

Narrating Nationalism of “the Other”

— An Analysis of Frank Chin’s Counter-Discourse in *Gunga Din*

Highway

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Abstract

Due to the unfair treatment towards Chinese Americans, Frank Chin, the defender of Chinese Americans nationalism, uses his writing as the counter-discourse to fight against the western hegemonic discourse and propagates the orthodox Chinese culture, aiming at reconstructing a heroic Chinese American culture tradition. This article will draw on Frank Chin’s *Gunga Din Highway* to analyze his subversive writing strategy, and illustrate how “the other” in the American mainstream society narrates his unique Chinese American nationalism.

Keywords: Chinese, Americans, the other, western hegemonic discourse, counter-discourse

1. Introduction

Although Chinese Americans have lived on the American continent over one hundred years, they have been seen as perpetual foreigners. Until now, there still exist some stereotypes about Chinese Americans in the American society. Chinese Americans have always been on a marginalized position in the American society. So Frank Chin, as a forerunner of Chinese American literature, makes use of his pen as a dagger to fight against the racial prejudice in American white society, and in this way, he tries to awaken the ethnic awareness of Chinese Americans to fight for the equal rights in American society. From the works of Frank Chin, we can see clearly his rebellious writing motifs: on one hand, he fights bravely against the western hegemonic discourse with which the white racists impose prejudiced stereotypes on the Chinese Americans; on the other hand, he reproaches fiercely those Chinese Americans who try to cater to the taste of the West by self-orientalizing Chinese culture and Chinese people. Also, through his writing, Frank Chin expresses his wishes to propagate the orthodox Chinese culture and in this way, to reconstruct a heroic Chinese American culture tradition. These motifs can be well shown in his latest novel *Gunga Din Highway*. So this article will mainly focus on Frank Chin’s subversive writing strategy, analyzing how “the other” in the American mainstream society narrates his unique Chinese American nationalism.

2. The Subversion of the Stereotypes on Chinese People in the “Oriental Discourse”

2.1 The Cause of the Stereotypes in the “Oriental Discourse”

It’s well known that racism is the underlying cause of the “culture wars” between the white ruling class and the subordinated peoples of color, but it cannot be grasped fully and resolved without revealing the social and historical conditions that make it possible. So Frank Chin points out:

The general function of any racial stereotype is to establish and preserve order between different elements of society, maintain the continuity and growth of western civilization, and enforce white supremacy with a minimum of effort, attention and expanse. The ideal racial stereotype is a low maintenance engine of white supremacy whose efficiency increases with age, as it became “authenticated” and “historically verified”. (Note 1)

From Chin’s remark above, the hegemonic process of the white racists is mercilessly exposed. It shows that what is imperative for us is “a critical review of the racial/class hierarchy that constitutes the social order of the United

States, its historical construction as a hegemonic articulation of classes, races, nationalities, sexualities, together with the manifold contradictions that define the parameters for change.” (Note 2)

In the American mainstream media, Chinese people are often portrayed as the Gunga Din type silent servant, the Fu Manchu type the Yellow Peril, or the Charlie Chan type fake Chinese hero. Although contrasted with Fu Manchu, Charlie Chan, the cherubic and inscrutable Chinese American detective, was a benign and non-threatening character, Charlie Chan is only a perfect image of the assimilated “model minority” who remains perpetually foreign. White women are completely safe with such a male image, for he has neither “sex appeal”, nor interest in women. These attributes of Chinese stereotypes are naturalized as fixed racial and cultural essence. As we know, the emergence of the stereotypes on Chinese people has its historical and political origins. Because they come from China, a poor and backward oriental country, the Chinese immigrants fell into a state of aphasia once they entered the white world in America. Even with the flowering of the Chinese American literature, the Chinese American writers have to meet with strict censorship before they publish their works, for example, when Jade Snow Wong’s *Fifth Chinese Daughter* was finished, her editor Elizabeth Lawrence cut out two-thirds of the manuscript to suit the taste of white readership. “They can’t depict themselves, they have to be depicted by others.” This is a sentence from the preface of Edward Said’s book *Orientalism*, which can best illustrate the awkward situation of Chinese immigrants in America. So in the following part, I will apply the theory to analyze the strategy Frank Chin used to deconstruct the prejudiced stereotypes of Chinese people.

As analyzed in above, a central aspect of racial exploitation of the West centers on defining people of the East as “the other”. The social construction of Chinese American “otherness” — through such controlling images as the Yellow Peril, the model minority, the Dragon Lady — is “the precondition for their cultural marginalization, political impotence, and psychic alienation from mainstream American society.” (Note 3) Frank Chin, as a defender of Chinese American ethnic culture, has been fighting against the assimilation of American dominant culture. In *Gunga Din Highway*, through the narration of different characters, Chin mainly deconstructs the three stereotypes of Chinese who appear on the screen of American movies. In the novel, by revealing the absurdity and falsity of these stereotypes, Frank Chin shows the readers the vicious intention of the white racists to twist Chinese culture and acculturate them into submissive servants of American dominant society. So next, I’ll try to analyze the main stereotypes imposed on Chinese Americans and how Frank Chin, with his pen as the weapon, deconstructs the prejudiced stereotypes about Chinese in *Gunga Din Highway*.

2.2 The Construction of “the Discourse of the Other” to Deconstruct the Stereotypes of Chinese in the American Media

The naturalization of the social hierarchy, Chin cautions us, lies at the base of white control. The western dominant culture, through its media, publishing censorship and other social mechanism, gives Chinese Americans no other choice than being either “different and inferior” or “the same and invisible”. So in his essay “Our Life is War”, Chin argues that “What is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy’s strategy,” hence it is of great importance for us to survey the terrain or context of the struggle, analyze the contradictory trends immanent in the forces engaged, and seize the “weak link” to resolve the contradictions.

In *Gunga Din Highway*, Frank Chin employs the subversive possibilities of postmodern aesthetics of fragmentation, indeterminacy, and multiplicity to challenge representation of the western discourse, and to use radical language and images as means for highlighting the ethnic identities. Combining investigation of language with interrogation of identity construction, Chin undermines the representation of Asian Americans in the American media. As in the first part of this novel, Frank Chin borrowed the traditional Chinese mythology of Pangu Creating the World to satirize the Western image of idealized Chinese American world: in the smoke of drugs, Longman Kwan’s mind began to fly about, he heard “ Spencer Tracy depart from his usual Jap planes can’t bank left”... Spencer Tracy says straight into the camera, “when the last Charlie Chan breathes his last, his breath shall become the winds and clouds over Chinese America, his left eye shall become the sun of Chinese America, and his right shall become the moon... Charlie Chan’s lower body shall become the five great Chinatowns... Each hair of Charlie Chan’s head, eyebrows, and Charlie Chan’s moustache and beard shall become a shining star of in the Hollywood firmament and praise his name just by shining bright.” (Note 4) Through the subversive use of postmodern aesthetics fragmentation, indeterminacy, and intertextuality with the traditional Chinese mythology, Frank Chin reveals to us the absurdity of the stereotypes that the western hegemonic discourse imposed on Chinese Americans.

In order to reveal the fake image of Fu Manchu, Frank Chan applies the writing strategy of parody by producing a burlesque play “Fu Manchu plays FLEMENCO Guitar”. In this way, he deconstructs the prejudiced vicious stereotype towards Chinese. In the play, Fu Manchu tells the white captive to give up the secret to Kool-Aid or

he will “let his nympho daughter give him the dreaded torture of a thousand excruciating fucks and exotic sucks,” (Note 5) but the white man still defends the secret stubbornly, so Fu’s luscious daughter wheels the captive off to her silk-sheeted torture chamber. Then Ulysses, who acts as Fu Manchu, gets the idea to have Fu play the guitar in rhythm to his daughter’s hips while badmouthing the white captive’s sexual organs, skills and style in Spanish, English, and three dialects of Chinese. Then Fu Manchu ends his flamenco by ripping open his rope and showing his body in a bra, panties, garter belt, and black net stockings, licking his lips as he makes a move on the white man, while Fu’s daughter straps on an eight-inch dildo. At this time, the captive screams the secret formula, not only for Kool-Aid but for Bisquick and Crisco, too. Through this exaggerated burlesque play, especially the last act, Frank Chin satirizes the stereotype that the white American mass media creates. In Ulysses’ words, “Fu Manchu Play Flamenco Guitar is creating a Chinese-American culture that kicks white racism in the balls with a shit-eating grin.” (Note 6)

Also in the novel, Frank Chin reveals this obvious yet often neglected fact through the mouth of Hyacinth, Longman Kwan’s wife, with an ironic tone: “A Chinese man will never star as a Chinese man in a Hollywood movie. They’ll get a white woman to play the Chinese detective before they star a Chinese man. They’ll star a Chinese woman before they star a Chinese man. They’ll star a Chinese queer boy before they star a Chinese man”. (Note 7) In effect, Charlie Chan series movies were totally the imagination of the white American writer. The director had no through understanding of Chinese, no experience of living in the Chinatown; the white actors who acted as Charlie Chan performed only according to the stereotypes of Chinese in their mind. As Anlauf, the character in *Gunga Din Highway*, who acts as Charlie Chan recalls, “Capra (the director) had him cut his eyelashes short, as he was convinced short eyelashes were the secret to making Caucasian eyes look Oriental. (Note 8) So the above analysis shows clearly that Charlie Chan isn’t a real Chinese hero, but a ridiculous “fake hero”. In essence, he is a Chinese servant of the American white, a Chinese stereotype who has been assimilated. What’s more, the father-son relationship between the white actors and Chinese actors hints the submissive position of Chinese in the white hegemonic discourse. However, many Chinese people were deceived by the bright laurel of the first “Chinese hero” on the screen of American movies. They applauded for Charlie Chan series movies, as what Longman says in the novel, “As God the Father gave up a son in the image of the perfect white man, to lead whites to walk the path of righteous towards salvation, and praise God, so the White Man gave up a son in the image of perfect Chinese American to lead the yellows to build the road to acceptance towards assimilation. Charlie Chan was his name.” (Note 9) In order to satirize the fake Chinese hero, Frank Chin creates a plot in the novel where the Chinese on Maui Island worship Charlie Chan like God. On every Thanksgiving Day of the Chinese Club of Maui, a virgin daughter from a Chinese family will be chosen to be the bride of the General (Charlie Chan in the movies), to thank him for having Chinese being accepted by the American white society, for they think “without that nice kind Charlie Chan we Chinese of Maui would not know who we are.” (Note 10)

Through the deconstruction of the main Chinese stereotypes in American mass media, Frank Chin’s “Discourse of the Other” shows that assimilation can’t offer Chinese Americans equal social status to the American white; conversely, it can only mislead Chinese Americans to an inferior, submissive and awkward social position. As a Chinese American of the second generation, Ulysses Kwan and his Chinese friends realize it, so they refuse to be “the docile sheep” in the mind of the white Americans, they despise the Gunga Din style Chinese character in the movie and laugh at Charlie Chan, the absurd fake Chinese hero, pointing out he isn’t a real hero. So when the General (the white actor of Charlie Chan) tries to touch “the bride” (the Chinese girl) with his hands, “she whips a knife and slashes his arm.” (Note 11)

2.3 The Chinese American Beat Generation Revolting against American Mainstream Culture

Beat Generation is a phrase used to describe a group of American writers who emerged in the 1950s, and generally agreed to have been coined in this sense with connotations of beatitude, disengagement, down-and-out street language and experience. The beat emphasis was on escape from conventional, puritanical, middle-class mores towards visionary enlightenment and artistic improvisation through drive and accelerations charged by wheels, drugs, sex, drink, or talk. “The provocative anti-intellectual, anti-hierarchical spirit of the movement spread across America and then beyond English-speaking world, to be taken up by second and third generation writers (Yevtushenko, Voznesensky, Bob Dylan, the Beatles, etc.), thus evolving a “counter-culture” which had a widespread and in many ways lasting impact. The movement made itself heard in the 1950s with the publication of Allen Ginsberg’s *Howl* and Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road*”. (Note 12)

Frank Chin, as a writer of that period, is deeply influenced by this movement. As a Chinese American writer, Chin attacks strongly stereotypes, racism in its overt forms, a racism that reduced Chinese Americans to an enclave. He denounces the practices that have converted the Chinese Americans into “a race of Helen Kellers,

mute, blind and deaf”, the perfect minority worshipping Pearl Buck and embracing Charlie Chan, an image of racist love, as a strategy for white acceptance. In *Gunga Din Highway*, Frank Chin forges a uniquely “Chinaman” language fusing the cadences of Cantonese and urban black vernacular to the English language. For according to Frank Chin, “language is an essential component of a culture and it has great power that can link people together and endow them with great discursive competence to claim their subjectivity and independence.” (Note 13) So by the use of the uniquely “Chinaman” language, Frank Chin intends to proclaim the existence and subjectivity of Chinese Americans. In some sense, Ulysses is the spokesman of Frank Chin himself. In the novel, Ulysses and his friends are depicted as the outright Chinese American Beat Generation. When the Third World Student Strikes at San Francisco, and the Revolutionary Black Panther Party came to Chinatown, wearing their jeans, set up their sound systems and declaimed to the old men playing chess and the old women sitting together watching children playing in the sandbox, “the Chinese are the Uncle Toms of the nonwhite peoples of Amerika!” (Note 14) All the American-born Chinese suddenly mope about not having an identity like the blacks. Thus, the Civil Rights Movement of the black arouses the awakening of the identity of Chinese Americans, they began to strive for their equal rights. So Ulysses and his friends set up Chinatown Black Tiger, they rebel and challenge the American mainstream culture by resembling the defiant and unruly behaviors of the young American Blacks on the street. So by the portrayal of the rebellious Chinese American Beat Generation, the author deconstructs the slavery and feminized stereotypes that the white racist imposed on Chinese people.

3. The Defender of Chinese Ethnic Culture Against Neo-Orientalism

3.1 Neo-Orientalism, the Hidden Peril in Chinese American Literature

Since the 1960s, the rapid development of Chinese American literature has been a splendid phenomenon in the American ethnic literature. However, aside with these achievements, we should be alert about the neo-orientalism that exists in some of the writings. Neo-orientalism is originated from orientalism, but it is no longer the dominant discourse of the West, instead, it poses a seemingly lenient attitude to let some “particular” intellectuals from the Third World to make speeches as the native informants, offer them the right to possess some limited power of discourse. (Note 15) Those intellectuals from the East win the readers and the market through self-orientation and the West encourage them to do so for they help to testify the correctness of orientation and reinforce the dominant position of the western mainstream culture towards the East.

So it's not an easy task for the ethnic literature to be accepted by the mainstream society. There are always some obstacles ahead. As they live in the sphere of the western culture, but they are from the Third World, if their discourse is against the mainstream discourse, they will be marginalized. So when they face the West, they always feel rootless. In order to avoid being refused by the mainstream society, they possess a sense of superiority in face of the East. Therefore some Chinese American writers, owing to their special cultural and ethnic identity, together with the social, political condition they live in, have some deviation, distortion or even vulgarization of Chinese culture and Chinese image in their works. They make use of their particular cultural status and the cultural inheritance from their Chinese predecessors to view the East from the White's perspective, or even to orientalize China, Chinese culture and the Chinese immigrants. This phenomenon is just what Frank Chin strongly opposes to. He criticizes those writers as the fake Asian American writers who “suck off the white Christian fantasy of the Chinese as a Shangri-la people”. (Note 16)

From those writings with the tint of neo-orientalism, we can see two main trends: the first trend is highlighting the backwardness, alienation and brutality of Chinese as the “other”; the second trend is juxtaposing the historical China with the present America to intensify the superior status of America. From the popularity of Chinese American works, we can see such a rule: the works that cater to the western dominant culture are very likely to become the best-seller while the works that reveal racial discrimination are not that popular, such as Frank Chin's works and also Marxine Hong's *The Monkey King*. Kingston herself also admits that her novels are not as popular as those of Amy Tan, whose novels are often full of exotic oriental myths and Chinese culture is often depicted as patriarchal. So it's obvious that the tint of neo-orientalism in the work is the main factor to attract the mainstream readers. So this phenomenon is very instructive: on one hand, it shows the tenacity of the hegemonic process in effacing the oppositional; on the other hand, it illustrates the need for the counter force to fight against neo-orientalism, thus subverting the conspiracy of the white racists.

3.2 Fighting against Neo-Orientalism

We can't deny that there does exist gender prosecution and some other backward customs in Chinese traditional culture, and we also admit that it's necessary to criticize those backward feudal customs in Chinese culture, yet the fact is most of the plots they describe in their works belong to the past. The living condition of Chinese people nowadays has improved a lot in all aspect, socially, economically and culturally. But some Chinese

American writers seem to have special preferences to the backward old China, they juxtapose the historical China with the present America, thus highlighting the superior status of America. So it's urgent to fight against the phenomenon of Neo-orientalism in Chinese American literature, so as to establish a respectful position in American society. This is just what Frank Chin strives for. In the following part, we will see how Frank Chin revolts against Neo-orientalism in *Gunga Din Highway*.

3.2.1 To Be or Not to Be: The Argument between Ulysses and His Assimilated Chinese Friend

As is shown in the novel, Ulysses and his friends Benedict Han and Zhang are sent to a Chinese school when they were young where they began to get access to Chinese culture. Their parents do so in order that the next Chinese generation will not forget about Chinese culture, thus keeping their "root" in the multicultural society of America. With the enlightenment of the Old Horse, the teacher in the Chinese school, Ulysses, Benedict Han and Zhang come to realize their special identity, and the three America-born boys begin to admire the Chinese heroic traditional culture. And later, in the Civil Rights Movement, they take active part in it to fight together with the black. However, this movement brings little change to Chinese Americans, the prejudiced stereotypes about Chinese still exist in the mind of American people. "Go with the bald-headed dog-faced used-car...and the sixties. All gone, nothing but talk now." Living in the West hegemonic society, they can't avoid the question of "To be or not to be": to stick to their Chinese culture or desert it and turn to cater to the taste of the white supremacy instead so as to avoid being refused by the mainstream society. While Diego Zhang still remains rebellious, Benedict Han seems to have given in, "Briefly, even so briefly, [he] lived the part of the serious writer at Santa Barbara. Free from [his] mother and her legend, free of the clownish opera man, free of Chinese, Chinatown, and Chinese friends." Facing the overwhelming influence of the Western hegemonic discourse and the suppression of American mainstream society, Benedict Han turns his back towards Chinese culture and becomes "a kid from China with the total Asian eclipse, the Oriental amnesia, [who] forgot it, and [thought] Three Kingdoms is just a kid's book". Ben becomes eager to break away from Chinese culture. In order to promote his play, Ben writes an open letter to his mom about why he's not eating in her Chinese restaurant. And he also stands by the side of Pandora, identifying with her Neurotic Exotic Orientoxic. Hence, a fierce argument begins between the former friends:

"Credible?" Ulysses snarls. "Remember all that shit we had to learn in Chinese school? Did anybody belch and win a woman in any of those stories? Huh?"

"Ulysses, come on, don't be that way. You know you've heard about that said about the Chinese."

"You ever heard any Chinese say it's polite or sexy to belch at the dinner table?"

"Yes, of course. Pandora Toy and her mother."

...

"Hey, the first place that anybody, anywhere, anytime, in any language read such a thing was when Pearl Buck said the only good Chink is a Christian Chink, and that belching at the dinner table is good manners to the Chinese. Then the whites invented the Nobel Prize for literature and gave it to her. That showed us!"...

Were your mother's feet bound? Did Pandora's mother have bound feet? It's never a popular or common practice. Nothing in Chinese folk tales praises women with bound feet or even mentions it because the folk didn't do it. To the folk, binding women's feet was always the behavior of perverts.... (Note 17)

From the argument between Ulysses and his assimilated Chinese friend, we can see Ulysses has initiated into a defender of Chinese culture with strong ethnic awareness, fighting against the prejudiced stereotypes, which are imposed by the Western hegemonic discourse. He revealed the hypocritical nature of the Western discourse, that is, the power mechanism of the Western discourse decides what kind of speech and act is reasonable and legitimate. It will propagate the discourse that caters to its taste and satisfying its fantasy of the white supremacy. If the practice of discourse is antagonistic, then it will either be refused, or at least will be marginalized. Some Chinese American writers, owing to their special cultural and ethnic identity, together with the social, political condition they live in, have some deviation, distortion or even vulgarization of Chinese culture and Chinese image in their works. As a matter of fact, they know completely what the truth is, but they just long for success in the American mainstream society, even at the cost of "sucking off the white racist fantasy." In the novel, Benedict shows his intention to Ulysses clearly:

That's just what I'm saying! If anyone deserves to profit from the white racist fantasy, we Chinese Americans do... The only way we can make it in America is to sell ourselves. No one wants to buy our folk tales. But they like buying exotic Oriental women and Oriental men who are either sinister brutes or simpletons. So why not sell it to them? (Note 18)

Hearing this, Ulysses fights back strongly towards such self-orientalizing conducts, “Excuse me, Gunga Din, but what you describe is sometimes called selling out.” Ulysses says, looking ugly. And later he moves out of the uptown apartment the theatre had provided Ben, and into the old rooms upstairs from Ben’s mother’s restaurant.

The argument destroys the friendship between Ulysses and Ben. And through this dispute, Frank Chin also expresses his view on this matter through the mouth of Ulysses. In a sense, Ulysses is the spokesman of Frank Chin. Besides this, Frank Chin also makes use of such postmodernism strategies as parody and collage to reveal the absurdity of those “racist love”, thus waging a war towards neo-orientalism. In the following part, I’ll try to have a thorough analysis of these subversive strategies.

3.2.2 Fighting against Neo-orientalism by the Subversive Application of Parody

According to *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, parody is a form of literary composition in which an author’s characteristics are ridiculed by imitation and exaggeration. And true parody implied a sound and valid criticism of the original. So by the application of parody, Frank Chin challenges the presence of an authentic, complete ethnic, racial identity naturalized in Hollywood images of Asians and also in the works of those neo-orientalists—those assimilated Chinese American writers who try to self-orientalize and vulgarize Chinese Culture so that they might be accepted by the American mainstream society.

In *Gunga Din Highway*, Frank Chin explains the function of parody through the mouth of Ulysses, the protagonist of this novel. That is in the part “Fu Manchu plays Flamenco Guitar”, when Ulysses was practicing the performance, he met with the resistance from Washington Ching Flores, the resident Asian at The Village Voice, who said “this play will destroy all the progress we have made”, (Note 19) then Ulysses started singing, on his knees, looking as if he believed in God and this were “Amazing Grace”, “Ching Chong Chinaman sitting on a rail/Along come a choo-choo train/ And cut off his tail.” In this way, Ulysses mocked at the self-righteous sublime of Washington Ching Flores. At that moment, the Dragon King squeaks in to stop him, saying it’s racist. Then Ulysses said to them not too slow, not too fast, “Have you ever heard of satire? Satire is where you make fun of how *they* think and what *they* say in order to make *them* look stupid.” (Note 20)

In the novel, we can see clearly that Pandora, the author of *The Woman Warrior*, who is also the writer of the Chan Charlie series movies, is a satiric image of Maxine Hong Kingston, another Chinese American writer. It’s obvious that the name Pandora has its connotative meanings. As we know, Pandora is a character in the Bible who opened the box that contained vicious things, thus resulting in the spreading of those vices in the world. Here Frank Chin uses this name to imply the destructive effect of those “racist love”, who, in their writings, describe the East as being a neurotic exotic erotic orientoxic. Their self-orientalization of Chinese and Chinese people, in the view of Frank Chin, will bring forth disastrous consequences, just like Pandora’s opening of the Magic Box. In one of her articles, Pandora distorts Chinese myths and classics, changing the story of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* into the Western Bible story, in which Kwan Kong is portrayed as a “Chinese Prometheus”:

The Jade Emperor charged Kwan Kung’s older brother, Lowe Bay, with the creation of man and the animals, Kwan Kung was charged with recording and cataloging Lowe Bay’s finished work... Lowe Bay sent his brother (Kwan Kung) to heaven to steal fire for his little brother, Chang Fay. Fire made man superior to animals... The Jade Emperor took advantage of Lowe Bay’s lapse of creating women. After he created the first woman, he sent her to Lowe Bay to be his wife. She was created to be a punishment for stealing fire from the gods. Her name was Kwan Yi...(Note 21)

Through the application of the postmodernist styles of parody, Chin fabricates this peculiar literary form in order to reveal the hegemonic nature of American mainstream culture, as the heterogeneity of novelistic form has the function of exposing, or defamiliarizing the real contradictions taken for granted in the everyday life. Also, through fighting against these discursive modes of domination by the West, Frank Chin calls our attention to the racial subordination of the Chinese under the influence of the ideological apparatus of racialization which, once internalized, produces the Gunga Din type servant.

As is shown above, in the course of his growth, the series of encounter with the white racists and the neo-orientalists propel the maturity of Ulysses and strengthen his desire to establish a Home Terminal of Chinese Americans where Chinese Americans can live with dignity and enjoy equal rights to the white.

4. Home Terminal —The Exploration of a New Chinese American Identity

From the analysis of the previous chapters, we can see that Chinese Americans have suffered from the prejudiced stereotypes imposed by the western hegemonic discourse as well as the self-contempting portrayal of neo-orientalism for a long time. And in the view of Frank Chin, the stereotypical Chinese American is nothing as

a man. "At worst, the Asian-American is contemptible because he is womanly, effeminate, devoid of all the traditionally masculine qualities of originality, daring, physical courage, and creativity." (Note 22) So, according to Frank Chin, the new Chinese American identity must be built around the Chinese American man's accepted as American. To gain this acceptance, it is necessary to challenge the stereotype of quaint foreigners, to reject the notion of the passive, quiet Chinese American, and to propagate the positive traits of Chinese people.

4.1 Redefining Chinese American Manhood by Revolting against the Castration of Chinese American Males

Because of the Western control of the discursive means of representation, the Orient in Western construction is very much effeminate even to the extent of being assumed to be a female object. In the power and knowledge struggle, "the West uses female sexuality as a strategy to establish the difference between the intellectual and historical West and the immature East, which justifies Western control of other nation." (Note 23) In effect, the "feminization" of Chinese men in the West has long historical and cultural roots. The racist immigration laws in American history forbid Chinese laborers to bring their wives or marry white women and Chinese immigrants to become naturalized citizens of the United States. Such unequal political and economic conditions offered Chinese immigrants little employment opportunity other than "to be cooks, waiters, laundry workers, and domestics—jobs traditionally considered as 'women's work.'" (Note 24) And as is analyzed in Chapter Two, to consolidate the distortion of Chinese as incapable effeminated weaklings, a literature feature, Charlie Chan, was produced. The stereotype of Chinese males as an emasculated other is very hard to be removed and its effect has been lingering on till today. So in the 1991 preface to *The Big Aiiieeee!*, Frank Chin condemns racist white authors and criticizing what he calls "sell-out" authors:

It is an article of white liberal American faith today that Chinese men, at their best, are effeminate closet queens like Charlie Chan and, at their worst, are homosexual menaces like Fu Manchu. No wonder David Henry Hwang's derivative M. Butterfly won the Tony for best new play of 1988. The good Chinese man, at his best, is the fulfillment of white male homosexual fantasy, literally kissing white ass. (Note 25)

According to Chin, the western discourse is a wholesale and systematic attempt to emasculate the Chinese American male. The white myths describe Chinese Americans as docile and compliant members of a modern minority, which contribute to what he sees as a threat to Chinese American manhood. What's more, racist laws "warred against us... to deny our manhood, to drive us out of the country, to kill us..." (Note 26) Facing such social predicament and the pitfalls underlying the seeming social acceptance, Frank Chin tries to feature masculine ethnic male Chinese in his writing as a counter-discourse, in this way, he hopes to redefine Chinese American manhood. However, he thinks that it is not powerful and effective enough to act in a mild way, so he resorts to shocking the western public through unconventional representational strategies, but without abandoning a desire to construct a unified individual identity against overwhelming adversities. In the later part of the novel, Diego Chang remains his unconventional and unconstrained conducts, seemingly completely involving in the American mass. He addicts to drugs, has many affairs with different girls. On him we can hardly see any tint of traditional image of Chinese American in the western discourse. Yet deep down, he doesn't forget his Chinese identity. As he goes to see a Chinatown double feature with his white little girl hippie dippie, Diego Chang has an argument with her when they talk about woman warriors in the movies, in spite of the romantic environment.

"...They never saw women warriors in the Chinese movies before Pandora Toy invented them."

Naw, I say. That Pandora Toy is bullshit. Her woman warriors are pussies. As bad as these old movies are."

"Please don't dump on that story. It hits me very personally."

"It's racist, but that's all right. Pandora's that way." I toss. (Note 27)

Even Diego Chang himself doesn't know why he is so angry, although he thinks that "no fuck is worth this shit at [his] age. And when his "white sugar" says it's not racist, but feminist, though "in such a sweet breathy voice and with such a nice little touch of [his] arm", it doesn't make him give up his standpoint, but only gives him the creeps, for "[he is] the Chinese. And this is Chinatown." (Note 28) In the end, he gets up and goes away, leaving his white sweetheart in the Chinese movie alone.

It's obvious that Frank Chin portrays Diego Chang and Ulysses as such with the intention of featuring masculine ethnic male Chinese as a counter-discourse, thus deconstructing the effeminized stereotype on Chinese American man. So we should not see the description literally and judge this figure just from the surface meaning. And compared with Diego Chang, Ulysses is portrayed more seriously, with more ethnic awareness. At the later part of this novel, Ulysses has become a hero, with the noble goal of enhancing the heroic tradition of Chinese culture. This will be illustrated in detail in the next part.

4.2 Carrying Forward the Heroic Tradition of Chinese Culture

Because of the castration of Chinese American males in the western hegemonic discourse, the image of Chinese people was reduced to the submissive and feminine one. In this case, Frank Chin finds it urgent to enhance the Chinese male heroism. Therefore, Chin resorts to Chinese heroic cultural tradition, such as *Three Kingdom*, *The Water Margin*, and *Monkey's Journey to the West*. Such application is not a nostalgic escape but “an invigorating absorption that at once provides historic anchorage and directs present reality” (Note 29), for in the view of Frank Chin, the essence of the real Chinese is a martial view of the world: Life is War. This view of Chin is originated because of the marginalized position of Chinese Americans in the American society. Chin propagates the heroic Chinese tradition with the aim to fight against Chinese American emasculation in American colonial discourse. In essays like “I am Talking to the Strategist Sun Tze Life when the Subject of War Comes up”, and “Come All Ye Asian American Writers of the Real and the Fake,” Chin reiterates that life is war. So in *Gunga Din Highway*, Chin depicts Ulysses Kwan as a fighter of Chinese heroic tradition. On the dying Old Horse, his Chinese teacher, Ulysses learns perhaps his most enlightening lesson. Lying in bed with many tubes all over his body, Old Horse nevertheless gives, from his tightened fist, a paper wrapped with a small statue of Kwan Kong, and on the paper writes in Chinese, “Sun Tze”. This intends to show to Ulysses that all the Chinese Americans are the descendant of Kwan Kong and Sun Tze, thus he should draw on the Chinese heroic tradition and stick to his Chinese American cultural identity to fight against racism bravely like Kwan Kong and tactfully like Sun Tze. So living in the overwhelming power of western hegemonic discourse, Ulysses doesn't lose his way. Instead, he objects strongly to the Hollywood depiction of Chinese Americans and creates his own movie---The Movie About Me. In Chapter The Mandate of Heaven, Ulysses wakes up from The Movie About Me, in which he dreams that he is Superman, a better white man for his parents' sake. This shows that Ulysses is reluctant to be stereotyped by the western hegemonic discourse, he'd rather write his own movie, thus enhancing the heroic tradition of Chinese culture. At present he is writing *The Night of the Third World Living Dead*, in which the war heroes, Malcom X, Martin Luther King, freedom riders long forgotten in unmarked graves... and all the brothers and sisters of The Third World Revolution Power to the People politics from the barrel-of-a-gun days rise from the dead. In writing this, Ulysses intends to inspire his unrealized ambition as a youth in the 1960s to fight for the equal rights of Chinese Americans. Also, in Chapter “The Anna May Wong”, Ulysses' dying father, Longman Kwan, feels the meaninglessness in his life though he has achieved some success in Hollywood by acting Charlie Chan's fourth son and other minor roles. When recalling the past, he hates his life, he doesn't taste anything anymore, for although “[he has] had all the fun and good times [he] will ever have and now the memory of the fun and good times he have had are good for nothing. (Note 30) Deep in his heart, Longman Kwan still harbors a special love for the fictional movie, Anna May Wong, an airplane movie with an all-Chinese bomber crew, in which the father and other Chinese are heroic fighters of the Japanese invaders. However, this movie has never been on shown in America. Nevertheless Longman Kwan regards this movie as his “ace in the hole”, he hopes that after a life-time of despising him, his children might see him in that B-24 and think better of him. At the end of this chapter, Longman Kwan imagines that the Chinese crew members run the Anna May Wong into the wind for the take off, departs from the Gunga Din Road. And in such description, Frank Chin hints at the reader that Kwan Longman, the former “Charlie Chan's son” has enjoyed a symbolic resurrection and rehabilitation before his death. This further suggests that all the real Chinese long for the heroic tradition of Chinese culture, despite the fact that some of them are influenced by the western discourse and lose their direction for the time being.

To be in concert with the name of the novel, the conclusion of the novel returns us to George Stevens' film *Gunga Din*, “after whom this highway of negotiation of ‘subject-positions’, as the fashionable idiom has it, is named.” (Note 31) Now that Kwan Longman, the former “Charlie Chan's son” has gained resurrection and rehabilitation before he leaves the world, so the *Gunga Din* myth comes to its end. From the above, we can see that this part of the novel renders the success of awakened Chinese people in refusing the image of Charlie Chan, a synecdoche for the systematic Americanization of the Chinese.

In the last chapter Home Terminal, a Chinese woman who lives on the floor above Diego's is in labour, and Ulysses and Ben happen to be there, so they help to send the pregnant woman to the Chinese Hospital in Chinatown. So they are all aboard for Chinatown. This part is full of surrealistic tint and is rich in its symbolic meanings. Along the road, Ulysses/Frank Chin imagines that they are riding a fast-moving car that transcends the limits of time and space, the voice of the Chinese culture tradition and the memory propel them to march on. Ulysses “feels the hundreds, the thousands of percussing children tumbling folk songs in the hollows of his bones, [his] skeleton, bone by bone, hums with speed, singing round the long curve...” (Note 32) The green light is ahead. They drive fast through their youth, through the Hollywood movie where the stereotyped Chinese image is shown. “Green! ...The eyes of Chinatown look up from the all-night TV, watch me slip into town, and

watch me leave" (Note 33). The end of this novel shows Ulysses/ Frank Chin's determination to march on, surpassing the exotic image of Chinatown and Chinese people. In Ulysses/ Frank Chin's view, the future is full of hope, for the forthcoming baby is the embodiment of the fresh force and inspiring possibilities of Chinese Americans.

5. Conclusion

In the previous parts, this paper has explored Frank Chin's "counter-discourse" —how does he make use of his literary practice as part of a strategic action to subvert the western hegemonic discourse with which the white racists impose prejudiced stereotypes on the Chinese Americans; and to reproach fiercely those Chinese Americans who have been assimilated by the western mainstream society, thus trying to cater to the taste of the West by self-orientalizing and vulgarizing Chinese culture and Chinese people. Through his writing, Chin reveals to us the racial hierarchy that constitutes the social order of the United States, its mass media as a hegemonic articulation of classes, races, and nationalities. So Chinese Americans need to reflect on their real history and their positions, in spite of the restrained condition of pursuing their identity in the white dominant society and also plagued by a suicidal conduct from the "racist love". In *Gunga Din Highway*, through the initiation of Ulysses into a defender of the heroic Chinese culture, along with the various predicaments he meets, Frank Chin artistically reflects the suppression of the western hegemonic discourse on Chinese Americans and the neo-orientalism that it causes. So in *Gunga Din Highway*, Frank Chin employs the subversive possibilities of postmodern aesthetics of fragmentation, parody and collage to challenge the western representation. In this roundabout way, Chin not only undermines the representation of Asian Americans in American popular culture, but also re-articulates Chinese Americans' Otherness, which refuses to be defined or assimilated by the dominant culture.

Compared with other Chinese American writers, Frank Chin is a little bit radical. In both his writings and speeches we can see the flaming anger, so someone may ask, "What's wrong with Frank Chin?" But the reply from Jeffery Paul Chan, a friend of Chin who co-edited *Aiiieeee* with him (in a newly-produced video directed by Jeffery Paul Chan) may be very illuminating to us, "Don't ask what's wrong with Frank Chin; ask what's wrong with the society." Given its social and historical background, we will know that the cause of his subversive writing is due to the marginal status and the erasure of Chinese Americans in the white hegemonic discourses. It is out of an enormous sense of historical urgency that Chin stands out and calls for an open confrontation with the institutional wrongs done to Chinese Americans. So Chin makes use of his writing as counter-hegemonic practice to declare a war towards the perpetuation of stereotypical images in American popular culture and the self-contempting conducts of those assimilated Chinese Americans, with the intention of rebuilding a heroic Chinese American identity and in this way, awakening the consciousness of the Chinese American community as well as the attention from the dominant culture. Frank Chin's effort in propagating the heroic tradition of Chinese culture has its great practical significance, even in the present world. As the twenty-first century dawns, globalization has become a major trend throughout the world, there are more and more contacts between people from different cultures and nations. In general, understanding and respecting each other's culture has become the theme of this era, however, racism and culture hegemony still exist, especially in the culture hegemonic country of the United States. Hence, Frank Chin's prominent "counter-discourse" is of great significance in the construction of a dignified and heroic Chinese American identity, which coexists and enjoys equal rights with American mainstream society.

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