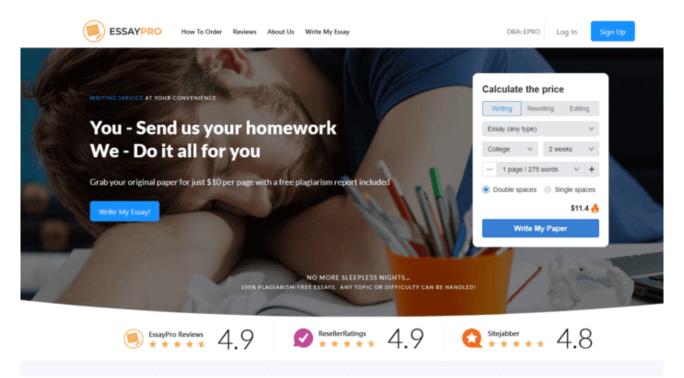
Selling-Out the Asian-American Community in Amy Tan's The Joy Luck Club



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Selling-Out the Asian-American Community in The Joy Luck Club
i wish i could join in the universal praise for amy tan and her best-selling novel "the joy luck club." i wish i could find the latest chinese-american literary dish as appetizing as the rest of the american public does. but i can't. before amy tan entered the scene, public images of asian america had not developed since the middle of the century. the asian american male did not exist except as a barbaric japanese or vietcong soldier. the asian american female remained the adolescent suzy wong pipe dream, toyed with for a while and then deserted.
amy tan, a gifted writer, had the chance to change those images, to dispel the public's misconceptions and to forge a new asian american identity. instead, she copped out on her obligations, meekly reinforcing every conceivable stereotype.
if you believe tan's first novel "the joy <u>luck</u> club," asian amerca is some mystical oddity, conforming to the mascot-culture view of the white thirtysomething women who

predominated at tan's reading. san francisco chinatown is filled with hysterical chinese women playing secret mah jong games. china itself is a dreamlik landscape, filled with secrets and traditions, all exuding a delicate, storybook aura.

chinese mothers are all one-dimensional, superstitious and ignorant. their chinese phrases are delightful italics with quaint meanings. of course, what chinese comedy would be complete without a couple of garbled english words? when tan was late for her berkeley reading, her white husband directed the audience to mimic her mother's amusing syntax: "why so late?" rimshot.

amy tan's heroines are the white mother-in-law's dream come true. these china dolls talk and have strong feminine sympathies. as one of tan's heroines admits, "i used to push my eyes on the sides to make them rounder." futile self-denial, but, oh, isn't it cute?

tan's heroines gain identity by separating themselves from and looking down on their culture. when the heroine in "the kitchen god's wife" hears about her grand auntie's "spirit money," she sneers are her aunt's attempt to "bribe her way along to chinese-heaven" immediately suggests a negative contrast to the "truer" western heaven.

the same dichotomy is used with men as well. asian american men are inadequate -they're either bothersome brothers or unsuccessful lovers who lead to "apathetic boredom."

love with a white male, however, is different.

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