

A Study on the Metaphors of Chinatown in *The Concubine's Children*

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Abstract: *The literary background of Denise Chong's novel The Concubine's Children mainly sets in Chinatowns in Canada, where Chinese immigrants struggled for a living, strived for their dreams, and preserved their "portable root", in second half of the nineteenth century. By narrating the real family stories and representing living conditions of her former generations in Chinatown, Denise Chong expressed her admiration and pride to them, and even stood in awe of them. Chinatown in Canada, once was the enclave for the early Chinese-Canadians who were isolated from the social mainstream, political and cultural life. It is not only a witness of the history of Chinese-Canadians and a spiritual home, but also a muse who gives inspiration to the creation of Canadian-Chinese literature. By analyzing the metaphorical figures of Chinatown--Utopia, transplanted tree, and invisible dome, the essay probes into the implications and significance of Chinatown, its multifaceted images being unveiled. Meanwhile, courage, tolerance and persistence in Chinese immigrants are revealed.*

Keywords: *Metaphor, The Concubine's Children, Chinatown, Denise Chong*

1. Introduction

The third-generation Chinese-Canadian writer, Denise Chong (1953-) has drawn increasing attention since the publication of her first non-fiction novel *The Concubine's Children: The Story of a Family Living on Two Sides of the Goble* (1994), which won various awards including the Governor General's Literary Nomination Award, Vancouver Book Award etc. After that, by virtue of the following works, such as *The Penguin Anthology of Stories by Canadian Women* (1997), *The Girl in the Picture* (1999), and *Lives of the Family: Stories of Fate and Circumstance* (2013), she established her prestige for her emphasis on the voices of women, as well as her particular brand of nationalism. All of Chong's books "evoke such 'everyday happenings and relationships' amidst the extraordinary circumstances of war, communism, immigration, and racism". [6] *The Concubine's Children* is unparalleled by others by its depiction of the history of Chinese immigrants in Canada and the manifold roles of Chinatown. Amidst the extraordinary circumstances of war, communism, immigration and racism, this family saga narrates the tale of three generations in Chinatown. *The Concubine's Children* tells the story of her grandparents—Chan Sam and May-ying (she is the concubine of Chan Sam) —who left their homeland in search of wealth in Vancouver's early Chinatown. Chan Sam worked as coolie, May-ying teahouse waitress. They both sacrificed and broke their backs for their family, persistently pursuing a whole family and providing a better life for their descendants. Eventually, May-ying slid into a life of alcohol and became a single mother whose strict yet negligent ways were used to raise Denise's mother, Hing, in Canada. While confronted poverty, racism, and the terrible family, Hing strived to improve herself and became self-dependent.

Denise Chong aims to retrieve her family story, as well as the story of Chinese community in Chinatown. "Chong's approach to recovering Chinese Canadian experience has been widely praised by nationalist criticism". [7]. Through her narrations based on Chinatown, Denise Chong has explored the roots of Chinese culture, completed her spiritual return and reconstructed the history of the Chinese Canadians. "In reality, the urgency is more pressing because Chong observes that the historical evidence about her grandparent's generation is disappearing fast from the communities in both Canada and China". [3] Chinatown contains a part of collective history of the sojourner generation of earlier Chinese immigrants. And Canada is one of the countries which has the earliest and the biggest number of Chinese immigrants. The first Chinatown in Canada was built in the west coast, Victoria in Canada, in 1858. Successively, Chinatowns sprouted in Vancouver, Toronto, etc. [11]. Chinatown not only participated in the construction of Chinese-Canadian history, but also cultivated Canadian literature.

The study of this essay, by examining the various metaphors of Chinatown and the lives of Chinese

immigrants in Chinatown, devotes to interpreting what Chinatown means to Chinese sojourners in Canada. Through discussing the formation and disillusionment of Gold Mountain dreams, the hope and suffering of being outsiders, and the mustered-up courage and final breakthroughs, a comprehensive portrait of Chinese immigrants' lives is illustrated, their spiritual world and personal excellent qualities demonstrated.

2. Utopia: an imaginary habitat where Gold Mountain dreams were buried in

2.1. The Utopia Depicted in Immigrant Authors' works

Gold Mountain has appeared prevalently in many works, such as Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men* (1980), SKY Lee's *Disappearing Moon Café* (1990), Way Choy's *Jade Peony* (1995), Frank Chin's *The Chinaman Pacific and Frisco P. R. Co.* (1989), Lisa See's *On Gold Mountain: The One Hundred Year Odyssey of My Chinese-American Family* (1965), Zhang Ling's *Gold Mountain Blues* (2010) etc. It was common for these Chinese who lived a pathetic life to go for the Gold Rush, and it was not accidental that early Chinese Canadian migration was then a part of a "mass exodus of dispossessed communities" [4]. Then Gold Mountain dream and the longing for decent life is so charming and irresistible that they left China resolutely, although their future is unpredictable.

In 19th century, Chinatowns in Canada were the glamorous and alluring places for miserable and poor Chinese who had been under the exploit of the Qing dynasty and the incessant disturbances and turmoil. They are greatly convinced that Canada, as a new continent, was abundant with opportunities and fortunes, if they went there, then they would achieve their Gold Mountain dreams and return home in brocade, being worshipped by their relatives and their children. Their ancestors and parents would be proud of their descendants for what they would have achieved. They regarded Chinatowns in Canada as Utopia where they can enjoy their life and attain pleasure, only if proper effort being taken. Chinese male and female immigrants are ambitious as Napoleon and Genghis Khan. Paradoxically, life in Chinatown pricked their bubbles, and pains and suffering plunged them into desperation. These far-from-home youngsters, with Gold Mountain dreams, got disillusioned and disenchanted. Consequently, Gold Mountain indicates a derogatory and negative associative image, and the term Gold Mountain gets atrocious, not only because it has a close relationship with money, but also insinuates that guests of the Gold Mountain sacrificed gravely for their dreams, at the expense of displacement and alienation in their body, heart and mind. They are like the cursed Sisyphus, condemned by God, ceaselessly rolling a boulder to the top of a mountain, whence the stone would fall back of its own weight, rather than lucky Robinson who survived after the shipwreck and colonized an anonymous island, and return home with pride and glory.

2.2. "Push" and "Pull" of pursuing Gold Mountain Dreams

There were "push" and "pull" that urged these seafarers to sail for Canada to catch Gold Mountain dreams. "It was a combination of factors in the home country and the receiving state, which served as 'pushing' and 'pulling' forces, that the wave of human movement from one country to another" [3]. On the one hand, there Chinese peasants were not able to live a decent life although they commence hammer and tongs with their work. Nonetheless, "in the nineteenth century, one in three peasants died landless. A peasant's entire cash wage for six to eight years might buy one *mau tin*". [6] At the close of the Qing dynasty, the invasion of the foreigners and the erosion of China's sovereignty because of the *Treaty of Nanking* brutally opened the tightly closed of China, and Chinese are exposed to a more complicated and precarious environment. A semi-colonial and semi-feudal society pushed them to the edge of desperation. The tyrannical Qing dynasty, numerous bandits, continual riots and upheavals, heavy taxes and the cruel landlords and incurable corruption are the prominent pushing forces. On the other hand, Gold Mountain dreams seemed accessible and possible. In the eighteenth century, Canton had been the only Chinese port open to foreigners and the only gate leading to the Gold Mountain dream. The delta of the Pearl River in Kwangtung was a privileged port that transformed peasants into seafarers who were regarded as "folk heroes". And the "repeating tales of Chinese men going to Gold Mountain harvesting the money trees and coming home rich men with prestige", [6] like the songs of Siren, coaxed these "innocent sailors" determinedly into going after the fortune in fairy tales. Moreover, the Gold rush made Gold Mountain dreams more fascinating and intoxicating. "In 1848, Gold was struck in Sacramento, California, and the race was on across the Pacific to Gold Mountain." A decade later, gold was found in Fraser Valley in 1858. [11] In 1962, the second dash for Gold led more Chinese from the south of China to British Columbia's Fraser River and Baskerville. In addition, "salve trade had been abolished as British

Columbia was under development. Thus the shortage of labor force made colonists resorted to Asian labor market”. [12] “The ‘opening’ of China by Britain following its victory in the first Opium War,” the demise of the Atlantic slave trade, and the need for labor in the far-flung colonies of the British empire were the main factors that made Chinese aspired for the Gold Mountain dreams. [10]

Chan Sam and May-ying, the two Chinese sojourners, had struggled in Canada for almost half of their life, aiming to achieve their Gold Mountain dreams. However, they both failed, and their dreams crashed. Exhausted, aged and homesick, they could not go back home, which had always been regarded as the most comfortable and pleasing place in the world for them. In the 19th and early 20th century, hundreds of thousands of Chinese came to the United States and Canada, the vast majority of them laborers. In Canada, as coolies, they came to build the Canadian Pacific Railway and later worked in mines, fish canneries, and lumber mills. As contracted workers, they were exploited by the foreman and the white people. Yet they could not vote, they could not testify in court, and they were subjected to daily abuse, humiliations, and even violence.

In *The Concubine’s Children*, May-ying’s double curses—born as a girl and in poverty—had been haunting all her life. It seemed that God always played black humorous jokes with her, and Fortuna made her web of life more complicated and intricate. When she was a young girl, she was sold off because she would be “someone else’s” when she got married. And she was sold again at seventeen, at this time, she really had a say in her marriage ironically, committing suicide or being married off. Auntie persuaded May-ying that “once she came back to China, living in one of the large houses of the wealthy, where the rooftops are all that is visible over the wall around the compound”, [6] and would have a harmonious family and bear a son. That was what May-ying’s Gold Mountain dream all about. So the concubine May-ying was married off and emigrate to Canada in 1924, a year after Canadian government passed its exclusionary law similar to the acts passed in the United States in 1882, 1924 and 1934. However, “May-ying became waitress, hostess, and later sex workers for economic and social reasons”. [15] She got no love, no male child, no fortune. The case is same for Chan Sam. To support his family, Chan Sam had no choice, but to go on the way his father had chosen—raise money and go abroad. Although “the house of Chan Sam’s family gave no indication of his father’s Gold Mountain success”, [6] Chan Sam was still insisting on his determination. He determined to leave his hometown Chang Gar Bin in Kwangtung province. “He worked eleven-hour days, six days a week” and living a stoic life. Meanwhile, he kept himself disciplined, and away from gambling, drinking. Although he worked in mines, fish canneries, and lumber mill, even the top of his middle finger severed by a fling shingle, he still remained optimistic about life abroad and told his brothers that “it is not easy to save money, but making a living here is better than making a living by cultivation in the homeland”. [6] Most of the critics put their focus on May-ying, while Chan Sam called little of their attention. In their eyes, Chan Sam is an exploiter and a selfish and irresponsible husband. But Chan Sam’s struggle, forbearance and sacrifice should be noted. He had been tried his best for a successful, respectable, and integrated family, albeit his dreams appeared unapproachable.

Chan Sam’s generation had suffered a lot because of their Gold Mount dreams, and Chinatowns in Canada are not Utopia for them. They fought against loneliness, worry and homesickness, at last got nothing. May-ying’s lover Chow Guen, in his old age, got a stroke, which “left him incoherent and uncomprehending”. At a nursing room in Prince George, he died lonely. May-ying’s best friend Jang Noong also had a stroke, and died a few months later and was buried a pauper. The worse is that nobody would search for their bones of the deceased brave Gold Mountain dream pursuers, and crate their bones to China. Searching for bones in SKY Lee’s *Disappearing Moon Café* got the soul of the departed back home, but it was terminated because of war. The streets of Chinatown were not paved with gold. The intangible Gold Mountain dreams were woven not only by the Canadian government but also by the enchanted Chinese emigrants themselves. Struggling and worrying were the essence of their life.

3. “Transplanted tree”: a harsh place where struggle and hope coexist

3.1. Protection for Chinese Immigrants

Chinatown, for the early immigrants, was not only a geographic space, but also a cultural field, which provided much convenience to them and allow them to set down their “portable roots”. Therefore, it had been a spiritual homeland that rendered them a shelter physically and spiritually for these sojourners, giving them consolation. In their eyes, Chinatown is more like a transplanted tree from their homeland, which they brought across the Pacific Ocean and planted it in the new land, hoping it would alleviate their homesickness and pain. There Chinese immigrants would have a sense of belonging and recognition,

they had to bear discriminations and unfairness because they are outsiders, strangers and undergoes. They did not cease struggling and holding hope.

In this book, Denise Chong described Chinese people's inclination for Chinatown. They were so fond of Chinatown that they would like to live, work and die there. They duplicated all the Chinese elements and characteristics in Chinatown. They fostered and cultivated the transplanted seedling, with care and caution, finally got a big tree, under which they could rest their bodies and enjoyed the breeze. This book mainly focused on the laborers who were living in Chinatown, or more specifically, a half family. Living in a compact community is safe for Chinese emigrants. Chinatown is a safe house for their spirit and dignity. Chinatown provided the outsiders a working place where they could earn the bread and butter, and support another half family in China. Arriving at Chinatown in Canada, May-ying became a waitress in a restaurant, because of her diminutive size and beauty and acquire the real art of the tea house waitress—entertain with witty conversation. It was her salary that construct the house in Kwangtung. Chan Sam tried his best to run his shop in order to make a better life for his family. Chan Sam is thrift husband, and always saying to May-ying: "What I am doing is the so-called 'making a Mountain by accumulating the sand.'" They both remitted money to China to keep the household, and were looking for a united family. Nan, Ping and Hing were all born in the Chinatown. The Chinese sank like stones to the bottom of the labor pool because of the 1930's depression, the couple just moved from Vancouver's Chinatown to Nanaimo's Chinatown.

3.2. *Struggles as Being as "Others"*

Chinese immigrants were regarded as "others" in Canada, and they suffered from the racism and intended marginalization. And their voice had been silenced, but they were so firm and tenacious that they struggled through all the obstacles and adversities. The image of the "other" is always marked with negative words, such as silent, famine and ignorant and so on, because "other" is being deprived of power and discourse. The marginalized living condition of early Chinese immigrant laborers reflected their "other" identity. Not only were they excluded from the main stream, but also their basic human needs are far from guaranteed, which directly exposed them to the crisis of living.

Racism overshadowed their lives while they were imponent to object and defy the Canadian government's resolution. Because "they could not take out citizenship, they couldn't own land, they couldn't vote". [18] "Two very notorious historical events were Chinese Head Tax (1885-1923) and the Chinese Exclusion Act (1923-1947)". [14] "Chinese were the only racial group that had to pay increasing head taxes upon landing in Canada". [3] "On June 30, 1923 Bill 45, known as the Chinese Exclusion Act, was passed, allowing only diplomats, children born in Canada, students, and merchants to enter Canada. The bill virtually crushed the dreams of Chinese laborers to have their families reunited in Canada". [3] Chinese previous contributions were completely ignored by these bills. "The rapid development of Canada in twentieth century was not caused by nothing. One of the crucial elements in its surging is the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railroad (1881-1885) that crossed the whole Canada, which is the genesis of all". [8] "In the building of Canadian Pacific Railway, Chinese workers were dispatched to do the toughest work. Because of hungry and bad boarding and medical condition, most workers died of laborious job. 30 years were spent on searching for the skeletons of the sacrificed Chinese laborers on constructing the railway and sending these bones back to China to be buried since 1890". [8] Wang Guichang, the protagonist in Sky Lee's (1952-) *Disappearing Moon Café* is one of the representatives who conducted the work of "collecting bones".

Being marginalized is another hurt for Chinese immigrants in Chinatown. Most of the early Chinese immigrants who were subjected to having no knowledge of English and education, would not like to recall the humiliation and bitterness they had went through, rather to forget. "Not all the immigrants in Canada are treated equally. Chinese immigrants are the most unwelcomed and ill-treated ethnic in a long period in Canadian history". [9] The marginalization silenced the Chinatown; Chinese voice being erased. Denise Chong confessed that in her previous interview that *The Concubine's Children* did not get a good reception in Chinese readers in its early publication, and the essential reason is that it writes about the struggles of Chinese community. Chinese women are the vulnerable groups in the marginalized people, and they suffer more. May-ying, as a concubine of Chan Sam and a Chinese immigrant in Canada, are oppressed by patriarchy and racial prejudice. Being contracted as a waitress at Vancouver's Peking Tea House and a good investment of Chan Sam, May-ying was an epitome of the collective Chinese Canadian women who had a strong spirit and forbearance. Actually, Chinese Canadian women made the untold contributions whether in the development of Chinatowns or to their families in China, but their names have been erased. Denise once said, "Writing *The Concubine's Children* is paying off the debt, which is owe to my grandmother. It is she that turn her blood and tears into money which support the big family

divided in Vancouver and Kwangtung. She should get credit where credit is due”. [18]

Although confronting so much misery and tribulation, Chan Sam and May-ying did not lose their hope. The hope is rooted in Chinatown, the big transplanted tree, because it, to some extent, cared and blessed the people living in it. Chinatown generated entertainment industry and preserved their belief. May-ying, like a tonic, brought fun for these bachelors who are away from home. Mah-jong parlors are secretly set up for a little relaxation. Cha Sam’ clan give him job recommendations, and he could read *Confucian Analects* and the *Book of the Golden Mean*, being a strict follower of Confucius. Most Chinese abroad were lapsed believers, but May-ying regularly sought and took guidance from the gods and goddesses. May-ying honored God or Goddess by worshipping at the makeshift temple in the living room of a dingy house at the edge of Chinatown and “beseeched the temple gods to bestow such good fortune on her. Chinatown instilled Chinese wisdoms and philosophy in them and provided them strength to survive in this adoptive environment. Moreover, Chinatown is a reminder of their national identity and retains their love for their mother country. They are both patriotic, after the breakout of the Anti-Japanese War, Chan Sam’s family went to their clan fund-raising banquets and listen to the news from the other side of the Pacific Ocean. Chinatown initially organized a boycott against commerce with Japan and Japanese-Canadians. People in Chinatown all donated money for their motherland, standing unswervingly and unitedly. The “transplanted tree” shoulders his responsibility to give assistance to her mother. Hope are deep set in their heart.

Chinatown could not resist the “exclusion and segregation from the mainstream society” [1], and could not present a happy life as Chinese Canadians wished, but Chinatown is necessary for them. It is not the promised land, but a “transplanted tree” from their homeland. “Immigrant family that was trying to build a life: they struggled, they dealt with tragedy, and they were victims of history too” (Interview with the author Denise Chong. By Jacalyn Soo). Chinese Head Tax and Chinese Exclusion Act did not crush Chinese immigrants; racial prejudice and ethnic oppression did not defeat them. In spite of being ignored and mistreated as outsiders, they are full of hope. They learned from the wits of Confucius and devoutly believed in God, in another way, they believed in themselves.

4. An invisible dome: an area where courage and metamorphosis come into being

4.1. The Caged Bird

In *The Concubine’s Children*, on the one hand, Chinatown did give protect to the early residents; on the other hand, it shackled their mind. In other words, it functioned as a screen, shielding and separating. These early Chinese immigrants, like caged birds, were stranded in the small and limited Chinatown. They could not get out of the soft zone and their familiar land. The reasons could be found in Chen Zhongyi’s statements that “the formation of Chinatown in Canada is the last resort to desperate Chinese who were marginalized in Whites’ society. In the early period of immigration, Chinese immigrants were deemed as “second-class citizens”, filthy, dumb, queer. Therefore, Chinatown has been a harbor of refuge for Chinese, a dome that blocked all the Whiteman culture. However, their blocking and evasion deteriorate the negative image in Whiteman society”. [5] Due to the racism and marginalization, Chinatown was formed passively, but in some way voluntarily. Chinese immigrants are alienated from the mainstream of society, and they constrain themselves in Chinatown. Nevertheless, some of them took courage and assimilated themselves into Canadians when multiculturalism emerged. These brave soldiers peered out of their cocoon of convention and brace themselves up to confront the prejudice and injustice, completing their metamorphosis. Thus, Chinatown are regarded by the first and second generation differently. Chan Sam and May-ying seldom leave Chinatown, while their daughter Hing crave for the world outside Chinatown. Apparently, Hing succeeded in running away from there, breaking through the invisible dome that Chinatown built. There are two forces that fabricated the invisible dome, or two forces that restrains Chinese people from growth--one is from the interior, the other is from the exterior.

The interior force is the old, dilapidated thoughts that imposed on Chinese mind. “According to doctrines in Chinese feudal society, obedience is considered as the fundamental virtue for Chinese women. There are old doctrines such as ‘Three Obedience’, ‘Four virtues’ and ‘Having no talent is a virtue of a woman’ for traditional Chinese women”. [13] May-ying was raised up in China, so these words are engraved in her mind. After a period of residence in Canada, her self-awareness grew, she re-examined her relationship with Chan Sam, and even fell into alcoholism, temporarily and imaginarily fleeing from the strangling doctrines and unbearable dichotomy. Her evasion gave no alleviation to her distress and trials. Being addicted to alcohol, gambling and having affair with other men are just the bad habits of the bachelors in Chinatown, in such extreme ways she fought against the invisible dome around

her. She exiled herself for not being able to talk equally with her husband, and she sold herself off for money that was used to build the house in Kwangtung in order to avoid meeting her husband. She took up her courage to find her true love, Chou Guen (May-ying's lover), and cohabit with him. Perhaps influenced by Chou Guen, May-ying added a masculine touch to her wardrobe and in "American Gentlemen Fashions". "When May-ying was seen dressed in this way in the gambling dens and around Chinatown, it was as though she was making the statement that she was taking her rightful place in a man's world; that a woman who made her own living, who didn't depend on a man for support, should be respected". [6] When Chan Sam request the expense for letting her go, she bravely shouted at him, "I am not for sale. You are such a greedy man. How could you?! He'll never pay you, and I'll do exactly what I want to do". [6] But she did not get deceived with Chan Sam, because she did not want her soul to be worshiped by the family. Living in the invisible dome or the ghetto which is far beyond the mainstream of new thought, and unproperly educated, Chinese women lack interactions with the outside society and did not absorb the idea that man and woman are equal. [2] "The elder members of a family rigidly were looking forward to assure the Chinese family mode and Chinese tradition, and requiring their children to internalize all the Chinese cultural values, wright or wrong". [8] So May-ying forced her daughter Hing to conform to those unfair rules which expose women in a disadvantaged position.

4.2. Hing: The Butterfly out of Cocoon

Different from her mother, Hing completed her metamorphosis, having escaped from the invisible dome. Her name is an example of her transformation. In Chinatown, she was called Hing, out of Chinatown Winnie. The new name gave Hing another identity that she was a new generation of Chinese Canadian. "You're Canadian, not Chinese. Stop trying to feel something". [6] However, Fred Wah (1939-), the winner of Governor General's Award, conveyed his confusion about his identity and the vague understanding about nationality, by employing the two metaphors, the "door" between Chinese society and Canadian society, and the "hyphen" in the word "Chinese-Canadian", in his autobiographical novel *Diamond Grill* (1996). Fred Wah chose to be stuck between two worlds, and shed light on his identity by making use of coined word, "synchronous foreignicity", [17] which means that he remained the "ability to remain an ambivalence without succumbing to the pull of any single culture. [14] Fred Wah, unlike Hing, he straddled between border of the invisible dome, no walking in, nor escaping.

Hing was affected more by the exterior force which was from Canadian society. "The early generation of Chinese Canadian encountered racism, cultural conflict which was cause by the traditional family, the feudal ethics and old ethic code; while the troubles their descendants confronted not only from family, but also from society. They were born in Canada, educated in Canadian school and influence by western culture, and Chinese tradition they kept were disappearing like the waning moon". [8] Coping with the embarrassing family condition, a bad-tempered mother and a young brother, Hing made up her mind to combat the racial prejudice and reveal her great potential. She strove to prove her capability and brilliance through her persistence in studying not the vain popularity in school's social contact. Hing knew exactly the importance of education. But she did not know that her ideal university--University of British Columbia had yet to admit a Chinese student, male or female, into its faculty of medicine. After one of her friend's drop-off from school, she realized what "prejudice" means, and the words "The job is taken" or "We don't hire Chinese." Later, she became a psychiatric nurse at Essondale Mental Hospital, but was assigned to "J" ward, which housed the most violent patients, who often kicked or attacked the nurses. Then she met John Chong who taught her how to be self-dependent and disposed of fetters of her spirit, so she rejected her mother's gratuitous request--taking her little brother Leonard with her when she married. Hing and John moved to Prince George due to call from the public radio, "Go north, young man. Work hard and opportunity is yours". [6] Due to the combine forces both at home and abroad, Canadian ethnic policy has a radical change--in 1971, October, Multiculturalism Policy was released by Canadian government, which states that all ethical groups in Canada share the equal benefits and status, and declared that Canada is a nation where two languages are used and multiple cultures coexist. Canadian developmental and ethical policy presented Hing a better environment. She seized the opportunity, and fit herself into Canadian culture. Hing, like a butterfly, flied out of her cocoon—her Chinatown.

The interior and exterior forces checked the development of Chinese who lived in Chinatown. The wrong traditional doctrines and racial prejudice synchronously suppressed their growth. Some of them fight vigorously with great courage, finally from an "ugly duckling" to a "white swan". To complete this metamorphosis, they sacrificed and toiled, shed tears and blood. Undergone a long period of racism, violence, judicial unfair, ethical conflict and segregation, they were restricted in the Chinatown, the invisible dome, being seen as "others". Denise Chong's *The Concubine's Children* broke the long-dated silence, embarked on the conversation between Chinese Canadian and the mainstream in Canadian

society.

5. Conclusion

Denise Chong's *The Concubine's Children* is a family saga, as well as a document of the development of Chinese immigrants and of the flux of Chinatown. The family Denise described is a miniature of the whole Chinese immigrant society in Chinatown, reflecting the fact that the early Chinese immigrants in Canada had undergone a long period of mistreatment and exploit due to racism and exclusion, in spite of their considerable contribution e.g., constructing the Pacific Railway, however, these strong-willed Chinese survived and built the Chinatown in the harsh living condition. Chinatown witnessed pieces of history of Chinese immigrants in Canada, meanwhile it is the oldest root of all Chinese-Canadian. By interpreting the metaphorical figure of Chinatown, this essay discusses the disillusionment, sacrifice and growth of Chinese immigrants who lived there, being exposed in the foreign detrimental and precarious environment. By exploring various metaphors of Chinatown—Utopia, transplanted tree and invisible dome, diverse roles Chinatown played is observed. In the future, the Canadian Chinatown will have multiple figures in Canadian culture. Chinatown, old or new, is a special scene in Canadian cities, which is more a representation of Canadian mosaic culture.

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