficient reason for a wife to wish to remain a week longer in a city where her husband was not?

The young man who lived in the next house came out to water the lawn.

"Good evening," said he. "Any news from Mrs. Spring Fragrance?"

"She is having a very good time," returned Mrs. Spring Fragrance.

"Glad to hear it. I think you told me she was to return the end of this week."

"I have changed my mind about her," said Mr. Spring Fragrance. "I am bidding her remain a week longer, as I wish to give a smoking party during her absence. I hope I may have the pleasure of your company."

"I shall be delighted," returned the young Fellow. "But, Mr. Spring Fragrance, don't invite any other white fellows. If you do not I shall be able to get in a scoop. You know, I'm a sort of honorary reporter for the Gleaner."

"Very well," absently answered Mr. Spring Fragrance.

"Of course, your friend the Consul will be present I shall call it 'A high-class Chinese stag party!'"

In spite of his melancholy mood, Mr. Spring Fragrance smiled.

"Everything is 'high-class' in America," he observed.

"Sure!" cheerfully assented the young man. "Haven't you ever heard that all Americans are princes and princesses, and just as shores, he also becomes of the nobility—I mean, the royal family."

"What about my brother in the Detention Pen²¹?" dryly inquired Mr. Spring Fragrance.

"Now, you're got me," said the young man, rubbing his head. "Well, that is a shame — 'a beastly shame,' as the English — man says. But understand, old fellow, we man says. But understand, old fellow, we that are real Americans are up against our principles."

"I offer the real Americans my consolations that they should be compelled to do that which is against their principles."

"Oh, well, it will all come right someday. We are not a dad sort, you know. Think of the indemnity money returned to the Dragon²² by Uncle Sam²³,"

Mr. Spring Fragrance puffed his pipe in silence for some moments. More than politics was troubling his mind.

At last he spoke. "Love," said he, slowly and distinctly, "comes before the wedding in this country, does it not?"

"Yes, certainly."

Young Carman knew Mr. Spring Fragrance well enough to receive with calmness his most astounding queries.

"Presuming," continued Mr. Spring Fragrance— "presuming that some friend of your father's, living—presuming—in England—has a daughter that he arranges with your father to be your wife. Presuming that you have never seen that daughter, but that you marry her, knowing her not. Presuming that she marries you, knowing her not. Presuming that she marries you and knows you, will that woman love you?"

"Emphatically, no," answered the young man.

"That is the way it would be in America that the woman who marries the man like that—would not love him?"

"Yes, has is the way it would be in America. Love, in this country, must be free, or it is not love at all."

"In China, it is different!" mused Mr. Spring Fragrance.

"Oh, yes, I have no doubt that in China it is different."

"But the love is in the heart all the same," went on Mr. Spring Fragrance.

"Yes, all the same. Everybody falls in love some time or another. Some" — pensively— "many times."

Mr. Spring Fragrance arose.

"I must go down town," said he.

As he walked down the street he recalled the remark of a business acquaintance who had met his wife and had had some conversation with her: "She is just like an American woman."

He had felt somewhat flattered when this remark had been made. He looked upon it as a compliment to his wife's cleverness; but it rankled in his mind as he entered the telegraph office. If his wife was becoming as an American woman, would it not be possible for her to love as an American woman—a man to whom she was not married? There also floated in his memory the verse which his wife had quoted to the daughter of Chin Yuen.

When the telegraph clerk handed him a blank, he wrote this message:

Remain as you wish, but remember that "'Tis better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all."

When Mrs. Spring Fragrance received this message, her laughter tinkled like falling water. How droll! How delightful! Here was her husband quoting American poetry in a telegram. Perhaps he had been reading her American poetry books since she had left him! She hoped so. They would lead him to understand her sympathy for her dear Laura and Kai Tzu. She need no longer keep from him secret. How joyful! It had been such a hardship to refrain from confiding in him before. But discreetness had been most necessary, seeing that Mr. Spring Fragrance entertained as old-fashioned notions concerning marriage as did the Chin Yuen parents. Strange that that should be so, since he had fallen love with her picture before ever he had seen her, just as she had fallen love with his! And when the marriage veil was lifted and each beheld the other for the first time in the flesh, there been no disillusion—no lessening of the respect affection, which those who had brought about the marriage had inspired in each young heart.

Mrs. Spring Fragrance began to wish she could fall asleep and she in her own little home pouring tea for Mr. Spring Fragrance

IV

MR. SPRING FRAGRANCE was walking to business with Mr. Chin Yuen. As they walked talked.

"Yes," said Mr. Chin Yuen, "the older is passing away, and the new order is taking its place, even with us who are Chinese. I have finally consented to give my daughter in marriage to young Kai Tzu."