RELOADING THE DRAGON LADY: READING THE CHARACTER OF CHUN LI IN *STREET FIGHTER: THE LEGEND OF CHUN LI*

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Abstract: *Street Fighter: The Legend of Chun Li* movie revolves around the journey of Chun Li, a Chinese female fighter of the Street Fighter series, and her eventual fight against Bison. This study focuses on the portrayal of Chun Li as a representative of Asian women in an American movie, and compares it to her original portrayal in the game. There are two big groups of representation of Asian women in the Western media: the submissive 'lotus blossom baby' and the aggressive 'dragon lady.' As a form of content analysis, this study analyzes both textual and visual elements of *the Street Fighter: The Legend of Chun Li* movie and *Street Fighter* game series which represent the portrayal of an Asian woman character named Chun Li. Result shows that Chun Li character in the movie leans more towards the 'dragon lady' group with her strong and seductive characteristics, while her game self exhibits a broader range of qualities.
Keywords: *Asian women; Chun Li*; *dragon lady; lotus blossom; representation*

INTRODUCTION

"Warriors converge on streets of Bangkok, preparing for the ultimate battle of terror versus beauty, light versus darkness and good versus evil" is the teaser of the 2009 Street Fighter movie, *Street Fighter: The Legend of Chun Li*. Directed by Andrzej Bartkowia, the movie is based on the Capcom *Street Fighter* video games. As the title suggests, this particular movie revolves around and is focused on the character of Chun Li, the first female fighter in *Street Fighter*. Throughout the series, Chun Li is one of the major fighters who has attracted many, especially male, audiences. Therefore, it is no wonder to have a special movie dedicated to her.

Street Fighter was first released as an arcade game by Capcom, a Japanese game manufacturer company. This electronic fighting game then gained a lot of popularity and has been adapted in many diverse media, multiple adaptations, sequels, and spin-offs — the newest one is the Chun Li movie. Based on the original characters from the

game, Americans have developed a version that caters to the need and appeal to its new audience. In the video game, Chun Li is one of the most popular and iconic characters in the series. She is a skilled martial artist and an Interpol agent of Chinese descendant. On the other hand, in *Street Fighter: The Legend of Chun Li*, Chun Li appears as a Chinese-American pianist who turns to a renowned street fighter in order to save her father from Bison. There is a large difference (personality, past, clothing choices, ability) between the Chun Li in video games and in the movie. This transformation of characters from the original game to the Americanized movie offers an interesting topic of research, especially in relation to how Chun Li, as an Asian woman, is portrayed in a western media.

Orientalism is a term coined by Edward Said (1995) in his book to describe the way the West views the East. It can be viewed as a system of representation through which the West places the East as its opposite. It involves a collection of binaries between East and West, used to separate between the two—civilized and uncivilized, colonizer and colonized, progressive and primitive, self and Other (Hoeveler and Cass, 2006; Said, 2023). Ranji (2021) states that orientalism is used to deal with regions, objects, qualities, and questions deemed to be Oriental in nature. He notes that media and journalism are marked by binary terminology when referring to West and non-West. However, Said (2023) argues that the concept of 'orient' or anything related to 'oriental' is only a product of Western imagination. The Westerners have constructed a binary opposition between the East and the West, which is used to justify its imperialism and domination over the East. Orientalism is not simply a topic of academic study; it is a political and cultural project that has real consequences on the world.

Likewise, there is a close relationship between Orientalism and popular culture. Orientalism influences what kinds of roles Asian characters can or will play, and once those roles are established, it will be very difficult to go against the mainstream and then create new representations of Asian people (Ofianti, 2021). The representation of Asian women in Western media is often influenced by Orientalism (Matsumoto, 2020; Arie, 2020; Ramirez, 2020; Tombul, 2021). Asian women are usually represented in both Asian and American media as exceptionally submissive, mysterious, strong, sexy, and/or aggressive. It was the ultimate male fantasy, a lady outside the bedroom and a whore inside. Such stereotypes of these women tend to revolve around "the scary but seductive dragon ladies of China, the demure geisha of Japan, and the sexy belly dancers and mysteriously veiled women from the Arab world" (Chin, 2011) in particular.

Nevertheless, if we were to put together all the representations of Asian women in the Western media, we would actually arrive into two big groups: the lotus blossom baby and the dragon lady (Nakamatsu, 2005; Tajima, 1989; Zhou & Paul, 2016; Paner, 2018; Ma, 2020). The 'lotus blossom baby,' which is also known as china doll or geisha girl, refers to the stereotypical representations of Asian women as shy, passive, and/or sexually exotic beauties (Nakamatsu, 2005; Tajima, 1989; Zhou & Paul, 2016; Ma, 2020; Pires, 2024; Ramiro, 2022). At the same time, the dragon lady is ruthless, cold, and unforgiving type (Nakamatsu, 2005; Tajima, 1989; Zhou & Paul, 2016; Ma, 2020; Hwang & Parreñas, 2021, Pires, 2024; Ramiro, 2022; Tripathi, 2021). Following the lotus blossom and dragon lady dichotomy, Hagedorn (1997) argues that most Hollywood movies usually play down Asian women as follows: "If we are 'good,' we are childlike, submissive, silent and eager for sex. And if we are not silent, suffering doormats, we are demonized … cunning, deceitful, sexual provocateurs." One is prettily submissive, whereas the other is the expected dominatrix; so, which one would one rather have?

It initially started with an attempt to present Asia. The Western began to fantasize Asia from what they saw themselves or heard from others. It included female representation in Asian media as a form of societal representation that crosses the Pacific to America. It was then in turn consumed by Americans and became a hybridized popular culture. The Asian female was first portrayed with ideological assumptions in American media such as television and movies. Some people might see it as a positive thing to have Asian actresses on the big screen, and it indeed is – but in the end, the thinly veiled stereotypes still remain. It cannot be denied therefore that the portrayal of Asian women in Western media is closely related to Orientalism, which often exoticizes Asian women and perpetuates them in negative stereotypes (Jessop, 2021; Wu, 2023; Peralta, 2022; Nighman, 2021; Zhang, 2023).

Rarely does a lead character of Asian heritage appear in a regular television show or movie, even though the number of Asian actors in the world of American movies might not be less than those of other races. Not only are Asian Americans underrepresented, but the little representation that

Asians get is also characteristically stereotypical. Gerbner (1998) mentions in his report about the fairness and diversity that Asian characters only made up 2.6 percent of the cast in the nineties. In the past, Asians have often been portrayed as cooks (*Happy Days*), loyal assistants (*Green Hornet*), or heavily accented landlords (*Suddenly Susan*); Asian actresses may have crossed over into more contemporary and significant roles, but they are still stereotyped in another way (Kim & Chung, 2005; Leong, 2005; Jessop, 2021).

While the name may suggest otherwise, the term dragon lady was not originally Chinese, nor did it come from any Asian country (Kim & Chung, 2005; Leong, 2005). Both the term, which was inspired by the characters played by Anna Wong, and its usage are more of Western thing than an Eastern one. Dragon lady is used to indicate domineering, aggressive, and fierce women, specifically ones of the Asian descendants, or as Leong (2005) would put it "an overly aggressive and dominant Oriental female." While the word 'dragon' is mainly used to imply something positive in the East, particularly in East Asia, the Westerners have adopted it for an entirely different purpose.

The Dragon Lady in particular originated from the 'yellow peril' stereotype, which was born out of the threat of Asian invasion during the 1300s (Hoppenstand, 1992; Johnson, 2004; Kong, 2023). The 'yellow peril' presents Asian men as a threat to the Western civilization whereas Asian women in the dragon lady category are cunning, dominant, cold, calculating, and mysterious characters (Hoppenstand, 1992; Johnson, 2004; Hwang & Parreñas, 2021; Wong, 2022; Park, 2022; Brown, 2023; Shin, Bae, and Song, 2023). Previous studies (Staszak, 2015; Wiley, 1995, Kim & Chung, 2005; Leong, 2005; Lee, 2018; Clark, 2012; Tripathi, 2021) describe dragon lady to be oversexualized, with the characters playing them using sexuality as a means of power. To achieve their objectives and plans, the dragon lady will make a full use of their charms, seducing and even manipulating their targets (Rajgopal, 2020; Zhang and He, 2023). Some might describe their character as femme fatale. According to Lee (2018), this oversexualization reinforces the idea of Asian women as the "exotic other," who are sexually available and can fulfill the ultimate male fantasies. Such representations are actually harmful and reduce the portrayal of Asian women to one-dimensional characters.

This study sets out to identify how Chun Li, as a character of Asian descendants, is portrayed in the movie *Street Fighter: The Legend of Chun Li.* Is Chun Li being portrayed as a submissive and demure maiden of the lotus blossom or China doll group? Or does she belong to the more aggressive and cunning dragon lady group? Is there any possibility of her being portrayed into some unique representation? In addition to focusing on the portrayal of Chun Li in the movie, this study also aims to draw comparisons between Chun Li's depiction in the movie and her character in the original game version. It seeks to find out whether both versions present similar stereotypical representations of Asian women or not. Addressing these questions would allow us to gain better insights about the representations of Asian characters in popular media and how it follows or challenges the existing cultural stereotypes.

Studies on the representation of Asians, particularly Asian women, in the media have been quite popular. Besana, Katsiaficas, and Loyd (2019) has conducted analysis on the representation of Asian and Asian American in media through film analysis. They focus on the frequency, type of role, characteristics, and content of dialogue that Asian characters have in the films. They discover that the frequency of Asian lead roles and genres have increased recently in the last 25 years. Though the stereotype-confirming representations are still present in those roles. Similarly, Johnson (2004) also focuses on exploring the representation of Asian and Asian American in American films. She examines the cause of stereotypes on Asian characters, and explains how the stereotypes are gendered and sexualized. Two key depictions of Asian women, Johnson (2004) mentions, are dragon lady and lotus blossom which are highly sexualized and erotic objects in American media. Lee (2018) agrees on her findings and writes about how the representation of East Asian women in popular media can be harmful due to the exaggerated portrayal of china dolls and dragon ladies. Then, there is also Zhou and Paul (2016) who find out that, in the online pornography of Asian women, films featuring lotus blossoms are actually more popular and numerous than those starring dragon ladies. Additionally, Sriganeshvarun and Wen (2020) also analyze the stereotypical images of Asian women in six selected Hollywood films— *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961), *Sixteen Candles* (1984), *Rush Hour* (1998), *Shanghai Noon* (2000), *The Hangover* (2009), and *Pitch Perfect* (2012). They state that while Asian images in Hollywood films are changing, the representations of Asians still mostly adhere to the stereotypical portrayal

like scheming dragon lady and submissive lotus blossom. They emphasize on the effects of such stereotypes and the need to change these harmful narratives.

Previous studies mostly focus on the portrayal of one or more Asian characters in media (novels, films, videos, pictures) and describe their traits. However, this study differs as it seeks to identify the portrayal of Chun Li in the movie *Street Fighter: The Legend of Chun Li* as well as how it can be compared to its game version on the matter of stereotypical representations of Asian characters. It seeks to find out whether Chun Li represents dragon lady, lotus blossom, or an entirely different group. After all, no studies have been done on the character of Chun Li exclusively. Previous studies on *Street Fighter* series mostly focused on the game composition, content, history, culture and players rather than on individual character. This research objectives are twofold. First, it sets out to identify how Chun Li, as a character of Asian descendants, is portrayed in the movie *Street Fighter: The Legend of Chun Li*. Second, how she compares to her game self.

METHOD

This study applies content analysis to explore the portrayal of Chun Li as a representative of Asian women in a Western media, particularly American movie. It combines an examination of both visual and textual elements, which includes but not limited to dialogue, actions, interactions, and costume design, presented in the *Street Fighter: The Legend of Chun Li* and finds out whether Chun Li embodies or challenges the existing stereotypes of Dragon Lady and Lotus Blossom Baby which commonly associated with Asian women in Western media.

The submissive lotus blossom baby and aggressive dragon lady are the two major representations of Asian women that would be used as a theoretical framework for analyzing Chun Li's character. These representations, influenced by Orientalism, have affected how Asian women are portrayed in Western media; they have limited and often stereotypical representations. It ends up putting them in a negative light most of the time.

The data used in this study are selected through repeated viewings of *Street Fighter: The Legend of Chun Li* movie and playing the *Street Fighter* game series. Throughout the data collection process, the researchers focus on particular facets of Chun Li's character portrayal. They document scenes, dialogues, actions, and/or visual components that influence Chun Li's representation, taking screenshots or notes of each occurrence. The data collected are then organized according to a list of categories–lotus blossom, dragon lady, and unconfirmed. Each category would then be divided into specific characteristics that the character displays in the movie and game. For instance, the lotus blossom category might be divided into three characteristics such as submissive, weak, and nurturing; while the dragon lady might have four characteristics such as domineering, ruthless, cunning, and seductive. Uncategorized sample would then belong to the unconfirmed category, which predictably lead to the unique representation of Asian female characters. Among all the characteristics and categories, the most dominant ones would be used in determining what kind of portrayal Chun Li has as an Asian character in media produced by Westerners and Easterners.

After collecting and organizing the data, content analysis is performed to identify trends and patterns in Chun Li's portrayal in the movie and game using the coded data. It assesses how her character may embody or divert from the submissive lotus blossom baby and aggressive dragon lady archetypes. A possibility of an entirely new representation (of Asian women)—based on the unconfirmed category in the coded data—is also considered. Furthermore, a comparison would also be made between Chun Li's character in the game and movie. Any differences in appearance, traits, or behaviors are noted and analyzed. The findings will contribute to the understanding of representations of Asian women in Western media, particularly in relation to how these representations differ or evolve from their original.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Re-loading the Dragon Lady

Representation of Asian women on the big screen has always been an interesting topic of research. Seeing a dragon lady instead of a lotus blossom baby for the representation of Asian women may be a refreshing — not to mention welcoming — change because for once Asian is not portrayed as the submissive one to the domineering Western presence.

The dragon lady may be represented as all-powerful and even in some cases equal to their male partners. However, their power will still be subject to their ability to remain highly aggressive, domineering, and sexy. It is not a pretty welcoming change any more. Because even though the form has been altered, it remains another cultural subjection of the East by its other half.

The image of "dragon lady" is associated with sexual attraction. Sriganeshvarun and Wen (2020) explain that the representation between Asian women and white men reflects a complex relationship containing dominant yet sexually objectified. The representation of Asians merely becomes "the other" without being given any sgnificant roles in some particular Hollywood movies. The naming of dragon lady tries to erase the subordination towards Asian women, yet the idea of being sexually attractive once again decreases the social stratification between Asians and Whites.

The Chun Li in *Street Fighter: The Legend of Chun Li* is different from its game version. She is more dangerous and sensual, and like many Asian women characters in Hollywood movies, Chun Li character, played by Kristin Kreuk, seems to have fallen into the dragon lady category. Although there have been several descriptions following the image of the notorious 'dragon lady,' this study focuses only on the two main characteristics—strong and seductive—which seem to be dominant in Chun Li character in the movie.

The strongest woman in the world
In relation to the dragon lady in the Hollywood context, the first characteristic (strong) appears to lean more heavily toward physical prowess than a mental one. As stated by Tung (2004) and Paner (2018), heroines of Asian or Asian American descendant are seen differently from the white heroines. In martial arts movies, in particular, they often fit into the stereotypical roles of being master of kung fu or other types of martial arts. This shows that Western audiences expect Asian women to excel in martial arts, which can lead to exoticization in (and of) these films.

Chun Li character in the movie indeed possesses the quality of being called strong, both in the physical and mental sense. She has been "standing up even when standing is not easy," following what her father taught her as a child. Pursuing the dragon lady description, Chun Li is more than capable of self-defense and martial arts, in the form of *Wushu*, before his training with Gen. Furfari (2010) has commented on Chun Li's ability: "Chun Li owns the distinction of being the first female fighting game character and is known for her balance of strength and speed. She was one of few female characters…not cast in a role of damsel in distress, but instead showed that female characters could fight just as same as their male counterparts".

Figure 1. *Chun Li training martial arts with her father (00:03:04 - 00:04:12)*

Figure 2. *Chun Li fighting thugs (00:29:00 - 00:30:19)*

Under the guidance of her father, she has taken martial arts training since childhood (figure 1) and is stronger than most women her age. She is more than capable of fighting and defeating a group of men even unarmed. It is proven throughout her journey in Bangkok. Chun Li has defeated four thugs who are trying to rob an old man (figure 2). Not only that, but she also manages to deal with Bison and his Shadaloo organization. After training with Gen, she becomes far stronger than before and can even take on a group of fully armed men easily (figure 3 and 4).

Figure 3. *Chun Li fighting armed men (00:48:28 - 00:48:57)*

Figure 4. *Chun Li defeating armed men (00:48:57 - 00:49:15)*

Additionally, she is also capable of materializing and using her inner energy as seen in figure 5 and 6. The *kikoken* is Chun Li's trademark

move from the video game and is usually used to defeat her enemy. In the movie, Chun Li uses it (figure 6) during her battle against Bison where she eventually defeats him. There is no doubt that Chun Li is a strong character. She has said it herself that "I am the strongest woman in the world!". The battle against Vega has provided another proof. Trained in assassination by Bishon, Vega is defeated by Chun Li in their fight.

Figure 5. *Chun Li's training to channel her inner energy (01:12:23 - 01:12:49)*

Figure 6. *Chun Li's kikoken   (01:28:09   - 01:28:23)*

The kick-ass image that the dragon lady possesses does not stop there. Tung (2004) states, "the other popular understanding of Asian women's physical prowess and power is in relation to sexuality." It is obvious how Vega absolutely enjoys fighting and watching Chun Li's fight from the way he caresses the brown strand that is left behind in his weapon (figure 7). He even licks his lips as he eyes her up and down. Even though his perfect killing record cannot stand against Chun Li, Vega has shown pleasure in dealing with a female who cannot easily be killed. At first he is surprised that a woman can hurt him (figure 8), but he later seems to enjoy fighting her as a female fighter is unusual.

Figure 7. *Vega picking Chun-Li's hair from his weapon (01:00:46-01:00:55)*

Figure 8. *Vega's surprised face (01:01:02 - 01:01:26)*

This shows that although Chun Li might be strong, her physical strength and power simply becomes another trait that attracts male sexually. Her portrayal therefore does not fully reflect a positive image as it confirms the stereotypical representations of Asian women as a strong and desirable kung fu master. Chun Li is actually one of the many Asian female characters who are fiercely good at martial arts. Other examples are the characters played by Michelle Yeoh in *Police Story III: Supercop* (1992), *The Heroic Trio* (1993), *Wing Chun* (1994), and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000). It implies that, although the female Asian characters are presented as a strong one in terms of their physical and fighting prowess, their representation ends up playing to the dragon lady stereotype rather than empowering them.

Femme fatale

The second characteristic of the dragon lady is seductive. In this case, it entails not only the act of seduction itself but also the costume. Talking about the costume, Chun Li's choice of wardrobe has drastically changed before and during her time in Bangkok. Before her journey to Bangkok, Chun Li was a renowned lady pianist who lived in a big mansion with her mother and servant. Chun Li resolved to forge her own path after her mother passed away due to cancer where she met Gen due to an old Chinese scroll she found.

As a pianist, Chun Li is the picture perfect of a dignified Lady in her formal dress and skirt. She mostly wears traditional Chinese clothes that leave little to no room uncovered. However, as she leaves for Bangkok, the dignified lady suddenly makes a quick U-turn into something that does not speak of a lady coming from a well-respected family. If anything, Chun Li's recent outfits, which leave little to one's imagination, very much resemble that of an ass-kicking dominatrix girl.

Figure 9**.** *Chun Li's framing position, smirking (01:01:26 -01:01:29)*

Figure 10. *Chun Li's framing position, looking down at her opponent (01:01:29 - 01:01:32)*

She is often staged so that she is looking down on the bad guys (figure 9 and 10). Her stance is usually rigid, her legs apart, her arms resolutely balled on her sides, readying to attack at short notice (figure 11). One eyebrow is typically raised, and her expression is angry, though her smirk suggests she is enjoying her superiority. In addition, Chun Li often is shown to wear a trademark tank top combined with pants, hiking boots, and fingerless gloves (figure 11) and also tights black combat suit (figure 12), which are commonly found in the wardrobe of a dominatrix (Brown, 2004).

Her sexuality is emphasized by portraying her as a kicking-ass dominatrix. Because of the manner in which she is described, and the danger of violence, pain, and pleasure she represents, it is difficult to address the sexual image linked to her outside of the context of domination. The original Chun Li's fighting garb is designed ridiculously short for easier movement during battle and seducing the enemy. On the other hand, it seems that the attire of Chun Li in *Street Fighter: The Legend of Chun Li* is also intended for the same purpose and much more.

Figure 11. *Chun Li's combat clothes in the movie 1 (00:29:05 - 00:30:29)*

Figure 12. *Chun Li's combat clothes in the movie 2 (01:16:27- 01:29:49)*

Chin (2011) believes that one of the stereotypes of Asian women is embedded in the representation of "the scary but seductive dragon ladies of China…" This depiction is taken straight from the book into this movie during the scene in which Chun Li is demanding information from an officer in the port. Actually, all of Chun Li's interrogations can be an example of this seductive trait; nevertheless, this particular scene will be a good example since it successfully captures the dazed expression of the officer who, although he is scared of Chun Li, cannot help but be fascinated by her. The officer at first warns Chun Li that the room is a restricted area, but the former pianist only ignores him and slowly waltzes in, capturing his attention as she does so. The male gaze undoubtedly begins gradually moving to her body, taking pleasure in what he sees up and down (figure 13).

The brown-haired female seemingly has expected it as she has purposely donned in a pretty revealing outfit. She moves casually to sit on the table and crosses her legs, directly looking down at the man as she leans closer to speak: "I thought you might make an exception." Her body language and tone have taken into a seductive edge that invites the man to get closer. He does get closer, but the man cannot do anything except put his hand on Chun Li's shoulder before he gets smashed into his table with his arms pinned behind him (figure 14).

Figure 13. *The officer fascinated by Chun Li (01:01:50 - 01:02:09)*

Figure 14. *Chun Li pinning the officer (01:02:09 - 01:02:28)*

After getting the information she wants, she warns the man to "never put a hand on a lady," Chun Li disappears, leaving the man to massage his hurting shoulder and look longingly at the door. Both her manner (hands in pocket, looks down into the other) and her appearance (clothes) signify her dominatrix image, which is more likely the embodiment of "the scary but seductive dragon ladies of China" description. The dragon lady might be scary, yet she is still desirable by males, especially ones who enjoy the dominatrix type.

Contrasting Chun Li: Movie vs video game
This section draws a comparison between Chun Li's character in the movie and video game. It would compare three aspects: physical appearance, costume, and personality traits. Then, after drawing comparison on those three aspects, both would be compared regarding their relation to the dragon lady and lotus blossom baby stereotypes.

Chun Li was first introduced in the video game *Street Fighter II: The World Warrior,* which was released in 1992. She then became the first playable female character and a regular who appears in almost all the *Street Fighter* series. As indicated by the ending of the movie, *Street Fighter: The Legend of Chun Li*'s timeline is set before *Street Fighter II: The World Warrior*. In *Street Fighter II*, Chun Li is said to be in her early 20s. If the movie is to take place before that, then she is supposed to be younger (late teen or early 20s). However, the Chun Li in the movie looks older (figure 15 and 17) than her game self (figure 16 and 18) in terms of appearance.

Figure 15. *Chun Li in the movie (01:08:41 - 01:11:00)*

Figure 16. *Chun Li's profile in the game*

Physically speaking, both characters look quite sexy especially since their clothes accentuate their figure—more so for Chun Li in the game. Chun Li's original character in the game is illustrated as wearing a blue *qipao* with golden accents (Figure 16 and 18), a Chinese dress from Manchuria (Ma and Zou, 2022; Grela-Chen, 2020; Law and Qin, 2023) that was very popular among girls during the early twentieth century. Her outfit is modified to allow a wider range of movement than a normal *qipao*. It usually goes down past her knees with two identical slits that go up to her upper thighs; hence, many players gush over her muscular thighs. She styles her hair into two buns or ox horns (figure 18) as it is called, a typical style in which Chinese children and also the girls in Chinese paintings are frequently described dress their hair (Wong and Thiagarajan, 2021; Liu, 2021).

Figure 17. *Chun Li's costume in the movie (01:16:27- 01:29:49)*

Figure 18. *Chun Li's costume in the game*

Chun Li in the movie, as discussed in the previous section, usually wears a fighting garb consisting of a combination of tank top, pants, hiking boots, and fingerless gloves (figure 11 and 15). Near the final battle, she is shown to wear a black tight combat bodysuit (figure 12 and 17). Regarding her hairstyle, she mostly keeps her hair in a low ponytail and only styled it once into twin buns during the movie. Both versions of hairstyles and outfits worn by Chun Li in the game and movie are intended to make her able to move easily during battle and seduce her enemy. Therefore, in relation to their physical appearance and costume in both media, Chun Li's character does possess the characteristic of being seductive, which is a trait of the dragon lady stereotype.

Figure 19. *Chun Li in the game ending 1*

Figure 20. *Chun Li in the game ending 2*

Next, comparing the original Chun Li to its American counterpart is like comparing a girl to a woman. Personality-wise, the original Chun Li takes on a more innocent and childish side; it can be seen from how she seeks approval from Ryu, a fellow Street Fighter, over her fighting ability. She sees Ryu as someone she can look up to and not a boyfriend material. Furthermore, compared to her movie counterpart's sensual and dangerous vibes,

original Chun Li is presented as a kind, enthusiastic, and caring character. In the game, whenever players win battles using Chun Li, she would be shown to cheer while jumping in joy (figure 21). Then, in the ending of *Street Fighter II*, she is shown to have visited her father's grave after she has successfully defeated Bison (figure 19). She is also illustrated to remove her fighting gears and don normal clothes, while saying "AND I CAN GET BACK TO BEING A YOUNG SINGLE GIRL" (figure 20). It is apparent that Chun Li does not actually enjoy fighting, but she has to do that in order to find out the truth behind her father's death and avenge him. She is strong in her own right, yet she uses that strength not only for fighting (like her movie counterpart does) but also for helping others (figure 22).

Figure 21. *Chun Li in the game*

Figure 22. *Chun Li in the game 2*

Movie Chun Li's most dominant characters are her strength and aggressiveness. As discussed in the previous section, the movie follows Chun Li in her journey to discover the truth behind her father's disappearance and eventually to avenge him. As a woman on a mission, she is really focused on her goal and would do almost anything to get her revenge on Bison and his underlings. Her character seems to be rather flat and does not really change throughout the story. If anything, the highlight of her character is focused on her strength—the martial arts skills that Asian characters are expected to have—her cunning personality, to resort to deception and seduction to accomplish her mission (as in the scene with Cantana and the port officer). There is not much to her personality. Her character remains unchanging, somewhat one-dimensional, emphasizing on her dragon lady quality.

Regarding gender roles, Said (1995) mentions

that it can be considered as "western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" and it will exist as long as Asian women remain sexual objects. This view, in fact, has existed for a long time, where "white American men viewed and treated local women in dehumanizing, reductive ways that sexualize their racial and cultural identities" during Asian occupation (Matsumoto, 2020).

After what is said and done, the Asian Dragon Lady, who is portrayed as powerful and sexual, has further captivated and intrigued the male audience with her mysterious and enigmatic image. Chun Li is the epitome of that. However, while the movie Chun Li embodies dragon lady characteristics, her game self appears to have a more balanced representation. In the game, Chun Li is strong like her movie counterpart; yet she is not depicted as aggressive or seductive. If anything, she seems more innocent and kind.

In conclusion, Chun Li in the movie is portrayed to be a perfect epitome of dragon lady, emphasizing her physical allure, bold attire, as well as strong, aggressive, cunning personality. On the other hand, in the game, her character exhibits more complexity. While she remains physically appealing with her sexy figure and adheres to Asian stereotypes with her *qipao* dress and ox horns hairstyle, the games showcase Chun Li as a multifaceted character. She is strong, possibly even stronger than her movie counterpart, as she attains more extensive arrays of fighting skills and techniques such as *kikoken*, spinning bird kick, and hundred lightning kicks which are not really shown in the movie. However, even as the strongest woman in the world, she retains her kindness, innocence, respectfulness and care for others. Although both versions have vowed to take revenge on Bison for killing their father, in the game, Chun Li doesn't single-mindedly focus on that goal. She still interacts with other characters, developing bonds and intending to teach martial art skills to elderly and children.

Contrary to the game version, which offer the character Chun Li a richer portrayal, due to the Western influence, the character in the movie is being molded into the stereotypical Dragon Lady portrayal. These differences show the impact of cultural perspectives on character representation in media. Audiences who only watch the movie may perceive Chun Li (or even Asian women in general) to be a figure who is alluring and fiercely skilled at martial arts yet cunning. They would most likely have a superficial understanding of what Asian women would look alike and act in real life. On the other hand, those who play the game (and probably also watch the movie) would see Chun Li as a female Asian character who is strong, attractive, and kind. The Western portrayal of Chun Li in the movie reflects and maintains the existing stereotypes, particularly of the Asian dragon lady, whereas the Eastern portrayal as seen in the game version of Chun Li presents a more diverse and realistic portrayal that does not really adhere to the stereotypes. Hwang & Parreñas (2021) view that dragon lady as a form of hypersexualization of Asian women; it implies immorality and may threaten social order as it indicates Asian women's disposability. Therefore, such stereotypical portrayal should be avoided.

CONCLUSION

As one of the recent Hollywood movies in the series, *Street Fighter: The Legend of Chun Li* proves that the stereotyping of Asian women in the Western media is still very much intact. The representation of the Chun dragon lady Li does seem to satisfy the "lady in the dining room and a whore in the bedroom" fantasy of the male audience with her sexy, ass-kicking and seductive dominatrix play. She is quite different from her game counterpart who possesses an unique combination of being strong and seductive yet remains kind and bright. The portrayal of Chun Li in the movie is more focused on displaying her mysterious and dangerous allure rather than her human side. This causes her to become a perfect epitome of a dragon lady.

In summary, movie Chun Li is shaped by Western influences and thus embodies the stereotypical portrayal of Western dragon lady; whereas the game version originates from an Asian perspective and presents a more balanced character that belongs neither to lotus blossom baby or dragon lady category. Game Chun Li may retain physical allure, appearance, and strength that may adhere to Western stereotypes of Asian characters, yet her character exhibits a broader range of qualities like kindness, innocence, and independence. It is a big contrast to her movie self whose traits mostly revolve around dragon lady's strength and seductiveness.

Stereotypes are a product of prevailing myths broadcasted by various media, films, and television. The stereotyping of Asian women often inclines towards the extreme of the docile, subservient sexual object of the lotus blossom baby or the aggressive, powerful dominatrix of the 'dragon lady.' Asian female roles have at least received more exposure despite the insufficient

exposure in general. Asian actors and actresses may have managed to get into film and television roles because their popularity and survival in Hollywood depends on the constructed and limited stereotypes plaguing the Western media. Asian male roles are more confined due to the lack of sexuality, while the female ones are fully charged with it. Will there be a time for Asians to be cast without the heavy (sexual) stereotypes in the future?

Although studies on gender representation in media have been very popular, discussions on racial gender representation, especially ones comparing the representation in Western and Eastern media are still limited. Future research on this topic should focus on exploring and challenging stereotypes of Asian or Asian American characters in Western media, with particular attention on presenting diverse as well as realistic portrayals. It may include examining the effect of these stereotypes on individuals and society. Asian women, in particular, may be affected in how they see themselves, how others (audiences) perceive them, and how they get treated in real life due the aforementioned stereotypes. Therefore, offering potential solutions to address and change these harmful stereotypes in the media as well as promoting more realistic and diverse portrayals of Asia and Asian American characters can be another future research topic. In addition to examining the portrayals in the media itself, the role of media in maintaining or changing the stereotypes should also be analyzed. This study provides insight into the current portrayal of Asian female character in both Western and Eastern media; it shows the importance of presenting an accurate and diverse representation in the media as well as its potential implications for combating discrimination and promoting diversity.

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