



CSCCanada

Cross-Cultural Communication

Vol. 10, No. 2, 2014, pp. 118-124

DOI:10.3968/4448

ISSN 1712-8358[Print]

ISSN 1923-6700[Online]

[www.cscanada.net](http://www.cscanada.net)[www.cscanada.org](http://www.cscanada.org)

## A New Historicist Analysis of the Rewriting of Chinese American History in *Donald Duk*

WANG Xiaoxue<sup>[a],\*</sup><sup>[a]</sup>Lecturer, English Department, Institute of Foreign Languages, Shenyang University, Shenyang, China.

\*Corresponding author.

Received 16 November 2013; accepted 10 February 2014

Published online 22 February 2014

### Abstract

Frank Chin creates the methods of recovering the lost history of Chinese Americans in his book *Donald Duk*. He constructs the male heroism through traditional Chinese culture, challenges American education of history through describing the changing process of Donald's attitudes towards anything about China, and rewrites his version of Chinese American history by analyzing the relation between dreams and reality. Thus Chin achieves his strategy to subvert "History" with "history." This paper intends to give a new historicist analysis of the rewriting of Chinese American history in Chinese American literature through *Donald Duk* by Frank Chin.

**Key words:** New Historicism; *Donald Duk*; Rewriting; Chinese American history

WANG Xiaoxue (2014). A New Historicist Analysis of the Rewriting of Chinese American History in *Donald Duk*. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 10(2), 118-124. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/ccc/article/view/4448> DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/4448>

### INTRODUCTION

Frank Chin is journalist, playwright, novelist, critic, editor and anthologist. For generations, the white men tend to see people of other colors in a denigrating lens. Even some prominent philosophers described Asian culture as being stagnant, morally inferior, irrelevant or non-existent. With such philosophy, the white stereotyped Chinese Americans. The stereotypes are merged into people's minds, forming the "episteme" called by New Historicism. For Chin, life

has always been a war to reclaim a Chinese American history that has been a part of American history – the history of the transcontinental railroad. It is a heroic history that has never been told in American history books written by the white, which he takes as the mission.

In *Donald Duk*, the first novel of Frank Chin, he describes the process of a Chinese American boy, named Donald Duk, from resisting anything about China to be a boy who is proud of his Chinese American ethnicity. Chin angrily lays bare that the representation of Chinese has been maliciously distorted in American history. The harshness and the brutality in the lives of these railroad builders as well as the inhuman working conditions to which they were subjected are what Chin emphasizes. However, his more emphasis is put on causing readers' attention to the lost history. In this work, Chin presents readers with the rail-building history of Chinese Americans, and traces back a kind of history he perceives and subverts the orthodox history written by the dominant group. His obsession with social history rises out of the need to cease being nameless, voiceless, a people without a past.

## 1. THE PROCESS FOR DONALD DUK TO GROW UP

### 1.1 Hate for Anything Chinese

Born into a Chinese American family, Donald Duk, a twelve-year-old boy, hated everything Chinese at the very beginning. As a boy, he was not born with prejudice. But because of the education he received, he formed negative attitudes to Chinese including himself, and he admired everything American. New Historicism states that self is made by influences outside oneself and by oneself. Every one, as a social being, is located in a network of many social discourses, which compete against each other to exert influences on the individual. Donald Duk, located in the white dominated society, which was full of the negative

attitude towards Chinese, took in what he was educated because of the ignorance of the history of his ancestors.

According to the power relationship in New Historicism, when people communicate with others, they are actually exerting power, and with this channel, they define this society in accordance with their wish. Donald Duk received his education at school, where he was filled with knowledge cherished by the white. Donald Duk was just one of all the little Chinese American children, so Chin reminds “the Chinese are comfort to hate Chinese” (Chin, 1991). In a history lesson, Donald was presented with a group of historical narratives that shaped a dominant view of Chinese American men as passive and feminized. This lesson was taught by a teacher, named Mr. Meanwright, whose name invokes at once a malignancy of spirit and a “do-good” liberalism. Through the name, Chin wants to tell the readers that the history taught by him is not correct, and he is so mean in appreciating Chinese American culture. Therefore, there is no wonder that the little Donald hated everything Chinese at the beginning of this novel. The American history the teacher taught was written by a white man, a professor who specialized in history at Berkeley University. Their history endeavored to devalue Chinese American culture and to impress the Chinese American stereotypes into the white supremacy. Thus, the school, where Donald received education, did nothing but reinforce the ideology of the mainstream society. Hearing such explanation of Chinese culture, as the descendent of Chinese, no wonder Donald Duk formed the attitude of self-contempt. Mr. Meanwright offered his students with the seemingly fair and unquestionable history. He went on to the students: “One of the Confucian concepts is ‘the mandate of heaven’. As the European kings of old ruled by divine right, so the emperors of China ruled by the mandate of heaven” (Chin, 1991). This kind of idea broke down Donald Duk’s last belief in Chinese culture. In other words, Chinese as victims of their culture were not culturally prepared to make a living in America. They were no matches for the assertive Americans. The whites twisted the fact. Chinese Americans were not born with “Chinese traits”—docility, passivity and obedience to the authority. Why they behaved like that was their response to the condition they faced in American society. In fact, China-born people were more spontaneous and expressive than American-born Chinese, because in America, the out-spoken rebels were weeded out by exclusion, deportation, murder, and other forms of negative reinforcement, while those who exhibited meek and mild behavior were rewarded. Therefore, the coward behavior of Chinese Americans was their response to white racism, not because of “the mandate of heaven.” However, this characteristic was always taken advantage of by the white. The children, like Donald Duk, growing up in such environment which was hostile to Chinese Americans, inevitably showed their hatred to their ethnicity and themselves.

At first, Donald hated being Chinese and dislikes anything Chinese. He hated his name. Second, Donald Duk felt embarrassed by all things in Chinatown. He didn’t like Chinese New Year, the symbol of Chinese culture. What’s worse he didn’t want to see Chinese and tried his best to avoid Chinese at school. He hated his father, himself, the people and object in Chinatown, so he did not think himself a Chinese American. His idol, Fred Astaire, was the greatest dancer, who had been an American icon, a genius and a grace personified dancer. Donald admired his grace on the silver screen and wished to be like him, to be loved and welcomed by everyone in America. He internalized American pop culture so deeply and the white were his idol. He ever asked himself: “If the Chinese were that smart, why didn’t they invite tap-dancing” (Chin, 1991). He called Chinese “they”, as if he was not one of members. His father sensed his incorrect attitude toward Chinese and criticized his antipathy for Chinese and his relentless assimilatory drive. He said, “I can’t believe I have raised a little white racist. He doesn’t think Chinatown is America” (Chin, 1991, p.99).

In the white hegemonic power, many Chinese American children are brought up like Donald Duk. Their ignorance of their own history makes them accept the stereotype of their ancestors. In Chin’s view, American-born-and-raised Chinese Americans often get “their China from the radio, off the silver screen, from the television, out of comic books, from the pushers of white culture that pictured the yellow man as something that when wounded, sad, or angry, or swearing. The purpose for Chin to create a protagonist like Donald Duk is to show that Chinese Americans are either distortedly represented or totally effaced from American history. Knowing the meaning of history to the existence of a people, Chin, the Chinatown cowboy, engages himself in striving for Chinese American tradition through rewriting Chinese American history.

## 1.2 Father and Uncle’s Education

Donald’s unquestioning acceptance of the mainstream ideology about Chinese in America brought his uncle, Donald Duk, and his father, King Duk, a sea of worries. They noticed the reason for this was that the boy stayed away from Chinese culture and internalized the gist of his teacher’s generalizations about Chinese Americans. Therefore, his father and uncle decided to change this situation. Through describing father and uncle’s education, Chin presented readers with Chinese culture and Chinese American history, which was erased or distorted in American society. This was an education for Donald Duk, and also an education for the white. This kind of education subverted the orthodox education received by Donald Duk at school.

Uncle Donald was the first person who called Donald’s attention to his Chinese identity. “Your real name is your Chinese name. And your Chinese name is not Duk, but Lee, just like Lee Kuey” (Chin, 1991, p.22). Uncle Duk, incisive as a laser-knife, held the school accountable: “I know how

that snooty, private school you go to has ruled the guts out of you and turned you into some kind of engineer of hate for everything Chinese, but your real name is your Chinese name” (Chin, 1991, p.22). His words served an inspiration for Donald Duk to consider whether what he took for granted at school was really the truth or not. His words were the challenge and subversion to the hegemonic power. Locating Donald’s identity problem in the school he went to, uncle Duk was ready to fight back so that Donald would realize that his real name was his Chinese name.

He then told the story of the 108 heroic outlaws and the family history of the young protagonist. Donald’s great-great-grand father, who was then about Donald’s age, was the first of the Lees to come to the United States and worked on the Central Pacific Railroad. He asked the boy a thought-provoking question: Why Chinese were not included in the picture taken at the Gold Spike ceremony? This is also Chin’s emphasis. The reason is the discrimination. When taken photos, Chinese were excluded. That they were not in the photos meant what they contributed to America was not recorded in American history. The history was not correct. The history taken for granted by Donald Duk was not trustworthy like the photos. After talking with his uncle, Donald had his dreams in which he witnessed the completion of the Central Pacific track by Chinese labors, whose last railway tie was pulled up by Irish crew members in preparation for the ceremony. The white knew and admitted that Chinese were integral to the railroad completion. They also understood the need to manage a radicalized history through the power of visual image. However they shifted the truth. They erased the presence of Chinamen in the photo. According to the white’s logics, to erase the Chinese contribution in the building of the railroad was to erase them from the visual screen. Chin shows the readers that, what they see isn’t necessarily true in history. Something may be erased or lost because of the hegemonic power. In reality, what Donald saw in the picture was that there was no Chinese in the photos. This was the difference between the given-to-be-seen and the truth. This kind of contradiction gave Donald an inspiration. More importantly he began to regard the dominant historical images around him with suspicions. Here, Chin emphasized why Chinese didn’t appear in the historical photos, through which he rewrites the lost history.

Donald’s father was another important mentor in the boy’s life. Seeing his son was so bored by everything Chinese, he perceived this as illness. So he took Donald to see Chinese doctor. However, all of these symptoms were not physical, they were mental. The herb doctor could not cure Donald’s illness. What was at stake with Donald was his lack of Chinese American consciousness, his Chinese American sensibility. Realizing this, his father King Duk decided to inscribe such consciousness through the re-education about the heroic deeds of the Chinese coolie labors.

Through King Duk’s education, Donald Duk learned more about Chinese American histories, especially the railroad building history, which was lost or not mentioned in text books. The Chinese rail-builders were said to be beaten by Irish in the track-laying competition when they were hired to construct the continental railroad in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In fact, they won in this competition, which fanned up Donald’s interest in learning more about Chinese. Chin presents readers with Chinese American history from Chinese American perspective. It is the subversion to the orthodox history.

The adult Duk, uncle and father’s intervention proved to be too demanding for Donald to digest. The overdoses of both Chinese and Chinese American heroic deeds were instructed to him through visual and auditory senses, which revealed the mainstream’s misrepresentation of Chinese American history. Born and brought up in the white hegemonic discourses, it was not easy for a little boy to accommodate himself to such great conflict. Therefore, he experienced tremendous inner violence during the birth of his new consciousness. Because the knowledge he received from his father and uncle was fragmented, he couldn’t connect them all. And it was difficult for him to grasp these cultural signs connote. Thus, it was conceivable that he suffered in order to shed off his former prejudice and cultivate a new subjectivity. He couldn’t connect all the information he received, Kwan Kung, the 108 outlaws, the railroad workers, their foremen, and how the last cross tie was laid, all of which only found their expression in the little boy’s dreams.

Through the education of the adult Duk, little Donald began to pursue the history his ancestors experienced and to question the truthfulness of the representations of that particular period in history books by non-Chinese authors.

### 1.3 Dreams and Realities

New Historicist Stephen Greenblatt said: “I’d like to speak to the dead” (Veesser, 1989). Because of the hegemonic discourse, something marginalized or discriminated may be lost or distorted, and they are dead. New Historicism believes that what is not presented in the orthodox history book may exist. The restoration of the lost is an important element in Chin’s novel, *Donald Duk*. These restorations connote the idea of breathing new life into something that had been dead. This is a crucial element in the struggle against the racism in the field of history.

Uncle told Donald: “Your great-great-grand father was the first of our Lees to come over from china. He worked on the central pacific when it went east over the Sierra and on the Promontory” (Chin, 1991). However, Donald ever saw a picture about the Golden Spike ceremony, but he didn’t see any Chinese in it. Thus uncle showed him a picture of Chinese labors with a white foreman on horseback. “Look at how young we were when we came to build the railroad”. Uncle’s word enlightened him, but it was not easy for him to accept what uncle said was true. He dreamed to discover the truth. “By introducing

forbidden differences on the level of the unconscious and by disguising these prohibited differences on the level of the preconscious, the dream work offers the possibility of departure from the conventional norms and prohibitions” (Eng 79). The dreams provided an opportunity for Chin to rewrite the railroad history and it was a chance for Donald to respect the heroic deeds of his ancestors.

In his dreams, he became his great-great-grand father, who was just of his age when he joined in building the railroad. He witnessed the courage, ingenuity and hardworking of Chinese Americans. The images of Chinese Americans were daring and masculine.

Donald’s dreams flashed while he was asleep. As soon as he woke up, his dream was already nothing but a fading feeling. When his mother inquires about this odd behavior, he replied: “I’m trying to remember” (Chin, 1991, p.99). It means Donald’s change of attitude toward anything Chinese. He began to be interested in the lost history of his ancestors. This dream told Donald that it was his ancestors who took great part in building the railroad. In his dreams, he lingered at the site studying the tie covered with the names of 10,000 Chinese on all sides and ends. However it was conflict with the education. Therefore, he went to the library to find out the truth and began his self education. It was a great turning point for such a boy. He had the intention actively to date back the history of his own ethnicity. However, surprisingly, in the documents from the library, there was no Chinese name in the history record, but only eight Irish workers. Chin puts the protagonist in an embarrassing situation: On the one hand, his father and uncle’s education as well as his dreams told him Chinese Americans made great contribution to the railway building; on the other hand, he couldn’t find any proof in the history book written by the white authorities.

Dreams served Donald Duk as the self education. Consciously, he began to be confident about himself and proud to be Chinese Americans. This is the total turning of Donald’s attitude toward Chinese and American. He says “we” referring to Chinese Americans, and it means he treats himself as one member in it and he knows the history he is educated at school is false. Dreams provide Donald with the courage to re-recognize himself and his own ethnicity. Chin tells an alternative Chinese American history through these dreams.

At the end of the novel, Donald not only accepts the history of his ethnicity, but also fights for it. He challenges his teacher’s version of Chinese American history and culture in the class. Now Donald has the consciousness to challenge hegemony to subvert the distorted or erased parts of Chinese American history.

---

## 2. CONSTRUCTION OF MALE HEROISM

For a long time, Chinese Americans have been a voiceless people because of the racial discrimination. Chinese

Americans lost their masculinity and were feminized. This kind of image is the consequence of the hegemonic power, which dominates the ideology of people. In Chin’s work, he takes Chinese myths and legends as the valuable tool to remind Chinese Americans their heritage. However, Chin’s attitude toward the method of using Chinese culture has changed a little. In the very beginning, he insisted that Chinese American writers should articulate Chinese American identity by completely rejecting of both Chinese culture and white mainstream culture. Since the mid-1980s, he began to appropriate Chinese culture and set up the models for Chinese Americans. His desire to rebuild the Chinese Americans’ masculinity couldn’t be fulfilled unless he reinvents and redefines the past from his subjective artistic vision. It is a strategy for him to rebuild the Chinese American masculinity. For Chin, only by defining Chinese American culture with heroic images and masculine deeds could Chinese survive in America. In his eyes, Chinese must have been and be heroes and fighters. Chin’s strategy in reconstructing Chinese American masculinity to subvert the stereotype formed in the hegemonic power.

### 2.1 The Heroic Image of Father

In this novel, King Duk, a well-known successful cook in Chinatown is the ideal image for Chin: intelligent, hard working, and generous. All these characteristics can’t be found in the feminized image of Chinese Americans. He is the most important one to pass down traditional Chinese culture to Donald Duk. He is a figure detested by the boy at first and then respected by him.

First, as a cook, King Duk infused masculinity into the traditionally feminine job. “He owns a successful Chinatown restaurant. He is the best cook there. In the kitchen, he could cook any meal and he treasured his “good name among the *sifu* of world cooking” (Chin, 1991, p.8). Chin describes the heroic and legendary deeds of father. “During the last war, Dad says, he is on the securing staff of the US army chief of staff, a four-star general who travels around the world and answer only to the commander on chief” (Chin, 1991, p.9). Father had a glorious history and he was intelligent and eager to learn something. He was very excellent and could serve the meals for the great officers. However, the cooking was not the final purpose. For King Duk, the culinary arts were the leading path to rediscover the lost learning. For father, cook was not only a job, it was also an art that could create something or restore something. It is Chin’s purpose to write this novel—to restore the lost Chinese American history and to rediscover the abandoned past of Chinese Americans.

King Duk’s masculinity not only found its expression in his creative and legendary life as a cook, but also in his central position in his family. He was strong and powerful. But it was not physical but mental. He had the ability to protect and educate his child in his Chinese way.

Donald Duk was laughed at by the white boys for his funny name. He was scared and couldn't do anything to get rid of them. Because others always made fun of him, he was isolated and expelled as a stranger. Knowing this, his father decided to teach his boy to be a real man inside and outside his family in American complex situation. Because of the hegemonic power, Chinese Americans were feminized and the boy was described as a coward one at first. He admitted he was scared by the white boys. This was the conflict between the coward son and the masculine father. Therefore, the father decided to educate his son with Chinese ways to solve the problem. As the father of the son, he instructs Donald with Chinese standard of masculinity. This is a way for Chinese Americans to subvert the feminized stereotypes.

Accepting father's advice and putting it into practice, Donald found he could deal with the white boys. From then on, he wasn't bullied anymore because he became strong mentally, and he even could make the gangsters laugh. This success resulted from father's help and instruction. It was the success of Chinese standard of masculinity. In this way, Chin creates a heroic image of father who represents all Chinese Americans.

Father's masculinity also finds its expression in his redefinition of "the mandate of heaven" and its relationship with history. Because of the influence of white hegemonic power, the white men took the docile, passive character of Chinese Americans as the consequence of the Confucian thought. As a white, though stayed in China for half a year, he couldn't understand the essence of Confucius. He mistook the foundation of the two civilizations: western civilization was founded on religion while Chinese civilization was founded on history. King Duk has his view about the Confucius thought.

In this novel, King Duk built 108 airplanes. However, these perfect models were to be burnt, which made Donald uncomfortable because he didn't understand the background knowledge of this story. However, Donald wasn't educated as such in school. It also reveals Frank Chin's view of history. Chinese Americans have to write their history or they will lose it forever.

King Duk is the heroic father created by the writer. Though not masculine in body, he is masculine in mind and gives his son some instructions of being a real man. This image is very different from the stereotypes. It is a strategy used by Chin to subvert the hegemonic power to rewrite the lost history.

## 2.2 Chinese Traditional Images

In this novel Frank Chin uses Chinese myths and legends. He finds that they are the best sources of the heroic tradition. For Chin, these stories represent the heroic tradition of ancient Chinese culture. He ever praises *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* because it "explores the ethic of private revenge, the individual-as-soldier's constant battle to maintain personal integrity".

For *Outlaws of the Marsh*, he comments it explores "the idea of the mandate of heaven, or the Confucian idea of the oppressed people rebelling and forming a large alliance to avenge themselves against the corrupt state" (Chin et al., 1991, p.39). In both of the stories, there are the protagonists who are rebellious and militant. They fight against the corruption for their own dream. These stories form the collective communal memory of Chinese Americans. For ethnic writers, myths and legends are important strategies of resistance and self-affirmation in novels. They serve both as content and as organizing principle in the plot. Though some of the inherited memories might be lost, distorted or forgotten as time passes, but most of them are still in the collective consciousness. In *Donald Duk*, Chin examines the heroic tradition included in these two novels, and also how this heroic tradition has been carried on by the Chinese immigrants in the New World. The heroic images and deeds of the protagonists subvert the feminized stereotype of Chinese Americans.

Kwan Kung is a protagonist in *The Romance of Three Kingdoms*, who along with Liu Pei (Liu Bei) and Chang Fei (Zhang Fei) swears an oath of brotherhood in Chang's peach garden. This is a famous centuries-old myth and has become the model for every subsequent brotherhood club. Among the three brothers, Kwan Kung has always been highly praised for his loyalty, courage and integrity, and is a perfect example of the ethic of private revenge preached by Confucius. He is "the God of war, plunder and literature" (Chin, 1991, p.150) in Chinese culture.

In this novel, Kwan Kung is transformed into a foreman who leads the other 108 Chinese Americans to build the railroad in the west of America. Foreman Kwan Kung has the eyes "like Dad's eyes, but more so" (Chin, 1991, p.77), because Dad has hawk eyes, which can see everything through. In his leadership of these Chinese builders, he shows courage, intelligence and compassion. His bravery and wisdom are the important factors for him to deal with his recalcitrant boss, Charles Crocker, co-owner of the Central Pacific Railroad.

There is not a trace of passiveness and docility in Kwan's character. As a leader, he leads Chinese workers to go on strike for back pay, to compete against the Irish workers and to establish the world record by laying ten miles of rock in ten hours. Kwan is no longer the sheep-type of the stereotyped Chinaman who acquiesces to the silence or absence of Chinese Americans in American history. As a heroic embodiment of Chinese Americans, Kwan is "antithetical in every way to the image of the quiet, passive and submissive Oriental house boy" (Cheung, 1993, p.242).

The 108 outlaws are also mentioned in this novel. They are "an extension of the heroic tradition and stand for the ethic of popular or collective revenge against the corrupt state, or the mandate of heaven" (Chin, 1991, p.35). In *Donald Duk*, the 108 outlaws are transformed from

Chinese literary characters into the 108 Chinese American railroad builders. After Chinese arrived in America, they were not welcome. Most of the laws excluded them. Thus, they lived in the hostility of the whites, like the 108 outlaws who were excluded by the government in Song dynasty. However, they were not as passive, docile and coward as recorded in American history. In the railroad building, those intelligent immigrants took up a bunch of dangerous jobs the whites scared to take. They showed masculinity as men. The masculine and heroic images are counter to American colonizing stereotypes that would keep them geographically restricted and removed from American history.

Chin admires the 108 outlaws of *Outlaws of the Marsh* for their extraordinary talents and fighting skills. He integrates the historical facts with fantasy. By so doing, the author is incorporating the Chinese American fathers into the heroic tradition represented by the outlaws. By comparing Chinese Americans to the outlaws in the legends, Chin asserts that his Chinese Americans possess all the manly qualities defined by the dominant discourse. He locates his heroic tradition and finds his ideal manhood in the form of an aggressive, combative, and workaholic “outlaws” identity. He tries to legalize this “outlaw” identity for his Chinese Americans in his works.

In *Donald Duk*, Chin examines how the heroic tradition has been inherited and handed down by immigrants in the New World. As soon as Chinese Americans arrived in America, they found themselves unwelcome. In such situation, they didn't leave the heroic tradition behind them. They didn't reject or forget Chinese myths when in the face of new experience and in the process of making history and language. What they experienced in the New World made them feel like the 108 outlaws in the *Outlaws of the Marsh*. It was the 108 outlaws who helped them to face the difficulties and to fight against the exclusion, as well as to maintain their masculinity.

It was King Duk who mentioned the 108 outlaws for the first time in the novel. He intended to build 108 planes and paint the outlaws on them. On the fifteenth of the Chinese New Year, the Lantern Festival, he wanted to burn them on the Angel Island. Among the 108 outlaws, some were very famous, such as Soong Gong “The Timely Rain”, Lee Kuey “The Black Tornado”, Yin “The wrestler”, and Wu Song “The Tiger Killer.” They frequented Donald's dreams. In Donald's dreams, he imagined the 108 outlaws as Chinamen who just arrived in America. In the dream, they were godlike. Their images were great and masculine.

Like the wrongly judged outlaws in Song Dynasty, Chinese immigrants are wrongly treated in America. However, for Chin, Chinese people are not as passive, docile and feminized as described in American history. By citing the traditional heroes in the legends, Chin presents the masculine tradition of Chinese and subverts the hegemonic power of the mainstream culture. This subversion designates his attempt to prove the historical

presence and contribution of the Chinese in the United States because they were and are there in a way not as represented in the official history books.

---

### 3. WRITING STRATEGY

---

Like Kingston, Frank Chin also makes use of some writing strategies to rewrite the lost Chinese American history. With these strategies, he gets Chinese Americans into the mainstream culture and subverts the stereotype written in the orthodox American history.

#### 3.1 Naming Strategy

The opening sentence of this novel tells us that Donald Duk hated his own name and he wanted to become a dancer like the white, Fred Astaire. However, his name seemed to be his obstacle and drove him to be crazy. He hated to be thought as the character living in the Disney Land. Donald was a representative of American pop culture. According to New Historicism, this dominant culture forms an episteme, and people's mind and thought are the reflection of it. On mentioning Donald Duk, people may have the clumsy and funny image of the duck in Disney Land. Thus, a person who is called Donald Duk will be laughed at of course, because people will connect this person with the funny image. However, in this work, Chin uses Duk, not Duck for the little boy and his family members' family name. In this work, Donald Duk is not a duck, but a little boy who gradually pursues his ancestors' history. This image is quite different from the general image in people's mind. By so doing, Chin confuses the mainstream culture. It shows his courage to create or rewrite the Chinese American history.

In American history, Chinese American images are stereotyped. Chin is not satisfied with the given-to-be-seen, and wants to know more facts behind it. Through the creation of another Donald Duk, he wants to get Chinese Americans to enter American popular culture and history. His version of Donald Duk tends to make the Disney Land of America more inclusive so that it can show the heterogeneity of America. Chin puts something new into American culture and creates a new meaning to Donald Duk. The final purpose of him is to show the courage to subvert the hegemonic power and to get Chinese Americans into American history.

Besides the omission of the letter “c” in duck, Chin also presents readers with a vertiginous doubling of the proper name. Many famous white Americans are doubled with Chinese Americans. For example, Daisy Duk is the Chinese Betty Crocker and Larry Louie is the Chinese Fred Astaire. Especially Fred Astaire, he was the idol of little Donald Duk, because the boy wanted to dance like him one day on the stage. By so doing, Chin tells the readers that the white dominant culture is very influential, and Chinese Americans are inevitable to be influenced by the values and standards of the whites. Donald Duk, as a

small boy, born and brought up in America, considered himself as American, and his dream was to become a man like Fred Astaire: being loved and welcome by everyone in America. He internalized the American pop culture and despised his own people.

Becoming Fred Astaire was the biggest dream of Donald Duk. However, this dream was gradually broken and he got a better understanding of the meaning of names. In fact, Donald thought that his teacher was out of respect not only because he danced this kind of dance, but because his teacher smashed all of the good imaginations in his mind. Donald Duk admired the name Fred Astaire and the culture represented by that name. He even couldn't bear a little damage to the impression. That was because he was educated by the white dominant culture, according to the episteme in New Historicism. He judged everything out of that standard.

However, it was Fred Astaire who taught Donald the real meaning of a person's name. Name was nothing but an artificial product. In Donald's dreams, in the first talk between Fred Astaire and Donald, Fred Astaire helped the boy understand the history of his ancestors on building the transcontinental railroad. It was very crucial for the boy to change his attitude on his own ancestors. Fred Astaire told the boy that name was nothing and it was not important whether it was remembered or not. The importance was that a person should be remembered as human being. If Fred Astaire was nothing but a name, then it was not necessary for the boy to be Chinese Fred Astaire. And then if the name was nothing, then why did Donald care about his name "Donald Duk"?

By telling the story of names, Donald Duk, Chinese Fred Astaire, and Fred Astaire, Chin presents the readers with a fact that name is just an artificial object. It is just a method to identify things. The meaning of a name is related to people and their ideology. Different people may have different understandings of a name. So is the history. According to New Historicism, history is only the text recorded by people who are biased with the precedent knowledge. Therefore, history is biased. By examining the name, Chin subverts the authenticity of the dominant culture.

### 3.2 Donald Duk's Central Position

In American history, Chinese Americans are excluded or marginalized. There are little or no words given to them and to their contributions. In Frank Chin's work, to rewrite the lost history of Chinese Americans, he puts his protagonist, Donald Duk, and his family in the center of the narration. This is a strategy used by him to reverse the white centered history. Chin's writings and endeavors are for the equality of Chinese in America.

In the relationship with Arnold, Donald Duk was always in the centre and seemed to be more clever and brave. Donald Duk seemed to be more clever and sensitive to sum others' meaning. He was even described

as qualified to judge westerners' description of Chinese Americans. Even the white boy, Arnold, had to consult him for the answer. He was a hero.

Step by step, Donald Duk knew his ancestors' history, and he became braver to fight against the stereotype and the prejudice forced on Chinese Americans. At the end of the novel, when he heard his teacher Mr. Meanwright's false comment of Chinese, he bravely interrupts him. Here, Donald behaved like a warrior to protect the history of his ancestors. He was not nervous at all and told his teacher his true feeling: He was offended. His attitudes forced his teacher to admit that he was not perfect. That meant what he said may not be true. What his saying about the negative image of Chinese Americans might be false. Chin successfully subverted the orthodox history by describing this class scene at last. Therefore, he used his own novel as a tool to present the Chinese American history he knew. And Donald Duk, put in the center of the narration, meant that Chinese Americans should be in the center of their own history.

What mentioned above is the strategy for Chin to subvert the hegemonic power. They are good ways for Chin to re rewrite the lost history of Chinese Americans.

---

## CONCLUSION

As is well known, the early Chinese Americans are the co-creators of American history. They have made great contributions to the construction and development of the United States. However, their experiences and contributions have rarely been mentioned in the authentic American history. A close reading of the text reveals that providing an alternative version of Chinese American history is an effective way of fighting for the proper rights of Chinese Americans and establishing their cultural identities.

---

## REFERENCES

- Brannigan, J. (1998). *New historicism and culture materialism*. New York: ST. Martin's Press, INC.
- Cheung, King-kok. (1993). *Articulate silences: Hisaye Yamamoto, Maxine Hong Kingston, Joy Kogawa*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Chin, Frank, et al. (1974). *Aiiieeeee!: An anthology of Asian-American writers*. Washington D. C.: Howard University Press.
- Chin, Frank, Jeffrey Paul, Inada, Lawson Fusao, & Wong Shawn (1991). *The big aiiieeeee! An anthology of Chinese American and Japanese American literature*. New York: A Meridian Book.
- Chin, Frank (1991). *Donald Duk*. Minneapolis: Coffee House Press.
- Eng, David L. (2001). *Racial castration: Managing masculinity in Asian America*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Veesser, Aram H. (1989). *The new historicism*. New York & London: Routledge.