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Bakalářská práce

**Chinese American Authors and Their Depiction
of Immigrant Life in US**

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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci zpracovala samostatně a použila jen uvedených pramenů a literatury.

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1 Introduction

Alexander and Eva Peck write in the *Panorama of American Literature* that “literature in general is nearly linked to history because history and literature are intertwined; both reflect the progression of human thinking and development.” [1] The present Bachelor’s Thesis, titled *Chinese American Authors and Their Depiction of Immigrant Life in US*, will endorse Pecks’ claim and show the connection between literature and history, focusing on the topic of Chinese immigration to the US. [2]

The goal of the thesis is, firstly, to provide general overview of the topic of Chinese immigration to the United States over the past two centuries, secondly, to explore the impact of immigration both on the Chinese and the American identity, showing the attitude of American society on this issue, and finally, to present and comment on chosen examples of books written by contemporary Chinese American authors who represent the immigration community themselves and get readers familiar with the topic, connecting real historical facts with literary fiction.

The thesis comprises two major parts – theoretical and analytical. The initial part of the thesis will be concerned with the depiction of the United States as a multicultural country often referred to as a “*melting pot*”. The meaning of this term will be defined and further explained. The attention will be also paid to immigrants and immigration in general. The phenomenon of leaving one’s home country is connected to specific reasons which will be also shortly discussed, introducing several categories of immigrants. As the primary sources for this part of the thesis will be consulted mainly electronic sources dealing with immigrants and immigration in general.

Further, one of the major chapters will be dedicated to the history of Chinese immigration and to reasons which made Chinese citizens leave their country. This part of the thesis will also deal with the main immigration waves of Chinese to the United States and the most important historical events related to the issue, including government immigration policies. One of the major issues of the thesis will be the integration of Chinese to the American society and the attitudes of Americans to this group of immigrants, reflecting the conflicts that arose.

An important chapter of the theoretical part of the theses will then deal with the American literature, covering the important stages in its development. The periods of American literature will be supplemented by important authors of that time and their famous works. Chinese American literature will follow and its origins will be

introduced. As primary sources for the literary overview will be books as: Chang, Iris: *Chinese in America* and Yung, Judy: *Chinese American Voices*.

The final analytical part of the thesis will be dedicated to selected authors and their books. The criterion for the choice of the authors was that they need to have personal experience with Chinese immigration and display it in their works. The parents of chosen authors originally came from China, and their children were already born in the United States, so the authors are typical representatives of so called “hyphenated Americans” – Chinese-Americans. The first author is Brian Leung, a fiction writer and a professor, who wrote a book *Take me home* published in 2010. The second author is Maxine Hong Kingston, a writer of novels and autobiographical novels, who wrote a book *Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts* which was published in 1976 and awarded the National Book Critics Circle Award for Nonfiction. The analytical part of the thesis will present close reading of the books and detailed comment on how the authors express their immigration experience in the books. Finally, a short comparison will conclude the analysis of the two books. Judging from the preliminary research on the topic, it might be assumed that the authors will share common topics and will serve as good sources of information for readers who are keen on learning about the topic of Chinese immigration.

2 Chinese Immigration to the United States

2.1 Multicultural United States

The United States of America is a home of people of different nationalities and cultural characteristics. The cultures in the United States are mixed thanks to a large number of immigrants, all together forming the American society. The US was given a nickname “Melting pot” to reflect the fact that different nationalities and traditions are melting together there. For the first time, the melting pot theory was mentioned by Israel Zangwill in 1908 when the immigration from North-western Europe started to increase. [3] The term is thus closely connected with the immigration. The immigration to the US dates back to 1620 when Pilgrim Fathers sought for religious freedom and it has been continuing until nowadays. Until 1882, the United States of America followed the open-door immigration policy and did not regulate the number of immigrants coming. However, in 1882 American government excluded a certain kind of people from the immigration list. It was mainly the Chinese were excluded from coming to America at that time. Further, in the 20th century, German, Italian, Polish, Irish and Chinese immigrants reached America to make their American dream come true. In the 20th century, the immigrants from Mexico or Latin America also started coming and wanted to become American citizens. [4]

Additionally, the term „melting pot“ also means to encourage the new comers to join the American society. However, the immigrants do not abandon their own traditions while integrating to the American society and so American culture expands and accepts new traditions and customs. The melting pot has both positive and negative meaning. Firstly, the origins of American identity could be threatened because every new culture constitutes a part in whole American identity. In addition, America is formed by more than only one identity and it means that if any of them is missing, America cannot be the same as before. For example, Americans love Italian food as pizza, Mexican food as burritos, Japanese food as sushi or Thai food. It shows that Americans are able to accept other cultures and integrate them to their own. [5] The melting pot is further interwoven with the concept of multiculturalism. The term multiculturalism is also connected with the government of a certain country which allows different cultures or religions be expressed within one society. The society is tolerant and accepts the ethnic and cultural diversity. [6]

As it was said above, the United States has faced immigration waves throughout its whole history. The newcomers believe it is a developed country where they can find what they need or want. American melting pot, among others, also comprises a number of Chinese who immigrated to the country very soon after its formation.

At the very beginning, Chinese were hired for the work in mines in California and then for the construction of transcontinental railroad. Thanks to their work placements they could spread across America to New York or New Jersey. Though they had to pay larger taxes than American natives, they did not have opportunities to work where they wished, their wages were low and they were treated in harsh way, Chinese stayed in the United States to earn and support their families back in China. The Chinese immigration to the US will be a subject of the following chapter.

2.2 Definition of immigrant

An immigrant is a person who wants to leave his home country and live permanently in a foreign country s/he chose. Immigration arises from many reasons. Immigrants leave their home countries due to the political situation. For example, due to civil wars, wars, or state policy, which discriminate a certain group of citizens. These migrants are so called political migrants and they cannot return to their country because of persecutions. Another reason is economy. The overwhelming majority of economic migrants leave because they want to benefit from better economic opportunities in other country. One of the most important reasons for immigration is also family reunion when one family member is already in the foreign country and his/her family members want to join him/her. It concerns wives, husbands, fiancés, fiancées, children or other family relatives. Chinese immigrants are not the exception to these rules and follow similar motives mentioned above. [7]

3 History of Chinese Immigration

Chinese immigration began in 1850's and in those years, it was the first larger wave of Chinese immigrants to the United States. The immigration was caused by political and also by economic reasons, when thousands of Chinese decided to leave their home country and find home somewhere else. The region, primarily Chinese left, was Pearl River Delta in south eastern China. [8] China had to deal with Great Britain during the Opium War from 1839 to 1842. Chinese government unsuccessfully tried to stop, or at least repress, the opium trade and in 1842 it was defeated and signed the Treaty of Nanking¹. China became an area dominated by Great Britain and Hong Kong became British colony. The taxes increased, Chinese experienced food shortage, often living from "hand to mouth". Families sometimes even sold their youngest daughters to provide for themselves. Moreover, in 1847 Great Britain was hit by a credit crisis and it was not possible to keep the warehouses in the Pearl River working any longer. Thus, the unemployment was also increasing and other groups of Chinese decided to leave the country. [9] [10]

In 1848, Chinese heard about the Gold Rush in California and the immigration burst out as a consequence. This was a chance for poor people to temporary leave their country, gain wealth, support their families in China and then come back with more money to live in better conditions. Especially young men signed labour contracts which were illegal, but offered better future in the New World. Also, before leaving, if they did not have wives and children, they married to ensure that they would send money to their families. Many families and many villages became dependent on money made by those men in the New World. [11] [12] Until 1851 only hundred reached the United States but in 1852 more than 20 000 of Chinese people arrived in California, nicknamed "Gold Mountain". They had to survive between four and eight weeks at sea because they travelled from Canton in China to San Francisco. It was the shortest way to the United States, but still more than a half died during the journey, mainly of hunger and disease. [13]

¹ The Treaty dictated to abide strict conditions, China was forced to open to outside trade and also paid war indemnities to Great Britain. [14]

“Americans are very rich people. They want the Chinaman to come and make him very welcome. There you will have great pay, large houses, and food and clothing of the finest description. You can write to your friends or send them money at any time and we will be responsible for the safe delivery. It is a nice country, without mandarins or soldiers. All alike; big man no larger than little man. There are a great many Chinamen there now, and it will not be a strange country. China god is there, and the agents of this house. Never fear, and you will be lucky.” [15]

Obviously, the Chinese were enticed to the United States. The propaganda made them sure that the New World was different and better for living. After their arrival to the United States almost every Chinese worked as a mining worker because America needed them for that kind of work. The wages were rather low for the hard work which Chinese did; they received only two dollars per day in comparison with American natives who were paid better for less work done. [16] [17]

The Chinese faced aloofness of American natives immediately after their arrival. American society did not want to accept Chinese immigrants; they saw threats in several ways. The American people were afraid about their own culture which could be in danger and they also thought that the Chinese could take their jobs in labour competition. [18] Considering the labour competition, new taxes were enacted as a law for Chinese miners. One of them should have discouraged new arrivals and the second should have punished those who were already working in America. Nevertheless, Chinese continued in working because they received more money than they would have received in China anyway. [19] The Chinese community was expanding and “Chinatowns”, areas where the most of the Chinese were living and having almost everything they needed, were created. They could profess their faith, attend temples, find help or protection, practice their customs and celebrate their national holidays there. Chinese even opened restaurants with Chinese noodles there. The restaurants became a success and it enabled Chinese to start also other forms of business in demand such as laundries and ironing. [20]

Further, in 1861 the Americans expressed the necessity of building the transcontinental railroad which was planned to stretch from the coast of the Atlantic to the coast of the Pacific Ocean. The plan included unsettled lands and it was impossible to supply workers with food, clothes and other necessary things for survival in such

places. American engineers wanted to be ensured that all the difficulties would be overcome and so President Lincoln decided to financially support the building of the railroad even though Americans were fighting in the Civil War at that time. Although high wages were offered, only less than one thousand Americans applied for the work for the railroad company. More than five thousand workers were needed and it was the reason why Chinese workers started to be recruited in higher numbers. [21] [22] The railroad company spread leaflets in China to find new workers. As a result, more than ten thousand Chinese people were employed in America for the railroad construction. Tensions emerged between American natives and other immigrants – Irishmen, Germans, and also Chinese. The problem was that almost no one wanted to hire others than Chinese workers because they worked six days a week, twelve hours a day, received only two-thirds of the wage of an ordinary American worker and did not complain. In 1866, to step up the pace of the construction, the Central Pacific² foremen bought nitro-glycerine, which also help Chinese who were forced to work with their bare hands or only shovels until then. [23]

Further on the legal path, the Burlingame Treaty, an agreement between the US and China, was signed in 1868, which permitted Chinese to leave their home country and work in the US temporarily or permanently. However, when the construction of the railroad was finished, Chinese workers became unemployed and the unemployment rose again. [24] Also, the Six Companies were formed to help Chinese people to come to the United States and to return to their home country. They were formed in 1850s but their power was stronger in 1870's. They also tried to protect Chinese people from the racism from Americans, they lent money to Chinese workers if they needed, and helped them when they were sick. The Six Companies presented themselves as unofficial ambassadors of China. [25] [26] Nonetheless, the functioning of the organizations was not without problems. The Six Companies were also involved in the business of importing Chinese women and girls to the United States which led to the rise in prostitution. [27]

In addition, Chinese workers were also in demand in another field. They signed labour contracts in salmon-canning factories of the Pacific Northwest. They had to travel to Alaska and worked in conditions comparable to the conditions during the

² American Railroad Company established in 1860's, formed especially for the construction of the first transcontinental railroad.

construction of the transcontinental railroad. Chinese were competitors of American fishermen, which meant that Americans wanted special taxes to discourage them and so the government imposed a special tax of four dollars a month to get a fishing license. [28] In 1868, the fourteenth amendment³ was adopted which permitted Chinese born in the United States became automatically citizens of the US. [29] [30] The fifteenth amendment⁴ was ratified later in 1870 and Chinese were given the right to vote. However, majority of Americans disagreed with that and anti-Chinese movement appeared again and in 1870s Chinese were excluded from the newly gained right to vote. [31]

In January, 1863, President Lincoln issued an executive order which freed African Americans from slavery and the South was in need of labour for the Reconstruction⁵. In 1869 hundreds of delegates discussed recruiting Chinese labour, becoming so the nation's first Chinese labour convention. In 1870's only few Chinese lived in the Old South. To attract more of them Americans promptly spread leaflets over the south Chinese ports. [32]

“All Chinese make much money in New Orleans if they work.”

“Chinamen have become richer than mandarins there.” [33]

More than two thousands of Chinese came to America to work in the South. Hundreds of Chinese were able to move from San Francisco to New Orleans to work for twenty dollars a month and thousands were willing to come to the United States to work even for less. Some of them worked on plantations and some of them replaced African Americans in the cotton fields. After some time they left, spread across America and found a better job. If the community of Chinese was not large enough to form a Chinatown, they were forced to integrate the American majority. [34]

The integration could not be done easily. Chinese were struggling especially in California where they were attacked by Americans in 1871. American rioters attacked the whole Chinese community in Los Angeles because they blamed them for the

³ Everybody who was born on the territory of the United States was a citizen of the United States, regardless race, colour or previous condition of servitude. [35]

⁴ All citizens of the United States were allowed to vote, regardless race, colour or previous condition of servitude. [36]

⁵ The period after the US Civil War from 1863 to 1877 when the southern states were brought back into the nation. [37]

unemployment of Americans. More than twenty people died. In 1876 the Republicans and also the Democrats spoke about the Chinese immigration and its regulation in public. The government was supported by President Grant, who pointed out the increasing Chinese immigration as the first president in 1874, and also from the Americans. [38] The negotiations led to the modification of the Burlingame Treaty of 1868 (see page 7), and President Grant proposed to ban Chinese immigration to the United States. [39] [40] In 1881, the presidency was executed by president Chester Arthur who knew that Chinese helped to develop the American industry and agriculture. Thus, he suggested the ban only for ten years and allowed to enter merchants, students and teachers. [41] [42]

With the exclusion the anti-Chinese movements were established by Americans which should have caused departures of Chinese immigrants. Americans forced Chinese to leave Washington territory which led to violence also in other cities. In 1885, in Rocky Springs, Wyoming, Americans invaded Chinatown. Those who did not die immediately as a consequence of the robberies and shooting were able to escape to the mountains. However, they did not know how to live in the mountains and died there no longer after. Chinese appealed to American government for help but the politicians did not feel responsibility for the attacks and refused to protect them. [43] [44] In 1892 the Exclusion Act expired but new Chinese immigrants were still not allowed to enter America. Chinese who were already on the American territory had to be registered and to have a certificate of residency. [45]

3.1 Formation of Ellis Island and Angel Island

In the 20th century, immigrants were still coming to America. Ellis Island⁶ was formed in 1892 as a check station for all immigrants who wanted to reach America. Chinese immigrants formed a special group as they came in large numbers. As a result the American government built Angel Island in 1910 specifically for Chinese immigrants. They had to pass through and prove who they were and also had to get through medical checks if they were in good health. It led to long investigations about their past and they were imprisoned for month, sometimes even for years. Ellis Island

⁶ Ellis Island is situated in Upper New York Bay and more than 12 million immigrants had to pass through it. It was created by American government as an immigrant inspection station. Nowadays, it is used as a museum. [46]

was formed to facilitate immigration and Angel Island to discourage the new comers. After their arrival to Angel Island, Chinese were divided into men and women groups even if the couples were married and women were also separated from their children. Immigrants were cut off from the rest of the world. They wrote poems on walls of buildings to express their feelings of living there. See the example below. The poems they penned are accessible to public on Angel Island nowadays. [47]

“A member of the Li household was ready to leave.
In the last month of summer, I arrived in America on ship.
After crossing the ocean, the ship docked and I waited to go on shore.
Because of the records, the innocent was imprisoned in a wooden building.
Reflecting on the event, my heart is vexed and depressed.
I composed a poem to rid myself of sadness and worry.
At present, my application for admission has not yet been dismissed.
As I record the cause of my situation, it really provokes my anger.
Sitting here, uselessly delayed for long years and months,
I am like a pigeon in a cage.” [48]

On Angel Island, Chinese lived in bad health and also eating conditions. Immigrants who got ill were together in one room and it did not matter if they had a serious disease or a milder illness. They were condemned to death. 175 000 Chinese passed through the checking station at Angel Island. [49] After certain period of time, Chinese were either allowed to enter America or further investigated, being suspected of not a good intention for entry. Chinese who were freed to live in America were monitored and under ceaseless control of inspectors. The American government charged inspectors who checked Chinese certificates of residency and everybody who did not have it was immediately condemned to other long investigations and then to deportation. The immigrants could also enter the US illegally because some American officials were corrupted and accepted illegal fees. [50]

At the beginning of the 1920s Chinese started to work in restaurants as cooks, dishwashers, waitresses or cashiers. Later, Chinese owned their own restaurants and they also became herbalists. Herbal shops became very popular among Americans. Chinese still worked in laundries and owned most of them. [51] In 1929, the era of prosperity in the US was ended by the crash on Wall Street, which forced banks to close and companies to dismiss more than 20 million Americans. At the beginning of the crisis, Chinese were not affected because they assembled in major cities. However, Americans lost their jobs so they did not have enough money to spend for services which were provided by Chinese – restaurants and laundries. In 1933 president

Roosevelt proposed the New Deal, giving work to unemployed and helping to Chinese who worked harder during the Depression to save their businesses. [52] [53]

During the 1930s Chinese parents who were already American citizens had an idea that their children could study in the US and built their career in China. After studies they would come back to China and have a good job as for example a doctor. In America it was not possible for them to do such a good job. [54][...] “America is the most racist society and very prejudiced against the yellow race of people.” [55] Chinese immigrants had a right to study at university but they could not work in top positions. Still, American corporations, educational and religious organizations needed bilingual Chinese Americans for communication and negotiations, which represented a good opportunity to Chinese immigrants. [56]

3.2 Conflict with Japan and the Second World War

In 1931 Japan started to threaten China and it was the very beginning of the war. Japan seized the whole Beijing region and wanted more. Japanese soldiers occupied especially Toishan region where they exploited local Chinese who starved to death. The impoverished families in China reported the situation to their relatives in America and Chinese-Americans immediately asked American government for help. Chinese forced people to boycott supplies to Japan and purchase of Japanese goods. Chinese who were employed in navy boycotted preparations of ships with steel. Everybody who protested and did not do his job properly lost it. However, Chinese achieved the solidarity from Americans and the embargo on all war material was imposed. In 1940, Japan occupied almost all Chinese major cities. [57]

The United States did not pay enough attention to the war between Japan and China until December 1941. They focused mainly on the situation in European countries because Germans occupied most of them. In December, 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbour. The United States immediately declared war to Japan and Chinese in America became friends and allies for Americans. Unfortunately, Japanese, even if they were American citizens, were enemies and warlike. Chinese had to wear buttons with a writing “I am Chinese” to avoid possible violence and discrimination from Americans. [58] [59] Chinese prepared to wear American uniforms, went together with Americans to war in China. Some of them wanted to prove their loyalty to America because they

were already citizens of the United States, some of them went to war because they were single, without family and wanted to help and the rest of Chinese were patriots who wanted to fight for their country. The government promised those who were not already American citizens the citizenship in exchange for military service. [60]

In August 1945, the war was at the end. The government of the United States wanted to reward Chinese men for the military service and allowed them to go back to China, marry a Chinese woman there and re-enter the United States with her. After the war, those Chinese, who were educated could gain a better job and be engineers, scientists, technicians or clerks. After the Second World War Chinese did not stop immigrating to the United States, but now they migrate as new members of American society or as family members of Chinese-Americans. Chinese immigrants still live in their Chinatowns or in other immigrant neighbourhoods, enriching American culture not only with food, but also with fashion, music and even literature. [61]

4 American literature

The United States comprises more than 300 million inhabitants but more than a tenth is represented by foreign-born people thus forming one of the most diverse nations in the world. Apart from known and established authors, the events such as literary festivals and poetry slams help also starting and unknown writers to present their works to the public and enter the literary world in the US. It gives them a chance to become known among the readers all over the world and tell their stories. [62]

American literature is considered the literature written on the territory of the United States and on the territory of former colonies. However, the early literature is more connected to the British as a literary heritage of the British colonies. Therefore the origin of truly American literature should date back to the year 1776 when Thomas Jefferson and other founding fathers signed the Declaration of Independence. Nonetheless, the Founding Fathers were mainly philosophers, not fiction writers. [63]

4.1 American literature of the 19th century

In the early 19th century, the first nation's novels were published and American authors started to develop their unique style. The writers who helped to found the early American literature were for example Washington Irving, the author of first American legends, and Edgar Allan Poe, the author of American gothic stories. Further, after the period of abolitionism and the Civil War one of the key books of American literary history was published - the *Uncle Tom's cabin* written by Harriet Beecher Stowe. Slave narrative autobiographies followed and became popular. The most important poets of the second half of the 19th century were Walt Whitman with his poems about cheerful details of lives and Emily Dickinson who wrote about the relationships between the inner self and the outside world. The list would be endless, but to mention at least a few, Mark Twain, Henry James or Stephen Crane were also important American writers whose literary output lasted until the 20th century. [64]

4.1.1 Hyphenated Americans

At the end of the 19th century, precisely in 1890, the term "hyphenated Americans" emerged to disparage everybody who had a different birthplace, was of a different origin but still an American citizen. The term referred to those who had dual nationalities as for example German-Americans, Irish-Americans and also Chinese

American population in California. The term was at rag until the 1920s. In 1915, President Roosevelt expressed his dissatisfaction with the inequality between American natives and foreign-born or foreign-origin Americans. In his speech, he shared his conviction that everybody who had American soul inside was simply American not a hyphenated American. [65]

“There is no room in this country for hyphenated Americanism. When I refer to hyphenated Americans, I do not refer to naturalized Americans. Some of the very best Americans I have ever known were naturalized Americans, Americans born abroad. But a hyphenated American is not an American at all.” [...] “There is no such thing as a hyphenated American who is a good American. The only man who is a good American is the man who is an American and nothing else.” [66]

4.2 American literature of 20th century

The 20th century was marked by several events of worldwide influence, namely – the World War I, the Great Depression and the World War II. These events constituted the topics which also influenced publishing in American literature. However, the nature of the stories developed further and so the list of successful authors of the second half of the 20th century includes for example also Ken Kessey with his physiological story *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, Alice Walker and her *The Color Purple* and finally, Toni Morrison with the book *Beloved*. Morrison is so far the last American Nobel prize winner in literature. Nowadays, American literature is still being formed by different ethnic groups that live on the territory of the United States. A significant part of the American multi-ethnic literature is also formed by Chinese American authors describing their experience in the United States throughout the generations. [67]

5 Chinese American literature

The Chinese American literature originated in the 1850’s when the first Chinese immigrants reached America and wanted to share their experience with other people. The early Chinese works depict American history from a point of view of immigrants to the United States, using their Chinese background for comparison with the American reality. [68]

The first Chinese American literature was written mainly by students and workers. They wrote autobiographical books, poems and novels which were written either in Chinese or in English. A group of Chinese immigrants wrote about their experience in business for 25 years and in 1875 they passed those books on other Chinese who would come later. Chinese students often wrote essays with a special theme such as cultural traditions and religion. For example, Wong Chin Foo wrote essays which were published in *the North American Review*, *Chautauquan*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper's Weekly*. In 1887 he wrote a provocative and sarcastic essay "Why Am I a Heathen?" in which he denied Christianity, even though he was educated in a Christian school. As a response to his essay, Yan Phou Lee published "Why I Am Not a Heathen" to stress the importance of believing in God. [69]

In the 20th century and with the beginning of the World War II, the Chinese American literature was mostly written in English and concentrated on the topic of intervention of the United States to the war which was initiated by Pearl Harbour attack in 1941. World War II brought further changes to Chinese American literature and the Pro-Chinese sentiment helped to publish books like *Fifth Chinese daughters*⁷ or *Flower Drum Song*⁸. After the war, Chinese American authors started to write more fiction and they were included to the national literary competitions and awards such as the National Book Award. For instance, the National Book award was given to Amy Tan for her book *The Joy Luck Club* published in 1989. [70] [71]

Even today Chinese American writers continue in writing fiction books and the topics they discuss are still linked to immigrant's experience. Those who do not write about immigration, connect their stories with Asia, especially historical events, or write about traditional topics such as family, relations, etc. [72] [73]

⁷ *Fifth Chinese Daughters* is a book written by Jade Snow Wong, describing a family with a daughter who looks for their place in America. [74]

⁸ *Flower Drum Song* is a book written by Chin Yang Lee which describes lives in a Chinatown in San Francisco in a sarcastic way. [75]

6 Chosen Chinese American writers

6.1 Brian Leung

Brian Leung is an American fiction writer who was born in and grew up in San Diego. His father escaped from China in 1949 and his mother was born in Washington. Brian Leung lived for a long time in Los Angeles and he studied the city's kinetic diversity there. However, he found his interest in literature and started to write his own books. In 2000 he started to teach in Cincinnati and Los Angeles. Then, he lived in Louisville, Kentucky, where he was the Director of Creative Writing at the University of Louisville. He received his M. F. A. degree in Creative Writing from Indiana University. [76]

He wrote several books of fiction, also historical fiction, creative nonfiction and poetry. He is the author of books such as *Take Me Home*, *Mid-American Review*, *Velocity*, *The Barcelona Review*, *Gulf Coast*, *River City*, *Runes*, *The Bellingham Review*, *Hyphen*, *Velocity* and many others. He received the Asian American Literary Award for fiction and the Mary McCarthy Prize in Short Fiction. Nowadays, he works as Director of Creative Writing at Purdue University. [77]

6.2 Maxine Hong Kingston

Maxine Hong Kingston is an American Professor Emeritus at the University of California and also an American author of autobiographical fiction. She was born in Stockton, California in 1940. She was the first from her seven siblings who was born in the United States. Her father was a laundry worker and her mother was a practitioner of medicine. She started to be interested in literature in young age. She graduated from the University of California, Berkeley in 1962 where she is a professor now. [78]

Hong Kingston became successful after her first book *the Woman warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among the Ghosts* published in 1976 and she was awarded the National Book Critics Circle Award for Nonfiction. *The Fifth Book of Peace*, *Tripmaster Monkey* or *China men* belong also to her literary output which gained her other awards as National Book Award and the Northern California Book Award Special Award in Publishing for her most recent anthology, *Veterans of War, Veterans of Peace* published in 2006. [79]

She married actor Earl Kingston in 1962 and they had a son Joseph Lawrence Chung Meiwith together. Now, they live in Oakland, California. [80]

6.3 *Take Me Home*

The author narrates a story which takes place in Dire, a Wyoming coal-mining town in the American West in 1880's. It is a period of time which corresponds to after Golden rush time when thousands of Chinese came to America. The main character is Adele Maine (Addie), a young American lady, who travels from Kentucky, in the North of America, to Dire, to stay at her brother's Tommy's homestead. Their mother abandoned them in their young age and Addie then took care of their alcoholic father before he died. When she comes to the town, she is warned about the Chinese who stay alongside in the camp. They are described by white settlers as "beasts and half-men". [81] Addie is obviously afraid of them; however, she is a cheerful and open-minded young girl. She even wants to hire a Chinese man – Wing Lee, to help her in the homestead.

Addie's brother works in the mines and, as most of the inhabitants of Wyoming, he blames Chinese for taking work from them. Unfortunately, shortly after Addie's arrival Tommy dies in the mines, but Addie manages to rescue two Chinese miners from the mine fall. Then, after Tommy's death, Addie finds herself closer to Wing although their friendship is inconceivable and condemned by the others. To fulfil her dead brother's wish Addie gets married to Muuk, a Finn immigrant and Tommy's good friend. After some time, Addie falls in love with Wing and she gets pregnant. Addie feels responsible and wants to inform Muuk and so she sends Wing to Rock Springs to be safe from Muuk's short temper. Nevertheless, he denies not being a father of a baby and Addie leaves to discuss this problem with Maye, her friend. Later that day, Addie is informed about a riot in Rock Springs, where Americans attacked the Chinatown and killed Chinese there. Without hesitation, she goes to Rock Springs to save Wing from Muuk's anger. It is difficult for her to find him, she saves two other Chinese men and she finds herself without a horse in a burning town. She gets shot and falls unconscious so she is then taken to Green Rives to a doctor. There, she is visited by a Wing's friend who tells her about Wing's death. She loses the child and suspects Muuk of shooting at her. She leaves her husband without a word.

After more than forty years later, she is asked by the Union Pacific to return to Dire for celebrating her as a heroine. She also wants to know the truth about the shooting. Moreover, her and Wing's friend and, at the same time, a camp boss of Chinese, Ah Cheong, leaves America for China, so she wants to give him a farewell. She finds Muuk in bad living conditions caused by his alcohol addiction and that makes her sure that he shot at her in Rock Springs. This fact is also confirmed by Muuk which helps Addie to liberate her mind and feel free.

6.4 *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts*

The Kingston's book *The Woman Warrior: Memoir of a Girlhood among Ghosts* is an autobiographical novel, divided into five shorter chapters. The book is narrated by Kingston herself and by her mother. The book represents a combination of stories of different styles and relevance. The stories describe Kingston's childhood and girlhood in America. The book also comprises stories which took place before her mother left China and several fictions stories. Kingston is thus not only the narrator of the stories, but also a listener when her mother tells the stories to her.

The first story with a title *No-name woman* takes place in China and talks about Kingston's aunt (her father's sister) who married a man who shortly after the marriage left China for America. She becomes pregnant long after her husband left and so she becomes hated by other Chinese villagers. When the time comes to give birth to the child, she is alone and depends only on herself. Fortunately, the baby is healthy. However, the aunt is condemned by her own family and nobody can talk about her because they pretend that she does not exist, therefore she becomes the "no-name woman" for everybody. The story is told by Kingston's mother who tells it to her in secrecy. She is not even allowed to tell to her father about it. The purpose of the story is to frighten Kingston so that she does not ever put shame on her family.

The second story bares the title of *White tigers*. It is also narrated by Kingston's mother and it tells a story of Fa Mu Lan, a mythical Chinese woman warrior. She is trained for eight years by an old couple to replace her father in battles in China. After eight years, she is allowed to look inside water gourd where she can see her husband and their child and the scene how her brother and her husband are conscripted into army. She is trained to avert it and finally she is able to defeat an emperor who controls the village. After that, she returns home and cares only about her family. Kingston

compares herself with the mythical heroine and likens her destiny in America with the destiny of Fa Mu Lan. She also fights with the American society and American bosses.

The following story is called *Shaman* and it describes the time when Kingston's mother went to school to be a doctor in China. She was naturally smart and she was liked by other school mates. All of her classmates also believed that ghosts exist and they were afraid of them. They thought that there was a ghost in one of the rooms at the dormitory. They called it „ghost room“. Kingston's mother was brave and wanted to show them that there was nothing to be afraid of. To prove it, she slept in this room and finally she was able to ignore the ghost and expel it. After the studies she became a successful doctor and a midwife in China. However, she decided to leave China with her husband and go to America. There, she was not allowed to practise medicine so they opened a laundry in California. The story is based on the talk-stories of Kingston's mother and for her, everyone who is not Chinese, is a ghost. Ghosts are the metaphor for the Americans here.

Further, there is a chapter called *At the Western Place* which starts at the airport where Brave Orchid waits for her sister Moon Orchid. She immigrates to the United States after thirty-year period after her sister left China. Moon Orchid's husband immigrated to America and left her in China, still sending money to her. He became a successful doctor in Los Angeles and after some time he re-married an American woman and he has children with her. Brave Orchid cannot stand his treatment of her sister and she tries to persuade Moon Orchid to visit him and take him back as her husband. Finally, both sisters drive to Los Angeles where they find that Moon Orchid's husband has a happy family and does not want to come back to Moon Orchid. After that, Moon Orchid is not able to join American culture and surroundings and becomes mentally sick. She dies in a mental sanatorium. Moon Orchid and Brave Orchid are the traditional names which the sister gave themselves to show their personality. The story reflects the uneasy reality of families separated by immigration.

The last story is titled *A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe*, which is mainly about Kingston herself as a child and a teenager trying to express herself, and trying to integrate the American society. She is also angry with her parents who do not understand her and she has to depend only on herself. The misunderstanding between her and her parents bursts out when Kingston's parents try to arrange her marriage with a Chinese boy. Then, she does not want to attend Chinese school and listen to her mother's stories. After some time, she leaves the immigrants' community and she starts

to realize that her parents will not do anything against her will concerning the marriage or other important issues. The story ends with a story of the poet Ts'ai Yen who was captured by barbarians and returns to China. Kingston wants to show the life of an immigrant in America, mainly if the immigrant is a child, by this story. It is difficult to integrate this society.

7 Analysis of *Take Me Home*

Leung's novel *Take Me Home* is an example of historical fiction. It accurately portrays the situation of Chinese living in and coming to the USA after the Golden Rush in 1848 (for more information on that matter see chapter 3). The book covers the period of 1880's when the Americans and Chinese work together in the mines in the city of Dire in Wyoming territory. The author uses a Chinese narrator, Wing, to describe and present the nature of relations between the two groups of miners. The American side is represented by the main female character, Addie. The characters describe not only their own lives but also the lives of other people living in the city, meaning both Chinese and American. Though the story is fictitious, it comprises references to everyday reality of those times – mainly racial discrimination and animosity towards immigrants - and even to real events. For example, the riots in Rock Springs that took place in 1885 in the book are based on a real historical event⁹. A more detailed analysis of the topics that correspond with the theoretical part of the thesis (pages 8-9) follows below.

Wing Lee is the youngest of eight brothers and is talented in music, singing and storytelling. As the youngest child he was pampered and supported by parents. He came to San Francisco in June 1875 during the Golden Rush when he was fourteen and he started narration of his story nine years after his arrival to America. Initially, he missed his home country and traditional events held there, for example Spring Festival famous for tangerine trees¹⁰. He dreamt about having a happy family and a loving wife. However, his brothers were unsuccessful with their families, so his parents discouraged Wing from having one himself. “There will be no wife for you, Wing,’ his father told him when he was thirteen.” [82] Also, Wing once fell in love with a girl in his village

⁹ Rock Springs riots were held on 2, September, 1885, it was caused by hiring the Chinese instead of American citizens. The Chinese were paid very low which caused the labour competition and racial tensions between these two groups. Americans were losing their jobs, mainly in mines, because the Chinese were a cheaper labour.

¹⁰ Tangerines are a symbol for Chinese; it means good luck and wealth for local people. [83]

who was pledged to another man, which made him sad and discouraged him from further love life¹¹. Being disappointed with his life in China, Wing decided to leave and make fortune in California in the USA. Then, he wanted to return to China with the wealth earned. However, he was not the only one with the same plan. He describes his experience in the following way:

“It wasn’t at all the type of place he’d imagined when he left his village. He was going to make his fortune in California like so many others, and like so many others, he discovered too many had come before him.” [84]

He firstly worked at the butcher’s where he learnt how to slaughter a pig and where he was also responsible for selling meat to customers. He was paid low, only one dollar a week, but he got a room to stay and meals from his employer. After some time his employer ran into debts and Wing, not having money and due to rising racial tensions between Chinese immigrants and Americans, decided to move to Dire in Wyoming territory. It was a mine-town where he started to work as a camp cook as he explains in his narration:

“From the whites he heard “Get out!”; from his own countrymen, “Go East!” That is why he arrived in Dire as a camp cook, a skill he was taking to more and more, but for which his young life had prepared him little.” [85]

He did not want to work in the mines because he was afraid of his health which could be placed in danger. Wing came to Dire and believed that the life there would be more bearable than in San Francisco. However, he and other immigrants found out that every one of them was replaceable when they did not do their work right. Wing knew the situation of Chinese who built the Railroad and when they were not able to work, they were simply replaced by the others.

Wing and his Chinese co-workers were able to do what was necessary, which made the Americans feel endangered by them. The work which was done by the Chinese was not good enough for American workers. Wing could hear complaints from the Americans every day in his work. “The men he fed would complain that his soup was too thin, tasteless, but he knew if he tried to do more to it, they would criticize it anyway”. [86] The Chinese stood aside to avoid conflicts with the Americans. “In Little San Fran the UP kept him and the other Chinese protected, mainly from the white

¹¹ Marriages were agreed by parents in China.

miners who hated all of them, he knew”. [87] They were protected by the Union Pacific which handled their arrivals to America.

In addition, the Americans also tried to stay away from the Chinese and ignore them until they could use any complaint against them. The situation is well depicted by Addie when she says in the book that: “Most of the men, she knew, would eat inside the mine. She watched as the Chinamen headed one way while the other miners went opposite without a word or wave between them”. [88] This precaution was also formed by the Union Pacific as their strategy to keep the Chinese safe. “The UP kept the Chinese as segregated as possible. They were an invisible people in these parts unless they were needed for work or were being accused of stealing it.” [89] In fact, the Chinese were treated by most Americans as less than humans as the following quote implies: “He handed Addie Racer’s lead. “You stay put. I’m going inside for a minute to see about a job.” He winked. “Maybe a Chinaman died. Let’s hope anyway.” [90] It shows that Chinese labour is inferior.

Apart from working conditions in the camp, Wing also talks about the personal life. The Chinese were not able to imagine falling in love with a woman of other nationality than theirs. However, after a while the situation was changing and they felt more comfortable in a presence of American/white women. Wing explains that it was “ridiculous thought, anyway, to think he would ever stand so close to the woman that he might share even a Chinese word, a simple “Nei ho”. [91] Every detail was strange to him, this woman [Addie] who was not Chinese, down to the fact that she was in charge. [92]

Americans in general did not seem to accept Chinese immigrants, only few individuals did not feel endangered by them and took them as equal people. Americans also considered themselves as leaders, even if they worked in the same position as the Chinese, as miners, but they wanted to give orders and wanted everybody to be obedient. “White spoke. The Chinese listened. If a reply was to be made, there were a few Chinese who did this ... for a price.” [93]

Another issue that was raised was the language barrier. The Americans wanted the Chinese to speak proper English, which was extremely difficult for Asian foreigners. Wing describes the language barrier when he talks about how Addie was treating him: “If she thought he didn’t speak English, why was she always talking to him as if he understood? It was curious too that she never resisted trying to teach him her language, which was the way of so many whites.” [94]

Apart from language, the Americans also ridiculed Chinese appearance. They called them “coolies”. The nickname was used for unskilled labour from South China. The Americans referred to the Chinese as to animals.. They described them like that mainly because of their yellow skin colour and also because of their small eyes and black hair. They wore a ponytail on their heads. Addie was once curious about the “coolies” and she was given a clear answer:

“Then how will I know a coolie if I see one?” The woman composed herself, nesting her hands in her lap. “That’s the bit of good news. You can’t miss ‘em. They got eyes like cats and tails that grow out the back of their heads and down the length of their bodies. Front teeth like rats and skin so yellow and oily if you ever got hold of one, he’d slip right through your fingers.” [95]

[...]“And remember, love ‘em as we’re wont to do, but in Wyoming, more often than not a gun is more use than a man.” [96]

Apart from their outer appearance, their personal qualities are also discussed in the book. The Chinese are not considered as honest people because Americans believe that they cheat not only on them but also on their own people. The following quote from the book illustrates the fact: “Don’t have no dealings with them if you can help it. They’ll shake on a bargain with one hand and pick your pocket with the other. One talks to you, just walk away, and don’t be like old Lot’s wife.” [97] Tommy, Addie’s brother, also tries to discourage her from working with Wing: “I don’t see how anything good can come of you mixing with those Chinamen,” Tommy said when she finished. “That letter proves it. They can’t even trust each other.” [98]

In contrast to how the Chinese are described by Americans, they characterize themselves as honest people and only individuals are able to recognize who they really are.

They simply do what their employers want them to do and they do not ask about salary or other things, they only pay attention to the work, which is described in one of Addie’s memories:

“Miss Addie. Wing has not asked you such questions. He has not asked for proof that you can pay him, has not questioned why you are a woman willing to live alone. It is not usual for whites to associate with Chinese, but Wing has not shown suspicion. He has not asked you about these things, but he would be right to.” [99]

And finally, talking about the overall situation in society, the Americans were dissatisfied with the government’s policy because they allowed the Chinese to enter the

state and work there. Before the Railroad started to be built, the Chinese were scarce in America. However, after starting the construction the Chinese formed a large group, which lived and worked in Wyoming, a reality Tommy describes saying: “The truth is,” [...], “there just isn’t much mine work for men like me. They say ten years ago wasn’t hardly a coolie to be seen. Now the mines is full of ‘em.” [100]

The discrimination and hatred from Americans erupted into riots when Americans blamed the Chinese for the unemployment. They were also upset because the Chinese took their town. They wanted to stop new arrivals from China and to force the Chinese out of Dire. American government banned arrivals from China but the Chinese were still coming. Thus, Americans expressed their disagreement with this situation and tried to make order by themselves. It led to murders, shooting and burning the Chinatown in Rock Springs. The white miners were running through the camp, “screaming, “Take back our territory! Take back your job!” [101] [...] “Kill the coolies,” and “The Chinese must go!” [102] Obviously, the fiction in Leung’s book is not far from what is was like in reality.

8 Analysis of *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts*

Kingston's autobiographical novel *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts* is written in a post-modern style¹². Kingston and her mother are narrators in the book. However, the leading character in the book is Kingston herself. She represents a Chinese immigrant who describes life in America. In 1924, Kingston's father left China to earn money, but his wife stayed in China. Later, in winter 1939, he was finally successful with handling the documents for his wife so she could enter America. She came to California in 1940. Kingston was born the same year in the middle of the Second World War. Her mother was a doctor in China but she was not allowed to practise medicine in the USA. Her father was also an educated man. He was the only son from his family who chose education instead of farming. They decided to open a laundry in the US where they both worked and employed fellow Chinese immigrants. Americans in the book are described in many situations and in various contexts – at school, at work, in streets, and in shops providing services.

The immigration from China was controlled by officials. Before leaving, men, who wanted to enter America, had to marry a Chinese woman to assure the responsibility for her and also for her survival. It was also case of Kingston's aunt as her mother describes in her first story. "In 1924 just a few days after [their] village celebrated seventeen hurry-up weddings – to make sure that every young man who went 'out on the road' would responsibly father and his brothers and [Kingston's] aunt's new husband sailed for America, the Gold Mountain." [103] The men left and they were obliged to send money to their new wives and their families to provide them with everything needed for living. "All of them sent money home." [104] However, the men were away for a long time so it sometimes happened that women found another man and started a new life and a family without their official husbands. However, the same situation happened in America. Chinese men abandoned their Chinese wives and they started a new life in America with American wives and their children. Such situation is described in the chapter *At the Western Place*, where Kingston's mother tells a story of Moon Orchid. "For thirty years she had been receiving money from [her husband] from America. But she had never told him that she wanted to come to the United States. She

¹² Postmodernism is a style of art, writing, music, theatre, that includes features from several different periods in the past or from the present and past. [105]

waited for him to suggest it, but he never did.” [106] The men still sent money to China but they did not have a plan to return back. Thanks to the money received, the Chinese families could afford more than other inhabitants in China, also the Moon Orchid’s case. “[Her husband gave her] so much money. [She] had all the food and clothes and servants I’ve ever wanted. And he’s supported our daughter too, even though she’s only a girl. He sent her to college.” The reasons why Chinese Americans did not want to return to China were that they were also afraid of practises which were known in their home country. New-born girls were considered inferior and boys were wanted and needed. “[When Kingston’s parents] suspended enjoyment, but [she did not rebel because she] did not want to go to China. In China [her] parents would sell [her] sisters and [her].” [107] She mentions a situation when it was possible to see “among the sellers with their ropes, cages, and water tanks [also] the sellers of little girls. [108] Sometimes, Chinese family in China made their American members to send more money for feeding or clothing. Chinese in America earned more than they would make in China but still, it was not enough to send home an amount which was wished by their relatives there. Kingston’s mother refers to this fact pointing out that “[they had] have to go hungry [themselves]. [Their relatives did not] understand that [they had themselves] to feed too.” [Kingston’s parents were] making money; [They would] like to go to China and see those people and find out what’s cheat story and what’s not. Did [their] grandmother really live to be ninety-nine? Or did they string [them] along all those years to get [their] money?” [109]

Chinese who were born in the United States were automatically American citizens; they were called Chinese-Americans. They grew up in multicultural society and they were influenced by different live style. There were two different cultures and sometimes it was difficult to distinguish what a Chinese or American tradition was. “[They tried] to understand what things in [them] are Chinese, how do [they] separate what is peculiar to childhood, to poverty, insanities, one family, [their] mother who marked [their] growing with stories, from what is Chinese? What is Chinese tradition and what is the movies?” [110]

Some Chinese still owned a piece of land in China so that they had a place to return to. The rest of their family was able to take care of the land. However, sometimes it happened that the last member of the family died, the other villagers wanted the land for their own to utilise it. Thus, Chinese in America lost their home and also an opportunity to come back. Kingston’s family also experienced this situation. “[They]

got a letter from the villagers [once]. They asked if it was all right with [them] that they took over the land. The last uncles [had] been killed so [the] father [was] the only person left to say it [was] all right. He [had] written saying they can have it. So. [They had] no more China to go home to.” [111]

The living in America is described as difficult. Chinese are afraid of Americans in many ways. They always think about what they say and how they behave in front of Americans because they are afraid that everything might seem suspicious and could result in their deportation back to China. It concerns their past, living in contemporary America and their occupation. “There were secrets never to be said in front of the ghosts, immigration secrets whose telling could get [Chinese] sent back to China.” [112] Chinese immigrants also stayed away from the official buildings or official authorities. However, the authorities visited Chinatowns to keep the situation under control. “Occasionally the rumor went about that the United States immigration authorities had set up headquarters in the San Francisco or Sacramento Chinatown to urge wetbacks and stowaways, anybody [there] on fake papers, to come to the city and get their files straightened out. The immigrants discussed, whether or not to turn themselves in.” [113]

Still, America was a dream of happy lives and immigrants reached America every day. New comers to America had to pass medical and paper checks to be allowed to enter. For this purpose, a checking centre on Ellis Island was founded. Immigrants waited there until everything was settled and then, they could join to their family members or start working. At the airport there was no possibility to meet their family members before the checks. “The passengers were separated from the people waiting for them by glass doors and walls. Immigration Ghosts were stamping papers.” [114] A more detailed analysis of Ellis Island that corresponds with the theoretical part of the thesis (pages 9-10) follows below.

Immigrants who were not able speak English were condemned to do inferior jobs. It was difficult to find a job even more for those who never had a job before. Those people were dependant on remittances from their men working in America in the past. Majority of them worked in hotels. “A lot of immigrants [started] that way [then].” [115] “Immigrants also [worked] in the canneries, where it’s so noisy it [did not] matter if they [spoke] Chinese or what.” [116] For these immigrants, “the easiest way to find a job, though, [was] to work in Chinatown.” where people of the same nationality were and could help them with translations and interpretations. [117] Concerning English,

Chinese fought with English, especially with the pronunciation which is more difficult and different from their Chinese language. Kingston's mother for example "could not understand 'I'. The Chinese 'I' has seven strokes, intricacies. How could the American 'I', assuredly wearing a hat like the Chinese, have only three strokes, the middle so straight?" [118]

For children the English language was also difficult and they were frustrated that they are not able to speak properly and respond immediately on a question. "Reading out loud was easier than speaking because we did not have to make up what to say, but [Kingston's mother] stopped often, and the teacher would think [she]'d gone quiet again." [119]

Americans also saw Chinese children and immigrants of their nationality as poor people who did not have anything to eat and a place to sleep. The majority of Americans did not really like them and those, who were employed for example in services, gave them things for free. Kingston shares a similar memory with the readers remembering a man who "reached into a jar and gave [her] a handful of lollipops. He gave [the kids] candy all year round, year after year, every time [they] went into the drugstore." [120] "They thought [they] were beggars without a home who lived in back of the laundry. They felt sorry for [them]."[121]

9 Leung versus Kingston

Both of the books deal with the topic of Chinese immigration and Chinese arrivals to the United States. The stories pay attention to descriptions of the relationship between two groups of people – American citizens and Chinese immigrants. However, each of the books deals with this topic in a different way and in different time.

Leung's *Take me home* is a fiction story which is based on true historical events and focuses on two main characters – Addie and Wing. The story refers to the immigration in the past, more precisely the event which took place in 1882, the riots in Rocky Spring. The story focuses on the developing relationship between the American girl and the Chinese immigrant which is condemned by the other Americans.

On the other hand, Kingston's *Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts* is an autobiographical novel which deals with the life of Kingston herself as a Chinese immigrant in the United States. The time spans from the Second World War period when Kingston's mother reached America till present. The book is divided into shorter chapters and each of them talks about different part of Kingston's life in different times. Kingston's mother is also engaged in the book and also represents a narrator. She describes her life in America as well as before in China.

The book *Take me home* also shows Wing's childhood in China and describes his past when he lived there. He describes his family and living in China in general. He left China when he was an adult and came to America. In contrast, Kingston's mother left China alone and her daughter was born after the arrival so and grew up already in America. She describes the integration to the American society as a child and a girl. Her duty is to go to school with other Chinese children. However, Wing, in the book *Take me home*, Wing is an adult man who need to work and adapt to conditions and treatment of other Americans he works with.

And finally, the book *Take me home* describes Wing is employed by the Union Pacific, works in mines and lives in Chinatown in San Francisco. Kingston lives also in Chinatown with her parents, but they own a laundry and employ other Chinese immigrants. Seemingly, both books discuss similar topics with only minor divergences, and more importantly, they both represent good examples of books written by Chinese American authors who pay attention to the topic of Chinese immigration to the USA.

10 Conclusion

This thesis attempted to answer a question concerning Chinese immigration into the United States and to depict the Chinese integration to the American society by means of chosen books from Chinese American writers. The initial part dealt with the depiction of the United States as a multicultural country which is formed by a large number of immigrants from all over the world. President Roosevelt said: “All American art is a function of the hybrid culture that resulted from centuries of immigration to this nation,” [122] which shows that the term “melting pot” describes the United States well and explains the diversity of the country.

The United States are famous for American dream which is a wish for almost everyone so the theoretical part was firstly dedicated to the reasons why Chinese left their country and secondly to the political and war situation in China in the 19th century. This part also included the depiction of the first big wave of Chinese coming to America, and the beginnings of new lives in a new country. It was also necessary to mention the measures adopted by the American government to reduce the number of Chinese arrivals. One of the big measures was the Chinese Exclusion Act which was adopted in 1882 and lasted until the end of the Second World War. The big part followed up the integration of Chinese to the American society which was difficult for them. The Chinese faced discrimination from the beginning, so conflicts started to arise and attacks on Chinese were committed by Americans. Chinese were and still are cheap labour which caused the high unemployment of Americans. Finally, the Chinese immigration still lasts and the Chinese immigrants form a big part of American society. The main sources for the theoretical part were the book *The Chinese in America* from Iris Chang and also academic articles concerning Chinese immigration and lives in China.

The practical part was based on the closer look at Chinese American literature which was presented by analysis of two chosen authors. The first one was Brian Leung and his book *Take Me Home* which narrates a fiction story based on true historical events. Leung focuses on the relationship between an American girl and a Chinese immigrant and the main part of the story is dedicated to the riots in Rock Springs in 1885. The second author was Maxine Hong Kingston with her book *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of The Girlhood among Ghosts* which is an autobiographical novel and also a collection of Kingston’s memoirs describing her life in America as a child

and a girl. This book is written in post-modern style which makes the book specific and different from Leung's *Take Me Home*. Both of the books depict the lives of Chinese immigrants in America but each of them describes it differently and shows different problems of the integration. Nevertheless, more Chinese American authors exist and they pay attention to other topics of Chinese immigration to the United States and to the integration to the American society.

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13 Abstract

The immigration is a worldwide phenomenon which dates centuries back. The United States is a popular country where to emigrate. A big number of immigrants, from all over the world, constitute the whole country. A large group of immigrants are Chinese who look for better living conditions and money to support their families in China. They started coming to the country in the 19th century and the immigration also continues nowadays. The thesis deals with the Chinese history and reasons why they are forced to migrate and also to their lives in the United States with the immigrant status. Literature analysis also forms a big part of the thesis and it deals with the analysis of chosen Chinese American authors - Brian Leung with the book *Take Me Home* and Maxine Hong Kingston with the book *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts* - and their depiction of immigrant lives. Nevertheless, more Chinese American authors exist and they pay attention to other topics of Chinese immigration to the United States and to the integration to the American society.

14 Resumé

Imigrace je celosvětový fenomén a její počátky se datují již po několik století. Spojené státy americké jsou oblíbenou destinací, kam lidé emigrují. Značný počet imigrantů z celého světa společně vytváří z této země celek. Velkou skupinou imigrantů jsou Číňané, kteří hledají lepší životní podmínky a peníze, aby mohli podporovat své rodiny v Číně. Do USA přišli již v 19. století a imigrace z této země pokračuje dodnes. Tato práce se věnuje čínské historii a důvodům, proč byli Číňané nuceni emigrovat, a také jejich životům v americké společnosti se statutem imigranta. Literární analýza také tvoří větší část této práce a věnuje se analýze vybraných Čínsko-amerických autorů – Brian Leung s jeho dílem *Take Me Home* a Maxime Hong Kingston s jejím dílem *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts* - a jejich vyobrazení života imigrantů. Nicméně, existuje více Čínsko-amerických autorů, kteří se věnují dalším tématům čínské imigrace a začleňování se do Americké společnosti.

15 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Chinese immigration and the changes in law¹³

19 th century		
Year	Law	More details
1855	Law of exclusion the Chinese from citizenship	Racism was increasing and American government took the steps to ensure – Chinese could not demand the rights as Americans
1877	Crash of financial markets	It caused the high unemployment and Chinese started leaving America back to China.
1882	Chinese exclusion Act	It was a ban of entering to the United States for Chinese.
1884	Change of Chinese exclusion Act	Only those who entered American before 1880 were allowed to stay.
1892	Geary Act	It was based on the same principle as the Chinese Exclusion Act, after expiration of Geary Act, next exclusion was passed.

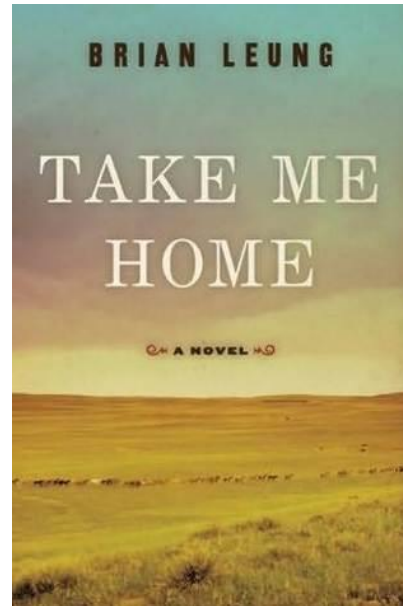
¹³ CHANG, Iris. The Chinese in America: A Narrative Story. London, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 2003. ISBN 0-670-03123-2.

20th century		
Year	Law	More details
1905	Decision Ju Toy	Chinese were denied to enter the United States even if they were already American citizens. It caused big protest in China and harmed American trade. America lost a lot of money.
1913	Alien Land Act	That act prohibited all Asians from owning real estate in America.
1922	Cable Act	Every American citizen who married non-American was punished by losing American citizenship. The law was especially connected with Asian immigrants.
1924	Immigration Act	The law regulated immigration from all Asian countries to the United States.
1943	Magnuson Act	The law repealed the Chinese Exclusion Act. It was allowed 105 Chinese to enter to the United States and they could gain American citizenships.

Appendix 2 – Discussed authors



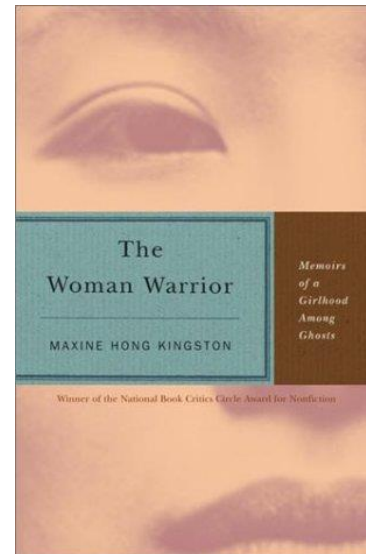
Picture 1 – Brian Leung¹⁴



Picture 2 – Take Me Home¹⁵



Picture 3 – Maxine Hong Kingston¹⁶



Picture 4 – The Woman Warrior¹⁷

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