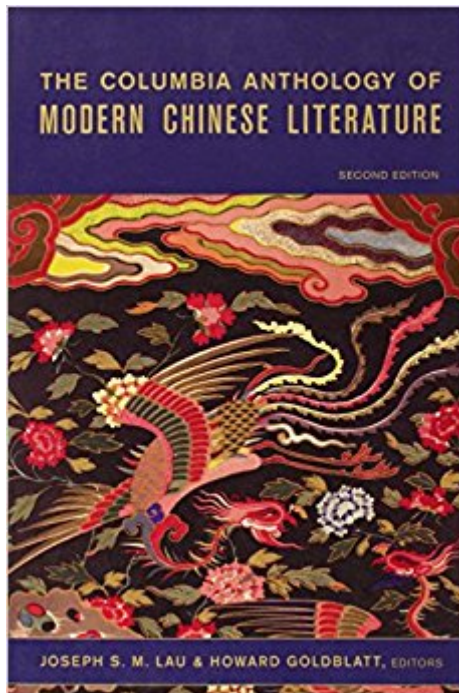


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The Columbia Anthology Of Modern Chinese Literature (Modern Asian Literature Series)



Synopsis

The Columbia Anthology of Modern Chinese Literature has long been a definitive resource for Chinese literature in translation, offering a complete overview of twentieth-century writing from China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, and making inroads into the twenty-first century as well. In this new edition Joseph S. M. Lau and Howard Goldblatt have selected fresh works from familiar authors and have augmented the collection with poetry, stories from the colonial period in Taiwan, literature by Tibetan authors, samplings from the People's Republic of China during the Cultural Revolution, stories by post-Mao authors Wang Anyi and Gao Xingjian, literature with a homosexual theme, and examples from the modern "cruel youth" movement. Lau and Goldblatt have also updated their notes and their biographies of featured writers and poets. Now fully up to date, this critical resource more than ever provides readers with a thorough introduction to Chinese society and culture.

Book Information

Series: Modern Asian Literature Series

Paperback: 784 pages

Publisher: Columbia University Press; 2nd edition (February 20, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0231138415

ISBN-13: 978-0231138413

Product Dimensions: 6.2 x 1.4 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars See all reviews (9 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #196,879 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #27 in Books > Textbooks > Humanities > Literature > World Literature > Asian #82 in Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Regional & Cultural > Asian #143 in Books > Reference > Writing, Research & Publishing Guides > Research

Customer Reviews

These comments are for the first edition of the book, which was published in 1995, not the second/revised version, which came out in 2007. The book was the largest collection of modern Chinese literature that I've seen, and must've taken some years to compile. It contained 152 works by 83 authors. There were 50 short stories (42 authors), 71 poems (30 authors), and 30 essays plus 1 excerpt from an autobiography (11 authors). The short fiction comprised about 70% of the book, poetry 10% and essays/excerpt 20%. There were 88 works from the 20th century from mainland

China (47 writers), 58 from Taiwan (31 writers, including émigrés), and 6 works from Hong Kong from the 1970s and after (5 writers). Seventeen of the authors were women. The works were divided into short fiction, poetry and essays, with each of these divided further into pieces from 1918-49 (early modern), 1949-76 (post-"Liberation") and since 1976 (post-Mao). The middle period, 1949-76, was represented almost entirely by Taiwanese, including émigrés from the mainland. This was because most of the literature from the mainland during that time, intended mainly to promote the new society under the Communist Party, was judged unable to stand inclusion on artistic merit. The one exception was a poem by Mu Dan published at the period's end, in 1976.

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This is an authoritative anthology put out by a couple of great translators. Like other reviewers, I also enjoyed the fiction selections more than the poetry or essay selections. With poetry, things get lost in translation, and the essay selections were very different stylistically from Western expository writing. Whereas Western essay writing tends to value persuasive, descriptive details, some of the essays were vague and abstract and almost read like Taoist parables. The topics were, however, interesting in that they were totally different from what you might encounter in Western style essays--for example, in-depth analysis on whether or not ghosts age in the afterlife. As for the fiction, part one (1918-1949) included a lot of selections examining poverty in the context of a free market, and I thought many of these selections were pertinent for Americans. Favorites includes "Spring

Silkworms" by Mao Dun, with vivid descriptions of the cultivating of silkworms as a metaphor for human greed; "Dog" by Ba Jin, a story told from the point of view of a lower class person who is treated so poorly he thinks he's a dog; "When I Was in Xia Village" by Ding Ling, about meeting a former Comfort Woman and learning about she plans to live out the rest of her stolen life; "Hands" by Xiao Hong a story about the bullying of a poor, annoying, young girl; and an "An Old and Established Name" by Lao She about how businesses need to change with the times or get taken over by capitalistic ways. Also "Steelyard" by Lai He, a meandering story about the stark disparity between the haves and have nots that ends in a dramatic turn of event, the criminal justice system stepping in to ensure tragedy.

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