



# Martial Arts Film in the 20th Century: A Medium of Resistance and a Reclamation of the Asian Identity

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Seth Rohmer would publish the first feature Fu Manchu in a serialization from October 1912 to June 1913.<sup>1</sup> The Mystery of Dr. Fu-Manchu was an instant success. Vanity Fair called the titular doctor “the most exotic and diabolic of contemporary villains in the annals of crime.”<sup>2</sup> “Imagine a person tall, lean and feline, high-shouldered, with a brow like Shakespeare and a face like Satan...accumulated in one giant intellect, with all the resources of science past and present, with all the resources, if you will, of a wealthy government...Imagine that awful being, and you have a mental picture of Dr. Fu-Manchu,” wrote Rohmer.<sup>3</sup> Between 1913 and 1969, Rohmer produced 13 novels and five movies in various genres and guises. However, it was a rise of Asian xenophobia that would contribute to Rohmer’s success. Dr. Fu-Manchu was one of many movies and novels that were symptoms of the West’s “Yellow Peril,” a pervasive alienation and dehumanization of East Asians across Western nations. In his lifetime, Rohmer sold more than 20 million copies and developed a popular long-running television sensation in the middle of the 20th century.<sup>4</sup>

The Fu Manchu series was only one of the many pieces of popular Western media that derogated the Asian identity. Global conflict and tension had ignited an infatuation with “a vast and convulsive Armageddon to determine who is to be the master of the world, the white or yellow man.”<sup>5</sup> This Western lens resulted from “a detailed logic governed not simply by empirical reality...a battery of desires, repressions, investments, and projections.”<sup>6</sup> Racialized antagonism, only intensified by international conflict, marked Asian Americans. The culminating effects of the World Wars, Cold War, and subsequent Red Scare and, later, the United States’ involvement in Vietnam would only heighten America-Asian racial tensions. This resulted in an overt racialized exoticization of Asian identity in 20th-century media portrayal of the

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<sup>1</sup> Urmila Seshagiri, "Modernity's (Yellow) Perils: Dr. Fu-Manchu and English Race Paranoia," *Cultural Critique*, no. 62 (2006): 163, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4489239>; Thank you to Semira Robinson, Will Lucas and Anthony Ganci for Peer Reviewing this work.

<sup>2</sup> Urmila Seshagiri, "Modernity's (Yellow)," 162.

<sup>3</sup> Urmila Seshagiri, "Modernity's (Yellow)," 162.

<sup>4</sup> Urmila Seshagiri, "Modernity's (Yellow)," 162-194.

<sup>5</sup> Julia Lovell, "The Yellow Peril: Dr Fu Manchu and the Rise of Chinaphobia by Christopher Frayling – Review,"

The Guardian, last modified October 30, 2014, accessed May 14, 2023,

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/oct/30/yellow-peril-dr-fu-manchu-rise-of-chinaphobia-christopher-frayling-review>.

<sup>6</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 8.

Chinese. One screenwriter wrote, “American images of the Chinese are seen as a superior people and an inferior people: devilishly exasperating heathens and wonderful humanists; wise sages and sadistic executioners.”<sup>7</sup> The racialization of Asian identity had charged a growing interest in derogatory stereotypes of Asians across Western media. Audiences would flock to cinemas to witness the infinitely diverse array of race fantasies circulated throughout movies and television shows that reaffirmed their concerns of an Eastern invasion.

However, by the end of the 1970s, a progressive change in Chinese attitudes shifted the aesthetic and social dimensions of Western films and English theater productions in Hollywood. Between the 1970s and 1990s, the rising popularity of Chinese Martial Arts films in the United States positively reformed preconceptions surrounding Chinese identity and challenged the historical legacy of Orientalism. An influx of immigration and the rapid growth of Chinese ethnic enclaves produced a shroud of optimism that fueled younger generation Chinese Americans with the prospect of integration. The development of Asian Martial Arts in Western media became a pivotal medium for Asian Martial Artists to express resistance through heroic personas displayed in film. They showcased a foreign depiction of Asians that transformed Chinese cultural status from an exotic novelty to an influential force to dismantle long-standing stereotypes in American media. By platforming figures of heroism that overcame their oppressive environments and promoting aspects of Chinese culture, Martial Arts films fueled the rising popularity of Asian cinema. Cinematic icons such as Bruce Lee transformed and empowered the Asian identity through their depictions of martial arts, bolstering antiracist resistance by combating Western hegemony and hierarchy.

On August 11, 1896, a foreign projectionist hosted the first recorded film screening in China. Throughout the beginning of the 20th century, film and production companies throughout China were foreign-owned. American filmmakers and technicians primarily trained the technical crews of the first Chinese film companies in Shanghai. But one of Asia’s first flourishing film studios would appear out of Hong Kong. In 1913, Benjamin Browsky, an American entrepreneur, co-founded Huamei [Chinese-American], the first studio to produce movies that conformed to the traditional image of global cinema: short films and dramatic plots.<sup>8</sup> Western film had rooted itself within Asia’s small but rapidly growing film industry, developing an essential bridge between the United States and Asian film.

In 1923, a Nationalist party under Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek established a capitalist military dictatorship in China under the Soviet Communist International, hoping to gain support in warding off ongoing Japanese expansionism.<sup>9</sup> A World War had consumed both the Eastern and Western hemispheres in international conflict and violence. This angst would carry into various art, literature, and film mediums, becoming a central point of thematic influence of many productions between 1900 and 1950. Wuxia and martial arts films dominated the film industry during this time. Many of these early films centered around the concepts of the woman warrior and the knight-errant in folklore who, through ‘larger-than-life’ heroism, protected the public from the forces of injustice and would find great success. Wong Fei Huang was a revolutionary practitioner of traditional medicine and a 20th-century martial artist. His story inspired countless films, first produced by Shaw Brothers studio. In Asian media, Fei was mythologized and became the central model of the Wuxia genre. Singapore-based film production Shaw Brothers reproduced depictions of characters with similar personas who embodied traditional Chinese values of wisdom and virtue while persisting as a force against evil. Wuxia was both an expression of Chinese culture and tradition and an artistic expression of resistance against

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<sup>7</sup> Albert H. Yee, "Asians as Stereotypes and Students: Misperceptions That Persist," *Educational Psychology Review* 4, no. 1 (1992): 98, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23359579>.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Fonoroff, "A Brief History of Hong Kong Cinema," *Renditions* 29/30 (1988): 294, accessed May 14, 2023, [https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/rct/pdf/e\\_outputs/b2930/v29&30P293.pdf](https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/rct/pdf/e_outputs/b2930/v29&30P293.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> David Carter, *East Asian Cinema* (Oldcastle Books, 2010), 12-13, digital file.

oppressive regimes. Between 1920-1930, Wuxia-style martial arts films and romantic dramas would dominate the film industry, paralleling a world consumed by conflict.

In 1942, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which had enforced a complete ban on “lawful” immigration “for any Chinese laborer to come” into the United States, was repealed.<sup>10</sup> Chinese enclaves experienced immense growth and Americans were “fairly infatuated with the,” Chinatowns<sup>11</sup> Heralded by their “celestial style,” Chinatowns became the center of Chinese culture and tradition, intensifying a curiosity and Western appetite for Chinese culture.<sup>12</sup> Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, literature and media fed the appetite of a public fascinated by a growing Chinese ethnic population on American ground. Between 1960 and 1970, an influx of imported Chinese media and an expansion of Chinese Cinema would be driven by the growth and expansion of these Chinese-American communities on American shores. “The Great Wall separating the U.S and Chinese” media had “come crashing down.”<sup>13</sup> For Chinese Americans, the importation of Wuxia film and Martial Arts reconnected communities and provided a “home-away-from-home touch” arranged “by networks executives.”<sup>14</sup> Throughout the 20th century, Chinese productions held the majority market share of film box office revenue, towering over the U.S market share that often dipped below 30%.<sup>15</sup> By the end of 1950, Martial Arts film had found a substantial presence in Western society amongst Chinese immigrants, propelling Asian filmmakers and stage artists into the heat of the 20th century.

Lee Hoi Chuen, a famous Hong Kong opera singer, and his wife, Grace Ho, both respectable and affluent Chinese immigrants, had their fourth child, Lee Jun Fan, on November 27, 1940, while on tour in the San Francisco area. Bruce, a name given to Lee by a nurse at his birthing hospital, would be thrown into United States lights and glamor at the early age of 3 months old, where he would serve as the stand-in for an American baby in *Golden Gate Girl* (1941).<sup>16</sup> However, in the early 1940s, Bruce and his family returned to Japanese-occupied Hong Kong, where he from an early age displayed his natural prowess and energetic personality on stage. Hoi would recall that “As [Bruce] grew older, he got better...he was sometimes too active for me.”<sup>17</sup> Bruce’s troublesome curiosity would not add to Grace’s despondency as, even later in childhood, “Bruce never changed his character...he repeated the same mistakes time after time...Once, I asked how he expected to earn his living if he kept on like that. He said, ‘I’ll become a famous film star one day.’”<sup>18</sup> Bruce Lee’s childhood exposure to acting propelled his interest and enthusiasm for acting. He would appear in roughly 20 films, win Hong Kong’s cha-cha competition, and was locally renowned for his poetry. In an interview, Grace reflected that Bruce liked acting “very much...in the morning, I’d call out, ‘Bruce, the car is here,’ and he’d leap and put on his shoes and go off very cheerfully...When I had to get him up for school in the mornings, however, it was quite a different story.”<sup>19</sup> Theatre and acting became Bruce’s escape. Bruce appeared in shows such as “My Son,” “Ah Cheum,” “Chow Shui,” and

<sup>10</sup> National Archives, "Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)," National Archives, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/chinese-exclusion-act#transcript>.

<sup>11</sup> Barbara Berglund, "Chinatown's Tourist Terrain: Representation and Racialization in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco," *American Studies* 46, no. 2 (2005): 6, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40643847>.

<sup>12</sup> Berglund, "Chinatown's Tourist," 7.

<sup>13</sup> Howard Rosenberg, "Chinese Group in the Market," *Los Angeles Times* (1923-1995) (Los Angeles, Calif.), 1979, <http://proxy5.noblenet.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/chinese-group-market/docview/162651025/se-2?accountid=13178>.

<sup>14</sup> Rosenberg, "Chinese Group."

<sup>15</sup> David Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 2, [http://www.columbia.edu/itc/film/gaines/historiography/Bordwell\\_HongKong.pdf](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/film/gaines/historiography/Bordwell_HongKong.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Rachel A. Koestler-Grack, *Bruce Lee* (New York: Chelsea House, 2007), 17, digital file.

<sup>17</sup> Koestler-Grack, *Bruce Lee*, 18.

<sup>18</sup> Koestler-Grack, *Bruce Lee*, 18.

<sup>19</sup> Koestler-Grack, *Bruce Lee*, 18-19.

comedies such as “It’s Fathers’ Faults,” often playing the role of a street urchin or orphan.<sup>20</sup> Bruce’s early exposure to film allowed him to cultivate a strong attachment to entertainment, his early experience becoming the basis for many of the signature ‘moves’ that would define Bruce’s later career.

Following the early years of 1949, a British-occupied Hong Kong pushed racial unrest into schools, forcing Bruce into years of violence and turmoil. At the age of 12, Bruce attended La Salle College, a Catholic and English-teaching boy’s school, where the majority of students had no English-speaking history.<sup>21</sup> Race tensions between the British and Chinese pushed students into immense race rivalries with their peers. Bruce would find himself the leader of a gang that would congregate around the school’s playing field, where Chinese and British students would brawl and taunt each other in fierce fights until either one side was beaten or the gangs were separated by police.<sup>22</sup> Bruce recalled, “I always fought with my gang behind me... Those days, kids improvised all kinds of weapons – even shoes with razors attached.”<sup>23</sup> Hong Kong, trapped between racial angst and global unrest, was a city of desperation and determination. The violence and conflict that had plagued Bruce throughout his early academic years would pervade his later interest in Martial Arts, becoming an outlet for his emotions and expression of his frustration with racial conflict. Bruce Lee, under the tutelage of Master Yip Man, would hone his discipline and skills as a fighter in the most effective style of martial arts at the time: Kung Fu.

Kung Fu, Gung Fu in Cantonese, was a term that meant “the accomplishment of a difficult task” rather than a specific form of martial arts.<sup>24</sup> Bruce, who would train in the style of Wing Chun, aimed to deliver “the maximum of anguish with the minimum of movement.”<sup>25</sup> The style was based on formulating an attack at a central axis of an opponent’s body. For Bruce Lee, Kung Fu was a necessary tool to survive Hong Kong’s streets but, in other ways, Martial Arts became central to reclaiming the brutality of his upbringing. Kung Fu formulated important philosophical principles in patience, balance, and control, even without aggressive violence. Under Yip Man, Kung Fu transformed into a mental exercise as much as physical taxation.<sup>26</sup> But, by the end of the decade, at the age of 18, Lee could barely manage his academics while simultaneously pursuing his passions in local fighting competitions. Bruce would return to Seattle, Washington, in hopes that life in America would amend his academic struggles. Bruce’s passion for Kung Fu, combined with his natural prowess in acting became hallmarks on his identity. Bruce, pushed by racial conflict and violence, used martial arts to guide and build his philosophy, permeating into the principality of the art he performed.

Bruce would perform various demonstrations of his Kung Fu in parking lots, backyards, and garages. Bruce quickly attracted a prominent following of students and fighters.<sup>27</sup> Lee’s audience grew, and his popularity would land him from an educational role on Seattle’s KCTS-Channel 9 education station to the televised “The Green Hornet.” Bruce’s acrobatic, theatrical, and high-energy performance would continue to forward Bruce’s career in the movie-making industry into stardom. His popularity allured an audience with Raymond Chow of Golden Harvest Studios, where Bruce would earn a deal to play in the film “The Big Boss.” It “grossed over \$12 million” in the United States, “an Asian box

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<sup>20</sup> Koestler-Grack, *Bruce Lee*, 18-19.

<sup>21</sup> Koestler-Grack, *Bruce Lee*, 19.

<sup>22</sup> Koestler-Grack, *Bruce Lee*, 21.

<sup>23</sup> Koestler-Grack, *Bruce Lee*, 21.

<sup>24</sup> Koestler-Grack, *Bruce Lee*, 120.

<sup>25</sup> Koestler-Grack, *Bruce Lee*, 28.

<sup>26</sup> Koestler-Grack, *Bruce Lee*, 30.

<sup>27</sup> Koestler-Grack, *Bruce Lee*, 44.

office record.”<sup>28</sup> The movie propelled the West into a “martial arts madness.”<sup>29</sup> *Cinéaste* magazine reported that “in a little more than two years, kung fu...has caught the fancy of the American public and literally become the ‘fist of fury.’”<sup>30</sup> Lee flew into fame, but his past would shape his later acting career, sculpting elements of his style and philosophy.

Bruce Lee’s movies were “hip and fairly Americanized,” for “a Chinese hero in an American series.”<sup>31</sup> *Time* magazine wrote, “his hands were like wedges, his feet flew like blades. With his flashing skill, though, came an edge of self-deprecation...That quality made him not only indomitable but affable -- a surefire combination for those who prefer their superheroes to be approachable.”<sup>32</sup> Bruce subverted into Western hegemony, whose “superimposed English phrases” were “amusing enough playing an Oriental bumpkin.”<sup>33</sup> Bruce’s popularity gave Kung Fu a platform to promote the cultural acceptance of Chinese culture, as well as an opportunity to reform Asians in Western film. When asked about adopting Western and Asian styles in his film, Lee replied, “styles tend to not only separate man because they have their own doctrines and these doctrines become the gospel truth that you cannot change, but if you just say ‘Here I am as a human being. How can I express myself totally and completely?’ that way you won’t create a style because style is a crystallization – that way it is a process of continual growth.” Lee diverged from the traditional marks of Wuxia films and instead opted for a distinct individualism that reclaimed stereotypes and misrepresentations of the racialized Asian persona. Lee admonished, “research your own experiences for the truth. Absorb what is useful...add what is specifically your own...The creating individual...is more important than any style or system.”<sup>34</sup>

Lee’s unique and distinct persona reinforced his popularity amongst Western audiences while embracing the Asian racial identity, creating a relatable hero that his fans and audiences could respect and follow. Bruce Lee opted to integrate key Chinese cultural elements, such as “the application of the theory of Yin and Yang” or nunchaku, in his displays of Kung Fu.<sup>35</sup> Bruce’s wife, Linda, said, “his library contained many books about...both ancient and modern, Oriental and Western” facets. “His films, the solo number (his playing with nunchaku), the duet (usually with the arch villain)...are designed like an elaborate dance,” against the forces of evil.<sup>36</sup> Lee’s artistic expression of “freedom” fueled Lee’s covert narrative of decolonial struggle while capturing Asian Americans’ voice for resistance.<sup>37</sup> Lee wanted his audiences “to realize Freedom,” and transcend the institutionalized superior-inferior complex of the West.<sup>38</sup> His films were climatic and entertaining but upheld subtle historical and political meanings for Chinese communities overseas, who looked to overcome Western injustice.

<sup>28</sup> Cecilla Blanchfield, "Game of Death: Milking the Bruce Lee Legend," *Calgary Herald*, June 1, 1979, <https://www.newspapers.com/>.

<sup>29</sup> B. P. Flanigan, "Kung Fu Crazy: Or the Invasion of the 'Chop Suey Easterns,'" *Cinéaste* 6, no. 3 (1974): 9, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42683410>.

<sup>30</sup> Flanigan, "Kung Fu Crazy," 9.

<sup>31</sup> Koestler-Grack, *Bruce Lee*, 101.

<sup>32</sup> "Kung Fu's Last Fight," *Time Magazine*, November 11, 1974, E5, accessed May 14, 2023, <https://web.p.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=4&sid=f31b320c-02ba-4bcd-9576-9f8e55891001%40redis>.

<sup>33</sup> "Kung Fu's," E5.

<sup>34</sup> "Kung Fu's," E5.

<sup>35</sup> Kin-yan Szeto, "Jackie Chan's Cosmopolitical Consciousness and Comic Displacement," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 20, no. 2 (2008): 234, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41482538>; M. T. Kato, "Burning Asia: Bruce Lee's Kinetic Narrative of Decolonization," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 17, no. 1 (2005): 65, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41490933>.

<sup>36</sup> Kato, "Burning Asia," 65.

<sup>37</sup> Kato, "Burning Asia," 65.

<sup>38</sup> Kato, "Burning Asia," 86.

The portrayal of violence satisfied a craving for rebellion, and revenge, in the face of the global angst against Asians, only intensified by global international conflict, such as the Vietnam War. “Almost every really successful movie of the past decade comes down to one theme—revenge...The vendetta was a fixture of Chinese society long before Sicilians and hillbillies adopted the blood feud as an interesting way to pass time. Celluloid plus revenge plus violence equal profits,” said a scriptwriter.<sup>39</sup> It was undeniable that Bruce participated in this drastic shift within the entertainment industry. “An action film borders on reality and fantasy.<sup>40</sup> If I were to be completely realistic in my films, you would call me a violent, blood man,” Bruce said.<sup>41</sup> Films were drastically more bloody and violent, where heroes and enemies alike “would simply destroy” opponents “by tearing his guts out.”<sup>42</sup> However, violence attracted viewership and controversy, and as it was, Bruce Lee’s audiences wanted action that portrayed them as strong and relentless heroes in the face of evil.

Lee’s movies followed a progressive transformation of Asian Martial Arts films. In the justice of integration, it was the job of minorities to fit themselves within the white-dominant culture. Martial Arts films reshaped into an almost unrecognizable standard of Western film that subverted Kung Fu to action-pact theatrics and violence. Films like “The Big Boss” and “Fist of Fury” would attract critique and accusations of the immense violence and gore prevalent across the Martial Arts genre. In one “Big Boss scene,” Lee splits a man’s head with a saw. Aside from the costs of the film stock itself, “the single greatest out-lay in Chinese-language movies goes for synthetic blood. Between 3% and 5% of the budget for the low cost productions,” goes to the purchase of “numerable half gallon plastic bottles of red sticky liquid.”<sup>43</sup> For Chinese audiences, “violence is apparently more appealing than the convoluted sexual and psychological intricacies of the West,” a 20th-century screenwriter observed.<sup>44</sup> This lust for gore reciprocated the frustrations of Chinese Americans caught in the inequity and injustice of Western imposition.

Bruce’s anti-imperial implications were evident across all of his feature films, often actively challenging and critiquing Western hegemony and hierarchy through plot and employed film techniques. In *The Big Boss*, Lee portrayed a worker who heroically worked to defeat his corrupt employers. In the film *Fury of the Dragon*, Lee defended his family against local gangsters and their leader, played by Chuck Norris. Bruce’s victory was symbolic of the oppressed man’s capacity to triumph in the face of Western hegemony.<sup>45</sup> Joe Lewis described his role when Bruce attempted to cast him as “a big, strong, muscular, blue-eyed, blond-haired, all-American punch bag.”<sup>46</sup> Bruce Lee participated in a popular movement that elevated Asian actors into lead roles that depicted strong, heroic Asian superstars and forgoed the gross misrepresentations through martial arts. He was “powerful” and “invincible,” and “usually defeated his opponents with one punch.”<sup>47</sup> While Kung Fu films still represented an exoticized Asian culture, the Chinese American image had transformed from an antagonized Asian immigrant into a forceful image of retaliation against oppressive dictatorships. For Asian producers, screenwriters, and filmmakers, Martial Arts films exposed years of pent-up emotion that had now resulted in a medium of artistic expression.

<sup>39</sup> Robert S. Elegant, "POPULAR APPEAL: ORIENTAL FILMS: LOTS of BLOOD AND REVENGE," *Los Angeles Times* (1923-1995) (Los Angeles, Calif.), 1973, <http://proxy5.noblenet.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/popular-appeal/docview/157228184/se-2?accountid=13178>.

<sup>40</sup> Koestler-Grack, *Bruce Lee*, 91.

<sup>41</sup> Elegant, "POPULAR APPEAL."

<sup>42</sup> Koestler-Grack, *Bruce Lee*, 94.

<sup>43</sup> Elegant, "POPULAR APPEAL."

<sup>44</sup> Elegant, "POPULAR APPEAL."

<sup>45</sup> Raechel Dumas, "Kung Fu Production for Global Consumption: The Depoliticization of Kung Fu in Stephen Chow's <em>Kung Fu Hustle</em>," *Style* 43, no. 1 (2009): 68, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/style.43.1.65>.

<sup>46</sup> Koestler-Grack, *Bruce Lee*, 97.

<sup>47</sup> Szeto, "Jackie Chan's," 234.

Through films and movies, Bruce Lee, like many other Asian and Western movie makers, infringed on the normative, white patriarchy of the United States and set in stone a movement of antiracist ethos that would work to destabilize a world that revolved around the premise of white supremacy. Film figures such as Chow Yun-Fat, Jet Li, Michelle Yeoh, and Jackie Chan asserted high levels of creative, technical, and administrative control over their film projects to shape their public image against the dominant ideologies of Asians. British colonialism, Chinese nationalism, Western Orientalism, and imperialism reshaped a complex and evolving film persona that enabled Asian actors to not only succeed commercially but impose a tactical political agency on their local, ethnic, and national identities in mainstream media. A journalist observed that Jackie “Chan’s ‘softness’ does not consist of a lack of masculinity or an inability to fight, but more in a refusal” to “play the part of the Oriental other.”<sup>48</sup> Kung Fu, and Asian Martial Arts film inclination to lean into heroic fantasies as a means of physical liberation, encompassed a performative style that effectively superseded the historical generalization of Asianess.

The finale of “Fist of Fury” encapsulated the core of Kung Fu’s ideological revolution: “The great hero takes revenge and saves his people. Life and death lies at that moment. Leaving behind his love for life.”<sup>49</sup> Martial Arts had become a form of resistance and a source of empowerment for the growing communities of Chinese Americans.<sup>50</sup> Martial arts’ notion of defiance and triumph constructed a narrative for Chinese Americans to follow. Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan, Lung Ti, and other actors became symbolic of the path toward liberation. While Chinese Americans would continue to experience the clash of racial conflict, Kung Fu and martial arts articulated defiance of subjugation in the face of dominant power.

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<sup>48</sup> Szeto, "Jackie Chan's," 235

<sup>49</sup> Kato, "Burning Asia," 87.

<sup>50</sup> Kato, "Burning Asia," 86-87.

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