



Bruce Lee and the Image of the Chinese Man

ENTER THE DRAGON

Chinese Masculinities Before Bruce Lee

- ▶ “women’s jobs” after 1869
- ▶ Exclusionary laws
- ▶ Socioeconomic discrimination

Chinatowns and Tourism

- ▶ Chinese enclaves like Chinatowns
- ▶ Exotic culture as tourist draw
- ▶ Chinese men conform to tourist stereotypes

Chinese Men in Popular Culture

- ▶ Fu Manchu: political threat, sexual threat, desexualized
- ▶ Charlie Chan: smart but physically weak; asexual
- ▶ Foreground Chinese foreignness
- ▶ Justify exclusionary discourses

Bruce Lee biography

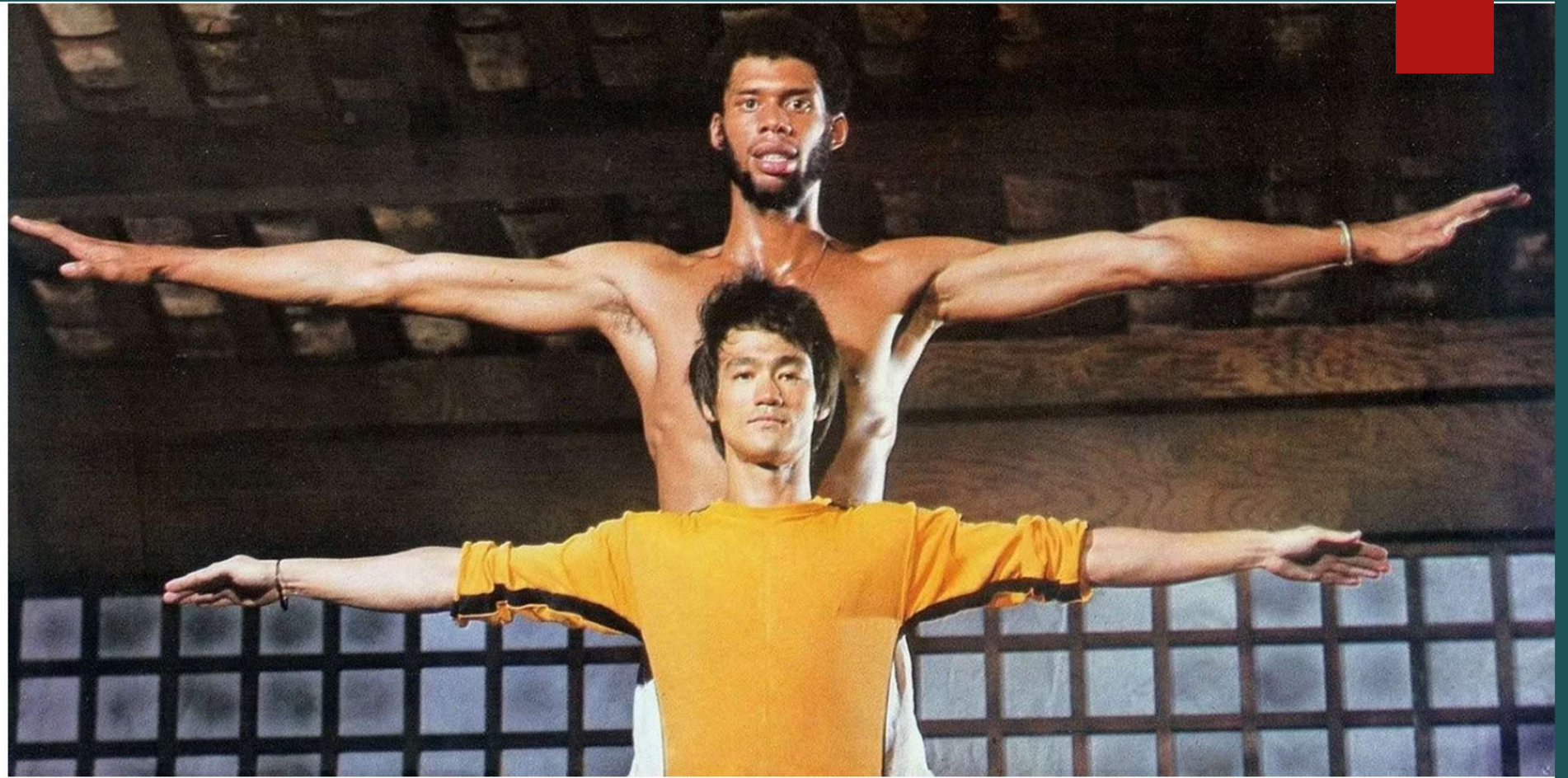
- ▶ Born in San Francisco in 1940
- ▶ Named Lee Jun Fan (“Return Again”)
- ▶ American, but treated as a foreigner
- ▶ Superb dancer
- ▶ Created Jeet Kune Do (“The Way of the Intercepting Fist”) in 1967

Lee's fighting style

- ▶ Like a dancer
- ▶ Fluid fighting style with a spiritual element
- ▶ Man of few words
- ▶ Looks/stares
- ▶ Concentration
- ▶ Strength: KOs with one-inch punch
- ▶ One-finger pushups, break five boards with a kick
- ▶ Head movements like a snake
- ▶ Unnerving cries
- ▶ Lee's ethos: "Be water."

Bruce Lee's career

- ▶ 1966–1967: Kato in *The Green Hornet*
- ▶ Taught martial arts to famous people
- ▶ Not given lead role in *Kung Fu* TV series
- ▶ Goes to Hong Kong in 1971
- ▶ Greeted as the star of “The Kato Show”



Bruce Lee's Movies before *Enter the Dragon*

- ▶ ***The Big Boss*** (1971); *Fists of Fury* in USA
 - ▶ Lee plays a worker in a factory that is a front for drug smuggling. Grossed nearly US\$50 million worldwide (about \$300 million today), the highest-grossing Hong Kong film until *Fist of Fury* (1972).
- ▶ ***Fist of Fury*** (1972)
 - ▶ Lee plays a martial-arts student who fights against Japanese aggression in 1910. Grossed about US\$100 million worldwide (about \$600 million today), the highest-grossing Hong Kong film up until Lee's *The Way of the Dragon*

Bruce Lee's Movies before *Enter the Dragon*

- ▶ ***The Way of the Dragon*** (1972); *Return of the Dragon* in USA
- ▶ Set in Rome, the film centers on the owners of a restaurant being threatened by gangsters. Lee's character is sent from Hong Kong to help them.
- ▶ Co-starred Chuck Norris
- ▶ Grossed around US\$130 million worldwide (over \$700 million adjusted for inflation), the highest-grossing Hong Kong film up until Lee's next film, *Enter the Dragon* (1973).

Lee's Death

- ▶ Bruce Lee died in July 1973, before *Enter the Dragon* was released.
- ▶ He was 32 years old.

Enter The Dragon

(1973; 102 mins)

- ▶ Directed by Robert Clouse
- ▶ Fight sequences staged by Bruce Lee
- ▶ Key characters (*and the actors who play them*)
- ▶ Lee (*Bruce Lee*)
- ▶ Roper (*John Saxon*)
- ▶ Williams (*Jim Kelly*)
- ▶ Tania (*Ahna Capri*)
- ▶ Han, renegade Shaolin (*Kien Shih*)
- ▶ O'Hara, Han's bodyguard (*Robert Wall*)
- ▶ Su Lin, Lee's sister (*Angela Mao*)
- ▶ Mei Ling (*Betty Chung*)
- ▶ Braithwaite, British agent (*Geoffrey Weeks*)
- ▶ Bolo (*Bolo Yeung*)
- ▶ Parsons (*Peter Archer*)
- ▶ Old Man (*Li Jen Ho*)



Let's watch the film

PRODUCTION _____

DIRECTOR _____

CAMERA _____

SCENE _____

TAKE _____

Lee's Crossover Appeal

- ▶ For Chinese audiences:
 - ▶ Persona as champion of oppressed Chinese
- For US audiences: hegemonic masculinity
strength; domination through violence
BUT not typically patriarchal and
not misogynistic

Working-class hero, but not calling for systemic change

Pauline Kael compared Lee to Fred Astaire

Lee compared his films to Clint Eastwood's

Lee's martial-arts films are grounded in reality

Bruce Lee versus Jackie Chan

- ▶ Chan is comic; Lee is tragic
- ▶ Chan is multicultural; Lee is about race
- ▶ Chan's audience is middle class; Lee's films are about the working class
- ▶ Chan's body is soft and vulnerable for comedy; Lee's body is hard
- ▶ Chan is often drunk; Lee is sober

Lee's Legacy

- ▶ Lee rewrote the history of action cinema
- ▶ A foreign cinema comes to dominate the box office
- ▶ A foreign cinema leads to a new genre in American cinema
- ▶ Focus on underclass; appeal to inner-city audiences
- ▶ Violence as ritual
- ▶ Foreground cultural dislocation and split identity
- ▶ Asian pride → Asian American civil rights movement

Hong Kong harbor

