MASCULINE IDENTITY IN CHINESE AMERICAN LITERATURE AND HISTORY

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Abstract: Masculine Identity in Chinese American Literature and History offers a new perspective on the way in which male Chinese immigrants were perceived in modern and contemporary United States. The evolution of the immigrants' image, from effeminate or common laborers, in the beginning, to today's prosperous businessmen, will be one of the major focus points of this paper. Moreover, this change of perspective is reflected by the literary creations of Chinese American writers, which is another topic this paper discusses.
Nowadays, authors and critics propose new models of male Chinese American characters, inspired by the old Chinese tradition of a man developing both his intellect and his heroism, i.e. wen-wun.
An example of such a character is Donald Duk, whose transformation from ignorant teenager to heroic defender of Chinese American history will be analyzed within this paper.

Keywords: Chinese American, Effeminate, American Ethnic Literature, Frank Chin, Hero.

INTRODUCTION

Although the United States of America is recognized for being the country were all dreams can become reality, for the longest time America was not everybody's Promised Land, as only Americans of European descent were able to fulfill their dreams and get rich, while Africans were used as slaves and East Asians were hired as poorly payed workers on farms, railways construction sites, or in gold mines and factories. Fortunately, in the last century American minorities managed to chance their status from slaves or poorly payed workers to successful American citizen who can have a decent job and be recognized as model citizens.

The evolution of East Asian and African minorities in North America from the state of slaves or poorly payed workers to that of successful Americans is not only presented in history books and articles, but it also appears in autobiographical or fictional novels written by professional or amateur writers of African and East Asian descent. Unfortunately, unlike the literature created by African American authors, which has a long history and is widely known and recognized, Asian American literature written by Americans of East Asian descent was only recently discovered by the wide international public and attracts new readers through exotic elements and shocking realism. Moreover, the majority of authors writing this type of literature are women and they concentrate more on the female image in East Asia and the Asian American community and less on the male perspective, although an avid reader will find some fictional and autobiographical novels which describe the old and new images of the American man of East Asian origin. Therefore, a historical and literary study on the image of East Asian men in American society is not only possible, but needed if we take into account that there are so little studies on this subject

The current paper will try to show that literature and history recorded not only the image of American women of East Asian descent, but also the image of American men of East Asian descent, even if historians and writers chose to elaborate more on the circumstances of women. Moreover, while the first chapter will show the evolution of Chinese immigrants from the status of effeminate and low-wage workers to the respectful American citizens who have businesses, or are teachers, or make themselves recognized through their physical power, the second and third chapter will concentrate on the literary evolution of the old and weak East Asian immigrant character, in general, and of the effeminate Chinese immigrant character, especially, into a new type of Asian

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American male character, which merges the concepts of manhood from both American and East Asian culture.

The evolution of the status of Chinese American men in the United States of America

Chinese immigrants came "in the mid-1800s […] [joining] other fortune hunters who came to America. Thousands of people headed to California, hoping to find gold. Few Chinese found fortune, but they did find work as laborers, cooks, launderers, and servants"[1]. By 1880 there were about 300,000 Chinese living in America[2], but this is not unexpected considering that during the Ming rulers (1368-1644) and the Qing dynasty (1644-1912) one million Chinese from the huashang class (traders and merchants) moved to Southeast Asia, in places like Brunei, Malacca, Western Java, Batvia, Manila, Southern Siom, and Phom Penh, although they were banned from leaving China, under threat of the death penalty[3].

The majority of Chinese immigrants that came to North America in the middle of the nineteenth century originated from the Guangdong province and did not make the journey in order to get rich, like other European explorers, but in order to earn enough money to ensure the wellbeing of the families still in Asia, because at that time, China was affected by "political and social upheaval with the Opium Wars, the 1851 T'ai P'ing Rebellion"[4]. Moreover, because the Guangdong area was prone to be "subject to periodic typhoons and floods"[5], many peasants were left without their crops and this contributed to a severe shortage of food, which generated an exodus of hungry Chinese men to North America in a search for resources to live and to offer some help to those that stayed in China.

The Chinese came to North America attracted by the illusion created by the gold rush, but by 1851 they "were shut off from the Golden Mountain [and] went to Southern Oregon"[6]. Moreover, the fear created by European Americans that Chinese immigrants will buy North America gave birth to a series of laws that prohibited Chinese nationals from buying mines or exploring by themselves, so they could only work as employed miners.

The majority of Chinese immigrants that came to North America were men and they came as "sojourners: they left their families behind in China, planning to return home when they had accumulated enough wealth"[7]. Unfortunately, because they created remote communities of Chinese men, they were perceived as gay or effeminate, because some became launderers or cooks and these jobs were usually considered to be women's jobs by modern Americans. Furthermore, Chinese men were generally hated by other immigrants and Americans because they worked hard and took every job opportunity, even if it was a poorly payed job. This resentment lead to the apparition of "degrading names such as "chin", "John Chinaman", "mooneyes""[8] and even to hate-crimes[9], but also encouraged the creation of discriminatory laws like the Sidewalk Ordinance of 1870, or the Queue Ordinance of 1873, etc[10].

Unfortunately, by 1890 the Gold Boom had waned, but the Chinese immigrants had remained and, surprisingly, more wanted to come to North America. The majority of Chinese immigrants gravitated towards "clearing land and building canals, roads and railroad tracks", while

[1] Kay Melchisedech Olson, *Chinese Immigrants 1850-1900,* Capstone Press, Mankato, 2002, p.4.
[2] *Ibidem.*
[3] Man Zhou, *Contemporary Chinese America: Immigration, Ethnicity, and Community Transformation,* Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 2009, pp.25-27.
[4] *Dreams of the West: A History of the Chinese in Oregon 1850-1950,* Ooligan Press, Oregon, 2007, p. 17.
[5] *Ibidem.*
[6] *Ibidem,p.*18.
[7] *Ibidem, p.*17.
[8] *Ibidem, p.*77.
[9] *Ibidem, p.*81.
[10] Berard P. Wong, "Chinese," in *America Immigrant Cultures: Builders of a Nation,* eds. David Levinson and Melvin Ember, vol.1, Simon and Schuster Macmillan, New York, 1997, p.155.

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others "labored in iron, wool and paper mills"[11] and some took jobs as house servants, day laborers, shop keepers, and sharecroppers[12]. Furthermore, after the Gold Rush age ended, the Chinese had to face even more discrimination because they had to find jobs in domains other than mining, which made Americans hate them more. Therefore, unions started protests against the right to work for Chinese and politicians used this opposition to the Chinese and their rights to work and to enter America, making political promises to the citizens with a right of vote in political campaigns and afterwards these promises were converted into discriminatory acts[13]. By 1879 politicians managed to pass "the Fifteen Passenger Bill which would have limited to fifteen the number of Chinese passengers on any ship coming to the United States" in the Senate and after three years the U.S. Congress voted "the Chinese Exclusion Act [...] [which marked] a turning point in American history. It was the first immigration law ever passed by the United States barring one specific group of people because of their race or nationality"[14]. Fortunately, the act permitted entry to the United States to some "Chinese people who were exempt from the stipulations of the law [which] included diplomatic personnel, merchants, students, teachers, and tourists"[15].

Not only were Chinese in general restricted from entering the United States of America, but through earlier acts like the Page Act of 1875 and through other government attempts Asian women were denied the right to enter the United States of America if they could be "perceived to be immoral and guilty of sexual [labor]"[16], which sadly lead to the exclusion of the majority of Asian women from being eligible to enter the United States of America[17]. Therefore, it is not surprising that Asian men, in general, and Chinese men, in particular, formed closed communities where men performed the roles of women as well, and this enabled the general American public to perceive Chinese men as either gay or effeminate and weak.

Politicians continued to create discriminatory laws in order to stop immigrants from Asia and other parts of the world. By 1924 the new Immigration Act restricted the number of immigrants to a "quota for each country [which] was based on the proportionate number of each nationality already residing in the United States as of 1920"[18] and this lead to a quota of 105 new Chinese immigrants per year[19].

After the Pearl Harbor attack, the Japanese became the most hated Asian race in America and the Chinese took advantage of this situation by discriminating against Japanese the same way Americans had discriminated against them in order to show that they were good American citizens. Moreover, after the incidents in Nanking in 1937, when the Japanese Army invaded China and conducted numerous acts against humanity by killing innocent civilians and raping all the women in Nanking, Americans started to feel moved by the suffering that affected the Chinese and, by 1943, the Exclusion Act was repealed in order to strengthen the relation of the United States of America with the Republic of China[20]. Furthermore, after the Second World War many Chinese Americans who fought in the war received the right to bring their wives over from China or marry a Chinese woman and come back with her to America[21]. After the McCarran and Walter Act of 1952, Asians were given the right to immigrate to the United States in a bigger number and to become

[11] *Dreams of the West: A History of the Chinese in Oregon 1850-1950,* ed. cit., p.37.
[12] *Ibidem.*
[13]Andrew Gyory, *Closing the Gate: Race, Politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act,* The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill and London, 1998,pp. 4-6.
[14] *Ibidem, p.* 6.
[15] John Soennichsen, *The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882* , Greenwood Publishing Group, Santa Barbara, 2011, p.67.
[16] Andrew Gyory, *op.cit., p.* 30.
[17] *Ibidem.*
[18] Won Moo Hurh, *The Korean Americans,* Greenwood Publishing Group, Santa Barbara, 1998, p.34.
[19] *Ibidem.*
[20] *Dreams of the West: A History of the Chinese in Oregon 1850-1950,* ed. cit., pp.93-95.
[21]Mae M. Ngai, "History as Law and Life: Tape v. Hurley and the Origins of the Chinese American Middle Class," in *Chinese Americans and the Politics of Race and Culture,* eds., Sucheng Chan and Madeline Y. Hsu, Temple University Press, Philadelphia,2008, p.78.

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Americans[22]. Therefore, many Chinese who had no desire to live in either one of the two Chinas (the Republic of China and the Popular Republic of China) immigrated to the United States. By 1965 the Americans had "abolished the national-origins quota system"[23], and therefore new and bigger waves of Asians, in general, and Chinese, in particular, arrived in America to look for a better life.

After 1949 Chinese Americans passed through luodishenggen, a process of transformation from a generation of Chinese Americans who think that they are just temporary workers and planned to return back in China to one that understood that they were Chinese Americans and true American citizens[24]. Furthermore, because of this process of transformation, new movements appeared during the 1960s and 1970s which called for the revitalization of ethnic pride and consciousness by searching for one's roots (xungen wenzu) or pursuing one's roots and looking for one's origin (zhuigen qiuyuan)[25]. During this period, authors such as Maxine Hong Kingstone, Amy Tan, Frank Chin wrote extensive novels in which they depicted or reconstructed the image of the Chinese family or that of the Chinese individual.

Because the new Asian immigrants and the second and third generation immigrants tried to integrate as Asian Americans and not as Asian immigrants or American citizens, they managed to become a model minority by the end of the twentieth century[26]. Unfortunately, by being a model minority it had "foster[ed] resentment from non-Asian minorities who are impliedly faulted as less than model" [27] and this lead to another wave of discrimination that culminated in the incidents in Los Angeles in 1992. Moreover, even if they tried to prove themselves equal to Americans of European origin or as proud Asian Americans they were "seen as submissive, culturally prone to be physically unaggressive, politically docile, and accommodating"[28].

THE NEW MASCULINE IDENTITY

When a researcher tries to understand the masculine identity of Chinese American men, one must first know the "historically enforced feminization of Chinese American men, […] [confront] the dialectics of racial stereotypes and nationalist reactions […] [and use] notions of masculinity and femininity in both Asian and Western cultures"[29].

At the beginning of the Chinese immigration process the majority of Chinese in America were male and this "combined with anti-miscegenation laws and laws prohibiting Chinese laborers' wives from entering the US, forced these immigrants to congregate in the bachelor communities of various China towns, unable to father a subsequent generation"[30]. Furthermore, although many Chinese immigrants "built railroads, mined gold, and cultivated plantation, their strenuous activities and contributions in these areas were often overlooked by white historians. Chinamen were better known to the American public as restaurant cooks, laundry workers and waiters, jobs traditionally considered women's work"[31]. Therefore, the image of the effeminate or gay Chinese immigrant was not the true image of the Chinese citizen who had decided to look for a better life in North America, but the social and political construction of Americans of European descent. Moreover, many have

[22]Won Moo Hurh, *op.cit., p.*35.
[23]*Ibidem.*
[24] Ling-chi Wanng, "Roots and Changing Idenntity of the Chinese in the United States", in *Adaptation, Acculturation, and Transnational Ties Amonng Asia Americans, ed.* Fraklin Ng, Garland Publishing , New York, 1998, p.45.
[25] *Ibidem, p.*46.
[26]Lelad T. Saito, "Japanese Americans and the New Chinese Immigrants: The Politics of Adaptation", in *Asian American Interethnic Relations ad Politics, ed.* Franklin Ng, Garland Publishing, New York and London, 1998, p.131.
[27] *Ibidem.*
[28] *Ibidem.*
[29] King-kok Cheung, "The Woman Warrior versus The Chinaman Pacific: Must a Chinese American Critic Choose Between Feminism and Heroism", in *A Companion to Asian American Studies,* ed. Kent A. Ono (Malden, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford and Carlton, 2005, p.158.
[30] *Ibidem.*
[31] *Ibidem.*

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used this stereotype to create "degrading sexual representations of the Chinese in American popular culture"[32] and also spread this stereotype into American literature.

Although Chinese American authors came into the spotlight because of Maxine Hong Kingston's *Woman Warrior*, Amy Tan's *Joy Luck Club*, David Henry Hwang's *FOB* and *M. Butterfly*, critics such as Frank Chin state that "these works held up before as icons of our pride, symbols of our freedom from icky-gooey evil of a Chinese culture where the written word for <<women>> and <<slave>> are the same word and Chinese brutally tattoo messages on the backs of women"[33] is anything but. Frank Chin justifies the success of the named authors and others like Yung Wing and Jade Snow Wong on the fact that "(1) all the authors are Christian, (2) the only form of literature written by Chinese American that major publishers will publish other than the cookbook is autobiography, an exclusively Christian form; and (3) they all write to specification of the Christian stereotype"[34]. The critic also argues that these works talk more about the Chinese American women and they "were the chosen of assimilation, not the me, but the me of this dream don't care, for theirs is culture steeped in passivity. All the generalities about Chinese American history and culture that sociologists come up with are straight from the Chinese American autobiographies, and the Chinese American autobiographies are straight from the missionary memoirs ad ecclesiastical novels"[35]. Moreover, Frank Chin scolds Chinese American writers for depicting weak and effeminate Chinese men and forgetting to mention their contribution to American society through their hard work[36].

Frank Chin not only criticizes the old models, but also proposes a new model of Chinese American man through inspiration from the traditional Chinese hero. This type of hero is portrayed in his novel *Donald Duk*, in which teenaged Donald Duk travels to his past in his dreams and transforms into a railroad worker, where he has to pass through a number of hardships in order to help finish the construction of the railroad tracks, while these hardships are compared by the author to the hardships of the missions that the traditional Chinese hero had to do.

Merle Wo, like Frank Chin, "recognizes the multiple oppressions of racism, sexism and classism confronted not only by her mother but also by her father. […] likewise, she observes the complex social and economic violence that humiliates and dehumanizes her father in front of his family and community"[37], but disagrees with Frank Chin's model of heroic Chinese American man and his "ridicule and dismissal of lesbian and gay identities and experiences in erecting a particular homophobic performance"[38]. Furthermore, Merle Wo believes in the current narratives even if they discuss gay identity or of Chinese American men in a family as long as it offers an objective and realistic picture of Chinese American society[39]. Similar to Merle Wo, King-kok Cheung also advocates for an anti-heroic model, because it is too close to a patriarchic masculine model who abuses his power to show who he is[40].

Unlike the precedent critics, Jachison Chan in *Chinese American Masculinities: From Fu Manchu to Bruce Lee "*argues that queer literature and scholarship provide alternative models of resistance to dominant white masculinity. [Therefore,] he suggests that gay masculinity constructs

[32] *Ibidem.*
[33] Frank Chin, *Come All Ye Asian American Writers of the Real and the Fake, A Companion to Asian American Studies*, ed.cit., p.134.
[34] *Ibidem, pp.*139-140.
[35] Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, Shawn Wong, "Preface to the Mentor Edition", in *Aiiieeee! Ann Anthology of Asia American Writers*, eds. Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, Shawn Wong, Mentor, New York, 1991, p. xxviii.
[36] Idem, *Preface*, In *Aiiieeee! Ann Anthology of Asia American Writers*, ed.cit., p. xix.
[37]Wendy Ho, "Seeding Asian Masculinities in the US landscape representatios of men's lives in Asian American literature", in *Performing Masculinity*, eds. Rainer Emig and Antony Rowland, Palgrave Macmillan,New York, 2010, p.151.
[38] *Ibidem.*
[39] *Ibidem.*
[40] *Ibidem, p.*152.

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offer alternative strategies to resist the effects of a hegemonic model of masculinity particularly, gay models of masculinity allow straight men to confront an inherited homophobia and conventional masculine fear of feminization"[41].

Unlike these critics I believe that currently, there are two types of masculine models in Asian American literatures, in general, and in Chinese American literature, in particular. After reading some of the important titles in Asian American literature I realized that some Asian American authors use the intellectual Chinese American man as the main character in their works, who may be either a business men, a professor, a spy or a politician, and who consolidates his authority through his intelligence, while others, like Frank Chin, prefer to use a heroic model that consolidates his status as the best masculine model through rough force and resistance to a number of difficult tasks.

At a first sight, the two models seem to be taken from the American social tradition, because the heroic masculine model with its brutal solutions is an African American model, while the intellectual masculine model is the Western/American model of modern man, created for a knowledge based society. Unfortunately, if we take a closer look at the two models of Chinese American masculine identity we will see that they are taken from the Chinese tradition, because therein persists a Confucian paradigm which describes Chinese men as having an intellectual side and a heroic side. Usually this paradigm is transposed in the oxymoronic pair of words wen and wu[42]. In order to understand the terms we need to understand that "the *Great Chinese Dictionary* lists 26 definitions for the word wen, with the core meanings centering around literary and other cultural attainment […], [while] wu also has over twenty definitions listed in the *Great Chinese Dictionary*, with the core meaning centering around martial, military, force and power"[43].

During the Zhou dynasty "men who had wu (martial arts) expertise dominated the shi (the upper-classes), they were known as wushi. It was only after Confucianism took hold that we became progressively more dominant for the upper classes, resulting in shi's later association with scholar-officials'"[44]. In imperial China wu and wen were characteristics of men's superior position in the social hierarchy. Moreover, women and immigrants could not attain this status, because "official recognition of wen-wu achievements was most commonly attained by passing the civil service or military service examinations. Both were only available to men. Moreover, these examinations were traditionally not available for foreigners"[45].

Because authors like Frank Chin, Leonard Chang and Gus Lee have depicted a heroic male character who makes himself seen as an adapted American citizen who serves his country through physical force, and authors like Gish Jen, Susan Choi and Chang-rae Lee have constructed an intellectual hero who makes his voice heard in the American society through his equal position of American scholar, it can be said that the new generations of Asian American, and especially Chinese American, writers have managed to find new models of Asian American male identity based on the realities of North American society and on old Asian traditions.

THE HEROIC MODEL

In order to show the existence of a wu element and the creation of a heroic model of manhood we will analyze Frank Chin's experimental novel, *Donald Duk*, which depicts the transformation of Donald Duk from naive youngster who imagines himself to be a well known American celebrity into a well informed Chinese American who knows both the history of the United States and the history of the first Chinese Americans, after living this experience in a dream. Moreover, unlike his first works, "in *Donald Duk (1991) […]* his ideas on such issues as the sources

[41] *Ibidem, p.*153.
[42] Louie Kam, *Theorising Chinese Masculinity: Society and Gennder in China,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, 2002, p.10.
[43] *Ibidem, pp.*10-11.
[44] *Ibidem, p.*11.
[45] Louie Kam, "Chinese, Japanese and Global Masculine Identity", *Asian Masculinities: The Meaning and Practice of Manhood in China and Japan,* eds. Kam Louie and Morris Low, Routledge Curzon, New York and London, 2003,p.5.

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of tensions in Chinese America families and solutions to racial problems differ considerably […]. Frustration has been replaced by a sense of humor, racial conflicts are resolved through compromise, and [the] generation gap is presented from a point of view that is more sympathetic to parents"[46].

Donald Duk does not enjoy being a Chinese American and "looking Chinese is driving him crazy"[47], he also "does not like his name. Donald Duk never liked his name. He hates his name"[48], because he is frequently associated with the funny Disney character. Moreover, "Chin not only indicates that Donald hates his name but also that the dominant white society holds him in contempt of the original"[49], as he asks "who would believe anyone named Donald Duk dances like Fred Astaire?[50]". Although he is not accepted as an American citizen in society and in school, Donald wants to be an American citizen, he likes Fred Astaire and "he takes tap lessons from a man who calls himself "The Chinese Fred Astaire""[51].

Even though he has a strange name, he tries "to displace his Chinese identity with one that is typical American, he looks, ironically to American popular culture for [an] alternative sense of identity. Donald obsessively views Fred Astaire films, occupies all his spare time with tap-dancing lessons, and hangs posters of his hero all over his bedroom walls", but he concentrates on becoming like the actor, which usually seems to be a more feminine than masculine identity, and by doing so he transforms himself into an effeminate man[52], someone who looks like he wants to be beaten, an opinion that is also expressed by his father, who says that "[Donald Duk] you look like you want everyone to beat you up"[53]. Furthermore, his father advises him to look tough by telling him "[to] walk with your back straight. You keep your hands out of your pockets. Don't hunch your shoulders. Think of them as being down. Keep your head up. Look like you know where you're going. And you say, 'Don't mess with me horsepuckie! Don't mess with me!' But you don't say it with your mouth. You say it with your eyes"[54]. Unfortunately, "gang kids [still] laugh at his name and try to pick fights with him during the afternoon rush hour". Therefore, his family advises him to make fun of his name and invent jokes about it so the gang kids can be amused and he can be left unharmed, but "Donald Duk does not want to laugh about his name forever"[55].

Unfortunately, Donald Duk was not only affected by the fact that he was Chinese and he had a strange name, but also by the fact that his history teacher repeats that "the Chinese in America were made passive and nonassertive by centuries of Confucianism thought and Zen mysticism"[56], and therefore Donald Duk feels that his teacher offends Chinese American people through this remark.

Although Donald Duk hates Chinese culture and considers himself to be a pure American citizen, because he was born in the United States of America, he is still offended when others say negative things about the Chinese. This situation changes during the period before the celebration of the Chinese New Year, due to the fact that his friend Arnold Azalea wants to spend time with him and wants to learn more about Chinese traditions, which offers Donald the chance to learn more about his own culture and accept it.

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[46] Xiao-hunag Yin, C*hinese American Literature since the 1850's ,* Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2000, p.244.
[47] Frank Chin, *Donald Duk,* Coffee House Press, Minneapolis, 1997, p.2.
[48] *Ibidem, p.*1.
[49] David L. Eng, *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America,* Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2001, p. 71.
[50] Frank Chin, *Donald Duk,* ed.cit., p.1.
[51] *Ibidem.*
[52]David L. Eng, *op.cit, p.*73.
[53] Frank Chin, *Donald Duk,* ed.cit., p.3.
[54] *Ibidem, p.* 4.
[55] *Ibidem, p.*7.
[56] *Ibidem, p.*2.

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During one of his family talks Donald states that "everybody's gotta give up the old and become American. If all these Chinese were more American, I wouldn't have all my problems"[57]. While "Donald Duk may be the very last American-born Chinese-America boy to believe you have to give up Chinese to be an American […] These new immigrants prove that. They were originally Cantonese, and did not want to be Chinese. When China conquered the south, these people went further south, into Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand. They learned French. Now they're learning English. They still speak their Cantonese, their Chinese, their Viet or Lao or Cambodian, and French. Instead of giving anything up, they add on. They're including America in everything else they know. And that makes them stronger than any of the American-born, like me, who had folks who worked hard to know absolutely nothing about China"[58].

Donald Duk does not accept his Chinese legacy, thinking of himself as being an American citizen, because he was born in North America, but after he travels back in time (in a dream) to the end of the nineteenth century where he works on "joining the Central Pacific and Union Pacific railroads into one transcontinental line"[59], he changes his opinion on Chinese Americans and recognizes them as part of the founders of the modern American society, based on them building the roads and railroads that connect the country. It is possible to say that this dream, which projects how the first Chinese Americans strived to earn their living, may be interpreted as a collective memory that can be found in the memory of all the descendants of the first Chinese immigrants in America. Moreover, the dream illustrates the harsh conditions in which Chinese immigrants had to work, and it depicts moments when they worked in the rain or during the night in order to finish the job on time. Therefore, he "directly experiences in his dream work a tangible history of deprivation that addresses his present concerns [on] the difficulties of hard labor, the lack of food, the exploitation of low-wage labor"[60].

In his dream, the leader of the Chinese workers is Kwan, a young Chinese immigrant who leads his underlings with wisdom and courage. When his demands are not taken into consideration, he calls on all the workers to stop working and, in order to motivate them to finish their job, he requests to be given Crocker's horse and states "they say it is impossible to lay ten miles of track in one day. We begin work at dawn. By sunset we will look back on more than ten miles of track. Do that and Crocker's horse here is ours to eat"[61]. There is quite a lot of similarity between Kwan and the Chinese opera character and god Kwan Kung not only in name, but also as being rightful heroes who protect the weak.

After waking up from dreaming, Donald Duk starts to search for proof that Chinese people had worked on the transcontinental line, but instead of finding Chinese names, he discovers that people and history books do not mention anything about the work done by the Chinese. When he talks to his father about this situation, and about the fact that in the history books the names of six Irish workers were mentioned instead of the Chinese workers' names, his father replies by saying that "they don't want our names in their history books. So what? You're surprised. If we don't write our history, why should they, huh?"[62].

After each dream Donald Duk "transfers psychic investment from the frozen and static images of the given-to-be-seen to the dream visions that he has brought into the present"[63]. He slowly gives up on the aging posters and prefers "to be an integral member of his Chinese (dream)

[57] *Ibidem, p.42.*
[58] *Ibidem.*
[59] *Ibidem, p.*73.
[60] David L. Eng, *op.cit, p.*83.
[61] Frank Chin, *Donald Duk,* ed.cit,p.77.
[62] *Ibidem, p.*122.
[63] David L. Eng, *op.cit, p.*87.

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community"[64]. Moreover, by researching in the library for evidence on the construction of the transcontinental railroad he "forces his unconscious visions into walking reality"[65].

In the end, the main character returns to the classroom where the history teacher had told them that the Chinese were weak immigrants and he challenges his teacher's authority by talking about the true sacrifices done by the Chinese in order to build the transcontinental railroad. Although Donald has no solid proof, he speaks after seeing a photo with the man with "bear fur hat and puffy bearskin coat", a man whom he believes is him working at the transcontinental railroad in his dream.

In conclusion, we can say that during the last decades Chinese American men evolved from being effeminate and gay workers into married men who impose themselves in society through force or intellect, being model citizens. Furthermore, some Chinese American writers observed that, although Chinese Americans changed, many of their colleagues still portrayed exotic Chinese families in which the men were weak and violent, and the women were models of beauty. Therefore, they decided to portray new models of masculine identity basing then on the old Chinese masculine paradigm of wen-wu, on the expectations of American society and on modern realities. Moreover, we may say that Frank Chin offers a model of masculine identity which is constructed on heroism, fighting capability and hard physical and intellectual work. Although we do not often see violence or demonstrations of hard physical capabilities, the Chinese character possesses this power and, therefore, is a strong Chinese American model, because in his dream he worked on the railroad, and he is heroic in his defense of his ethnic historical integrity in front of his friend and teacher.

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[64] *Ibidem.*
[65] *Ibidem.*

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