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At Interregnum: Hong Kong
and its English Writing

by

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List of Abbreviations

CBD	Central Business District
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CMI	Schools that use Chinese as their medium of instruction
CPPCC	Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference
CUHK	The Chinese University of Hong Kong
ED	Education Department, Hong Kong (1852-1997)
EDB	Education Bureau, Hong Kong (2007-present)
EMB	Education and Manpower Bureau, Hong Kong (1997-2007)
ELT	English Language Teaching
EMI	Schools that u se English as their medium of instruction
GBP	Great Britain Pound Sterling
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HK	Hong Kong
HKALE	Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination
HKCEE	Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination
HKD	Hong Kong Dollar
HKDSE	Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Examination
HKEA	Hong Kong Examinations Authority (1977-2002)
HKEAA	Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (2002-present)
HKSAR	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
HKU	University of Hong Kong
H or L	High or Low (Language)
HSBC	Hong Kong-Shanghai Banking Corporation

HSR	High Speed Railway System, China
IVS	Individual Visitors Scheme
LegCo	Legislative Council, Hong Kong
LSD	League of Social Democrats, Hong Kong
MA	Master of Arts
MFA	Master of Fine Arts
MOI	Medium of instruction in schools
MP	Members of Parliament (British)
MTR	Mass Transit Railway, Hong Kong
NET	Native English Teacher
NPC	National People's Congress
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
POP	Public Opinion Programme, conducted by HKU
PRC	People's Republic of China
RMB	Renminbi, China's currency
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SBA	School-based Assessment
SCMP	*South China Morning Post*
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London
US	United States
USD	United States Dollar
WE	World Englishes
WReC	Warwick Research Collective

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Abstract

The recent Umbrella Revolution has drawn the world's attention to Hong Kong's neo-colonial situation, where it is sandwiched in a number of interregna, such as between the postcolonial and the neo-colonial, or between ex-coloniser Britain and current coloniser China. This unique postcoloniality of Hong Kong—that it has money but no independence—is seldom addressed in postcolonial (literary) studies. The situation is further complicated when one considers the state of English writing, given the invisibility and neglect it receives worldwide and among the Hong Kong population, who only recognises the pragmatic value of English. Nevertheless, the Umbrella Revolution has also provided a crucial opportunity to reconsider how Hong Kong culture can contemplate the past and articulate the future of the city, a project undertaken in this dissertation. Believing that it is high time Hong Kong English writing emerged as a distinct literary voice, this dissertation asks how English writing should be positioned amidst, and help to move forward, Hong Kong's various interregna. It evaluates the opportunities and the challenges facing the formation of an English writing community in Hong Kong, drawing inspirations from Pascale Casanova's vision of a world literary space that is fraught with struggles and competition, and Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of cultural, symbolic and other forms of capital. The recommendations made in this dissertation to develop English writing further share the common idea that Hong Kong English writing should "turn and look inwards" as much as it should present itself as international and cosmopolitan. The main recommendations are: the need to develop committed and dedicated publication avenues for emerging English-language writers and students from Hong Kong, and the need to develop new analytical paradigms that represent the rich layers of social reality and lived experiences across fault lines of class and geographical segregation in Hong Kong.

Introduction   **At the Interregnum of the Postcolonial, Neo-colonial**

and World Literatures

Interregnum: an interstitial position between two modes of being; a transitory gap between two prominent reigns; an aperture between two spatial worlds. Popularised by the South African writer Nadine Gordimer to denote a transitional period before the end of Apartheid, the term interregnum anticipates progression to a new stage/state of being while remaining fully critical and reflective of the past.

Hong Kong is at a major interregnum now, one that has a multitude of manifestations: between the postcolonial and the neo-colonial, between ex-coloniser Britain and current coloniser China, and between Chinese culture and an Anglo-American inspired globalised culture, all of which will be discussed in the rest of this dissertation. However, I have decided to sandwich Hong Kong in these smaller sorts of interregna, not so much because the recent Umbrella Revolution has exposed to the world Hong Kong's worrying sociopolitical situation after the 1997 handover, but because the unfolding of events has also provided a crucial opportunity to reconsider how Hong Kong culture can contemplate the past and articulate the future of this city. It is this spirit of backward- and forward-looking—a sense of progression, of hope—that makes interregnum a better word choice than phrases that merely describe some oblique hybridity, such as "in flux". The cultural field that interests me in this dissertation is Hong Kong's under-researched English writing, as a locus that not only brings to light the interaction of many of the smaller interregna, but is also in need of its own future direction: Provided that English writing pays equal attention to the internal disjunctures across class and geographical segregation within Hong Kong's seven-million home population as it does to cross-cultural,

cosmopolitan[1] exchanges in the international metropolis, English writing plays a crucial role in responding to Hong Kong's contemporary situation and reshaping its distinct cultural identity, thus helping in its own way to move Hong Kong away from the interregnum.

From Post- to World-

To frame the rest of this dissertation, however, I will open by positioning Hong Kong in a disciplinary interregnum—in the transition between postcolonial studies and world-literature.

Postcolonial studies as a critical field is characterised by autocriticality, with its practitioners constantly interrogating its limits and pitfalls.[2] Although this is by no means an exhaustive list, the main areas of contestation relevant to this dissertation include: insufficient attention to the politics of marginality, superficial celebration of hybridity and globalisation, and slippery embrace of methodological interdisciplinarity.

As a project that has always aimed to introduce "voices and subjectivities from the margins of earlier political and ideological colonialism" to those at the centre (Dirlik 329), some critics consider the notion of the margin as being

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[1] Unless otherwise stated, the term "cosmopolitan" in this dissertation does not refer to the neutral, philosophical idea of a worldly awareness or consciousness that one exists in relation to part of a larger world. It is instead a popular idea that most resembles a form of metropolitan multiculturalism, uncritically celebrating cross-cultural communication and mingling (or hybridity) found in developed, urban cities around the world, without considering its complicit dovetailing with neoliberal capitalism.

[2] The term "autocriticality" is from the introduction to *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*, edited by Ania Loomba et. al. (35, n.1). Such a call, seconded by many other scholars, has much to do with the institutionalisation of a postcolonial discourse in Anglo-American universities addressing the geographically wide-spread phenomenon of European style of territorial imperialism. Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks speaks of a "melancholia of postcolonial studies" that questions the immobility and ineffectiveness of postcolonial studies in its critique of imperialism after its institutionalisation (3-5). E San Juan Jr. declares the need to scrutinise the "scholarly industry" called postcolonial discourse "for the questions about knowledge, power, and value it rehearses" (1). Bruce Robbins, too, deems it necessary to subject the successful institutional rise of postcolonial studies to "the most scathing critique possible" (157).

"inadequately enunciated" (Seshadri-Crooks 4-5). So far, postcolonial studies has been most attentive to the experiences of three "chiral centres": India, Africa and the Caribbean. East Asia is one of those regions that do not fit readily into mainstream postcolonial concerns, one of the main reasons being that European territorial colonisation, which has been the primary focus of postcolonial studies, is not as applicable to East Asia, and not as sufficient in explaining the matrices of colonisation between different East Asian empires and countries (R. Chow, "Between Colonizers" 152; Barlow 364-65). Anshuman Mondal adds that countries such as China and Vietnam were caught up in a capitalist-versus-communist ideological battle during the Cold War era, which is why it has failed to register itself as a central concern in postcolonial studies (140-43). In postcolonial literary studies, such a danger of invisibility fails to challenge the notion of canonicity, and manifests itself in the formation of a literary canon of works produced mainly from former colonies. Gayatri Spivak, for one, warns that postcolonial studies can, at worst, "construct a canon of 'Third World Literature (in translation)'" ("Scattered" 277). For Neil Lazarus, the teaching of this postcolonial literary canon often consists of the same authors (particularly Salman Rushdie), entails the same teaching methods, and draws on the same questions and concepts ("Politics" 423-24). Here, again, East Asian literatures fail to garner much attention, even if they do appear occasionally in university syllabi (Smits and Hockx xi).

Perhaps the biggest fault line in postcolonial studies is the antagonism between Marxist and poststructuralist camps. Thanks to a rising wave of critique from the mid-1990s that attempts to realign postcolonial studies with nationalism, history, material relations, collective resistance and Marxist class theory (Lazarus, "Politics" 423), the reductions, generalisations and misgivings of poststructuralist approaches, which have previously dominated postcolonial studies following the rise

of neoliberalism and the downfall of Marxist criticism (Parry, "What's Left" 348; Lazarus and Varma 310-14), have not gone unnoticed. The eschewal of all forms of totality, universality and fixed meaning, and the embrace of a reconciliatory accommodation between the coloniser and the colonised in "the history of the ambiguities, mimetic plays, [and] hybridities" (During 332), are all features of poststructuralism that typically reduce "the facts of exploitation across the categories of race, gender, and class, to the status of discourse and intertextuality" (San Juan 7). Without a careful class critique (due to the abandonment of Marxism), vocabularies such as hybridity and mimicry have become "descriptive catchall term[s]" that ignore the diverse and conflictual modalities of domination, and dissolve the lived experiences and resistance of the people under exploitation (Shohat 137). In short, poststructuralists risk ensconcing themselves in celebrating their idioms of hybridity or in-betweenness as definitive facts, rather than challenging the inequalities and generalisations inherent in these hybridities. What a Marxist critique can contribute to postcolonial studies is its belatedness in announcing the slippery and hasty leap from resistance and independence struggles to post-independent, postcolonial and hybridised empowerment: Marxism's contribution, writes Benita Parry, lies in its examination of "the state apparatus, economic organisation, social relationships, and cultural forms of different post-independence regimes" ("Institutionalization" 79-80). It reminds us not to obfuscate real-life struggles and interventions made by marginalised groups[3] against global economic and class domination for material providence and political subjectivity (Quayson and Goldberg xii; San Juan 8; Cooper 412; Boehmer 248).

Parry's words further gesture towards a critique of globalisation, which has

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[3] Such marginalised groups are termed by Benita Parry as "the global economy's 'new subalterns,' defined in terms of migrancy and diaspora: refugees, asylum seekers, *sans papiers*, internally displaced persons, economic and illegal migrants" ("What's Left" 344).

generated another heated debate in postcolonial studies. Globalisation is sometimes hailed in a manner strongly reminiscent of the triumphalist celebration of hybridity. "The popular rhetoric of globalisation", muses Ali Behdad, "suggests that the world is becoming a better place to live through an intensification of economic interdependence, technological interconnectedness, and cultural linkage" (76), made possible due to the rendering of national boundaries as obsolete, the pronouncing of the death of empires, and the espousal of mobile, transborder forms of cultures and hybridised identities (Brennan 122-29; Cooppan 81). However, a materialist analysis would be committed to putting globalisation under scrutiny for its uneven and exploitative effects. Far from being hybridised, globalisation "produce[s] a purely immanent global capitalist order that lacks an outside" through 1) regulating economic and cultural exchanges under a single logic of rule (O'Brien and Szeman 608, 623), and 2) encouraging the concentration of power to achieve a homogenised monopoly (Brennan 137).[4] The championing of globalisation, hybridity and mobility tends not only to lose sight of the undeniable presence of an asymmetrical global capitalist order, but also fails to take into account that travel is "price-tagged like any other commodity" (A. Smith 246), hence ignoring that the merits of globalisation is in fact unavailable to the majority of a community (Behdad 76).

Finally, there is a methodological crisis that concerns the interdisciplinary nature of postcolonial studies. The "first initiative" of postcolonial studies emerged from English literary studies (Spivak, "Scattered" 277),[5] and is later joined by "the

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[4] The mechanism of capital reorganisation has been elaborated by the Marxist geographer David Harvey in his concept of "time-space compression" as a mode of expansion of neoliberalism. To achieve the liberation of "individual entrepreneurial freedoms", and to establish "private property rights, free markets, and free trade" as the keys to human well-being, neoliberalism as a political economic practice must shorten the temporal aspect of market contracts and expand its operation to as far a geographical range as possible (i.e. globalisation) (Harvey, *A Brief History* 2-3). This as a rule of thumb leaves no country outside of its operational parameters.

[5] This is a highly controversial and challenged view. Aijaz Ahmad refutes it by saying that the term postcoloniality comes from discussions in political theory in the 70s or much earlier, such as in the

interdisciplinary offerings" from diverse non-literary disciplines such as anthropology, history and political science (Quayson, "Sighs" 361). Although interdisciplinarity enables the comparative study of viewpoints from different disciplinary practices, an "anxiety of interdisciplinarity" exists (Huggan 4), because the term itself lacks clear consensus as to what it means in practice, and is confusing alongside other prefixed derivatives such as "inter-", "trans-", "multi-" and "cross-disciplinary", resulting in a methodological malpractice that ends up decontextualising vocabularies of other disciplines (Huggan 10). Huggan proposes that many of the postcolonial work done so far is rather "interdiscursive" than interdisciplinary (6). The difference between these two terms, he contends, is "an important indication of the continuing disparity between theoretical ambitions and practical achievements in postcolonial cultural work" (6). While he gives no concrete definition of "interdiscursivity", my understanding is that interdiscursivity is more theoretical, a mere "retool[ing]" or borrowing of perspectives from such disciplines as sociology and linguistics without adopting the specific methods (such as fieldwork or archival research) commonly practised in those disciplines. Interdisciplinarity, on the other hand, may refer to the practical application of methodologies characteristic of other academic disciplines, and should be accompanied by a detailed and conscious discussion on the limitations of such an application.

These three autocritical features in postcolonial studies have lent themselves in the emerging critical study of "world literature", now an offshoot that departs more and more from postcolonial or comparative literary studies. A few strands have begun to manifest themselves in the field, with notable key texts written by David

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works of Frantz Fanon and Samir Amin; when the term gets rechristened in cultural or literary theory in the 80s, the antecedent trace from political theory goes unacknowledged by many scholars ("Politics" 276, 280-81). This is a valid point in itself, but to me, Ahmad focuses more on the early usage of the term "postcolonial", meaning anti-colonial resistance, while Spivak's concern is on postcolonial studies as an interdisciplinary academic field.

Damrosch, Franco Moretti, the Warwick Research Collective, and Pascale Casanova. In *What is World Literature?* Damrosch's approach is more like a comparative reading of literary works, their translations and reception reframed in new local, sociocultural contexts, or in effect, what he calls "a new life" of works of world literature (Damrosch 24). Moretti, in a range of essays collected in *Distant Reading*, sees world literature as "literature of the capitalist world-system" under Immanuel Wallerstein's tripartite theory of the core, the semi-periphery and the periphery. Moretti advocates distant reading as a methodological concept, through which unifying trends and phenomena across literary publications under the force of cultural markets are understood via the study of literary form, the use of quantitative methods and the engagement with network theory.[6] His call to discard the method of close reading raises eyebrows, but his willingness to adopt research methods unconventional to literary studies perhaps makes his methodology the closest to the kind of interdisciplinarity that Huggan may have in mind. The Warwick Research Collective (WReC) has long seen the need to move on from postcolonial literature to the notion of world literature as "the literature of the modern capitalist world-system", as Neil Lazarus urges (Gunne 10). WReC agrees with Moretti that world literature registers the capitalist system as being "one, and unequal", and reintroduces Trotsky's theory of combined and uneven development to study peripheral modernisms and their asymmetrical relationships in the capitalist world-system ("Peripheral Modernisms"). World-literature, for WReC, is a hyphenated term denoting the relation between literature, especially literary forms, and the (capitalist) world-system (Graham, Niblett and Deckard 468).

　　　Finally, Casanova, inspired by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's concept

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[6] Examples of Moretti's own empirical work using quantitative data analysis and network theory are, respectively, "Style, Inc: Reflections on 7,000 Titles (British Novels, 1740-1850)" and "Network Theory, Plot Analysis", both subsequently collected in *Distant Reading*.

of the field ("Literature" 80), proposes a spectrum of hierarchical, unequal "world literary space" (*ibid.* 72), in which literary resources are unequally distributed across different but relational positions in this world structure,[7] from global literary centres, which are the oldest national literary spaces accumulating the most literary resources and prestigious heritage, to new literary spaces, invariably the newcomers to the transnational literary competition and most lacking in literary resources (*ibid.* 83). Domination in this asymmetric world literary space can be witnessed in a number of ways, from the circulation of commodified books via publishing companies in literary centres (Graham, Niblett and Deckard 466) and the transnational prestige of literary awards (Casanova, "Literature" 74), to the devising of strategies for peripheral writers to establish themselves and conform "with the prestige-bestowing centre" ("Literature" 89), one of the most prominent examples being the knighthood and Nobel Prize laureation of V. S. Naipaul (*World Republic* 209-12). Casanova's social science approach in her survey of literary fields has been criticised for the lack of close reading of literary works (Prendergast 23; Guttman, Hockx and Paizis xii), but she does provide another useful perspective to study world literature.

Situating Hong Kong

This dissertation on Hong Kong English writing is broadly framed within this ongoing and progressive disciplinary initiative in Anglo-American academia to move beyond postcolonial studies—given its methodological and paradigmatic problems as a critical field—to the study of world literature. I position Hong Kong in this debate with the hope that my discussion will problematise and contribute to both sides of the

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[7] Casanova avoids using Wallerstein's "world-system" theory, arguing that his theory under-articulates the struggle by the periphery as a feature of the system; for her a world literary space is always characterised by the struggles at "the boundaries of the space" and the restitution or rewards gained from these struggles ("Literature" 81, 89).

debate. Despite repeated claims of the death of postcolonial studies,[8] a project on Hong Kong can still be a relevant contribution to the field because Hong Kong's unique postcolonial condition is under-articulated due to the mutual neglect between postcolonial studies and Hong Kong Studies.[9] Contrary to other colonial contexts in Africa, Latin America or South Asia, Hong Kong did not become an independent, recognised country of its own on 30th June 1997, but was instead transferred from the hands of the once-powerful British Empire as a metropolitan and prosperous colony, to the hands of a rising international superpower, China, with a view to maintaining Hong Kong's financial importance and preserving its prosperity and stability. Its postcoloniality is *sui generis*: it has money but no independence, or put differently by Kwok-kan Tam, it has "neither a precolonial past, [nor] a postcolonial future"[10] (K. Tam 165). The difficulty in connecting Hong Kong with other experiences of decolonisation around the world[11] partially explains why most

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[8] The most notable example is the tense change in Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge's 1991 essay "What is Post(-)Colonialism?" to their 2005 essay "What was postcolonialism?" The journal *New Literary History* also ran the section "The State of Postcolonial Studies" across 2012 and 2013, soliciting experts' opinions on the future of the field. Most recently Chantal Zabus has edited *The Future of Postcolonial Studies*, published by Routledge, in 2014.

[9] There has not really been a unified discipline called Hong Kong Studies, although The University of Hong Kong has recently convened a new interdisciplinary undergraduate programme under such name. I use the term to refer to scholarly studies on any aspect of Hong Kong's society, culture, politics or history. By "scholars of Hong Kong studies", I do not have any presumption on the scholars' work location, ethnic or geographical origin, as long as they have a consistent interest in Hong Kong issues.

[10] The word "postcolonial" for Tam, I gather, means post-independence. Hong Kong is thus purely a colonial invention—there was no such place, or region with a clearly defined geographical boundary, called Hong Kong before the First Opium War (1839-41). Even the creation of Hong Kong was not an instant process. The name Hong Kong was initially used in the Convention of Chuenpee (1841) and the Treaty of Nanking (1842) to designate the cession of what is now called the Hong Kong Island. Later what is called Kowloon now was ceded in 1860 after the Convention of Peking (1860) after the Second Opium War. In 1898, the New Territories (north of Kowloon and south of Shenzhen River) was added as part of Hong Kong following a 99-year lease under the Second Convention of Peking.

[11] The small size of Hong Kong is also a factor. Rey Chow suggests nonchalantly that Hong Kong and Macao, "of course, are too small to merit attention" in postcolonial studies ("Between Colonizers" 152). Hong Kong also did not play a significant role in the history of British colonialism until the last twenty years as a Crown colony. Only sparing remarks on Hong Kong can be found in mid-twentieth-century studies: twice in Guy Pint's *The British in Asia* (1947; even China was indexed more often), and once in W. R. Crocker's *Self-government for the Colonies* (1949).

postcolonial projects do not bother to engage with Hong Kong in their discussion except perhaps a few glosses, if not completely silent.[12]

Inasmuch as the fact that postcolonial critics hardly ever notice Hong Kong, scholars working on Hong Kong seldom explicitly engage with postcolonial theories, except when using the word "postcolonial" as a reference to Hong Kong's former colonial condition. Nonetheless, there are a few notable exceptions. Rey Chow's essay "King Kong in Hong Kong", first appeared in *Social Text* in 1998 and later anthologised in Blackwell's *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, criticises Britain's lukewarm effort in promoting democracy in Hong Kong, and worries that post-handover Hong Kong would cease to value democracy in favour of China's economic growth. Wing Sang Law's book, *Collaborative Colonial Power* (2009), is among the few, if not the only, existing book-length study specifically on Hong Kong's postcoloniality. He argues that a co-optative class of Hong Kong elites and compradors collaborated with the colonial government to propel and consolidate the colonial regime in the past, and, following the handover, sell Western capitalism and modernity to reap the profits of the Chinese market in the present. Law has the tendency "to overstate his contribution to postcolonial studies" due to his misunderstanding of postcolonial theory as being concerned only with colonial Manichaeanism that polarises the coloniser as oppressor and the colonised as the absolute oppressed (Hon 258),[13] but I will constantly return to his insightful study in

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[12] Hong Kong is usually mentioned only to mark the end of the British Empire (Young, *Postcolonialism* 301; ni Fhlathuin 27, 30). David Punter declares that "[t]he era of the formal colony is dead" with Britain's handover of Hong Kong, "the last European overseas colony of any size", to China in 1997 (2). Anshuman Mondal's chapter in *Routledge Companion to Post-Colonial Studies* insists that British territories in Asia tend to receive more attention, and expresses his wish to see more research on East Asia informed by postcolonial studies, but never for once mentions Hong Kong, this last British colony.

[13] Even the idea of "collaborative colonialism" is not entirely novel. Frantz Fanon has long warned against the hijack of the nationalist movement by the colonised bourgeoisie in "The Pitfall of National Consciousness". In 1991, a scholar named Wai Kwan Chan penned a book that analyses the formation of the Chinese merchant class in early Hong Kong (see *The Making of Hong Kong Society*).

the following chapters. John Nguyen Erni, in his introduction to a specially curated issue of *Cultural Studies* on Hong Kong's "liminal postcoloniality" (Erni 392), calls for a postcolonial cultural studies in Hong Kong that applies "postcolonial" concepts of Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, Edward Said and others to discussions of Hong Kong's postcolonial nativism, or multi-layered resistance in the local progressive circle, among other things (395-99). Inspired by his focus on social resistance, the first part of my thesis will examine and critique an emerging tide of social movements and identity discourses as resistance in post-handover times. Finally, Ackbar Abbas' monograph, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance*, is not explicitly "postcolonial" in its theoretical grounding, but is published in the important year of 1997 and widely quoted. Abbas' premise is that Hong Kong culture is in "hyphenation" (142)—a term that, due to its conceptual and semantic approximation to the poststructuralist vocabulary of indeterminacies, has been taken by critics to mean "transience […] hybrid, transitional, or homeless" (Lam, "Poetry in Hong Kong"). In fact, what Abbas says is that transience is not some ossified truth about Hong Kong, but merely an illusory feeling about to expire by the 1980s with Tiananmen Square and the approach of 1997, eventually giving way to "a kind of last-minute collective search for a more definite identity" in the 1990s (Abbas 4). In a more nuanced and complex way than is usually understood, he sees hyphenation as the "disjunctures of colonialism and globalism", and "not as a 'third space' that can be located somewhere; not as a neither-nor space that is nowhere; not even as a mixed or in-between space" (*ibid.* 143). He is, in other words, less concerned with the categorical hailing of Hong Kong's cosmopolitanism or multiculturalism, than with the impact that Hong Kong's colonial-turned-global reality has on daily life.

The negligence on Hong Kong is also to be noted in the field of postcolonial literary studies. Benita Parry observes that "works written in the local languages of

Asia and Africa" are often deemed "'uncongenial' to metropolitan taste" and are thus "seldom translated and largely overlooked within the academies […]" (Parry, "Institutionalization" 73). While this already anticipates the unpopularity of Hong Kong literature, the phrase "local languages" has further complications for Hong Kong: Is "Hong Kong literature" only written in Chinese? Is English a "local language", a coloniser's language, or the language of globalisation? How can one be considered a Hong Kong English writer? These questions about Hong Kong's language politics and the nomenclature of Hong Kong literature will be explored in chapters 2, 3 and 4. For now, it is interesting to note that in countering the neglect in the teaching of postcolonial literature on the literary works of many great writers from other parts of the world, Neil Lazarus gives a list of such forgotten writers, two of whom concern Hong Kong: Xi Xi[14] and Timothy Mo (Lazarus, "Politics" 424, 428). Yet, Xi Xi writes in Chinese, and Timothy Mo, although often championed as the finest English writer from Hong Kong, hardly ever lives in Hong Kong anymore.[15] There are other writers in Hong Kong who write about Hong Kong in English, and a main goal of this dissertation is to introduce some of these emerging writers and their works.

Echoing Hong Kong's lack of attention in postcolonial studies, Hong Kong English writing is overwhelmingly absent from scholarly volumes and anthologies in

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[14] Xi Xi (1938-, not to be confused with the Hong Kong writer who writes in English, Xu Xi, mentioned below) was born in China and came to Hong Kong when she was young. She is now regarded as a Hong Kong writer. The version of Lazarus' article, "Politics of Postcolonial Modernism", that I have quoted here is from the collection of essays *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*, edited by Ania Loomba et al. When the article was later reworked into Lazarus' 2011 monograph, *The Postcolonial Unconscious*, Xi Xi's name has been deleted (26).

[15] This is not to dispute the value of Mo's works, but to question the sensitivity of his works to the latest and subtle changes in Hong Kong's postcolonial condition. Stefano Manferlotti even goes so far as to speculate that Mo's "relationships with his land of 'origin' are much less direct and intense" than writers like Salman Rushdie and Kazuo Ishiguro, and draws his evidence from Mo's acknowledgements, in his novels *Monkey King* and *Sour Sweet*, to Western academics' study on Chinese lineage and Hong Kong Triad societies (193). In chapter 4 I will further discuss whether Timothy Mo can be called a Hong Kong writer.

postcolonial literary studies. It is hardly mentioned in *The Empire Writes Back* (by Bill Ashcroft et al.), *Postcolonising the Commonwealth Studies in Literature and Culture* (edited by Rowland Smith), *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literature in English* (by C. L. Innes), *The New English Literatures* (by Bruce King) and *Post-Colonial Literatures: Expanding the Canon* (edited by Deborah L. Madsen). The 1997 handover is mentioned in one sentence in Dennis Walder's *Post-colonial Literatures in English: History, Language, Theory* (1998). The lack of recognition is even temporally ossified (or "Orientalised" in a Saidian sense), and an illustration can be found in John McLeod's introduction to *Beginning Postcolonialism*, where he quotes A. L. McLeod's 1961 observation that

> the genesis of a local literature in the Commonwealth countries has almost always been contemporaneous with the development of a truly nationalist sentiment: the larger British colonies such as Fiji, Hong Kong and Malta, where there are relatively large English-speaking populations, have produced no literature, even in the broadest sense of the term. (A. L. McLeod 8, qtd. in J. McLeod, *Beginning* 15)

John McLeod then goes on to affirm the A. L. McLeod's observation. That Hong Kong has produced no English writing is, of course, untrue. Thanks to Elaine Ho's recent research, we know today that English literary works by an ethnic Chinese in Hong Kong did exist in the 1950s with the bilingual poems of Wong Man (see chapter 3). What is interesting here is that John McLeod has not attempted to critique or update a statement made 40 years ago; nor does he mention Hong Kong or any example of Hong Kong English writing in the rest of the book. Hence when the sentence, "Hong Kong has produced no literature even in the broadest sense of the term", traverses five decades and lands itself in the two editions of *Beginning Postcolonialism*, we see two problems: first, the development of English literature in

colonies like Hong Kong is assumed to be static, unchanging and have little progress; second, such a verdict is made, and left intact, on the basis of whether such literary works, even if they do exist, are famous enough to be known by the two McLeods and other postcolonial critics.

The opinion (or lack thereof) of Anglo-America-based academics on Hong Kong English writing has prompted me to study the formation and self-positioning of this literary space both in Hong Kong and in the global literary space. Conceptually, then, my project bears the closest resemblance to Casanova's view of world literature, as she is most concerned with a holistic evaluation of how literary fields both configure themselves vis-à-vis other literary fields in the hierarchical world literary space, and how they organise themselves internally in the same hierarchical structure ("Literature" 83). Her influence can be particularly discerned in chapter 4, where I discuss the strategic positioning of Hong Kong English writing both internally within Hong Kong literature and externally in a globalised reading community. However, whereas Casanova macroscopically surveys literary fields across the globe, I am more interested in the microscopic formation of the Hong Kong English writing community. For this reason it is imperative to study the historical, social and linguistic backgrounds that have led to that formation.

Like Casanova, I also turn to Bourdieu, but primarily to his book *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1984 [1979]), for the differentiation between economic, cultural and symbolic forms of capital and their unequal distribution in society. Given that different social classes distinguish themselves from one another through aligning with different but sometimes interrelated forms of capital, including economic (e.g. money and property rights), symbolic (reputation,

respectability, social connection etc.) and cultural[16] (such as linguistic repertoire, qualifications, preference for cultural goods), Bourdieu argues that the dominant upper class reinforces class hierarchy through imposing and legitimating hegemonic tastes over the subordinate classes (*Distinction* 12, 114, 291; Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital" 243; Bennett et al. 29; Daloz 35-36). This dominant upper class does not always necessarily mean those who have amassed material or financial wealth, but—as Casanova has shown with regard to global literary culture—can also refer to any being at the centre of a field or the top of a hierarchy. Despite criticism on his work,[17] Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital—the exhibition of which he is most interested in (Daloz 35)—has been widely applied to address the criteria to which different groups form their social spaces. For instance, Gassen Hage connects cultural capital to the process of national formation, where a sense of national belonging depends on one's accumulation of the symbolic capital of the nation, reified by common cultural experiences and knowledge (53). Bourdieu's own research with Jean-Claude Passeron creates the concept of "linguistic capital", or the possession of capacities to understand and use languages in logical or aesthetic ways, to explain hierarchies in the linguistic repertoire across social class (Bourdieu and Passeron 73). They also argue that the equipment of the correct linguistic and cultural capital is implicitly demanded of students in educational systems, and conversely the unequal distribution of capital across social class has brought about unequal access to the education system, eventually sealing off upward mobility (*ibid.* 99). Specifically

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[16] To be precise, cultural capital can be broadly classified into three subtypes: institutionalised, i.e. the prestige and fame of the qualifications conferred or the awarding institution; embodied, i.e. the long-lasting bodily manifestation through one's accent or dress; and objectified, that is, the preference for cultural goods and possessions (Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital" 243; Bennett et al. 29)

[17] Much criticism is on Bourdieu's lack of acknowledgement to pre-existing theories of distinction (Daloz 45-46) and the empirical applicability of his French-inspired accounts of social boundaries and cultural norms to other contexts (Daloz 51-52).

in literature, while Casanova signals briefly to different forms of capital in the global circuit of books ("Literature" 79), it is John Guillory who problematises the formation of literary canon in terms of "the constitution and distribution of cultural capital" (vii). He redefines canon formation as an institutionalised, school-based mechanism that controls how and whether or not individuals across different social classes gain "access to the means of literary production and consumption" through literary syllabi and curricula (ix). This insight into literary education has inspired me to survey the development of English literary education in Hong Kong in chapter 3.

To summarise, Casanova alerts me to the cross-sectional, horizontal positioning of Hong Kong English writing in the world literary space, and Bourdieu provides me with theoretical concepts to delve into the vertical depth or richness in the formation of the field. This can be exemplified by two key statements on Hong Kong English writing. Both are made by the unofficial poet laureate of Hong Kong, Louise Ho. These quotes will constantly reappear in the coming chapters, so it is apt to foreground them here:

1. Hong Kong society has nurtured sensibilities for stocks and shares and property prices rather than sensibilities in abstractions and aesthetics. ("Hong Kong Writing" 173)

2. Those of us writing in the English language in Hong Kong would know the feeling of isolation […] There is insufficient writing in English here for a critical mass to have formed. ("Foreword" 2)

The first statement polarises financial and creative pursuits and is therefore suggestive of a clash of financial capital and cultural capital; the second is a lamentation about the invisibility of Hong Kong English writing, but the contentious absence of the Chinese language and Hong Kong Chinese literature gestures towards a relational positioning of English writing in Hong Kong literature. Future chapters

will seek to both critique her positioning of Hong Kong English writing within Hong Kong, and move forward to discuss the future direction for such writing.

Thesis Glossary, Methodology and Structure

In the final part of this introduction, what is left is to introduce the structure and terminologies of the rest of the dissertation. First, I call Hong Kong's current political interregnum the "neo-colonial" era.[18] I use the term "neo-colonisation" in a way that is different from its original definition in the Third All-African People's Conference in Cairo 1961, where it was invented to define the indirect victimisation and domination faced by emerging countries due to the survival of the colonial system in spite of formal recognition of political independence (Woddis 61). This definition proves less useful for Hong Kong due to its assumption of political independence which Hong Kong lacks. Instead, Hong Kong's neo-colonisation has a literal dimension derived from the prefix "neo"—i.e. having a new coloniser called China while dealing with the aftermath of the previous colonial legacies.[19] Jack Woddis stresses repeatedly that neo-colonialism has the significant goal to "nourish capitalism in the new states, to foster a class with which it can co-operate, to give a fresh injection into the world system of capitalism, and to halt the drift to socialism" (Woddis 60, also 52, 57, 86).[20] As we will see in chapter 1, a coloniser that claims to

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[18] Unlike the debate between the epochal "post-colonial" and the relational "postcolonial", I do not collapse the hyphen in "neo-colonial", because the hyphen signifies the complex interplay between British colonial legacies, Chinese influence and autochthonous Hong Kong identity.

[19] I prefer the term "neo-colonisation" to "recolonisation", which is what Sonny Lo uses in his article "The Mainlandization and Recolonization of Hong Kong". Together with "mainlandisation", "recolonisation" for Lo denotes governmental policies from China or Hong Kong that make Hong Kong reliant and dependent on China politically, economically, socially and legally (179, n.1). However, the prefix "re-" misleads one into thinking that there is a repetition of colonisation by the same coloniser. "Neo-colonisation" for me captures more accurately the competition for influence between both old and new colonisers.

[20] The underhand ideological mission is sometimes missed by postcolonial scholars. Elleke Boehmer, for one, reduces neo-colonialism to a mere "continuing economic control by the West of the once-colonised world, under the guise of political independence" (9). Ella Shohat also, in her brief

be socialist (China) colonises Hong Kong in the same way: pushing for solely capitalist development and ignoring calls for democracy. Neo-colonisation in this sense is Hong Kong's postcolonial condition (postcoloniality), and draws attention to the mechanisms of identity, ideological and material colonisation by the new coloniser, and highlights the identity and material crisis in (especially) post-1997 Hong Kong, due to its being sandwiched in the slit between two world powers.

This dissertation interrogates the position of Hong Kong English writing in the overarching background of neo-colonisation, where identity and material concerns are intricately connected, politicised, and questioned. I call the general corpus of literary works written in the English language and produced by any person who is a resident in Hong Kong (whether permanent or not) "Hong Kong English writing", instead of "Hong Kong English literature", or "Hong Kong Anglophone writing". "Literature" evokes a sense of established canonicity,[21] while "writing" reminds one of "creative writing" and places more focus on the creative activity of producing a piece of literary work. "Writing" therefore fits the idea of the interregnum more: it may develop into a canon, but is currently not one. The decision to use "writing" and not "literature" reflects my belief that Hong Kong needs to encourage more of its local residents to produce more writing in order to form a canon of its own literature in the future (see chapter 4). Where I do use the term "English literature", primarily in chapter 3, it is to denote the school subject called "Literature in English" available in Hong Kong schools and public examinations. The word "Anglophone" carries too much of an implicit reference to Angles,

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discussion of neo-colonialism, focuses on the continuation of first-world geoeconomic, free-trade hegemony via the nationalist elites (131-34).

[21] This canonicity, some would argue, is also a construct imported from the West, making the usage of the term "literature" in other contexts such as East Asia a slippery participation in these Western-inspired discourses (Smits and Hockx xii).

England, and reminds one of "Anglophone countries", or English-speaking countries, to which Hong Kong does not belong. "English" is relatively neutral, and is taken to simply mean the English language. Yet, the combined phrase "Hong Kong English" playfully registers some sociolinguists' call to recognise Hong Kong English as a unique brand of world English used by Hong Kong people. This is not to suggest that Hong Kong English writers do or must write only in the specially inflected form of Hong Kong English, but to evoke the idea that their writings should carry a distinct Hong Kong flavour, which I will substantiate in chapters 5 and 6.

In terms of methodology, this dissertation adopts a mixed array of research perspectives. Instead of rashly aligning with the fashionable term "interdisciplinarity", my methodology is more closely aligned with Graham Huggan's term "interdiscursivity". I will draw on a variety of perspectives (such as history, sociology and linguistics, alongside literary analysis) to articulate a thorough understanding of Hong Kong's social, political, cultural and linguistic situations. In chapter 1, where I provide an account of Hong Kong's post-1997 concerns, a wide variety of document types has to be critically discussed to fill up the belatedness of academic research on the latest happenings in Hong Kong. These documents include traditional newspaper articles and government archival documents, but will also include social media reportage and articles on the blogosphere. Online activism,[22] or so-called digital democracy or social movement media, now plays an important role in mobilising social movements in Hong Kong, and there is a pressing need to study

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[22] Here is a list of the most common platforms. Online news and op-ed aggregators have blossomed exponentially, including *Hong Kong In-Media*, *House News*, *VJ Media*, *Passion Times*, *Post 852*, *Local Press*, *WK News*, *Polymer*, *PenToy, HK Frontline Media*, and *Hong Kong Text*. Notable commentators and bloggers include, in their internet alias, Lady Kylie, Horace Chin, Lewisdada and Kay Lam. A number of websites, blogs and Facebook groups provide English translations of Chinese-language news and op-eds on Hong Kong: "Dictionary of Politically Incorrect Hong Kong Cantonese", "Hong Kong Columns (Translated)", "The Real Hong Kong News", "Hong Kong & China NOT the SAME", and "Hong Wrong". In addition, *Social Record* is a provider of free online streaming of social movements in Hong Kong, and is an alternative to the online streaming provided by the pro-democracy newspaper company, *Apple Daily*.

this emerging form of activism in detail (Garrett, "Online"). Chapters 2 and 3 borrow perspectives from applied linguistics and education to discuss issues of access to English language and literary education in Hong Kong. Chapter 4 is concerned with the broader formation of the English literary community as a cultural phenomenon, and the method is mainly a "metacritical" critique of essays written by critics. This dissertation also seeks to overcome the social science bias in Casanova's methodology discussed earlier, and recognises the value of close reading, unlike Moretti; the last two chapters therefore mostly contain literary analysis, although it will be necessary to conduct some minor "distant reading" exercise in evaluating the oeuvre of one's writer work holistically.

Finally, the thesis is divided into three parts complementary to each other:

Part I: Neo-colonial identity in Hong Kong

The first part of this dissertation reflects on Hong Kong identity through an examination of the social, political, and cultural concerns in Hong Kong today, and explains how these concerns frame the discussion on the formation of a neo-colonial mainstream Hong Kong identity.

Chapter 1 lays the cornerstone of the whole thesis, and demonstrates the formation of a distinctly neo-colonial Hong Kong identity. The first section of this chapter charts how Hong Kong undergoes a twist of fate, from being a northbound coloniser in pre-handover times to becoming a colonised position after 1997. China's various neo-colonial strategies on Hong Kong has tangible impact on the daily lives of Hong Kong citizens, most notably in the struggle for material resources, certain commodities and services, as a result of policies that privilege mainland Chinese citizens over local Hongkongers. The second section records the emergence of civic awareness and the manifestation of such awareness in a new wave of social

movements and political actions since the latter half of the 2000s, which in turn catalyses the formation of a new Hong Kong identity. The final section explains why and how this identity is different from existing theories and earlier accounts on Hong Kong identity—particularly in the ability to inspire mobilisation and activism that respond to crises of daily livelihood and materiality; in the meantime, the section will also pay careful attention to how this new identity encompasses many internal divisions and streams which are sometimes hostile to each other.

Chapter 2 moves from sociopolitical issues—the phenomenal—to language politics—the discursive. It aims to untangle the complex linguistic situation in neo-colonial Hong Kong, in which Cantonese, Mandarin and English compete for different definitions of prestige and privilege. The increasing ties between Hong Kong and China mean that the languages of the new coloniser, namely Mandarin and simplified Chinese characters, gradually gain importance over Cantonese and traditional characters commonly used in Hong Kong. This has inspired resistance from those who seek to defend the right of self-expression in the city's linguistic heritage. On the other side of the neo-colonial spectrum, English, the language of the ex-coloniser and now of global commerce, becomes a sought-after skill by those who believe in the career prospects and access to the economic and social capital offered by the language. While the pragmatism of English is widely recognised across social classes, educational inequality and uneven access to English-speaking opportunities have helped promote a kind of covert prestige of Cantonese, making it the default language of a Hong Kong identity and barring English from being owned or internalised in the identity formation of the people of Hong Kong.

Part II: Sociocultural Critique of Hong Kong English Writing

Chapters 3 and 4 form the second part. This part applies a sociocultural

perspective to critique the development and self-positioning of English writing in Hong Kong.

The first part of Chapter 3 distinguishes between English language education and English literary education in Hong Kong: If English language enjoys high pragmatic importance as noted in chapter 2, literature in English has gone largely unnoticed by the majority of the population, reflected by the small-circle state and canonical syllabi of English literary education in Hong Kong. In contrast, English programmes in universities are becoming keener to encourage creative writing and the study of Asian or even Hong Kong writing in English. Hong Kong lacks a coherent education policy to promote and popularise the study of English literature and creative writing at school level. Recent changes in the syllabi for English language and English literature in public examinations are welcoming, but may not bring much change. In fact, the niche, almost elitist, nature of English literary activity in Hong Kong is best dispelled by the growth of the English writing community, intriguingly after 1997, with the emergence of young writers and publishing opportunities. The current development of the field of Hong Kong English writing will be descriptively sketched in the latter half of the chapter.

Chapter 4 studies how Hong Kong English writing positions itself in response to three major dilemmas discussed at the opening of the chapter: its confusing classification as Southeast Asian writing or East Asian writing, its rivalry with Hong Kong Chinese writing, and its convoluted relationship with the prevailing capitalism of Hong Kong. The key argument for this chapter is that because of these three fault lines, Hong Kong English writing has a tendency to appeal to the symbolic capital of recognition from a globalised, international and cosmopolitan readership. My main method here is a metacritical reading of writers-cum-critics in the English writing community. The reading aims to show how a desire to brand itself as "broadening"

from or going beyond Hong Kong sometimes has detrimental effects on the availability of publishing opportunities for new, emerging Hong Kong English-language writers. I propose that the field find a foothold for itself within Hong Kong society by "looking inwards", showing greater commitment to scrutinising the complexities of the lives of the local people, and creating encouraging and dedicated spaces for young writers.

Part III: New Critical Perspectives on Hong Kong English Writing

The last part contains two chapters exemplifying some new perspectives that are worthwhile to develop and expand in both the Hong Kong English writing field and the critical canon of such works.

Chapter 5 argues that new perspectives or paradigms must be developed to enrich the critical appreciation of Hong Kong English writing, and careful attention to fault lines between class and geographical districts is one such paradigm to be developed. I will critique the works of prominent, established Hong Kong writers, fiction writer Xu Xi and poet Louise Ho. I will also discuss samples of new writing by young writers and creative writing students, published on new platforms and in new outlets. Often with a more locally-flavoured education and upbringing than established writers, and particularly because of their less-refined, but more-impulsive, writing, the works presented by these students are able to document the internal splits in Hong Kong society and the consequent transformations in post-handover Hong Kong identity from more autochthonous viewpoints.

Chapter 6, the last content chapter, returns to Hong Kong's neo-colonialism. In revisiting the arguments I make in chapter 1, I will address the tension between China and Hong Kong through a poetry exchange between a mainland Chinese student and some Hong Kong netizens. Issues explored in previous chapters,

especially the lack of popular recognition of English literature/writing, will reappear

in my analysis in this chapter.

PART I

NEO-COLONIAL IDENTITY IN HONG KONG

Chapter 1   Critiquing Hong Kong Identity: Essentialisation and Resistance

> Hongkonger, *n.*
>> A native or inhabitant of Hong Kong.
>
> Hong Kongese, *n.* and *adj.*
> A. *n.*
>> A native or inhabitant of Hong Kong.
> B. *adj.*
>> Of or relating to Hong Kong or its inhabitants
>> ─ Oxford English Dictionary

In March 2014, the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) enlisted "Hongkonger" and "Hong Kongese" as official entries ("New Words List"), a gesture widely welcomed by many Hong Kong netizens. The timing of this decision—some 140 years after the first appearance of these words in the 1870s, 17 years after Hong Kong's handover to China, and at a time when Hong Kong-China conflict is worsening—leads to the belief that it is an affirmation of a Hong Kong identity distinctive from the simple ethnic marker "Chinese", the result of persistent resistance movements that respond to China's increasing control in recent years on many aspects of daily life in Hong Kong.

This chapter, as the foundation of the dissertation, offers an overview of the deepening social, political and cultural tensions between Hong Kong and China in the neo-colonial era, and how these tensions have gradually pushed some people of Hong Kong towards social movements and political activism. I start by discussing the respective positions Hong Kong and China occupied before and after the handover, foregrounding economic relations in conjunction with other cultural and social aspects. In the latter sections, I shall introduce the emerging social movements and accompanying discourses that rethink narratives about Hong Kong identity. It is

worthwhile to stress that this chapter does not aim to provide an exhaustive account of Hong Kong's post-1997 situation, or a comprehensive analysis of Hong Kong-China relations—both of which are obviously impossible to achieve in just one chapter—but only brief attempts at contextualisation.

From Coloniser to Colonised, Colonised to Coloniser

Reversed Economic Colonisation

This section tracks how Hong Kong's role changes from a coloniser before 1997 to a colonised thereafter. China's national strengthening project in the 1970s, known as the Open Door Policy, is based on a premise informed by nationalist, patriotic discourse entailing a collective "psychological need of the Chinese people to have China recognised as an equal among all nations [… and to] never again be disparaged as the 'sick man of Asia'" (Ogden 225, 234). "Socialism with Chinese characteristics", as China calls its own reform practice, is widely considered by scholars to be a blend of market economy and state capitalism (R. Chow, "King Kong" 314; Ong, *Neoliberalism* 100; Steinfeld, "Capitalist Enabler" 130-31; Gordon and Li, "Taxation" 22).[1] There is little doubt about the staggering effects of the reform, which propelled the country into one of the fastest growing economies with positive growth in exports, imports and gross domestic product (GDP) every year since the 1980s (Chao et al. 83; Fung et al. 97).[2] It is important, however, to

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[1] However, some scholars such as Yi-min Lin are more careful in associating China with outright capitalism. Lin points out that China's economic reform involves a process in which economic practices like "bankruptcy", "managerial accounting", "shareholding" etc. are de-labelled from being "capitalist", so that these practices can be adopted to serve socialism in a regulated manner (Y. Lin 47).

[2] Critics are in fact split on this issue. Some have not failed to notice that the growth rate differs across regions. In general, coastal provinces have a much higher growth rate than inland regions (Chao et al. 83). Other mainland scholars have dismissed the Gini coefficients reported by the National Bureau of Statistics of China, which fluctuated between 0.47 to 0.49 between 2003 and 2012, as a lie ("Hok Dze"). Foreign observers like Anne Stevenson-Yang have raised doubts with China's

remember that China's economic growth involves offering vast lands and labour for manufacture and production (the dominance of "Made in China" labels), opening up its huge market for consumption of consumer goods (e.g. luxury goods), and attracting foreign investments of transnational corporations into China.

Hong Kong—this "show window of capitalism in the East" (Youngson 7)—played an important role in China's opening. China needed both the capital investment and the experience of managerial staff from Hong Kong to develop its own socialist-turned-capitalist economy. Hong Kong's economy then underwent a structural shift from the post-World War II robustness in manufacturing, to tertiary industries such as entrepôt trade, banking, finance and real estate, due mainly to the relocation of factories in mainland China and the inflow of foreign investment from/via Hong Kong (G. C. S. Lin, "An Emerging"; H. Hung, "Uncertainty" 59). It recorded rapid economic growth, thanks to its proximity to China and a liberal, low-taxed market economy (Jacques 242; Lilley and Hart 432, 442; Youngson 155-56; Sung 188). Its contribution to more than half of China's foreign investment in the 1980s (C. K. Lee 118), was accompanied by a process termed by sociologist Ho-fung Hung as "northbound colonialism". The term denotes the process in which Hong Kong occupied a superior, civilising "position of the coloniser both economically and culturally", through exporting its Westernised (read: higher and modern) living standards (e.g. cosmopolitan trends), ethical values (e.g. concepts of order and manner), and business models to mainland China (H. Hung, "Tso Taam"; Wu 146). In the entertainment industry, for instance, Hong Kong television dramas and pop music were promoted in southern China as demonstrating "the superiority of

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reported GDP growth (Stevenson-Yang). For an analysis of income inequality and economic growth in China, see Shi Li's article, "Economic Growth and Income Distribution: An Empirical Analysis of China's Experience".

the Hong Kong culture and lifestyle" (Wu 138). In short, before 1997, Hong Kong was a colonised coloniser—colonised by Britain, but colonising mainland China in both economic and cultural aspects.

Following the handover in 1997, this rhetoric was inverted, putting Hong Kong as the colonised after Hong Kong's economic growth stagnated while China's remained unaffected in regional and global financial crises, such as the Asian financial crisis in 1997-98, the 2003 outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), and the global recession starting from 2008. To remedy plunging performance in tourism and trade after the SARS outbreak, China and Hong Kong established the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and the Individual Visit Scheme (IVS). CEPA aimed to boost trade relations between China and Hong Kong, and IVS brought mainland tourists and made Hong Kong a popular sight-seeing spot overnight. The rising visitor figure was easily used to reassure many people of Hong Kong's prosperity again, but scenes of mainland tourists queuing outside luxury stores have also encouraged the view that Hong Kong has now lost its economic advantage and has to rely on China's booming economy and consumption power.

A grammar inverting the rhetoric of economic reliance has been picked up by people on both sides of the border. A news clip in 2008 shows a mainland tourist, being held up at the Hong Kong International Airport, grumbling to the camera, "if not for the help of the Central Government, you Hong Kong would have perished" (*News at 6:30*). Ronnie Chan, the chairman of one of Hong Kong's major property developers, rejects the idea that China still needs Hong Kong as a significant bridge with the outside world (105). Hong Kong economist Yun-wing Sung maintains that a severely-hit Hong Kong in the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis is relying more on the mainland due the latter's potential for robust economic growth (191). Hong Kong's

economic advance into China is no longer condescension, but self-rescue; China, on the other hand, has taken up the position of the economic coloniser.

There is then a widespread assumption of China's unilateral economic dominance over Hong Kong, and conversely the complete erasure of Hong Kong's continuous significance to China's economic growth today. For instance, Yongnian Zheng, a veteran scholar in East Asian Studies, merely notes mainland's heavy dependence "on eminent business figures in the management of Hong Kong affairs" and the preservation of Hong Kong's capitalist system (44), but leaves out the fact that these Hong Kong businessmen have had a significant role to play in China's humongous economic growth. The elimination of Hong Kong's contribution to China has prevented Hongkongers from realising their importance in China's development, and enabled China and its compradors to cast Hong Kong as the absolute powerless. The sense of crisis created in this discourse is then fed back into the circuit of domination, to further inflate Hong Kong's reliance on China and cement China's sovereignty over Hong Kong.

Hegemony of Patriotism

In no society does economy operate separately from realms of identity, culture, politics, and values. With respect to China and Hong Kong, economic colonisation from whichever direction has underwritten shifting accounts of Hong Kong identity and culture.

One of the most famous accounts on the issue of Hong Kong identity is Rey Chow's theory of in-betweenness in her essay "Between Colonizers". Premised on the observation that Hong Kong "has always been dismissed by the mainland Chinese as too westernised and thus inauthentic", and "is usually viewed with disdain […] as a symbol of decadence, artificiality, and contamination" ("Between

Colonizers" 156), Chow sees Hong Kong as suffering from a unique double victimisation, caught between two dominant colonisers, namely the British colonial culture and the Chinese communist nativist culture, "neither of which takes the welfare of Hong Kong people into account even though both would turn to Hong Kong for financial and other forms of assistance when they needed it" (*ibid.* 158; *Writing Diaspora* 20). However, Chow sees the transformative potential in this in-betweenness, and proposes a tactic of "combat[ting] […] the totalising nativist vision of the Chinese folk" and recognising Hong Kong's "impure origins" and "third space" position ("Between Colonizers" 156-57). This "third space" allows Hong Kong to create its own identity by "articulat[ing] a concept of autonomy and community"—a cultural agency *in situ*—to "help maintain its prosperity" and represent its own culture through what she calls "self-writing" (*ibid.* 158).[3]

This in-between identification requires a prerequisite ability to distinguish between different senses of China and Chinese, while flexibly adopting one or multiple senses at any given time: China the home to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime, China the elusive origin of one's descent or ancestry, or China the home to some distinct cultural affinities (such as Confucian values); Chinese as a political identification, an ethnoracial label, or a cultural identity. Given its colonial history but predominantly (ethnic) Chinese demographics, Hong Kong identity is a way of imagining itself as a member of the Chinese race without being conflated with the rest of the People's Republic of China (PRC). As Rey Chow observes in

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[3] Her theory has its critics, particularly in her fetishising Hong Kong's victimisation into a simplistic proliferation of numerical space (i.e. "third" space). Ho-fung Hung's theory of northbound colonialism is precisely a rebuttal against Chow's failure to address how Hong Kong's businessmen are colonising China's economy in the 1980s ("Tso Taam" 27-29). From another perspective, Critic Ip Yam-chong argues that in forming a "third space" for Hong Kong, Chow ignores what "the others" of this Hong Kong identity are and how they are constituted in this identity formation (Y. Ip 50, qtd. in Law 182).

Writing Diaspora, "Hong Kong predisposes one to a kind of 'border' or 'parasite' practice—an identification with 'Chinese culture' but a distantiation from the Chinese Communist regime" (22). Amy Tsui also confirms from her research on Hongkongers' language use pattern that even the self-identification of "Hong Kong Chinese" entails an "ethnic and cultural affiliation" rather than a national identity (133). In *The Politics of Hong Kong's Reversion to China* (1999), authors Chang and Chuang claim that their Hongkonger informants have expressed "privately […] that 'we love China, but we hate the communists'" and "fear[ed] the communist influence will permeate local life", while "[o]lder residents dread the *return* of the scene of cultural revolution of 1966-76" (70-71, italics mine).[4] It is unclear whether the China referred to in the sentence "we love China, but we hate the communists" is China as an ethnic or cultural ancestor, but at least it is a clear declaration of their divorce from the CCP regime and from the horrors of the Cultural Revolution from which they have survived and fled. A certain anti-CCP sentiment has thus existed in much of Hong Kong's colonial history, from the anti-communist sentiment among the Hong Kong Chinese merchant elites and the British colonial government in the period 1921-34 (L. K. Chan 183), the very strong "communist-fearing sentiment" among the public which led to the failure of the Communist-invoked riot of 1967 (C. P. Lai 178), to the landslide win of pan-democrat candidates (over pro-Beijing camps) in the 1991 Legislative Council (LegCo) elections following the Tiananmen Crackdown in 1989 (Alvin So 233; P. W. Wong 79).

Yet, as Wing Sang Law observes pertinently, this anti-communist sentiment turned peculiarly into a feverish patriotic identification with communist China in the

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[4] These words, however, should be taken with caution, largely because the book is weak in methodology. It is revealed only around half way through the book that interviews were conducted with local Hong Kong residents. Moreover, the book lacks an explanation on its methodology or a profile of the interviewees.

1970s with the rise of a Return Discourse that pursued Hong Kong's return to China (Law 151-55). Across three chapters, Law charts the development of Hong Kong's intellectual history, and demonstrates that Hong Kong has been a key site of diasporic Chinese nationalism, a place of resettlement for displaced and exiled Chinese intellectuals, such as the Shanghai intellectuals who came in the 1930s (111-20) and the neoconfucians who came in the 1960s (138-41). These intellectuals often contemplated their loss of Chinese identity while imagining themselves as the indispensable actors in the national revival of China. However, that they were staying in Hong Kong, a place then ruled by a foreign coloniser, provided pro-CCP scholars with an opportunity to turn the intellectuals' beliefs against them: to attack their insufficient identification of (Communist) Chineseness, to appeal to their rootlessness and wish to contribute towards national revival, and to lure Hong Kong students of the 1970s to return to their Chinese cultural roots (151-58). All these were done with a conflation between a return to a cultural China and a return to a political China.

This strategy is adopted to greater success in post-handover Hong Kong in absorbing the local elites, especially the local entrepreneurs as well as academic scholars, because, as pointed out earlier, the discourse of economic colonisation has been reversed, allowing China to lay claim on both capitalism on the outside (in economy) and authoritative (Maoist) communism on the inside (in political ideology).

On the entrepreneurial front, China has found a way to incorporate Hong Kong businessmen into its discourse of patriotism, such that post-handover, economic colonisation as a discourse is successfully bundled with the discourse on national identity. Whereas in Hung's analysis of northbound colonialism, the red capitalists' self-proclamation of patriotism is but a half-hearted capitalist façade

seeking economic interests, Hong Kong's post-handover economic crises have provided China with a perfect opportunity to absorb the capitalist interests of the Hong Kong businessmen into China's project of modernisation and defence of national sovereignty.[5] A transaction is formed between China and Hong Kong capitalists, in which a continuous supply of raw materials, resources and consumption market for the capitalists is guaranteed only in the presence of patriotic support of the ruling CCP regime. As reward to their loyalty, many Hong Kong business tycoons hold delegate status in the Chinese political structure, such as the National People's Congress (NPC) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), giving them the political endorsement from the Chinese government to spread its definition of national patriotism and safeguard CCP's sovereignty in Hong Kong (K. Poon 79). China has thus earmarked patriotism as the prerequisite for capitalist growth: Fruitful economic growth can only take place when political stability is achieved through securing CCP's incontestable sovereignty in Hong Kong and Macau. It then comes as no surprise that the pan-democrats in Hong Kong are deranged by Beijing, simply because they put guarantees of freedoms and rights ahead of political stability and the legitimacy of one-party rule. Striving for democracy is seen as an unpatriotic obstacle towards economic development and hence detrimental to the strengthening of the nation.

On the academic front, Law gives the example of Siu-kai Lau, a US-trained

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[5] On this point, Nick Knight's insightful chapter describes how China faces the challenge posed by the influx of global capital since the 1980s. Economic globalisation is a double-bladed sword with the potential to "[render] impotent the nation-state's capacity to determine and prosecute a distinctly national economic agenda" (144), and force the Chinese state to surrender certain perimeters of control on economic sovereignty. Facing this risk, China is however determined to defend the completeness of China's territorial sovereignty with its military strength and political unity (148-51). Knight concludes that China is convinced of its success in defending territorial sovereignty when the capitalist interest of the Chinese regime is aligned, i.e. "a congruence of interests" with that of the global investors and transnational capital (160).

public critic and political sociologist who later became the head of the Central Policy Unit in the HKSAR government, to illustrate "a larger trend wherein the local elite tried to shift their political loyalty away from the previous anti-communist or British loyalist stances toward Beijing's coming dominance" (176). Kit Poon, who used to study in the US and was an assistant professor in Hong Kong, renounced her academic career and US citizenship to join the Hong Kong Government in 2008. Ironically, I have just quoted her on the assimilation of business tycoons into the power structures of China, from a monograph that she published as an academic; it turns out that she herself has been absorbed as well.

Also relevant to CCP's reappropriation of the discursive definition of patriotism is the discourse of *tongbao*. In Chinese, *tongbao* means "consanguineous compatriot", "fellow countryman" or "descendants of the same root", and the word is often used by the contemporary Chinese government, in the term *"gang'aotai tongbao"*, to address the people of Hong Kong (*gang)*, Macau (*ao*) and Taiwan (*tai*). Because of the connotation of consanguinity, it is also sometimes used alongside the narrative of "blood is thicker than water" when Hongkongers take part in donation campaigns for victims of natural disasters in the mainland, such as the Eastern China flood of 1991 or the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. Yet as Wing-Sang Law explains through the juxtaposition of *tongbao* with another word, *huaqiao* (overseas, diasporic Chinese), ever since the rise of Chinese nationalism in early Republican China (1920s), Hong Kong has been gradually called by the mainland Chinese as *tongbao* not *huaqiao*, suggesting that they have treated Hong Kong as part of China (119). *Tongbao* then is a peculiar word that exposes at once similarity and difference: the word erects difference since it refers to non-PRC Chinese communities, but it also carries the hidden assumption that these communities are to be returned under a vision of Chinese national unity. The CCP, in fact, "cannot do without demonstrating

to the world that they can successfully incorporate Hong Kong into their nation. […] China has had to both disavow and affirm Hong Kong, as well as its colonialism" (Law 174).

The last coherent strategy adopted by China in remaking Hong Kong is a suspicion of demographic cleansing, carried out by way of urging Hong Kong people to leave, and introducing Chinese immigrants to Hong Kong. *People's Daily*, China's official newspaper, has for example published an article in its overseas edition on 9th October 2013, calling to cultivate "new Hongkongers" in Hong Kong (W. Li). This factually incorrect[6] article urges existing Hongkongers to never discriminate against new immigrants from China, since they are "new Hongkongers" and an important source of the labour force remedying Hong Kong's low fertility rate. The paradox is that if there were no discrimination there would have been no need to "other" the new immigrants through a differentiation of "new" and "old" Hongkongers. Also, the article does not explain whether "new Hongkongers" is a periodising concept (i.e. those who came to Hong Kong after 1997) or a qualifying concept (i.e. distinctive qualities that can only be found in new immigrants but not in the old ones), or both. Similar to the *tongbao* discourse, it is contradictory for China's official newspaper to both distinguish new Hongkongers from the old ones, and to call for the elimination of discrimination—the distinction *is* itself discrimination already.

More blatantly, the third Chief Executive of Hong Kong, C. Y. Leung, has, within the same interview with a local paper, contradictorily urged Hong Kong youngsters to broaden their exposure beyond Hong Kong on the one hand, and

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[6] The article quotes Po-Chung Chow, Professor at the Department of Government and Public Administration at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), on the controversy of new immigrants. Chow soon clarifies that he has never been interviewed by *People's Daily*, and the quote attributed to him could have been a personal opinion of the journalist who interviewed him two years earlier for another Chinese newspaper ("*Jan Man Jat Bou*").

vowed to import more professionals from the mainland to fill the lack of such talents in Hong Kong. It does not take a genius to notice Leung's reluctance to cultivate and invest in the younger generation of Hong Kong. He instead favours the import of non-local talents and professionals, which, as commentators repeatedly observe, mean people from the mainland (W.-w. Wong, "Jan Hau"; M. Lam, "CY Asks"). In fact, Hong Kong's demographic and social terrain has been reconfigured by several schemes promoted by the Hong Kong Government to attract the mainland population. A table of descriptions and statistics of these schemes is provided below (see table 1).

Although not all schemes are targeted only at mainland residents, China's position and Leung's statements indicate a tendency to increase the portion of mainland residents migrating to Hong Kong after the handover. The article in *People's Daily* reveals the CCP's audacity to endorse a different Hong Kong identity in these new immigrants, itself a paradoxically prejudicial practice. Contrasting the open approval from the party and China's perceived economic strength, with the escape from the horrors of China in the 1950s to 80s, it does not seem entirely groundless, then, to be vigilant about the difference between these new, post-1997 immigrants and the earlier immigrants who have eventually stayed in Hong Kong and helped build it into what it is today. The convolution between economic development (in both China and Hong Kong), demographic structure, and identity should be carefully noted. It is also in fear of China's propagandic inception of a new Hong Kong identity in these so-called new Hongkongers that the current Hongkongers, especially the younger generation, have begun to stand up and imagine their own new Hong Kong identity.

Table 1

Descriptions and Statistics of Immigration Schemes in Hong Kong

Scheme title	Description	Statistics
One-Way Permits (OWP)	A system that has been in place since the 1950s, the OWP allows mainland residents, mostly spouses, accompanying children or relatives in a Hong Kong-China intermarriage, to settle in Hong Kong. The number of daily quotas has undergone various changes; since 1995, it has been increased to 150. However, that the Hong Kong Government has no authority in approving OWP applications (that authority resides in China) is transformed into one of the demands in the social activist movement discussed below.	From 1 July 1997 to 31 December 2012: A total of 762,044 mainland residents have relocated to Hong Kong. From January to August 2013: A total of 30,668
General Employment Policy (GEP)	The GEP aims to attract overseas professionals to contribute to Hong Kong's economy with their special skills. The GEP is not specifically targeted to mainland residents.	In 2013, 28,380 professionals from overseas were admitted.
Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals	This is the same scheme as the GEP and uses the same assessment criteria, but is targeted specifically at mainland residents. It was implemented in July 2003.	As at the end of 2013, the scheme has attracted a total of 65,143 mainland professionals.
Capital Investment Entrant Scheme	This scheme, also started in 2003, attracts people with huge potential to invest capital in Hong Kong.	As at the end of 2013, more than 23,000 applications were approved, 90% of which belong to applicants with both Chinese nationality and permanent residence in a

		foreign country.
Quality Migrant Admission Scheme	Implemented in 2006, the scheme attracts highly skilled talents from overseas or the mainland to settle in Hong Kong.	As at the end of 2013, quotas were allocated to 2,724 applicants.
Immigration Arrangements for Non-local Graduates	Launched in 2008, the scheme allows non-local graduates of Hong Kong universities (which, in reality, means students from the mainland) to remain in Hong Kong for 12 months for job hunting.	As at the end of 2013, 30,819 non-local graduates have benefitted from this arrangement.
Note: From the 1997 handover to the end of 2013, a total of 460,000 individuals from China or overseas have worked in Hong Kong under the various schemes discussed here (except the OWP).		

Source: Hong Kong, Information Services Department; "Immigration"; *Hong Kong: The Facts* (Hong Kong: Information Services Department, Sep. 2014; PDF file).

---, ---; *LCQ2: One-way Permit Scheme*; Information Services Department, 20 Mar. 2013; Web; 25 Mar. 2014.

---, ---; *LCQ4: One-way permit scheme*; Information Services Department, 22 Jan. 2014; Web; 11 Dec. 2014.

"Mui Jat 150 Daan Tsing Dzing Ngaak Gei Jung Dzoen [每日 150 單程證額幾用盡; 150 Daily Quota of One-way Permits Almost Used Up]"; *Oriental Daily*; Oriental Daily, 27 Oct. 2014; Web; 12 Dec. 2014.

Wing-wai Wong; "Jan Hau Wun Hyt jy Lau Si [人口換血與樓市; Demographic Reshuffling and Property Market]"; *Hong Kong Economic Times*; Hong Kong Economic Times, 10 Dec. 2014; Web; 10 Dec. 2014.

Two Observations

　　I have so far charted how the reversal of power relations between Hong Kong and China after the handover is shaped by hegemonic discourses on economy and identity. Two observations emerge from this. The first is the fact that China places

unrelenting emphasis on economic issues over everything else—and expects Hong Kong to do so as well. As Yongnian Zheng writes, Beijing's keen collusion with local Hong Kong businessmen indicates its tendency to "consistently [interpret] the Hong Kong issue from an economic angle, in the belief that all problems will come under control as long as the Hong Kong economy recovers" (Zheng 44). Arguably, the problem is that the economic angle is the *only* overarching angle. Thus, the failure to understand how other issues of livelihood are both related to and separated from economy, and how they underlie Hongkongers' perceived lack of patriotism, "frustrates mainland Chinese officials", writes freelance Hong Kong journalist Verna Yu, "who do not understand why numerous trade deals aimed at boosting Hong Kong's economy have failed to win over the hearts of its citizens" (Yu, "Indoctrination").

Unfortunately, this rhetoric is adopted not only by the governments of China and Hong Kong, but also by some Hong Kong scholars, sometimes even unreservedly. Political scientist Wai Ting believes that, given Hong Kong's pivotal role in assisting foreign traders to conquer the Chinese market, Hong Kong needs to maintain its international appeal and attractiveness by "reproduce[ing] the city so that it is always 'different' from the mainland, and to always maintain a competitive edge in comparison to other great coastal cities, including Shanghai" (206-07). In almost the same language, anthropologist Helen Siu asserts that "Hong Kong must dare to be different" from its regional competitors if it wants to "enhance its position as a finance hub", by utilising its "unique historical networks" to help China engage with the global economy (143). Both Ting and Siu note the need for Hong Kong to be different from mainland China, but fail to imagine difference other than in capitalist, economic terms. Difference here means playing the cards right so that Hong Kong finds a right footing in China's grand project of modernisation, which of course only

affirms once again China's economic superiority. But both scholars lack the imagination to conceive "difference" in non-economic ways; their reliance on Hong Kong's economy exposes their uncritical subscription to the rhetoric of globalisation and economic development in order to reproduce difference.

The second observation to be made—one that is only beginning to become clear with the recent Umbrella Revolution—is that in the neo-colonial era, Hong Kong's new coloniser overshadows the former coloniser, to the extent that we seem to have forgotten about the bilateral nature of the Sino-British Joint Declaration on the handling of Hong Kong after 1997—an imperial transaction between two hegemons that exchanges Hong Kong from one hand to another. Thus, while neo-colonisation, in its definition in the African context, concerns the lingering effect of one coloniser, for Hong Kong it refers to an asymmetric influence between two colonisers. In this way, China's totalising claim on Hong Kong blocks out, of all countries, the one whose one-and-a-half-century rule on Hong Kong has developed Hong Kong into what it is today, from which China is benefitting.

Numerous critics have observed Beijing's "hysteric" reaction against any signs of interference in Chinese political matters from foreign countries. The word "hysteric" is Rey Chow's terminology: China's "frequent objections to the West's 'meddling in Chinese internal affairs' – an excuse the PRC has notoriously used to justify all kinds of repressive political practices – […] is the hysteric's logic of a historical memory, a symptomatic resistance to the West, based, as it were, in an inability to forget [its humiliation in the past]" ("King Kong" 311-12). Speaking of the rising tide of activism and social movement in recent years, which will be discussed in the next section, Kit Poon also notes Beijing's assumption that the frequent rallies and demonstrations "spring not from the genuine sentiments of Hong Kong's people", but are "part of a Western conspiracy to destabilize Hong Kong and

to subvert China", or more accurately, to subvert the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the CCP (103-04). In the recent Umbrella Revolution, Beijing's attitude is acutely expressed in its ban of a Foreign Affairs Committee delegation of British MPs to enter Hong Kong and investigate into the implementation of the Sino-British Joint Declaration that guarantees the "one country, two systems" principle. This is an "unprecedented" rejection, as MPs have stressed, for a total of eight times at an urgent parliamentary debate on 2nd December 2014 (United Kingdom, Parliament, House of Commons, *Hansard*, col. 172). The age-old excuse of meddling with China's internal affairs, and the threat of detrimental effects of Anglo-China relations, are employed again (Lee and Ng, "China Warns Britain"; Olsen, "China Breaks Promise"; Phillips et al., "China Warns Britain"), echoing the impact that the strength of China's economic growth has in shaping this asymmetric relation between two colonisers. This time, undoubtedly, there is higher awareness of Britain's difficult position in juggling its economic ties with China with its "treaty obligations" and "moral responsibility" to Hong Kong, in the words of Hong Kong's last governor Chris Patten's recent criticism of Britain's lack of action on post-handover Hong Kong (Patten, "Britain is Honour Bound").

Awareness, however, does not equal concrete action, as a record of Britain's prioritising of Chinese pressures over the interests of the Hong Kong people has shown. It is useful to remember that bilateral negotiations in the drafting process of the Sino-British Joint Declaration in the 1980s did not involve participation from the Hong Kong people at all. Moreover, as recent reports on declassified British government documents have revealed,[7] Britain backed down to Chinese pressure on

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[7] The existence and content of these declassified documents, together with photos of the documents and analysis, are first pointed out in a post by a blogger/researcher called "Mou Loi Jau" (penname) in his/her article on *VJ Media*, one of Hong Kong's latest online news and op-ed aggregator. On 10th October 2014, in the midst of the Umbrella Revolution, Gwynn Guilford, writing for the American business news site *Quartz* (under the Atlantic Media Company), publishes an article which extracts

constitutional advances in Hong Kong. A declassified 1971 archival file at the British National Archives, originally marked as "Secret" (see figure 1), indicates that there were efforts to "associate a more representative cross section of the people of the Colony [of Hong Kong] with the management of their own affairs at the highest level", effectively widening the element of election into the LegCo (Laird, "Appointments"). While it was decided that "an elected element in the Legislative Council" would have "no prospect" (Rushford, "Hong Kong"), what is more interesting is a record of Chinese government's reactions prepared by E. O. Laird of the Hong Kong Department at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. According to

Fig. 1. Cover of the archival file "Constitutional Development of Hong Kong"; Ref. FCO 40/327; Records of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and predecessors; The National Archives, London; TS.

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the key information revealed in the article by "Mou Loi Jau". On 27th October, Andrew Jacobs of *The New York Times* publishes an article based on Guildford's revelation, further publicising the information contained in the declassified documents. I acknowledge the inspiration and attention drawn to these documents given in "Mou Loi Jau's" original article, which I have indeed read; my own discussion on the documents, however, is based entirely on my research to the British National Archives in September 2014.

an interview between a Lieutenant Colonel Cantlie with the then Chinese foreign minister En-lai Zhou, Zhou said that any gesture from the British side on making "Hong Kong a self-governing Dominion like Singapore" would be considered by China "a very unfriendly act". This was to Cantlie's surprise, who believed that self-governance would have facilitated "the eventual reunion of Hong Kong with China", only to be told of China's wish of a maintenance of status-quo (i.e. no change to the colonial status of Hong Kong) (qtd. in Laird, "Position"). In another statement by Chinese government official Shing Chi Liu to Hong Kong trade union officials in 1960, Liu is quoted saying that

> we [the Chinese government] have never recognised Hong Kong, Kowloon and New Territories as British territory. However, the present status of Hong Kong is to our benefit. Through Hong Kong we can trade and contact people of other countries and obtain materials we badly need. For this reason we have hitherto made no demand for the return of Hong Kong. You [the Hong Kong trade union officials] are patriots. On return to Hong Kong you should do what you ought to do. We want to get back Hong Kong in a good state and not in a state of ruin. (qtd. in Laird, "Position")

The evidence presented here nuances the common understanding that Britain as a coloniser has only irresponsibly introduced democratic election at what Rey Chow calls "the eleventh hour" of its colonisation of Hong Kong, referring to the first elections into LegCo in 1985 and the first direct elections in 1991 ("King Kong" 311). In fact, these documents indicate that Britain's earlier plans to introduce greater elements of representative democracy were thwarted by China's blatant denial of democracy for Hong Kong as per En-lai Zhou's words. With this precedence of Britain overpowered by China, it seems unlikely that the Foreign Affairs Committee

will take up a strong stance defying China's intimidation.

In fact, the exposure of this evidence should initiate a revision of the discourse of northbound colonialism and Hong Kong's pre-1997 economic colonisation of China. Comments made by En-lai Zhou and Shing Chi Liu show that neo-colonialism—in the sense of China's economic and tactical control of Hong Kong—and the re-alignment of patriotism with a political China, started way earlier in the 1950s and 60s. Liu's words testify to the CCP's opportunist stance that tolerated British colonial governance as a trustee only in terms of the value of utilisation and exploitation of Hong Kong's economy in facilitating China's self-strengthening project. Hung's theory of northbound colonialism now needs to be carefully re-construed—the huge profits reaped by the Hong Kong red capitalists were "endorsed" by the strong filtration of CCP's influence in the commercial sector of Hong Kong (as shown from the fact that Liu, an official in the Chinese government, was discussing with a party of Hong Kong trade union representatives). Zhou's words are testimonial to the Janus-faced nature of the *tongbao* discourse I have discussed. He surprised Cantlie, because the latter conflated an ethnic identity with a political one, and believed that a Hong Kong governed by Hong Kong people, who were ethnic Chinese, could only induce in the people of Hong Kong a stronger desire to reunify with a political China. Zhou's denial highlights the view that only the CCP could have political legitimacy on Hong Kong's sovereignty. Hong Kong people are both Chinese and not Chinese at the same time, at least not in the same sense as the Chinese in CCP-ruled China. Again, as in the "new Hongkonger" idea promulgated by *People's Daily*, it is the CCP that has been discriminating against the people of Hong Kong with mistrust long ago.

These two interrelated observations—economic determinism and China's

asymmetric overpowering of Britain—shed light on a more holistic and macroscopic evaluation of China's neo-colonisation of Hong Kong. The two observations are interconnected, because Britain's weak response to Hong Kong's situation thus far is susceptible of kowtowing to China's important role as a global economic hegemon. This poses a particular dilemma to Hong Kong's unique double-sided neo-colonisation: if the UK, out of a sense of "honour" as Chris Patten calls it, stands more firmly for Hong Kong's democracy against China, not only will Britain's commercial benefits[8] be jeopardised, but this may also become the strongest proof of neo-colonisation in the old sense—the lingering of the former coloniser's influence.

To resist and work against economic determinism, Hong Kong must respond *to* and *beyond* it. By "responding to", I mean a more careful examination in, and possible dispelling of, the overarching discourse (or myth) about Hong Kong's post-1997 dependence on China's economy. "Responding beyond", on the other hand, refers to a commitment to reimagining Hong Kong's difference not in economic terms, but in the realms of culture and identity. These two principles underlie the emergence of the recent tide of social movement discussed in the next section.

Countering Neo-colonialism

I now move on to examine the various ways some Hongkongers have undertaken to resist neo-colonisation, which entails a deep reflection of economic determination and importance. But if this rethinking can be seen as a challenge to China's economic power, it can equally be seen as an exercise to make sense of one's

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[8] As has been made clear in the Parliamentary debate on 2nd December 2014, about "40% of British investment in Asia goes directly to Hong Kong" (United Kingdom, Parliament, House of Commons, *Hansard*, col. 193).

living experience in post-1997 Hong Kong, or what Michel de Certeau calls in *The Practice of Everyday Life* the "everyday practices", or ways of doing things (de Certeau xi). For de Certeau, to understand a culture means to allow "the ordinary man [to become] the narrator" so that s/he can participate in the development of discourse based on everyday experience (5); the individual is in effect "a locus" upon which plural social relations interact (xi). To put this in a post-1997 Hong Kong context, it calls for a critical attention to not only some abstract, indeterminate postcoloniality, but to how this postcoloniality enables us to make sense of the everyday life, and in particular, how it has encouraged more and more people to stand up against neo-colonisation in two main areas, namely, formulating counter-discourse against Hong Kong's economic dependence, and participating in social activist movements.

Countering Economic Dependence

The first response to neo-colonisation is to challenge the rhetoric of Hong Kong's unilateral economic dependence on China, and consequently consider a more nuanced, bilateral, mutually-reliable economic relation between the two places. Netizens have taken to official (governmental) statistics and reports to interrogate the objectionable claims about the economic benefits allegedly "bestowed" by China.

For instance, netizens have expressed doubt on the actual economic value of inbound tourism. As mentioned earlier, the Individual Visit Scheme (IVS) was implemented after the 2003 SARS outbreak in Hong Kong. The scheme allows individual mainland tourists to apply for a permit to enter Hong Kong for sightseeing purposes. However, the actual economic benefit to Hong Kong's economy made by mainland tourists has been said to be meagre, as statistical reports reveal that the percentage share of inbound tourism (including retail trade) in Hong Kong's 2010

GDP was a mere 3.4%[9] (HK, Census and Statistics Department, "The Four Pillar", FC4). Some Hongkongers also complain that mainland customers' consumption of foreign luxury goods, jewellery, and pharmaceutical products has encouraged these brands to expand their branch networks in Hong Kong, thereby effectively pushing up rents and edging out small, local businesses. The huge external consumption and high demand for different daily goods and baby's milk formula (perhaps as an aftermath of the 2008 melamine poisoning in babies in China, see below), highlight a fetishised need for mainland tourists to (again) produce Hong Kong as both different from, and part of, China—a trusted shopping paradise selling safe, imported goods without value-added tax within China for their easy access and exploitation. On the contrary, the influx of tourists has made urban areas even more crowded than it was. In short, the IVS has only managed to attract more visitors in number, but its limited economic benefit to a few retail goods affects the everyday living experience negatively.

Another main point of contention is the important role that Hong Kong continues to play until today in developing China's economy. In both trade and investment, for instance, Hong Kong and China are each other's biggest partner (Hong Kong SAR, Trade and Industry Department, "The Mainland"), where Hong Kong plays the additional role of being an entrepôt, as shown from the fact that 54.9% of Hong Kong's re-exports in 2013 was to the mainland (*ibid.*, "Hong Kong's Principal"). The continuation of the entrepôt role is particularly interesting, since this is clearly based on the assumption that Hong Kong is considered, in the economic realm, *outside* of, and thus different from the rest of, China. It is most peculiar that, while the mainland boasts of strong economic growth, investments made by

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[9] This is in addition to the fact that not all inbound tourists come from China.

allegedly Hong Kong merchants used to be, and still are, considered *foreign* or *external* investment. This designation adds intriguing new dimensions to Hong Kong's entrepôt status: even until today, one-quarter of a century since the Open-Door Policy, Hong Kong is still China's largest foreign investor (K. Chan 50), although statistics varies according to sources. China's Ministry of Commerce has for example announced data that shows an increase of Hong Kong investment from 63.54% in the first half of 2012 to 69.43% in the same period in 2014 (PRC, Ministry of Commerce, "Statistics of FDI in January-May 2012", "Statistics of FDI in China in January-May 2014).[10] In contrast to these figures, the Hong Kong Government still acknowledges that Hong Kong is "the mainland's largest source of realized foreign direct investment", but gives a conservative figure on the portion—47.7% of the national total in 2013 (HKSAR, Trade and Industry Department, "The Mainland"). On top of the suspicious discrepancy, speculations from informed economists suggest that these so-called Hong Kong investments are in fact money-laundering activities conducted by mainland Chinese companies in the guise of their Hong Kong office (X. Cheng, "Tanchen"; X. Ge, "Jiedao"; Q. He, "Renminribao"). Nonetheless, it holds little logical sustenance for the ongoing depreciation on Hong Kong's economic significance. In addition to its long-time status as a major offshore Renminbi (RMB) trading centre for China, the Hong Kong banking industry has also continued to lend vast amounts of money to mainland corporations; as at the end of 2013, the industry has had HKD 2,589 billion of

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[10] The two percentages are my calculations. Actual numbers announced by the Ministry of Commerce: Hong Kong invested USD 29.935 billion out of USD 47.11 billion of total foreign investment for January-May 2012; and USD 33.96 billion out of a total of USD 48.91 billion from January to May 2014 (PRC, Ministry of Commerce, "Statistics of FDI in January-May 2012", "Statistics of FDI in China in January-May 2014").

mainland-related loans (Yuen, "Mainland-related Exposures"),[11] an unprecedented level which drew the International Monetary Fund's concern on bad debts (Moiseiwitsch, "IMF Latest").

In the neo-colonial era, then, Hong Kong serves two main financial purposes for China: first, as a place to camouflage mainland-originated capital, and second, as a "bank teller" which gives out loans. China's neo-colonial strategies now come fully into view: governed by the need to refashion Hong Kong people's identity into one of self-belittlement, so as to continue its exploitation on Hong Kong's financial system, China has influenced the implementation of economic policies such as the IVS and CEPA, which, as it turns out, not only fail to see the effect trickle down to local Hongkongers, but also inconvenience their daily life. This explains why Hong Kong, until now, has to remain simultaneously part of and outside China, as seen in the *tongbao* discourse. To be able to see through China's neo-colonial strategies, as I have mapped out in this chapter so far, is important in formulating and contextualising resistance strategies devised by Hong Kong people in recent years, as well as reimagining a new Hong Kong identity distinct from existing, readily available theories.

From Values to Identity: Towards an Anti-Modern Hong Kong

Hong Kong people's second response to neo-colonisation seeks to reshape a Hong Kong identity that goes beyond economic determinism, and instead emphasises—and inspires activism that defends—the so-called "core values" of Hong Kong. As I have stressed, this rising tide of social movement and reaffirmation of core values is a response to the impact in Hongkongers' daily lives brought by

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[11] Articles by Alex Siu, a blogger on *VJ Media*, have drawn my attention to the loan situation of Hong Kong banks (A. Siu, "Wai Sam Mo").

economic determinism. In the same vein, political scientist-cum-politician Kenneth Ka-lok Chan also notices that economic integration between China and Hong Kong is a "double-edged sword": as the local business sector sides with the Central Government on issues of democracy, rights and freedoms in order to take advantage of the country's economy, the "one country, two systems" principle will in effect dilute Hong Kong's core values (52).

That Hong Kong has a different set of core values from mainland China is well argued and noted by various scholars. A colonial history has allowed Hong Kong to develop fundamentally different systems of governance, finance, and judiciary from China, as well as emphasise and respect certain ethical values. Sociolinguistic scholar Amy Tsui, for instance, reports that some professionals and academics in Hong Kong have made a "Hong Kong Core Values Declaration" in 2004, proclaiming that values such as "liberty, democracy, human rights, rule of law, fairness, social justice, integrity and transparency, plurality, and respect for individuals" are the core values respected highly by Hong Kong (Tsui 139). Political scientists David Chang and Richard Chuang, in their book *The Politics of Hong Kong's Reversion to China*, praises the colonial governance "in terms of economic prosperity, efficient rule of law, individual liberty and private wealth and property under the British authoritarian, but not dictatorial governor […]" (Chang and Chuang 60). In *Writing Diaspora*, Rey Chow also posits a string of things—"a firmly instituted and well-used legal system, emerging direct elections, the relative freedom of speech, and so forth, all of which are present in Hong Kong but absent in China"—to underline the fundamental differences between the two places (*Writing Diaspora* 24). From these three accounts, liberty and freedom, and willingness to abide by comprehensively designed (administrative) systems make Hong Kong stand out. What is most noticeable here, however, is that this is where the lingering

influence of British colonisation is the strongest: these values are more and more often seen as "treasures" left by the British administration.

Roughly starting from 2010, these values are increasingly acknowledged as an integral part of Hong Kong identity, to the extent that they have been used to foreground an incompatible cultural disjuncture between Hong Kong and China. It must be made clear at the outset that these so-called "core values" are, in the eyes of those Hongkongers who uphold them, justified to be called "Hong Kong's values", only because they are perceivably lacking, in a general manner, among many mainlanders, as reflected by the negative news and social problems in China reported day after day in both print media and social media platforms. Such problems include, but are not limited to, the Foxconn suicides which exposed labour malpractice ("Foxconn"), or the 2008 melamine scandal where more than 300,000 babies were sickened by contaminated milk formula (Branigan, "Chinese"). The tragic incident of two-year-old Little Yueyue—who was hit consecutively by two trucks in Guangzhou (Canton), but ignored and left to die by 18 passers-by ("2-year-old")—stirs fear at the attitudes of mainland drivers, as well as strong opposition against the Hong Kong-Guangdong cross-border driving scheme, which was first supposed to take effect in March 2012, then subsequently put off, and eventually reintroduced.

Antagonism is also stirred up when photos and videos capturing some mainland visitors' "uncivil" behaviour in Hong Kong are disseminated via internet portals. One common type of behaviour involves mainland visitors defecating on the streets of Hong Kong ("Chinese Mainlander"). Another incident involves a verbal argument between a man from Hong Kong and a mother from mainland China, about her daughter spilling some snack noodles on a Hong Kong train in January 2012

("Mainland Visitors Eating"). [12] A third problem lies in that of pregnant, gate-crashing mainland mothers rushing to emergency rooms in Hong Kong hospitals to give birth, so that doctors could not refuse them on humanitarian grounds, resulting in their infants being granted, by default, the right of abode, the Hong Kong identity card, and access to educational and social resources, pursuant to Article 24 (1) of the Basic Law. This leads to a shortage of bed spaces and resources for local mothers to take care of their own babies. However, the speculation that "most of these children will be brought back to China after birth" without a known return date (J. Chan, "Mainland Mothers"), with a sizeable portion of mothers evading a total of HKD 6.6 million (about USD 846,000) hospital fees in 2010 and 2011 (P. Siu, "Push"), has prompted some Hongkongers to post full-page newspaper advertisements calling for the ban of the gate-crashing phenomenon ("Hong Kong Full Page"). A locust is shown in the background image of this advertisement, obviously alluding to how some Hong Kong people label mainland immigrants in recent years. In March 2011, the *South China Morning Post* runs an article on the spread of this anti-immigrant sentiment on a Facebook group, citing the group members' hate messages against mainland immigrants:

> Many dubbed the migrants "locusts" for eating away at their job opportunities and social welfare.
>
> "[New migrants] have done nothing but […] immediately ask for everything once they come to Hong Kong. Do you know the lives of many Hong Kong-born people are worse than theirs?
>
> "You are not qualified to ask for this and that. If you are not

[12] Escalating the incident, a few days later, Peking University professor Qingdong Kong commented that "some Hong Kong people are dogs", which further sparked fury on the Internet ("Racial Disputes").

satisfied, please go away," Facebook user […][13] said in the group. (S. Cheung, "Anti-migrant")

The comparison of mainland immigrants to locusts that threaten a farmer's hard-earned agricultural production, registers a perceived superiority among these Hongkongers that is grounded in the strain on social resources felt in their everyday life. This metaphor portrays Hong Kong and China in a hierarchical relation, where Hong Kong people defend their fruits of labour in this more resourceful city, against unwelcomed swarms of immigrants and tourists.

The daily exposure to China's social problems and the realisation of Hong Kong's key values have helped establish a distinct Hong Kong identity that is increasingly reflective of China's neo-colonial economic integration and cultural assimilation. On this Yongnian Zheng comments that

> Hong Kong's return to China has not weakened Hong Kong political identity [sic]. Despite rapid economic integration between Hong Kong and the mainland and Hong Kong's increasingly economic dependency on the latter, it [*sic*, its] political identity continues to grow. Indeed, to a great degree, Hong Kong has developed a unique form of 'nationalism'. Central to this form of nationalism is how Hong Kong can maintain and develop its own political identity vs. its motherland. (Zheng 40)

One of the best indicators of this Hong Kong identity demarcated from a Chinese identity is the surveys conducted by the Public Opinion Programme (POP) of the University of Hong Kong. The POP, when they conduct headcounts or surveys, publish all their methodologies and statistical data online, demonstrating reliability

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[13] I have left out the name of the Facebook user, although the name was revealed in the newspaper article.

and transparency. At least every 6 months since the handover, the POP conducts a random telephone survey on ethnic identity with around 1000 Cantonese-speaking Hong Kong adults, providing respondents with five categories of identity: "Hong Kong Citizen", "Chinese Hong Kong Citizen", "Hong Kong Chinese Citizen", "Chinese Citizen", and "Mixed Identity". Among the 53 surveys conducted since 1997 (as of December 2014), the bottom and peak figures for "Hong Kong Citizen" were 18.1% in June 2008 and 45.6% in June 2012, while those for the label "Chinese Citizen" were 13.8% in February 2000 and 38.6% in June 2008 ("People's Ethnic Identity"). June 2008 saw the upcoming of the Beijing Olympics and it was possible that the bottom for "Hong Kong Citizen" and the reciprocal peak for "Chinese Citizen" at that time reflect a heightened national pride towards the Olympics. However, since then there has been a general falling trend for "Chinese Citizen": while the figure for "Chinese Citizen" never dropped below 25% between 2001 and 2008, none but one figure after 2008 was higher than 25%. Meanwhile, identification with "Hong Kong Citizen" has been on the rise especially since 2011, showing that recent China-Hong Kong conflicts have catalysed the re-emergence of a distinct Hong Kong identity.

From Words to Deeds: The Emerging Social Movement

Given this ongoing reflection on the values cherished by Hong Kong society, some Hongkongers, especially in the younger generation, have become disillusioned with the myth of economic prosperity, and have taken a further step to turn their identity into concrete social activism. In a city with skyrocketing property prices and a widening gap between the rich and the poor—problems that not only the young but also the middle-aged are suffering from—it is no wonder that the "post-80s"

generation,[14] which sometimes includes young middle-class professionals, feels that the path to upward mobility is blocked, and turns to fight problems of unequal income, imbalanced wealth distribution, and the destruction of Hong Kong's cultural and ecological heritage. This new tide of social movements in the younger generation fulfils Donald Hugh McMillen's prophecy made in the 1990s about "an increasing reservoir of pent-up 'political energy' awaiting opportunities for constructive release" (McMillen 9). Analysing the political situation in 1991 when direct election was introduced for the first time for some LegCo seats, McMillen attacks the myth that the Hong Kong people were politically apathetic,[15] and instead argues that the exclusion of Hong Kong people's voice and the negligence of their interest during the Sino-British negotiations in the 1980s would build up this "reservoir of pent-up political energy" that can destabilise Hong Kong's political and social order (*ibid*). Yongnian Zheng, too, observes that a "series of crises" after the handover exposing the incompetence and unaccountability of the non-elected administration have catalysed the awakening of a "younger, better educated, and more affluent generation" who join in a new wave of social movement, "voicing their dissonance and demands" and calling for elections and a democratic Hong Kong (Zheng 40-44).

Protests and demonstrations thus become one of the most common forms in

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[14] The term "post-80's generation" refers to a loosely defined generation of youngsters, mostly born after the 1980s, who are keen on participating in social movements.

[15] That the Hong Kong people were politically apathetic was a popular thesis put forward by some sociology books published in the 1970s and 80s, most notably *Society and Politics in Hong Kong* written by the aforementioned Siu-kai Lau. Lau proposes the term "utilitarianistic familism" to explain the placing of one's immediate family's material interests (e.g. income and property) over the interests of society or other individuals in the society (72), which led to low social and political participation among Hongkongers. It is a highly influential idea before the handover, even acknowledged by Rey Chow: "analysts have always attributed Hong Kong's economic prosperity […] to the fact that, because colonialism did not allow political choices to be made, Hong Kong people had to channel their energies into the economic sphere. Hong Kong's economic prosperity, in other words, has always been construed *negatively* in relation to political awareness […]" ("King Kong" 312, italics original)

this social movement. The triggering event was undoubtedly the march on 1st July 2003. 1st July is a new public holiday since 1997 in memory of the establishment of Hong Kong as a Special Administrative Region. In 2003, amidst a SARS-trodden economy, the Hong Kong Government attempted to legislate Article 23 of the Basic Law, which "outlaws treason, sedition, secession, and subversion"—with the obvious intention to defend China's sovereignty—but also creates worries over the much cherished value of freedom of speech (S. Lo 181). On 1st July 2003, a record number of about 500,000 Hong Kong people marched to the government headquarters to protest against Article 23, making this the biggest demonstration since the handover. Sonny Lo points out that the demonstration is a way for the Hong Kong people to express their dissatisfaction at the growing convergence of political systems between Hong Kong and China (despite China's promise of "one country, two systems"), and at the threat of their values (*ibid*). Now an event for Hongkongers to voice their distress, the 1st July march is an annual fixture together with another annual mass gathering: the candlelight vigil held in Victoria Park every year on 4th June in commemoration of the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown. Table 2 provides rough numbers of participants in these two rallies, as provided by the organisers, the Hong Kong Police, and, where available, the POP. The frequency of rallies, marches and protests in Hong Kong have led Chinese movie star Jackie Chan to name Hong Kong the "City of Protest" and support crackdowns (Phillips, "Jackie Chan").

Table 2

Headcounts of the Two Largest Rallies in Hong Kong (Selected Years)[a]

1st July Marches			
Year	Organisers' Data	Police Data	POP Data
2003	500,000	350,000	465,500
2004	530,000	200,000	193,500

2007	68,000	20,000	32,000
2008	47,000	15,500	17,500
2012	400,000	63,000	95,000
2013	430,000	66,000	92,000
2014	510,000	98,000	157,000
2015	48,000	20,000	28,000
4th June Candlelight Vigils			
1990	150,000	80,000	N/A
1994	40,000	12,000	N/A
1999	70,000	N/A	N/A
2004	82,000	48,000	51,000
2009	200,000	62,800	120,000
2013	150,000	54,000	N/A
2014	180,000	99,500	N/A
2015	135,000	46,000	N/A

Source: "Combined Charts of the July 1 Rally over the Years (2003-2015"; *HKU POP Site*; Public Opinion Programme, The U of Hong Kong, n.d; Web; 10 July 2015.

"Combined Charts of the June 4 Vigil over the Years (1990-2009)"; *HKU POP Site*; Public Opinion Programme, The U of Hong Kong, n.d; Web; 10 Feb. 2015.

a. All figures are estimates.

Other forms of protest have also burgeoned, with some more popular than others. Prostrating walk is a form of protest in which participants walk a decided number of steps before kneeling down and placing their head on the ground in reverend position. This peaceful performance is likely to have been inspired by Tibetan pilgrims and some South Korean farmers who performed the walk in a demonstration on 15th December 2005 during the WTO Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong. Hong Kong protesters first performed it in a 2009 protest against the construction of Guangzhou-Hong Kong High Speed Railway (see table 3 below), and

have been doing so since, including in the latest Umbrella Revolution.

Occupation also gained currency when local protesters occupied the 53-year-old Queen's Pier from April to July 2007, with a view to preventing it from being demolished (see table 3). The Police's eviction operation lasted for more than12 hours and was criticised for using excessive force to restrain limb movement of the 30-odd protesters (Pang, "Violent Scuffles"). Occupation was also used in the 40-day strike by subcontracted dockers at the Hong Kong International Terminals, whose demand for a 20% pay rise was based on the lack of pay adjustments since the 1997 Asian financial crisis as well as lengthy and harsh working conditions on cranes. After numerous negotiations and occupation at the Kwai Tsing Container Terminal with support from student activists and citizens' donation towards an emergency support fund, the dockers concluded this remarkably long labour strike in recent Hong Kong history by settling for a 9.8% pay hike. But occupation as a protest form had its breakthrough in the occupation at the new government headquarters against the implementation of the national education curriculum. In 2012, the Hong Kong Government announced that in order to strengthen national education, the school subject "Moral and Civic Education" would be replaced by a new compulsory subject called "Moral and National Education" in the primary curriculum from 2012, and in the secondary curriculum starting from the following year. A sample teaching manual, "China Model: National Conditions Teaching Manual", published by the National Education Services Centre, praised the CCP as an "advanced, selfless and united ruling group" while criticising party politics in the United States for bringing suffering to their citizens (National Education Services Centre 10). The biased account of contemporary China drew fury among many Hong Kong parents and students. In addition to a protest march attended by 90,000 on 29th July 2012 ("9 Maan Jan"), concerned groups also occupied the new government headquarters on

30th August 2012, with more than a dozen secondary school students, university students and retired teachers taking turns in a hunger strike. In the following 11 days until 9th September, the occupation, with its organised concerts, public seminars on civic qualities, and supportive messages from public figures, attracted the attendance of thousands of people every night, with a record attendance of 120,000 on 7th September (Zhao, "Record-high Turnout"). Many people camped at the site at night, and there were volunteers supplying, collecting and redistributing sleeping mats, cleaning public toilets and even donating sanitary napkins.

Finally, there is the Umbrella Revolution, so important that it warrants a paragraph on its own, and which I believe is a turning point in Hong Kong history. When an NPC ruling on 31st August 2014 rejected open, democratic election in Hong Kong, and instead raised the bar for the number of nominations required to stand in the Chief Executive election to half of a 1600-member Nominating Committee, a student-led, territory-wide boycott of classes on tertiary and (to a lesser extent) secondary level was organised in September 2014—the first in many years. On 28th September, the Hong Kong Police deployed tear gas to a huge protest crowd in support of detained student leaders who occupied the Civic Square in front of the government headquarters in Tamar, Admiralty. The protest quickly escalated into a full-fledged occupy movement, strengthened by the activation of Occupy Central with Love and Peace,[16] an occupation campaign in preparation for more than one year, led by HKU law professor Benny Tai and based on the principle of civil

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[16] In support of Occupy Wall Street, Hong Kong had its first mini version of Occupy Central (Central being Hong Kong's central business district) from October 2011 to September 2012. At its height more than 200 participants gathered under the headquarters of the Hong Kong-Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC), while around 10-20 people regularly camped there in a "commune-like habitat" (L. Tang, "HK High Court"). Compared to the Umbrella Revolution, it is interesting to note that, spinning issues directly concerned to the daily lives of Hong Kong citizens is more likely to draw a large number of people to occupation than appealing to solidarity movements in other places.

disobedience. At the same time, influenced by critic Horace Chin (see below), some netizens have occupied parts of Nathan Road in Mong Kok, the busiest avenue in Kowloon. A third occupied site appeared in Causeway Bay. The occupation in Admiralty lasted for a historic record of 75 days, from 28th September to 11th December, during which a strong communal feeling was forged with the proliferation of art works and cultural gatherings, the generous donation to citizen-initiated university scholarships in response to sponsorship withdrawals from business conglomerates, the sharing of bottled water, food, umbrellas, phone chargers, toiletries, sleeping bags and blankets, the voluntary removal of wastes and cleaning of public toilets, and the collaborative assemblage of wooden study desks, tents, bunk beds, makeshift shower stalls, and even a windmill that produces electricity for students to study at night. In a neo-colonial city where pressures of assimilation infiltrate many aspects of daily life, this is a large-scale social experiment putting alternative modes of living into practice.

Apart from a growing awareness about labour conditions as exhibited in the dock strike, cultural and environmental preservation—or what is called in Hong Kong "preserving collective memories"—becomes another key theme emerging from this wave of social movement—one that, I should stress, goes hand in hand with the emergence of a new Hong Kong identity explained above. Environmentalists Yan-yan Yip and Christine Loh believe that certain ideas with a potential to improve the quality of life have been gaining popularity among the newer generation of Hong Kong, thanks to the works of "green" NGOs in recent years; these ideas include "a clean environment, good urban planning, heritage conservation, equal opportunities, media freedom and animal welfare" (Yip and Loh 216). In actual activism, several protests have been organised to protect and preserve, often to no avail, historical or ecological sites, colonial buildings, green belts, or establishments that the

government wants to get demolished and redeveloped into new commercial/residential complexes. Major incidents of conservation are summarised in table 3. Not only do these demolitions exhibit David Harvey's comments on the capitalist "passion for newness which leads to the tearing down and building up in metropolitan economies" (Harvey, *Social Justice* 271), but in the context of neo-colonial Hong Kong, the demolition of colonial buildings such as the Star Ferry and Queen's piers, and the construction of high speed railway (HSR) further connecting Hong Kong and China, serve to erase the traces of Hong Kong's colonial past, to possibly pre-empt the germination of colonial nostalgia, and to replace it with a neo-colonial, hegemonic assimilation from the PRC. The Northeast New Territories development project is a particularly poignant example that combines the destruction of Hong Kong's natural environment with a deliberate blurring (or seen by some as a dissolution) of Hong Kong's borders with China.

These forms and themes in this new wave of social activism reflect an attitude change among the younger generation in Hong Kong. Long-time lawmaker Margaret Ng notices that more and more "middle and professional classes" found street rallies "acceptable" as a means to fight for democracy and safeguard the way of life in Hong Kong (M. Ng 70, 75). More recently, Ho Fung Hung and sociologist Sing Ming both believe that some of the new political parties formed after 1997, notably the League of Social Democrats (LSD) (and also People Power, split from LSD later), gained popularity and electoral success through adopting "'pro-grassroots' positions" in social welfare issues and confrontational tactics in both civilian protests and parliamentary politics (Sing 103-05; Hung, "Uncertainty" 70-71). In the words of scholar Mirana May Szeto, the younger generation now seek to be more than just *homo economicus*, and instead aspire to participatory democracy (Robertson, "A Hong Kong Scholar").

Table 3

An Outline of Recent Examples of Cultural and Environmental Conservation

Project & Year	Description
Lee Tung Street, also nicknamed Wedding Card Street (2003)	The numerous printing shops on the street, which have attracted many Hong Kong people to print their wedding invitation cards and name cards since the 1950s (hence the nickname), had to be relocated when the Urban Renewal Authority of Hong Kong decided to redevelop the area into a residential and commercial complex. Despite public protest including a case of hunger strike, the street was finally demolished.
Star Ferry Pier (2006) and the Queen's Pier (2007)	Both piers, located at the heart of Hong Kong, had a long history, and the Queen's Pier even bore the ceremonial significance of welcoming former British governors on their inaugural journey to Hong Kong. They faced demolition under the Central and Wan Chai Reclamation projects. After losing the Star Ferry Pier to reclamation, conservation groups occupied the Queen's Pier for nearly four months, drawing public attention and even celebrities' support.
Choi Yuen Tsuen (2009)	In 2009, a plan to extend China's High Speed Railway system to Hong Kong was announced. The adverse effects of the construction work in the Hong Kong section include: 1) a cost of HKD 69.9 billion (around USD 9 billion), 2) noise pollution to households in the Tai Kok Tsui area, and 3) the demolition of Choi Yuen Tsuen, a village of about 500 people in Northwest New Territories. 10,000 people surrounded the Legislative Council on the night of the approval of budget. In the anti-High Speed Railway protest, not all protesters were concerned with environmental protection or cultural conservation; some worried about the issue of compensation, and some were opposed to the high cost of railway construction.
Lung Mei beach (2012)	A proposal to transform a part of the coastline in Northeast New Territories into a 200-metre artificial public beach. Funding was approved by the Legislative Council and the project was endorsed by the Chief Executive in October 2012. The project was however met with heavy opposition from environmental groups, scholars and the public, which led to a protest at the

	Hong Kong Government headquarters with a turnout of 3000 people. Marine ecologists have warned that the beach is contaminated with heavy metals, and the project endangers the existence of about 200 species of marine animals.
Northeast New Territories Development (2014)	A buffer area in northeastern New Territories, just south of the Shenzhen border, has been demarcated for development into a visa-free zone where Hong Kong citizens can inhabit and citizens from Shenzhen can enter and leave freely for shopping purpose in the future. Not only will the territorial border between Hong Kong and China be blurred, but the lives of some villagers in the area will be affected. The LegCo meeting for funding approval on 13th June 2014 was met with fierce activists, who broke through the cordon of security guards and entered the LegCo building to stage a protest. Some LegCo members also tried to stop the project by filibustering at the meeting.

Source: Chi-fai Cheung; "Lung Mei Beach Project Doomed to Fail, Expert Warns"; *South China Morning Post*; South China Morning Post, 6 Nov. 2012; Web; 14 Dec. 2014.

Tanna Chong, and Gary Cheung; "Protesters Storm Legco over Northeastern New Territories Plan"; *South China Morning Post*; South China Morning Post, 7 June 2014; Web; 14 Dec. 2014.

For sociologist Alvin So, these patterns of social activism, including "the preservation of cultural heritages, informal and loose movement organisations, relying on internet and other information technology for mobilisation, and spontaneous tactics" are all "anti-modern" (249). He does not explain why these are anti-modern, but the invested effort in defending Hong Kong's values and environment matches my previous observations about an alternative reimagination of Hong Kong other than in economic terms. For example, in the protest against the construction of High Speed Railway in 2009 (see table 3), one major criticism was whether it was worth destroying rural villages and bringing harm to natural

conservation areas for the sake of building a costly railway that, again, appeals to the opportunities of China's market. This is why Ho Fung Hung comments that the new social movement manifests not only a "strong sense of a Hong Kong cultural identity", but also "resentment against monopoly capital and a preference for collective direct action" ("Uncertainty" 71). As seen in the theme for the 1st July march in 2012, "Kick Away Party-Government-Business Collusion" (translation mine), the social activists believed that collusion between Hong Kong's capitalist businessmen, the Chinese Communist Party and its marionette the Hong Kong Government is the crux of Hong Kong's social problems that must be "kicked away". What will eventually replace this capitalist developmentalism, as demonstrated in the occupations in the anti-national education campaign and the Umbrella Revolution (and not without similarity to Occupy Wall Street), is a communal form of living that involves altruistic sharing of resources among like-minded protesters and social experiments that create a sustainable living environment.

By way of summing up, it is worth pointing out the main difference between Hong Kong's new social activism and the kind of activism that was prevalent in the past. What the new social movement often works against are the CCP's regime in China and its tampering with Hong Kong society. The new activism is a reflexive response taking pride in an essentialising, localised Hongkongness against another essentialised, state-defined Chineseness. In the cleavage between the ethnic, the cultural and the national, the perception that CCP is the root of all evil lends a fundamental explanation to the China-Hong Kong gap, and explains why blatant, name-calling, xenophobic discrimination against mainlanders has gained so much momentum in Hong Kong. That said, it must be remembered that 1) this new social movement does not necessarily represent the majority of the Hong Kong population, 2) awareness of cultural and environmental conservation may not imply an equal

commitment in other social movements, although many activists are concerned with many of these issues, and 3) it is hard to assume that all protesters always have the same agenda. Nonetheless, there is abundant evidence, I believe, to argue that the energies of the younger generation in Hong Kong have brought hope to a future where Hong Kong can find a way to move away from the interregnum it is facing.

Summary

In this second main section of the chapter, I have introduced two main directions of resistance to China's neo-colonisation of Hong Kong, respectively a revision to China's unilateral economic dominance over Hong Kong and a series of activist movements that respond to social developments. Despite their different natures, I have stressed that they are ultimately borne out of the everyday situation and lived experience faced by the people of Hong Kong in a neo-colonial era. One thing that is hard to dispute is that the economic relation between China and Hong Kong is always at the undercurrent of these resistances; in other words, the new wave of social and democracy movements is a response to China's influence on Hong Kong economy and society. The emergence of these movements can somehow be seen as a political awakening of Hongkongers, particularly in the younger generation, and in this sense proves Rey Chow wrong. Writing shortly after the 1997 handover, Chow observes that in the colonial age, Hong Kong's economic prosperity precedes the call for political change and democracy, hence a timely worry that

> [i]f economic prosperity takes precedence over everything else and if democracy (despite the West's promoting it as an indispensable part of social progress) has already been discursively constructed as a byproduct (as what *follows* economic prosperity but not vice versa), doesn't that mean that in fact, democracy *can* be sacrificed when

> necessary – for instance, if Hong Kong fails to sustain its economic prosperity? ("King Kong" 313-14, italics original)

With the benefit of hindsight it seems fair to say Chow's question is only partly warranted in its prophecy of Hong Kong's neo-colonial fate. To suspect that the Hong Kong people could forsake their democracy and values *just because* they want to embrace China's stronger economy, is to anticipate the development that China could one day lay claim to political, economic and social control. This is, of course, not entirely false, for there is still a huge majority of Hongkongers who remain steadfastly silent in the recent Umbrella Revolution. However, Chow could not have foreseen the spirited rise of the new social movement that strives to defend the very Hong Kong values noted by herself earlier. This emerging social movement seeks to rethink Hong Kong's future and its relation with China. It also fights against the eradication of things that have been a part of Hong Kong's history, and against the disruption to citizen's livelihood due to the influx of mainland visitors and numerous infrastructure projects.

When China is not China: Essentialisation as Resistance

Informed by the two sections above on Hong Kong's post-handover situation, I shall, in the final section of this chapter, discuss how this neo-colonial Hong Kong identity departs from our conventional understandings of Chineseness and Hongkongness so far. Discussed earlier in the introduction of this dissertation and in this chapter respectively, Rey Chow's in-betweenness and Wing Sang Law's collaborative colonialism, to name two examples, have been prominent theories on Hong Kong identity. But I also frame my discussion with a critical reflection on theories of Chineseness, which have generated a vibrant, discursive debate.

In "Introduction: On Chineseness as a Theoretical Problem", Rey Chow

observes that the subordination faced by Chinese intellectuals in the hegemonic centrality of Western academy has turned a victimised inferiority into a narcissistic, megalomaniac "arrogance and self-aggrandizement" where "[e]verything Chinese [...] is fantasized as somehow better—longer in existence, more intelligent, more scientific, more valuable, and ultimately beyond comparison" ("Introduction" 4). For Chow, instead, Chineseness needs to be unpacked so as to problematise both the orientalist interest on China from the West as well as the discourse of monolithic identity from the Chinese government (*ibid.* 18). Other scholars have explored plural ways to understand the term. Based on her research on the diasporic Chinese, Aihwa Ong proposes the concept of flexible citizenship, which accounts for "the strategies and effects of [the diasporic Chinese] mobile managers, technocrats, and professionals seeking to both circumvent *and* benefit from different nation-state regimes by selecting different sites for investments, work, and family relocation" (*Flexible Citizenship* 112). Ong argues that for the diasporic Chinese, identity is fluid and plural, with many possibilities for an individual to identify themselves as Chinese in various ways.

Ong's account of flexible citizenship has at least two potential pitfalls. First, multiplicity and flexibility assumes free, unconstrained movement internationally. Ong's focus on the Chinese diaspora assumes that a foreign country is always involved in the formation of one's citizenship and identity, and has asked little about multiple Chineseness within the territorial boundary of China, such as a distinct Beijingness or Hongkongness. Second, terms such as "flexibility" and "fluidity" are vocabularies of transnational capitalism that privilege a certain class of citizens who can afford a cosmopolitan lifestyle. Ong's examples for bearers of flexible citizenship are "multiple passport holders" such as Hong Kong emigrants in the United States, who align themselves with global capitalist opportunities rather than

with a state-imposed identity (*ibid.* 2, 67). But her book does not discuss those who are stuck in Hong Kong, do not work in transnational companies or have multiple passports, and are certainly unable to be "flexible" when living hand to mouth. The best Ong does is a discussion of how Vietnamese boat people or Indonesian women factory workers have influenced immigration laws in Southeast Asia (*ibid.* 220-24), but she is not sensitive to uneven development *within* a single country or city, thus leaving out, among other examples, local Hong Kong Chinese without money and a foreign passport. The Chineseness of these people cannot be flexible under Ong's privileging of the multi-passport, mobile, hybrid, upper-middle class—a limitation well noted by Hong Kong cultural critic Yiu Wai Chu, who points out that "flexible identification is undoubtedly a new product in the era of globalisation; the problem is that not only are some people [in Hong Kong] not flexible, but they even do not have any identification" (Chu 64-65, translation mine).

Yet another strand of critique features more radical, post-identity scholars such as Allen Chun. In his essay "Fuck Chineseness", the term "identity"—whether used by the state to authorise national homogeneity or by the diasporic population to invoke heterogeneous and plural accounts of Chineseness against a state-dictated national identity—is but a construction that carries a "boundedness" to solidify one group of people in a homogenous geographical space. Even multiple identities, for their self-eulogy of standing in between "homogenization and heterogeneity, cores and peripheries", has also failed to "destroy the boundedness of identity" (134-38). Chun repeatedly hints that ultimately we must address the possibility of the *irrelevance* of identities "in which ethnicity is totally irrelevant or in which there is no necessity to identify" (132). His is a more radical account that vouches for the eschewal of the basic need to identify with one's ancestry and ethnic labels.

Hong Kong as an Autonomous City-state

The above discussion on Chineseness is useful in framing the discussion on a new Hong Kong identity, not so much as to confine it, but precisely to allow it to depart from such fetishisation with Chineseness. Chineseness is still a reference point for Hong Kong identity, but one that must seek to grow away from it. The ideas of cultural theorist Horace Wan Chin is worth studying here. Chin, a key figure in the online activist groups Hong Kong Autonomy Movement and Hong Kong Resurgence, is the author to the bestseller *A Theory of Hong Kong City-state Autonomy* (2011), which declares that Hong Kong is a city-state and should practise autonomous rule (which does not necessarily equal independence) against China's assimilation. His argument can be divided into three strands.

First, attacking the belief of some Hong Kong pan-democrats that they must help transform China into a democratic country upon which Hong Kong's democracy has to be predicated (Chin 13-14), Chin warns against falling into the trap of Return Discourse, where a black hole of Chinese "cultural hollowness" automatically privileges China—no matter what political state it is in—as the indisputable centre of Chinese culture, and is used to lure Hong Kong people back to "the womb of the 'motherland'" (203, my translation). Instead, he believes Hong Kong should acquire democracy first and set an example for the rest of China. He also radically disavows the legitimacy of the CCP regime over the land of China. In his historiographical view of a cultural China (*waa haa/huaxia*), China has long been a cultural nation whose ancient orthodoxy (*dzing sou/zhengshuo*) was based on the practice of the Confucian moral code[17] (28). The orthodoxy of cultural China was then lost to three

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[17] The term that Chin uses is *ming gaau/mingjiao* 名教, which is most often translated as Confucian moral code or ethics, but this does not necessarily mean placing exclusive emphasis on Confucian morals alone. As Chin himself elaborates, *ming gaau/mingjiao* includes paying tribute to the Heaven, to Confucian, but also to Buddhism and Daoism. In fact, the idea is closer to what Prasenjit Duara and

colonial regimes: the Mongolians who ruled China in the Yuan dynasty (AD 1279-1368), the Manchurians in the Qing dynasty, and the Chinese Soviet Republic (1931-1937) founded by Mao Zedong (29). What is more, he believes that Hong Kong carries the continuation of this Confucian orthodoxy. Historical evidence and historical sites in Hong Kong reveal that when the Mongolians invaded China in the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279), the Song government court was forced to move southward, until the last Song emperors finally reached what is present-day Hong Kong and committed suicide. This historical fact leads Chin to believe that the Confucian tradition that had been the orthodox philosophy of imperial China up till the Song dynasty was spread to and retained in Southern China, particularly Hong Kong. Thus, dismissing the legitimacy of the current communist regime as "usurpation" of cultural China (29, my translation), he argues that Hong Kong, thanks to its colonial isolation from China's political turmoil, is the place that can sustain this cultural orthodoxy (220-21).

Second, charting the history of the ancient European city-states such as the Greek *polis*, Chin notes that Asian city-states established by the British imperial power, notably Singapore and Hong Kong, are an extension of the ancient European tradition, flavoured with British governing principles, built upon full-fledged administrative systems and mature protocols of public administration (65-73).[18] Based on these colonial influences, Chin argues that Hong Kong is the one place that is able to blend Chinese cultural orthodoxy with well-established British administrative systems and judicial code. This blend marks Hong Kong with several

other scholars identify as a syncretic religiosity that combines Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism (*sanjiaoheyi*; Duara 14), except that Duara focuses on the religious character while Chin focuses on the ethical philosophy.

[18] Hong Kong as a city-state is not Chin's original idea, since it has been cursorily mentioned in Eric Hobsbawm's *The Age of Extremes* (281). Chin has however elaborated on it extensively.

advantages on which China must rely: the dependence on and useful reference to Hong Kong's well-developed legal/financial/welfare systems and international relations, the constant invigilation of the international community on Hong Kong's wellbeing, the need to preserve Hong Kong's financial reserve in case the CCP regime is jeopardised, and the convenience of semi-foreign Hong Kong as an "intermediary bank" for party officials to entrust their assets and family members (10-13). Hong Kong's city-state position has unmatched and indispensable significance to the sustenance of the PRC.

Third, and most importantly, Chin believes that Hong Kong's cultural orthodoxy, its city-state history and its current strategic importance to the stability of the CCP regime, are necessary conditions that form the backbone of an autonomous governance, which is the position that neo-colonial Hong Kong should hold onto in order to counteract the assimilation from China. As he is quoted in an article in *The Guardian*, mainland China is now "a mixture of rotten Chinese culture plus Soviet colonialism" whereas Hong Kong represents a "modern Chinese culture" that combines Chinese elements with the city's "long exposure to the west" (Higgins, "Hong Kong Protests"). To realise this autonomous rule, Chin supports collective, effective protest methods, such as resorting to force for self-protection if necessary, in contrast to Benny Tai's Occupy Central campaign which stresses total compliance when arrested. A more effective protest, Chin believes, is able to pressurise the Hong Kong Government to uphold clear boundaries with China, limit immigration into Hong Kong, prioritise the interests of local Hongkongers in the allocation of social resources, consolidate a local Hong Kong culture, and get due "credit" for facilitating the modernisation of China (Chin 15, 162). In a word, as the book's tag line reads, "[f]orget China, Hong Kong comes first" (sic, 16).

At first glance, Chin's theory of autonomous city-state—positioning Hong

Kong between China and the world—bears a deceptive resemblance to Rey Chow's theory of in-betweenness. In truth, they are vastly different ideas. The two theorists are writing in different temporal contexts: Chow was writing in the onset to 1997, a time when psychological anxiety at Hong Kong's future abounded; Chin is writing at about a decade after the handover, when Hong Kong's survival is numbered under China's assimilation, prompting Hong Kong people to initiate social and political action to address the disruptions of their domestic, everyday life. As discussed, Chow's call for Hong Kong's autonomy via in-betweenness concerns mainly the cultural realm; she internalises and takes pride in Hong Kong's cultural impurity. By contrast, Chin's autonomy theory is both a political principle of governance and a cultural manifestation. To say "Hong Kong comes first" is to urge the Hong Kong Government to prioritise Hong Kong permanent citizens—a clearly defined legal concept that also includes immigrants who have stayed in Hong Kong for seven consecutive years—over other groups, instead of relying on capitalist market principles that have only exacerbated the expansion of limited types of retail sectors. On the cultural front, Chin takes the opposite approach from Chow, and accuses the PRC regime as the one which is impure, inferior and illegitimate. Unlike Rey Chow who mixes up the political regime of PRC with a totalising nativist Chineseness, Chin separates the two, disavows PRC's legitimacy, and then designates Hong Kong as the precious site that continues the orthodox Confucian tradition. His approach recovers from historical research a somewhat "reactionary" appeal to cultural orthodoxy and uses this oxthodoxy to synthesise a progressive position: the way to defy assimilation and hegemony from the north is to recognise Hong Kong's historical uniqueness (i.e. the marriage of an essentialised Chinese cultural orthodoxy with Hong Kong's city-state tradition), and to put this uniqueness into generating or inducing political action.

Undoubtedly, Chin's questionable recovery of an essentialised understanding of Chinese cultural orthodoxy or Hong Kong's city-state history would be subject to criticism. Many of his thoughts are also worth further contemplation and debate.[19] Chin himself is a highly controversial figure for his provoking and humiliating languages against dissidents to his thoughts. He is a fierce critic of the pan-democrat legislators, calling them compradors for the US in perpetuating its economic exploitation in Hong Kong. Taking issue with the inefficacy of marches and rallies, which have invariably become routine and only end up dissipating the energy of the protest mass, he also criticises left-wing social movement leaders for monopolising and dominating the leadership in social movements, and for devising a protocol of protest routine that invariably indulges in partial victory and feel-good self-congratulation. In Chin's view, these methods limit the potential flexibility of protest, for they no longer help converge participants' attention on how to appropriately escalate the degree of resistance in order to achieve substantial transformations and results. On the other hand, he has been criticised for not taking any concrete action himself. Although his publications have earned him a large following on his Facebook account, through which he disseminates his "teachings" and comments on the latest happenings in Hong Kong, he and his associates have yet to gather large enough financial support to put his ideas into practice. The fault lines between his radicalism with the pan-democrats' more moderate ways, or even with other scholarly analyses, are also difficult to bridge. The latter is for example reflected in a conference on postcolonial Hong Kong (in fact, one of the few conferences exclusively on Hong Kong) held at the University of Oxford at the end

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[19] For example, I take issue with his aggressive desire to place Hong Kong as the centre of a Chinese (*waa haa/huaxia* 華夏) federal system (after the imaginary fall of the CCP), something like the one in the US, where other Asian countries influenced by Confucianism, such as Japan and Korea, would become a "state" in this federal system. Such idea is pure imperialism.

of 2012. One of the panels, titled "Hong Kong after 1997: Post-colonial or Re-colonial", saw the collision of such different forces. Chapman Chen, a colleague of Horace Chin's in the HKAM, presented a paper titled "Postcolonial Hong Kong as a City-State", praising uncritically how Chin's ideas have largely subverted conventional understandings of postcoloniality. At the end of the spectrum is the subsequent paper by Allen Chun, titled "Assessing the Relevance of 'Post-colonial' Theory to Hong Kong Society, Past and Present". Consistent with his "Fuck Chineseness" essay, Chun eschews terms such as "real Hong Kong identity" as merely a fictive construction shaped by an essentialised misunderstanding of the changing socio-political landscape and global capitalism. During discussion, however, there was little engagement with the potential opposition between the two theories and their respective problems, such as the practicality of Chun's post-identity politics or the problematic essentialisation of Chin's view of Chinese cultural orthodoxy. Much remains to be done for scholars to communicate and engage with each other.

Nonetheless, Chin's success must be read in what he calls the *realpolitik* of Hong Kong, or in the overarching context of post-handover Hong Kong which I have detailed in the two earlier sections: 1) the emphasis on Hong Kong's economic advantages, the credit for which is given to British colonial systems and governance, exposes the fact that Hong Kong is crucial in sustaining the governance of CCP, and expels the myth that the economic colonisation Hong Kong-China has been reversed; 2) the warning to pan-democrats on avoiding tumbling into the Return Discourse complements my earlier review of how Chinese nationalism and patriotism work; 3) moreover, the paramount combination of Chinese cultural orthodoxy and British administrative management supplies the rising social movement with a theoretical blueprint. His works should be seen as a product of the times, as an intellectual's

interference into the dynamics of current sociopolitical situation in Hong Kong. It is precisely in this sense that Chin's thesis departs from other theoretical formulations about Hong Kong: unlike Aihwa Ong's elitist embrace of flexibility, or Rey Chow's emphasis on cultural agency, or Allen Chun's disparagement of essential identities, Chin's is a theory that aims to have practical applications, to provide the rising social movement with a tenable theoretical doctrine.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided an overview of the neo-colonial Hong Kong situation. The simplistic reversal of economic colonisation (from Hong Kong as the northbound coloniser, to Hong Kong as the colonised) needs to be revised to accommodate the historical fact that the PRC's sole neo-colonial interest in Hong Kong's economy could be dated back to colonial times, as revealed by government archives, registering an imbalanced influence between Hong Kong's two colonisers. Faced with this lopsided economic discourse on Hong Kong's dependence on the "mother country", some Hongkongers respond with an emerging social movement which defends a constructed set of "Hong Kong core values" reminiscent of colonial influence and the othering of China, and experiments on alternative modes of communal, altruistic living. This new activism has bred new discourses on Hong Kong identity, most notably Horace Chin's theory on Hong Kong as a city-state. This theory recognises Hong Kong's historical, political and cultural uniqueness in two distinct ways: as a vision that positions Hong Kong politically, socially as well as culturally vis-à-vis China, it carries a political dimension that extends beyond existing theories of cultural self-imagination; on the other hand, it is also a somewhat reactionary extension of an anti-CCP sentiment, which displaces the ruling legitimacy of CCP's regime on the land of China by appealing to an even earlier,

Confucian cultural orthodoxy in the pre-Yuan era. Despite numerous controversies around his extremist attitudes and advocacies, Chin's firm root in a local, authochthonous Hong Kong identity suggests that it is becoming more prevalent to dispute the efficacy of uprooted post-identity or multiple citizenship discourse in bringing about social change.

That said, it is not my intention to view China or Hong Kong in any essentialising manner, even if the broad sketches here have had to gloss over more detailed expositions on Hong Kong's political ecology or on the internal splits within the rising social movement. Some interesting phenomena, for instance, are the proliferation and rise of new political groups (which would only mean that parliamentary consensuses would be more difficult to reach) and the facile understanding of ideologies—what it constitutes to be left, right, moderate or radical. However, rather than subscribing rashly to pluralistic, diversified understandings of any identity, the point I stress here is to conduct an "exegesis" that seeks to understand the intricate intersections on political, economic, social and cultural planes in neo-colonial Hong Kong, and to comprehend the fact that the strategies of resistance adopted by some Hongkongers, even if they involve essentialisation, are a reaction against the adverse impacts on their daily life brought by political, economic and discursive pressure from China.

Hence we need to see Hong Kong as being in a neo-colonial interregnum, where the recent wave of social movement, including the Umbrella Revolution, is an important way to reimagine alternative, sustainable modes of living for the future, or in short, to move on and declare its own foothold between the world and China.

It is against this background that I go on to interrogate how Hong Kong English writing has featured, and should feature, in this interregnum. The rest of the dissertation can arguably be read as "activist": in the same spirit as the social

movement to think deeply what it means to live in Hong Kong or see Hong Kong as home, the remaining chapters will also ponder on what it entails to uphold Hong Kong English writing, and how it can contribute to Hong Kong's future by participating in the reimagination of a full-fledged, post-1997 identity. In the next chapter, I shall elaborate on the post-handover language politics in Hong Kong with respect to Mandarin and English. In chapter 6, the final content chapter, many of the issues already discussed in this chapter will be revisited via a comprehensive integration with discussions over the other chapters.

Chapter 2   Unknotting Language Politics in Neo-colonial Hong Kong

Introduction

In the last chapter, I explained how a new form of local identity is arising out of daily material concerns and resource competition in neo-colonial Hong Kong. This does not mean, however, that the new identity is not concerned with language or discourse. In this chapter, I argue that language politics in post-1997 Hong Kong—which involves the complex interplay between (in the spoken register) English, Cantonese and Mandarin,[1] or (in the written register) English, traditional Chinese and simplified Chinese characters—is as much a point of contention as material concerns in Hong Kong's neo-colonial situation and in the construction of the new Hong Kong identity. Under my definition of neo-colonialism, where both former and current colonisers exert continual asymmetric influences on Hong Kong, the linguistic hierarchy of Hong Kong has doubled: English and Mandarin at the top, Cantonese at the bottom. Although these three languages make Hong Kong a triglossic society, they compete with each other for power, prestige and recognition, as seen in this quote by Rey Chow:

> What would it mean for Hong Kong to write itself in its own language? If that language is not English, it is not standard Chinese (Mandarin/Putonghua) either. It would be the "vulgar" language in practical daily use—a combination of Cantonese, broken English, and written Chinese, a language that is often enunciated with jovial irony and cynicism. (Chow, "Between Colonizers" 154-55)

Surely the word "vulgar", whether in the sense of common or crude, has to be put in

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[1] In this dissertation, Mandarin and Putonghua are treated as synonyms, and denote the official spoken variety of Chinese in mainland China.

quotation marks, for they register Hong Kong's unique linguistic configuration: Inasmuch as English and Mandarin have growing importance, it is Cantonese that is still the most widely spoken. There are also sociolinguistic arguments that affirm the value of Chinese-English code-mixing as a unique feature of Hong Kong's rich linguistic diversity, contrary to the "jovial irony and cynicism" it has received so far. Jane Setter et al, for example, see code-mixing as a linguistic practice that nativises English with local norms, and has thus "neutralised the 'alien-ness' or 'other-ness' of English" and contributed to the development of a Hong Kong English (102). The ideal of linguistic purity, for these researchers, is obsolete. Thus, post-1997 Hong Kong is a rich intersection of colonial and post-colonial power play where Mandarin, Cantonese and English compete for different definitions of prestige.

The chapter will have two main sections, one concerning the language politics between Cantonese with Mandarin, and the other with English.[2] The Mandarin section explores how the growing use of Mandarin draws resistance from some Cantonese-speaking Hongkongers. Finally the English section studies Hongkongers' ambivalent attitude towards English—that English is an important language for upward mobility, but is paradoxically seldom found in people's language repertoire. The relationship between the accumulation of linguistic capital and class segregation will also be explored via looking into the Medium of

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[2] Due to the lack of space a section on the hegemony of Cantonese has been edited out. In this section I question how the mainstream Cantonese-speaking identity is often a criterion according to which the South Asian ethnic minorities in Hong Kong are judged for their assimilation in Hong Kong society. Unlike the British colonial days where English-speaking ability would suffice for certain job types, the privileging of Cantonese-speaking ability after the handover has made job prospects worse for many second-generation South Asians in Hong Kong, who lack Chinese proficiency due to the Hong Kong SAR government's long-time neglect on promoting Chinese language education for these ethnic minorities. Social class also plays a role. The wide-spread poverty among these minorities denies them of good education and better job opportunities with a hope of climbing the social ladder; instead, even the most menial job types require Cantonese, making it difficult for them to enter the lowest-paying layer of the job market. Despite Hong Kong's claim as an international city, then, Cantonese is also instrumentalised as a hegemony as far as job prospect is concerned.

Instruction (MOI) policy in schools and its uneven implementation across social classes and geographical districts.

Mandarin Chinese and Hong Kong Identity

I will start with the clash between Mandarin and Cantonese, which closely predicates on China's ongoing control of Hong Kong deliberated in the last chapter.

Mandarin as National Hegemony

In his essay "English, Identity and Critical Literacy", Chinese scholar Weiguo Qu disagrees with arguments made by such linguists as Alastair Pennycook that see English language education as simply a tool of cultural neoimperialism or an enhancement of the power status of English. He thinks that such arguments risk overlooking asymmetrical power relations in individual, intracultural contexts (297-99), and uses China as an example to illustrate how intracultural power dynamics exist in the domination of dialect-turned-national-language Mandarin over all other Chinese dialects, "subjecting all of them to the status of unofficial and 'low' varieties" (299). In line with his call to survey intracultural tensions, I will first analyse the power struggle involved in the national language policy of China, which bifurcates into the spread of Mandarin and simplified Chinese characters.

The simplification of Chinese characters is an artificial process driven by sociopolitical consideration. Simplification began in the 1930s under the rule of Kuomintang (which eventually retreated to Taiwan during the post-World War II civil war), and was systematised and spread throughout the country from 1956 onwards. Proponents of simplified characters cite the ease of communication and the resultant boost in China's literacy rate as advantages, while opponents see simplification as propagandist destruction of the logic and beauty of the traditional writing script as

well as the root of Chinese culture.[3] Even sinologists acknowledge that a lack of knowledge in traditional characters causes a "semi-literacy" that occults students' understanding of classical Chinese literature, since the originals and serious academic discussion outside state-approved interpretations were printed in the traditional script (Churchman, "Confucius"). In recent years, however, some intellectuals have suggested reviving traditional Chinese characters (G. Wang, "Wushi", qtd. in Barmé, "The Chinese Character"), and similar proposals have been put forward at the National People's Congress (NPC) annual meetings by mainland delegates, but to no avail ("Song"; "Taizhi").

The promotion of Mandarin as a national language has drawn a similar but much richer debate. Mandarin effectively becomes a hegemonic tool, rendering regional dialects irrelevant. Moreover, Mandarin's hegemony obviously contradicts the official claim that China is a multi-ethnic and multi-dialectal nation. Research studying Chinese language policy has highlighted the contradiction between PRC's minority language policies and actual practice. Wang and Phillion's comprehensive literature review on the matter reveals that, while Article 4 of the PRC Constitution protects the rights and interests of the minority nationalities, it also prohibits any act that "undermines the unity of the nationalities or instigates division" (3). Considering this logic alongside Article 19, which "promotes the nationwide use of Putonghua", Wang and Phillion endorse the perspective adopted in previous research that the language rights of minorities actually "empower the state rather than minority individuals": "state rights [i.e. national unity and stability] are weightier than individual minority rights" (5).

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[3] For example, the traditional character for love 愛 consists the component for heart 心. The simplified version 爱 has replaced the heart with the component for friend, 友 (Barmé, "The Chinese Character").

As the national standards of the Chinese language, Mandarin and simplified characters are essentially what linguists call the highly-valued (high or H) language/variety, as opposed to other low (L) languages/varieties in a multiglossic society. While different definitions for high/low languages exist, Joshua Fishman's taxonomy in particular differentiates between high/low varieties in terms of the histories of the languages, i.e. classical/vernacular, or of the occasions in which they are spoken, i.e. formal/vernacular (Fishman 4).

Given its national prestige, Mandarin as the H language also becomes a necessity for upward mobility while China hops on the train to economic development and globalisation. Extinction of minority languages in China has accelerated in the last 50 years, because when young minorities move from rural areas to big cities for education and employment, they often abandon their own dialects and cultures, in both formal and informal occasions, in favour of the metropolitan ways of life afforded only by Mandarin (Wang and Phillion 7; Zhou 28; A. Lam, *Language Education* 173; Zuo 84). Even dialects in big cities cannot escape endangerment. The Shanghai government, for example, has had trouble finding proficient speakers of Shanghaiese after the local dialect has been suppressed and "bann[ed] […] in the media and in school" since the 1990s ("Shanghai Struggles").

Mandarin VS Cantonese: Tensions in Hong Kong

The intracultural power struggles within China has also influenced the internal language politics in Hong Kong (and all the more so after 1997), since the handover and change of sovereignty have promoted the rising status of Mandarin, which is now in direct clash with the popular status of Cantonese. Whereas Amy Tsui, writing in 2007, claims that there "was no attempt to include the learning of Putonghua in the school curriculum in Hong Kong" and that Cantonese "had become

the home language of many speakers of other dialects"[4] (132), language policies have changed in recent years to the effect that Mandarin, the national H language of China, competes directly with vernacular Cantonese, the first language of most ethnic Chinese Hongkongers but a mere L dialect[5] in China's national policy, for popularity, status, and prestige. Language politics has become one of the key fields where the anxiety of mainlandisation (the growing influence of mainland culture) looms large.

The threat of Mandarin against the common Cantonese language in post-1997 Hong Kong should first be understood in the complex circuit of historical processes and power politics. In addition to its national recognition, Mandarin is often associated with the neoconfucian educators who escaped to Hong Kong from China in the 20th century to continue their teaching career in Chinese tradition and culture. In this sense, Mandarin gains symbolism as the language of the national Chinese culture. What is more, Mandarin and Cantonese are in many ways mutually unintelligible (J. Li 89, 101). Apart from phonetic differences, a major disparity lies in the influence of Mandarin in the written Chinese language. The modern form of standard written Chinese we write today is largely based on Mandarin vocabulary and grammar, and Hong Kong in general follows this form of standard written

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[4] In fact, it is also valid to consider how Cantonese has edged out other Chinese dialects, and become "the *lingua franca* for all Chinese ethnic groups in Hong Kong" (Tsui 131). Immigrants in the 50s-80s were from Southern China, where Cantonese is only one of the many dialects (albeit a major one) in the region alongside Hakkanese, Teochewese, Taishanese etc. George C. S. Lin's research has mapped out demographic changes of each dialect group and discussed the making of the Chinese diasporic landscape in Hong Kong ("Identity", esp. 151-57).

[5] I am aware that some people oppose to the English word "dialect" as a direct translation of the Chinese term *fangyan* 方言, which literally means "place-speech", when describing intranational language politics in China, because the word unnecessarily dichotomises standard varieties and regional forms of speech (Churchman, "Confucius"). I have, however, kept the term, because the designation of a dialect is a political decision, which is what I would like to stress here.

Chinese.[6] Cantonese, however, does not transcribe directly into modern standard written Chinese[7]—there are discrepancies in diction and syntax. One could therefore notice a linguistic "schizophrenia" that, although the Cantonese spoken in Hong Kong does not follow Mandarin, the written Chinese used in Hong Kong in practice follows the Mandarin-based written form in formal registers in general. Linguists such as David C. S. Li and Nim-yan Wong have opposed to the promotion of written Cantonese as an official written language in Hong Kong, a concrete proposal of which was suggested in the research of linguist Robert Bauer in 1988 (Bauer, "Written Cantonese"; D. Li, "Phonetic Borrowing"; "Dzung Man"). Wong, for example, insists that Hongkongers can speak Cantonese, but should purge Cantonese expressions in writing and learn to write in modern standard written Chinese ("Dzung Man").

In recent years, the influence of Mandarin as well as the presence of simplified characters in Hong Kong has notably increased. While simplified characters may be used in informal handwriting for convenience, most Hong Kong Chinese write traditional characters in formal occasions. In the past few years, some Hong Kong citizens have reacted negatively whenever shops and companies are found to be displaying simplified instead of traditional script, as in the case of an *agnès b.* café and some HSBC premier service centres, whose use of simplified

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[6] Before the 20th century written Chinese was generally in the form of Classical Chinese (*wenyan*), as opposed to vernacular Chinese (*baihua)* which was a transcription of the actual spoken language but was seldom used in formal writing. Because China historically had different dialects, there were different kinds of vernacular Chinese, with the official one being based on Mandarin spoken in present-day Beijing since the 14th century. However, the 1919 May-Fourth Movement dispelled the use of Classical Chinese writing, and instead made official vernacular Chinese the standard written Chinese. This was how the current written Chinese language became aligned with the vocabulary and grammar of spoken Mandarin.

[7] In other words, for any written Chinese sentence, pronouncing it in Mandarin would be comprehensible and natural to the ears of a native Mandarin speaker, but pronouncing it in Cantonese will sound unnatural to a native Cantonese speaker. Cantonese does have its own written scripts but these are discouraged in schools and formal writing.

characters on their menus and display has drawn criticism in newspapers throughout 2012 (Berg, "We're Not That Simple"; S. Cheung and K. Wong, "Store Adds"; Lo and Chong, "Cafe Menus"). In the HSBC case, displaying simplified characters for its most prestigious customers (HSBC Premier) insinuates that non-local, mainland customers are richer and can afford more prestigious services, giving an ironic slap to the bank's motto, "The World's Local Bank".

This tendency is found even in official communications. On 2nd February 2014, a news announcement on the website of the Education Department of Hong Kong was found to have used a simplified character. It was later admitted that the simplified character was a technical error in the process of converting simplified characters to traditional ones ("Dzi Gwong Dong Waa").[8] The suggestion that the announcement was first penned in simplified characters before being converted to traditional for publication, leads some to suspect that even government positions are filled with people from mainland China ("'Gwong Dong Waa'").

In fact, the announcement in question is the Department's apology to an earlier controversy concerning a subpage titled "Language Learning Support" on its website. The original version of this subpage, posted on 24th January 2014, states that Cantonese is "a Chinese dialect that is not an official language" (Tam and Lau, "Education Bureau"), a statement that drew outrage among netizens. Like Shanghainese, Cantonese is also facing threats of linguistic cleansing, when a government proposal in 2010 suggests introducing Mandarin programming on

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[8] The word in question is 精准 (accurate) in simplified version, and 精準 in traditional version. Both 准 and 準 exist as traditional characters but have different collocations. In this case, 準 should have been used, but the published announcement used 准 instead. Online news websites have verified that Microsoft Word does not convert 准 to 準, because 准 is also in the stock of traditional characters ("Dzi Gwong Dong Waa").

television and radio channels in Guangzhou [9] ("Fears of a Lost Dialect"; "Guangdong"). Such initiatives have also begun to spill over to Hong Kong. There is little doubt that language policy in post-handover Hong Kong is shaped by the agenda to facilitate its "reunification" with China and reconstruct a state-defined Chineseness in Hong Kong (Tsui, 136; Bolton, "Language Policy" 235). Mandarin becomes a compulsory subject in schools in 1998; and in 2003, a governmental advisory committee proposes a long term goal to encourage using Mandarin, instead of Cantonese, to teach the Chinese language subject (Bolton, "Language Policy" 234). Mandarin has, in this way, elevated its high status from a mere academic subject in schools to the preferred medium of instruction in first language education. More and more schools have started to teach in Mandarin in recent years, with media statistics putting the percentage of such schools at 35% ("Jau Siu Hok"). Proponents point out that teaching Chinese writing in Mandarin is beneficial, because the grammar in standard written Chinese is the same as the grammar of oral Mandarin (*ibid.*). There is also a rising but alerting trend in middle-class Hong Kong parents to prioritise English and Mandarin as the usual language for their children, usually by putting them in international schools or English primary schools that teach only in English and Mandarin, but not in Cantonese ("Gong Haai"). These parents consider this a necessary sacrifice to maximise the children's exposure to English and Mandarin, often at the expense of curbing their knowledge in Cantonese. A random- and small-sampled survey by a local newspaper indicates that the majority of parents think that Mandarin is more important and has wider use than Cantonese (*ibid.*).

　　Although the overwhelming majority still uses Cantonese as a first language, we see here the danger in the opinion of the likes of Nim-yan Wong. She treats

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[9] The old Anglicised name for Guangzhou is "Canton", which of course forms the root of the word "Cantonese".

written language and spoken language separately, and believes using standard written Chinese under Mandarin grammar has no effect on the vitality of Cantonese in Hong Kong. In reality, the H status of Mandarin—as well as the accompanying prestige, social status and career opportunities associated to its national status in China—has propelled pragmatic middle-class parents to abandon Cantonese in favour of the accumulation of linguistic and cultural capital associated with Mandarin. The belief that Mandarin instruction at school benefits Chinese writing skills, in effect, jeopardises the first-language status of Cantonese and embodies complicity in perpetuating the violence of the state's linguistic agenda that promotes a homogenous, state-defined national identity and erases the richness and vitality of the Chinese dialects and culture. The bourgeois aspiration of upward mobility, through the equipment of linguistic capital in preparation for the accumulation of financial wealth, consolidates the hegemony of a national *lingua franca*.

Resistance against Mandarin and the Building of Hong Kong Identity

In response to the increasing appearance of simplified characters in Hong Kong, legislators Claudio Mo and Gary Fan formed a "HK First" movement in 2013, and have written a declaration that proclaims their cherishment of "Hong Kong's lifestyle characteristics [which] include the use of traditional Chinese characters, Cantonese and traditional phonetic translation between English and Cantonese", not unlike Horace Chin's theory of autonomous city-state mentioned in the previous chapter ("HK First"). Their effort is criticised by pro-Beijing legislator Kwok-him Ip for excluding mainland culture from Hong Kong's multicultural image; he further claims that the decision to use simplified characters is unrelated to politics and is a matter of business freedom for the shops and restaurants concerned (K. Ip, "Do Jyn Man Faa"). Commentators have however rebutted that, first of all, the CCP's

implementation of simplified characters has been from the start a political decision that eventually leads to the wipe-out of traditional characters in mainland China, and second, the problem lies in the bigger displays of simplified characters over traditional ones (in the HSBC case) or even the absence of traditional ones, contrary to Hong Kong's common practice of writing (Hui, "Gaan Tai Dzi"). Simplified characters are seen as another CCP policy to damage the orthodox Chinese culture with mostly artificially and allegedly irrationally formed characters.

The "HK First" movement shows that resistance against the growing prominence of Mandarin and simplified characters in Hong Kong is intrinsically linked to the project of building a local Hong Kong identity that takes pride in certain aspects of Hong Kong culture. This is where Horace Chin's thesis of cultural orthodoxy, mentioned in chapter 1, returns. His main argument—that Hong Kong and Southern China is the actual cultural orthodoxy of Chinese culture—now carries a linguistic dimension which asserts that traditional Chinese characters and Cantonese are in fact the linguistic orthodoxy of China.

Phonological evidence describing how Cantonese sounds have developed through history has also strengthened this view. The argument is that old Mandarin, the predecessor of modern Mandarin, was a language based on northern dialects under the rule of the Jurchens in the Jin dynasty (AD 1115-1234) and of the Mongols in the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368). The Jurchens, historically considered a mere foreign tribe that lived in the northeast area of Manchuria (which is in the northeast of modern-day China), invaded China in the Northern Song dynasty in 1126-27. The rest is history: the Jurchens beat the imperial Chinese government and ruled over the northern plains of China as the Jin dynasty, while the Song court moved south to become Southern Song dynasty; both were later conquered by the Mongols who used to reside further north, and who ruled the Chinese territory as the Yuan dynasty. It

was during the Yuan dynasty and in the dynasties that followed that the Mandarin-based Peking dialect was spread throughout the whole country as the language of the officials (*guanhua*, which then became *baihua*).

Thus, in the eyes of Chin and some other Hongkongers, Mandarin is always the language of the foreign invaders, and Cantonese, being the descendant of the Song Dynasty, is the closer linguistic orthodoxy of Chinese culture. Some linguistic evidence may support this: classical Chinese poetry, written mostly in Middle Chinese in the golden ages of Han (206 BC-AD 220), Tang (AD 618-907) and Song (960-1279) dynasties, rhymes more closely and reads more naturally in modern Cantonese than in Mandarin. This is because the Yue dialect group in southern China, to which Cantonese belongs, has retained most features of Middle Chinese while Mandarin has lost these features, such as the word-final plosive consonants (/p/, /t/ and /k/) and the distinction of the eight tones in Middle Chinese[10] (Norman 212, 216; C. Tang 30; J. Li 91). In addition, the meanings of some words in Middle Chinese have been lost in Mandarin but retained in Cantonese (J. Li 91-93). Recovering this trajectory of linguistic evolution, these Hongkongers have used this discourse to foster their resistance against the hegemony of Mandarin. They displace Mandarin from its national legitimacy and cultural orthodoxy by claiming that Mandarin is the language of foreign invaders, while Cantonese is a descendant of Middle Chinese and is thus closer to the rich canon of classical Chinese literature and scriptures.[11]

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[10] As a tonal language, the four basic tones in Ancient Chinese (level, rising, departing and entering) split into as many as eight tones in different varieties of Middle Chinese, which subsequently merged back into the four-tone system in the Peking dialect upon which modern Mandarin was based (P. Ting 151).

[11] It must be noted that phonological research has already provided contradictory evidence to the alleged orthodoxy of Cantonese. Pang-hsin Ting even claims that "[a]ll scholars of Chinese phonology agree that proto-Wu [a dialect family in Zhejiang province where Shanghai is located] is a direct descendant of Ancient Chinese" (P. Ting 155). Other scholars have posited the nuanced view that modern Cantonese is a non-linear, organic mixture of northern Chinese dialects and southern aboriginal languages (Deng and Wang 147-48). Jingzhong Li even goes so far as to claim that

As I have written in chapter 1, upholding any orthodoxy of Chinese culture only makes sense strictly in the context of countering PRC's attempts to subordinate Hong Kong under its economic, cultural, and now linguistic domination. What is notable in this strategy is that it serves to recover the historical prestige of Cantonese, and thereby questions the national prestige and validity of Mandarin as the H variety among all spoken varieties of Chinese. In other words, it displaces the H status of Mandarin by arguing that Cantonese, due to its linguistic affinity with Middle Chinese, is a better candidate as the H variety of Chinese.

To summarise, despite vast linguistic differences between Cantonese and Mandarin, the promotion of Mandarin and the classification of Cantonese as a mere dialect are political causes that underpin the rise of Mandarin's status in Hong Kong. Many Hongkongers are unwilling to submit to the hegemonic threat of Mandarin, "find[ing] it difficult now not to be subdued in another potentially colonial situation wherein much of society treats *putonghua* as the language of the new master […]" (Law 56). That there is a struggle to recognise Putonghua as the new H language serves as another example of many Hongkongers' self-perceived distinctive cultural identity, which is accompanied by an understanding of the complex historical factors that shaped such linguistic changes.

English and Class in Hong Kong

Having examined the threatening prominence of Mandarin in Hong Kong and Hongkongers' resistance to it, the remainder of the chapter will look at the privileging of the English language.

The relationship between the languages of European colonisers (English,

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Cantonese is a separate and independent language alongside modern Mandarin, not a dialect within a Chinese nation (J. Li 101-06).

French, Dutch and Spanish) and the indigenous languages of the colonial world is also one between H and L languages: the H language is often the one with international prestige or the one preferred by the powerful, dominant, elite sector of the society. Some other definitions of the H/L distinction, such as Carol Myers-Scotton's, designate that the low variety should be the mother tongue of the population while the high variety should not be featured in informal speech (Myers-Scotton 408-11).[12] These criteria are applicable to Hong Kong. In a metropolis whose colonial history is dedicated to trading, commerce and financial activities, English proficiency often functions, explicitly or implicitly, as what Elaine Ho calls "the language of educational advantage and elite social status" (E. Ho, "Connecting" 2), or in short, as the H language. As a marker of global privilege and status, English ability has been a much sought-after skill among parents and students in both schools or used in official circumstances. This demand for English skills mirrors the evolution of the role of English language worldwide. For linguist David Crystal, English maintains its present-day world status because it transforms itself from being a colonial language, epitomised in the expansion of British colonial power, to an international language promoted with the emergence of the US as the leading power of neoliberal economy (*English as a Global Language* 59). This historical trajectory is relevant in explaining the popular demand for EMI schools (schools that teach non-Chinese subjects in English; see below) in Hong Kong: just as Hong Kong could have forgotten the language of the coloniser upon its return to China, English continues to haunt as a desideratum due to its significance as the language of global commerce and communication (D. So 22).

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[12] Myers-Scotton's definition employs frequency of use as a criterion of high/low language, but this is not always the case; in Canada where diglossia involves English and French, English as the high, official language is also the most commonly spoken language.

In the following, however, the focus will shift to nuancing the concept of power and privilege among languages through two main ideas: first, the uneven access to this linguistic privilege across social classes, and second, the rivalry between languages to compete under different rubrics of linguistic prestige. In the latter, I will argue that Cantonese is still the common language for the majority of the Hong Kong public because it is a marker of community and solidarity, and thus enjoys a "covert prestige" that enables it to counteract widespread general demand for English proficiency in Hong Kong. The result is that English proficiency varies across social class and districts, as seen from evidence in English language education. My discussion will be guided by this paradigm to interrogate the intersections between English's changing privilege, social perception and the education system of Hong Kong.

Linguistic Imperialism: An Overview

To contextualise the global spread of English, from its being a colonial language to an international language of neoliberalism according to Crystal, it is important to understand how linguistic imperialism and the global spread of English are interconnected with class and access issues. Frantz Fanon is one of the first scholars to notice the relationship between language and imperialism. In "The Negro and Language", he makes the famous statement that "[t]o speak means […] above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of civilisation. […] To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture" ("The Negro" 127, 137), a statement which unfortunately attracts misreading often.[13] He gives the example that "[t]he Negro of

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[13] For example, Bill Ashcroft writes that "[t]he key to this astute perception is the term 'take on'. […] Mastering the master's language has been a key strategy of self-empowerment in all post-colonial societies […] Cultural capital always presents itself as dominant: the 'proper', 'correct', 'civilized', way to behave. But this very dominance means that its appropriation by the colonial subject can be empowering" (*Post-Colonial Transformation* 57-58). Ashcroft believes in the transformative power of

the Antilles will be proportionately whiter – *that is, he will come closer to being a real human being* – in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language. […] The Antilles Negro who wants to be white will be the whiter as he gains greater mastery of the cultural tool that language is" (*ibid.*, emphasis added). For Fanon, civilisation is not attainable unless through the coloniser's language, as in the metaphor of the jungle: "The colonised is elevated above his [sic] jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle" (*ibid.* 127). Or, we can also say, he becomes whiter as he enters civilisation.

The phrase "in proportion to his adoption" point to a class structure and the creation of an in-between class that is neither the black jungle nor the white civilisation. Fanon further observes how some Antillean and Martinician middle-class families forbid and ridicule the use of dialect and creole except to servants (*ibid.* 128). This linguistic or cultural deracination, he explains, helps "contribute to *a feeling of equality* with the European and his achievements" (*ibid.* 131, italics added). Fanon is obviously more concerned with the phenomenon in which the coloniser's language becomes the kind of cultural capital that discriminates against the primitive colonised in the jungle, that helps mark class segregation, and that serves as the sole criterion of civilisation.

Although Fanon has already flagged up this issue in 1952, the issue of class has not received much critical enthusiasm within the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) research. The predominant focus in this field so far is to

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using the coloniser's language for self-empowerment, but he does not realise that the parameters of this empowerment are defined by a hegemony of European civilisation. He does not recognise the inherent violence in coercing the colonised into speaking foreign languages through imperialism and globalisation, nor does he solve the crucial injustice between the colonised who need to speak a foreign language to assert themselves, and the coloniser who already is a human being and whose native language carries the ability to empower other people.

dehegemonise standard English "not by rejecting the idea of a standard, but by working towards broadening the standard to include the greatest variety possible" (Boyle, "Linguistic Imperialism" 72).[14] The resistance in the field to interrogate the problems of this global English ideology is captured by Joseph and Ramani:

> The anonymous power of the 'culture' of the hegemony of English, backed by widespread silence from the ELT community, and reinforced by occasional articulated support for it by ELT specialists, might seem quite daunting for anyone attempting to support a counter-culture redefining the role of English and therefore of globalism. (194)

As early as the mid-1980s, however, some sociolinguists have already warned that English, the current candidate for a global language, is fraught with shaky celebrations of its emancipatory power. A prominent critic in this regard is Alastair Pennycook, who, in *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language* (1994) and *English and the Discourses of Colonialism* (1998), uses the Asian examples of Singapore, Malaysia, and Hong Kong to illustrate that the spread of English over the globe has not been neutral or void of ideology, but often helps fan imperialist discourses. Such discourses are intertwined with the triumph of capitalism

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[14] The prime models in this field, also known as World Englishes (WE), are Braj Kachru's three concentric circles and Marko Modiano's framework of International English.

    In Kachru's model, the Inner Circle is native English-speaking countries such as the UK or the US; the Outer Circle includes countries where English has been a *lingua franca* due to a historical cause, such as India and Nigeria; and the Expanding Circle, the circle at the outmost layer, represents countries where English has no historical or governmental presence, but has been used as a language of international communication, such as China and Japan (94).

    Modiano's model improves upon Kachru's, and creates a common core of International English where all varieties of English share linguistic features that "function well in cross-cultural communication" (Modiano 25). This core is surrounded by other petals, each of which represents a distinct native or non-native variety of English. These models intend to improve the marginalisation of non-native users of English and "dismantle the mind-set of the mother-tongue speaker as someone who enjoys positions of privilege" (*ibid.*).

    Addressing more practical questions, Prayag D. Tripathi criticizes Modiano's model that it depends too much "on response and reaction to assumed superiority, on historical developments, and on how we achieve the unity and equality of people from different areas" (34).

and the penetration of Western media that has ended up exacerbating inequalities between social classes. Because English is so embedded in the world as the perceived common language of science and commerce, the lack of access to English affects students' potential for social mobility.

At the turn of the millennium, however, there is "a growing body of socioeconomic studies that address glaring disparities in language learning opportunities between rich and poor and that shed light on a good number of low-income-family children who are distanced from language education and social mobility" (Kobayashi 3). For instance, educationist Monica Heller argues that the current era of late capitalism provides new ways for former colonial powers to "reconstitute their former empires as economic markets and to recast the former language of empire as a neutral and equitable means for gaining access to the global economy" (Heller 105). Because language is deeply connected with the development of economy and production, it too becomes a commodity to be "produced, controlled, distributed, valued, and constrained" (108), demanding our critical attention on the tensions between "regional class dynamics and the globalized linguistic market" (109). Arguing along a similar line, Kobayashi Yoko deplores the phenomenon in which "many scholars and laypeople are either united as believers in this global English capital, or at least engage in the (re-)production of public discourse that aligns English with globalization" (2). Using Japan as an example, she tracks how the current demand of English education throughout Japan is seen as a solution to recover from the current economic recession, despite that problem of access bars lower-class and middle-class Japanese from "stable, white-collar, 'global' jobs with career advancement prospects" (2). Piller and Cho's research on South Korea questions the way neoliberalism links English and the socioeconomic order together, and naturalises English as the language of global competitiveness (Piller and Cho 24).

The IMF-imposed policies to cut public spending and privatise public services after the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis has incepted into the South Korean education system structures of competition regarding English proficiency, where test results "entrench the inequalities between those for whom proficiency in English opens doors and those for whom lack of proficiency in English closes doors" (25-29). They conclude that the spread of English is a "systematic, organized, and orchestrated policy"—instigated by neoliberalism, instituted by the state and abetted by universities—that seizes the chance of economic insecurity to create an illusion of meritocracy in which "English has been institutionalized as one of the terrains where individuals and institutions must compete to be deemed meritorious" (38-39).

Collaborative Promotion of the English Ideology in Hong Kong

I will now turn my attention to the situation of English in Hong Kong, and show that English is treated ambivalently in this metropolis—its development has always been in competition with Cantonese and Chinese. As observed in Fanon's writing, language is often the means by which the local, elite, comprador class promulgate further social segregation between themselves and the working class, on top of the hierarchy between the ruling class of colonisers and the colonised locals. English, on the one hand, has unquestioned high symbolic prestige in Hong Kong as the language of international communication; on the other hand, its penetration and usage in daily life is uneven among different social classes and geographical districts.

Scholars have long advocated a nuanced view that colonialism is never carried out top-down in a single direction, but always requires the collaboration of the local people in their desire and campaign for English education, and thus a joint promotion between the coloniser and the colonised on the privileged status of English (e.g. Bolton, "Language Policy" 225; Sweeting and Vickers 126-27). Wing

Sang Law's monograph on collaborative colonialism, which I introduced in the last chapter, also argues how the collaborative production of the "cash-value" of English in Hong Kong sheds light on the creation of an internal class hierarchy among the Hong Kong Chinese. Due to a desire for knowledge in Western affairs and languages during the "Western Affairs Movement" in China between 1861-95, an English-medium Western education in Hong Kong gradually "gained importance as cultural capital by producing Chinese elite who had beyond-Hong Kong influence" (45-46). The job prospects and "cash-value" of English competence guaranteed bilingual school graduates in Hong Kong with career paths in civil service, commerce and translation around the world (Law 45-47). It is based on the cash-value of English that Law argues English education in Hong Kong renders the colonial language as a class marker and "as statist, elitist, and prejudicial against the vernacular" (37):

> The efforts of these emerging Hong Kong-based Chinese elite to defend English-language instruction amounted to a highly class-conscious act in which the English language was used as much as a vehicle for imposing cultural domination of one race on another as a cultural capital effectuating class segregation within the same dominated race. (50)

The class segregation here involves a historical distinction between an early, pre-World War II Hong Kong identity limited to the wealthy Chinese, versus a mainland Chinese label given to poor Chinese immigrants. A "segregated education conducted in the English language […] came to embody a new cultural or even moral capital", as seen in two petitions attached in Enclosure No. 2 in the 1902 Report of the Committee on Education. Both petitions, one by wealthy Hong Kong Chinese parents and one by European parents, argued against the "undesirable

mingling" of European and mainland Chinese students in St. Stephen's Boys School, citing different civil standards in those students from mainland China (Law 50-53). As such, he concludes, "[t]he cultural segregation between the privileged Chinese and the marginalized Chinese generated tensions that increasingly superimposed themselves on the existing racial cleavage between the Europeans and the Chinese" (54). The privilege of English language has brought the Europeans in agreement with the elite local Chinese in maintaining social class exclusion against the mainland Chinese.

In spite of the change of the role of English from a colonial language to a global language, what has remained unchanged till now is its function as a broad marker of symbolic status and social prestige. What *has* changed in the course of Hong Kong's gradual development into a metropolis of seven million population and the birth of a neo-colonial Hong Kong identity, is that the binary between class and geographical origin—that between wealthy Hong Kong Chinese versus poor mainland immigrants—is split into two binaries: first, Hongkongers who enjoy generally wider English exposure versus mainland Chinese,[15] and second, wealthy Hongkongers versus lower class Hong Kong families. In examining the latter of these binaries, I will use the Second Chinese Movement and the Medium of Instruction (MOI) policy as examples that illustrate how the desire for English proficiency intersects on identity and class segregation between the elites and the general working class.

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[15] While I have no wish to delve into the first of these binaries, a brief but interesting illustration can be found in Horace Chin's book, *A Theory of Hong Kong City-state Autonomy*, mentioned in Chapter 1. The tagline of this book, which constructs a theory of Hong Kong identity, is written in English: "Forget China, Hong Kong comes first" (16, see also the plurk). This interesting switch from the book's Chinese medium to a finger-snapping tagline in the fashionable English language strategically exemplifies Chin's call to recover Hong Kong's unique embrace of Eastern and Western cultures, and takes advantage of code-switching as a common linguistic habit of the Hong Kong Chinese to strengthen his idea of a distinctively Hong Kong and non-PRC Chinese identity.

The Second Chinese Movement

That English used to be the sole official language of administration and governance—and hence the default language/medium of instruction in many schools[16]—was challenged by the two Chinese Language Movements in the 1970s. In the first movement, Chinese became an official language in 1974 after six years of protests and demonstrations. The second movement is less often mentioned by academics, but is to my mind equally important.

After 1974, the colonial government paid only lip service to Chinese's official status. The spark of the second movement came from Paragraph 6.2 of a 1978 white paper titled *The Development of Senior Secondary and Tertiary Education*:

> […] school candidates for the Advanced Level Examination of the
> University of Hong Kong should have obtained, at one sitting of the
> Certificate of Education Examination,[17] at least Grade C in two
> subjects and Grade E in four other subjects or, alternatively, Grade C
> in four subjects and Grade E in one other subject, *including English*.
> (16; ch. 6, par. 6.2, my italics)

The phrase "including English" was taken to mean that a pass in English—but not in the other official language, Chinese—is a necessary qualification to sit for the A Levels and thus to enter the most prestigious university in Hong Kong, the

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[16] This is a general statement. Many historical research have shown that the earliest development of education in Hong Kong involved inconsistent policies on language of instruction (see Bickley, "British"; Bickley, "Contribution"; Boyle; Sweeting and Vickers).

[17] The Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) was Hong Kong's version of the GCSE. The Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE) was the equivalent of GCSE A Levels.

University of Hong Kong (HKU). Hence the controversy was that some believed the top university of Hong Kong had taken the lead to derogate the importance of Chinese (Szeto 228-29). Teachers, secondary and university students launched a full-fledged protest movement, proposing that passes in both Chinese and English at the HKCEE become entry requirements to the A-Levels (Hong Kong Federation of Students 172-73), and making three declarations on Chinese education: to supervise the government's recognition of Chinese's official status, to allow Chinese as a medium of instruction in secondary schools in Hong Kong and to improve the teaching quality of both the Chinese language and the English language (Szeto 229).

Except for the repletion of the language requirement to the A Levels, the movement achieved little and was considered a failure as the passion began to fade out in 1982. Siu-tong Kwok, later a History professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), reflects on the movement's failure and gathers that one or two individual events cannot stimulate enough fundamental discussion "to change the values and views of Hong Kong citizens" (174, my translation). Judging from the movement's goal to raise the importance of Chinese among the general society, one can deduce that the prevailing "values" against the movement was the firm belief that English was more important than Chinese. Indeed, while schools used to be classified into two types—English-medium Anglo-Chinese schools and Chinese-medium Chinese middle schools—Chinese middle schools had been on decline after World War II, suggesting the effect of not only governmental policies that promoted English-language classrooms, but also the general public's preference for such a learning environment. Kwok also contrasts the social reality between the first and second Chinese Language Movements, commenting that whereas the first

movement from 1968-74 encompassed a spirit of anti-colonialism[18] that easily attracted the participation of students and the general public, the 1970s saw the government's adoption of a softer approach of governance, the development of mass media and the 1973-74 global stock market crash, which brought an atmosphere of utilitarianism and hedonism in the Hong Kong society (175).

The second movement, or rather its failure, has managed to shed light on a key aspect of sociolinguistic reality of Hong Kong: the Hong Kong public is caught in a conundrum in which Chinese and English compete for significance in schools. Any attempt to increase the proportion of Chinese used in schools, whether in the 1979 movement or in the 1998 MOI debate discussed below, would always bring out worries from the public on the students' lowering English ability.[19]

The Medium of Instruction (MOI) Policy

After the Chinese Language Movement and before 1994, secondary schools in Hong Kong were more or less allowed to choose their own medium of instruction under a laissez-faire policy. However, in light of the high number of schools that claimed to teach in English but actually adopted a mixed-code medium,[20] a streaming policy was introduced from 1994 to 1998 to stream all secondary schools

[18] Indeed, the initial protests in the first movement, in 1968, came after the anti-colonial riots of 1967.

[19] Interestingly, declining English proficiency is another common obsession among the Hong Kong people. It was already used as one of the reasons to oppose the second Chinese-language movement, in 1979, although research has shown that it was the poor pedagogy of English education that was to blame ("Gau Gau Dzung Man (Dzuk)"). In the English Proficiency Index published by commercial company Education First (EF), Hong Kong drops from its initial position of 12th place in the 2011 index (based on the results of a free online test between 2007-09) to 25th place in the 2012 index (based on the results of the same test between 2009-11) (EF Education First). In the latter index, Hong Kong also ranks the lowest among the five countries where English is an official language (Singapore, Malaysia, India and Pakistan).

[20] Over 90% of secondary schools in Hong Kong allegedly labelled themselves as EMI schools before 1998 (D. So 17).

into EMI (English as Medium of Instruction) and CMI schools (Chinese as Medium of Instruction) (A. Poon et al. 946). In 1998, the post-handover Hong Kong Government announced a compulsory policy stipulating that, apart from 112 secondary schools (roughly one-fourth of all secondary schools) that were allowed to teach all non-Chinese-related subjects[21] in English, all other schools must use Chinese for all subjects except English at the junior secondary level (Secondary 1-3).

Although the promotion of mother tongue education affirmed once again the rising status of Chinese in a post-1997 environment, this could not offset the fierce social debate created by the policy among the general public. Despite remedial measures to allocate more resources to English teaching, such as increasing the quota of English teachers and employing native English-speaking teachers, the compulsory Chinese-medium policy drew heavy concern on the detrimental effects of the lack of exposure to an English-speaking environment in CMI schools (Bolton, "Language Policy" 231-33). After 12 years in running, in 2010, the compulsory policy gave way to a fine-tuning policy, which revised the list of EMI schools, allowed CMI schools some degree of flexibility to spend up to 25% of each lesson time in English, and to provide an English-teaching environment to some of their English-capable students.

While it is not my intention to reproduce the whole MOI polemic here, one thing that most researchers agree is that, given the deep-rooted perception of the vitality of English proficiency, parents and sometimes students themselves desire an EMI environment no matter how hard the government promotes the mother tongue hypothesis (i.e. that it is best to learn in a child's mother tongue). Daniel So comments accurately that "it is exactly because the Hong Kong children's English has been found wanting that they are being sent by their parents to EMI schools to

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[21] i.e. Chinese Language, Chinese Literature, Chinese History, and Mandarin.

further their secondary education. If their children could pick up English at home or in the streets, we will not have to grapple with this vexing issue of MOI today" (20). Poon et al.'s research on the preliminary effect of the fine-tuning policy also reports contrasting desire on the part of EMI students surveyed to be placed in EMI classes despite the difficulty they face in learning English (953). Even a questionnaire survey done by the Education Department in 1999 reveals a bleak picture: students, teachers and principals in CMI schools agree that teaching in Chinese enhances lesson participation, while many EMI school teachers and principals concede that only a fraction of students are capable to learn in English, and that teacher-student interaction outside classroom is rarely done in English ("Gaau Hok", my translation). Despite this, about 40% of CMI students think that studying in a CMI school has branded them with the mark of "second-class" students, and the same percentage of parents of CMI students wish that their children's school switch to an EMI environment (*ibid.*).

The attitude of these teachers, students, parents, and even researchers, towards English is a conventional one, best represented by this quote from Poon et al: as an international financial centre, Hong Kong "cannot afford to see the further dip of English" that, for these people, has been happening since the early 80s, and whether students like it or not they need to "master this important tool" lest they "be missed out in the era of globalization" (953). Many researchers automatically believe in the global function of English and tend to argue about the efficacy of learning through English, but few question how this belief has configured Hong Kong society along class lines.

English, Access and Hierarchy

Along this line it is helpful to consult the works of Angel Lin, who has

constantly challenged head-on the problem of unequal access to English among Hong Kong students, displaying an admirable concern about "the barriers that [… bar] the provision of equal educational opportunities for all schoolchildren, so as to develop their potential and to ensure a better socioeconomic future for them" ("Bilingualism" 52). Like Wing Sang Law, Lin also notices the formation of an elite, bilingual class that "enjoys social and economic benefits second only to the small, English-speaking ruling class", and "serves as a model for the growing aspirations of the majority" ("Bilingualism" 61). However, she takes a step further to interrogate the channels of access to this elite class via language education. While the elite class is a model for aspirations, most of the time it remains a dream because the majority of Hong Kong people lack access to the necessary cultural capital to acquire English proficiency. The popularisation of secondary education in Hong Kong, seen in the fact that English usually has the highest number of lessons in schools per week, does not come with a wise investment of educational resources for students to learn and teachers to teach in English. The 1994 policy that streams schools into EMI and CMI has caused further segregation, perpetuating "the lack of symbolic resources for the majority of children" ("Bilingualism" 76). Her sample analysis of English classroom discourse reveals that inadequate teaching resources and inappropriate teaching methods further alienate Cantonese-dominant students, "pushing them further away from any possibility of developing an interest in English as a language and culture that they can appropriate for their own communicative and sociocultural purposes" ("Lively" 76).

The core problem, in short, is that being confined to an English-speaking environment in schools, many Chinese children in Hong Kong, particularly those from underprivileged socioeconomic backgrounds, are living in an "insulated Cantonese sociocultural world", "where it is impossible and unnatural to use English:

Their parents cannot speak English, understand English television, or read English newspapers and magazines" ("Lively" 65; "Bilingualism" 62). Although this "insulated Cantonese world" has established their "local Cantonese-based Chinese cultural identity", it also cuts them off from English-speaking opportunities ("Lively" 65). Unless they and their families undertake a huge sacrifice, which involves among other things fees for extra tuition classes or increased commuting costs to and from school, they are trapped in "a frustrating dilemma where they universally recognise the importance of English for their future but at the same time have little access to the symbolic capital necessary for successfully acquiring it" ("Bilingualism" 62-63).

The result, she contends, is a form of outright social injustice which she terms "elitism-without-meritocracy" ("Bilingualism" 76). Hong Kong is a "bitterly divided society" where only the children of the upper- and upper-middle class Hong Kong elites "can become members of the elite", because they are the ones who have functional bi/trilingual skills and have "access to socioeconomically important identities like international/cosmopolitan, a professional/business executive, or a linguistic and cultural broker in the booming China trade activities" ("Lively" 80, 77). That is to say, the possession of the linguistic capital of English is a key to acquiring other forms of symbolic capital. All parties involved in language teaching, be it policy planners, language teachers or academic researchers, should understand the symbolic domination of English through, first, "the formation of a universally recognised, unified, legitimised symbolic market", and second, "the perpetuation of the uneven distribution of symbolic capital across different social groups, with the dominated group having the most limited access to symbolic resources" ("Bilingualism" 76).

Sandwiched between the elite class and the working class is the bourgeois middle class. Before Mandarin came to be identified as a desirable language for the

children of middle-class Hong Kong parents, it was English that was, and still is, imposed on some young Hong Kong children, whose parents believed in the advantages of making English their children's first language. An SCMP article in 2010 records "a growing number of local Hong Kong parents", who are usually not fully proficient in spoken English, but "have decided to give their children a head start in life by trying to make English their native tongue", much to the dismay of linguists interviewed in that article (Yu, "The Quest"). Although the monolingual myth is detrimental to the development of "a child's sense of cultural identity and belonging", many of the linguists' opinions miss the fact that these Hong Kong parents, such as those interviewed in the article, "have little faith in the local education system" and aim to send their children "into an international school and study abroad" in the future (*ibid.*). A typical display of some Hongkongers' pragmaticism, identity formation becomes secondary here and can be sacrificed for more practical concerns like getting "a ticket to good schools and jobs, as well as a status symbol" (*ibid.*). The linguistic hierarchy in colonial times is inherited in neo-colonial Hong Kong where English as the language of globalisation is still the language of the elite. The effort of surrounding their children with an English-only environment is a bourgeois response to the overwhelming Cantonese-speaking environment in Hong Kong, and their prerogative in avoiding a Cantonese-insulated world commonly associated with the lower class which Angel Lin has discussed.

My use of Angel Lin's argument here to underline issues of class segregation in the access to English education also hopes to counter Kingsley Bolton's premature celebration of the shift from what he calls "elitist bilingualism" to "mass bilingualism" after the 1980s ("The Sociolinguistics" 34). He insists that "the majority of the student population in Hong Kong have become increasingly cosmopolitan" through English and the Internet ("Hong Kong English" 12). Indeed,

census data seem to support this: In 1966, government census reports that over 20% of the population could speak some English[22] (Hong Kong, Commissioner for Census and Statistics, *Hong Kong Report on the 1966 By-Census*; vol. 1, XI; par. 15.9), and 25 years later in 1991, when language ability once again becomes a census item, only 29.4% of respondents claims to speak English as a second language (HK, Census and Statistics Department, *Hong Kong 1991 Population Census Main Report* 45). The figure is subsequently risen to 45.1%[23] in 2011 (*ibid.*, *ibid.*, *2011 Population Census Interactive Data Dissemination Service*).

The problem of this claim of mass bilingualism is that it is supported only by a shaky and slippery class analysis. For example, Bolton notes that

> In many 'ordinary' families in Hong Kong […] [a] large proportion of undergraduates at the University of Hong Kong and other universities have part-time jobs as English tutors […]
>
> Many of the lower-middle class and working-class children at local universities […] often have little chance to speak English, but when they graduate from university and begin work in the business sector, as the majority increasingly do, they find an immediate use for spoken English. ("Hong Kong English" 12)

Despite the optimism, Bolton does not give concrete numbers of these university students who either give English tuition or come from an underprivileged background. He also cites his own surveys in the 1990s that claim that 57% of the

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[22] The methodology of this census is amusing, to say the least. The data coding conventions reveal that the determination of whether one speaks English is based on the successful comprehension and intelligible response to two arguably not very challenging questions in the census interview: "Do you understand English?" and "Where did you learn it?" (Hong Kong, Commissioner for Census and Statistics, *Hong Kong Report on the 1966 By-Census*; vol. 1, XXIV).

[23] The figure for 2011 is my own calculation based on the population aged 5 or above and excluding foreign domestic helpers and mute persons.

sample had close relatives in an English-speaking country (*ibid.*), without establishing how this would help raise students' English proficiency. Overall, he is too hasty in debunking the myth about Hong Kong's falling English standards. Careful attention is needed to scrutinise the problem of access to English education across social classes.

Uneven Access across Districts

The inequality in the attainment of English proficiency across social class can be further substantiated by an examination of uneven access to EMI education in Hong Kong. While Angel Lin looks at class segregation from qualitative data, a quantitative approach would indicate trends across geographical districts. This is noticeably not the main focus on the MOI debate so far, given the scant material and mostly cursory discussion available. For example, Anthony Sweeting has only briefly mentioned that the 114 EMI schools are "unevenly distributed" across districts, citing fifteen EMI schools in the Kowloon City district versus one in the Sai Kung district as an example (Sweeting, *Education* 536). However, the 18 districts of Hong Kong have different sizes and populations (and thus different numbers of Primary 6 students each year), and a simple comparison of the number of schools is unfair.

Instead, the most piercing critique on the geographical injustice of the EMI policy comes from a paper written in Chinese by education scholar Wing-kwong Tsang. Using data from the 1998-99 school year,[24] Tsang compared the percentage

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[24] It is arguably more difficult to conduct the same kind of analysis with data from recent years. The fine-tuning policy introduced in 2010 has obscured the principles in determining EMI schools. The Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS), which was first introduced in 1991 but underwent drastic changes in its purview, allows schools to charge exorbitant tuition fees on top of a one-off government grant, and to choose their own medium of instruction, effectively excluding them from the EMI/CMI debate. Finally, while students' applications for secondary schools are centrally processed with an allocation mechanism, there used to be about 10% discretionary places that allow schools to admit students of their choice; this percentage of discretionary places has risen to about 30% recently, thus increasing

opportunities for students in each of the 18 Hong Kong districts to enter an EMI school in that corresponding district (see table 4 at the end of the chapter). Further comparisons with the average percentage in Hong Kong launches into a comprehensive review of the injustice inherent in the EMI policy. In the course of reproducing Tsang's statistical data, I have discovered that he has adopted two basic sets of data from the document "Secondary School List for Secondary School Places Allocation 1996/1998": the number of Secondary 1 EMI school places offered for Primary 6 (P6) students in each district, and the total number of Secondary 1 places offered for P6 students in each district. This document lists the number of places each school in a given district allocates to students in the same district and in other districts, and is distributed to parents and students to facilitate their choices of secondary schools. However, while the number of EMI places is valuable information, it does not seem to me that the total number of school places per district should be used, because the total number of places offered in each district does not necessarily reflect the total number of P6 students in that district that year. I have therefore retained the EMI places data (column (2)) and the statistical methods used in Tsang's paper, but updated the numerical results using the actual number of P6 students per district in 1998 (column (1)). My slightly different numerical results, however, do not undermine Tsang's interpretation and analysis in general.

What can be immediately seen is that the number of EMI school places available to all students throughout Hong Kong was 27.38% of the total number of school places (box A3). It is also obvious that urban areas (Hong Kong Island [B3] and Kowloon [G3]) provided a higher opportunity for students to enter an EMI school than the suburban/country area (New Territories [M3]). All but one district

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the difficulty of computing the number of EMI places in each district. It can be said that the mechanism for secondary school allocation has allowed more mobility across geographical districts.

(Sha Tin [T3]) in the New Territories had less opportunity to enter an EMI school than the Hong Kong average (A3), with the lowest figure in the Outlying Islands (V3), at 2.14% or some 23 times lower than the district with the highest opportunity, Central & Western (C3). Moreover, Tsang designs two ways to further compare these percentage figures with each other. The first, shown in column 4, is to compare the opportunity percentage of each district with the Hong Kong average (i.e. 27.38%), so that we understand how much more or less likely than average it was for students from a given district to attend an EMI school. Results again show that most districts in urban areas had a higher likelihood than average to provide an EMI school place, while in the New Territories only Sha Tin (T4) had a positive number. In the most extreme cases, Central & Western students (C4) had a 80% chance higher than the average Hong Kong student to win a place in an EMI school, and students from Outlying Islands (V4) lost out to the average by 92%. This is an appalling result that highlights how students in the New Territories were facing an unequal distribution of EMI places back in 1998, regardless of their academic results or English proficiency.

Tsang's second comparative indicator is to use an absolute, official reference point as the base of comparison. This brings us to the sieving mechanism devised by the government and still currently in use to determine which schools can be an EMI school and which students are suitable to study in these schools. Each student's school examination results in Chinese and English are reported to the government twice, in the second term of Primary 5 and first term of Primary 6. These results are then calibrated in order to classify all P6 students into three groups:

> Group I: where the student's Chinese and English exam results are within the first 40th percentile among all P6 students in Hong Kong, showing that the student is suitable for studying in English as well as Chinese. The classification result in April 1998, for use to determine

allocation for the 1998-99 school year, shows that 32.76%, or 23866

P6 students in Hong Kong fell into this group;

Group II: where the student's Chinese and English exam results are

both outside of the first 40th percentile, or where either one of the two

results is within the first 40th percentile but the other result is beyond

the first 50th percentile, meaning that the student should study in

Chinese. In 1998, 59.15%, or 43090 P6 students were in this group;

Group III: where either one of the student's two results (Chinese and

English) are within the first 40th percentile and the other between the

40th to 50th percentile, indicating that the student is more inclined to

studying in Chinese, but can also study in English. In 1998, 7.39%, or

5382 P6 students belonged to this category. (HK, ED, School Places

Allocation Section, app. 2 and 3)

Finally, a school could apply to become an EMI school if, among other relevant

factors, the school was able to admit more than 85% of Group I and III students

(deemed suitable to study in English) in three school years, 1995-96, 1996-97 and

1997-98.

According to the government's official classification result for 1998-99, a

roughly combined 40% of P6 students were in Group I or III[25] and were deemed

suitable for studying in an EMI school. This 40% figure becomes Tsang's second

indicator. For sure, there is already too obvious a gap: the government classified 40%

of P6 students as suitable to study in English, but the actual portion of EMI places

that year was only 27.38%, meaning that over 9,000 P6 students had the ability but

did not manage to get a deserved EMI place. The ideal situation, where 40%

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[25] i.e. 32.76% for Group I, and 7.39% for Group III.

EMI-worthy P6 students are equally distributed in Hong Kong, is upset by the actual uneven EMI opportunity across districts in reality (i.e. column (3)). This prompts Tsang to use the 40% figure to calculate once again percentage difference between the actual opportunity and the ideal 40% opportunity in each district (column (5)). This time, only Central & Western (C5) and Wan Chai (D5) record a positive percentage, showing that all other districts do not provide enough EMI places for the 40% ideal.

Combining an analysis of these data with theories of justice by American philosophers John Rawls and Robert Nozick, Tsang concludes that the EMI policy is an "unjust policy design" (29) for a number of reasons. First, the actual portion of EMI places is less than the government's claim that 40% P6 students are suitable for EMI schools. Second, the uneven city-wide distribution of EMI places limits the choices available to students in certain districts, thereby going against the principle of meritocracy which assumes that the 40% EMI-worthy students are equally distributed. This in turn also violates Nozick's theory of distributive justice which places emphasis on redistributing resources to the least-favoured group in society (Tsang 27-28).

Tsang's analysis also contains other insightful points,[26] but to finish this section, I would like to further the potential of his critique. Tsang only briefly gestures at the fact that the uneven geographical distribution of EMI places reflects Hong Kong's history of urbanisation (9), but in fact, this distribution is a complexly

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[26] In fact, in Tsang's original paper, the data on the number of EMI and total school places (part of which I have cited as column (2) in table 4) are further distinguished into places provided by "through-train", feeder or nominated schools, which have formed some sort of a cooperative affiliation with a secondary school that guarantees a direct supply of P6 students. His research shows that EMI school places provided through feeder schools are twice more than the Hong Kong average, showing not only a tendency for EMI schools to ensure quality students from affiliated primary schools, but also that one's choice of primary school can already determine whether one can enter an EMI school (Tsang 12-13).

mutual influence between class, history and geographical development. That Central & Western and Wan Chai are the two districts with the highest opportunity to enter an EMI school (C4 and D4 in table 4) coincides with the fact that these two districts have always had the highest median income among all Hong Kong districts, and have been historically the centre of Hong Kong's colonial governance and economic activities. For other districts, social class (or median income) alone does not necessarily coincide with the pattern of distribution, and has to rely on accounts of Hong Kong's developmental and urbanisation history. For example, while Kowloon City has the highest median income and the best opportunity to go to an EMI school among the five districts in Kowloon, it should be Yau Tsim Mong that has a longer history of development with the ceding of Kowloon in the 1860 Treaty of Peking. Traditionally the poorest area of Hong Kong, Sham Shui Po, even has a positive percentage. Other districts often with low median income also display unevenness along the urban/rural fault line: whereas Kwun Tong in Kowloon only has a 6.67% disadvantage (box L4) in getting into an EMI school than the Hong Kong average, Yuen Long, equally poor and in the northwestern part of the New Territories, has a 37.04% disadvantage (Q4). In the New Territories, Sha Tin (T4) may lose to Sai Kung in median income, but it is one of the first new towns to be developed and certainly one of the most prosperous and most convenient to reach the urban area by the Mass Transit Railway (MTR). The historical process of urban sprawl triggers a gradual shift of population towards the New Territories; despite this, urban areas on Hong Kong Island and in Kowloon only had 48.49% of P6 students in Hong Kong but retained 60.5% of all EMI places.[27] From boxes C5 and D5, we also know that

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[27] The 48.49% figure is calculated by dividing the sum of boxes B1 and G1 by A1, giving the percentage of P6 students living on Hong Kong Island and in Kowloon. By the same token, the 60.50% figure is calculated by dividing boxes B2 and G2 by A2.

Central & Western and Wan Chai are also the only two districts that have fulfilled the theoretical ideal of 40% EMI places. This may mean two things: either that more than 40% of P6 students in these districts belong to Group I or III than other districts in Hong Kong, so that there is increased supply to meet demand, or the remaining EMI places after admitting the theoretical 40% of EMI students are used to attract Group I/III students from other districts. The first case would call for a statistical test of the correlation between more EMI students and their highest median income. The second scenario would suggest that schools in these two districts seem to possess some kind of attractiveness not found in many other districts, perhaps based on historical and symbolic prestige.[28] Whichever the case, I am not suggesting here that class and urbanisation history are explanations to uneven geographical development in English language education, but there may indeed be a correlation between the three, as the data in table 4 have revealed.[29]

Before moving on, it may be useful to sum up the argument so far. English as an ideology is promoted collaboratively not only by the colonial government, but also by the elite Hong Kong Chinese, the middle class, and the general working class in their own ways. However, an uneven distribution of educational opportunities and access to quality English teaching across geographical districts bars many Hong Kong students and families from attaining high English proficiency and gaining the

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[28] I do not have enough space in this thesis to pay close attention to the phenomenon of elite schools in Hong Kong, except a brief mentioning in the next chapter. In fact, many EMI schools in Central & Western and Wanchai districts are elite schools, which tend to have long histories, be established by missionaries, unisex, and have a long record of academic excellence. The attractiveness of these schools gesture towards another side of Hong Kong people's pragmatism: To be pragmatic and be concerned with the accumulation of wealth, as Louise Ho has complained, involves a geographical dimension, a centripetal desire to be at the commercial and political centre of Hong Kong.

[29] Uneven geographical development will be taken up again in Chapter 5, not as a phenomenon, but as a critical theory devised by theorists like David Harvey and Neil Smith, which will inform some of the new critical paradigms I advocate for critiquing Hong Kong English writing.

required potential for social mobility.

Form Rather than Substance: Contradictory Definitions of Prestige

I will now take a more critical view of English in Hong Kong by integrating all the materials reviewed above. The situation of English education in Hong Kong has been captured nicely in this long sentence from *A Perspective on Education in Hong Kong*, a 1982 report penned by an invited visiting panel of educationists:

> It is the form rather than the substance that still counts in Hong Kong where one is subject to the spectacle of a born-and-bred Hong Kong speaker of Cantonese going through the ritual of instructing Cantonese speaking pupils by means of a language in which both teacher and taught have very little competence. (Hong Kong, Education Department, *A Perspective*, 27; sec. III, par. III.1.13)

My understanding of this sentence is that although neither Hong Kong teachers nor students are competent enough in the English language with which they teach or learn, the self-proclamation of English-medium instruction for any school suffices to comfort everyone without talking about the substance, i.e. the actual effectiveness and quality of such education.

In many ways this superficial concern with English-medium education also underlies the general linguistic attitude towards English in Hong Kong. While English is undoubtedly an H language, and is a linguistic capital hotly sought after, its acquisition is plagued by inequality of access in the education system, which produces, as a result, what Angel Lin calls a Cantonese-speaking identity. Of course, English's importance and longer existence in Hong Kong put the language at a closer distance to Hongkongers than Mandarin, although both languages are languages of colonisers that fail to become a language of identity for the majority of the

population. Yet, the exclusive coupling of Cantonese and Hong Kong identity for most ethnic Chinese Hongkongers reveals the weakness in most definitions between H and L languages: that popularity of a language is not taken into account. It does not explain why, if H languages are so prestigious and important, people do not simply abandon their L language in favour of an H language.

Another pair of linguistic concepts is called for to supplement the categorical distinction between English as an H language and Cantonese as an L language. In some multiglossic situations, the low language is able to attain another form of prestige that is not based on symbolic status but on the extent in which it penetrates into the daily life of the general public. In other words, prestige can come in *overt* and *covert* forms. Linguist George Yule defines overt prestige as language "perceived to have higher social status" or "status that is generally recognized as 'better' or more positively valued in the larger community", and covert prestige as a "hidden" status of a speech style that induces the speakers to value group solidarity over upward mobility (Yule 209-10). There is no doubt that English as a perceived *lingua franca* has international prestige, but perhaps precisely because it bears *inter-national* prestige, some speakers around the world will still have to rely on languages other than English to communicate in *local* or *intra-national* situations,[30] appealing to the covert prestige of L languages as a small effort in retaining one's "local" identity or "roots" (however shakily they are defined) and resisting the hegemony of English. Covert prestige defines another type of prestige based on the sense of solidarity offered by using a certain language, and can be seen, surprisingly, as a kind of resistance against the globalisation of English.

In the linguistic reality of Hong Kong, covert prestige is observed in the use

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[30] Meanwhile, there is also the pessimistic view that the spread of English wipes out other languages and cultures (e.g. Phillipson 27; Todd, "Global English" 31).

of Cantonese, and becomes a decisive reason why Hong Kong is able to maintain its di/triglossia instead of becoming a monolingual English-speaking city. Although the pragmatic value of English is highly valued on the surface and has played a part in hierarchising the society, English, unlike Cantonese, has not enjoyed the same par of penetration and has mostly been confined in a school environment. In Y. S. Cheung's succinct summary: "While English in Hong Kong divides people in those who know the language (the middle class) and those who don't (the working class), Cantonese unites the general public [...]" (Y. S. Cheung 15, qtd. in A. Lin, "Bilingualism" 51). Further evidence to the repulsion of English in identity formation is found with Stuart Christie's very small scale survey with 22 English majors in a Hong Kong university, where most respondents "did not embrace bilingualism as a basis for identity formation" and claimed that speaking English had no impact on one's identity (Christie, "Centrifugal" 95). Although the survey results, published in 2004, are unrepresentative and outdated, there is overall a fairly strong case to argue that Cantonese's covert prestige lies in conflict with English's overt prestige.[31]

Yet, it would be unwise to romanticise this covert prestige for a number of reasons. First, this Cantonese-speaking identity reinforces the vicious cycle about Hongkongers' pragmatism to climb the social ladder. The general public of Hong Kong recognise the importance of English in improving job prospects, but most do not wish to increase their usage and exposure of English beyond schools (although see below). We ought not to forget that this is only possible because Cantonese is still so prominent in Hong Kong that its usage alone is enough to get by in the daily lives of most Hong Kong Chinese. English is an international language vital to the

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[31] The covert prestige enjoyed by Cantonese is further highlighted if we consider its pre-eminence in the job prospects among South Asian ethnic minorities in Hong Kong. The overt prestige of English loses to the covert prestige of the vernacular language in the everyday realities of job-hunting.

economy of Hong Kong, but many Hong Kong people, as I have stressed in chapter 1, do not live an international or even multicultural life that requires them to consistently use English in non-work-related scenarios. Instead, their daily interactions can be extremely local and Cantonese-oriented, and there may exist little motivation to aspire to speak fluent English. The inconvenient truth is that a stubborn binary still exists between a small tier of English-speaking "elites" versus a large number of local Hongkongers who pay lip service to the importance of English.

Second, we should always remember that the conflict between covert and overt prestige is also a matter of uneven distribution of cultural and symbolic capital across different social class. As Amy Tsui acknowledges in her study of how language policy shapes Hong Kong identities, English language education has in general been "extended to teaching Western knowledge", and "was not just a means of providing the local elite with a communication tool, but also a process of acculturation" (123). The connection between Western knowledge and acculturation reminds us that the degree of acquisition of the linguistic capital of English occurs in direct proportion to the simultaneous acquisition of the cultural capital of Western knowledge. Pierre Bourdieu reminds us in *Distinction* that the segregation between the elite class and the working class is never simply a matter of financial wealth, but a string of other attributives including symbolic and cultural capital (such as the breadth of knowledge one possesses, the code of behaviour). This is how Fanon's aforesaid argument—to speak the coloniser's language is to be recognised as human—is readopted in the globalised world today. While European territorial colonialism gives way to a form of neoliberal imperialism, to speak the global *lingua franca* of English is to gain access to a global elite culture that not only takes advantage of the global economic traffic, but also eschews national boundaries, celebrates geographical mobility, and claims cultural diversity and tolerance. In other

words, the better English one speaks, the more access one has to transcend the "local" and embrace its semantic antonym, the "global". This becomes particularly pertinent when I discuss the strategic positioning of English-language writing in Hong Kong in chapter 4.

Conclusion

This chapter on language politics in neo-colonial Hong Kong draws a close to part I of the dissertation and transits into the next part. In this chapter, I showed how the linguistic reality of Hong Kong involves a competition between Mandarin, China's national language, and English, the global *lingua franca*, for different definitions of privilege, and the resultant change in the statuses of these languages. Mandarin is slowly gaining popularity in Hong Kong because of its official status in China, leading to protests and rebuttals from some Hongkongers defending the "orthodoxy" of Cantonese in Chinese culture and their Cantonese-speaking identity. Meanwhile, the symbolic capital and overt prestige of English, while functioning as a class marker, is in conflict with the popularity and covert prestige of Cantonese, as seen in the fact that Hongkongers have never naturalised the English language in their daily lives except in the form of code-mixing. The failure to take ownership of English vis-à-vis the strong Cantonese cultural identity is a phenomenon further explored in the next chapter, where I discuss the small-circle elitism of English literary education.

Table 4

1998-99		Actual Number of P6 Students (1)	Number of EMI School Quota for P6 Students (2)	Opportunity of P6 Students Getting into an EMI School (3)=(2)÷(1)×100%	% Difference in EMI Opportunity Compared to all of HK (4)=[(3)÷0.2738–1]×100%	% Difference in EMI Opportunity Compared to Claim (5)=[(3)÷0.4–1]×100%
(A)	**All of HK**	**72478**	**19842**	**27.38%**	**±0%**	N/A
(B)	**Hong Kong Island**	**12567**	**4423**	**35.20%**	**+28.56%**	**−12.01%**
(C)	Central & Western	2949	1460	49.51%	+80.84%	+23.77%
(D)	Wan Chai	2576	1210	46.97%	+71.58%	+17.43%
(E)	Eastern	4959	1317	26.56%	−2.99%	−33.61%
(F)	Southern	2083	436	20.93%	−23.54%	−47.67%
(G)	**Kowloon**	**22581**	**7581**	**33.57%**	**+22.63%**	**−16.07%**
(H)	Yau Tsim Mong	3657	1307	35.74%	+30.55%	−10.65%
(I)	Sham Shui Po	3498	1266	36.19%	+32.20%	−9.52%
(J)	Kowloon City	6432	2491	38.73%	+41.46%	−3.12%
(K)	Wong Tai Sin	4082	1262	30.92%	+12.93%	−22.71%
(L)	Kwun Tong	4912	1255	25.55%	−6.67%	−36.13%
(M)	**New Territories**	**37330**	**7838**	**21.00%**	**−23.30%**	**−47.51%**
(N)	Kwai Tsing	4850	942	19.42%	−29.05%	−51.44%
(O)	Tsuen Wan	2914	665	22.82%	−16.64%	−42.95%
(P)	Tuen Mun	6268	1212	19.34%	−29.37%	−51.62%
(Q)	Yuen Long	5082	876	17.24%	−37.04%	−56.91%
(R)	Northern	3935	576	14.64%	−46.53%	−63.41%
(S)	Tai Po	4450	1159	26.04%	−4.86%	−34.89%
(T)	Sha Tin	6702	2164	32.29%	+17.94%	−19.28%
(U)	Sai Kung	2567	232	9.04%	−66.99%	−77.41%
(V)	Islands	562	12	2.14%	−92.20%	−94.66%

Distribution Pattern of EMI School Places across Hong Kong Districts, 1998-99

Source: Hong Kong, Education Department, School Places Allocation Section; *1996 dzi 98 Nin Dou Dzung Hok Hok Wai Fan Pui Bou Gou Sy [一九九六至九八年度中學學位分配報告書; Report on Secondary School Places Allocation for 1996-98]* (Hong Kong: Education Department, 1999; print; appendix 19).

Wing-kwong Tsang; "Jing Dzung Hok Ngaak Fan Pui Dzing Tsaak Dik Gwai Fat jy Bat Gwan Dang: Heong Gong Dzung Hok Gaau Hok Jy Jin Dzing Tsaak dik Dzoi Si [英中學額分配政策的匱乏與不均等：香港中學教學語言政策的再思; The Poverty and Inequality in the Policy of English-Medium Secondary School Allocation: Re-contemplating the Policy of Medium of Instruction in Hong Kong Secondary Schools]"; Education Policy Studies Series (Hong Kong: Faculty of Education, The Chinese U of Hong Kong, 1998; print; 1-35).

PART II

SOCIOCULTURAL CRITIQUE

OF

HONG KONG ENGLISH WRITING

Chapter 3   A Sociocultural History of Hong Kong English Writing

This chapter builds upon the complex web of language politics in post-handover Hong Kong examined in the last chapter, and moves on to nuance the status of English by distinguishing between English language and English literature. The chapter will provide a brief sociocultural history of the development of Hong Kong literature in English, particularly in school education and in the recent emergence of English literary activities. The latter will be the focus of the second half of the chapter as I outline broad, descriptive sketches of the development of the English writing community in Hong Kong. The focus in the first half, like the MOI debate in the previous chapter, is on education, but this time of English literature. It shows that English literary education in Hong Kong is a much smaller and niche circle available only to a typical minority of students in the best secondary schools in Hong Kong. Two issues at hand about the study of English literature in schools are: first, it is assumed to be suitable only for, and thus confined to, elite students who have a high command of English; second, the curriculum includes mostly Western canonical works, and only has very few initiatives to encourage students to pursue creative writing or connect literature to a Hong Kong context. These issues contradict the trends found in English departments in Hong Kong universities, where more opportunities are offered to study creative writing and literature in Asian contexts. These opposite trends at different levels of education need to be addressed if we are to understand and critique Louise Ho's lament about the lack of a critical reading mass of Hong Kong English writing.

Introduction

This focus on English literary education is inspired by a comparison to India's historical situation. In *Masks of Conquest*, Gauri Viswanathan charts how English literature, "long before it was institutionalised in the home country" (3), started in 1813 as a subject in the Indian curriculum for religious and moral education—hence Thomas Macaulay's infamous statement in 1835 to form "a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (Macaulay 116). Moreover, in *Towards a Literary History of India*, Sujit Mukherjee argues that the tertiary-level study of English literature became the template for the study of other Indian languages and literature, through which a sense of literary history of India was formed (17-18). Later, the moral function of English literature had to compete with utilitarianism, after English literature was linked to social mobility and entry into the professions (Viswanathan 147), which were nonetheless false hopes due to the deep-rootedness of the caste system. The access to English literature was only confined to an uprooted, elite class of Indians who were "intellectually hollow and insufficiently equipped with the desirable amount of knowledge and culture", becoming "at once apostates to their own national tradition and imperfect imitators of the West" (*ibid.* 159). The development of English literary education constituted a challenge to filtration theory—the assumption that knowledge will gradually filtrate down to the bottom class of society. In short, because English literature neither assimilated into the daily life and the social context of the masses, nor produced enough material incentives to keep up its authority on moral education, literary education in India "collapsed" in the 1850s (*ibid.* 163).

In contrast to India, the colonial Hong Kong Government never emphasised the teaching of literature as a vehicle for moral education, perhaps because Hong

Kong was, since day one of its creation under the Treaty of Nanking, seen as a port whereat British subjects could replenish their ships and conduct trade with China.[1] William Tay postulates that because Britain understood it would never be able to colonise the whole of China, it sought to play the role of a "benign dictator" in Hong Kong, in order to "reap economic benefits" in China "through so-called 'free trade'" (31-32). As a result of this, and also of Hong Kong's long tradition of identifying with Chinese culture and literature (W. Tay 31), government policy towards literature and art in the early days of colonisation was *laissez-faire*, as also pointed out by Wing Sang Law:

> [E]ven though the English language commands a dominant and official status in Hong Kong it has never become a popular and commonly used language in everyday life. Without any project attempting to incorporate all Hong Kong Chinese into the culture of the colonizers, Hong Kong remained as a place where Chinese cultures and languages could exist and develop. (55)

This analysis seems to support his idea of collaborative colonialism, and the claim that "English culture and literature were increasingly confined to a small elite stratum" (55). Thus, even though Hong Kong did not go through the promotion of English literature as India did, English literature still managed to have an air of elitism around it. However, Law's analysis above seems to draw an analogy between the small-circle nature of "English culture and literature" and the tiny population that could speak the English language. He tends to conflate English language and English literature, and assumes that the two are equally marginalised and elitist. This might

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[1] Article II of the Treaty of Nanking states clearly that British Subjects were allowed to reside in certain Chinese cities "for the purpose of carrying on their commercial pursuits". Article III mentions the ceding of Hong Kong Island for British Subjects to "careen and refit their Ships, when required, and keep Stores for that purpose".

have been true in early-colonial Hong Kong, but since the commercial function of Hong Kong as an entrepôt seemed to have anticipated people's practical attitude towards English, English language went on to become a compulsory school subject, while English literature did not enjoy the same kind of popularity.

One of the primary aims of this chapter is thus to drive a wedge between the split development between English language and English literature. Despite the tension of (c)overt prestige between Cantonese and English mentioned in the last chapter, English language nevertheless enjoys an immense amount of enthusiasm and popularity that English literature has never enjoyed (and probably never will). Furthermore, the elitist and niche nature of English literary education poses challenge to sociolinguistic claims that are optimistic to Hong Kong's bilingualism. In fact, the following comparison with how Chinese literature features prominently in Chinese syllabus in schools, only echoes Angel Lin's idea of the "Cantonese-speaking identity" mentioned in the last chapter. The non-egalitarian nature of English literary education discourages students from making claim to the English language in their daily life and identity, which has important implications for my next chapter, when I discuss the consequential self-positioning of the Hong Kong English writing community.

My suggestion to separate language and literature also means that we need a systematic record and study of how English literature leaves its mark in Hong Kong through publications, literary festivals, poetry readings and so on. This is glaringly lacking in Law's book, and also in many articles discussing the general label of "Hong Kong Literature". For example, surveying the unique historical development of Hong Kong literature from the 1950s, both Kwok-kan Tam and William Tay agree that Hong Kong has not developed a tradition of English literary writing (K. Tam 167;

W. Tay 31), but they take this lack for granted and promptly move on to a discussion of Chinese literature in Hong Kong. This highlights how literature written in Chinese and in English compete with each other in laying claims on the label "Hong Kong literature", and I will explore this politics further in the next chapter. For this chapter, I wish to first recover this missing piece of puzzle in the criticism of Hong Kong English writing by tracking a brief development of English-language literary activities. This has been difficult to trace because there is a lack of substantial previous research, and because at least before the turn of the millennium, such activities lacked impact. However, a few articles have made cursory discoveries, such as Agnes Lam's "Poetry in Hong Kong: The 1990s" (1999), another of her article titled "Defining Hong Kong poetry in English" (2002), and Eddie Tay and Eva Leung's "On Learning, Teaching and the Pursuit of Creative Writing in Singapore and Hong Kong" (2011). The evidence supplied in this chapter will be based on these articles as well as my own library and internet research. The project of tracing any aspect of the development of English literary community will be ongoing, and what I present here is by no means a complete review.

English Literary Education in Hong Kong Schools

This section studies the provision of English literary education in schools in Hong Kong. From this study I hope to understand the positive and negative conditions behind the development of a Hong Kong English writing. For we must not simply take for granted Louise Ho's lament about Hongkongers' pragmatic preference for capitalist, rather than aesthetic, sensibilities. A more fundamental question to ask is: are Hong Kong people provided with the opportunity to study English literature in schools? To approach the problem differently, if we

acknowledge the fact that Hong Kong has too small an English literary writing community, one obvious remedy will be to cultivate more locally born and educated students to write in English (a key position which I will defend in the next chapter). In this case, literary education in schools can be a prime way for them to develop first an interest in English literature, then a willingness to express themselves in English. This is not to suggest that exposure to English Literature as an exam subject is a prerequisite to cultivating one's interest in English literature—indeed, a sizeable portion of English majors in Hong Kong universities, myself included, has no prior training in English literature before university. Nonetheless, the possibility to such exposure and education (or lack thereof) may still shed light on the current state of Hong Kong English writing, hence the need to study the provision of such education.

I wish to begin with a comparison with Chinese literary education. I argue that there are fundamental differences in the way Chinese language and English language are perceived and taught in Hong Kong. Whereas the curriculum of English Language as a subject focuses on language skills and grammar and has little to do with literature, Chinese language education is always based on the study of Chinese literary texts. Chinese scholar Chee-shing Chan, for one, insists that Chinese language education is and should always be implied in Chinese literary studies (Chee-shing Chan, "Developments"). The background against which he is writing was in the 1980s, when Chinese education was adversely affected by the emphasis the society placed on English in terms of employment and educational advancement, and when Chinese was about to split into two separate school subjects (Chinese Language and Chinese Literature), a move suspicious of mirroring the division between English Language and English Literature. Chan thus asserts that the Chinese curriculum for Hong Kong was based on the new Chinese curriculum developed

under the Republic of China in the 1920s—a curriculum which aimed to develop in students an interest in understanding the histories of Chinese literature, philosophies and culture through reading and appreciating contemporary and classical writings (C. Chan 231-244). Quoting and agreeing with Man Tsok So, Chan was keen to pronounce that different from "Western concepts of pure Literature [… where literature] is suitable only for high minded scholars", Chinese language teaching had always focused on the "stylistic and expressive elements" of the literary works that formed the Chinese Language curriculum, rather than on "the analytical and the grammatical" (238-239). Even here we can see how Western literature is perceived by some as something for the elite, while Chinese literature is for the populace. The central role of Chinese literary texts in Chinese language education is reflected by the public backlash against a recent curriculum change that abandons all set texts and migrates toward a skill-based examination. After much public debate, a decision to reintroduce literary texts into the curriculum from the 2015-16 school year has been made.[2] I therefore disagree with Amy Tsui, who observes that the absence of works by the patriotic Chinese literati in the 1930s and 40s or during the PRC era is an "unmistakable" "suppression of identification with Chinese culture" (125). As Horace Chin has demonstrated, what the Hong Kong people do not identify with is a national Chinese culture as seized, defined, and hegemonised by the PRC, but they should, according to Chin, identify with a much earlier "orthodoxy" of Chinese culture accessible via classical Chinese literary texts. Today, although literary texts are temporarily purged from the language syllabus, Chinese Literature as a subject is

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[2] Despite the re-inclusion of set texts, the format of the Chinese Language examination has nonetheless been changed. In the past, one of the papers for the examination tested the candidates' ability to analyse the content and formal feature of the literary texts, even if such a method had drawn criticism of rote learning. In the new public examination, the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE), the Chinese Language examination involves purely skill-based papers such as reading comprehension, listening comprehension etc.

offered in 205 (or 43.7%) secondary schools to 3,051 candidates in the 2012 Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE, Hong Kong's new public and university entrance examination), and in 193 (42.3%) schools to 2,803 candidates in 2013—a downward trend but still seven times more than the number of schools and candidates in Literature in English in HKDSE (see below) (HK, HKEAA, *HKDSE: Examination Report 2012* 27; *HKDSE: Examination Report 2013* 28).

Returning to English literary education, sadly, little is known about the teaching of English literature in Hong Kong schools before the Second World War. Queen's College (formerly The Government Central School) is said to be one of the earliest schools to teach Shakespearean literature since 1888 (Stokes 55), but it is natural to surmise that the education of English as a foreign language has had to put its foremost focus on linguistic competence, especially when facing grave post-war aftermaths including damaged school properties, four years of interrupted education, shortage of teaching staff and a huge influx of Chinese-speaking immigrants. For example, the 1946 School Certificate Examination only offered three non-literary components for English Language, namely Composition, General, and Dictation (HK, ED, *Annual Report* 63). Traces of selected poems and literary works (such as *Robinson Crusoe* and *Julius Caesar*) were only found in the English syllabi of the Central British School, which only admitted children of English-speaking families at the time (*ibid.*, 39-43). English Literature was later available as a separate school subject from 1948-9 onwards, but only "intended primarily for those whose mother tongue is English" (HK, ED, *Hong Kong* 41); however, in 1951, English Literature became an exam subject in the Hong Kong School Certificate Examination for students in government or grant-aided schools,[3] with a pass rate of 73.5% (*ibid.*,

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[3] The Hong Kong School Certificate Examination was the precursor of the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE), and was available to Hong Kong Chinese students.

Annual Departmental Report 135).

Still, there is evidence that some literary elements have played a role in early English education. The Annual Report in 1948-49, for example, testified that many Anglo-Chinese schools encouraged students to join English speaking competitions and to produce short plays in English in dramatic societies (*ibid.*, *Hong Kong* 43). Further evidence can also be found in a recent reprint of *The Oxford English Course for Hong Kong*, a set of English textbooks first published between 1956 and 1958 by Oxford University Press, adapted from a similar set of textbooks for Malaya and very possibly used by some schools in Hong Kong at the time. Story episodes and dialogues based on daily Hong Kong life, as well as characters with Chinese names, have peppered the series since the First Year, setting an example for contemporary textbooks which sometimes follow this pattern. As learning progresses, literary elements are gradually introduced into the curriculum, such as a short play with scene divisions titled *The Best Place in the World* in the Third Year, an adapted version of Robin Hood in the Fourth Year, poems by British/Irish poets like W. H. Davies and Cecil Spring-Rice in the Sixth Year, and excerpted Shakespearean works in the Seventh Year.

The presentation of lesson materials in this Oxford textbook series, I think, illustrates the perception that English literature should be reserved for students with a higher command of the language. While stories and dialogues are used for younger years, these are not considered "proper" literature, although such lesson format is common even in contemporary English textbooks at junior secondary level. Literature "proper", that is, works in the English literary canon by British/Irish authors, was only introduced at more advanced levels.

This was later abandoned when primary and secondary education were

funded and made compulsory by the government in the 1970s. The universalisation of education brought in standardised public exams mimicking the GCSE O-levels and the A-levels.[4] With the introduction of public examinations and the sudden expansion of student population, English language education was geared towards practical skills. Because the two public examinations, the HKCEE and HKALE, aimed to test the candidates' ability in reading, writing, listening and speaking, literary elements were purged from higher form syllabi and existed as a separate exam subject—and quite possibly the subject that had the least support resources available.[5] I will now turn to statistical data on English Literature as a public exam subject,[6] looking at the respective curricula and popularity in public examinations in Hong Kong, past and present.

Literature in English in HKCEE

In general, the HKCEE syllabus exhibited little deviance from the works of Anglo-American canonical writers. My research brings me to as early as the 1963 syllabus, which was divided into five sections filled with works by Thomas Hardy,

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[4] In reality, the education reform was a long process lasting for more than a decade. The education system of Hong Kong followed the British system at that time, with three years of junior secondary (Form 1-3), then an exam for promotion to two years of senior secondary (Form 4-5). At the end of Form 5 lay the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE), which, if passed, would lead to two more years of matriculation (Form 6-7). The matriculation system had two routes leading to the only two universities at the time: either through the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE) at the end of Form 7 into the three-year University of Hong Kong (HKU), or through the Hong Kong Higher Level Examination (HKHLE) at the end of Form 6 into the four-year Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). In 1994, the two entry routes merged into a single exam, the HKALE, after CUHK switched to a three-year undergraduate curriculum. Generally speaking, the HKCEE is equivalent to the GCSE O-levels, while the HKALE resembles the A-levels.

[5] While for many other subjects the government has published all sorts of different support packages and guidelines, Literature in English has never received the same level of attention. My research so far has only located *Looking at Literature*, a radio broadcast series by Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) in 1968-69 with accompanying booklets aimed to prepare Form 5 students for the English Literature paper of the Hong Kong School Certificate Examination (the predecessor of the HKCEE).

[6] The subject was called English Literature in HKCEE and HKALE before 2004, and Literature in English thereafter.

John Keats, William Shakespeare and Oliver Goldsmith (HK, ED, *Hong Kong School Certificate Examination Papers, 1963*). It was not until 1987 when Austin Coates' *Myself a Mandarin* (1968) became the first book in the syllabus that was directly about Hong Kong.[7] Postcolonial literature had to wait until 2001 to be included in the syllabus, with Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* being the first example. Exam questions also did little to draw students' enthusiasm to connect high literature to their personal experiences or the happenings in Hong Kong. The phrasing of most questions did not place emphasis on the candidates' own opinion.[8]

Table 5 shows that the number of candidates taking Literature in English in the HKCEE had never been high, and would only drop until reaching a stalemate of about 700-800 around 1995. In the last 13 years of the history of the HKCEE (1998-2010), there were on average about 770 new day school first attempters[9] sitting for Literature in English, representing about 1.1% of all day school first attempters each year.

Table 5

Number of Candidates in HKCEE English Literature, 1979-2010 (Selected Years)

Year	All Candidates	Day School Candidates[a]	Day School First Attempters[b]
1979	2,789	2,717	N/A
1984	N/A[c]	1,877	N/A
1989	1,239	1,186	N/A
1994	907	885	N/A

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[7] This autobiographical book was based on Coates' work as a magistrate in the New Territories of Hong Kong in the 1950s. Unfortunately, the questions pertaining to the book in that year's examination were not directly related to Hong Kong.

[8] The first exception I could locate is a question in the 1978 exam: "The Casket Scene and the Trial Scene [in *Merchant of Venice*] arouse our interest in Portia. What sides of her character are revealed in each one? In which scene do you like her better?" (HK, HKEA, *Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination Question Papers English Literature 1978-81*)

[9] The category "day school first attempters" provides a more accurate reflection of the provision of English literary education in schools, since this category excludes candidates re-sitting or self-studying for the exam.

1999	794	781	755
2004	819	808	796
2009	875	829	817
2010	831	769	763

Source: Hong Kong, Hong Kong Examinations Authority / Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority; *Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination Annual Report, 1979-1999*; 31 vols (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Examinations Authority / Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, 1979-1999; print).

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a. Note that from 1995 onwards, day school candidates only include those schools that provide normal HKCEE curriculum.

b. Day school first attempters refer to those students studying in a day school and taking the English Literature examination for the first time. This data is available since 1996.

c. Data unavailable in that year's report.

Literature in English in HKALE

The syllabi for the HKALE examination gave a slightly higher emphasis on literary creativity, and were more sensitive to literatures about colonisation and postcolonialism or texts set outside Europe and North America. E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* was on the syllabus as early as 1956, although for many years it had remained the only text substantially set in Asia. In 1992, an excerpt from Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills* appeared as an unseen passage for appreciation. Examination questions showed a higher tendency to engage with candidates' own

experiences and background. Paper 3 of the 1956 exam was particularly adventurous, asking candidates to write from the point of view of Joseph Addison's fictional narrator Mr. Spectator in *The Spectator* in contemporary Hong Kong, or to comment with personal experience on why Asian students would find metaphysical poetry less interesting (The U of Hong Kong, *Matriculation Examination Advanced Level Papers, 1956*). As if to speak to the identity anxiety triggered by Hong Kong's handover, the 1997 exam invited students to comment on the power disguise in contemporary Hong Kong based on their study of Shakespearean plays.[10]

The syllabus structure underwent major changes in 1994, discarding a periodised approach for a theme-based approach, in which candidates were required to write two essays on one of the three main topics in Paper 1. A change of topics in 1997 introduced "Asian Voices in English", a section of Asian-themed novels and films.[11] Exam questions on this topic proved to be popular, and were answered by about 40% to 50% of candidates between 2003 and 2006.[12] Although it was finally replaced by "Love and Death" in 2007, Asian-themed literature and films continued to scatter throughout the syllabus until 2012, the last year of HKALE.

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[10] Apart from the two examples given here, other examples include: a 1967 exam question inviting personal judgment on whether Tess from *Tess of the D'urbervilles* is improbable or depressing; three questions in 1993, 1994 and 1995 asking students to imagine a modern adoption of literary works in a contemporary Hong Kong context; and a question in 2000 seeking candidates' views on the cultural challenges Hong Kong students faced in studying Western literary texts.

[11] These novels include, throughout different years, R. K. Narayan's *The Painter of Signs*, Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills*, Timothy Mo's *The Monkey King*, Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, and David Guterson's *Snow Falling on Cedars*. The film selections include Mira Nair's *Salaam Bombay*, Ang Lee's *The Wedding Banquet*, Peter Weir's *The Year of Living Dangerously*, Steven Spielberg's *Empire of the Sun*, David Cronenberg's *M. Butterfly*, Damien O'Donnell's *East is East*, and Wayne Wong's *Dim Sum*.

[12] According to the examination reports from 2003 to 2006, the popularity for "Asian Voices in English" was 44.15%, 43.05%, 48.60% and 52.7% respectively. These figures are calculated in this way: Since candidates had to first choose one out of the three topics in Paper 1, and then two questions out of the five available options in that topic, there would be a total of 15 questions available in Paper 1, and the accumulative popularity percentage for all 15 questions would be 200%. I have therefore added up the popularity percentages of all five questions in "Asian Voices in English" (provided in the examination reports) and then divided the number by two to give an average of the popularity of this topic.

The syllabus change in 1994 also introduced a portfolio element that assesses school-based assignments, required of candidates sitting the exam as a full A-level subject.[13] Until 2003, candidates were only allowed to produce film/book/drama reviews, or extended essays or special projects on literary texts, although they were explicitly encouraged to "make connections between what they read and things occurring in Hong Kong and around the world" (HK, HKEA/HKEAA, *HKALE Regulations and Syllabuses 1994* 265). Since 2003 and later officially amended in the syllabus in 2005, creative writing also became acceptable as part of portfolio material. The number of candidates who submitted creative writing pieces was not provided in examination reports, and the quality of creative work fluctuated from year to year, with the examiner's report explicitly discouraging the submission of poems (HK, HKEAA, *HKALE A/AS Literature in English Examination Report and Question Papers 2006* 22).

As for the number of candidates, table 6 reveals a similar trend to that of HKCEE. From 2000-12, out of the 700-odd students who sat for the HKCEE, only 100-200 would go on to take the English Literature A-level two years later, representing only 0.6% of the day school first attempters each year. Among these A-level candidates, an average of 135 students each year were full Advanced Level candidates, which required them to submit a portfolio of school-based work that might be a piece or pieces of creative writing.

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[13] In other words, not as an Advanced Supplementary (AS) level subject, which typically bore half of the requirement of a full A-level subject. For Literature in English, an AS level did not require a portfolio submission. The full A-level and AS level differentiation was introduced in 1994.

Table 6

Number of Candidates in HKALE English Literature, 1981-2012 (Selected Years)

Year	All Candidates	Day School Candidates[a]	Day School First Attempters[b]	Full A-level Candidates
1981	541	466	N/A	N/A
1986	334	293	N/A	N/A
1991	224	210	N/A	N/A
1996	330	324	323	234
2001	190	185	185	135
2006	168	166	165	129
2011	196	191	191	148
2012	184	173	172	133

Source: Hong Kong, Hong Kong Examinations Authority / Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority; *Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination Annual Report 1981-2012*; 32 vols (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Examinations Authority / Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, 1981-2012; print).

a. Note that from 1995 onwards, day school candidates only include those schools that provide normal A-level or AS level curriculum.

b. Day school first attempters refer to those students studying in a day school and taking the English Literature examination for the first time. This data is available since 1996.

Literature in English in HKDSE

The British educational model in Hong Kong was replaced in 2012, with secondary education changing from 7 to 6 years (with 3 years each for junior and senior secondary) and undergraduate education from 3 to 4 years (thus labeled as the 3-3-4 system). This resulted in the "combination" of the HKCEE and the HKALE into a single university entrance exam, the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE), now sat by Secondary 6 students.

The syllabus for Literature in English in the HKDSE from 2012 was a combination of both the HKCEE and HKALE. Instead of arranging the set texts into

specialised topics based on their themes, the HKDSE syllabus took after the HKCEE organisation of texts according to the genres of novel, play, film, short stories and poetry. Candidates could choose between two sets of texts, each containing works in all genres, in the first few years of the HKDSE, but the option has been removed from 2016 onwards. Most texts again come from canonical writers, but—showing the influence of past HKALE syllabi here—traces of Asian literature in English or Asian diasporic literature can still be found in John Curran's film remake of W. Somerset Maugham's *A Painted Veil*, Ang Lee's *Life of Pi*, Hisaye Yamamoto's short story "Seventeen Syllables", and some others that have appeared previously on the HKALE syllabus. Poems by Hong Kong English poet Agnes Lam and a few potentially Hong Kong poets have been included in a HKDSE resource package that aims to "cater for the needs and interests of students of Literature in English at senior secondary level" and to assist the teaching and learning of poetry,[14] (HK, EDB, Curriculum Development Institute, English Language Education Section i). A couple of sample poems written by Hong Kong students have also been included in another resource package aimed at junior forms (Secondary 1-3) (HK, ED, Curriculum Development Institute, English Section 56, 64). Following the aim to bring literature closer to daily life as seen in the A-level syllabi, a range of practice papers and sample papers, published in 2012 before the first instalment of DSE, have included questions that elicit the candidates' personal response by inviting them to imagine themselves as certain characters in the literary works (such as Lady Macbeth).

The portfolio element from the HKALE has been retained as Paper 3, also known as the school-based assessment (SBA) element of the exam, to be

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[14] Although further information is not available in the resource package, there was a Kwok-yin Woo who penned two poems. Since there is a Hong Kong Chinese poet of the same name (胡國賢), the two poems may have been translated. There is also a Perrine Wong who wrote one poem.

implemented fully from 2019 onwards. The portfolio element is in accordance with the learning outcome in the curriculum that encourages students to "develop creativity and powers of self-expression through producing works of different literary genres including prose, poetry and drama" (HK, EDB, Curriculum Development Council and HKEAA, "Literature in English" 8-9). Creative writing is available as an option to fulfil this paper, but only time will tell if it is a popular choice, since the quality of works submitted so far has been criticised as being "insipid", "trite", "flat" and lacking in conflict (HK, HKEAA, *HKDSE Literature in English: Examination Report and Question Papers 2012* 60; *HKDSE Literature in English: Examination Report and Question Papers 2013* 64; *HKDSE Literature in English: Examination Report and Question Papers 2014* 82).

As shown in table 7, the number of candidates sitting for Literature in English in the 2012-14 HKDSE has been dropping from 450, now barely accounting for more than 0.5% of the day school candidates. Although the absolute number of day school candidates sitting for HKDSE Literature in English (350-450) was in between the old numbers for HKCEE (about 750-850 in 2000-10) and HKALE (around 100-200 in 2000-12), the percentage out of all HKDSE day school first attempters is closer to the old HKALE figure (0.6%) and lower than the old HKCEE percentage (1.1%). Moreover, the examination statistics for the 2012 and 2013 HKDSE exams indicate that respectively only 28 and 27, or about 6% of secondary schools in Hong Kong, offered Literature in English as an elective HKDSE subject (HK, HKEAA, *HKDSE Examination Report 2012* 29; *HKDSE Examination Report 2013* 30). Taken together, this means that because the absolute number of candidates has risen, more students will have to participate in the portfolio paper, thus a higher probability to try out creative writing; however, the general popularity of Literature in English as an

elective among HKDSE candidates has dropped.

Table 7

Number of Candidates in HKDSE Literature in English, 2012-14

Year	Total No. of Day School Candidates Sitting for HKDSE	Day School Candidates Sitting for Literature in English (% of total day school candidates)	Male Day School Candidates	Female Day School Candidates
2012	70,282	451 (0.64%)	30	421
2013	69,750	410 (0.59%)	17	393
2014	65,103	362 (0.56%)	N/A	N/A

Source: Hong Kong, Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority; *Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination: Examination Report 2012-2014*; 3 vols. to date (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, 2013-2015; print).

To wrap up this survey on Literature in English, although the syllabi for all three exams tend to include canonical literary works, there have been limited but motivating endeavours to encourage candidates to express themselves in English, and to connect literature with the sociopolitical reality of Hong Kong or Asia. However, most of these endeavours were only available to A-level candidates which only accounted for an extremely trace number of day school candidates. Questions also need to be asked whether in the future the HKDSE syllabus will recognise the importance of Hong Kong English writing at all. Most importantly, the recent adoption of the 3-3-4 system has further reduced the percentage of students taking Literature in English, raising further worry about the decline of literary studies. In the past, day school HKCEE candidates often had four to seven electives, before narrowing to a specialisation in three elective subjects at the A-Levels. Now, HKDSE candidates only undertake two or three elective subjects for their three-year senior secondary curriculum. Since the HKDSE is in effect a university entrance exam and

there are fewer elective slots available, it is possible that students nowadays are less inclined to invest their study time and effort on a difficult, less practical arts subject in favour of more common ones in the science or business streams. Thus, the buffer effect provided by the HKCEE in the past—which might allow students to pursue electives of their interest (such as Literature in English) before narrowing down at the A Levels—has been lost as students are naturally more inclined to pick more "practical" subjects for their HKDSE. The only silver lining is the possibility that candidates submitting a creative writing portfolio for Paper 3 have increased in absolute numbers. Although there is no breakdown of portfolios for different types of writing (a common problem for both HKDSE and HKALE), the absolute number of candidates taking HKDSE Literature in English, hence the number of portfolios submitted, which stands above 350 in 2014, is higher than the 100-150 ALE candidates in the past.

Yet to be fair, the majority of students taking Literature in English have mostly been limited to students from the so-called "elite girls' schools". In Pauline Burton's ethnographic study on a creative writing project called "Poetry for Pleasure" from 1999 to 2001, the project venue was a "well-known girls' secondary school" where English was the medium of instruction (499). A search on the Secondary School Profiles 2013-14 reveals that 31 schools have planned to offer Literature in English as a DSE elective, of which 18 are girls' schools, mostly established by Christian missionaries in the late 19th and early 20th century.[15] The fact that English literature is most commonly found in these schools highlights a still common gender

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[15] These 18 girls' schools include: Belilios Public School, Diocesan Girls' School, Good Hope School, Heep Yunn School, Holy Family Canossian School, Kowloon True Light School, Maryknoll Convent School, Marymount Secondary School, Sacred Heart Canossian College, St. Clare's Girls' School, St. Margaret's Girls' College, Hong Kong, St. Mary's Canossian College, St. Paul's Convent School, St. Paul's School (Lam Tin), St. Paul's Secondary School, St. Rose of Lima's College, St. Stephen's Girls College, and Ying Wa Girls' School.

stereotype in Hong Kong that girls are more adept in arts subjects than boys. While it is becoming common for girls nowadays to study science subjects, the converse does not seem to be true, and it remains uncommon for boys to study English literature at secondary level. The problematic of gender is furthermore intersected by the issue of class and symbolic capital, as will be elaborated below: many unisex schools in Hong Kong are considered "elite schools"; English literature therefore becomes almost a *de facto* subject for the "elite" schoolgirls.

New Language Arts Electives in HKDSE English Language Examination

If English Literature as a subject is plagued by unpopularity, then a more welcoming and effective gesture can be observed in the HKDSE English Language curriculum, a subject taken by almost all day school candidates, to promote literary appreciation and creativity. This is first and foremost seen in the literature-related reading comprehension passages in the Reading paper. For example, the practice paper[16] for the new DSE English exam set questions on an excerpt from Jack London's novel *The Call of the Wild*. The 2013 exam also chose an article from *The New Yorker* discussing dystopian fictions. Although the question items were on semantics and grammar instead of interpretation and appreciation, these were nonetheless signs to broaden students' literary exposure.

A more significant change in the English curriculum is the elective modules.[17] Schools are now required to allocate 25% (100 hours) of lesson time for

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[16] In response to the anxiety of the new HKDSE exams, a practice paper for English Language was held on 16th January, 2012.

[17] Not to be confused with the "elective subjects" mentioned earlier. These are smaller modules within the English Language subject. The eight modules are divided into two groups: the Language Arts group include Learning English through Drama, Learning English through Poems and Songs, Learning English through Short Stories, and Learning English through Popular Culture; the Non-Language Arts modules include Learning English through Debating, Learning English through

the English Language subject to teach any three out of the eight elective modules, of which the modules on Drama, Short Stories, and Poems and Songs all aim to "develop a response to a wider range of imaginative or literary texts" (HK, EDB, Curriculum Development Council and HKEAA, "English Language" 12). Curriculum documents also encourage pedagogies that "give expression to imaginative ideas through oral, written and performative means such as", among other things, "writing stories", "creating poems and lyrics", and "creating short dramatic episodes" (*ibid.* 8, 12, 32-37). The English Language Education Section of the Education and Manpower Bureau has also published resource packages that include activities allowing students to create their own short story, drama script, poem or song lyrics (*Learning English through Drama*; *Learning English through Poems and Songs*; *Learning English through Short Stories*).

Being electives, however, it is difficult to assess their effectiveness in promoting literary awareness and creativity. The knowledge learned in these modules will only be tested in the Writing paper and in an oral test in the School-based Assessment component. In the Writing paper, candidates are in fact asked to pick a question on just one elective module out of the eight available. Notice the gradual narrowing here: from eight available electives, to three electives chosen by the school, to one exam question chosen by the candidate. Candidates can in fact dodge any question on the three literary modules even if they have learned about them in school. In addition, the questions seldom ask candidates to produce a piece of creative writing except in the short story module; realistically, it is quite infeasible to produce polished poetry or plays within the 2-hour limit of the writing paper. Finally, both the popularity rates and the mean candidates' scores for the three literary

Social Issues, Learning English through Sports Communication, and Learning English through Workplace Communication.

electives, are lower than other non-literary modules (see table 8), mirroring once again the difficulty and low popularity in studying literature.

Table 8

Popularity and Mean Score[a] for Elective Writing Questions

	Practice Paper[b]		2012 HKDSE		2013 HKDSE	
Language Arts	**Popularity**	**Mean Score**	**Popularity**	**Mean Score**	**Popularity**	**Mean Score**
Poems & Songs	3.6%	10.77	8.8%	8.15	4.7%	20.62
Short Stories	7.4%	6.33	10.9%	8.95	3.2%	19.47
Drama	7.4%	6.93	7.8%	9.57	2.7%	15.05
Popular Culture	6.1%	7.29	7.3%	13.14	16%	20.74
Non-Language Arts	**Popularity**	**Mean Score**	**Popularity**	**Mean Score**	**Popularity**	**Mean Score**
Workplace Communication	30.0%	9.47	11.1%	10.25	31.0%	22.08
Social Issues	17.1%	10.91	31.4%	12.42	17.7%	20.86
Sports Communication	16.9%	11.02	14.1%	9.65	17.4%	12.10
Debating	11.8%	12.05	8.5%	12.28	6.3%	22.62

Source: Hong Kong, Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority; *Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination English Language Examination Report and Question Papers, 2012-2013*; (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, 2012; Print; 166-168; 2013; Print; 171).

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   a.   Out of 21 for practice paper and 2012 HKDSE, but out of 42 for 2013.

   b. Figures for the practice paper are rounded off to one decimal place and are based on the 2,843 students who sat for the Writing paper.

Showcase of Students' Writing

       Despite a generally ambivalent picture presented above on literature as an

examination subject, there have been noteworthy efforts in the education sector to promote literature in English, particularly creative writing, in the English language classroom, even if such initiatives are again plagued by another problem. It ought to be acknowledged that a series of education publications in the 1990s have sought to promote the use of English poetry in Hong Kong schools: these include *Using Poems in Schools* (1993), *Poems, Songs and Games for the Primary English Classroom* (1994), both published by the government, and *Learning Language through Literature: A Source Book for Teachers of English in Hong Kong* (1997; see Falvey and Kennedy). In 2005, Chameleon Press also published an anthology of Hong Kong English-language poetry targeted especially for Hong Kong teenagers, selected by David McKirdy and Peter Gordon, titled *Poetry Live!* Three years later, the Education Bureau published *NETworking: Using Poetry in the English Classroom* (2008), a book that shares successful initiatives of using poetry in the English classroom and samples a number of poems written by students or native English teachers (NETs). These publications invariably encourage more usage of poetry in facilitating English language learning. In *Using Poems in Schools*, for example, editor Mike Murphy writes from a framework of second language acquisition, and understands poems as "an enjoyable aid to language learning" and to the teaching of English (Murphy 5). Although I find objectionable Murphy's instrumentalisation of poetry in language learning (thus subsuming the importance of literature under that of language), I agree with Murphy's vision that "poetry is not the preserve of only gifted poets or of so called well-informed or priviledged [sic] academics, but is a pleasure that can be enjoyed by all" (Murphy 6). To achieve the democratic aspect of literature, he particularly supports the use of poems written by non-native English speakers of Hong Kong or translated from Chinese—what he calls "localised

literature" or literature that evokes familiar contextual references to the second-language reader—with a view to encouraging students "to give expression to their personal response […] in the form of either a short poem of their own or a piece of creative prose or [other formats]" (Murphy, "Using Poems" 33). The handbook in addition showcases a range of "localised poems" written by Murphy and other Hongkongers.

Unfortunately, Murphy's vision of popularising localised English poetry did not gain too much prominence. Creative writing, above all, is still widely seen as a talent of those with the best English command, who in Hong Kong tend to attend either international schools or the best EMI schools, also called "elite" schools.

The similar counterpart to something like Harrow or Eton in England, "elite schools" in Hong Kong has no clearly defined official definition, but does have some widely assumed characteristics (Alison So 42-45). One indicator is the Grant Schools Council, a type of secondary schools run by missionaries in the 19th and 20th centuries in Hong Kong, which received partial grant and land from the colonial government to establish schools before 1973 (i.e. before mass and compulsory primary education in 1974). Many of these schools—and so are some other schools widely considered as elite schools—are unisex, located in urban districts, have religious backgrounds, long histories, have English as their MOI, and a wide network of established alumnae available as students' mentors. While some of their long track records of academic excellence are contested, i.e. both reproduced and displaced, by other non-elite schools that engage their students in brute-force exhaustive examination training, elite schools are widely considered to be providing a holistic educational environment that inspires students to excel not only in academic results but also in extra-curricular activities and personal conduct. Elite schools are hotly

sought after by middle-class parents for their children's secondary education.

Just as English Literature as a subject tends to be limited to a number of girls' schools in Hong Kong, English writing projects aimed at primary and secondary levels also draw the majority of their participants from international schools or elite schools. This trend is noticeable in three examples: Moving Poetry, the Hong Kong Budding Poets (English) Award and Society (HKBPA), and the Hong Kong Young Writers Award (HKYWA). Moving Poetry, a 10-year project of poetry workshops organised by HKU's School of English and aimed at primary and secondary school students, published an anthology under the same name in its first instalment in 2001. The HKBPA is an annual poetry writing competition for school students with keen interest to express themselves creatively in English poems. It is run by the Education Department since 2005 (with a break in the 2013-14 academic year), which publishes an anthology *post aut propter*. Founded in 2010 by Hong Kong English writer Nury Vittachi, the HKYWA is also an annual English writing competition, but with themes set on different Chinese heritage each year. While these initiatives seem a positive effort to promote the craft of English poetry, their participants come from schools with relatively high prestige and/or academic results, echoing problems of uneven segregation of English-language education I have highlighted in the last chapter. In the 2001 anthology for Moving Poetry, for example, 160 students across 19 primary and secondary schools participated according to the Preface (Lim, "What It Takes" 4). Of the nine participating secondary schools that year, one was an international school,[18] and all others were EMI schools, of which six were unisex (including four

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[18] This was the Canadian International School.

girls' schools[19]), four Grant Schools,[20] and only two not in Kowloon or Hong Kong Island.[21] Statistics in the other two awards show a similar trend. For example, the HKBPA runs an interview system with 20 selected finalists apiece for the Primary, Secondary and Open Sections. Most participants in the Secondary Section were from so-called elite (or at least EMI) schools, and those in the Open Section have often studied at international schools; over the years, only four participants from the two sections came from CMI schools.

Contrary to Mike Murphy's vision, these publications show that "impact" projects aiming to promote creative writing at school level still have to rely on EMI, "elite", or even international schools for supplying students who have high English proficiency, exacerbating the inequality of access to English literary education. It is rather ironic that Shirley Lim, in her introduction to the Moving Poetry anthology, sees the publication as proof to young poetic talent in Hong Kong, which is able to "counter the negative impressions of English-language decline in the SAR" as a result of the mother-tongue education policy ("What It Takes" 2-3). If the policy to stream schools into CMI and EMI was the culprit behind falling English standards, then teaching the craft of poetry-writing to a selective cohort of EMI schools would only widen the gap in exposure to English literature between CMI and EMI schools. Further, the HKBPA falls under the purview of the *Gifted* Education Section of the Education Department, a designation that unfortunately reinforces the elitism of English creative writing, as it suggests that poetic talent is a skill that can only be

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[19] These include: Sacred Heart Canossian College, St. Clare's Girls' School, St. Paul's Convent School and True Light Middle School of Hong Kong. The other two boys' schools were St. Joan of Arc Secondary School and Wah Yan College, Hong Kong.

[20] The four Grant Schools involved in Moving Poetry were: Sacred Heart Canossian College, St. Clare's Girls' School, St. Paul's Convent School and Wah Yan College, Hong Kong.

[21] They were: Law Ting Pong Secondary School and SKH Bishop Mok Sau Tseng Secondary School, both in Tai Po district and co-educational.

honed upon the natural gift of English proficiency.

A slightly more positive picture can be gained from secondary school almanacs. It is not uncommon for schools to produce an annual magazine or almanac that includes student and class lists, reports on club activities, and reflections on school events. Occasionally, and more so in recent years, there are schools that are keen to showcase their students' writings in Chinese or English. Some schools even publish a stand-alone volume at times. My very preliminary research on post-2000 school magazines catalogued in university libraries indicates that most of these magazines are published by EMI schools, but there is also a sizeable portion of CMI schools eager to include their students' creative writing.[22] These school magazines are usually distributed to their students, parents, guests of honour, public and university libraries, as well as library of other secondary schools. Judging from the readership, these magazines can be good ways for schools to promote their name and their students' works, but such self-promotion also encourages students with better English proficiency to try their hands in creative writing.

Summary

In this section, I presented data on public examinations and student publications, to show that despite recent encouraging changes to the HKDSE English Language and English Literature syllabi, it is still too early to evaluate their effectiveness in broadening students' involvement in English literature. Elitism, in the meantime, is still associated with English literary education—its profile of

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[22] Some of these schools include Hon Wah Secondary School, Pui Ching Middle School, Ling Liang Church E Wun Secondary School, Ching Chung Hau Po Wun Secondary School, Rosaryhill School and Fung Kai Liu Man Shek Tong Secondary School. A good portion of these schools only publish their students' English essays, usually from a writing topic from English composition class. Some, such as *All Write* published by Fung Kai Liu Man Shek Tong Secondary School, include poems and stories in English.

candidates are concentrated on a narrow band of students with the highest command of English; its provision is mostly confined to Christian girls' schools in urban districts; its syllabus often emphasises canonical Anglo-American writers, and exhibits weak tendency to include postcolonial or contemporary works; and its assessment gives little focus to creative writing.

The picture presented here matches the way John Guillory redefines literary canon formation not as inclusion or exclusion of texts, but as the dissemination and distribution of the cultural capital of literature through school syllabus and curriculum, thereby forming an "efficient mechanism of social exclusion" (vii-ix). The cultural knowledge of literary texts acquired via the syllabus "constitutes capital in two senses" for Guillory: it is a form of linguistic capital credentialing the legitimacy of standard (literary) English, and a form of symbolic capital that "entitles its possessor to the cultural and material rewards of the well-educated person" (ix). The argument of linguistic capital is relevant to Hong Kong, since it is widely presumed that those who study English literature must have high English command. At the same time, the observation on symbolic capital is what divides English language education and English literary education: whereas English language education is widely, albeit already unevenly, available to all students in Hong Kong, the symbolic capital of English literature is concentrated in a small profile of schools and students, which may have an adverse impact on the forming of a Hong Kong English writing community.

English Literary Education in Universities

The state of English literary education in schools is nicely contrasted by almost opposite trends in English departments at the tertiary level. In the past,

English programs also used to carry an air of elitism due to low entrance rates and the suspicion of collaborative colonialism. This is ironic since according to Wing Sang Law, when Frederick Lugard, the 14th Governor of Hong Kong (1907-12), argued for the establishment of the University of Hong Kong, he had in mind the "dissatisfaction exhibited by a large section of educated Indians" due precisely to the English education in India, and was consequently determined to set up a secular and practical university that would "neither Christianize its students nor privilege literary studies" (Law 64-65). However, Scarlett Poon's archival study on the departmental history of the School of English of HKU reveals that, at least in the early days of the university's establishment, the department had close connection with an organisation called the English Association which sought to maintain a high standard of pure, proper British English through the teaching of canonical English literature (S. Poon 22-23). Although in later chapters Poon argues that under the chairmanship of Robert K. M. Simpson from 1921-51, English literature was "denationalized" from the English national discourse and instead put its focus on broader, interdisciplinary Western knowledge, this does not seem to alter the phenomenon that the syllabi were full of canonical British texts at least until the 1980s, according to the sample syllabi provided in Max Lin Hui-Bon-Hoa's doctoral dissertation (S. Poon 70-71; Hui-Bon-Hoa 50-51, with sample syllabi on 345-47).

In contrast, many English departments in Hong Kong nowadays offer a wider range of modules including postcolonial, diasporic, Asian, and even Hong Kong literatures in English. Courses on Asian literature in English are available in HKU, City University of Hong Kong, Lingnan University and Hong Kong Shue Yan University.[23] A dedicated module on Hong Kong Literature in English can be found

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[23] Shue Yan is Hong Kong's first private university, having gained university status in 2006.

in HKU and CUHK, while the aforesaid course on Asian literature in City University does include some works by Hong Kong English writers. The Hong Kong Baptist University has no particular attention for Hong Kong literature in English, but runs a course on "Chinese-Western Literary Relations".[24] With the introduction of the language arts modules in the HKDSE English curriculum, there has been a heightened demand for teachers capable of teaching literature. In response to this, English departments at City University, Polytechnic University and CUHK offer specific MA-level courses on teaching English literature in secondary classrooms.

The broadening of the syllabus matches with a reconceptualisation of English studies at the tertiary level. With the rise of postcolonial and world literatures penned in or translated to English, the English degree becomes a vehicle through which students can know more about the world and where intercultural communication can foster. A useful idea is that of creolisation, advocated by Timothy Weiss. Using his academic careers in Liberia, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Hong Kong as examples, Weiss suggests that English Studies is a "creolising event" that gives birth to "a new, unpredictable diversity emerg[ing] from the interaction of heterogeneous linguistic and cultural elements", as evident in the diverse backgrounds of "new" readers of English from all over the world and in the culturally varied literary texts (44, 46). The end result is a "double transformation" that transforms both the reader and the present meaning or understanding of a text (56-57). The heterogeneous and unpredictable nature of creolisation differentiates it from hybridity and globalisation, which Weiss understands as synonymous to Americanisation in the guise of standardisation and cosmopolitanism (45).

While creolisation may be a useful concept, Weiss' emphasis on

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[24] Not all courses mentioned here are on offer every year. The information provided here is collected on the respective department webpages, and is correct as of February 2014.

"unpredictable diversity" takes the presence of heterogeneous cultural elements for granted, and pays little attention to the fact that diversity has to be grounded in different but firm sets of cultural practices. The study of diversity must therefore entail a close study on different communities as much as their interactions or lack thereof. What I find most useful in Weiss' article is his observation that English Studies in post-handover Hong Kong has "entered a state of flux", facing tensions between the pragmatism of the English language, the need to assert Hong Kong English as a unique variety among other World Englishes, the refusal to link English to the British colonial legacy, and the delicate balance between teaching canonical Anglo-American literature and other postcolonial/ethnic literatures in the undergraduate English degree (51).

Indeed, most English majors in Hong Kong may have received their education in Hong Kong all their life, and may initially find "foreignness" or "alienness" in learning about literatures and cultures "outside of their immediate cultural experiences" via a foreign language (*ibid.* 57). This is supported by Stuart Christie's small-scale questionnaire mentioned in the last section of the last chapter, where the 22 interviewed English majors did not embrace bilingualism in their identity formation. In another small but recent survey, Stuart Christie asked 62 respondents about the feasibility of opening a self-financed MA programme in English literature. 73% of respondents (45 out of 62) agree to the question "English literature has an important role to play when educating Hong Kong citizens", while 90% disagreed English literature has little practicality and interest, and an even overwhelming 98% finds English literature helpful in connecting with the wider world beyond Hong Kong (Christie, "Advancement or Appreciation"). It is true that the respondents are mostly English majors from Hong Kong, and may hence be

biased by their education; nonetheless, for them English Studies does seem to provide the possibility to broaden their knowledge and exposure, and does not proscribe transcultural learning simply because they do not come from a mobile class of global elites or do not possess the cultural capital typical of that class. New cultural diversity is not produced from vague, class-insensitive claims about Hong Kong's cultural hybridity; it takes place at the process when a Cantonese-based, Hong Kong-raised identity is in contact with the kaleidoscopic cultural varieties of the world via the prism of English Studies.

By the same token, creative writing modules in English departments carry the same power of "enlightening" the students to the possibility of self-expression in English. As will be reviewed in the next section, creative writing modules, which did not use to exist, have sprung up after Hong Kong's handover. David Parker, former Chair of the English Department at CUHK, confesses that in his first year of running a short-story writing module, he "simply could not bring myself to limit [student] numbers in what was for many students their final opportunity to do a course in creative writing" (Parker 5). Yet, the fact that this module, offered in honours years, is the last chance to study creative writing underscores how the Hong Kong education system has not been able to provide such opportunities out of negligence. The demand for this as well as other writing modules should suggest the worthiness of popularising the study of English literature and encouraging creative writing at school level.

The fundamental problem, then, is the mismatch of attitudes between tertiary and secondary levels towards English literature, with English departments being more willing to "democratise" English writing and study literary texts from other parts of the world. The same trend and attitude ought to be promoted at school level

as well, so that English literature is not monopolised by a certain background of students.

Recall at this point Louise Ho's two laments foregrounded in the introduction of this dissertation, namely, the lack of critical community in Hong Kong English writing and the preference for financial sensibilities over aesthetic sensibilities. Consider also Hong Kong English poet Agnes Lam's comment in an interview: "[m]ere proficiency […] is not enough for literary creativity to come about. The users of English must want, in fact, need to express their thoughts, feelings, and collective psyche in English. English has to be their language of integration, culturally and personally, before literary creativity can occur" (Xu Xi, "Agnes Lam"). Reminiscent of Angel Lin's "Cantonese-based Chinese cultural identity" mentioned in the last chapter, Lam observes that Cantonese is still the only language in which the majority of Hongkongers think (*ibid*.). Literature is a key area suggesting that even if students are capable of using the English language as a communicative tool, they fail to incorporate it into expressions of their cultural identity, or to "own" the language, so to speak. But what needs to be asked in relation to Ho's and Lam's observations is whether the educational system has offered sufficient opportunities and training in aesthetic appreciation, whether in English or in Chinese, to Hongkongers, and whether enough efforts have been made to promote English writing or literature in schools as indiscriminately and widely as possible. This is, I think, a key task in improving visibility and consciousness of Hong Kong English writing in future.

The Development of Hong Kong English Writing: Pre-2000

In the remaining half of the chapter, I will survey the development of English literary activities in Hong Kong, not only because this has not been thoroughly researched before, but also to show that an English writing community does exist and is growing. Ironic as it may sound, Hong Kong's English literary scene flourished *after*, not during, British colonisation. Still, there were notable publications. For poetry, two most significant anthologies published in the past were *Hong Kong: Images on Shifting Waters* (1977), edited by Joyce Hsia and T. C. Lai, and *VS: 12 Hong Kong Poets* (1993), published by Big Weather Press. Together with some other publications, these two books give a long list of expatriate poets or sojourners who have written about Hong Kong.[25] Among them, Edmund Blunden has been crowned by critic Elaine Ho as the pioneer of Hong Kong English writing and the producer of the "first substantial example of creative writing in English on Hong Kong sustained over a length of time" (E. Ho, "Connecting Cultures" 7-8, 12): a collection called *A Hong Kong House: Poems 1951-1961*, written during his appointment as Chair of English at HKU. In prose, some notable writers include: Jan Alexander, Richard Mason, Christopher New, Austin Coates, and James Dalziel (Hooper, 18-19; see also Turnbull, "Hong Kong").

Before the turn of the millennium, English creative writing by ethnic Chinese writers in Hong Kong did not enjoy a sustained and systematic development, and was at best sporadic. In his study on Hong Kong literature in English, Brian Hooper

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[25] This list includes: Brent Ambacher, Simon Beck, Ulrikka S. Gernes, Jeremy Hardingham, Richard Lawrence, Gordon Osing, Andrew Parkin, Gerard Tannam, Deirdre Tatlow (*VS: 12 Hong Kong Poets*); Dean Barrett, Timothy Birch, Joyce Booth, Martin Booth, Norman de Brackinghe, M. Bruce, John Davison, John Dent-Young, Gladis Depree, Sue Earle, Charles Gurney, Eric Hall, Marion Hicks, Joseph Jones, Ann Kingston, H.S. Luke, Kate McRae, Peter Moss, Seamus W. Rainbird, Joan Rogers, Alena Sherman, Clive Simpson, John B. Smithback, Walter M. Sulke (*Hong Kong: Images on Shifting Waters*); Robert Simpson, Joseph Jay Jones, Gladys Palmer, Raymonde Sacklyn, Jimmy McGregor, and Peter Stambler (Lam, "Poetry in Hong Kong"; Lam, "Defining" 184).

names Lily Chan, Xu Xi, David T. K. Wong, Arthur Lam, John Kai-hong Kam, Timothy Mo, Ding Fai Lee, and Margaret Siu as the more distinguished writers, and Winnie I. Cheung as a playwright representative (Hooper 18-19). Key poets include Louise Ho (widely acclaimed as Hong Kong English poet laureate), Agnes Lam, Joyce Hsia, Monica Lai, Gregory Leong, Herbert Leung, and Liam Fitzpatrick (who is half Chinese, half Irish). The first Hong Kong Chinese person writing in English substantially was probably Man Wong, whose bilingual poetry collection *Between Two Worlds* (1956) is praised and critiqued in Elaine Ho's research ("Connecting Cultures" 12-18; "Nationalism" 85-103). Other poets who mainly write in Chinese but occasionally in English are Xiangcheng Shu (Hsu 16-17) and Che Hung Yuen (*VS: 12 Hong Kong Poets*).

As Agnes Lam points out, there has been "appreciably greater" support, whether governmental or non-governmental, for Chinese language publications than for English. Her research located only one English literary journal called *Imprint* (not to be confused with the *Imprint* published later by the Hong Kong Women in Publishing Society) which only managed to publish for one year in 1980 (Lam, "Poetry in Hong Kong"). Even for the Hong Kong Arts Development Council, writes Lam, poetry was not readily visible compared to drama or visual arts. For instance, no poetry book in the English language had ever earned the sponsorship of the council. Things began to improve towards the end of the century with more reportage in various magazines like *Asiaweek* and *B International* (Lam, "Defining" 185). Louise Ho and Agnes Lam were featured in "Meeting Hong Kong Writers This Life", a programme organised by the Hong Kong Arts Centre in 1997, and the "Eye on Books" literary festival by the British Council in 1998 (Lam, "Defining" 184). In 1998, Kavita Butalia started a poetry reading in Central, the main business district,

and this quickly grew into a regular event later known as Outloud (*ibid.* 184-85).

Creative writing in English also did not seem to be of much interest to students, although such activities were not entirely absent. A group of Edmund Blunden's students has named themselves "Blundenians", and presumably might have also written poetry (Lam, "Poetry in Hong Kong"; Bolton and Lim 306). The literary inspiration of HKU students could also be seen from the occasional stories and poems in *The Quill*, the almanac of HKU's Arts Association in the 60s, and *The Chimes* (1961), *The Compass* (1973) and *Horizon* (1979), published by its English Society. A Hong Kong Tertiary Institutions English Writing Competition was held in 1988, and developed into a journal of winning pieces in poetry, prose and short story sections. Unfortunately, these publications did not last beyond a couple of years.

Many of the authors I have mentioned above have not produced a sustained body of literary works. It was not until the 1990s that we began to see the emergence of some English writers which would become what I call the four most established Hong Kong English writers in the first generation: Louise Ho, Xu Xi, David T. K. Wong, and Agnes Lam. Louise Ho's second poetry collection, *Local Habitation*, was published in 1994, the same year Xu Xi published her debut novel, *Chinese Walls*. David T. K. Wong's short stories collection, *Hong Kong Stories*, was published in 1996, although Wong had been publishing before that. Agnes Lam's first poetry collection, *Woman to Woman and Other Poems*, came out in 1997, as did Louise Ho's third volume, *New Ends, Old Beginnings*. Each of the three female authors contributed an article to the section "Dimensions of Creativity" in Kingsley Bolton's edited volume, *Hong Kong English: Autonomy and Creativity* (2002), demonstrating their established status as representative Hong Kong English-language writers. All four writers have continued to establish their wide profile of publications: Louise

Ho's fourth collection, *Incense Tree*, was out in 2009; Xu Xi has since published nine English novels and collections; David T. K. Wong has ventured in the novel genre with *The Embrace of Harlots* (2010); and Agnes Lam has had two more poetry collections printed: *Water Wood Pure Splendor* (2001) and *A Pond in the Sky* (2013), and added a commendation under her belt by the Home Affairs Bureau of the Hong Kong Government in 2009 for her contributions to arts and cultural activities. Her commendation was a rare recognition from the government on the English writing community, which brings us to the next section on the development of English writing after 2000.

The Development of Hong Kong English Writing: Post-2000

If the pre-1990s could be compared to the act of sowing different seeds of English writing here and there, the 1990s was roughly the time when we saw the first buds. Yet it was after 2000 when Hong Kong English writing truly began to grow, with new writing opportunities and new writers.

Promotion in English Departments

As noted earlier, English departments in Hong Kong universities play an important role in promoting English literature and nurturing a new generation of English writers and poets in their student population. Stephen Richards was one of the first teachers to promote creative writing in university. From 1997 to 2004, he encouraged his creative writing students at the City University of Hong Kong to put together their writings into an online journal called *Expressions* (Lam, "Defining", 185). The journal was unfortunately discontinued, but I have discovered that since

2013, Richards has been archiving the writings in his blog under the project name "AsianVoices" (Richards, "AsianVoices").

Malaysian American poet Shirley Lim is widely credited as a key figure in inspiring a new generation of student writers, when she started a benchmark creative writing course in HKU in 1999. The works of her students were collected to become *Yuan Yang: A Journal of Hong Kong and International Writing* (*Yuan Yang* for short) in 2000. Now in its 12th issue, the journal has become the key English writing journal published in book form in Hong Kong, although not without problems which I will discuss in the next chapter. In the 2000s, other English departments have also begun organising creative writing classes. CUHK had its "Reading and Writing Short Stories" course, taught by David Parker, the fruits of which became *CU Writing in English* (*CU Writing* for short) in 2001. From 2002 onwards, poems from creative writing classes, taught first by Louise Ho and then by Hong Kong-based Singaporean poet Eddie Tay, are also included. *CU Writing* is now another major literary journal showcasing the works of university students in Hong Kong, and is in its 13th issue. The City University and Baptist University also have creative writing courses for undergraduates; Baptist moreover has held an intra-university English Poetry Writing Competition for ten consecutive years since 2004.

In addition, there have been a number of offshoot and outreach projects to promote English literary awareness in the wider community. Both City University and HKU now have an MFA in creative writing. Led by Xu Xi in 2010, City University's programme is widely publicised and prides itself on being the first low-residency MFA established in and focusing on Asia. However, the programme is forced to close by the university in 2015 due to allegedly poor financial performances. On top of its MFA, HKU has also organised a Writer's Series and the

aforementioned Moving Poetry, In 2010, HKU started the biennial International HKU Poetry Prize, with Hong Kong poet Kit Fan winning the inaugural award under the adjudication of Louise Ho. Last but not least, Elaine Ho of HKU launched an online "Hong Kong English Literature Database" in 2010. This is the first comprehensive database of Hong Kong English writing, featuring the summaries of more than 100 titles, mostly novels. It has been a key resource for the research of Hong Kong English writing.

There are also occasional seminars, sharing sessions and launch readings organised by these English departments. Here I will only list some of the very recent ones. Both HKU and CUHK have hosted poetry readings of Kit Fan after he won the HKU Poetry Prize in 2011. HKU has also organised "An Evening with Xu Xi" on 19th March 2013. In April that year, Louise Ho and Eddie Tay have given poetry readings at a conference on the future of English in Asia held at CUHK. The Hong Kong Polytechnic University held "An Evening of Your Poetry with Visiting Poet Shirley Geok-Lin Lim" on 16th December 2011, an event during which Dominique Zhang's controversial poem discussed later in chapter 6 was read and subsequently published. The English Language Centre at the Polytechnic also organised a creative and academic writing roundtable on 24th May 2013, featuring a keynote given by Xu Xi. Another public university, Lingnan, has organised creative writing workshops and readings at their Arts Festival 2012 with their writer-in-residence, Jennifer Wong (featured below). It also held an "Asian Women Writers" symposium on 14th March 2014, featuring the Hong Kong writers Jennifer Wong, Tammy Ho (also featured below), Xu Xi and Agnes Lam. With the recent Umbrella Revolution, Henry W. Leung, a Fulbright scholar based in the English Department at the City University of Hong Kong, gave a talk titled "Lyric Agora, Lyric I" on 7th December 2014. The

same department has been running the Ten Poet's Night event since 2012, with readings from a mix of ethnic Chinese and non-Chinese poets, the latter group including Martin Alexander, Kate Rogers, Justin Hill, Madeleine Marie Slavick, Pauline Burton and Viki Holmes, all active in the Hong Kong English writing scene. Each time, *Halfway Home* was simultaneously launched as a collection of writings from City University's MFA programme. The programme also organises public literary events during its residencies.

New Creative Writing Outlets and Events

While universities have played an important role in encouraging the emergence of new English writing, there are new publishing opportunities, including *Yuan Yang* and *CU Writing in English* which have been discussed. Other periodicals include *Dimsum*, which prided itself as the first Asian-focused literary journal, was published between 1999 and 2005 for twelve issues. American Peter Gordon founded the *Asian Review of Books* in 2000, an online periodical with news on Asian-themed books or Asian authors ("Launch of Asian Review of Books"). *The Wild East Magazine* was a short-lived endeavour in around 2003-04, which quickly discontinued due to economic reality and the static number of subscribers. Its founder Lawrence Gray wrote about these hardships on starting an English-language literary journal in Hong Kong in an article in Volume 8 of *Dimsum* ("Naked Flesh"). *Asia Literary Review*, a Hong Kong-based journal also with an Asian focus, started in 2006 and is back after a hiatus in 2013. In 2007, *Cha: An Asian Literary Journal* became the first Hong Kong-based, Asian-themed English online periodical. Unrestrained by the complexity of print publications, *Cha* has gained fame on the online writing community. Compared to *Asia Literary Review*, which is managed by

non-Chinese expatriates and prejudiced towards established Asian writers, *Cha* pays stronger attention to the Hong Kong English writing community and is more dedicated to discovering new poets, as shown in their Hong Kong feature, "Hong Kong Poets Under 40", in Issue 19 (November 2012), and a supplement on publishing houses in Hong Kong, Macao, Singapore and Malaysia (Issue 15, November 2011).

The four new English publishers in Hong Kong covered by *Cha* were Blacksmith Books, Chameleon Press, Proverse Hong Kong and Signal 8 Press. Together with Haven Books and MCCM Creations, these publishing houses have at times printed fiction, poetry, and story collections by writers based in Hong Kong. Proverse has set up the Proverse Prize to attract good manuscripts for publication. Haven Books has published poetry collections as well as anthologies, most notably *Hong Kong ID* (2005) and *Fifty-Fifty* (2008), the latter edited by Xu Xi. Chameleon Press used to be the publisher of the literary journal *Dimsum*, and has also published a wide range of poetry collections. Xu Xi's latest story collection, *Access*, was with Signal 8 Press. MCCM Creations has among its accolades volumes of French translations of Hong Kong poetry, as well as other collections of new Hong Kong English writing such as *Outloud Too*, the second anthology of works presented in the aforementioned Outloud poetry reading.

Other periodicals include *Imprint*, published annually by Women in Publishing Society Hong Kong since 2001. The Hong Kong Writers' Circle, whose membership is mostly foreign-born expatriates or professional executives, publishes a short story collection on different themes every year since 2005. In 2003, Xu Xi and Mike Ingham published the most comprehensive anthology of Hong Kong English writing to date, titled *City Voices: Hong Kong Writing in English: 1945 to*

the Present. Referencing to the boom of creative writing classes in the university classrooms, Ingham's introduction also includes a list of suggested pedagogic activities to use the book in literature modules (Ingham 11-13). Two years after *City Voices*, Xu Xi and Ingham published another anthology on drama plays called *City Stages: Hong Kong Playwriting in English.*

As for competitions, apart from the poetry prizes mentioned earlier, *Culture Hong Kong*, an English-language high culture magazine in Hong Kong, has been organising an annual Short Story Contest for Young Writers, in connection with Women in Publishing Society. However, all the winners from 2006 to 2012 came from international schools in Hong Kong. There is also Hong Kong's Top Story competition, jointly organised by *South China Morning Post* (SCMP) and *Radio Television Hong Kong* (RTHK) since 2011, attracting many local writers every year. But perhaps the most high-profile literary prize was the Man Asian Literary Prize, established in Hong Kong in 2007 with the sponsorship of the Man Group. It aimed to be the Asian counterpart of the Man Booker Prize with its high-profile award ceremonies. The prize was awarded to the best novel written by an Asian author in English or translated into English, but has discontinued ever since the Man Group withdrew sponsorship in 2012. The only achievement in this prize by a Hong Kong writer was the shortlist of Xu Xi's novel, *Habit of a Foreign Sky* (2010).

Literary festivals are also emerging. Since 2001, the Hong Kong International Literary Festival (formerly sponsored by Standard Chartered and then the Man Group) and its outreach Young Readers Festival have been establishing itself as the leading English-language literary festival in Hong Kong. In 2013 and 2014, the Hong Kong Book Fair, which is the largest book fair in Hong Kong but used to feature mostly Chinese-language books, starts having a programme of seminars and forums

given by invited English-language authors worldwide. One must however take note of the fact that these festivals usually have an eye on international authors writing in English, and their existence does not necessarily translate to a higher visibility of Hong Kong English writing. In fact, local English writing often occupies only one event in these festivals. Unlike the Jaipur Literary Festival in India, the Hong Kong International Literary Festival also charges for entrance, at USD 8-38 (GBP 5-25) in 2013.

Poetry readings have also emerged. The biennial International Poetry Nights in Hong Kong invites poets from around the globe to share their works in discussions and poetry readings in a multilingual setting, and is in its third instalment in 2013. Regular poetry readings include the aforementioned Outloud group, now a free and regular open-mic poetry-reading event attended by many on the first Wednesday of every month at the Fringe Club, and the Kubric Poetry Society, a meeting of Hong Kong locals to read poems written or translated in Chinese or English, among which were Jennifer Wong's poems, featured in March 2014. StoryWorthyWeek is a recent addition: an English story-telling festival organised by a performing arts group called Hong Kong Story Tellers. Theatre performances also seem to be on the rise. The Shadow Players, a group of local university graduates that was incorporated in October 2012, now has two productions under their belt ("About Us").

Representative New Voices

Thanks to more publishing opportunities, more locally raised young writers are keen to pursue creative writing in English, thus possibly presenting new voices and new modalities of expression. Here I have identified five representatives in the newer generation of Hong Kong English voices.

Jennifer Wong has studied in the UK and has published two poetry collections with Chameleon Press: *Summer Cicadas* (2006) and *Goldfish* (2013).

Tammy Ho is the founding editor of the Hong Kong-based *Cha: An Asian Literary Journal* in 2007 as well as a fine poet herself. Her first poetry collection, *Hula Hooping*, is out in 2015, and a story collection, *Her Name Upon The Strand*, will be published in 2016. She was interviewed in the January 2014 issue of *City Magazine*, one of the most acclaimed Chinese-language cultural magazines in Hong Kong.

Arthur Leung has garnered many accolades, including a finalist in the 2007 Erskine J Poetry Prize, a short list in the 2007 Margaret Reid Prize for Traditional Verse, and the third prize in the inaugural Edwin Morgan Poetry Prize 2008. As a result, he was even the first writer in English commended by the Home Affairs Bureau of the Hong Kong Government in 2009. The news of his win and commendation, together with Agnes Lam's commendation in the same year, were some of the very few cases when local English writers were featured in Hong Kong Chinese newspapers.

As mentioned above, Kit Fan won the International HKU Poetry Prize in 2010, leading to his debut collection, *Paper Scissors Stone* being published in 2011. He was also the winner of the 2006 Times Stephen Spender Prize for Translation.

2012 saw the publication of Nicholas Wong's debut collection *Cities of Sameness*, and his second collection *Crevasse* came out in April 2015. A number of English-language media in Hong Kong, such as the *SCMP* and *Time Out Hong Kong*, featured him as a representative voice in English poetry (Gressel, "Four"; Y. Cheung and N. Wong, "An Ode").

These new writers have stimulated the growth of English literature in Hong Kong and brought more spotlight to Hong Kong English writing. Slowly we begin to see English writing being represented and recognised in mainstream media.

Overview of Critical Works

Critical works have also begun to catch up on the boom of English writing. Mimi Chan was one of the first critics to write from an academic perspective about Hong Kong Literature in English. Elaine Ho, who teaches at the School of English at HKU, has been actively writing articles on Hong Kong English writers since 2000. There are also scattered articles written by academics like Douglas Kerr and Timothy Weiss, or book chapters in Ackbar Abbas' monograph, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (1997), Amy Lai's *Asian English Writers of Chinese Origin: Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong* (2011) and Agnes Lam's *Becoming Poets: The Asian English Experience* (2014). Edited volumes include Kingsley Bolton's *Hong Kong English: Autonomy and Creativity* (2002), Tam et al.'s *Sights of Contestation: Localism, Globalism and Cultural Production in Asia and the Pacific* (2002) and Kam Louie's *Hong Kong Culture: Word and Image* (2010). Last but not least, Brian Hooper's *Voice in the Heart: Postcolonialism and Identity in Hong Kong Literature* (2003), which was based on his MPhil dissertation, is currently the only monograph solely about Hong Kong English writing.

There have also been a limited number of theses and dissertations on Hong Kong English writing; again most of these I have found are published after 2000. Max Lin Hui-Bon-Hoa's doctoral dissertation (1997, University of London) is one of the first dissertations to advocate the teaching of English literature in Hong Kong schools, although writing before 2000 the author has little choice but to claim that

there was no "corpus of local literature written in English that can be readily incorporated into the literature curriculum" (53, 223). Written almost a decade later, Adys Wong's MA thesis (2007, Cambridge) is able to look at the possibility of teaching the poems of Agnes Lam and others in schools. Esther Mee Kwan Cheung's doctoral dissertation (1998, CUHK) spends a chapter on the works of Xu Xi, Louise Ho and Timothy Mo, and is one of the first dissertations to talk about Hong Kong English writing. Christopher Payne (2010, SOAS) also spends a part of his PhD dissertation on Xu Xi. As mentioned above, Brian Hooper ironed his master's thesis (2000, CUHK) into a book. Catherine Wong's dissertation (2008, Liverpool) is most likely the only PhD-level work so far that engages solely with Hong Kong English writing. A number of master's theses are also written on the issue. Timothy Mo is studied throughout Cecilia Choi's (1999, CUHK) and also in one of the chapters of Siu Kit Mok's thesis (2005, HKU). Ho Yin Wong (2003, HKU) writes on Hong Kong English poetry, while Rose Ching Yee Chan (2006, CUHK) and Lok Yi Siu (2007, CUHK) both work on the prose of Xu Xi and David T. K. Wong. Pieta Chan's thesis (2013, Kingston) is a new addition that looks specifically at how identity is expressed in novels published around the 1997 Hong Kong handover.

Overview on Translations

Finally, a note about translations. As Agnes Lam rightly points out, translation "tends to go only one way, from Chinese to English, apparently for the benefit of the international community literature in English" ("Poetry in Hong Kong"). *Renditions*, a translation journal of CUHK, has been a key platform for the translation of Chinese texts into English, including special issues in 1988 and 1997 dedicated to Hong Kong literature. The extensive coverage of Hong Kong Chinese

writers in this journal has been discussed by Lam ("Poetry in Hong Kong") and Yuk-kwan Hsu (17-18). Lam's and Hsu's essays (14-18) have also taken note of some other translation magazines in Hong Kong. There are also other edited volumes, such as the story collection *Hong Kong Collage* (1998) by Martha Cheung.

Notwithstanding these efforts, however, there was only one Hong Kong poet who could truly claim to have transcended the boundary between Chinese writing and English writing in Hong Kong. This poet is Ping-kwan Leung, or known by his pen name Ye Si, who sadly passed away in 2013. With the help of many translators, many of Leung's collections, such as *Fly Heads and Bird Claws* (2013) were published bilingually with Chinese originals and English translations. His poetry has also inspired many young writers, including the aforementioned Arthur Leung. Interestingly, Ping-kwan Leung recollects that some of his first writing attempts were in English, after he was discouraged by his Chinese teacher but encouraged by his English teacher. Because of this cross-linguistic creative experience, throughout his writing career he has considered writing some poems in English despite not having any formal training, and has played an active role in working with his English translators (Leung 199-204). His death was elegised in Hong Kong literary journals: *Fleurs des Lettres* in Chinese, and *Cha* in English. He was indisputably the one Hong Kong poet who was equally famous in both Chinese and English writing communities.

Conclusion

This chapter examines the sociocultural development of English writing in Hong Kong, focusing on two main areas, namely the teaching of English literature in Hong Kong schools and universities, and the gradual development of English writing

community and activities. Despite the heartening emergence of English literary activities in recent years, there is a need to address the discrepancy in the way English literature is taught between schools and universities, as well as the disproportionate amount of encouragement in English creative writing. While school education is not the only way to sow the seeds of writing, it can be an important starting point—as the new HKDSE English Language Arts elective modules show—to bring about changes that may eventually revise Louise Ho's comment about the lack of a critical reading mass for Hong Kong English writing.

In transitioning into the next chapter, it should be pointed out that the problem of the lack of access to English literary education, discussed in the first half of this chapter, is deliberately juxtaposed with a positive, descriptive section in the second half on the burgeoning English literary scene in Hong Kong. This can be read in a number of ways: either it can be said that *despite* the problem in literary education, an English writing circle has still managed to evolve, or it would give us a reason to interrogate how the circle has emerged and should plan its survival when access to the circle is so limited. In the next chapter I take the latter route, and will tackle issues within the circle, most notably its strategies to position itself in Hong Kong and in the world.

Chapter 4 Critiquing the Strategic Positioning of

Hong Kong English Writing

In the last chapter, I pointed out that while there are positive developments in Hong Kong English writing in recent years, English literary education still tends to be offered to elite students in Hong Kong. Extending this critique, in this chapter I will further critique the problems and strategies underlying the self-positioning of Hong Kong English writing. I argue that due to the various geographical, intralingual and ideological dilemmas it faces, Hong Kong English writing has had to conceive its existence in the global literary community through highlighting Hong Kong's internationalism and cosmopolitanism—what I call its strategic positioning. This positioning, I further argue, has certain merits, but is not entirely helpful to move Hong Kong English writing forward. Instead I advocate a direction of "turning inwards", which should be complementary to the current desire to present Hong Kong as multicultural and cosmopolitan in English writing. One of the ways to "turn inwards" to be discussed in this chapter is to increase publication opportunities and writing platforms dedicated to emerging local writers and creative writing students, to ensure their access to the English writing community. In the following I will first provide a contextual background to the rest of my chapter with a critique on the lack of attention to class issue in the study of World English Literature. Then I will discuss three dilemmas facing the self-positioning of Hong Kong English writing, before moving on to a close-reading of several critical essays on positioning the Hong Kong English writing community. From this reading, I suggest a conceptual blueprint to the future of Hong Kong English writing that is committed to creating encouraging platforms for young Hong Kong writers, and that pays closer attention

to the complexities of the lives of the Cantonese-speaking Hongkongers.

A Critique of World English Literature

I do not use the term World English Literature to mean the ongoing academic discussion on "world literature", which I discussed in the introduction of this dissertation. Rather, I refer to the way scholars in the linguistic sub-fields of World Englishes (WE) and English Language Teaching (ELT)—in other words, the research fields I critiqued in chapter 2—understand the relationship between new varieties of English and the new literatures born out of these new varieties.

ELT research tends to see a complementary emergence of a nativised English literature together with the development of a nativised variety of English, and affirm the value of such literature as an exploration of aesthetics and a facilitator of intercultural awareness. In the five-stage Dynamic Model of World English devised by linguist Edgar Schneider, literary creativity is one of the features for the penultimate stage in the maturation of a new, independent variety of English. For Schneider, the emergence of literary creativity in English reflects cultural and linguistic independence of English in postcolonial societies and highlights the writers' cultural hybridity (*Postcolonial English* 50). He illustrates with notable examples like Nigeria, but arguably literature in English is not always noticeable in other World English varieties: literature is only mentioned in 12 out of 17 case studies Schneider conducts on postcolonial Englishes,[1] and Hong Kong is not on the list (*English Around the World* 153-55; *Postcolonial English* 133-39). Like how postcolonial literary studies has largely ignored Hong Kong as discussed in the

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[1] These 12 countries are: Australia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, India, South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Barbados, Jamaica, Canada and the United States of America. The five exceptions are Fiji, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Tanzania, and Cameroon.

introduction of this dissertation, the invisibility of Hong Kong English writing is underscored once again.

Linguist David Crystal has also theorised several stages in the stylistics of a nativised English literature, with the last stage being that "[c]haracters express themselves in a local variety [of English]; the author makes no comment", which represents "a stage of 'showing', not 'telling'" that demonstrates "a sign of real literary confidence" (Crystal, "Into the Twenty-First Century" 398). While I agree that this last stage represents what Crystal calls a "taking charge" of one's linguistic background, we need to take issue with Crystal's problematic assumptions in forming this theory. He places good faith in the convergence of linguistic traits among people in rapport with each other in the age of globalisation, thus it is

> only natural for native speakers of English, living as a (less powerful) minority in a non-native community, and wishing to integrate within that community, to accommodate in the direction of the linguistic norms which they hear around them. And it is only a matter of time before features of this integration […] begin to be institutionalized, written down by those who listen most carefully: the novelists, poets, dramatists, and short-story writers. (*ibid.* 397)

Contrary to Crystal's opinion, I see no reason to assume that being a minority will necessarily make native English speakers less powerful in a non-native community, to the point they would feel the "natural" need to integrate into the majority community. This calls for empirical examinations of geographical, racial and class-based segregation in those non-English-speaking contexts. We also know only too well from the histories of colonialism that a white minority can be more powerful than, and unwilling to mingle with, the local majority. There is, in addition, the

unresolved issue of social class accompanying the acquisition of English—thus reminiscent of the problems in applied linguistics research of ignoring class issue and the global hegemony of neoliberal imperialism, as I discussed in chapter 2. It is also suggestive of creating a new class of English-speaking, university-educated mobile class whose transnational cosmopolitan lifestyle hardly emulates the majority population inhabiting the city, as I critiqued Aihwa Ong's theory of flexible citizenship in chapter 1.

Class has, in fact, been the underlying issue in the seminal debate between Chinua Achebe and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. Achebe defends African writers who write in the colonial languages, defensively claiming that their emergence merely reflects the "reality" in the process of building new nation-states in present-day Africa, and appealing to English as a central language of international exchange and therefore as the only choice to "carry the weight of [the writer's] African experience" ("English" 344-49). Yet he is blind to the damage the promotion of English does to other African languages, and merely "hope[s]" that the ethnic literatures of Africa will flourish (348). In a famed response to Achebe, Ngũgĩ argues that African literature written in European languages is not African literature, but only Afro-European literature (81). He complains how writers in African languages were excluded in a discussion of what African literature is in the 1962 "Conference of African Writers of English Expression", which Achebe also mentions. Whereas the mother-tongue provokes "a tone of levity", the foreign language "produces a categorical positive embrace" (71). This is true in Kenya where, according to Ngũgĩ's observation, the promotion of English language and English literary education in schools has suppressed the development and status of other African languages and literatures. As such, Ngũgĩ disagrees with Achebe's assumption that English is "the natural language of literary

and even political mediation" among African people and the world (*ibid.*).[2] In his Marxist analysis, Ngũgĩ sees European languages as not only the languages of the coloniser, but also that of the bourgeoisie, and African languages as the language of the peasantry and working class. African literature written in colonial European languages is therefore the literature of the nationalistic petty-bourgeoisie that "continu[es] that neo-colonial slavish and cringing spirit", and fails to sustain a complaint against Africa's "neo-colonial economic and political relationship to Euro-America" (79-81). For him, only writing in an African language constitutes an anti-imperialist struggle (82).

The debate between Achebe and Ngũgĩ—particularly Ngũgĩ's class-based analysis—has a wider relevance for World Englishes and their literature. Certainly, English is no longer the language of any current European coloniser. However, the *effect* of that linguistic colonisation still lingers and only strengthens, since English is now the language of a new class of global, fluid, flexible and transnational bourgeoisie. If learning a language is never neutral or natural, but always entwined with the idea of accumulating more linguistic and cultural capital in the hope of transcending one's social class, then we must ask what it means ideologically for any writer to creatively express themselves in English. Adopting English as the language of creativity in ex-colonies and non-English-speaking societies[3] is a deliberate act that appeals to a bigger market afforded by the only language of the neoliberal

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[2] Ngũgĩ has not changed his position since, as shown in a recent interview in July 2013 with the BBC, in which he makes it clear that English is not an African language ("Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o: English is not an African language").

[3] I stress the ex-colonial and non-English-speaking contexts here, because I am aware that for postcolonial writers who have migrated to an English-speaking country, such as Salman Rushdie in Britain, writing in English is often not a choice, but a necessity in forging a British Indian identity (Rushdie 17). In societies like Britain, then indigenous languages in the ex-colony becomes a minority language among an overwhelming number of native English speakers. This is a different context from what I am focusing on here, which is the choice of using English in overseas societies where English is a second or even foreign language to the majority of population, such as Hong Kong.

capitalist order. Apart from scrutinising the writer's language choice, we must also situate such new literatures in both global and local contexts. As British scholar Gerald Moore rightly observes, the act of writing what he calls Anglophone literature in postcolonial and overseas societies is often deemed "an irrelevant and totally unrepresentative activity" because it is often separated from what is going on there (106). This is especially true in many parts of Africa and Asia, where "the sectors of national life and activity to which the word Anglophone can be applied are inevitably limited ones" (108). These new varieties of English literature, while bringing hybrid and cross-cultural experiences into the spotlight, should also show commitment against the global extent of the injustices and inequalities under neoliberalism.

This section is essential to contextualise this chapter, not only because it once again highlights the neglect on Hong Kong English writing from ELT research, nor only because it reminds us of the issue of class in the education and production of language and literature. Rather, I have tried to hint at the possible existence of a hierarchy within a writing community based on the language of the literary works. Far from Achebe's claim of a natural "reality of present-day Africa" (344), language choice is always a conscious decision that compartmentalises writers into groups and hierarchies based on the size of readership, and therefore the accumulation of financial capital (e.g. royalties) and—for the self-righteous ones who are seemingly nonchalant about money—symbolic capital (e.g. fame gained by taking advantage of the globalisation of literary consumption). Language, apart from being an issue of capacity (i.e. whether one is able to write in a foreign language), can also be a statement revealing how writers position themselves between their cultural origin or experiences and the global reading community. It is this relationship between language choice and self-positioning that I will illustrate with Hong Kong English

writing below.

Dilemmas in Positioning Hong Kong English Writing

It is hoped that I have established in chapters 2 and 3 an atmosphere of marginality surrounding Hong Kong English writing—even if it is a type of marginality convoluted with notions of elitism. In this section I will elucidate this marginality by identifying three dilemmas facing English writing in its positioning.

Southeast Asia VS East Asia

Literature is often classified according to their geographical origin, whether national or regional, although not without constant debates. The first problem facing Hong Kong English writing is its regional classification: With Hong Kong's tricky intersection in a special colonial and political history, does its English writing belong to "Southeast Asian literature in English" or "East Asian literature (in English)"?

If we adopt a geographical approach, such as Teri Shaffer Yamada's definition of Southeast Asia as "south of China and east of India, an area also incorporating thousands of islands that form the Indonesian and Philippine archipelagoes" (Yamada 1), then Hong Kong is clearly not part of Southeast Asia. If we look instead at history, then Hong Kong does not share the Southeast Asian experience entirely either. Singaporean poet Edwin Thumboo has, for instance, tried to probe into how liberation and postliberation circumstances have affected the language politics and hierarchies and the production of literatures from Thai, Malaysian, Filipino, Indonesian and Singaporean standpoints (*Literature and Liberation*). Due to its ongoing colonisation and lack of political independence, Hong Kong cannot take part in such discussions.

Nevertheless, Hong Kong English writing does share a connection, however feeble, with Southeast Asian literature in English, in their background as British colonies and in the (perceived) common use of English. These are the justifications put forward by Rajeev Patke and Philip Holden in discussing Hong Kong in their book *The Routledge Concise History of Southeast Asian Writing in English*, despite that Hong Kong is not part of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). At times in popular imagination, Hong Kong is considered part of Southeast Asia due to its colonial separation from China during the Cold War era; further, its colonial history has played a significant part in both forging an English-speaking communities and liasing with the Chinese communities in Southeast Asian countries (Patke and Holden 2-3). Like other Southeast Asian nations, Hong Kong also displays a "growing confidence in using English for creative purposes, even if only by a tiny minority of expatriates and English-educated writers born or settled in Hong Kong" (*ibid*). In a similar vein, Hong Kong scholar Kwok-kan Tam confirms that in the past, English-language writers in Hong Kong would refrain from identifying themselves as "Hong Kong writers", since "the themes they write about have much in common with SE Asian literature, particularly on the cultural issues of East-West encounters" (K. Tam 166-67). As Brian Hooper also comments, the earliest Hong Kong English-language writing corpus often "date to the earliest British presence in Southeast Asia" (23), and for this reason he situates Hong Kong English writing in "Southeast Asian anglophone literatures [that] are only just beginning to receive the attention they deserve" (Hooper 13, sic).

Yet, if this affinity with Southeast Asia was largely hinged upon colonial status, then it is certainly "muddled" as Hong Kong ceases to be a Crown colony. Because Hong Kong is now politically part of China, its popular association with

Southeast Asia is likely to diminish, and is indeed more often considered as part of East Asia geographically. The problem arising from this is that there is little awareness of an East Asian literature in English, which is a combined outcome between a strong root in their respective literatures and a relatively weak British colonial influence in the region. In departments of East Asian languages and literatures, the predominant attention has been on literatures written in the native languages: Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and so on. If we are to be optimistic about the emergence of literature in English in East Asia, as David Crystal has been with the general boom of literature in English, we must acknowledge the possible resistance from these East Asian countries on defending their "own" literatures.

In this regard, the strongest contemporary link that Hong Kong has with Southeast Asia will be that Hong Kong is one of the few, if not the only, places in the geographical East Asia (i.e. out of China, Taiwan, Japan, South and North Korea) that has a comparatively stronger presence in literature written in English. Moreover, the question of "to write or not to write, in English, as an ethnic Chinese"—always automatically touching on the problems of linguistic imperialism and national/cultural identification—will draw Hong Kong to a similar debate in Southeast Asia. While it makes sense for Edwin Thumboo to develop an Anglophone literature in Singapore due to its wide usage and emblem of multiethnicity (Thumboo 145), this may not be true for all Southeast Asia. Hence, speaking of the relationship between literature and English in Southeast Asia in 1986, Lloyd Fernando has disputed a tendency found among literary scholars that assumes "a sufficient knowledge of the interaction between literature and society and culture may be had from the study of English literature alone or combined with some knowledge of the European tradition" (Fernando 15). "In a bicultural [sic] age," continues Fernando,

"we need a knowledge of another literature from a quite different cultural area, preferably in the original, or at least in translation, so that we may prevent the study of literature itself from becoming more and more remote from present needs, or from becoming unnecessarily parochial" (*ibid.*). It is this debate on whether literature in English is necessarily narrow in scope or capable of reaching out to the lived material reality of the population that, I argue, should be a main focus of Hong Kong English writing.

On the other hand, if Hong Kong English writing is to deal with issues of national/cultural identification in the post-1997 neo-colonial era, this would draw us back to East Asian geography and politics. The tension brought by China's rise as a hegemony can be an area where young Hong Kong writers can explore with their experiences of living in colonial and neo-colonial times. Chapter 6 will examine a sample of such works.

Chinese-language Writing VS English-language Writing

Narrowing from a broad regional identification to the label of Hong Kong literature, we now come back to the confrontation between Chinese and English, which I have been developing with respect to language status and education in chapter 2 and to literary education in chapter 3. The concept of Cantonese-based cultural identity (discussed in chapter 2) echoes the first two reasons in critic Mimi Chan's three-point explanation on the marginal status of English writing in Hong Kong: 1) "that the Chinese population in Hong Kong has poor English proficiency", and 2) "that the Hong Kong Chinese has strong links with China" (M. Chan 407). It is thus due to the linguistic and cultural situations of Hong Kong that English writing lacks the input of the local ethnic Chinese. In other words, English writing loses out

to Chinese writing in terms of attention and recognition because English, whether as a language of colonial governance or globalisation, carries only pragmatic values, while Cantonese and traditional Chinese characters, as the mother tongue of most ethnic Chinese Hongkongers, are important components in the construction of a mainstream Hong Kong identity.

Indeed, overwhelming as it may seem, the term "Hong Kong Literature" is almost always assumed, without exception by scholars or the general public, to mean literature written in Chinese. Of course, often deemed a capitalist, pragmatic "cultural desert", literary activities and creativity in Chinese in general are already scorned by the Hong Kong public *as well as* by scholars in Asian or Chinese literary studies. Rey Chow for instance recalls an anecdote in which, upon announcing that she was attending a conference on contemporary Hong Kong literature, a senior Chinese classicist responded: "Oh, is there such a thing?" ("The Politics and Pedagogy" 125). Kwok-kan Tam likewise recounts that it was only in the 70s and 80s—roughly coinciding with the rise of a distinct Hong Kong identity—that writers began to debate about migrating from a self-labelling of "Chinese writers" to a tendency to call themselves Hong Kong writers (K. Tam 166-167). Today, however, there is little doubt "Hong Kong literature" is assumed to be in Chinese, whether on a sociocultural and canonical level. For example, in a Chinese newspaper article discussing the image of the city in Hong Kong literature, Cultural Studies scholar Pun Kwok-Ling only uses works by Hong Kong Chinese writers as examples ("Heong Gong"). An international symposium entitled "Hong Kong Literature and Culture in the 1950s", which was organised by the Lingnan University in May 2013, had an overwhelming number of papers on Chinese-medium works, and only two papers in one panel on Chinese-English translation activities in Hong Kong. Finally,

all articles in the published seminar proceedings of the biennial Hong Kong Literature Festival, organised by the Hong Kong Public Library, have focused only on literary works in Chinese. The association of Hong Kong writing with the Chinese language is stubbornly overwhelming.

Obversely, the general ignorance of English writing is also reflected in library catalogues. The public library system of Hong Kong has a special Hong Kong Literature reference unit which does include a limited selection of works in English; but this is not the case for another more prominent project, the Hong Kong Literature Research Centre. Set up by the Department of Chinese at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) in 2001 under the support of famed Hong Kong Chinese writer Lo Wai Luen, this research centre has set up an online Hong Kong literature database as well as a special "Hong Kong Literature Collection" at the CUHK library that celebrated its decennial in 2013. However, this collection customarily leaves out even the (comparatively) most well-known works of Hong Kong literature in English, such as the novels of Xu Xi, the short stories of David T. K. Wong, and the poetry of Louise Ho. Instead, such works are catalogued under "Hong Kong Studies" in the CUHK library. Such categorisation no doubt acknowledges the relevance of English writing to Hong Kong and Hong Kong Studies, but the tenacious ignorance of English works reveals the embarrassing position Hong Kong English writing occupies in the establishment of a representative canon of "Hong Kong Literature". This is perhaps why Elaine Ho, a devoted researcher to Hong Kong English writing at HKU, decided to launch a separate "Hong Kong English Literature Database" in 2010, featuring the online summaries of more than 100 titles of novels and poetry collections.

The hard work devoted to establishing a brand of Hong Kong literature has

therefore produced an exclusion of works written in English. John Flowerdew et al. write that in Hong Kong, there is "no indigenous creative literature in English to speak of" (203). As I have also signposted repeatedly in this dissertation, poet Louise Ho has also lamented at the "feeling of isolation" due to insufficient writing and critical mass. A Hong Kong brand of English writing does not exist in the consciousness of the general public—on a personal note, this is often the reaction I get whenever I mention my research topic to any non-English-major acquaintance from Hong Kong. Read also Mike Ingham's questions in his foreword to *City Voices*, the biggest anthology on Hong Kong English writing so far:

> If the Hong Kong fiction-reading population is more than adequately served by Chinese-language fiction, not to mention the plethora of other fictions in or translated into English, […] does this necessarily mean that Hong Kong English writers are doomed to a kind of literary twilight zone, struggling to get published and then remaining largely unread and ignored? (Ingham 3)

These enquiries are almost in parallel to the anxiety felt by the novelist Xu Xi, who also co-edited *City Voices*, based on her half-Chinese, half-Indonesian background:

> Is my voice "authentic" in any way, or is my writing merely a fringe literature, reflecting a minority perspective that simply cannot be considered the "real Hong Kong"? Or worse, do I get relegated to *gwailo* "foreign devil"[4] Hong Kong literature, a voice for those who are "belongers" only because of a residency status conferred alike to non-Chinese newcomers, long-term residents, as well as those who can claim actual birthright […] ? (Xu Xi, "Writing" 220)

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[4] *Gwailo*, literally "devil/ghost guy", is a Cantonese slang term that refers to Westerners in general.

Here, the mainstream understanding of Hong Kong literature comes into play in her pessimism towards English writing: Hong Kong literature is literature written in Chinese, and there will only be "greater attention focused towards Chinese language writing in world literature" after Hong Kong's handover (*ibid.* 219). This aligns Hong Kong literature with the greater Chinese literary community in which Hong Kong Chinese-language writers are busy "scrambling for a place" (221). In the meantime, English writing, as her questions show, may be further alienated as unreal and inauthentic. Xu Xi's problem, then, is that writing in English presents itself as alienation and a "failure to identify with and belong to a national literature" (221).

Hong Kong: Capitalism VS Aesthetics?

The final disjuncture I have identified is ideological: Hong Kong English writing shows at times a tendency to polarise capitalism from aesthetics, as we have seen from Louise Ho's concerns: "Hong Kong society has nurtured sensibilities for stocks and shares and property prices rather than sensibilities in abstractions and aesthetics" ("Hong Kong Writing" 173). A well-quoted lament, Ho's words are later echoed by Eddie Tay and Eva Leung, who observe that "one of the most important elements to Anglophone creative writing in Hong Kong needs to be sensitive to the fact that the culture and society of Hong Kong is premised on capital accumulation, […] socio-economic advancement and upward social mobility" (Tay and Leung 108). Indeed, even census data seem to support the claim that Hong Kong people do tend to be preoccupied with material attainments, and like the crises of the humanities faced in many parts of the world, the percentage of post-secondary students trained in the arts and the social sciences has dropped from 18.8% in 2001 to 16.7% in 2011,

despite an increased enrolment[5] in post-secondary level education (HK, Census and Statistics Department, *2011 Population Census Summary Results* 49). Within the arts, Agnes Lam further laments that promotion of poetry is also "not readily 'visible'" in the agenda of the Hong Kong Arts Development Council, which tends to favour artistic development and appreciation in the visual arts or drama ("Poetry in Hong Kong").

In presenting Hong Kong as a capitalist city where the power of literary creativity is much glossed over and hardly emphasised, critics have occasionally noticed the role played by the English language. Unlike metropolitan cities such as London or New York, where literary establishments (e.g. bookshops) and literary activities add to the capitalist chic of the cities, Kingsley Bolton and Shirley Lim, for instance, note that the public in Hong Kong favours "an identification of English with business, trade and prosperity" rather than with language arts or linguistic creativity (299), striking the same argument as Mimi Chan, who, apart from the two reasons given above on the unpopularity of English writing, also argues for a third reason "that the English language has instrumental but not creative value" (M. Chan 407). As we have seen in chapter 3, the lack of association with creativity stems partly from the niche elitism surrounding English Literature as a school subject.

But if Louise Ho's lament is ever so often quoted, it is because her words, inasmuch as highlighting a problem, also seem to provide a way out for the conundrum in defending the existence of English writing: The English writing community must assign an alternative value and function—aesthetic and creative

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[5] For a long time since 1989, university education has been the privilege of only about 18% of youngsters in the relevant age group (A. Lee, "Fewer"). Recognising the economic importance of a substantial post-secondary population in a knowledge-based society, plans to increase enrolment to post-secondary education were announced in 2000. However, this increased enrolment is achieved through expanding the self-funded sub-degree market and self-financed (instead of publicly funded) bachelor degrees. The publicly funded bachelor degrees have long remained at about 14,500 to 15,000 places per year.

power—to the English language, in order to articulate itself as the proxy means through which writers are inspired to escape the overwhelming functionalism of English and to venture beyond cut-throat capitalism and beyond Hong Kong.

However, I believe there is more to this polarisation between money and aesthetics than what the sources above suggest. As Eddie Tay and Eva Leung reflect on teaching English-language creative writing in Hong Kong, "creative writing ventures tend to be initiated mostly by private enterprises" (111), a problem reflected in the discontinuation of the Man Asian Literary Prize and the high admission prices to events at Hong Kong International Literary Festival mentioned in the last chapter. Contrary to Louise Ho, they take the stance that teachers of English creative writing need to address the fact that creative writing cannot tear itself completely free from sponsors (*ibid.*). I take one step further and consider that the reliance of English creative writing on the sponsorship of private funds reveals how English writing will always be caught in a complex web of capital accumulation—whether in terms of gaining a symbolic capital of elitism through the help of actual business companies, whose infatuation with globalisation or "global outlook" coincides with or even induces a similar trend in the English writing community to seek international readership and audience to consume books and literary events. In my view, a more useful approach instead of seeing aesthetics and a capitalist mindset as antithetical and dichotomous, is for Hong Kong English-language writers to be reflective on their privilege, and to channel a fraction of their creativity to scrutinising the perverse mutual reliance between the two, and imagining what kinds of community or lived experiences in Hong Kong are left out or under-represented as a result of this reliance.

Summary

To sum up the dilemmas discussed here, Hong Kong English writing faces a crisis of marginalisation in positioning itself regionally, linguistically, and ideologically. English writing seems to swim between Southeast Asian English literature and East Asian literature; its public recognition wavers in the face of Chinese writing; and it is often pitted against the capitalist mindset of the general public. As is also seen here, the last dilemma in particular has influenced a kind of strategic positioning that allows Hong Kong English writing to brand itself as a fugitive from the worship of material wealth. This has set the stage for me to elaborate and critique below how Hong Kong English writing develops a strategy to define its existence.

Devising a Strategic Positioning: A Critique against Critiques

It can be seen from the above dilemmas that English writing in Hong Kong belongs somewhat to what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari call a "minor literature", i.e. "the literature a minority makes in a major language" (Deleuze, Guattari and Brinkley 16), although strictly speaking it is a minority group in a city speaking a major language in the globe. Moreover, Hong Kong English writing also carries some of the characteristics of minor literatures (16-17): its survival certainly depends on its commercial and economic value in addition to its literary and aesthetic merit, and as a community it has a collective significance as a creative practice. These two characteristics open the door to my analysis of strategic positioning as a communal defence of its existence. My use of the word "strategic" here takes after Michel de Certeau's definition of strategy in *The Practice of Everyday Life*: the "calculation […] of power relations" so that "a subject with will and power" can "postulate a *place*" of

its own "from which relations with an *exteriority* composed of targets or threats […] can be managed" (35-36, italics original). The subject here is, clearly, Hong Kong English writing and its community. Faced with three dilemmas that threaten its own self-positioning, this section will elucidate my argument that the English writing community has had to devise strategies in order to establish a base for its own existence. To put it succinctly, this strategic positioning is a fetishisation of its marginality through staking a claim on the "Hong Kong" label, by branding itself on the cosmopolitan and international quality of Hong Kong to the global creative writing and literary community. My elaboration here will be based on a critique of several essays written by writers and critics in the Hong Kong English writing circle, before moving on to a critique of this positioning in terms of what it tends to leave out in enshrining its marginality.

Defining Hong Kong English Writing

The three dilemmas already discussed converge, first of all, on the crucial issue of definition. I return briefly to Chinua Achebe, and consider his ponderings on defining African literature, which I have taken the liberty to transpose the African context of his questions to a Hong Kong one (in square brackets):

> *On subject matter:* Was it literature produced in [Hong Kong], about [Hong Kong], or about the [Hong Kong] experience? Could [Hong Kong] literature be on any subject, or must it have a [Hong Kong] theme?
>
> *On authorship:* Was it literature written by [Hongkongers]? What about a [non-Hongkonger] who wrote about Hong Kong: did his/her work qualify as [Hong Kong] literature? What if a [Hongkonger] set

> his/her work in Greenland: did that qualify as [Hong Kong] literature?
>
> *On language:* Should it be in [Hong Kong Chinese] or should it include [English]?

Achebe's original questions, which covertly underscore the significance of place, seem translatable to a Hong Kong context; in addition I feel that these additional questions are also valid:

> *On readership:* Who are the readers of Hong Kong literature? Should the local Chinese natives be considered a key reader group? Or would it suffice if any sojourners or the expatriate population serve as readers?

These four areas, namely, subject matter, authorship, language, and readership, facilitate our understanding of the many definitions and complex debates around Hong Kong English writing.

For example, Brian Hooper's idea of Hong Kong English writing focuses on what he calls the "pride of place" (15). Recognising that there may be a potential worth in "the voices of Chinese, non-Chinese, and those of mixed extraction", the core principles that he considers are mainly these questions: "Does the author view him or herself as part of Hong Kong? Is the artist's identity based, in whole or in part, on the identity and character of the Hong Kong milieu?" (*ibid*). Hooper treasures a Hong Kong identity on the part of the writer, and hence "a novel by an American or London-based author whose Hong Kong experience is limited to having spent two weeks in the tourist ghetto of Tsim Sha Tsui should not" be counted as Hong Kong literature in English (*ibid*).

Hooper also gives Wai-leung Wong's four-tier definition on "authentic Hong Kong writers":

1) Born, educated and having their literary career in Hong Kong

2) Born elsewhere, educated and having literary career in Hong Kong

3) Started and continuing literary career in Hong Kong

4) Continuing literary activities in HK as major part of entire literary

career (W.-l. Wong 8, qtd. in Hooper 17).

Wong works with Hong Kong Chinese literature, and his taxonomy emphasises the writers' literary career in the present. Hooper seems supportive of transposing it to English language writers. However, the question is how this informs Hooper's concept of "pride of place", and whether this pride is only about being based in Hong Kong for both natives and non-natives. How can the third and fourth groups of writers ensure that the complex sociocultural histories and contexts of Hong Kong are explored in their works, or do they matter anymore if we simply define writers according to their current affiliation?

To show how Hooper's idea can run into trouble vis-à-vis Wong's system of taxonomy, let me make a brief bracket with the case study of Timothy Mo. Is Timothy Mo a Hong Kong writer or a British novelist? Mo is listed as a British writer in Nick Rennison's *Contemporary British Novelists*, as well as in the Writers Directory on the British Council Literature webpage ("Timothy Mo"). For Patke and Holden, however, he is "[t]he figure most readily identifiable as a Hong Kong writer" (98); for Shirley Lim he is the "best Hong Kong writer" (presumably in English) (Lim and Mo 564); and for Jennifer McMahon too, Mo is called a Hong Kong writer (119). Scholar Elaine Ho has also contributed an entry on him in *The Encyclopedia of 20th-Century Fiction*. Brian Hooper's book devotes a chapter to Mo's Hong Kong novel, *The Monkey King*, and even goes so far to embrace Mo's "dual identity" and "mixed parentage" as an example of "not fit[ting] neatly into exacting, ready-made

racial categories" (38).

And yet, according to Wai-leung Wong's taxonomy, Mo cannot be considered a Hong Kong writer because he no longer has a literary career in Hong Kong. Mo left Hong Kong at seven (1957), grew up, studied and worked as a journalist in the UK. He no longer speaks Cantonese (Lim and Mo 557), and only spends six weeks a year in Hong Kong (*ibid.* 561). Among his works, only *The Monkey King* is set in Hong Kong, although not without considerable mention of Portuguese-Macanese characters and culture. *Sour Sweet* (1982) is set in London with Hong Kong immigrants. Set in the 1840s, *An Insular Possession* (1986) is more about Chinese-British negotiation that led to the founding of Hong Kong as a British colony than about the city itself and its development in the following 140 years. If Hooper ever needs to evoke a "pride of place", then only one of Mo's novels, *The Monkey King*, may qualify. All of his subsequent novels from the 1990s, such as his latest work *Pure* (2012), mostly feature Southeast Asian countries like Thailand and the Philippines, not Hong Kong. To close the bracket, I would argue that it is more sensible to see Mo as a British writer who has had a connection to Hong Kong, instead of hastily claiming him as a Hong Kong writer.

To come back to definitions, Agnes Lam has also offered her thoughts in defining, specifically, Hong Kong poetry. She rightly identifies the English literary community in Hong Kong, where readership tends to be "limited to the literati", the non-Chinese foreigners' community, "young or older returnees from English-speaking countries, Hong Kong residents who have been educated in English either locally or overseas, […] and some overseas Chinese" (Xu Xi, "Agnes Lam"; Lam, "Poetry in Hong Kong"). Poetry in Hong Kong can be discussed in four categories: 1) poetry written in Chinese by ethnic Chinese poets, 2) poetry written in English by ethnic

Chinese poets, 3) poetry written in English by non-Chinese poets residing in Hong Kong, and 4) poetry in translation ("Poetry in Hong Kong").

In a later article, she further develops this into three tentative understandings of Hong Kong poetry in English: "(1) poetry written by Hong Kong poets; (2) poetry available in Hong Kong; and (3) poetry written about and for Hong Kong" ("Defining" 188). However, she rejects the first and third understandings. She believes one should not privilege Chinese ethnicity in defining Hong Kong poets because that would ignore those "who are already adults when they begin residing in Hong Kong", who may be possible to "come to know enough of the local culture to recount their experience of it" (*ibid.* 188). She also asks:

> How long does a period of residence have to be to suffice as Hong Kongness for these visiting poets? For example, would Edmund Blunden count as a Hong Kong poet because he taught at the University of Hong Kong for a good number of years and published *A Hong Kong House: Poems 1951-1961*? (*ibid.* 189)

It would be, she thinks, "unrepresentative" to exclude the works of those from elsewhere but currently or once lived/lives in Hong Kong. For subject matters portrayed in the poems (Lam's point (3) above), she likewise champions the notion that to qualify for Hong Kong poetry, it is not necessary for the poem to have a "Hong Kong flavour", simply because "[p]oets not native to Hong Kong may write about Hong Kong life while those native to Hong Kong may not always write about Hong Kong" (190). Instead, Lam supports the second understanding, that is, seeing Hong Kong poetry as "poetry available in Hong Kong". Hence she writes,

> it is useful to take the broader perspective of Hong Kong as a cosmopolitan city with people from all over the world living here.

> Hong Kong poetry can therefore include all the poetry written in
> English either published or made available at poetry readings by
> anyone writing in English currently or once based in Hong Kong. […]
> Hong Kong poetry means "Poetry available in Hong Kong". (189)

In short, while she concedes that Hong Kong poetry can have a narrower definition of poems "written by poets of Hong Kong origin as defined by place of birth and/or residence during their formative years" (190), she is more inclined towards a broader definition of "poetry written by poets currently or once based in Hong Kong, as long as they have experienced Hong Kong. Whether the poetry is about Hong Kong does not seem crucial" (190-91).

I have quoted Lam at length because there are a few questionable formulations here. First, Lam's definition of a kind of poetry "available" in a geographical region is not a common practice and has seldom been applied to other countries. British poetry for instance has seldom been defined as poetry available in Britain: A random English-language poem about the Spanish coastline, written by a student from China currently in education in Britain, and read in a London poetry reading, is hardly called British poetry. Lam does not justify why Hong Kong alone has to adopt her definition which disregards both the ethnicities and backgrounds of writers and the subject matter of the poem, and privileges only the place of publication.

Second, including everyone currently or once based in Hong Kong as Hong Kong poets is far too broad and lacks critical rigour. Lam's decision of broadening stems from her refusal to define a length of stay to be considered a Hong Kong person. It seems to me that there is a marked difference between "Hong Kong poets" and "poets based in Hong Kong". But because it is difficult for Lam to determine

what makes one a Hong Kong poet, she prefers not to differentiate between them at all. However, later she herself says that the "guiding principle" in determining what counts as Hong Kong poetry is "whether the poets have had sufficient experience of Hong Kong" (189). This goes against her general tone of resisting simple definitions for Hong Kong poetry. In the same manner as her critique, she herself lapses back to a single criterion based on a vague term, i.e. "sufficient", without precisely defining it. The legal answer to Lam's question of how to determine a foreigner as a "Hongkonger" is the Hong Kong permanent identity card, applicable after a non-native person has continuously resided in Hong Kong for seven years. This does not guarantee authentic and voluminous knowledge of Hong Kong and its culture, but can serve as one of the indicators.[6] More importantly, however, whether a non-native is considered a Hongkonger depends on their desire to settle permanently in Hong Kong, their attitude to see Hong Kong as home, and most of all their willingness to engage with the complexities of living in Hong Kong. Ultimately, whether a non-native poet can be considered to have known enough of Hong Kong culture can only be reflected by a rigorous and careful scrutiny on all of that poet's works, on whether the poet is able to bring out a rich portrayal of the intricacies and tensions between different subgroups that constitute Hong Kong. These criteria require a lot of critical work be done on examining the works of each poet, but such difficulty is not an excuse to dodge the task and instead advocate an extremely broad definition.

Moreover, inasmuch as identity labels are not fixed in time and may be

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[6] For instance, I suspect that part of the reason Kazuo Ishiguro is considered a British, not Japanese, novelist is that he has British citizenship since 1982, in addition to the facts that he grew up in Britain, writes in English instead of Japanese, and has his literary career in Britain rather than Japan. It is thus not unreasonable to employ legal definitions of permanent residence as one of the criteria for the consideration of a Hong Kong writer.

transcendent and ephemeral, "Hong Kong poet" is not a label that sticks to anyone for an indefinite time. Lam's suggestion clashes with Wai-leung Wong's taxonomy which focuses on one's present literary career. Since Hong Kong poetry has to be available in Hong Kong, Lam's definitions rest on Hong Kong as a geographical place. But when a poet ceases to have his/her literary career in Hong Kong, i.e. if the Hong Kong connection is lost, why shall s/he still be considered a Hong Kong poet as if it is some indefinite identity label? For this reason, to answer Lam about Edmund Blunden, I consider Blunden's poems on Hong Kong to be part of Hong Kong poetry, but Blunden himself could not be seen as a Hong Kong poet from the moment he left Hong Kong for Oxford in 1961. Looking at his literary career as a whole, he was an English poet who has written some poems about Hong Kong.

The final problem in Lam's arguments can be expressed in the question: does "Hong Kong" in the term "Hong Kong poet" and "Hong Kong poetry" refer to the ethnicity, nationality or identity of the author, or to the subject matter of the work? Lam thinks that a Hong Kong flavour is not necessary in "Hong Kong poetry", because "[p]oets not native to Hong Kong may write about Hong Kong life while those native to Hong Kong may not always write about Hong Kong" (190). However, this is not an adequate reason to treat natives and non-natives simplistically and indiscriminately. The key here is whether Hong Kong is considered as a distinct *city-state*, as reflected in recent sociopolitical sentiments documented in chapter 1, rather than just a city. In opting for a broad definition that sees Hong Kong "as a cosmopolitan city with people from all over the world living here" (189), Lam chooses to highlight Hong Kong as an international city with sojourners ephemerally coming and going, but neglects it as a city-state that is home to more than seven million natives.

This illustrates the anxiety to respond to the mainstream neglect on English writing by appealing and reaching out as much as possible to the international literary community. Resonating Chinua Achebe, Lam says that the conscious choice of writing in English "makes it possible […] to communicate with a very wide audience" (188). Readership and audience are privileged as crucial aspects in evaluating what she calls the communicative success of a poem: "[p]oetry is viewed as a communicative act and hence good poetry depends on communicative success" (193). Therefore,

> [t]he more readers a poet manages to reach, the greater the communicative success. The more a poet is understood by readers from diverse backgrounds in different geographical locations and through various historical times, the more communicative success the poet has. […] The choice of readership size does not determine how good a poet is *per se*, but […] I am tempted to ask, "If a poem is worth understanding, isn't it better that it is understood by more people?" (188)

Here we see how the automatic equating of "more readers" with "good poetry" characterises Lam's definition. It is quite clear that she subscribes to the Tolstoyan expression theory—which sees literary work as having a universal communicative capacity to transmit artistic emotions to readers (*What is Art?*)—as a primary definition of good poetry. But this alignment of "more equals good" is uncritical of the problems of globalisation, which in the worst case is reflected by Mike Ingham's remark on Hong Kong English writing:

> That [Hong Kong English writers] occupy an extremely marginal position on the periphery of the Hong Kong literary world is hardly

surrounding, but they may take comfort from the reflection that Hong Kong writing is itself pretty marginal, both in the context of classic and contemporary Chinese writing and of world literatures in English. *Thus, if Hong Kong fiction were to achieve its moment of international recognition in the future, it will in all probability be English-language writers who reap the rewards*. (3, my italics)

Ingham recognises the marginality of English writing in Hong Kong, and he thinks there is no reason "why contemporary Hong Kong literature in general […] should not be represented in some small part by English-language voices" (14). Yet, here he determines the success for a certain kind of literature under a single rubric called "international recognition", to the effect that Hong Kong English writing is even hierarchised over Chinese writing, due precisely to the use of English as *the* privileged language of globalisation. The contradiction of globalisation is, therefore, that if a writer wants to appeal to a wider audience, they could only choose to write in English because that is the only *lingua franca*.

Returning to Agnes Lam, this precisely limits the possibilities of what writers can experiment in with languages. Communicative success as a criterion for good poetry may actually limit a writer's creative potential to the employment of a single language. Also, Lam seems to have forgotten the very language politics that plagues Hong Kong: if it is better for a poem to be understood by more people, then should not all Hong Kong poets write in Chinese? Why write in English and struggle for recognition locally, globally and academically? After all, to choose to write in English in a Cantonese-dominant Hong Kong already constitutes an attitude of resistance against the omnipresent hegemony of Cantonese/Chinese and the invisibility of English writing in mainstream imagination about Hong Kong, similar

to what Deleuze and Guattari says about a minor literature being politicised. If English writing inherently carries this statement of defiance, then succumbing to the adage that more readership is good, which we have been influenced by transnational capitalism and globalisation to accept, is merely a fossilisation of the Chinese/English fracture, rather than a progressive bridging of this fracture. To my mind, it is possible to see Hong Kong poetry, or indeed Hong Kong writing,[7] as literature written by native Hongkongers without accusing it as narrow, in the meantime as we also include writings made by expatriates based in Hong Kong. Hong Kong writing can both take root in its native inhabitants *and* be sensitive to the international and cosmopolitan quality of Hong Kong.

Critiquing Louise Ho and Xu Xi

Understanding the deliberate broadness in Agnes Lam's definition of Hong Kong English poetry/writing is a prerequisite in understanding how other Hong Kong English writers pitch their works to a global audience in order to justify their existence. It is in rebranding itself as a necessarily cosmopolitan, all-accepting form of writing, that English writing can successfully assign the value of creativity to the English language, as a way to counter its multiple layers of invisibility within and without Hong Kong. To expose these writers' tendency to privilege the cosmopolitan character of Hong Kong English writing, I will conduct in this section a critique on Louise Ho's chapter, "Hong Kong Writing and Writing Hong Kong", and Xu Xi's article, "Writing the literature of non-denial", both of which, together with Agnes Lam's essay "Defining Hong Kong poetry in English", are collected in Kingsley

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[7] Lam's interest is in poetry and she is a poet herself, but her article does not explain whether she sees poetry as a distinct genre different from other forms of literature. For my purpose here, I will assume that her definitions also apply to Hong Kong English writing in general.

Bolton's edited book, *Hong Kong English: Autonomy and Creativity*.

Earlier, we have seen how Xu Xi faces a similar anxiety on the authenticity of her works, and I have foregrounded Ho's complaint of lack of critical mass of English writing. Analysing Louise Ho's poems, critic Catherine Wong notices that Ho's use of English for self-expression is "incompatible with the needs of this Cantonese speaking community. This discord reduces the authority of her poetic voice and even isolates her from her audience and readers" (C. Wong 61). The marginality faced by Louise Ho and Xu Xi can sometimes be argued as an advantage. Louise Ho herself recognises from this marginality a source of strength which enables English-language writers to observe "a highly unself-conscious, non-self-aware community, where people on the whole have no time to observe their own observations" ("Hong Kong Writing" 173-74). Another critic, Christopher Payne, argues that Xu Xi's fiction has a kind of "productive marginality" that serves "to ask (demand) that the island [sic] city's English history, and its attendant English voices, be *remembered*" (Payne 70, italics original). For Payne, Hong Kong English writing "can overcome its status as fringe, gwailo writing", and its future can seem "secure", as long as it "remain[s] true to its marginality" and "refrains from joining the cultural mainstream, because marginality is blessed "with a unique perspective from which to problematise conventional, mainstream interpretations of linguistic reality" (69-70).

Together with this refusal to assimilate into the local mainstream, however, comes a desire to join another mainstream—the global and international readership in English. Louise Ho does this by claiming that Hong Kong is a Cantonese city with a Chinese core but also caters for cosmopolitan cultures—a unique feature among "city-entities in the world" that can be summed up as "[i]nsignificant in geographic

size" but "significant on an international scale" ("Hong Kong Writing" 174). Catherine Wong likewise points out that while Ho is rooted in Hong Kong, she is

> not satisfied with confining herself within one small community and writing with a narrow, local communal scope of topics and perspectives; nor is she content with restricting herself to a rigid, inflexible concept of "locality" […] [I]t is beyond doubt that the poet is aiming to extend herself, her view as well as her poems, beyond Hong Kong. (55)

Like Shirley Lim and Agnes Lam, Catherine Wong assumes that readership of English literature in Hong Kong is small, that communal topics and perspectives are necessarily narrow, and that a focus on the local is always rigid and inflexible. However, as I have pointed out, there can be problems with this rhetoric of embracing the global and the international, and I will demonstrate this with an intercalated reading of Xu Xi's essay, "Writing the Literature of the Non-Denial".

If we recall Louise Ho's opinion that Hong Kong society is more interested in making money than in aesthetics, then perhaps a focus on the local is restrictive not only because Hong Kong is geographically small or its readership lacking, but because its capitalist obsession is incompatible with the embrace of "abstractions" and "aesthetics" that Louise Ho longs for. Naturally, then, setting sights beyond Hong Kong is to communicate these abstractions and aesthetics with the global community in the immense potential of cultural exchange afforded by the rhetoric of globalisation. Xu Xi's essay resonates with this idea. She rejects the notion that English is owned by the colonial British, comparing the Anglophiles of Hong Kong to "an elite local type" ("Writing" 222); instead, she has to hone a unique brand of "English" that belongs only to her and her writing, "a different kind of English to

speak across the actual language of my characters and for the Hong Kong world I rendered" (226). The "Hong Kong world" (an oxymoron itself) that she depicts is the Hong Kong that she knows—"a multi-ethnic, multilingual environment", where her family friends were "Eurasian, Japanese, English, Portuguese, Indonesian-Chinese, Indonesian, Filipino, Singaporean, Malaysian, Welsh, Scottish and even the occasional American", where her schoolmates include Hong Kong Chinese but also "Portuguese, Eurasians, Indians and the occasional English", and where her school, the elite girls' college Maryknoll Convent School, is an EMI school administered by American nuns (221-22). Accordingly, the characters portrayed in her novels are the "ethnic Chinese and other people who have ties to China and Asia, but are 'Westernized' or more accurately, 'globalized'", and their lives are written "against a social and cultural milieu" of Hong Kong which she describes as "multi-culti" and with which she is familiar (221-22).

This is an authentic experience, for Hong Kong is indeed an international city inhabited by people of different ethnicities. However, question arises when she goes on to say that this "multi-culti" world is "*denied* by a Hong Kong that, at a *benignly xenophobic* level, insists on a 'Hong Kong Chinese' identity […]" (222, my italics). There is a need for us to go beyond this superficial accusation of xenophobia (however "benign" she makes it sound) and understand its formations in deeper analysis, such as along the lines of privilege and class. After all, Xu Xi's upbringing as recorded in this essay—having family friends from all over the world, going to an elite girls' school, and leaving for America to pursue an MFA in fiction in the early 80s—puts her in a privileged class ready for international exposure if not explicitly for economic wealth, and hence does not reflect the lived experiences of most other Hong Kong people, who might have wanted to emigrate out of China via Hong Kong

but ended up staying for a lifetime. It is peculiar that Xu Xi does not even admit that there were many people in the 1970s who could not enter Maryknoll Convent School and who did not grow up with non-Chinese schoolmates.

Yet, this upbringing naturally has an impact on the scope of her writing. In discussing her short story "The Yellow Line" (which I will analyse in the next chapter), in which a local Chinese boy takes the newly built underground system (MTR) in 1979 to explore the district adjacent to his home, she reflects that she had to use "very basic words" as she tried to render the boy's Cantonese consciousness in English, because at that time basic English was "the only kind of English that sounded right for Hong Kong", a "second language fluency […] that is] limited in expression" (226). This attitude, on the one hand, underlines how much she values the integrity between the language of the narrative and her characters' linguistic consciousness. On the other, when she writes that "writing in English did not mean I wanted to translate Cantonese" (226), it seems that she is also shunning the possibility to represent local Cantonese consciousness, particularly that of the non-English-speaking working class, in English writing, just because most of the population fail to speak the language well. This linguistic disparity results in a potential imbalance of the representation of Hong Kong experiences in her oeuvre. Perhaps, to ensure that she will be able to present her characters' consciousness in a language they are fluent in, even "minor characters who [are] more clearly 'local' Hong Kong" in her later works will have "some life experiences overseas" (230)—in other words, an elite of some sort, if not always of financial capital, at least of cultural and symbolic capital. The kind of "xenophobia" that Xu Xi has experienced can, in fact, be understood as a tension between the majority of the population who were not born with, or are in lack of, such "global" privilege, and those who either

had it since birth or managed to acquire it later. In this sense, the mainstream "Hong Kong Chinese identity" Xu Xi mentions is a product of the unavailability of this privilege, and a result of what this "underprivileged mainstream" creates in response to the lack. The mainstream denial of "multi-culti" Hong Kong may stem not from the fact that these writers write in English, but that they seldom use their linguistic and cultural privilege to write about those in lack of this privilege in this "international", "cosmopolitan" city.

New Writing: The case of Yuan Yang

So far, I have examined essays written by Louise Ho, Agnes Lam and Xu Xi—some of the most famous first-generation Hong Kong English writers—to develop my critique on Hong Kong English writing: from the three dilemmas in its positioning and the necessity of assigning the value of creativity, to the strategy of adopting broad definitions and highlighting its cosmopolitan nature. In this section, I further illustrate, with the example of a literary journal called *Yuan Yang*, the impact such a strategic positioning has on the ecology of English writing.

As I have introduced in the second half of chapter 3, the burgeoning English literary scene and activities in Hong Kong may well cultivate a younger generation of new writers born, raised and based in Hong Kong. The hope for the emergence of young writers is obvious: most of the articles concerning literary expression in Kingsley Bolton's edited book *Hong Kong English* either mention or include new writings by Hong Kong university students. Shirley Lim for example note that

> [i]f one asks where is Hong Kong writing in English, part of the answer must be in its potential as a future production, when young Hong Kong people are given the opportunity to write their own stories

in the language that has been a part of Hong Kong history for over a

century. ("Cultural" 269)

Louise Ho concurs, hoping that as more writers come on the scene, eventually "Hong

Kong would have a voice of its own", a kind of English writing that "would make its

proper nomenclature and would contribute substantially towards an Hong Kong

identity" (L. Ho, "Hong Kong Writing" 179).

Such must have been the rationale behind Shirley Lim's ground-breaking

effort in establishing the *Yuan Yang* initiative to encourage Hong Kong students to

write and express themselves in English. In 1999, she started an English creative

writing class at HKU in order to explore ways to debunk the various stereotypes

about Hong Kong students' relationship with English, and to tease out the students'

suppressed aspiration to write creatively in English ("English-Language" 179). Thus

the journal *Yuan Yang* was born as a pioneer in collecting the creative efforts of those

young university students. Shirley Lim's pride with the launch of the journal is

unmistakable:

The thirteen students [in the creative writing class] made up the

editorial board of *Yuan Yang*. They were responsible for the entire

production: from selecting the title […], to composing the publicity,

finding donors, producing the camera-ready copy, working with the

printer, and marketing and distribution. […] The journal, the only

English-language creative-writing outlet for young Hong Kong

writers today, with over a hundred pages of fiction and poetry, was

launched on 2 May 2000. ("English-Language" 182)

When the first issue was published, Lim reaffirms in her Editor's Introduction that "it

is chiefly 'Hong Kong people' whom we glimpse in the pages of this first issue of

Yuan Yang [sic]; and it is chiefly 'Hong Kong people' who fill the editorial board"
(Lim, "Flavors" 6). It would not be an understatement to say that *Yuan Yang* brought
a breakthrough to the English writing scene in Hong Kong, and had an impact even
in schools—on a personal note again, it used to be distributed to my secondary
school where I purchased the first two issues and read through them at once.

Bolton and Lim speak of *Yuan Yang* as a gesture "towards the possibility of
an emergent body of Hong Kong English creative writing whose freshness and
energy will be expressive of this cultural space that is both Hong Kong and global,
Chinese and English language" (311). Here, the idea of the mixture is as evident as it
is in the name *Yuan Yang* itself. Literally meaning Mandarin ducks, *Yuan Yang* in fact
refers to a beverage popular in Hong Kong that mixes coffee and milk tea,
pronounced as *yinyeung* or *yuenyeung* in Cantonese.[8] The reason of adopting the
Mandarin pronunciation for this distinctly Hong Kong drink as the name of a Hong
Kong-based literary journal is unknown, but is suspicious of submitting to the
hegemony of Mandarin. Nonetheless, *Yuan Yang* does evoke the symbolism of Hong
Kong as a place where Chinese (tea) and non-Chinese (coffee) cultures meet, an apt
title that seeks to discover new Hong Kong writing. Shirley Lim has repeatedly
talked about the inspiration of the *Yuan Yang* project on the students. A student in her
first creative writing class admitted that, "I thought creative writing was the *privilege*
for those who are very talented. I didn't think I had the talent" (qtd. in Lim,
"English-Language" 183, italics added). The use of the word "privilege" is
symptomatic of the marginalised nature of Hong Kong English literature in both its
reception and production. *Yuan Yang* presents the opportunity to debunk this
privilege and open up a new world for her. Another student called Ho-yin Wong

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[8] In the Hong Kong Government-approved Cantonese Pinyin system, this word is romanised as *jin joeng* or *jyun joeng*.

learns from the experience that "being a Hong Kong writer I should write about Hong Kong [… and should] not feel uncomfortable injecting elements of Hong Kong and putting Romanized forms of Cantonese or Mandarin words in my poems. Now I am proud [to] let the English-speaking world know about my home" (qtd. in Lim, "English-Language" 183).

While *Yuan Yang* undoubtedly opened a new path for Hong Kong youngsters, it also has a tendency to appeal to globalisation, with which I have taken issue in the introduction of this dissertation. Despite the fervent promotion of Hong Kong's future talents, Lim displays an unmistakable affinity for the global, and describes how *Yuan Yang* fits into her vision in her essay "Cultural imagination and English in Hong Kong" (again in Kingsley Bolton's edited book). Lim juxtaposes "the business of conserving original cultures and communities" alongside "the business of change and transformation", and unreservedly celebrates the latter as "the side of the future" ("Cultural" 266). This "future" allows communities to assert their political agency and ameliorates what she calls the "ravages of globalization", such as "coercive integration into global capitalism and increasing loss of cultural autonomy" (266). Stripping English from its colonial status and seeing it as a global language, she argues that when English becomes one's possession, "then it may be taken as an empowering medium that opens the world's markets and cultural emporium […]" (267). Accordingly, the ethos of her teaching has always been "to offer to my students English as weapon of *choice*, as domain for their imaginations, and as cultural wealth to *enrich* their resources of feeling, thought, and knowledge" (267, my italics).

Lim seems to think that the right way to engage with the ravages of globalisation is to learn English and transform it into something of their own in order

to participate in global cultural markets, as if global markets are a uniform, fair playing field. She does not seem to understand the contradictory logics of global capitalism; as Marxists theorists like David Harvey and Alex Callinicos have shown, globalisation has made the under-privileged more oppressed and the rich accumulate more. In the same manner as my critique of Agnes Lam and Mike Ingham above, I find it hard to agree with the attributes she assigns to English in the quote above, i.e. "choice" and "enriching", because under the discourse of enrichment there is no choice for one but to write in English, this "most global language in human history" (266). Lim also erects a simplistic binary by polarising conservation of native cultures from change and transformation, and by saying the latter is "the future", as if to say it is in the trend and the other is outdated or obsolete. This unhelpful rejection of one over the other fails to probe into the difficult task of reconciling the two and finding a middle ground of accommodating both. In effect, then, the message that is carried across is not that English is a "choice", but that English is apparently *the only option*. But if this is a correct reading on her essay, then one must ask how one can possibly prevent cultural death by declaring that "conserving original culture and communities" has little future, or by discarding one's original culture, community and language in favour of a single language and economic system that dominates the world and its markets.

Ironically, an effective critique against Lim comes from one of her own HKU students whose reflection is reproduced in Lim's essay. This student, Ellen Lai, comments after taking Lim's creative writing class:

> [H]ere I taste a brave new learning experience in a liberal environment, melted with an instinctive joy of creating and a real global space with classmates from all over the world. But I find

myself facing a bunch of dilemmas between living and earning a living, art and market, Chinese and English.

Living or earning a living? […] [T]o be a writer is my greatest luxury in this materialistic society.

Art or market? As a writer, my duty is to write and write and nothing else. But as a marketing editor, I have to be embarrassingly pragmatic when I negotiate with bookshops.[9] […]

English is a world language. This means potential readers are all over the world. But how many people are lucky enough to cross borders? […] Chinese or English? (qtd. in Lim, "Cultural" 267-68)

Lim only evaluates the linguistic tension mentioned in this reflection, commenting that English permits the joy of creativity whereas Chinese still looms large as a language of attachment (268). However, it is clear that Ellen Lai addresses other complicated issues, most notably the struggle between monetary/material wealth and cultural wealth. Combining this crux with the question "how many people are lucky enough to cross borders", Lai's reflection registers the crucial point that outside the university classroom, cultural wealth, agency and enrichment through English are often unattainable without a "luck" that ensures first and foremost the existence of material wealth. Lim's simplistic embrace of the globality of English language as a way of ameliorating the ills of globalisation backfires upon her refusal to recognise that such an embrace does not help guard against disadvantages and inequalities in access to literary education, and may even be complicit in promoting the injustices inherent in the global capitalist system. The kind of reflection that Ellen Lai demonstrates is what the younger generation need to do more as writers—as I have

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[9] In the first few creative writing cohorts, the students were responsible for the whole editing and publication process and had to take up respective positions as if in a real publishing house.

said earlier—to untiringly scrutinise the dilemma and corrupted relationship between English writing in the 21st century and capitalism, even as we create new writing outlets to encourage more people to write and express their own voices. In short, at the heart of Lai's reflection is the tension between the "global" and a less privileged version of the "local", rather than an unequivocal welcoming of the global.

This tension also manifests itself in *Yuan Yang*, and reveals how going global may sometimes have a detrimental effect on the local. Since 2002 the journal took a remarkable turn in its direction and focus, and underwent several editorial changes. First, it removed the student editors of the creative writing cohorts: their names were still acknowledged until Volume VI (2005), but they were only thanked as a group "for their inspiration and vision" in Volume VII (2006) and were completely left out since Volume IX (2008/2009). The next major change was the fewer number of works being published: from a record of 76 pieces in Volume II (2001) to around 20 from Volume III (2002) onwards. The layout (such as paper type, font size, colour scheme and typesetting) was also redesigned in 2002 to bring aesthetic taste and style to the volumes. As a result of these changes, however, the number of young Hong Kong writers being published in the journal has greatly diminished. Elaine Ho has tabulated the provenance of *Yuan Yang* contributors in a research article, but her table only included data up to 2007. Relying on the contributors' self-introduction and my sole judgment, I attempt here to group the writers into the categories set out by Ho, and provide an updated table for 2008-12 (see table 9; my updates in bold).

Two things can be noted here. First, while the other categories remain more or less consistent, the proportion of Hong Kong writers (category 1) has dropped significantly over the years: from a record of 27 writers (most of whom were students enrolled in creative writing class) in 2001 (Volume II) to only several in the

latest issues. Second, because of the decrease in the number of works in each volume, the more or less unchanging number of non-Asian writers (category 4) means that its proportion has in fact increased. Perhaps this was why some of the HKU creative writing students have had to publish their works separately in a one-off publication, *Hong Kong U Writing: An Anthology* in 2006, edited by Tammy Ho. All these changes gave the impression that the journal was becoming more selective and rebranding itself from a showcase of budding creative writing students to fine international writing.

Interestingly, Elaine Ho sees these as positive changes:

> The editors and writers of the recent anthologies [including *Yuan Yang* and *Hong Kong U Writing*], while still privileged members of a university-educated minority, cannot be considered social elites as their predecessors were in earlier colonial times. […] Their global horizons are neither defined by the British Empire nor the anglophone West; the world is where English can bring them in touch, where English circulates, a world which can be opened up to conversations in the common tongues of literature. ("Language Policy" 435)

Ho is right to observe that English writing provides a platform for cross-cultural exchange, but once again we see a displacement of the previous ills associated with the English language—being a class marker and the language of the imperial coloniser—with the positive merit that English is now a democratised global language capable of cross-cultural communication and understanding. However, just because English is no longer imperial in the old sense (or so Elaine Ho believes), it does not automatically delink those who write in English from elitism and prestige. It may not be the exact same type of economic elitism, but writing in English now

bears a new form of elite privilege that enables these writers to claim their "emancipation" from competitive capitalism and allows their stories to be read by the rest of the world. As seen earlier in my critique of Mike Ingham, international recognition and breadth of readership now function as a new form of symbolic capital that can be accumulated for the differentiation of prestige between literatures. Ho falls short here of critiquing how this accumulation of symbolic capital is hinged on a flawed assumption of the antithesis between the accumulation of economic wealth and financial capital under capitalism on the one hand, and the production of literature as an aesthetic activity on the other. The very fact that there still exists a privileged university-educated minority—and thus an underprivileged majority incapable of expressing themselves in English—would require writers to reflect on their English-language privilege and global desire in terms of the contradictory logic of globalisation, in which English is hailed as the initiator to cultural exchanges and dialogues, but continues to be the contemporary definition of privilege that, if unwisely used, may bar other literatures or other people's experiences from being heard. Both newcomers and established writers in the Hong Kong English writing circle need to be more sensitive to the politics of prestige inherent in their language choice for their writing.

Returning to my critique of *Yuan Yang*, as table 9 illustrates, a strategic reorientation towards global readership comes with the price of diminishing the avenues of publication for creative writing students or budding Hong Kong writers. *Yuan Yang* started as a meaningful project to promote the value of English creative writing in Hong Kong—beginning with those students who could use the instrument of English well; Lim's original intention was to diffuse the privilege of English writing to those who had been unknowingly interested in but deprived of it, and to let

them write about issues of their concern, thereby enriching the profile and range of the Hong Kong English writing. However, it is a great shame that the journal seems to be less inclined to implement its "mission" in its recent issues—incredibly, the journal's website still boasts of its "special focus on the work of young and emerging writings in Hong Kong" ("About Yuan Yang"). A literary journal's global vision may compromise publication space for creative writing students and young local writers. To go global instead of local would risk, in the last resort, re-creating a selected, privileged minority of Hong Kong writers. This in the end only perpetuates Louise Ho's lament of the small circle of Hong Kong English writing; it also undoes Shirley Lim's very own effort in inspiring her students' creativity.

We need to carve out a dedicated space for creative writing students of Hong Kong, and encourage them to write about their local lives. In this respect, *CU Writing in English* has been an unfailing example. As mentioned in the last chapter, *CU Writing in English*, like the early *Yuan Yang*s, anthologises creative works written by English majors at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Now in its thirteenth instalment, the works in these volumes have offered new angles to the experiences of the Hong Kong people, and penetrating insights into the everyday lives of the ordinary Hong Kong family. As David Parker, initiator of *CU Writing*, reflects on its tenth anniversary issue:

> [F]or me *CU Writing in English* was never about producing formally sensational works of the kind usually selected for anthologization in professional publications. It is rather a record of the quieter imagining and creative expression of students who, in their formally modest way, found something special to make of their everyday experience. (Parker 4)

Perhaps Parker is making a subtle comment on the taste of the readers who consume professional publications, but I do not see why these imaginings of everyday experience should not be equally treasured by readers worldwide. The Department of English at City University of Hong Kong has also published the creative writing collection *Halfway Home* for three consecutive years, based on writing classes offered by none other than Shirley Lim. *Halfway Home* very much follows the model of the original *Yuan Yang*, with most of its contributors born and educated in Hong Kong, and responsible for the illustrations and editing. In the blurb on the back cover of the first instalment, Lim herself makes the explicit wish that the book will "encourage many more such collections" filled with "Hong Kong characters, scenes, and social imaginaries".

Summary

In this large section, I have expounded the strategic positioning of Hong Kong English writing, drawing specific attention to the critics' articulation of its marginality and globalisation. The two are in fact casually related: a marginality within Hong Kong, *and hence* the appeal for globalisation.

The strategic positioning outlined here bears witness to the potency of Pascale Casanova's theory of "literary inequality" ("Literature" 89). At the heart of this theory is the awareness that "literature itself […] is also an instrument which, if re-appropriated, can enable writers […] to attain a type of freedom, recognition and existence within it" (*ibid.* 90). The "freedom, recognition and existence" mentioned here is the reward, or in Casanova's term, the "restitution" to the subordinated groups in the global literary space for the "set of strategies" and creative invention they perfect in order to be "perceived" in the literary universe (*ibid.* 89). For Hong Kong

English writing, the "freedom, recognition and existence" to be attained is found in international literary readership, rather than in Hong Kong, due to the various challenges it faces in its positioning: the obscurity in geographical classification, the marginality against Chinese-language writing, and the inattention on aesthetic pursuit. In seeking alternatives to defend its existence, Hong Kong English writing appeals to the symbolic power that comes with the globalisation of English, and rebrands itself as a cosmopolitan, cross-cultural, all-welcoming kind of writing that reaches beyond Hong Kong and stands opposite to the "narrowness" of Chinese writing. Indeed, as Casanova says, the credit for their creative inventions can only be given when they strategically assign English an alternative value—a value of creativity that broadens the exposure of both the writers and their writings—*different* from the conventional rhetoric of pragmaticism in Hong Kong society.

Xu Xi's invention of a unique blend of Asian-inflected English (in American spelling) has to be simultaneously comprehended with her eschewal of purely Chinese-speaking Hong Kong characters in her works; they demonstrate her strategy to claim distance from two "prestige-bestowing centre[s]" (Casanova, "Literature" 89), a literary one (namely Euro-America) and an identity one (namely China). Mike Ingham's claim that English writing will "reap the rewards" of global reception and recognition over Chinese writing can also be put in perspective: The choice of language determines their victory in the scramble for recognition as per the rule of the world literary space, the very "restitution" to the struggles of invisibility suffered by the subordinated group of Hong Kong English writers. *Yuan Yang*'s change of editorial style and direction also becomes understandable in the fetishisation of the desire for international cognisance. Branding itself as "A Journal of Hong Kong and International Writing" ever since its first issue, these subsequent changes tip the

balance towards "International Writing" and inflate the prestige of the journal without betraying the general integrity of its pronounced attention on Hong Kong. Strategies to overcome Louise Ho's bemoaning of the marginality of Hong Kong English writing are plenty.

Finally, at the previous sub-section, I advocated that instead of bemoaning the marginality of Hong Kong English writing, it is now more pertinent to foreground and problematise the privilege of English as a global, international language. To rectify the neglect towards Hong Kong English writing and to keep this field alive, another interrogation sorely needed is to ask what may have been lost or made invisible when we seek international spotlight and hail global exchange as an achievement of Hong Kong English writing.

Conclusion: A Conceptual Critique

In the above, I have attempted to elucidate my understanding of how Hong Kong English writing positions itself, and subsequently to critique this positioning. In this remaining section I shall offer a conclusion in the form of synthesising my critique in a more conceptualised manner and mapping out a blueprint for the future tasks of Hong Kong English writing.

Compartmentalisation

It seems to me that the way Hong Kong English writing is currently positioned is by way of compartmentalisation. What has come through in the discussion above is that critics and English writers in Hong Kong tend to see Chinese writing as the local literature, the default mode of expression for the majority of the populace. On the other hand, "choosing" to write in the "global" language of English

makes English writing the literature of the marginalised in this self-proclaimed world city, comprising the voices of expatriates, the mixed-race population and a portion of young writers. It testifies to the global influences on Hong Kong culture, and exemplifies the richness of Hong Kong's cultural diversity. It is therefore not constrained by the locale of Hong Kong, but is capable of transcending the limitation of "narrowness" in the local boundary, and reaching out to the world and engaging with the diverse global readership. In doing so, Chinese writing and English writing become antithesis of each other; English writing merely claims a different position and occupies what Chinese writing is not. The two fields are separate and mutually ignorant of each other, except when translation brings the two in brief contact or when there is another Ping-kwan Leung.

It is, of course, not my intention to deny the merit of English as a global language and its potential in fostering cross-cultural communication. However, this kind of compartmentalisation through claiming marginality only further polarises the two writing communities and is perhaps symptomatic to the lack of attempt to increase mutual understanding of each other. The danger of compartmentalising this marginality is that it sometimes risks becoming the literature of a group of uprooted Hong Kong residents. What my readings of Elaine Ho's, Agnes Lam's, Louise Ho's and Shirley Lim's essays above have shown is that, the ability to pursue English creative writing in Hong Kong is in essence a new form of privileged cultural capital that promotes the emergence of a new class of global, transnational elites who may not earn as much as investment bankers but are certainly rich enough to cross national borders and gain access to literary communities around the world, thereby losing sight of a dedicated interest to the tensions and injustices faced by a growing dispossessed class of native residents in the local community—an argument which

inspires my next chapter to develop new critical paradigms on Hong Kong English writing. Sometimes the desire to go global even has a negative impact to the English writing field. As the case study of *Yuan Yang* suggests, in pursuing global horizon and repositioning literary journals for an international authorship and readership, what may be sacrificed is the publication space available to young, emerging local writers. In claiming how much Hong Kong English writing crosses boundaries and represents cultural diversity, the very "culture" with which it constantly lacks an engagement is precisely the variegated cultures and lives of the Hong Kong people, particularly the poor, the working class, the bearing middle class, and most of all those who simply do not have the monetary privilege or the right cultural capital to move across boundaries. I therefore disagree with Christopher Payne's suggestion for Hong Kong English writng to maintain its marginal position. I believe that such satisfaction with the margin misses out what can be gained by venturing into and understanding the viewpoints and lives of the mainstream majority, and undermine the potential of English writing in broadening the heterogeneity of Hong Kong literature.

Turning Inwards: Complementarity and Commitment through Critiquing Ackbar Abbas

The term "Hong Kong literature" itself is a contentious one, not least because "literature" or "writing" in Hong Kong is first and foremost a minority activity. To illustrate this, I offer my last piece of meta-critical review of Ackbar Abbas' monograph *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance*, whose idea of "hyphenation" I have already mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation. "Hyphenation", I argued, is not a categorical extolling of Hong Kong's multicultural

cosmopolitanism, but a critical concept to think through the position of Hong Kong culture in colonialism and globalisation.

Notwithstanding the usefulness of his idea, Abbas's methodology has drawn criticism. In reviewing Abbas, anthropologist Gordon Mathews complains about the book's "irony" that "the most striking disappearance is that of Hong Kong from the pages of the book itself", exemplified by Abbas's lack of bibliographic references to Hong Kong and Chinese critics, and also—although Mathews does not elaborate further—by Abbas's generalisations about Hong Kong based on high cultural forms like poetry and architecture, which creates "an expatriate feel" to the relevant chapters and misses out on the culture "as experienced by most Hong Kong people" (1112-13). Mathew's final criticism is that due to academic fashion and ease of distribution, a book like Abbas, published by University of Minnesota Press, is more likely to be read by American readers than books that Mathews thinks better capture Hong Kong culture but are published in Hong Kong (*ibid.*). Mathews' preference to the voices of the Hong Kong Chinese is evident in the example he has given, and his gloss on publishing speaks to a larger problem of how the limited fame of a local, non-Anglo-American academic publisher adversely affects the currency and impact of valuable works. This criticism is not unlike my critique of the cluster of critical articles by Shirley Lim, Louise Ho, Xu Xi and Agnes Lam in the last chapter, in their common tendency to appeal to international publishing opportunities with Hong Kong's rapidly moving, in-transit, cosmopolitanism.

If Mathews' criticism about the "expatriate feel" stands true, then as far as Abbas's chapter on literature, "Writing Hong Kong" (chapter 6), is concerned, this expatriate feeling may come from the fact that the texts chosen by Abbas all belong to high literature—such as Lu Xun's criticism on the speech of Hong Kong's 17th

Governor Cecil Clementi, English translations of Chinese prose and verse in the journal *Renditions*,[10] stories by Hong Kong Chinese writers like Xi Xi and Xiaoyang Zhong, and English poetry by Louise Ho and Chinese poetry by Ping-kwan Leung—instead of popular and vernacular literature, like Louis Cha's martial arts fiction, Ni Kuang's science fiction, Yi Shu's low-brow romance, or Chua Lam's essays.[11] Of course, the extent of Abbas' choice of texts is impressive, and he earns due credit for encompassing both Chinese and English writing from Hong Kong. Yet, the choice of high-brow texts is still highly ironic given that Abbas himself disapproves of the likes of novelists such as James Clavell and Richard Mason for their refusal to "take the risk of addressing the ordinary and the banal, that is, of addressing the local" (Abbas 112). Moreover, Abbas himself admits that it is "a little perverse" to "evok[e] the cultural space of Hong Kong through poetry" given the lack of a substantial audience for both Chinese and (more so) English poetry (129). Mathews' criticism, then, seems sustained, because, as I have elaborated above on the three dilemmas for Hong Kong English writing, Abbas' examples of literature "proper" reflects the tastes of a certain minority readership in Hong Kong.

The above critique highlights two things. First, "Hong Kong literature" should pay due attention to both Chinese and English writing, as Abbas has demonstrated. I do not consider the segregation between Chinese writing and English writing helpful to the overall development of Hong Kong literature. My vision is one of complementarity, so that not only will English and Chinese writing merely exist

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[10] *Renditions* is Hong Kong's longest-running Chinese-to-English translation journal since 1973, published by the Research Centre for Translation at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

[11] Louis Cha Leung Yung (1924-), pen name Jin Yong, is famous for his *wuxia* (Chinese martial arts) fiction. Ni Kuang (1935-) escaped from China to Hong Kong in 1957 and has published many *wuxia* and science fiction, the most famous being the *Wisely* and *Dr Yuen* series. Yi Shu (1946-) is Ni Kuang's sister, and mainly writes romance stories set in Hong Kong. Chua Lam (1941-) has published volumes of essays, but is also a food critic and a movie producer.

alongside each other, but they will also actively seek to engage in meaningful collaboration and exchange. This will be the responsibility of both the English writing community and the Chinese writing community in Hong Kong. Around late 2013 and early 2014, the long-awaited House of Hong Kong Literature was finally opened in Foo Tak Building in Wanchai after four years of preparation ("Wan Joeng Sei Nin"). There is little doubt that the museum will place its emphasis on Chinese writing, but I sincerely hope that the museum will also facilitate the development of English writing. More critical and creative dialogues are needed for Hong Kong Chinese and English writing to mutually recognise each other as part of the potential terrain called "Hong Kong literature". Only when the two communities start to get together—and deal with issues like whether the non-Chinese writers can express themselves in Cantonese or the Chinese writers are comfortable to communicate in English—can we then start recognising the issues of clash that illuminate the various social, political and cultural tensions in neo-colonial Hong Kong.

While translation and literary events involving both writing communities are things that we need to do more, my second reflection on Abbas is that there is also a vital need to make a change within the field of English writing community itself, if such writing too gives off an "expatriate" feel. This does not mean discarding high-brow Chinese or English writing altogether, as a superficial understanding of Gordon Mathews' review may anticipate. Instead, the future of Hong Kong English writing is not only to stay marginal or go global, but to also expand from marginality to, again, "turn inwards"—to not only represent the privileged class who are in possession of different forms of capital, but also to embrace the existence of those who are not as fortunate, to produce nuanced, socially engaging accounts of the rich layers of social reality and lived experiences. Agnes Lam writes that "English writing

in Hong Kong by ethnic Chinese writers […] is likely to be viewed as postcolonial literature, commonwealth literature, or part of what is termed world literature written in English[12]" ("Poetry in Hong Kong"). The problem arguably is not only whether they are considered as postcolonial literature or not, but whether they are considered, first and foremost, "Hong Kong literature". I particularly agree with the proposal made by Eddie Tay and Eva Leung:

> Even as creative writing in the academy is becoming a global phenomenon, and even as a significant number of graduates of creative writing programmes have garnered international fame as writers, *there is a need for its practitioners and teachers to consider the embedded nature of their craft in the social and cultural spaces of their local communities.* (Tay and Leung 111, my italics)

These words remind us that inasmuch as English creative writing has a global dimension, there is also a local dimension to be recuperated. To turn to the local, for me, is to nuance Christopher Payne's celebration of marginality, and to argue that Hong Kong English writing does not have to discard its marginal *perspective*, but it need not have a marginal *participation* or depict marginal *subject matters*.

Participation: As Agnes Lam responds to Xu Xi in an interview, "[m]ere proficiency . . . is not enough for literary creativity to come about. The users of English must want, in fact, need to express their thoughts, feelings, and collective psyche in English. English has to be their language of integration, culturally and personally, before literary creativity can occur" (Xu Xi, "Agnes Lam"). This is obviously lacking in the majority of Hong Kong residents, and I believe there are two

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[12] Since Lam's article was written in 1990, I suspect that the "world literature" referred to here is not the new disciplinary initiative known as "world literature" that has sprouted in English departments in recent years. Lam is probably referring to what I call World English Literature in the first section of this chapter, which is an extension of perspective of the linguistically-based World Englishes.

ways to address this discrepancy. The first is that we need to, through education and other opportunities, encourage the general public to participate in creating a kind of Hong Kong English writing culture that belongs to them. If we do complain about the small circle of English writing and the lack of a critical mass of English literature in Hong Kong, one obvious solution is to promote it, to make it accessible to as many people as possible, and to encourage them to take part in it. This can be in the form of public literary events that spread English-language works (even if in translation) to local citizens, of all sorts of ethnic, educational and socioeconomic backgrounds. But, realistically, as I have argued, this means creating more publishing avenues that have a sustained and consistent policy to encourage submissions from budding local writers and to broaden the profile of English writers.

Subject Matter: With proliferating participation, we can then see English writing as a form of social commitment that potentially induces changes to the society's collective sensibilities or consciousness. The advantage of writing in English, i.e. more efficient dissemination of literary works to the world and global audience, can be put to good use if English writing can communicate the stories and lives of as many Hong Kong people as possible, and express as many as possible the controversial tensions in contemporary Hong Kong—between different ethnicities and their cultures, between national/state and popular discourses, between the politics of different languages, and as will be seen in the next chapter, between social classes and geographical districts—so that readers from around the world will learn to understand the social, historical, cultural and political intricacies of this city. Hong Kong writing in English now needs to reach out to the general public mass, and uncover the modalities of different lived experiences in Hong Kong—South Asians who struggle with Chinese proficiency and mainstream recognition, or ethnic

Chinese born and raised in Hong Kong, who have few opportunities or cannot afford to live overseas long enough to let a foreign culture impact on them, who have never possessed the right symbolic and cultural capital to live in the districts where the cultural hubs are located or where the foreigners mingle, who have never seen English as more than a practical language, not to mention taking possession and integrating it as part of their identity, and so on. It is a form of commitment that strives to mitigate the problem of invisibility for those who cannot yet afford to write for themselves. Even when English writing writes about these themes commonly found in Chinese literature, it is still able to adopt a marginal perspective by mediating between the unwavering prominence of the Chinese language and the self-proclaimed "international" and "world city" image in Hong Kong, this financial metropolis. The key is whether the English writer is reflexive enough: the writers' job is not only to observe what the public is not trained to observe, but to always rethink how their works can or cannot represent one/some groups of Hong Kong people. It is a commitment that probes into the disjuncture between the local and the world.

Table 9

Provenance of *Yuan Yang* Contributors, 2000-12[a]

Volume	Year	Category 1 *Hongkongers/ HK-based*	Category 2 *Chinese diasporic*	Category 3 *Asian*	Category 4 *European/American/Australian/ New Zealanders*	Total
I	2000	18 HK 16 HK based 2	4 (US)	1 (Singapore)	1 (France, formerly HK based) 2 (US) 1 (Canada) 1 (Zimbabwe/London)	28
II	2001	27 HK 21 HK based 6	4 (US)	1 (Singapore)	1 (Scotland) 5 (US) 1 (Australia, formerly in HK) 1 (NZ, formerly in HK)	40
III	2002	14 HK 10 HK based 4	1 (US)	1 (Singapore)	1 (US) 1 (Australia, formerly in HK) 1 (NZ, formerly in HK)	19
IV	2003	14 HK 13 HK based 1	2 (US)	1 (Singapore) 1 (Malaysia)	1 (US) 1 (Australia, formerly in HK)	20
V	2004	10 HK 8 HK based 2	2 (US)	1 (Macao based) 4 (Singapore) 1 (Bangladesh)	1 (US)	19
VI	2005	7 HK 7	1 (US)	2 (Singapore) 1 (Malaysia) 1 (India) 1 (Pakistan)	7 (US)	20
VII	2006	7 HK 7	1 (Australia)	2 (Singapore)	7 (US) 1 (Australia)	18
VIII	2007	8 HK 6 HK based 2	--	1 (China based, from US) 1 (Singapore)	2 (Ireland) 1 (Canada) 3 (US)	16

Volume	Year	Category 1 Hongkongers/ HK-based	Category 2 Chinese diasporic	Category 3 Asian	Category 4 European/American/Australian /New Zealanders	Total
IX	2008/2009	6 HK 5 HK based 1	1 (US)	1 (Macao based) 1 (China) 1 (Japan)	5 (US)	15
X	2010/2011	1 HK 1 (UK based)	1 (US) 1 (Canada)	1 (Japan, US based) 1 (US based)	1 (Nigeria) 7 (US) 1 (England)	14
XI	2011/2012	4 HK 3 HK based 1	1 (Canada)	1 (India, US based)	6 (US) 1 (Scotland) 1 (Serbia/US)	14

Source: Elaine Ho; "Language Policy, 'Asia's World City', and Anglophone Hong Kong Writing"; *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 12.3 (2010): 428-41; print; table 1, 436.

a. Ho's original table stops at Volume VIII (2007). My own judgment of the contributors' background, marked in bold, start from Volume IX (2008/2009).

PART III

NEW CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES

ON

HONG KONG ENGLISH WRITING

Chapter 5   New Paradigms for New Writing

In the previous chapter, I suggested that Hong Kong English writing should turn inward and strive to show the complexities of the lives of Hong Kong people in variegated ways, covering a broader spectrum of perspectives and lived experiences found in Hong Kong. It should also welcome more locally born and educated writers, and create literary platforms that consistently encourage their submissions. If Louise Ho used to lament about the insufficient impact of English writing, then as works proliferate and readership expands, there will also be a need to cultivate a field where rigorous critical exchange on such literature can take place. In this chapter, I wish to demonstrate some paradigms that I think can be employed to conduct critical analyses of Hong Kong English writing. These paradigms are, first, the uneven relationship between class, geography and race in Hong Kong that nuances and challenges the rhetoric about Hong Kong's cosmopolitanism and prosperity. This framework will be developed through a reading of the works of Marxist geographers David Harvey and Neil Smith. The second paradigm is the formation of Hong Kong identities in local-born and educated creative writing students. For this I will analyse some examples of new writing by these students.

Paradigm I: Uneven Development and English Writing

Towards Uneven Class and Geographical Development in Hong Kong

An introductory section is called for here to combine theories of uneven geographical development, devised by critics such as Marxist geographers David Harvey and Neil Smith, with the situation in Hong Kong. To talk about unevenness is to refuse to overplay Hong Kong's multiculturalism as its definitive quality; instead, in the words of Harvey, geographical unevenness is "a tangible geographical

expression of a structural condition in the capitalist economy" (*Social Justice* 273).

The unevenness in the geographical development in Hong Kong is a result of history, colonial governance, class segregation and natural geological constraints. The availability of a natural harbour and the ease of defence on the Hong Kong Island were the reasons the Island came to be ceded to the British under the Treaty of Nanking, and also explains why current-day Central (also called Chater in the past) became the first settler town—on the north of the Island facing southern tip of Kowloon. This is also the start of Hong Kong's urbanisation process; Central becomes the core of colonial administration and the first urban space in Hong Kong. As both Harvey and Neil Smith point out, urban space and the urbanisation process are crucial in accumulating and centralising capital (N. Smith 136; Harvey, *Rebel Cities* 115; Harvey, "Notes" 101), which explains why banks and financial buildings then "tack themselves" on existing centres of colonial administration (N. Smith 123).

The acquisition of the Kowloon peninsula (south of Boundary Street in Mong Kok) under the Convention of Peking in 1860, and the borrowing of the New Territories[1] in 1898 for 99 years were, in essence, a "geographical expansion of capitalist society" based on the necessity of capital accumulation (N. Smith 119), but in the process of expansion, the centralisation of capital and production towards the first centre of colonial power (i.e. Central) has been kept intact. What then happened was a centripetal flow of different forms of capital (primarily financial but also symbolic in the Bourdieusian sense) from the subsequently developed districts in Kowloon and the New Territories. In other words, only Central and Tsim Sha Tsui, which is just across the Victoria Harbour, became the only two central business

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[1] The lease includes all the land at the north of Boundary Street and south of Shenzhen River, encompassing in effect both what came to be called as New Kowloon (north of Boundary Street and south of the ranges of the Lion Rock Hill), and the New Territories (north of the hill ranges and south of Shenzhen River).

districts (CBD), while most other districts were designed for other purposes, such as residence, agriculture, industry, natural conservation, and recreation. Vast areas of flatland in northwest New Territories, due to its agrarian nature, are perceived as the hinterland of Hong Kong. Such internal differentiation of the territory of Hong Kong, between, say, the administrative town of the coloniser's government and the agricultural town in rural New Territories, is then "the geographical expression of the division of labour" foundational to a capitalist society (N. Smith 144). Quoting Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*, the settler's town is a "strongly built", "brightly-lit" place of work (and of living to the colonisers), while the country is the district of the colonised people, a place of residence and reproduction (N. Smith 109-10, 136; qtd. in Harvey, *Social Justice* 263-64).

While this binary registers the simultaneous interplay between race, class and geography on a general level, we need further socioeconomic statistics to substantiate the complexity of this interplay. The first issue at hand is social class. The 1970s saw Hong Kong's economy soared, as shown in census data from 1971 to 1976, such as a 41.2% drop in the number of household earning less than HKD 1,000 per month, and a four-fold increase in households earning more than HKD 2,500 (Hong Kong, Census and Statistics Department, *Hong Kong By-Census 1976 Main Report* 113). The median monthly household income also quadrupled by 1981 (*ibid.*, *ibid.*, "Preliminary Results of the 1981 Population Census" 97). However, if this growth is considered at 1971 prices, the median monthly household income in 1981 has in fact less than doubled from a decade ago, and 28.5% of households were still earning less than HKD 2,000 a month (*ibid.* 97). This hints at a widening gap between the rich and the poor within these ten years, as the Gini coefficient went up from 0.430 to 0.451, already much higher than the 0.4 that would anticipate a serious income gap and social problems (HK, Financial Secretary's Office 86). Also,

according to the two 1970s censuses, more than 52% of the working population at the time were the lowest-earning manual labourers or production workers, as opposed to 7.6-7.7% of the professional and managerial workforce who easily earned at least 2.5 times more (Hong Kong, Census and Statistics Department, *Hong Kong By-Census 1976 Main Report* 64, 70). In short, Hong Kong's economic growth in this period was impressive but also beginning to show unevenness and a widening income gap across different industries.

Under this widening income gap, we can then further introduce the factors of geography. Apart from an ever-rising Gini coefficient, income disparity was also aggravating across districts. The income index, a tool used to compare the median household income by district against a neutral index of 100, reveals that in the 1970s, the Peak district and the Mid-levels on Hong Kong Island earned about 3.4 to 7 times more than the median household income in the entire Hong Kong (*ibid.* 113-14). Other districts with a high income index were Kowloon Tong, Southern and Tsim Sha Tsui, which earned 3.5, 1.6 and 1.4 times more than Hong Kong's median. What is common among these districts is that they are on Hong Kong Island or in Kowloon, i.e. the earliest regions ceded to the British. Despite a gradual decrease in population due to urban sprawl and development of new towns in the New Territories since the 1960s, regions on the Island and in Kowloon generally had an income index higher than 100 in the 1970s, while New Kowloon (north of Boundary Street) and the New Territories tended below 100. Even until today, the pattern has not changed much. Between 2000 and 2013, Central and Western District (which comprises of the (Victoria) Peak, the Mid-levels, Central and its surrounding districts) competes with Wan Chai District for the highest median income every year, while Sham Shui Po and Kwun Tong in New Kowloon, and Yuen Long in the New Territories always end up in the bottom place (HK, Census and Statistics Department, *Population and*

Household Statistics Analysed by District Council District, 2000-2013).

It is rather amazing that given the little flat land on Hong Kong Island, Central and Wan Chai still manage to accumulate the highest income. This partly echoes Neil Smith's observation, though in a different context, that the restructuring of metropolises in North America and Europe involves an "inner city of recreational and upper-middle-class residential land uses, together with professional and administrative jobs, and the increased suburbanisation of industrial and routine office activities" (N. Smith 150-51). In Hong Kong, the delegation of industrial and office activities to other districts can also be observed in two examples. First, one could find industrial estates in Kwun Tong (New Kowloon), Fo Tan, Tai Po and Yuen Long (New Territories), but never in Central. Second, sub-districts in Central that have a high income, such as the (Victoria) Peak and the Mid-levels mentioned in the previous paragraph, have also propelled Central into an upper-middle-class residential area. The Victoria Peak, towering at 554 metres from sea level (third highest in Hong Kong) just above Central, has historically been the residential area of European expatriates and the richest families up until the 1930s. Here altitude further divides a district in economic income, where residents of the Peak district earn even higher than those at the Mid-Levels district. The enjoyment of living on heights with panoramic view through the exploitation of a natural hill enables the upper and upper middle class to live above the rest of the population but close enough to the centre of financial and governmental power of Hong Kong.

The final factor to be considered is race, for if the Peak used to be out of bounds for the ethnic Chinese population, then race segregation is in every bit connected to geographical and class segregation. This is powerfully revealed by George C. S. Lin's research on the geographical settlement patterns of people of different Chinese dialectal groups in Hong Kong in 1961 and 1996. He maps census

data of the respondents' usual spoken language at home against the geographical districts of Hong Kong, creating maps that show the spatial distribution of each speech group over the course of 35 years (see top right hand corner of figures 2 and 3, from G. C. S. Lin, "Identity" 152, 154). He concludes that there is "a clear trend of homogenisation" where speakers of different dialect groups start to move around different areas while Cantonese slowly becomes the most common language throughout Hong Kong (153). But English speakers remain the unsurprising exception, where census data in both years reveal that the areas with a high concentration of the English-speaking population are also the most prestigious areas

Fig. 2. Spatial Distribution of Speech Groups in Hong Kong, 1961, from George C. S. Lin, "Identity, Mobility, and the Making of the Chinese Diasporic Landscape in Hong Kong"; *The Chinese Diaspora: Space, Place, Mobility, and Identity*; Ed. Laurence J. C. Ma and Carolyn Cartier (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003); Print; 152; fig. 6.2a.

of Hong Kong, such as the Peak District, Mid-Levels, and Southern District (with an increasing concentration in Sai Kung District in 1996), with a significantly low proportion of Cantonese and other dialect speakers. Furthermore, English speakers exhibit little geographical mobility to move towards less developed and less prestigious areas such as the New Territories and Lantau Island, with the distribution figure recording at -1 to 0 standard deviation in those areas (Lin 152, 154). When read alongside the geographical disparity of income just discussed, it seems certain that the English-speaking expats formed their own rich ghetto, almost impermeable by most ethnic Chinese immigrants.[2]

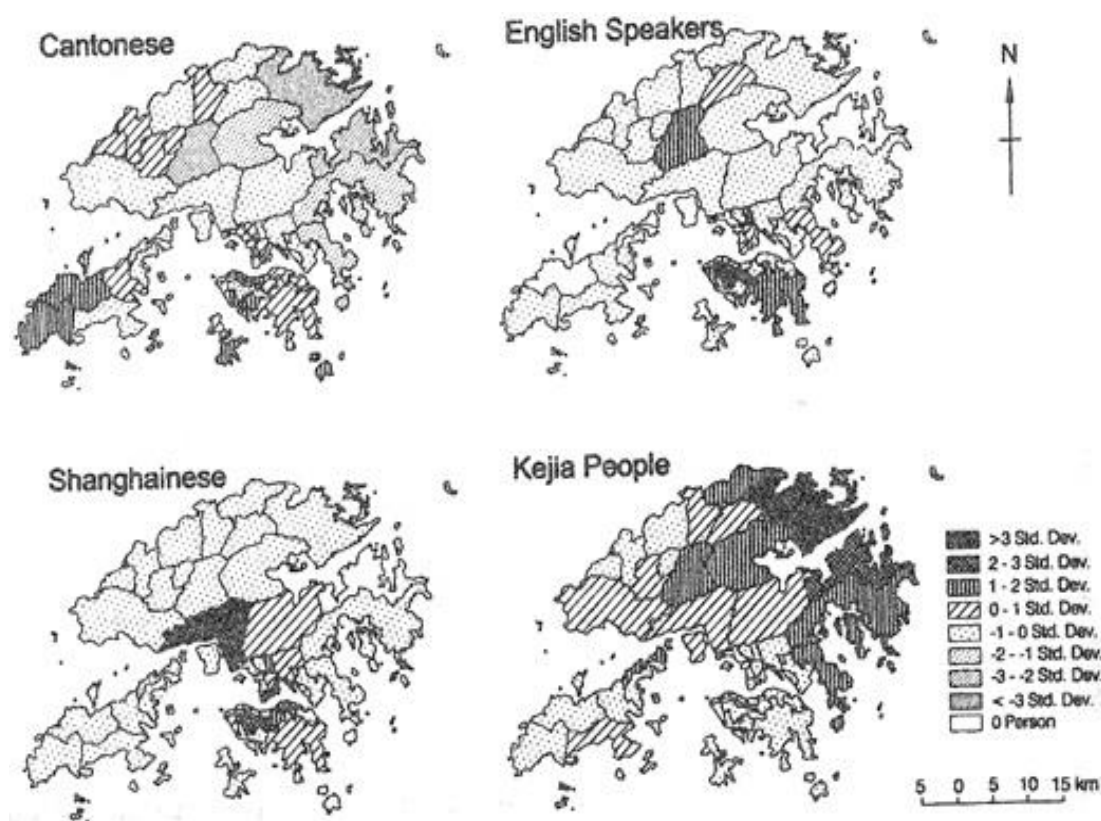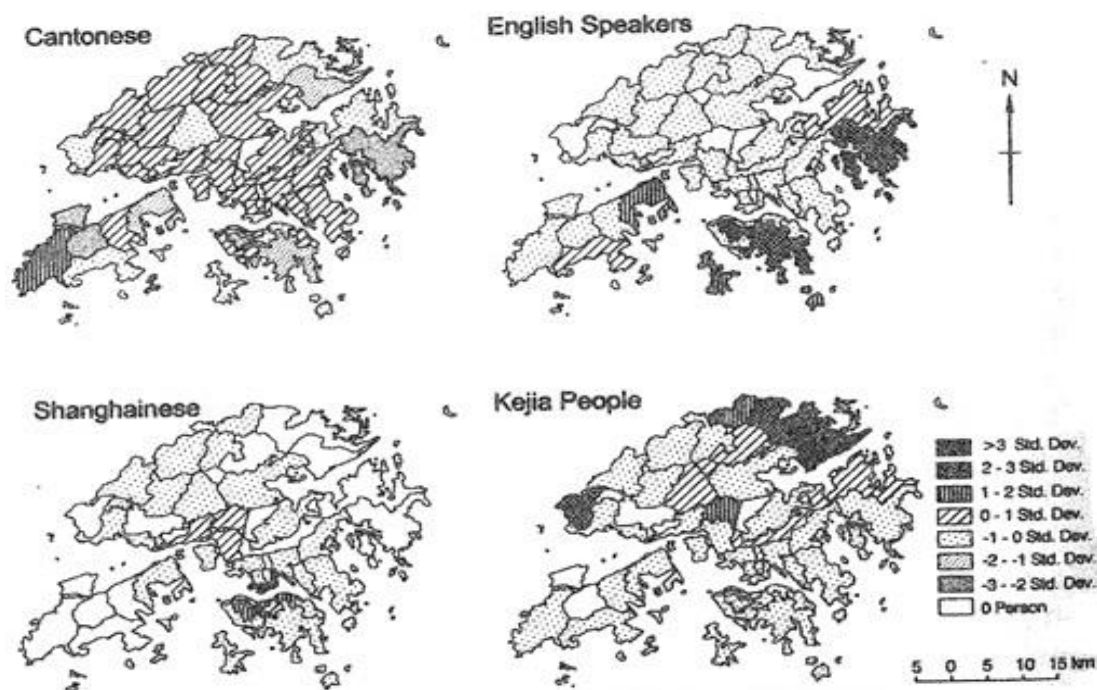Fig. 3. Spatial Distribution of Selected Speech Groups in Hong Kong, 1996, from George C. S. Lin, "Identity, Mobility, and the Making of the Chinese Diasporic Landscape in Hong Kong"; *The Chinese Diaspora: Space, Place, Mobility, and Identity*; Ed. Laurence J. C. Ma and Carolyn Cartier (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003); Print; 154; fig. 6.3a.

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[2] The zonal exclusion of the Peak district to non-Chinese was lifted in the 1930s.

Race, class and geography intertwine in a complex way in and with the history of Hong Kong. The colonial factor especially complicates Neil Smith's remark that the accumulation of capital under capitalist logics is a way to manage the lives of the proletariat (N. Smith 124)—the expansion of British colonial territory brings about a geographical division of labour that facilitates the accumulation of capital at the colonial power centre and the management of the lives of the local colonised underclass.

Two implications are to be extended from the above exposition of uneven development in Hong Kong. The first concerns the unequal access to education. I have briefly discussed this issue with regard to English language education in chapter 2, where I pointed out that unequal distribution of (and hence opportunity to) EMI school places across districts is characterised by a concentration of EMI places in urban areas, especially in the districts of Central and Western as well as Wan Chai. Schools in these districts can appeal to students from other parts of Hong Kong with the potential access to linguistic capital, which subsequently means access to economic and symbolic capital (better job prospects). In this way, the best students of Hong Kong are centripetally attracted to Hong Kong's richest and most multicultural districts where the heart of Hong Kong's economy lies. Social class also determines the chances of overseas education. Income disparity should remind us that mobility, as I have critiqued in the introduction of this dissertation, is privileged, and that traveling was, and pretty much still is, "price-tagged like any other commodity", a rarity "available only to a tiny and privileged minority" such as the upper class (or nowadays increasingly the middle class) (A. Smith 246, 253).[3] Given the enormous

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[3] I have conducted a brief research on Hong Kong air fares in the past; most information comes from scanned pictures of old airline advertisement in books on Hong Kong aviation history. From 2005, Cathay Pacific publishes three volumes of essays penned by its pilots on aviation knowledge, stirring

cost of international travel as a major inhibiting factor, it is no wonder that overseas studies was a scarce luxury enjoyed by only a total of 3,100 students in 1966-67 (HK, Census and Statistics Department, *Hong Kong Statistics 1947-1967* 188). Even until 1979, studying abroad in the UK, which cost around HKD 120,000 a year inclusive of fees and maintenance, was a "wild dream" to a normal family, according to witness's accounts (R. Ho 64, my translation).

The second implication—and arguably much more difficult to quantify and prove statistically—is the linkage between the location of Hong Kong's cultural centre and that of its financial centre. As David Harvey notes accurately, concentrations of wealth and power determine differentiation of the modes of consumption, so that "cultural differentiations can either be transformed or actively produced that generate niche markets" (Harvey, "Notes" 102). There exists a certain correlation between the accumulation of cultural capital and its reliance on the symbolic status of the venue which is conferred by the accumulation of financial capital. In the case of Hong Kong, the CBDs—Central, Wan Chai, Causeway Bay on Hong Kong Island, and Tsim Sha Tsui in Kowloon—become not only the urban centres of administrative and financial power, but also the hub for high culture, where high-rent residential flats (on the Peak or the Mid-Levels), air-conditioned offices, high-end shopping malls, museums and galleries, nightlife venues, and the

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up a public enthusiasm in the aviation industry and inspiring other publications on the work of cabin crew and Hong Kong's aviation history (see Fung et al., *Kiu Sau Dzan Tsi I*; Fung et al. *Kiu Sau Dzan Tsi II*; and Lam et al.).

In the late 1940s and the early 1950s, air fares in Hong Kong "were relatively high compared to other places" (*Wings Over Hong Kong* 179). One would pay HKD 380 for a typical single ticket from Hong Kong to Shanghai (*ibid.* 176, 183), HKD 538 to Bangkok and HKD 880 to Singapore (Chiu 66). By 1957, a ticket from Taipei to Hong Kong cost HKD 430, which was equivalent to a few months' salary of the average Hong Kong person (James Ng 205). Long haul flights were naturally exorbitant; a 1958 ticket to New York with Transocean Airlines was USD 558.5, or about HKD 3400 (Chiu 137). And yet, in a capitalist manner where the upper class guarded their privilege, during the demonopolisation of British Airway's Hong Kong-London service in 1979-80, Laker Airways' vision to run an all-economy service for GBP 125-250 (about HKD 1,300-2,600) was challenged by competitors Cathay Pacific, British Caledonian, and authorities in Britain and Hong Kong for reducing profitability of the route with cheap seats ("Nott overturns", "B.CAL receives").

best cultural and literary activities[4] all exist alongside one another, thus becoming the poster example of a Western-inspired cosmopolitan lifestyle. Of course, one can also find poor families, non-English-speaking individuals, crammed living environments, and communal wet markets in these areas. However, the point is precisely that this vibrant mixture of new and old, rich and poor, global and "local", is almost exclusively available in these urban, or urbane areas, and not in most other districts in New Kowloon or the New Territories. In Marxist terms, Hong Kong's urban areas are locales of both production and reproduction, while the suburban ones are those of reproduction only.

Thus, whenever we claim that Hong Kong is a vibrant, global, multicultural metropolis that never sleeps, and applaud its success story and work-hard ethos that has seamlessly transformed its economy from fishing and manufacturing to banking and finance later, we are evoking only its urban(e), developed and sophisticated side, the side that has managed to accumulate different sorts of capital through historical and geographical processes. We may then tend to forget the income disparity and social inequality that has only got worse recently, or fail to interrogate the structural reasons that have led to such inequality. In short, we disregard the complexities, fault lines and invisibilities *within* Hong Kong society (such as a huge underclass population living in subdivided flats or cage homes).

The understanding of uneven geographical development through the data-ridden paragraphs above is, I believe, a prerequisite to the "turn-inward" approach I advocated in the last chapter. Literature belongs to what Henri Lefebvre calls representational spaces in his three-tier classification of spaces, the "lived space"

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[4] Hong Kong Island has the highest number of English-language bookstores in Hong Kong. *Outloud*, the regular English-language poetry gathering on the first Wednesday every month, has long been held at the Fringe Club in Central. The 2013 Hong Kong International Literary Festival has organized its events at venues in Central, Wan Chai, and Causeway Bay. Finally, the University of Hong Kong (HKU) is still one of the most common venues for English-language literary talks.

for structures of feelings, sensations, imaginations, emotions associated with living in the world (Harvey, "Space" 130-31; also Lefebvre 33). As I have argued, by "turning and looking inward", I mean that Hong Kong English writers and critics should produce works or analyses that are reflective of the experiences of living in the space of Hong Kong, through orchestrating feelings with complex disjunctures of class, taste, wealth, lifestyle and materiality across districts, and examining carefully how far the tropes of travelling, cosmopolitanism and multicultural mixing are written against a nuanced portrayal of Hong Kong's sociocultural disparity. In the following sub-sections, I will demonstrate how to perform this "turn inward" approach with my analyses on selected literary texts by first-generation, expatriate writers, and up-and-coming writers.

Xu Xi: A Symptomatic, Class-conscious Reading

As the most famous English-language fiction writer from Hong Kong, Xu Xi's stories and fictions have been commended by critics for exemplifying Hong Kong's East-West "linguistic and cultural schizophrenic" origin through the unique portrayal of mixed-race characters (A. Lai 187), perhaps due to her own upbringing as an Indonesian Chinese (*wah kiu*) in Hong Kong. Her biggest contribution to the canon of Hong Kong English writing is undoubtedly the illumination on mixed-race, global-shuttling characters as a necessary representation of an almost invisible minority in a relatively mono-ethnic society: as Xu Xi admits herself in the essay I critiqued in the last chapter, her characters are globalised ethnic Chinese with connections to China and Asia ("Writing" 222). What is also special about her fiction is that the characters in different novels are connected to one another (A. Lai 112). In Xu Xi's latest novel, *Habit of a Foreign Sky* (2010), the protagonist Gail Szeto has in fact appeared previously in *The Unwalled City* (2001), and is also connected to Ai

Lin, the heroine in Xu Xi's first novel *Chinese Walls* (1994) through Vince da Luca, who is Ai Lin's husband, and Gail's brief lover in college. Vince has an affair with American Colleen Leyland-Tang, the wife of Hong Kong businessman Tang Kwok-Po, who is Gail's long-time friend and lobbies her in *Foreign Sky* to work in Shanghai after 1997. These interconnected novels present a cosmopolitan world view where a network of mixed-race Chinese characters from Hong Kong study in the United States, become global elites working in transnational corporations, and frequently get involved in unfaithful interracial affairs with each other.

A similar trend can be observed in *History's Fiction* (2001), a collection of 13 short stories divided into four sections that correspond to the four decades from 1960s to 90s. Some stories are excerpted from her longer works: "Chung King Mansion" is from *Chinese Walls*, and So Man Kit, the protagonist in "Manky's Tale", is the husband of Rosemary Hui, who is in turn one of the protagonists in another novel, *Daughters of Hui* (1996).

Many of these characters mirror Xu Xi's own upbringing. Her background can be glimpsed from her autobiography *Evanescent Isles* (2008): Xu Xi is Indonesian Chinese, grew up in a comparatively well-off family in Tsim Sha Tsui in the 1950s before the decline of family fortune in the 60s, attended the all-girl Maryknoll Convent School in Kowloon Tong where she was a Girl Guide, and then went to university majoring in English, and finally studied creative writing in Massachusetts. Similarly, two of the protagonists in *History's Fiction* are Indonesian Chinese ("Andrew's Letters" and "Chung King Mansion"), two grow up in Tsim Sha Tsui ("Blackjack", "Chung King Mansion") and two are Girl Guides ("Blackjack", "Democracy"). Five have studied in a Catholic/Convent/all-girl school ("The Fourth Copy", "The Tryst", "Andrew's Letters", "Chung King Mansion", "Democracy"). Seven have studied overseas, of which six in America and two in Massachusetts,

("Until the Next Century", "The Fourth Copy", "Rage", "Dannemora", "Allegro Quasi Una Fantasia", "Manky's Tale", "Chung King Mansion"[5]), plus a returnee from the US ("Blackjack"). In addition, there are other recurring motifs: the heroines' parents are generally concerned with their daughters' marriage prospects ("Blackjack", "Manky's Tale", "The Fourth Copy", "Rage"), but seem to carry a certain conservative prejudice against Westerner or Eurasian husbands-in-law ("Blackjack", "Rage", "Dannemora", "Andrew's Letters"); despite this, rich expats in Hong Kong appear in three stories ("Dannemora", "The Yellow Line" "Insignificant Moments in the History of Hong Kong"), and interracial marriage/relationship/affair exists in five ("The Fourth Copy", "Rage", "Until the Next Century", "Dannemora", "The Tryst"). Although Amy Lai observes that the collection is structured in reverse chronology, starting with the 90s and ending in the 60s (121), the stories, if read chronologically, imitate a growing-up process. The three stories in the 60s ("Andrew's Letters", "Chung King Mansion", "Democracy") all take place in the protagonists' school years in Hong Kong, forming a parallel to Xu Xi's own formation years as well as to Hong Kong's burgeoning economy. The characters' overseas education in America then took place in the 70s and 80s. By the 80s and 1990s, most of the protagonists are already working adults faced with different life decisions, just as Hong Kong approaches 1997.[6]

All this counting, or "distant reading", does not show much except to reiterate that Xu Xi's characters are often modelled after her own life path, which is not to

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[5] In "Chung King Mansion", the protagonist Ai-Lin is still in primary school, but later in the novel *Chinese Walls* she does end up studying in the US.

[6] Furthermore, it is interesting to see that until now Xu Xi has not produced new works substantially on Hong Kong's post-1997 situation. Her most recent novel, *Habit of a Foreign Sky* (2010), is set twelve years before the year of its publication, in 1998, just one year after the handover. As Hong Kong approaches its second decade from 1997, a novel-length work is long overdue from her to fill the vacuum on post-handover changes. The current lack of attention to post-1997 gives the impression that she is capitalising on Hong Kong's "coming-of-age" narrative.

suggest a biographical reading of her works. Instead, given her fame as the most established first-generation Hong Kong prose writer, the ground should now be opened to examine what other Hong Kong experiences new writers on the scene can explore beyond those subjective, partly autobiographical experiences of hers.

The characterisation and setting in many of Xu Xi's works involve those who are privileged enough to, when not in America, mingle on Hong Kong Island, and in Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon Tong and Kowloon City, i.e. some of the most urban and multicultural parts of Hong Kong. It is unlikely that Xu Xi is not aware of the huge class and ethnoracial divide of Hong Kong. Despite the overwhelming representation of mixed-race characters, she admits in *Evanescent Isles* that east and west do not really meet in Hong Kong except occasionally through interracial marriages (3). She herself was also a victim of the decline of family fortune, which meant saying goodbye to luxurious childhood in a penthouse flat in Tsim Sha Tsui with three servants, making her mother the breadwinner (9-13). In later years, she lived in the New Territories and had to commute for work every day for two and a half hours from rural Sai Kung to urban Causeway Bay (29-33). Yet it is most curious that her work engages relatively little with these life experiences shared by the majority of Hong Kong's not-so-wealthy ethnic Chinese residents: the difficulty to make ends meet, the struggle to earn education or work opportunities, and the long, exhausting commutes between rural and urban Hong Kong. In fact, the essays in *Evanescent Isles* give so much substance to her early life and make the book a more relevant read from my perspective as a local Hong Kong Chinese. In contrast, the majority of her stories in *History's Fiction* ignore class struggle of the protagonists, as if the protagonists were born in a family rich enough to easily send them abroad. It would be wrong to assume all her characters are born rich; however, what can be sensed from these explorations of racial, ethnic or cultural identities in the city of Hong

Kong is a desire to go beyond a Hong Kong that is not cosmopolitan or globalist enough, and what is effaced in the meantime is the characters' struggle to transgress class and district boundaries. Overall, Xu Xi's rendering of her own experience of Hong Kong's schizophrenia in fiction is sometimes weakened by the disconnection between race, class and geography.

In *History's Fiction*, one story, "The Yellow Line", gives an idiosyncratic impression from the others, due to its stronger attention to those Hong Kong-born Chinese who have not yet acquired the necessary cultural and symbolic capital to develop a cosmopolitan outlook. The story is also one of Xu Xi's first stories, written in the 70s before her MFA in America (Xu Xi, "Writing" 225), and also the first story to be published among the others in *History's Fiction* (*History's Fiction* iv). Set in the 70s, the story describes a little boy's adventures on the newly built Mass Transit Railway (MTR), Hong Kong's underground, and is an ironic comment on class segregation in Hong Kong. The six-year-old protagonist's "world had always been just Lok Fu" (132), a district of "low-cost government housing estate" (128) adjacent to Kowloon Tong, the upper-middle class enclave of blond-haired foreign kids and large houses. Today the two districts are within walkable distance, but the boy's excitement at taking the MTR and seeing a next-door district for the first time suggests how economic poverty and crammed living environment used to limit one's exposure and opportunities.

Written from the child's perspective, the story can be read as a typical story of class aspiration. The child naively associates the golden colour of the foreign kids' hair with their family wealth:

> They were foreign devil children with golden hair. How rich they must be because they had gold color hair. Everyone knew gold meant lots of money. […] Money was important because his mother was

> always shouting at his father about money. […] These little boys had
> golden hair and didn't need any money. They were all happy and
> laughing. If only he knew how to get money! (131)

Subjunctives such as "if only" appear whenever the boy makes new discoveries in Kowloon Tong, be it a playing field, big pretty houses, or just a skateboard, all of which, of course, he has never seen. English also plays a role, as he learns his first and only English line from the platform announcement: "Please stand behind the yellow line, the train for Chater will soon arrive" (Chater being the old name for Central, Hong Kong's CBD) (128). The neighbourhood of expats in Kowloon Tong is also described like a temporary "haven" (135) that enables the boy to escape from his mother's physical abuse and the psychological insecurity from his class background, and "hunt for self-comforting fantasy and adventure" (L. Y. Siu 78). Thus on the outset, the MTR symbolises a convenient connection between different districts of Hong Kong, as well as the possibilities offered by this shortening of traveling time. Indeed, this is supported by Lok Yi Siu's research in her thesis on the colonial government's rationale on constructing the MTR: the MTR "indicates Hong Kong's honorable achievement in terms of population and economic growth in the 1970s" (*ibid.* 73). This is, nonetheless, a spin on the basic principle for capitalism: railways and public transportation are simply infrastructures that testify the "geographical expansion of capitalist society" (N. Smith 119). Moreover, the final stop of the MTR in Chater was, as David Harvey observes, "drawn towards major centres of production, finance and commerce" for reasons of profitability ("Notes" 101).

It is because of the effacement of the capitalist intention to engulf suburban residents in its network of production and reproduction, that the MTR is presented as "a haunting image precipitating the rapid social developments in the 1970s, the clash

between Chinese and Western cultures, the rich and the poor" (A. Lai 155). Lok Yi Siu, too, points out that the commencement of the underground "did not necessarily eliminate the psychological alienation among people of different classes and financial backgrounds" (76). The boy's aspiration is quenched by the reality in which he lives, with his mother's constant complaint about family finance and his father's gambling money away. When his mother takes him on the ride for the first time, she orders him to keep it a secret because the ride is a waste of money ("The Yellow Line" 130). However, lured by the beautiful sights he sees, he begins stealing money from his mother in order to take the ride every afternoon, an act which leads to him being beaten by his mother, and then his mother by his father. The dream to upward social mobility is thus cruelly crushed by the reality of poverty and domestic violence; even imagining a bright future, through the symbolic train ride to posh areas, costs money (two dollars for a return) and can be too much of a luxury for the working class family. Accumulation of cultural capital (exposure) is hinged on financial capital.

This unattainable dream is also symbolised by the yellow line of the MTR, the line which is meant to keep passengers safe from the racing train, but also comes to regulate the boy's aspiration. Twice in the story the boy oversteps the line, only to be scolded by adults about the danger of being "killed by the wheels of the train" (129). The idea of crossing the line has double meaning here: it can either refer to his dream of escaping from a lower class background and moving up the social ladder, or to his stealing his mother's money in order to continue dreaming. Both interpretations would fit the tragic ending of the story in which the boy visits Kowloon Tong one last time before dashing past the yellow line and throwing himself in front of an approaching train. In this final scene, he proudly displays his confidence acquired from the adventures, by declaring that "[n]o one had to show him [the way] because he was an experienced traveler" (136). But he is also visibly

confused: he first decides not to return home, but by evening heads back to the station, then hesitates at taking a train to Chater, declaring paradoxically at one point "[i]t was time to go home", only to end up at the Chater platform and commit suicide in the end (135-36). The eagerness to prove he is experienced (even though what he has really always done is to travel one station) juxtaposes the anxiety of suicide. It expresses the conundrum that his travel experience is not much compared to a complete train ride to Chater, the richest district of Hong Kong, even though his family circumstances forbids him to further explore and imagine such a dream of social mobility. The conundrum is further exacerbated by his repeated monetary thefts which lead to further financial burden and arguments at home, forming a vicious cycle. The suicide underscores the wish for eternal escape from poverty as well as the infeasibility of that wish. It is in this reading that the yellow line signifies a cordon of upward social mobility.

While I would have wished the ending to be less pessimistic, this short story is nonetheless one of the few by Xu Xi that resonate with the concerns of the Hong Kong Chinese grassroots class. Xu Xi's aunt, for instance, who used to teach in Choi Hung, "a district quite similar to [the low-income district of] Lok Fu of the story", delightedly used the story in her class, and complained that English-language reading material "that had any relevance to her students' lives" was hard to find ("Writing" 226). Earlier I also counted broad similarities between her life experience and her fictional characters'; this story is one that has the fewest matches, due to the absence of middle-class, English-speaking characters shuttling between Hong Kong and the States, and the effective engagement with the city's underclass. Although there is some mentioning of blond-haired expat children living in Kowloon Tong, there is no interaction between them and the little boy but observation from afar, which further conveys the reality of class segregation in Hong Kong and the grassroots' inability to

gain privilege to a multicultural life. With this story, Xu Xi wishes to express "the way [the MTR's] existence 'collapsed' my city, connecting disparate districts and social classes in this democratic conveyance" ("Writing" 225), but I argue conversely that this story casts a sceptical eye on this collapse of districts, and brings to surface a more complex problem of segregation which cannot be easily solved by superficial speed and convenience.

Of Dogs, Underclass and Boxes

To be fair, there are expatriate writers in Hong Kong who are sensitive to, and actively seek to cross, the expat/local divide in both racial and class terms. Three examples selected here are Winsome Lane's short story "The Dog on the Roof" from the anthology *Hong Kong ID* (2005), Alan Jefferies' poem "Homage", first published in Volume 11 of the now discontinued journal *Dimsum* (2005), and Vaughan Rapatahana's "Hong kong is rhomboid" from his collection *Schisms* (2013).

"The Dog on the Roof" tells the story of expat Isobel Mumford, who used to live an almost unrealistically luxurious life in Hong Kong, occupying a seven-bedroom mansion with chauffeurs and gardeners on the Victoria Peak, thanks to her husband Arthur's investment banking job. Theirs is "a typical expatriate success story" (Lane 63), where two Brits from working-class backgrounds find themselves climbing the social ladder not in their home country but in ex-colonial Hong Kong. Isobel's life is filled with parties, charity fund raisers, and sexual infidelities, and so is her circle of pretentious wives. The enjoyment of wealth and privilege—all the while telling interviewers about her "dislike [at] living in an elitist enclave" (62)—ended with Arthur's sudden death midway in the story. Reality soon set in with the short-lived condolences, the dismissal of perks and benefits, and the need to find a job and relocate in a small apartment "in a very Chinese [area] in

Western [district]" (70). It is through this somewhat corny turning point that she is thrown suddenly into the everyday local realities: a non-English-speaking neighbourhood and a depressingly tiny apartment. It takes a chance meeting on the roof with her Hong Kong neighbour David Yeung and his dog to "save" her from depression. Through David, Isobel manages to pick up Cantonese, meet his friends, and even understand the Cantonese conversation at his family gathering during Mid-Autumn Festival. As David's granddaughter shares a lantern with Isobel, an act of goodwill to make the latter "feel like one of us", David welcomes her "to the real Hong Kong" (72). Arguably, the story title "The Dog on the Roof" does not refer to David Yeung's puppy, but to Isobel herself; what she says about dogs—that they cannot be left on the roof all day since they need "company and exercise" (71)—foreshadows the broadening of her own exposure beyond her previous expat lifestyle.

The story is rather stereotypical in its depiction of the lives of rich, snobbish expats and their ignorance of the local population and culture. It is narrated in the third person, which gives a feeling of detachment and didacticism to the story's moral lesson: to reach out to the locals and learn Cantonese, and know about "the real Hong Kong". The necessity of a local but English-speaking neighbour acting as an enlightening guide may also sound condescending. The story's happy ending comes off as surreal, largely due to the hasty success of Isobel's transformation, and the lack of details in her struggle to learn Cantonese (much harder than Mandarin) and adapt to a local lifestyle, as if the formerly patronising heroine can change so easily. However, the unnaturalness of the story is perhaps intended for the opposite effect, i.e. to hint at a not uncommon phenomenon of uprooted expats in Hong Kong. The idea of uprootedness is, undoubtedly, related to social class, but also to the metaphor of the roof. While on the one hand the rooftop of Isobel's apartment is

where she gets a glimpse of the activities of the nearby Hong Kong neighbours, it is nonetheless the altitudinal top of a building that limits the running space for dogs. The physical confinement and geographical height of a roof, in contrast with the dogs' need to run around and be walked, coincides with the district segregation that divides the lives of expats and locals. When the story opens Isobel lives on a detached mansion on the Victoria Peak, Hong Kong's most expensive district and thus the "roof" of Hong Kong,[7] "looking down on the rest of the world" (62). In the story's last scene she is with David's family in Victoria Park in Causeway Bay, which is an area of reclaimed flat land by the Victoria Harbour. Critic Janet Ng regards the Park as a "civic symbol" or Hong Kong's Hyde Park, due to its being the venue for the televised political debate programme *City Forum* and the starting point for major political protests or demonstrations, but it is also a "typical municipal park" where people can play basketballs and, of course, lanterns (Janet Ng 69-70). Although both named after Queen Victoria, the Peak is the habitat of the upper class, while the Park is a good kaleidoscope of the Hongkongers' ways of life. Coming back to the story, then, Isobel is indeed the dog on the roof, who must leave the confining Peak/roof and go to the Park/streets to understand "the real Hong Kong". It also becomes clear that this altitudinal lowering of Isobel's dwelling places corresponds to the sharp dip in her social class and symbolic capital: it is only through renouncing her past wealth, privilege and upper class status that she can possibly make a genuine and lasting contact with the locals, acquire the linguistic capital of Cantonese and assimilate into the local community.[8] This story therefore shows that the "global" language of

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[7] In fact, although in English "peak" and "roof" are two different words, in Cantonese they contain the same character, *deng* 頂, meaning the top.

[8] It must be noted that David Yeung himself is not doing too bad either; according to the story he was educated in England and taught English in private international schools before retirement. This personal background gives him the right cultural capital for his initiation into cross-cultural contact. Nonetheless, he does assist in Isobel's assimilation and understands the importance for expats to learn the local language.

English, together with its still popular association to an uprooted class of privileged expats or business elites, is alone inadequate to claim a good understanding of the lives of local Hongkongers.

As its title suggests, Alan Jefferies' poem is a straightforward "Homage" to Hong Kong's underclass, those who struggle to live their own ways in this city: working class children studying in the family shop on Hong Kong's busiest thoroughfare, Nathan Road (1-4); Chinese Amah ironing shirts for her employer while dreaming to get married and have her own family (5-7); the security guard who earns a meagre wage but tries his best to talk to the poem's speaker with the limited English he knows (8-11); the taxi driver who works long shifts to earn enough money to send his children to university for a future he never has (12-14); those elderly waste pickers who collect cardboards for a few dollars every day (16-18); the "cage-home dwellers" who live in terrible conditions, and for whom listening to and betting on horse races is the main entertainment and best chance to get out of poverty (19-21); the underprivileged students who suffer from educational inequality and can only dream about a "brighter tomorrow" (28-31), and so on. These are people who "never give up / who reach deep down into their guts / and make a heart from a stomach" (25-27), but they have no place in Hong Kong's image as a global cosmopolitan hub, invisible in the clichéd rhetoric of Hong Kong's success from a fishing village to an international metropolis. While the speaker applauds their effort and says these people never give up, certain parts of the poem sound rather bleak. For instance, the "tower dwellers perched in the shadow of Lion Rock" (15) references the Lion Rock Hill that separates Kowloon and the New Territories, and is the namesake of the Lion Rock Spirit that describes the hard-working ethos of 1970s and 80s Hong Kong, made popular after a pop song sung by Roman Tam. The Lion Rock spirit, a key component in Hong Kong's fishing-village-turned-world-city

rhetoric, is nonetheless contrasted by the lack of a sense of future in the poem: the poem is written in the present tense; the word "dream" appears twice while "hope" appears once; and the spectrum of people described ranges from the elderly (the waste pickers) and the middle-aged working class (the security guard), to the younger generation (the quiet student). The existence of these people should alert us to the growing disparity between the rich and the poor in 21st-century Hong Kong, and the increasing difficulty in achieving class mobility under exacerbating generational poverty.

Rapatahana is a Maori settled in Hong Kong. His poems on Hong Kong stand out from many other expatriate poets in their portrayal of lives in utterly Hong Kong Chinese districts, and in the stylistic twists that often reinforce the poem's meaning (such as, in this poem, smaller font size for the words "small box"). "Hong kong is rhomboid" is a particularly radical and abstract example (see figure 4). It challenges conventional understanding of what a poem is, but its form also effectively registers problems of material subsistence in Hong Kong. Different from a conventional shape poem, this poem does not use words to outline a shape, nor does it really have poetic lines arranged in a linear fashion. Instead, words and phrases are dispersed across a black-bordered rectangle. Elements or constituents of a poem are broken down from their linear arrangement into individual, separate parts that nonetheless exist simultaneously and relationally within a confined space. The subject matter of the poem seems to be living space in Hong Kong, as suggested by the regularity of the rectangular border and red lines associated with floor plans, and the phrase "living in a small box" at the top left hand corner.

Indeed, the poem reminds me of two things here. First, it is reminiscent of German photographer Michael Wolf's series "100x100" (see figure 5), which features 100 photos of 100 rooms of about 100 square feet in Shek Kip Mei Estate,

Hong Kong. Through linear perspective, these pictures powerfully collapse the

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living in a small box

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Hong Kong
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IN

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A

Hong Kong
is
rhomboid
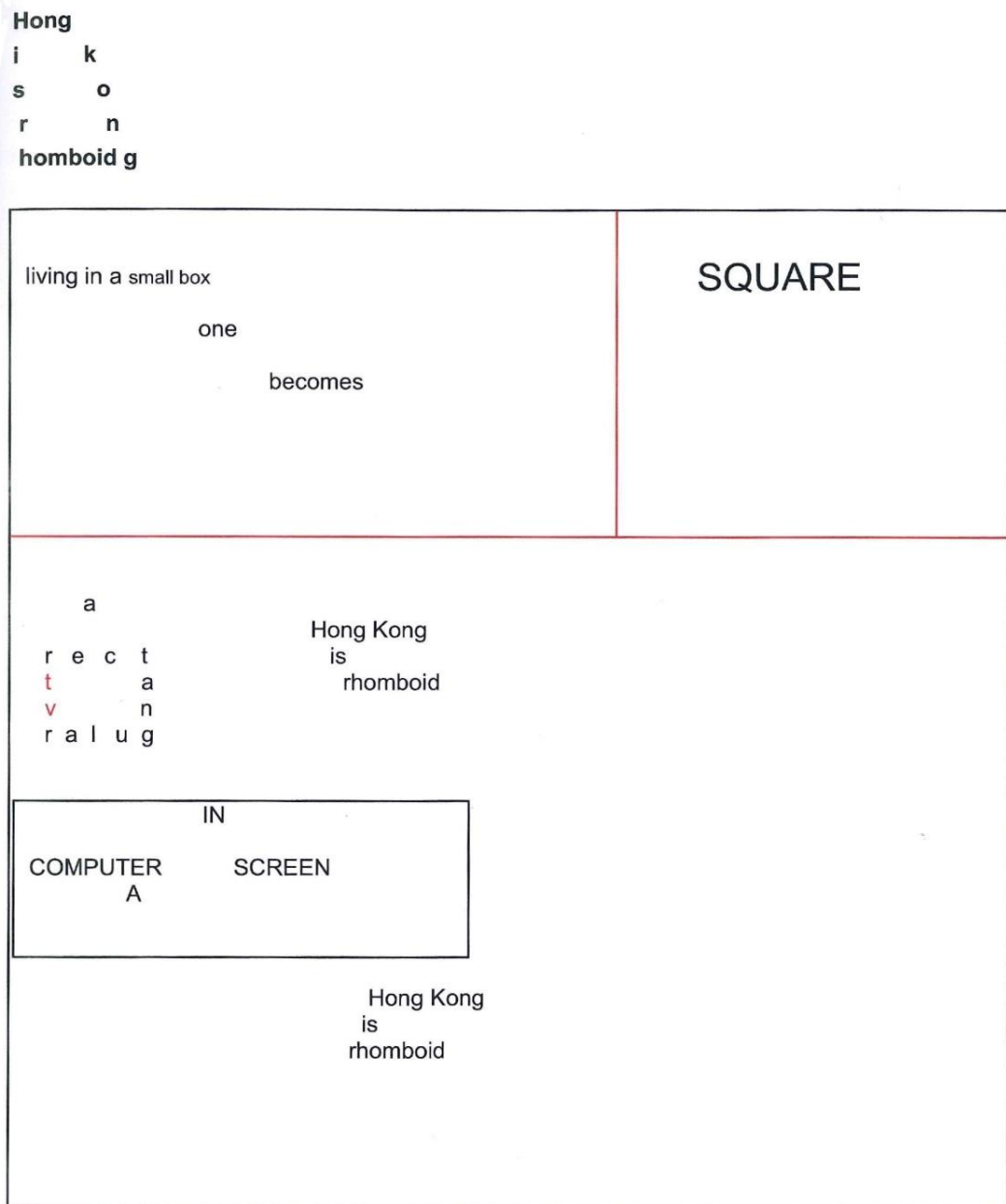
Fig. 4. Vaughan Rapatahana, "Hong kong is rhomboid"; *Schisms* (Lazarus Media, 2013; 7).

length, width and height of a three-dimensional living space into two-dimensional representations. They are venue-specific, taken in the Shek Kip Mei Estate, a public housing estate in a low-income of urban Hong Kong. Each of them tells the stories of the poor and the elderly living in this estate, whose possessions fill up every inch of the room: in figure 5, we see six chairs or stools, together with a fridge and a rice cooker on the right, showing the lack of compartmentalisation.

Fig. 5. An example of Michael Wolf's 100x100, from Michael Wolf; "100x100"; *Michael Wolf Photography*; N.p; n.d.; Web; 27 Nov. 2014.

Second, it reminds me of the ridiculously small flats in newly developed properties nowadays, often sold at exorbitant prices in the overheated property market of Hong Kong. The latest addition to this is a 177-square-foot (16.44 m^2) studio flat in Mont Vert in Tai Po, only twice the size of a prison cell (see figure 6 for an artist's impression). Targeted at the increasingly dispossessed younger generation who find it ever more difficult to have a property of their own, these flats are

testimony to the fact that social inequality and disparity in Hong Kong are indifferent to age and generation.
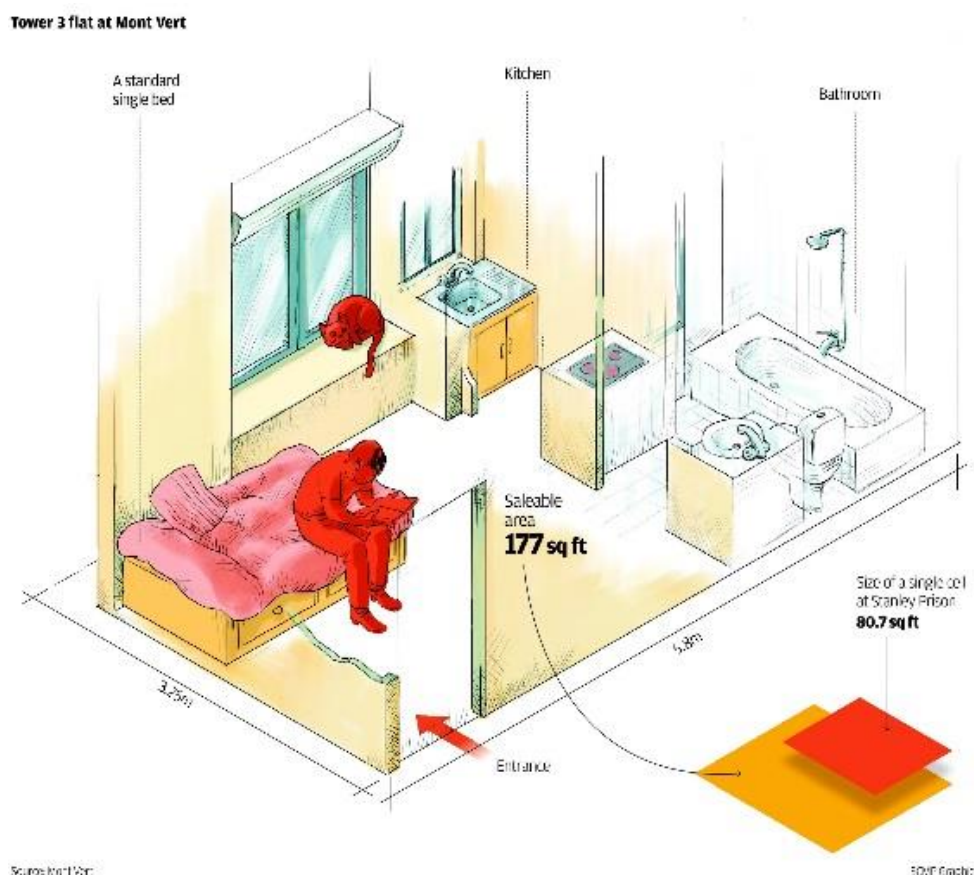
Fig. 6. Artist's Impression of Mont Vert's Smallest Studio Flat, from Sandy Li, and SCMP Graphics; "Mont Vert Studio"; *South China Morning Post*; South China Morning Post, 18 July 2014; Web; 27 November 2014.

While Rapatahana's poem is also a two-dimensional flattening of a cubic living space, it differs from Wolf's photos in marked ways. The obscurity of the poetic form allows readers to imagine what is being communicated through the poem in a multitude of ways. It is not attributed to any individual person, age group, or specific geographical district of Hong Kong. As I have said, the two-dimensional rectangles look like a simplified floor plan, which represents the length and width,

but not the height of the space. In this interpretation, the red lines can be seen as makeshift curtains for a bunk bed (as in figure 5) or non-load-bearing walls separating a kitchen or bathroom (as in figure 6). However, it also looks like a TV cabinet that extends to the ceiling, with the top two rectangles representing compartments hanging from the ceiling, not uncommon in Hong Kong. Whichever the interpretation, the two-dimensional rectangles merely evoke or hint at an actual three-dimensional space; they outline an abstract contour within which the words of the poem inhabit. Unlike Wolf's possession-filled pictures, the only two named objects are a TV and a computer screen, with the possibility of being combined into one piece of furniture, if the block of text is read as "a rectangular tv in a computer screen". The vast amount of white space surrounding the words but confined by the border is where the potential of Rapatahana's poem lies: The abstraction and effacement of other furniture and objects in a living space contrasts the embossing of these two technological products through the process of naming, and mediates the relationship between technology and modes of living.

The obscure form of Rapatahana's poem is open up to interpretations. Above all, the title of the poem, "Hong kong is rhomboid", evokes a different concept from the confining regularity of the rectangles which both frame and are part of the poem. Rhomboid is a parallelogram of non-right angles and different lengths for adjacent sides. This perhaps suggests unearthing a sense of unconventionality and irregularity of living in the regular, "ordinary" living experience of Hong Kong, mapped onto the mediation between the ample white space on the page and the techno-materiality of Hong Kong life.

Across Generations: Louise Ho and Kit Fan

To conclude the first part of this chapter, I end with this sub-section

comparing two poems by Louise Ho and Kit Fan, who respectively belong to what I called in the last chapter the first generation and the new generation of Hong Kong English-language writers. There is another symbolic meaning in picking these two poets' works for comparison: Louise Ho was the judge who picked Kit Fan as the winner of the inaugural HKU Poetry Prize in 2010, showing her endorsement of the quality of Kit Fan's poetry. I therefore read Kit Fan's win as an iconic growth of Hong Kong English poetry, moving from the first generation to the next. It is also in this context that I conduct a comparative reading of the poems. Both evoke Hong Kong as "home" to the speaker, but with a main difference: Whereas Louise Ho bases homecoming in a sort of Chinese cosmopolitanism, the sense of home in Kit Fan's poem is specifically based on a childhood episode in a specific, urban locale of Hong Kong. It is this difference that, I will argue, best exemplifies what I advocated as "turning inwards" in the last chapter.

Ho's short poem "Home to Hong Kong" is a popular selection in anthologies, according to Douglas Kerr in his afterword to Ho's collection *Incense Tree*, and to Ho herself in a poetry reading at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 2013. The poem reads:

> **Home to Hong Kong**
>
> A Chinese
>
> Invited an Irishman
>
> To a Japanese meal
>
> By the Spanish Steps
>
> In the middle of Rome
>
> Having come from Boston
>
> On the way home (L. Ho, *Incense Tree* 31)

Douglas Kerr praises this poem as an example of "a Chinese cosmopolitanism,

apparently available to Hong Kong people though still, in the 1970s when the poem was written, not much more than a dream to most mainland Chinese" (155). His analysis rightly points out that the "international friendship" and "frictionless mobility" suggested by the different country adjectives and denonyms are ultimately grounded in the idea of homecoming and "local belonging", exhibited in the use of epanalepsis in the word "home" as the first and last word of the poem (155-56). Similarly, Eddie Tay comments that in this poem, "Hong Kong culture is forever looking elsewhere, outside, and beyond itself" (E. Tay, "Curriculum" 109). My problem is with Kerr's confident assertion that this mobile cosmopolitanism is available to the Hong Kong people in the 1970s. To be fair, he never claims it is available to the majority of the Hong Kong people, nor are all of Ho's poems as uprooted as this one. But to have Western friends, to possess the knowledge about the Spanish Steps in Rome, and above all to be able to afford to travel from Boston to Rome and onto Hong Kong, may not be something commonly experienced by the majority of the Hong Kong population at the time. Therefore, it would not have been a problem if one reads Louise Ho's poem as a mere imagination or aspiration of a local Hongkonger living in the 1970s, but Kerr's one-sided appreciation, without noting the rarity of such experience, is to shun from the opportunity to reflect on how far individual experience captured in a poem is compatible with other diverse experiences in a multi-layered society, and on how far it can illuminate our comprehensive understanding of a locale.

The title poem to Kit Fan's debut collection, "Paper Scissors Stone", serves as a good example to show how younger writers, by reflecting on their experience of growing up in Hong Kong, can register specific places in Hong Kong as the "habitat" of the poems. The speaker of the poem recounts that since he was six he used to be left alone in a public library in the Telford Gardens in East Kowloon, so that his

mother "could sweat in other people's // kitchens" (I.6-7), her hands "tinted with bleach" (I.26). The Telford Gardens, completed in 1980 and situated above the MTR Kowloon Bay Station in East Kowloon, was conceived as a huge middle-class private housing complex, with its own shopping arcade, cinema and community centre. The library served Telford Gardens from 1982 to 1991, a period when Hong Kong was still having rapid economic growth and when South Asian domestic helpers were beginning to come to Hong Kong for work. Given this information, it is possible to infer that the speaker comes from a less privileged background, with his mother probably working as a part-time domestic helper in Telford Gardens. In those parentless afternoons, the books in the library give him custody, imagination and knowledge, as he "crawled // like a snail past spines of fairy tales" (I.14-16), devouring stories like Little Red Riding Hood and King Midas—incidentally all from "Western" culture. The library here is a landmark of childhood inspiration, imagination and formation, and a first portal to other cultures.

The poem however is not simply making a generalised statement on the importance of books and reading to children. Instead, it is firmly based on a specific experience of growing up in Hong Kong, in which book-reading as a childhood activity is embedded in a family's economic circumstances. The last four lines of part I echo the earlier image of orphanage, and imagine the speaker in a "book-lined womb" where book pages and covers brace his naked skin and which he prays "would not be scissored apart" (I.27-28). That the speaker feels secure and nurtured by library books instead of his parents speaks to the sacrifice many working class families have had to make, namely, to prioritise work over childcare. More symbolically, the internal, book-filled haven where the child absorbs knowledge and hones his imagination is only made possible by the external, corporeal protection of the womb as a metaphor for the mother's domestic job: The womb is the locus of

wage labour necessary for the budding of imagination. It is perhaps on this ground that the speaker calls, in a confessional tone, his/her fantasies at the imagined orphanage (with which the poem opens) hard-to-tell "guilty secrets" (I.1): It may be considered unfilial to indulge in books to the extent of imagining oneself to be parentless while fully realising that the enjoyment of imagination is conditioned upon the mother's work.

That imagination is embedded in economic activities is strengthened by part II of the poem, where the level of economic activity concerned is no longer limited within a family, but is elevated to a societal level. The library concerned cannot stand the test of time eventually, being "torn down" into "dust, pits, / cranes and stones" (II.2-7). A sense of loss is conveyed as the speaker asks "why paper / attracts scissors, books turn to stone" (II.11-12). The name of the hand game is broken down and understood metaphorically to signify the obsolescence of a community library: the place containing knowledge (paper) is demolished (scissored) into useless, lifeless rubble (stone). The poem thus mourns the disappearance of a communal place dear to one's childhood as well as the city's declining reading culture. The absence of any reason for the demolition in the poem may emphasise the redundancy, or rather the inadequacy, of any sort of excuse to justify the destruction of a public space for knowledge and inspiration. In reality, it is possible that this was due to the bureaucratic obsession of user numbers and efficient redistribution of communal resources, for the Ngau Tau Kok Public Library was opened in 1991 to replace two libraries in the vicinity, the one in Telford Gardens, the other in Kwun Tong, both of which have suspended service in the same year ("Gin Tsit"). Even the poem title, "Paper Scissors Stone", with its odd absence of commas or hyphens, can then be interpreted as the poet's wish to counteract this example of obsolescence: it can be read like a simple subject-verb-object sentence, where writing a poem on paper has

the power to cut apart (scissor as a verb) and revitalise forgotten (or stoned) childhood secrets.

It is the firm grounding in a vivid episode of growing up in Hong Kong—a young avid reader left alone by his working parents, and the impact of bureaucratic decisions on the local community—that the sense of home in Kit Fan's poem departs from Louise Ho's. "Paper Scissors Stone" is less concerned with cultural cosmopolitanism than with evoking a specific locale in Hong Kong as what Kit Fan calls the "habitat" of his poems. He comments in Volume X of *Yuan Yang* that earlier versions of the poem did not satisfy him until he wrote down "Telford Gardens" and "Kowloon" during revision, places where "the poem and the speaker found their home" such that the poem "seemed to fall into the right place" ("Habit" 16). It seems that as a new generation of writer born, raised and educated in Hong Kong, Kit Fan feels the imperative to pinpoint the subject matter of his poems to specific places or districts in Hong Kong, instead of just evoking a general feeling about his home city.

Summary

The comparison conducted here between the two poems is meant to be a totemic way of reading and reflecting on the future development of Hong Kong English writing. What it does not do is to claim that this is the only correct way to read Louise Ho and Kit Fan, nor does it want to typify the combined oeuvre of Louise Ho's or Kit Fan's poems. Moreover, the analyses on the two first-generation English-language writers, Xu Xi and Louise Ho, do not intend to undermine their contribution and effort in promoting Hong Kong English writing; it is by no means necessary to forgo their unique and original perspectives on Hong Kong. On the contrary, it is because they as first-generation writers have done so well in building up a climate in English-language literature with their creative and critical works, that

my symptomatic reading attempts to see where Hong Kong English writing can head next, exemplified by the works by Winsome Lane, Alan Jeffries, Vaughan Rapatahana and Kit Fan, in order to complement established writing trends and directions. Louise Ho confesses that she wants to create "a space where the English literary language expresses as well as is incorporated into the local ethos" ("Hong Kong Writing" 176). Douglas Kerr agrees that she is indeed "a poet of Hong Kong experience and history" while remaining "oriented outward to international readers and outlets" (159). However, such Hong Kong ethos or experience should be able to articulate the plural and complex disjunctures within the Hong Kong Chinese community. My belief is that Hong Kong English writing ought to place increasing emphasis on the kind of writing produced by locally born and educated Hong Kong Chinese—the kind of writing that represents the experience of living in less urban or less multicultural parts of Hong Kong, and the experience of those groups of people effaced in Hong Kong's Cinderella story of economic success: the working class, the subaltern, the proletariat, residents of public housing estates, or even just the local student who is more concerned with passing exams.

Paradigm II: Bildungspoiesis

My critique above—bringing attention to literature's ability to capture the lived experiences of different social class—echoes my argument in the previous chapter that English writing needs to engage with and articulate these voices and experiences, instead of presenting itself as an escape from these concerns. For certain, this kind of writing is still lacking, but in the rest of the chapter I will investigate how a selected sample of poems, written by young students and not receiving much scholastic attention as yet, can help broaden the spectrum of subject matters addressed.

I coin the word "Bildungspoiesis" to denote the blossoming of poetry writing as a new trend in Hong Kong English writing, thanks to poetry writing modules conducted by Shirley Lim, Eddie Tay and others, and subsequent publishing platforms such as *CU Writing in English* and *Halfway Home*. These are good avenues that enable students to explore issues they face when growing up in Hong Kong, hence "Bildung". Poiesis, from the Greek word for creation and invention, is also an apt term that not only captures the literary genre (poetry), but alludes to the hope to generate a space that houses the vibrant creative energies of Hong Kong students.

Learning to Love One's Home

It may be easy to assume that the younger generation will feel readily attached to Hong Kong, but the truth is that even for them loving their home city can be a difficult learning curve. This can be seen from a series of poems titled "Learning to Love Hong Kong" in recent volumes of *CU Writing in English*. This is a regular exercise in Eddie Tay's creative writing module in CUHK since 2007-08, and five pieces of students' works have been anthologised over the years, namely Vivian Chik's rendition in Volume VIII (2008), Joyce Yip's twin poems over a page spread in Volume IX (2009), Ling Cheung's version in Volume X (2010), and one contribution apiece by Jenny Ng and Vicki Chan in the latest Volume XIII (2014).

All six poems convey the tension between Hong Kong's less-than-ideal living environment and the speakers' attachment to Hong Kong, their home. The negative sides of Hong Kong include, for Cheung, traffic congestion, overcrowdedness and noise (L. Cheung 5-7). Chik's speaker seems to have grown up in Canada, and takes note of Hong Kong's fast pace of living and lack of personal space in crowded public transport (Chik, 4-7). Hong Kong's capitalist sensitivity, to use Louise Ho's phrase,

is also critiqued by Vicki Chan's speaker as "shopping malls" have come to be built to "replac[e]" "beautiful mountains" (V. Chan, 3, 6). One of Yip's twin poems even makes a twist on the title ("Learning to Love Hong Kong – Alas!") to register the difficulty in loving her home city. The speaker of this short, twisted poem comments on the hectic and cutthroat work culture of Hong Kong, most notably in the habit of sacrificing meals and sleeping time for higher efficiency, almost bordering on masochism—to work "faster" and "longer" but also to "fast" and "long for work" (1-4). The poem concludes:

> Learning to love this
>
> Hong Kong,
>
> learning to live in
>
> Hong Kong. (9-12)

To love and to live are thus equated as almost the same thing—to force oneself to find "love" with "this" capitalist Hong Kong is also to struggle to keep oneself sane in making a living there.

Hong Kong's neo-colonisation, discussed in chapter 1, also begins to take its toll on these creative writing students. Anxiety with neo-colonisation underpins most of Jenny Ng's and Vicki Chan's renditions of the theme, perhaps because their creative writing cohort in 2014 was most apparently hit by the Hong Kong-China conflicts so far. Categorised under the section "Questions//Transitions" (sic) in the volume, the speakers of the two poems then constantly struggle to come up with reasons to love their home city with the anaphoric use of the causal conjunctions "because" and "since". The repeated usage almost sounds desperate, like a tedious journey seeking for answers or reassurance for a difficult task, mirroring the urgency of Hong Kong's neo-colonial situation. They also evoke similar evaluations of China: a "well-off […] warehouse" whose "kind mainlanders" "charit[ably]" support Hong

Kong with "unbearable amounts of pocket money" (Jenny Ng 14, 18; V. Chan 5), masquerading a desire to "own" Hong Kong and persuade Hong Kong forcefully to return that love (V. Chan 11; Jenny Ng 16). The overwhelming economic colonisation from China, as discussed in chapter 1, leaves its mark on both poems.

Nonetheless, the two poems differ from each other in their tones, revealing different stances and approaches to the same subject matter. The second half of Jenny Ng's poem metaphorises the relationship between Hong Kong and China in a familial context, with China being the mother, Hong Kong the child, and other provinces siblings and brothers. But this chunk is bracketed by two strong statements: "Because I fold my arms at the gateway to Lo Wu" (Lo Wu being one of the immigration control points between Hong Kong and China) and "Because it is a threat" (Jenny Ng 12, 21). The first statement, which opens the poem's latter half, gives an impression of confrontation that becomes the very reason to dichotomise a love-hate relationship between one's home city and one's "motherland": "I" learn to love Hong Kong because I need to guard it against China. The motherland is being "stared" "at arm's length" (13), maintaining distance and distrust at the lack of moral values ("insincerity", 16). Towards the end of the poem, the diction grows more hostile: the persona is not afraid to admit s/he "resist[s]" the "risky" invitation to share the mother's pride (presumably referring to China's economic rise on the world stage), see it as a "threat" in the last line (19-21). These strong words contradict Vicki Chan's more subtle use of ironic juxtaposition to create a ridiculing effect by presenting narratives and truths side by side. A series of conjunctions denoting causal relations are used to justify China's hegemonic demand of Hong Kong's patriotism:

> *Since* loving Hong Kong *means* loving me, said China
>
> *Since* you must love me *if* I love you, said China
>
> I want you *so much that* I want to own you

>*So* you have to love me,

>Said China (V. Chan 9-13, italics added)

Such connectives and the repetition of "said China" highlight China's unchallengeable role in dictating what Hong Kong should be and do, echoing an earlier line that "it is decided by China to be different from China (*ibid.*8). In the block quote above, the use of diacope in the words "love/loving me" and "said China", always appearing in the same phrase for three repetitions (lines 9, 10 then 12-13), turns these phrases into brain washing imperatives that mimic the discourses of patriotism and economic dominance I identified in chapter 1.

Despite all these problems, Hong Kong is still the home for the speakers of all these "Learning to Love Hong Kong" poems, who for different reasons are still attached to the place. For Cheung, it can be something as simple as meeting and dining with beloved family members and loved ones, which gives the speaker a sense of peace and the incentive to proclaim "I know I love home" (L. Cheung 16). Vivian Chik's speaker evokes some broader characteristics that make Hong Kong special, such as its rich food culture, the peaceful 1st July demonstrations, and the behavioural differences with the mainland Chinese—in short, things that make her forget the Canadian National Anthem and call Hong Kong "home" (16). The word "home" does not appear in Vicki Chan's poem, but the last stanza ends with the speaker's self-realisation of his/her fate as "the future hope / Of Hong Kong", this place "where I was born" (17-18, 14). In a clever twist to the aforementioned rhetorical technique of repetition that exposes China's brainwashing rhetoric, the speaker also repeats the phrase "the future hope"—this time at the end of each clause, i.e. an epistrophe—across three phrases in all three English tenses: past ("I was born to be the future hope"), future ("I will be the future hope") and present ("I am the future hope") (14-18). The same rhetoric technique is turned around to declare a

triumphant determination to ensure that Hong Kong will continue "to be different from China" (8).

Unfortunately for the eight-year-old speaker in Joyce Yip's first of the twin poems, it is not as easy to learn to love Hong Kong. Set in 1997 when "[t]he crying Patterns [sic, Pattens] waved goodbye with tears / that did not lie" (5-6), the speaker has "no clue" with "[o]ne change after another" (11), from the physical replacement of red post boxes into green ones, to the curricular addition of the Mandarin language and the Chinese national anthem. As with the other poems, there is a sense of progression:

> From loving with innocence
>
> To loving with obligation
>
> The eight year-old was told
>
> It was the time to learn to love. (13-16, sic)

Even if a child does not understand all the changes, s/he can sense the difference in his/her love from British to Chinese Hong Kong. The top-down imposition of "obligation", a word common in authoritarian discourses, and accented by the passive voice of the sentence, contrasts the sense of freedom evoked in the past indulgence of "innocence". However, once an individual such as Vicki Chan's persona has decided to love Hong Kong, there is a need to proclaim it, take pride in it, and commit to becoming "the future hope" of the city. To love one's home city, or even country, where changes towards authoritarianism are creeping in under the straw man of "prosperity and stability",[9] is something that has to be artificially learnt from one's experience of living in it, or be stimulated and proclaimed from external threats (assimilation), instead of come naturally and wholeheartedly from within.

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[9] *On Ding Faan Wing/Anding fanrong* 安定繁榮, literally meaning prosperity and stability, is what the Central government promised to keep with the "one country, two systems" formula.

Dangerous Harbour

From the above, it seems that for the new generation of writers, loving one's home town is not a given, but a conscious and ambivalent decision only after admitting that it is a place far from perfect, but deciding to live with its problems. Another common metaphor coincidentally appearing in Jenny Ng's and Vicki Chan's poems is that of the Victoria Harbour. Chan's poem opens with the conventional narrative about the "special" uniqueness of this harbour, but both Ng and Chan later criticise the harbour as a symbol of "pollution" (V. Chan 4) and "contamination" (Jenny Ng 3). The harbour as a synecdoche for this ambivalent love of Hong Kong is also seen in Etta Fung's poem "Harbor of the City", from Volume VI of *CU Writing* (2006). Alluding to the mega-size shopping mall "Harbor City" by the Victoria Harbour, the poem uses the Victoria Harbour as a synecdoche for Hong Kong, but allegorically compares characteristics of water to certain aspects of Hong Kong, reversing the conventional association of harbour with safety along the way. The interpretation of these metaphors is open, but it is already evident in the first stanza that the speaker is rather critical of this water:

> This water is aged.
>
> […]
>
> A boat speeds by
>
> searing white surges of sebum.
>
> The trace of a transparent scab that follows
>
> extends into infinity. (1-7)

Calling the water "aged" and comparing white foams and waves as sebum and scab overturn the common description of Hong Kong as a vibrant city full of opportunities, or the narrative that routinely identifies this sheltered, deep-water harbour as a key

propeller of economic growth. Instead, once the surface is scratched or slashed open (by a boat), wounds will slowly ooze onto the surface. Hong Kong is like an elderly person with health complications, and the poem is one that seeks to expose problems of Hong Kong. This dark-toned opening then paves way to other dangers lurking in the water, such as an unsympathetic sense of capitalist efficacy:

> The waves are forever wriggling
>
> with vibrant undercurrents tearing away
>
> useless components with a sense of efficiency. (14-16)

The personification of wriggling waves possibly refers to citizens who struggle under the threat of cold bureaucratism (which is also a possible interpretation for the water imagery). Like a "dimple" immediately washed away after an eagle hunts a fish, mentioned in the second stanza (8-11), it seems to suggest that in Hong Kong society, those who fail to contribute with their labour for collective betterment of living standards are effectively eliminated without a trace. But those who do may be well-awarded with financial incentives, as the city is not only aged but also "rich" with "[f]ake yachts", "[c]argo ships" and "[c]ruises" (19-26). Financial prosperity continues to be the referent for the metaphor of a ferry that "carries a radiating golden dragon / on a golden throne" (31-32), pointing to Hong Kong people's enjoyment of wealth as a developed economy. Yet even during celebration the guests must be vigilant to the water, which is described in the last stanza as "contaminated", "conspiratorial", and baits with "bubbling neon lights" in order to kill or torture (36-41). It possesses a lethal "rigor" (36), from which we must struggle to overcome; a misstep and a fall, meaning either failing to make a decent living or losing one's composure or sanity in this highly competitive city, will result in efficient elimination according to the aforesaid logic. Here is a poem full of imaginative and metaphoric language, employed by a young writer to disintegrate the superficial success story of

Hong Kong.

From Sam Hui to Louise Ho

It can be seen from the above analysis that one of the most common themes explored in new Hong Kong English writing is a criticism of China's looming neo-colonial influence and Hong Kong's stereotypical obsession with financial wealth or economic growth. Annie Wan's "A Mute in the Modern City", from Volume XI of *CU Writing* (2012), is my final example that displays the younger generation's concern with the money-oriented culture of their home city. But to discuss this we must also compare it with two other texts in conjunction: Sam Hui's song "No Money No Talk" and Louise Ho's poem "Jamming".

This is how Wan's "A Mute in the Modern City" begins:

Sam Hui's song was on the radio today.

NO MONEY NO TALK (1-2)

"No Money No Talk" is a song from the soundtrack of the 1975 Hong Kong comedy film *The Last Message*, starring Hong Kong Cantonese pop singer Sam Hui and his brother Michael Hui. *The Last Message* tells the story of two greedy employees in a mental hospital (played by the Hui brothers) who pursue the treasures of one of their patients but end up finding fake antiques, which eventually reduces Michael Hui's character to lunacy. The film carries a moral warning against greed and cunning ways to amass more money, but it is less concerned with the money-thirsty attitude in the general Hong Kong society at the time. The lyrics to the song "No Money No Talk" is also an overt affirmation of the value of money:

When you are poor there are lots of arguments

(No money no talk, no money no talk)

You will think twice before having babies

(No money no talk, no money no talk)

Your kids will shout they are hungry

(No money no talk, no money no talk)

And you can't even pay your rent.

(No money no talk, no money no talk)

[…]

If there is money there are really fewer crimes,

Since people don't have to resort to theft, robbery, fraud and pawning.

If there is no money even Judge Bao[10] will just let you scream "I

have been wronged" (my translation)

As Janet Ng notes, Sam Hui is a pioneer in bringing Cantonese pop songs to the mainstream Hong Kong music market in the 1970s (Janet Ng 143). Despite being a HKU graduate at a time when university education was still relatively rare, Sam Hui "eschewed the elitism of the cultural industry" and together with his brothers "spearheaded a working-class culture" (*ibid.* 143) with their song lyrics written in vernacular Cantonese[11] and reflecting the attitudes and beliefs of working-class Hongkongers. The song "No Money No Talk", for example, does not seek to negate the importance of money at a time when many Hong Kong people fled from China, settled in slums, subdivided flats or public housing, and started making a living from scratch. To the extent that even family harmony is hinged upon finance, the song highlights the typical collective faith in the omnipotent power of money. At the same time, such lyrics also reinforce the ethos of hard work and perseverance in an age of

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[10] Bao Zheng (999-1062) was a famous judge in Chinese history. Popular TV series have been based on his story, and he is widely known as a symbol upholding justice. It is most ironic that the lyrics insinuate even he will only deal with cases when he is offered advantages.

[11] Recall that in chapter 2, I explained that written Chinese in Hong Kong largely follows modern standard written Chinese, which is in turn based on Mandarin vocabulary and grammar. Sam Hui's vernacular Cantonese lyrics is thus emotively closer and more familiar to Cantonese-speaking Hongkongers.

rapid economic development. This is shown in the use of conditionals (If/When …, … will…) that indicate a cause-and-effect relationship between wealth and family harmony. Together with the film *The Last Message*, "No Money No Talk" embodies the prevalent values in 1970s Hong Kong: work hard and earn more in a legitimate way, and one will eventually gain stability and harmony as reward. This is an optimistic encouragement.

It is against this background that Annie Wan opens her poem "A Mute in the Modern City", repeatedly inserting "NO MONEY NO TALK" as a refrain after every stanza. Like Sam Hui who was singing in the 1970s, Wan writes about the social reality of her time. But whereas in the song the phrase "No money no talk" encourages hard work that anticipates a bright future, it is now a refrain that empowers certain social classes to look down upon others. The power of money has not quite changed and can be seen in the animalistic associations of bank notes: The Cantonese nickname for the red hundred-dollar bank note, "red-coated fish", which is in turn a nickname for the red threadfin bream commonly eaten in Hong Kong, suggests a sense of convenience allowing the user to "swim through doors" (16-17). In addition, the lion on the HSBC-issued 100-dollar notes is "[f]ull of authority" (18) that "[s]peaks for" the user (14). Children, too, cannot suppress their excitement when they see 100-dollar notes, instead of blue 20-dollar ones, in the red packets during Chinese New Year (23-28), their innocence epitomised by the limerick-like rhyme: "See how they grin / From deep within" (25-26).

The motif of fish continues with a twist in the next stanza, when the speaker calls it "fishy" upon seeing the *nouveau riche* "from the North", i.e. from China, buying branded goods with suitcases of banknotes (30-34). It is unknown whether the suspicion comes from the source of those huge bundles of cash or from other things, but the speaker is already aware of the discriminating service s/he received

from the salespeople. The discomfort of being "scanned from bottom to top" (36), as opposed to the mainlander being "greeted […] with a smile" (35), shows that in Hong Kong the lack of money means losing respect. The poem then registers the younger generation's concern that their home city is now colonised by the mainland regime supported by its wealth and capital. The biggest problem however comes from the elite society in town. The speaker laments that at an event held "in Central, / Where people ate caviar / And drank red wine" (40-42), no one is willing to mingle with him/her because of his/her status as a "student, member of an unknown club" (47). Not only is a student isolated because s/he has yet to be able to earn huge money, but it is also because of the fact that s/he has yet to have a decent title, showing clearly that it is not only financial capital that matters, but also the symbolic capital of status in proportion to one's earning. Like Kit Fan's "Paper Scissors Stone", the addition of a specific place is significant in nuancing the segregation of class in Hong Kong. As the pinnacle of transnational capital with a high concentration of global mobile elites, Central symbolises the high wall which any aspiring youth must find ways to climb. In the meantime, the fact that this stanza on Central comes after the one about rich mainlanders is significant: While mainland tourists are threats from the outside, it is the exclusion and rejection from within Hong Kong that becomes the last straw to the speaker's disappointment, because this is when the bubble of Hong Kong's work-hard-for-social-mobility ethos bursts. Any literary analysis of the poem should remember that Wan does not only address the new colonising force from the North, but also the empire of global capital. Both mainland and transnational capital are colonising Hong Kong in different ways, and as a result a general sentiment arises among Hongkongers who feel increasingly edged out from a possibility to improve the quality of their lives.

The cultural reference to Sam Hui's "No money no talk" in Wan's poem is

thus an apt way to show how Hong Kong society has both changed and not changed since the 1970s. On the one hand, the power of money has not diminished. On the other, Wan's poem brings out aspects of the Hong Kong society absent in Sam Hui's time. Money in the lyrics is the guarantor of stability, prosperity and peace on both familial and social levels—a social belief for the grassroots in a developing economy. Three to four decades later, no such optimism can be detected in Wan's poem. The tone of the speaker is matter-of-factly, and what is absent in the past is the mentioning of big spenders from the mainland and of Central as a highly exclusive threshold of prestige barring the lower strata of the society outside. Whereas the song presents money's potential in achieving upward social mobility, the poem tells us that upward social mobility is no longer as readily available with Hong Kong's developed economy. Now, locals are discriminated over rich mainland tourists, while students even with the ambition to break into the core of the business area are given the cold shoulder. The Hong Kong flavours exuded from Sam Hui's song and Wan's poem are slightly different. Like Sam Hui's song, Wan's poem is committed to showing social beliefs in contemporary Hong Kong society; but unlike Hui, the poem also dispels the trite myth of Hong Kong's economic success and paints a bleaker picture of reality for young Hongkongers.

Apart from this inspiration on the subject matter of the poem, the formal inspiration is also worth noting. According to Eddie Tay, who taught Annie Wan in his creative writing class at CUHK, Wan's poem is the product of a creative writing exercise in which students have to model their work after another poem of their choice (E. Tay, "Curriculum" 115). The use of a short refrain flush right on the page after every stanza, takes after Louise Ho's poem "Jamming", which comes from her 1994 poetry collection *Local Habitation*:

"A great while ago the world begun"

geeleegulu (L. Ho, "Jamming" 1-2, sic)

The refrain "geeleegulu", a Cantonese colloquialism which the poet appends as "Double Dutch" in English, illustrates the failure of linguistic communication in a colonial setting. Louise Ho's poem demonstrates what Eddie Tay terms a "postcolonial cultural jamming", in which the speaker's "irreverent attitude" is disdainful towards "colonial intellectual pretensions" (E. Tay, "Curriculum" 117). For Ackbar Abbas, it is a "linguistic confusion" for the in-between space that is Hong Kong, and an attempt to "[shrug] off the anxiety of correctness" or being "judged by the standards of the native speaker", "in order to do something different in English" (Abbas 126). Indeed, a succession of four stanzas shows Louise Ho's endeavour to assert a linguistic pride in the non-pure linguistic origins of Hong Kong. Starting with an interracial relationship between a Western male and a "China Bride", Hong Kong is a product between a she who "has minimal English" and a he who "has minimal Chinese" (L. Ho, "Jamming" 24-27), or a resultant discourse between the syllable-stressed Chinese language and the time-stressed English one (*ibid.* 28-31). But, analogous to her views on the segregation that marks English writing as minority, Ho goes on to acknowledge the big cultural divide in Hong Kong:

> Call it what you will
>
> Variously-tongued
>
> Multicultural
>
> Cosmopolitan or apartheid
>
> Each is to the other

geeleegulu (32-37)

This prompts her to advocate that "[o]n these our very own shores / Let us make our very own / geeleegulu" (40-42). That is, on the shores of Hong Kong, both the Cantonese-speaking and English-speaking population merely exist, but do not seek to

understand each other's gibberish, effectively buttressing the establishment of the "own shores" of separate writing communities. Much as many critics of Hong Kong English-language literature would like to argue that Hong Kong has a rich culture of boundary-crossing, fluidly in-between, multi-culti cosmopolitanism, it is nonetheless lost on the Cantonese-speaking locals, whose perspective is encapsulated by the single, powerful, onomatopoeic response: "geeleegulu".

In comparing this poem with Annie Wan's poem, Eddie Tay notices that the change in the refrain, from "geeleegulu" to "NO MONEY NO TALK", also charts the transformation of the poetic personae from Ho's irreverence to Wan's reluctant reduction to silence under the threat of mainland Chinese capital (E. Tay, "Curriculum" 117). He praises Wan's poem as "one of the more powerful and culturally autochthonous of poems which have emerged from the creative writing course", giving evidence to "a locally embedded form of English language put to creative use" (*ibid.*). I agree with this evaluation, but would argue that his analysis does not elucidate this autochthony well enough, for while he notes the formal borrowing from Louise Ho, he misses out on the intertextual and cross-genre reference to Sam Hui's song lyrics. As I have shown, what makes Wan's poem a brilliant cultural critique of Hong Kong is that she borrows the form of Louise Ho's poem, yet builds her critique not around fanciful adages about some East-West hybrid, but through a cultural echo with Sam Hui's song, building a dialogue between the 1970s and current Hong Kong, and charting the way certain communal concerns, values and realities evolve. It uses an old bottle from Louise Ho but fills it with a wine that conjures up the taste of Sam Hui but has turned much bitter. The autochthony shown here is characteristic of a new generation of English writing, because it shows a clearer tendency than former writings to engage with the comportment, beliefs, and material realities of those locals excluded from the

"flexible", "fluid", "cross-linguistic", "cosmopolitan" mode of life.

Conclusion

      This chapter highlights the segregation between different social classes and geographical districts of Hong Kong as something that both established and new Hong Kong English writers can be more attentive to in their writings, and as one of the main ways through which these writers will display a stronger political and social engagement or commitment. It is only in expanding the subject matters and representing the distinct experiences of growing up or living in Hong Kong, that English writing can shrug off its stigma of marginalisation. New writings may not have the refinement or maturity required in professional publications, but their significance and contribution, as a collective body of local voices, should not be overlooked.

Chapter 6   English Writing as Neo-colonial Resistance

In part I of this dissertation (chapters 1 and 2), I outlined the kind of neo-colonialism Hong Kong is currently facing as well as the burgeoning of a new Hong Kong identity different from the version we have so far. In subsequent chapters, I have switched to an interrogation of the privilege enjoyed by Hong Kong English writing in both its education and self-positioning. I have also argued that Hong Kong English writing should be sensitive to the fractures of class and geographical segregation in order to represent a wider array of perspectives. In this final chapter, I will connect English writing to the neo-colonialism discussed in part I, bookending this dissertation with an attention to Hong Kong-China relations. Following my argument in chapter 4 to turn English writing "inwards", and the exemplary paradigms proposed in chapter 5, I suggest in this final chapter that another possible direction is to seek to understand the recent neo-colonial tensions between China and Hong Kong. In the previous chapter, we have seen how a few examples of new Hong Kong English writing make China's neo-colonisation their subject matter. This chapter will continue to study recent English writing along this line.

But first, I wish to comment on the relevance of marrying Hong Kong literature with neo-colonialism by returning to Ackbar Abbas, whom I studied in the introduction of this dissertation and in chapter 4. In his monograph on Hong Kong, he rightly rejects the foretokening of political liberation before the genuine establishment of a Hong Kong culture, and advocates that Hong Kong culture must take part in developing "practices of freedom" in order to anticipate cultural survival, rather than to "wait or follow social change in order to represent it" (145). To survive in sovereign shifts, particularly an authoritarian one, culture must initiate social change.

While this is an insightful point, it has several limitations. First, he tends to underestimate China's ambition by saying that "even China has in effect tacitly acknowledged Hong Kong's hyphenated status by proposing the formula of 'one country, two systems'" (142-43). He rightly points out that

> [w]hen sovereignty reverts to China, we may expect to find a situation that is quasi-colonial, but with an important historical twist: the colonized state, while politically subordinate, is in many other crucial respects *not* in a dependent subaltern position but is in fact more advanced—in terms of education, technology, access to international networks, and so forth—than the colonizing state. (5-6)

However, he forgets that China's political power and national interest ("one country") always precede and are prioritised over Hong Kong's ("two systems"), and that with immense political power, China can clamp (and has been clamping) on Hong Kong's advanced aspects and its development. What is the role of culture in the face of China's planned hindrance on Hong Kong's development through political control? What should the cultural community in Hong Kong do when China seeks to berate Cantonese and traditional Chinese characters, to name two of the pillars of Hong Kong culture (see chapter 2)?

This brings us to the second limitation, which is his refusal to imagine Hong Kong culturally as a nation. He claims that Hong Kong "has never been and will never be in any sense a nation […] on the model, for example, of Singapore" (142), but Hong Kong's unique history and circumstances—its distinct differences from the British and the mainland Chinese, and its well-recognised international importance—would qualify Hong Kong as a nation that shares common experiences of history, language, and culture among its population, even if it is not a political

state.[1] Thus, his comparing Hong Kong to "a port in the most literal sense—a doorway, a point in between" (4) will be frowned upon by some Hongkongers in the 2010s for belittling Hong Kong's orthodoxy of Chinese culture and for objectifying Hong Kong to merely a functional point or doorway which conceptually suggests there are much bigger spaces beyond both ends to be served. The rising number of people willing to stand up to China and identify themselves as "Hongkongers", and Horace Chin's argument that Hong Kong and Singapore are autonomous city-states (see chapter 1), seem to take a step further than Abbas, and attempt to imagine Hong Kong as a nation (although not without controversy) in order to weave a cultural defence against China's hegemonic claim on the Chinese nation.

Finally, Abbas is ambivalent about what he means by the anticipatory nature of Hong Kong culture: does it simply mean cultural works should be published before and forewarn about the coming social changes? The suggestion is also difficult to achieve because, being called a cultural desert for a long time to reflect Hongkongers' pragmatic obsession with material wealth, it may take a long time to cultivate the kind of vibrant and significant cultural scene that Abbas imagines is capable of preceding social change.[2] Writing in 1997, perhaps Abbas had his eye on 2047 when "one country, two systems" expires, thus implying that Hong Kong has 50 years' time. However, looking back, a storm was already underway as the economic crisis of 1998 and the SARS epidemic in 2003 gave China excuses to seize

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[1] The distinction between "state" and "nation" here follows Andrew Heywood's 1992 book, *Political Ideologies*, in which he posits that "nation" refers to a "cultural entity" that binds a people together by shared values and tradition, while "state" indicates a political, territorial sovereignty (141). While Abbas rejects the notion of Hong Kong being a nation, he does, however, see Hong Kong as a political *entity*—without adequate elaboration on how entity and nation differ from each other, it only seems to me a politically correct gesture just shy of giving Hong Kong the status of a nation.

[2] The only form of cultural production from Hong Kong that enjoys relatively more fame and global critical attention is perhaps films, as Hong Kong cinema receives comparatively prominent critical attention in film studies. Hong Kong literature, whether in Chinese or English, has yet to garner the same level of attention.

on Hong Kong's economy. In truth, cultural productions in Hong Kong already have had to respond to the turbulent changes in Hong Kong's sociopolitical terrain, let alone anticipate them. It is in this reality that I proposed in chapter 4 that Hong Kong English writing develop a stronger inward perspective and participation in order to represent the current social changes, even if it is not capable to anticipate them now. Such representation through English writing will be explored in two case studies below.

The Final Solution to Hong Kong

The first text I have chosen is Mani Rao's creative piece "The Final Solution", which was published in the anthology *Fifty-fifty* (2008) and which, if not read in the turbulent time of the 2010s, would have been hilarious. Written by the fictional "One-Country, One-System Think Tank", it imitates the tone of a think tank consultation report proposing four possible solutions to solve the "disturbance from Hong Kong" pertaining to the split between "those interested in 'prosperity', and those interested in 'democracy'", as if they are mutually exclusive (Rao 53). What is ironic about this piece is that a lot of the rhetoric employed—imitating the views of patriotic, pro-China people and organisations—are full of problems and contradictions already debunked in real life by the new wave of pro-democracy and social movements that have gradually developed and matured in the last few years. In some ways, this essay does, in Abbas' term, anticipate China's recent heightening of its control on Hong Kong and the consequential escalation of Hong Kong-China conflicts, even though changes, albeit more subtle, had been slowly creeping in since 1997. However, if some of the "solutions" suggested in this piece had a joking and nonchalant feel at the time of writing, the chuckle—my chuckle, at least—is certainly muffled as those solutions become a daily reality in Hong Kong, a point to

which I will return.

In this piece, Hong Kong people are described as having an original sin that they will never be able to fight off, as forewarned by Rey Chow long ago: they "have sold themselves to superficial freedoms and been polluted by foreign ways", thus "a foreign civilization, and a symbol of foreign arrogance" (Rao 53-54); similarly Chow speculates that "[t]he people in Hong Kong can sacrifice everything they have to the cause of loving 'China' and still, at the necessary moment, be accused of not being patriotic—of not being 'Chinese'—enough" (*Writing Diaspora* 24-25). The conflicting discourse of foreignness versus patriotism is to place China as the successor of an authentic Chinese culture with a long history, so that in the divide between self and other, local and foreign, a national identity can be erected and united. Under the purview of the slogan "Let China never forget the intrusion of foreigners" (Rao 53), the collective voice of the think tank comments bluntly that Hong Kong people are "too weak to take on the work of building a glorious China", and that the handling of Hong Kong "is not an economic, political or administrative one; [but] about the restoration of our national honour" (53-54). In this sense, Hong Kong will forever be the outcast of China not because it carries an original sin, but because China will always need Hong Kong to affirm its national identity; if Hong Kong ever becomes completely assimilated into China, China will also lose the reminder to its national shame and eventually "forget the intrusion of foreigners". The corollary of this, of course, is that Hong Kong must remain a separate, abjective or even heterotopic entity to China even if it is politically subordinate to Beijing. Indeed, the think tank already points out features that prove Hong Kong is so different from the mainland that it is almost a nation: Hongkongers "dress elegantly, drive on a different side of the road, use British electrical plugs and have their own ISD code" (54). In recent years, netizens have provided additional evidence that

supports the idea of the Hong Kong nation: that Hong Kong (as well as Macau) has its own identity card and passport, monetary system and financial control, laws and government structure. To the extent that Hongkongers are forbidden to apply for a Chinese passport or to work in the Chinese government, Hong Kong is itself being rejected by China even though China uses the patriotic discourse to lure Hong Kong. The *tongbao* (compatriot) discourse I discussed in chapter 1 then falls through because of China's policy, not because of Hong Kong people's decadence.

Apart from this, there are also two more problems in the essay. First is the insinuation that Hong Kong's original sin is completely caused by foreign invasion. However, for some Hong Kong netizens, China shares certain responsibilities for losing Hong Kong, for it was the conservatism of the Empress Dowager (Cixi) that led to the rise of the Boxers' Rebellion (1898-1900) and the failure to modernise the Chinese navy against foreign powers. China's claim to take back Hong Kong as if it is purely the fault of foreign powers comes off to the netizens as hypocritical.

Second is the claim that China's control on Hong Kong is not economic (Rao 53). On the contrary, as chapter 1 shows, the economies of Hong Kong and China are tightly related to one another, which can only mean that, to say the least, Hong Kong plays an important role to China's economy as much as China does to Hong Kong's. Archival research in chapter 1 shows that even as early as 1960s, Chinese officials have seen Hong Kong mainly in economic value. What Rao writes in the essay is very far from the truth, then, and an informed reader who is familiar with the Hong Kong-China economic ties will understand the absurdity.

A reader currently living in Hong Kong will not miss some of the features outlined in the suggested solutions, particularly the second proposal which plans to "superimpose the China way of life", including "flood[ing] Hong Kong with inexpensive China novels, and China television programmes", "devalu[ing] the Hong

Kong shopping experience", and making it "more sensible to marry someone from China and more fashionable not to speak Cantonese" (54). Most of these are under way in reality, such as the linguistic imperialism of Mandarin over Cantonese (discussed in chapter 2), although to various degrees of success. The shopping experience, for example, remains a major attraction to mainlanders under the Individual Visitors Scheme (IVS). However, the general principle of colonising Hong Kong with the Chinese way of life remains true; moreover, this colonisation does not have to be carried out in visible aspects. The think tank says: "Our protective surveillance will cover every aspect of their life, purifying them (although unknown to themselves) and getting them ready to welcome us" (54-55). In its conclusion it also believes "the final solution for the Hong Kong question" is a "display of our invisible hand and consummate authority" (56). This reminds one of the anti-communist sentiment mentioned in chapter 1, and the underground communist party that has long existed since colonial time and was said to have caused the 1967 riots against the British administration. Exposed in *My Time in Hong Kong's Underground Communist Party* by Florence Mo-han Aw, a self-proclaimed ex-Underground Communist Party member, it may well be the invisible infiltration of the Communist Party members and their influence that will be the decisive factor of Hong Kong's assimilation to China.

If in general we understand parody in terms of the humour and laughter derived from ridiculing or subverting our habitual expectations, then a literary work may not be seen as an effective parody if it simply confirms the everyday reality we live in. However, Simon Dentith's refined and succinct definition of parody as a "cultural practice which provides a relatively polemical allusive imitation of another cultural production or practice" (9), does not stipulate humour as a necessary element. Contrary to some other theorists, Linda Hutcheon also believes in *A Theory of*

Parody (1985) that the comic element in parody is not a necessity (*A Theory of Parody* 6, 21). Hutcheon's definition of parody is useful here for recognising the parodic value of a text without the limitation of a comic element.

For Rao's imaginary essay, the ridiculing effect is lost because its subject matter, Hong Kong-China relations, is subject to change over time, and as a result, some of the suggested solutions are taking place in the present. Even the most absurd solution, then, may not be funny at all. The think tank seems to believe that the most preposterous solution of all could actually be effective—to cause distress and panic by sending illegal immigrants to one of Hong Kong's outlying islands to eat up the inhabitants' pet dogs, so that as dog-eating becomes popular island after island, town after town, people in Hong Kong will be too revolted to stay and will flee with their dogs. This strategy is said to be effective not because of the illegal immigrants, and not entirely because it "cannot be traced back to us" (Rao 55), but because the local Hongkongers are repelled by this barbarous "menace" of dog feasts, and willingly evacuate their living space to the latecomers. Dog-eating then becomes a sign of being uncivilised, and the think-tank's use of the word "menace" may well be a Freudian slip that supports this judgment. At the very least, it functions as the ultimate symbol of cultural difference and it is through this cultural difference that the illegal immigrants from China will succeed in driving Hongkongers away. The fact that the deployment of illegal immigrants "cannot be traced back to us [the Communist government]" reveals a paranoiac mistrust of China's "invisible hand" behind policies of population movement. The absurdity notwithstanding, this solution masks what is essentially a demographic cleansing—to use whatever ways possible to expel the current population out of Hong Kong's territory and replenish it with a new one. The end result is one of bestiality: "When we next celebrate reunification day in Hong Kong, not one Hong Kong dog will bark at our

firecrackers" (*ibid*. 56). The dog's bark on reunification day, i.e. 1st July, obviously references the 1st July marches every year. Hongkongers marching for democracy are bestialised as dogs (presumably of the British breed) barking at the danger of the reunification with the Chinese regime, but the future disappearance of the bark means that as the master changes, they can also be tamed to acquiesce in the reality.

This solution, with its reliance on dogs, would have been ludicrous, had it not been so eerily similar to Hong Kong's current condition. It echoes the discourse of demographic cleansing discussed in chapter 1, such as the new label "new Hongkongers" introduced in the newspaper *People's Daily*, and third Chief Executive C. Y. Leung's contradictory rhetoric on expunging young Hongkongers while inviting mainland talents. The Chinese government's official endorsement of new immigrants stirs up the same effect as Rao's essay does—an anxiety that the influx of new immigrants, like the dog-eating illegal ones, will eventually edge out the current residents. Provided that this link between the final solution in the essay and the "new Hongkongers" narrative is valid, the absurd solution can be read as Rao's forewarning that China will unswervingly pursue Hong Kong in all means possible; Hong Kong will succumb to China if Hongkongers willingly concede without putting up a good fight.

With the benefit of hindsight, the essay can be seen as a creative imagination of, and at the same time a critical statement against, China's neo-colonialism on Hong Kong. However, limited by the nature of this fictional document, it does not record Hongkongers' reaction and resistance to such neo-colonial forces. It excels in exposing the absurdity of China's neo-colonial tactics and their effects on the sociopolitical reality of Hong Kong. However, Hutcheon's view on the parody in the essay "The Politics of Postmodernism" is more affirmative on the potential of the parody genre to effect political critique from a marginalised perspective: Parody is

often "the mode of the marginalised, or of those who are fighting marginalisation by a dominant ideology" ("Politics" 207). This politicisation of representation, I believe, is a possible and pertinent strategy to critique the neo-colonial situation of Hong Kong. To study how the marginalised also respond to dominant oppression through parody, I propose to study an exchange of English poems on Hong Kong's blogosphere below.

Neo-colonialism and Secondary Creation: A Poetic Exchange

The poetic exchange under examination here speaks more closely to the impact of China's neo-colonisation on the lives of Hong Kong people and their resistance to it. I see this as a rare instance where mainstream social sentiments in Hong Kong intersect with the much neglected English writing of the city. I will first introduce the incident and relevant materials for analysis, then give a thematic discussion on the poems before turning to inspect their formal and generic features.

On 16th December 2011, the Department of English at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University ("the Polytechnic" for short) held a poetry reading with Shirley Geok-Lin Lim and other poets, which was subsequently reported in the Winter 2011 issue of the departmental newsletter, *ENGLink*. According to the reportage, an MA in English student at the Polytechnic called Dominique Yang Zhang read a "pleasurably ironic" poem called "Hong Kong – an Ugly City" at the event, to the "appreciation and laughter" of the audience (*ENGLink* 4). In early March 2012, the poem was posted on *Hong Kong Golden Forum* ("*Golden Forum*" for short), a popular Chinese-language forum with a huge number of Hong Kong members. As one can anticipate from the title, the poem appears to criticise Hong Kong, thus understandably drawing a lot of negative response from *Golden Forum*

members.[3] Some wrote imitations of Zhang's poem, several of which were posted alongside the original on an English-language weblog, *Dictionary of Politically Incorrect Hong Kong Cantonese* (*Badcanto* for short), on 5th March 2012 ("A Mainland Chinese"). The original and imitations are attached in Appendix 1.

The controversy did not stop at the netizens' imitations. Soon after the poem was posted on *Badcanto* and *Golden Forum*, an apology allegedly written by Dominique Zhang appeared on *Badcanto*:

> In the poem, I assumed the voice of a leftist "Angry youth" Mainland tourist who get lost [sic] in Hong Kong's modernity […] However, my real intention was neither inciting hate between Hong Kongese and Mainland Chinese people nor criticizing Hong Kong for the sake of it. (I am in no place to do it; and if it was a poem full of nothing but hate speech and personal misconception, the Department would not want to have it on the newsletter.) […] My REAL idea behind the lines was an expression of my grief for mainland's backwardness, in comparison to Hong Kong, and a keen anticipation of wanting the Mainland to be as developed as Hong Kong now is. (This is reflected in the last line/ punch line of the poem.) […] This is not a Anti-HK poem [sic]; it was intended as a patriotic poem for wanting Chinese's progress and development. ("A Mainland Chinese", original capitalisation)

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[3] The merit of *Golden Forum* has been contested by Ruth Hung, who chooses not to engage with these popular sentiments, and bases her knowledge of the forum on *Wikipedia* and a quote from one Hong Kong university graduate. This graduate believes that the forum is not worth participating in because of its occasional circulation of false information, and its members' suggestions of "improper and unfeasible" solutions to solve social problem (qtd. in R. Hung 62). Further, Hung incorrectly states that *Golden Forum* is active since 2011, while in reality it has been running since the 2000s, an information available on the forum's *Wikipedia* page which Hung cited. False information potentially exists on all internet sources, and researchers should always employ these sources prudently and critically. Partial and selective engagement with digital democracy gives incomplete understanding of the sociopolitical issues at hand.

Rather than admitting that it is the subject matter—writing about hatred across borders—that has provoked the netizens, he attempts to deflect the problem to a matter of timing.

Unfortunately, his apology on Badcanto only sparked further polemic in the comment section which for the most part lasted until 10th March 2012. Netizens' opinions were split. Some sensible ones were convinced by Zhang's intention and agreed with him that the timing of the poem was inappropriate:

> *HKForever* **March 6, 2012 at 9:00am**
>
> I think many people know the true meaning, but you picked a hell of a wrong time to write it. 2011 and 2012 have been the rise of tension between Hong Kongers/Hong Kong and Chinese/China […]
>
> *gogumasone* **March 9, 2012 at 9:17 pm**
>
> the author of this poem has made his apology clear and as a secondary school student from hong kong i think he has apologised in a proper, polite and patient manner. […]
>
> *een* **March 8, 2012 at 3:08 pm**
>
> after having read your replies, i don't feel that you're a rat who is trying to smear us with the poem.
>
> but without any context/ explanations, i did feel irritated about it, especially when we got so many problems right now right here.
>
> ("A Mainland Chinese")

Some netizens gave a reading similar to Zhang's purported intentions:

> *silinz666* **March 7, 2012 at 2:59 pm**
>
> […] maybe Dom doesn't like the city, but he is still angry that he is not from there, the developed economy. Instead he loathes he is from a Third World Country.

Check on the ending, pretty strong statement. Paradoxical, the hate-and-love attitude towards Hong Kong, reflecting his the [sic] jealousy and resentment.

So this piece is a praise for Hong Kong, in disguise. A literary game or trick.

Guys, let us write more poetry

("A Mainland Chinese")

However, many netizens were still not satisfied and continued their attack, some rather insulting but soon rebutted by other rational voices:

fuck china **March 7, 2012 at 10:27 am**

here is NOT your place! stupid mainland dog!

Selena **March 7, 2012 at 11:05 am**

[…] It's actually quite apparent what the intention is and I believe the author is just trying to create a more dramatic and unexpected twist at the end. […] Moreover you can insult the poem, you can say the poem is badly constructed and virtually meaningless, you can say the poem is full of crap but you shouldn't use these kind [sic] of language and attitude to insult the person – especially saying someone as a "mainland dog". […]

("A Mainland Chinese")

In general, criticisms can be divided into two main strands, which will be analysed in detail later: the derogatory remarks on Hong Kong, and, ironically, Zhang's perceived poor English skills.

While the apology can be superficially understood as a tiny victory of the netizens' anger, I believe that a more holistic reading, treating the original, the imitations, the apology and the comments as an exchange event, is called for to go

beyond the superficial, name-calling criticisms of China and Hong Kong, and to make sense of the context in which they were written and articulated. The netizen "een" makes a good point, then, to highlight how the importance of context affects understanding.

It would be facile to argue that the need to respond to Zhang via what is in essence a form of copying reveals the netizens' lack of confidence in expressing their dissent in English. In fact, this kind of imitation, which draws on but also pokes fun at the original in light of social reality, is a very common and popular form of creation on social media platforms for Hong Kong netizens to engage with Hong Kong's post-handover situation. The direct translation from the Chinese term is "secondary creation",[4] and unfortunately it lacks adequate scholarly attention at the moment. As the name suggests, secondary creation challenges conventional definitions of creativity and art, because it alters the original work often in a (maliciously) humorous way, and is both a form of copying (thus "secondary") and of creativity. Some may note that this type of creation is very similar to the burlesque for its ludicrous caricature, but what is special about secondary creation is its engagement with Hong Kong's neo-colonial reality. It therefore fully demonstrates Hutcheon's point that parody can respond critically and creatively to dominant cultures.

Neo-colonial Resistance

At first sight, the strong language employed makes the imitations look like mere hate speech. However, there is good reason to go beyond this superficial judgment and distil their social importance. The apparent hatred demonstrated in

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[4] 二次創作 in Chinese, romanised as *Ji Tsi Tsong Dzok* under the Cantonese Pinyin system.

these imitations are popular discourses often employed by some Hong Kong people against mainlanders and China, registering the direct clashes between people from the two places as a consequence of heightening neo-colonial assimilation after 1997. In other words, the economic situation of neo-colonial Hong Kong is key to understanding the interplay between Zhang's poem and the imitations, since the content of these "secondary creations" illustrates the impact China's neo-colonialism has on the everyday lives of Hongkongers.

The imitations invariably respond to Zhang's original poem by way of substituting negative descriptions of Hong Kong with negative descriptions of China. Examples are: the lack of democracy and civil rights (I.2[5]; III.8), the ban on religious and speech freedom (I.13-16; II.13-16), food safety issues (I.3-4; III.1-4; IV.4), road safety concerns (II.1, 4), poor working and living conditions (II.8), and the widening gap between the *nouveau riche* and the poor (I.5; III.13-16). This exposé corresponds to the many social problems in China widely reported in Hong Kong newspapers. As a result, many imitations describe China with negative adjectives such as "decayed", "corrupted" and "pathetic" (III.1, 3, 17), even going so far as to dehumanise and curse the mainlanders (I.17-18; IV.18). Interestingly, different from what I argued in chapter 1, where a positive self-image of neo-colonial Hong Kong is often imagined through bringing out the negative aspects of current China, there is little outright assertion of Hong Kong's superiority, except in language issues (see below) and in Imitation V which describes Hong Kong as the "brightest star of East" with clean (i.e. far less corruption) and well-developed social systems at its core (V.9-12). The imitators' failure to straightforwardly declare their pride in a Hong Kong identity can be read as a limitation imposed by Zhang's original on the subject matter of the

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[5] I number the imitations with Roman numerals, which precede line numbers in parenthetical references. Line references to Zhang's original poem have no Roman numerals.

imitations: since his poem is a Chinese persona's bash on Hong Kong, the imitations would, naturally and primarily, respond by simply reversing the direction of derogation to China.

That said, the numerous imitations also operate distinctively from the original in two main aspects. First, some imitations do not simply point a finger at China, but also reflects how the daily lives of Hongkongers are affected by Chinese neo-colonisation in general, especially immigration incentives favouring the mainland Chinese. A large part of Imitation IV and some parts of Imitation I are about these daily tensions, gesturing to the same incidents already reviewed in chapter 1, such as defecation in public (I.8) and gate-crashing expecting mothers from the mainland taking up hospital beds in Hong Kong (IV.5-6). In addition, Imitation IV judges harshly on the mainlanders' lack of contribution and abuse of welfare (IV.7-8). These incidents bear an impact on the quality of life in Hong Kong, including soaring living expenses, competition over welfare and social resources, and the endangering of the Cantonese language due to the new immigrants' reluctance to adapt to Hong Kong culture.

Also echoing my comment in chapter 1 is the gesture towards the anti-communist anxiety in Hong Kong. In Imitation I, the first four stanzas on negative aspects of current China are presaged by the key phrase "red devil like communists" in the first line (I.1), as if to suggest that communist China is the root of the evils in China. The structure of this imitation reflects the view held by some Hongkongers that the CCP's authoritarian control and propagandist education should ultimately be blamed; the use of a preamble, absent in Zhang's original, registers those Hongkongers' anti-communist anxiety. In short, these two aspects—the deterioration of the quality of everyday life and the looming of a Communist Party governance or control—help orchestrate the neo-colonial anxieties of Hong Kong.

Language politics, which I have already contextualised in chapter 2, is also underscored here, to the extent that the identities of China and Hong Kong are inextricably intertwined. Zhang's third stanza (lines 9-12) reveals how the linguistic hegemony of Mandarin is achieved through a hierarchised othering process. The "angry youth" persona borrows the official mainland discourse and uses the pronoun "we" to highlight the collective imagination of a singular national language. In the process, the persona belittles the language "they", the Hongkongers, speak as "only a dialect" (11). The embrace of linguistic homogenisation highlights Mandarin as the Chinese variety that unifies an ethnically and linguistically diverse nation. Speaking a dialect, especially one as prominent as Cantonese,[6] then threatens the imagination of homogenisation and national unity for the Mandarin-speaking mainland Chinese.[7] At the same time, however, this linguistic superiority is already countered in line 10 of the poem by an inverted centre-margin politics, which considers the mainland persona an "outsider," and in line 12, which registers the pride of Hong Kong people in speaking this dialect. The inability at comprehending this pride somehow paves way to the sense of inferiority apparent in the last stanza.

The way the imitations respond to the original is through a turn of linguistic hegemony. We should first take note of a slight but important disparity between the original and the imitations. While Zhang's original poem focuses on spoken Chinese (as seen from "speak" and "dialect" in lines 9 and 11), Imitation I addresses both the spoken variety of Cantonese ("speak" in line 9 and "mandarin" in line 12) and the written variety of traditional Chinese characters in line 11. It brings in an additional

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[6] Cantonese, spoken in China's Guangdong Province in the south where emigration most often takes place, is the native language of many overseas Chinese who emigrated in the 20th century (Norman 215).

[7] Indeed, linguistic unity is but a national imagination. In reality, almost 0.4 billion, or about a third of the mainland population do not know how to speak Mandarin (Shamo, "Zhongguo"; "Spread the Word").

pair of tension on written Chinese, not only showing that some Hongkongers are sensitive to the doubled layers of linguistic differences between Hong Kong and China, noted earlier in two footnotes in chapter 2 (footnotes 6 and 7). Hongkongers' pride in writing traditional characters and speaking Cantonese is directly expressed in Imitations I and II, where it is claimed that Mandarin was of "barbaric origin" (II.11) and did not exist on the Chinese soil "until four hundred years ago" (I.12). Here we see the influence of Horace Wan Chin, who champions the cultural orthodoxy of Hong Kong and South China, and the linguistic orthodoxy of traditional Chinese characters and Cantonese phonology (see chapters 1 and 3). This dismissal of the designation of Mandarin as the national language becomes a key component in establishing a self-asserted and distinct Hong Kong cultural identity from China.

All these frictions—whether material, social or cultural—are finally condensed into a confrontation of China's rule over Hong Kong in the very last lines of the imitations. They ask, almost equivocally, "why" China wants to "transform" (I.20), rule (II.20), "infiltrate" (III.20), and besiege (V.14) Hong Kong. The diction establishes the distinct difference between Hong Kong and China, and challenges the sovereignty of a perceived "lesser" territory. The question "why" in particular undercuts China's legitimacy. To ask "why", on the one hand, is to ask: what were the historical contexts that gave China the right to take back Hong Kong in 1997? This question demands an examination of the present situation in relation to the history of British colonisation and to the establishment of Hong Kong and the PRC respectively, something that chapter 1 has attempted to do briefly. On the other hand, "why" is also a lament, and begs this question: what has Hong Kong done to deserve, or have to endure, being ruled, infiltrated and transformed into another part of China? This double layer of "why" expresses a resistance against the forces of assimilation from the mainland.

It is interesting to note how both Zhang's original and the imitations affirm Hong Kong's superiority to a certain extent. Hong Kong's self-perceived superiority will not mean anything unless there exists a "lesser" entity by comparison. Zhang's apology communicates his patriotic wish as well as his denial of having written an anti-Hong Kong poem, but the wording in the apology, ironically and perhaps unwittingly, reveals his subscription to the inferiority of a less-developed China and the superiority of a "developed" Hong Kong. This supports the critique of the netizen "silinz666" that Zhang's poem is a disguised compliment for Hong Kong. Moreover, Zhang's explicit use of the word "leftist" in his apology to describe the poetic persona also dichotomises Hong Kong and China ideologically: the sudden need to clarify his poetic persona as a "leftist" almost seems an act of pacifying the Hong Kong netizens, as if to demarcate the netizens as "non-lefitsts" immediately. Meanwhile, that he distances himself from these extreme, radical and nationalist leftist angry youth is something that has gone amiss on the Hong Kong netizens' part. Taking the poem at face value, netizens were irritated by the poem's superficial criticism of Hong Kong, and wrote the imitations as a knee-jerk reaction that resists against China by evoking the "last ground" of Hong Kong's uniqueness. The failure to appreciate Dominique Zhang's self-claimed "intention" to call for China's advancement reveals the Hongkongers' anxiety towards the reversed neo-colonialism in the economic and political arenas.

Meanwhile, ironically in the imitations, there is still a sense of casting China as a hierarchical opposite of Hong Kong: if China is corrupt and uncivilised, then Hong Kong is relatively clean and civilised. The key point to note here is that all this is done by implication: we read the mockery against China's lack of democracy (I.1-2; II.13), but we do not really read substantial passages to describe what is good about Hong Kong, nor do they overtly assert Hong Kong's capitalist lifestyle. Hong

Kong's continuous adoption of "a capitalist system and way of life", stipulated in Article 5 of The Basic Law of Hong Kong, is taken for granted, and becomes part of the ideological pull from which netizens establish Hong Kong's distinct difference from China. Coincidentally, the implication of Hong Kong's better situation turns out to match Zhang's intentions: both the original poem and the imitation poems serve the same ultimate purpose of othering China and affirming (or defending) the perceived higher status of Hong Kong culture.

Of course, there are still marked differences between Zhang's poem and the imitations, mainly in their poetic intent. The difference between the original hypotext and the imitative hypertext is that, for the former, Hong Kong serves as a developed model for Zhang's patriotic call for China's advancement, while the netizens see Hong Kong's merits as a source of pride of their home city without the same share of patriotic hope. It is clear, for instance, that the penultimate lines of Imitations I, II, III and IV display a desire to sever all ties with China as if it is a foreign region unrelated and unconnected to Hong Kong. On the contrary, it is difficult to tell from the apology whether Zhang agrees Hong Kong is, unproblematically, part of China's territory, something that the netizens would dispute. There may be a possibility that Hong Kong—and not other developed countries like the US or Japan—is chosen by Zhang as the model for China because of the worryingly permeable China-Hong Kong borders, in which case Zhang's leftist persona, with its embrace of China's sovereignty, may possibly not agree to the rejection of sovereignty in the imitations. Nonetheless, this ambivalence in interpretation only further exposes the impertinent truth that Hong Kong, as a Special Administrative Region under the political sovereignty of China, occupies an embarrassing status that is at once part of China but not China.

A Formal and Generic Critique

Having discussed the content of the imitations, this section turns to examine the formal and generic features of the poems, especially their parodic nature. In a general sense, these imitations qualify to be called parodies in Dentith's definition given earlier, for they do enter into a polemical ridiculing of a pre-existing cultural work. However, the five imitations can also be classified into two broad categories: Imitations I, II and III imitate only on the level of content without altering the poetic form, whereas Imitations IV and V employ a new poetic form in addition. Since the forms of the imitations vary, and accordingly give different mocking effects, we need a more careful theory of parody to analyse how parodic twists operate microscopically to create new meanings in this poetic exchange.

Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Parody* is again instrumental here for its insightful differentiation between parody, satire and irony, although there are also some contradictions that will be discussed below. Parody for Hutcheon is repetition or imitation with a critical distance that marks and dramatises difference from the original (6, 31-32, 44). Satire, while similar to parody, has an "ameliorative aim to hold up to ridicule the vices and follies of mankind, with an eye to their correction," and thus "brings the world into art" (43, 54, 104). Parody and satire are different in terms of their targets, in that the former is "intramural," meaning that it aims to strike a dialogue with the original or with "another form of coded discourse," and the latter is "extramural" due to its social or moral aims (62). However, they are similar in their frequent use of irony as a strategy or trope to achieve their respective aims; irony here is defined as a semantic marking between literal and intended meaning, in order to pragmatically signal a pejorative evaluation (53-54). Moreover, the two genres overlap generously, thus creating the slightly different intermediate categories of "satiric parody" and "parodic satire" (62). My understanding is that these two

subgenres differ on the ground of intent: parodic satire is still a satire essentially, but "employs parody as a vehicle to achieve its satiric or corrective end," whereas satiric parody has elements of social ills but basically critiques the original (62).

Under Hutcheon's taxonomy, Zhang's original can be classified as parodic satire. As his apology shows, his authorial intent aims to communicate a patriotic wish for China's progress, which makes his poem a satire with a corrective intent, but the vehicle he uses is a parody of the voices of Chinese angry youths with a critical distance. It however does not employ irony in Hutcheon's exact sense. Since Zhang's apology in effect affirms Hong Kong's superiority, the superficial criticism of Hong Kong is semantically opposite to the intent (i.e. to praise Hong Kong), but lacks the pragmatic pejoration Hutcheon insists on. Given Zhang's patriotic intent, it seems more likely the case that if the parody of angry youths is ever meant to be "pejorative", it is only because this pejoration must also form part of Zhang's patriotic wish for China's (and the Chinese people's) progress. This is not in itself humourous, but does fit Hutcheon's claim that modern parodies may be playful but may not carry negative judgment (*A Theory of Parody* 32, 44).

Instead, the humour and pleasure of the poem may exist in the paratext, or "suprapoetic" space, i.e. in the process of communicating this poem to an audience—exactly how the poem was deemed "pleasurably ironic" and "received with appreciation and laughter" according to *ENGLink* (4). The humour is thus heavily contingent upon the reader's knowledge of contemporary China-Hong Kong tensions, his/her ability to decipher Zhang's ultimate intent and understand the non-mocking parody of angry youths.

The opposite reaction between the Hong Kong netizens and the audience at the poetry reading at the Polytechnic exposes how some of the netizens fail to see the critical distance Zhang as a writer is keeping from the leftist persona of the poem.

Two examples are given below:

> ***Ivan* March 6, 2012 at 6:03 am** [Translated from Chinese]
>
> […] You are using the bad of Hong Kong to contrast the worse of China. Both descriptions are negative, so they are actually parallel criticisms. Where is the good wish? If you want to express wish for the improvement of a "certain" country, is all you can do to disparage other places? Nobody is interested in your concerns with that "certain" country, but it is undeniable that you are criticising Hong Kong. […]
>
> ***Reya Leung* March 7, 2012 at 4:41 pm** [Translated from Chinese]
>
> […] Once you use the angle of a Chinese Angry Youth to look at Hong Kong, it means [you] identify with these complaints against Hong Kong (whether or not they are true). […]
>
> ("A Mainland Chinese")

"Reya Leung" shows no awareness of a poetic speaker or persona, and assumes that what one writes must correspond to what one thinks with little allowance of rhetorical devices. While "Ivan" offers some interesting critique, his comment is ultimately contradictory: on the one hand, s/he resigns to saying that "[n]obody is interested in your [Zhang's] concerns with that 'certain' country [China]", and chooses not to challenge Zhang on whether his self-proclaimed patriotic intent is actually true; on the other hand, s/he resolutely declares it "undeniable that you [Zhang] are criticising Hong Kong" and ignores Zhang's claim that the poem is not anti-Hong Kong. This commenter favours a literal reading over a careful understanding of how irony functions, and only rebuts against the apology selectively without sound reasons. Earlier I discussed Zhang's deliberate use of the word "leftist" in his apology. The netizens' initial negative reaction to Zhang exemplifies the categorical assumption that the literal criticism of Hong Kong in the

original poem is a faithful representation of Zhang's own thoughts. However, he makes it clear that not everyone from China, and certainly not himself, is a leftist in the way that those angry youths he tries to imitate are. He establishes authorial distance from the persona in an attempt to pacify the netizens.

This analysis raises a more macroscopic problem about the ability to appreciate the value of English literary texts critically among Hong Kong netizens, which has been a main critique in chapter 3. Indeed, overshadowed by Hong Kong-China tensions, the focus of the whole poetic exchange was, from the very beginning, on the "inappropriateness" of the content of the original poem. Very few netizens read the poem deep enough to pay due attention to its stylistic, technical and formal aspects. The commenter "Courtney" here is a notable exception, despite the fact that the poetic exchange had already subsided by September when s/he left this somewhat vague and imprecise critique:

> *Courtney* **September 19, 2012 at 6:03 pm**
>
> […] If I assessed the poem objectively, it is a decent poem, with a clear tone. I am impressed with your grasp of English.
>
> I probably wouldn't have included the opening stanza. Contributes [sic] absolutely nothing to the poem and you would have benefited with a better opening. The conclusion was good, shame for that opening though.
>
> ("A Mainland Chinese")

Most of the exchanges between Zhang and the netizens, as we have seen and will see, feature very little discussion on the nature of poetry itself. While commenters like "silinz666" understand the intent of the poem, some others have not managed to grasp the various poetic devices employed, as can be seen in how they have overlooked the authorial distance Zhang maintains from the angry youth

persona. This explains Zhang's attempt to assuage the netizens by clarifying the actual intention of his poem, even to the point of mentioning the department's approval of the poem. But by so doing, the apology presents authorial intent as the "correct" way of interpreting the poem and urges the netizens not to misread it without scratching through the meaning on the surface. While I do not wish to bring in the debate on intention and authorship, the apology does reveal the important tension between the deliberate use of poetic devices and the netizens' inability to appreciate those devices. According to the apology, Zhang's poem is in fact patriotic and not anti-Hong Kong. This can be supported by reading the last couplet, the poem's "punchline", where the persona self-identifies as "I" for the first time, and turns from a criticism of Hong Kong to a reflection on his/her own national origin. The last couplet is thus a poetic volta that specifically turns hatred into patriotic wish. Its position at the end also makes it function a bit like a self-addressing envoi, only that it comments on the preceding stanzas through an exclamatory lament.

Some commenters on *Badcanto*, however, are not convinced by the use of these devices:

> *John* **March 7, 2012 at 11:55 am**
>
> dominique zhang, mind I leave a few words. Your so-called "poem" which only shows how poor your English writing skill you are [sic]. […]
>
> *an alumnus* **March 7, 2012 at 8:00 pm**
>
> […] The point is that your piece of work does not match the standard of a department/university newsletter in terms of the language used even to the untrained eyes. […]
>
> ("A Mainland Chinese")

The commenter "an alumnus", for instance, criticises the "language standard" of the

poem and its unsuitability in the departmental newsletter. For the user "John," the word "poem" is placed in quotation marks. A further point concerns the member on Golden Forum who wrote Imitation V. In this member's original post on the forum, s/he writes that

> [This] Chinese wants to defeat us with some specious English poem.
>
> Let [me] give you a sonnet in response.
>
> (qtd. "A Mainland Chinese", my translation)

Obviously, for these three netizens, Zhang's poem is void of poetic merit; yet, none of them has explained what poetic merit is except providing some vague and subjective perception. Important questions concerning a more fundamental debate are not properly asked: What counts as a poem? Why is Zhang's poem "specious"? What kind of English poem is not specious? In what ways is the poem not poetic? Is poetic merit a function of the poem's sociopolitical loyalties?

These questions can be hard to answer even for the literary critic. However, for the Golden Forum member the answer may be simple. A look at Imitation V tells us that perhaps formal regularity, such as the number of syllables and lines as in a sonnet, will be considered a key feature for a "proper" English poem. Imitations IV and V are notable examples along this line of argument, since they do not seek to follow the structure of the original poem, but instead employ other forms and poetic devices. Imitation IV replaces the last four-line stanza with a couplet, cutting the number of lines by two. It also employs a partial rhyme roughly based on a pair of vowels, /e/ and /æ/.[8] The conscious use of these features and the purposeful replacement with an ending couplet indicate minimal awareness of traditional English poetic devices and forms. It is even possible that the author of Imitation IV

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[8] It has been said that Hong Kong speakers of English often fail to distinguish between the two vowels, and would substitute with /ɛ/ due to an influence of Cantonese sounds (T. Hung 125; Stibbard 127; Setter et al. 28).

was trying to write a sonnet but unknowingly wrote an extra, fourth stanza. In comparison, Imitation V is clearly more sophisticated, despite the grammatical mistakes and contrived diction (such as "social pith", V.12). It mostly follows the rhyme scheme of a Shakespearean sonnet (except lines 5 and 7) and generally scans in iambic pentameter. The volta of the sonnet, however, occurs at lines 8 to 9 like the Petrarchan sestet, rather than in the final Shakespearean couplet, when it moves away from criticising China to affirming the superiority of Hong Kong. Still, the poem is in general impressively faithful to the basic formal features of a Shakespearean sonnet.

The intentional use of the sonnet form seems indicative of an overinvestment in the form of English-language poetry on the part of some of the netizens. The absence of any indication of knowledge about the shifting trends of English poetry writing in the past few centuries perhaps highlights how much work remains to be done to promote and popularise literary education in Hong Kong, as I have pointed out in chapter 3. Nevertheless, even the use of other poetic forms is done in reaction to ridiculing Zhang's perceived lack of poetic craft. Surely for the author of Imitation V, inasmuch as the content of the imitation ridicules China, being able to write in the "proper" sonnet form also becomes a source of superiority and part of the mockery at Zhang's perceived lack of mastery in English literature. Hence, regardless of whether the imitations follow Zhang's original structure, they are always caught in a dialectic need to reply to him. For this reason, opposite to my judgment of Zhang's poem as a parodic satire, the imitations can be seen as satiric parodies. They are satiric because they mock by highlighting the social ills of China to affirm and gain pleasure from Hong Kong's cultural superiority. This kind of pleasure again does not quite fit Hutcheon's definition of irony, since despite the pejorative criticism of China, there is no semantic contradiction in the already negative description of Chinese society.

But because the form is also mocking Zhang (thus intramural but distancing from his original poem), even Imitations IV and V seem to be parodies as well.

Earlier I drew attention to how the content of the imitations is limited by that of the original, to the effect that most imitations only involve a direct reversal of the direction of bash, rather than a direct manifestation of Hong Kong identity. I also discussed how both Zhang's apology and the imitations oddly affirm Hong Kong's superiority while differing on patriotic hope. Here, another difference comes to light: whereas Zhang's poem uses a satire with parodic features to bring out this effect, the imitations are parodies by nature since they are in *response* to both the content (China's social problems) and the form of Zhang's poem itself, thus making English-language poetry their intramural target. Hutcheon writes that parody can "transgress the limits of [certain formal] conventions […] only within the controlled confines authorized by the text parodied" (*A Theory of Parody* 75). This is pertinent to the netizens' works in general, because they, as a collective group of poetic imitators, can only be understood in the specific sociocultural and formal context of neo-colonial Hong Kong evoked by Zhang's original poem. Or to put it in another way, if Zhang's original is not recognised, the use of similar forms in all these imitations does not make any sense apart from superficial copying. But even when the imitations draw on different forms, as Imitations IV and V have done with features of traditional sonnets, they cannot escape from the purview of the original poem.

Summary

It must be remembered that the analysis above assumes that Zhang himself

did write the apology,[9] because his explanation of intent validates my judgment of the subgenres. In the essay "Defining Hong Kong Poetry in English", Agnes Lam asks if there is good poetry in Hong Kong under her three-tier rubric of good poetry: 1) the breadth of the readership achieved by the poem, or what she calls the poem's "communicative success", 2) the ability to "giv[e] pleasure", and 3) linguistic appropriateness (187-88). If evaluated against this, Dominique Zhang's poem may indeed be good poetry. The use of the poetic volta fulfils linguistic appropriateness. The poem attains a certain degree of "communicative success" by virtue of its being read and responded to by some of the Hong Kong netizens. It is uncertain whether it will be much read outside Hong Kong, since after all, it was published in a local departmental newsletter, even though it was subsequently discussed in an English-language blog. Finally, instead of pleasure, it attracted a scornful outcry from the netizens, who were empathically reminded of their daily experience with Chinese neo-colonialism. It is empathic because an eerie affirmation of Hong Kong's superiority can be sensed from both the imitations and Zhang's apology.

My main argument here, however, is that we need to go beyond the aesthetic determination of "good" versus "bad". Instead, there is a need to investigate how aesthetic expressions intersect with the socio-political currents of society. Both the original and imitations have presented selective sociocultural differences between Hong Kong and China, and show us what it means to be a subject living in contemporary China and neo-colonial Hong Kong, or what it entails to lay claim to mainland Chinese or Hong Kong identities. Just because the imitations appear to be malicious copying does not mean there is nothing valuable about them. What is "good" is not the original poem *per se*, but the way it initiates a poetic and discursive

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[9] To maintain critical distance and objectivity, I have not sought to contact Dominique Zhang, the English Department of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the blog owner of *Badcanto*, or any of the netizens involved.

exchange involving the use of the parody genre as a mode of resistance against the neo-colonialism and cultural assimilation that is occuring in Hong Kong. This poetic exchange brings English-language poetry directly to the awareness of those Hong Kong people who may never be bothered to write in English, but are motivated in this particular incident to channel their dissatisfaction via parody. What the Hong Kong people now experience on a daily basis—increased competition for social and material resources, as well as loss of public space—are often the effects of specific policies of the Hong Kong Government under the influence of the Central Government (such as the IVS). The parody genre, in the spirit of "secondary creation", is imperative to understand the emergent dissatisfaction that undergirds the imitations. The literary value, I argue, lies not in the individual poems, but in how this action-reaction transactive communication alerts us, via English poetry, to the social, cultural and political fault lines between China and neo-colonial Hong Kong.

On another level, the subsequent polemic on *Badcanto* points to the lack of literary understanding among Hong Kong netizens, thus delineating a lot of undeveloped questions between scholarly understanding and public perception of poetic merit. The use of poetic turn and the fusion of parodic elements in what is essentially a satire is part of the literary value of Zhang's original poem, but some netizens, preoccupied with the paramount tension between China and Hong Kong, failed to detect the critical distance that Zhang tried to demonstrate between the angry youth persona and his authorial intent in the apology. The parodic nature of the imitations—as a pejorative mockery of Zhang's poetic craft—and the adoption of traditional sonnet forms further uncover the gap between contemporary poetry and the netizens' somewhat old-fashioned understanding of English-language poetry or poetic merit. This ill-informed, stereotypical image of the obsolescence of poetry reveals poor aesthetic appreciation among some netizens, and is perhaps what curbs

some Hong Kong people to express themselves creatively in English. This not only suggests a need to look at aesthetic and literary education in schools carefully, but may become an obstacle to the development of English writing in Hong Kong. What would have been a perfect opportunity to engage in a discussion on the definition of literature or poetry, and on the relationship between English and Hong Kong literature, is bypassed. Although I believe that the exchange does succeed in drawing attention to the import of English writing among Hong Kong netizens, this success is limited. This has implications for the development of English writing in Hong Kong: if Hong Kong is to participate more actively in the world literary scene, much will need to be done to explore the critical potential of, and raise public awareness about, Hong Kong English writing. As netizen "silinz666" says, let us write more—not just poetry, but in other genres as well.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have surveyed, through the lens of parody, a small sample of Hong Kong English writing that has touched on the sensitive Hong Kong-China conflicts. If English has the benefit of being a global language, then English writing may take advantage of this and document Hong Kong's neo-colonial situation for a global audience. A body of new, fresh literary voices that are not afraid to discuss social, political and cultural frictions within or beyond Hong Kong, I believe, is one of the possibilities for developing a solid English literary culture in this so-called "cultural desert". I also wish to have demonstrated how literary critics should also start critiquing these new literary works that explore various aspects of post-handover Hong Kong.

I consider the poetic exchange discussed in this chapter an example of how English writing can show commitment to the rising social resistance in Hong Kong.

Currently there is a blossoming of English writing in response to the Umbrella Revolution. In response to China's uncooperative attitude on Hong Kong's open election, *Cha*, the Hong Kong-based online literary journal that has become a key promoter of Hong Kong English writing, launched its specially-curated poetry feature called "Whither Hong Kong?" in its September 2014 issue (of which I was a co-editor). The feature's original call for submissions over the summer of 2014 was met with lukewarm response, and it was not until the Umbrella Revolution that a surge of submissions came in, to the point that publication had to be delayed until October. A follow-up section on the Umbrella Movement was published in the subsequent December 2014 issue. During the occupation, Peter Gordon and Tammy Ho also started a "Letters from Hong Kong" section in the Hong Kong-based English literary periodical *Asian Review of Books*. In addition to his reading at a night of poetry reading in Admiralty, new-generation English-language poet Nicholas Wong has also helped curate a special issue on the Revolution in the literary journal *Drunken Boat*. The American journal *Gathering of the Tribes* has also expressed interest in submissions related to the Revolution. *The Asian American Literary Review* has a prose selection titled "Dispatches from Hong Kong" in its Fall/Water 2014 issue. These are all good chances to start raising writers' awareness on Hong Kong's dire reality, but the question is whether the English writing circle can sustain this commitment. In the case of *Cha*, the alarming fact that the poetry feature was saved by the Umbrella Revolution suggests, at worst, the opportunist attitude of Hong Kong English writers to take advantage of this now famous event; it remains to be seen if this spark of literary interest can be transformed into a long-term effort that digs more deeply into the intricacies of Hong Kong society. Anyone associated with the Hong Kong English writing circle—writers, reviewers, publishers, critics, teachers or students, whether locally educated or from elsewhere, whether ethnic

Chinese or expatriates—can all become social agents, documenting and contributing

to social change.

Coda   **Whither Hong Kong English Writing?**

The completion of this dissertation coincides with a significant juncture in Hong Kong's history: the Umbrella Revolution. As I argued in chapter 1, neo-colonialism now clashes with neoliberalism. Ever since its handover to one of the biggest self-proclaimed world powers, Hong Kong is increasingly in a hot mess after a number of policies have increased its economic reliance on China, and consequently helped cement such discourse of unilateral dependence. China has now not only denied an open election in Hong Kong, but has also slapped Britain in the face when it refused entry of a parliamentary inquiry into Hong Kong, warning Britain to stay ashore for the benefit of Anglo-Chinese relations. With Britain now being a toothless tiger, Hong Kong is in most part left on its own to face the aftermath of the Umbrella Revolution.

A secondary aim of this dissertation is to draw attention to China's neo-colonialism using the example of Hong Kong. For if the new direction for postcolonial studies is to interrogate and take to task the rise of neoliberal capitalism in its intricate interactions with our daily lives in the increasingly globalised world, then we must also scrutinise the capitalist expansion of such countries as China, a neo-colonial power not only in Asia, but in Africa and the Middle East as well. This transition from the postcolonial to the neo-colonial ought to warrant more attention, since China's influence—undoubtedly economic, but also cultural and political—has also sparked various resistance movements across Africa (see Kaiman, "Ghana"; Hirsch, "Influx"; Walsh, "Is China"; UN Regional Information Networks, "Lesotho"; Trofimov, "In Africa"). The case of Hong Kong, of course, is unique in its historical circumstances, but neo-colonisation in the sense of exploitative competition between traditional Euro-American colonial powers and rising ones such as China on the

locus of other countries is relevant in many other contexts.

But to come back to Hong Kong: What is the role of English writing at this interregnum?

This dissertation derives a reference framework that both explores the horizontal positioning of Hong Kong English writing in Pascale Casanova's vision of a competitive world literary space, and employs the Bourdieusian concept of various forms of capital to investigate the intricate issues (sociopolitical, linguistic, educational and others) that challenge the formation of an English writing community. The main argument is that, in light of the common impression and Louise Ho's lamentation that there is no substantial English writing culture in Hong Kong, one of the chief ways to position English writing lies in cultivating and encouraging the local people to read and to write about their lives in English—i.e. to recognise English as marker of identity by writing in it. This means popularising English literary education, so that local students are encouraged to join the writing community and write about their own experiences, even if (or rather, especially when) what they write is of concern to only the Hong Kong Chinese, and lacks a transcultural, "cosmopolitan", sometimes uprooted, perspective that has so far characterised many Hong Kong English writing. Apart from broadening participation and access, there is also a need to broaden the scope of critical scrutiny, particularly the uneven distribution and segregation of symbolic and cultural capital across districts, which does not only influence the background of writers, but may have an impact on the range of Hong Kong experiences portrayed in literary works. Hong Kong English writing would be celebrating cosmopolitanism prematurely unless it becomes more sensitive to a nuanced portrayal of Hong Kong's internal segregation, and actively seeks to increase its spectrum of participation and critical perspectives from a variety of classes with diverse social, geographical, linguistic, and ethnic

backgrounds. I have also suggested that the lived experience as we face every day in neo-colonial Hong Kong after the handover can be a source for the subject matter of such new writing. On the assumption that it gets a deserved, balanced development, new Hong Kong English writing can employ its potential of writing in a global language to both turn outwards and look inwards: to spread global awareness of what the complex issues haunting Hong Kong are, and to substantiate a distinct, neo-colonial Hong Kong identity that represents the layers of social reality and lived experiences in Hong Kong, including the recognition of English as an important component, rather than as a pragmatic tool. The balancing force of the inward part is what this dissertation calls for.

As with all academic projects, this dissertation has a number of limitations. First and foremost, in elucidating the neo-colonial situation of Hong Kong, the emphasis has been placed more on the sandwiching of Hong Kong between a neo-coloniser, China, and a reticent ex-coloniser, Britain. As two footnotes in chapters 1 and 2 have indicated, there has not been enough space to discuss how a mainstream, Cantonese-speaking, Hong Kong identity can itself be hegemonic to some, mainly South Asian, ethnic minority groups in Hong Kong. These minority groups face a tripled stigma on the planes of class, race and language, unlike those business elites who are English-speaking, metropolitan, cosmopolitan, hybridised, expatriated, globally-mobilised, and who usually cluster around the most urban districts of Hong Kong and sometimes portrayed in current Hong Kong English writing. The representation of the ethnic minorities in Hong Kong English writing is worth exploring. However, I must stress that the attention in mainstream narratives on ethnic minorities and the conscious gesture to include them as part of Hong Kong are also the fruits of the recent social movement, part of whose goal is to recuperate forgotten historical knowledge about Hong Kong, such as the existence of Ghurka

soldiers and South Asian families which predates the influx of immigrants from China from the 1950s onwards. This is therefore not without a symbolic meaning of resistance against the CCP-backed, ethnocentric claim that sees Hong Kong as always a part of China.

Another major invisibility in this project is the role of translation, bar a gloss in chapter 3. To sketch some rough ideas, however, I do not have in mind the conventional, almost automated idea of Chinese-English translation, i.e. translating Hong Kong Chinese literary works into English. Too often we tend to focus on the translation of Chinese language works for the benefit of an English-speaking global/globalised readership, but this, though absolutely necessary, hardly alleviates the segregation between the Chinese and English writing communities in Hong Kong, and only contributes to the creation of a canon of world literature in translation—something conceptually similar to what Gayatri Spivak earlier calls, in the context of postcolonial studies, "Third World Literature (in translation)" ("Scattered" 277). Instead, focus should be placed on internal translation, i.e. the translation done to facilitate exchange between different groups in a locale. I am interested in publications that translate English writing back to Chinese for the benefit of the Hong Kong Chinese. English-Chinese translation, if anything, is an extremely marginalised activity (more so than English writing itself), but one that, in my opinion, bears potential in bridging the mutual neglect between the two kinds of Hong Kong writings. The fact that translation for Hong Kong writing is habitually unidirectional, i.e. Chinese-English, and not a bilateral enterprise including a healthy development English-Chinese translation, is again suggestive of an imbalance in the ecology of Hong Kong literary culture.

As a project relevant to both cultural and literary studies, I have avoided venturing into Hong Kong films, which has certainly attracted more academic

discussions, and into diasporic writers originally from Hong Kong. Films tend to receive more critical attention, perhaps because their emergence as a form of popular culture reflects a stronger commitment to the lives of ethnic Chinese Hongkongers. I have made the deliberate gesture to steer my focus to English writing, a more marginalised forms of cultural production.

Finally, in arguing for due attention to new English-language creative writing in the Hong Kong classroom, I have not had room to take a closer look at the politics in the creative writing classroom. I have acknowledged in chapter 3 that while English literature as a subject, and by extension creative writing, is practically limited to elite girls' schools, EMI schools and international schools in Hong Kong, the creative writing classroom in university, convened by Shirley Lim, Eddie Tay and others, seems to accommodate a considerably popularised opportunity for creative writing. The university writing classroom is therefore a rich source of information to examine the crossroads between the students' desire for self-expression, the availability of such opportunities, and the training in the art of writing. More critical research needs to be done in this area, albeit some good reflective pieces by these convenors.

Hong Kong will never be the same after the Umbrella Revolution. The younger generation will, hopefully, persevere in standing up against an oppressive, neo-colonial China. English writing, I believe, has its own role to play in moving Hong Kong forward in, and away from, this interregnum.

Appendix 1   Dominique Zhang's Poem and Netizens' Imitations

Note: Where the original display username of the Hong Kong netizens on Golden

Forum and Badcanto are in Chinese, the Cantonese Pinyin system is used for

romanisation.

Original

Hong Kong – an Ugly City
By Dominique Zhang

In Hong Kong, they have red devil-like taxis	*1*
They never have an industry	*2*
They import cars transported from Germany and Japan	*3*
They have crazy drivers on the road, racing and drifting.	*4*
In Hong Kong, they have stick-like high risers	*5*
People there say they have two thirds of their land being	*6*
Unexploited and forest-covered	*7*
They work like ants and never have a decent place to live in	*8*
In Hong Kong, they speak a language hardly understood	*9*
By outsiders, like me	*10*
We call the language they speak a dialect, only a dialect	*11*
But they are proud of it!	*12*
In Hong Kong, they have Falun Gong demonstrators	*13*
Marking on Nathan Road	*14*
When the National Day comes	*15*
Dressing like zombies and making noises everywhere.	*16*
Hell, they have so much ugliness and the city is still	*17*
A developed one, a prosperous one!	*18*
I do not give a damn about politics, seriously	*19*
But why the hell I am from a Third World country!	*20*

Source: "A Mainland Chinese Student from Hong Kong Polytechnic University Wrote a Poem Called 'Ugly Hong Kong';" *Dictionary of Politically Incorrect Hong Kong Cantonese*; WordPress, 5 Mar. 2012; Web; 16 Apr. 2012.

Imitation I

China – an ugly country

By "Yoona Hou Leng Noey [允兒好靚女]"

In china, they have red devil like communists	*1*
They never have democracy	*2*
They export food products to the rest of the world	*3*
They add melamine, all kinds of crazy chemicals one cannot name	*4*
In china, they have nouveau riches	*5*
People there claim that they are highly educated,	*6*
Civilized and have high moral standards	*7*
They travel to hong kong and poop in theme parks and on the streets	*8*
In china, they speak the language that they claim they understood	*9*
For hongkongers	*10*
We are proud of the fact that we know traditional Chinese, not simplified	*11*
And mandarin never existed in "china" until four hundred years ago	*12*
In china, they have no demonstrators	*13*
Demonstrations are not allowed in china	*14*
When june fourth comes	*15*
Nobody sympathizes the students who sacrificed in the Tiananmen Square	*16*
Fu*k, they behave like apes and living happily in their country	*17*
More like a zoo I would say	*18*
I don't give a crap about your values, really	*19*
But why you want to transform us into one of you	*20*

Source: "A Mainland Chinese Student from Hong Kong Polytechnic University Wrote a Poem Called 'Ugly Hong Kong';" *Dictionary of Politically Incorrect Hong Kong Cantonese*; WordPress, 5 Mar. 2012; Web; 16 Apr. 2012.

Imitation II

China – an Ugly Country

By Sachiel

In China, they have illegal taxis	*1*
They don't have Technology	*2*
They import cars transported from Germany and Japan	*3*
They have crazy drivers on the road, racing and drifting, killing babies	*4*
In China, they have stick-like high risers burning/collapsing in the city	*5*
People there say they have two thirds of their land being	*6*
Unexploited and forest-covered	*7*
They work like ants and never have a decent place to live in	*8*
In China, they speak a language hardly understood	*9*
By normal people, like me	*10*
We call the language they speak a barbaric origin	*11*
But they are proud of it!	*12*
In China, they have Communist demonstrators	*13*
Marking on every Road	*14*
When the National Day comes	*15*
They are forced by the govt to stay at home.	*16*
Hell, they have so much ugliness and the Country is still	*17*
A developed one, a prosperous one! They call themselves harmonious	*18*
I do not give a damn about politics, seriously	*19*
But why the hell am I ruled by a Third World country!	*20*

Source: "A Mainland Chinese Student from Hong Kong Polytechnic University Wrote a Poem Called 'Ugly Hong Kong';" *Dictionary of Politically Incorrect Hong Kong Cantonese*; WordPress, 5 Mar. 2012; Web; 16 Apr. 2012.

Imitation III

China – a Pathetic Country
By "Ngo Si Gwai [我是桂]"

In China, they have bouncy ball-like eggs	*1*
They even have alchemy	*2*
Their food is transformed from inorganic and garbage	*3*
They have big-head baby in the hospital, crying and dying.	*4*
In China, they have god-like casualties controllers	*5*
People there say each accident, thirty five of their citizen being	*6*
Killed and others're covered	*7*
Their live like ants and never have human rights to live with	*8*
In China, they execute the law hardly understood	*9*
By outsiders, like me	*10*
We call the law they execute a joke, only a joke	*11*
But they are proud of it!	*12*
In China, they have affluent second generations	*13*
Rampaging on every states	*14*
When the Poor st[r]uggles	*15*
Flaunting their wealth and giving shits in Weibo	*16*
Hell, They are so pathetic and the country is still	*17*
An impudent one, a shameless one!	*18*
I do not give a damn about their corruption, seriously	*19*
But why the hell they infiltrate a clean and fair city!	*20*

Source: "A Mainland Chinese Student from Hong Kong Polytechnic University Wrote a Poem Called 'Ugly Hong Kong';" *Dictionary of Politically Incorrect Hong Kong Cantonese*; WordPress, 5 Mar. 2012; Web; 16 Apr. 2012.

Imitation IV

Foreigners in the eyes of HK People
By "Nei Gam Jat J Dzo Mei [你今日 J 左未]?"

They claim to love their country and its blood red flag,	*1*
Yet, give them a citizenship elsewhere and they flee without regret.	*2*
Can't blame the contradiction for the simple fact:	*3*
In that country you can't buy a clean piece of bread.	*4*
Send here their pregnants and they breed like cats.	*5*
Get their infants an ID and whatever associated with that.	*6*
Never contributed, whether it's the Mom or Dad,	*7*
Abuse our welfare and the hell with that	*8*
Some got the dollars yet they don't impress,	*9*
Ripping through our malls with locusts' act.	*10*
Drive up the prices is what they are best.	*11*
Leave us an economy that is good as dead.	*12*
Come to our land but they don't connect,	*13*
Demand us to accommodate, is what they request.	*14*
Take our scholarships for granted yet they give nothing back.	*15*
Those are the ones we most detest!	*16*
Such kind of foreigners are driving us mad,	*17*
And most of us wholeheartedly wish them dead.	*18*

Source: "A Mainland Chinese Student from Hong Kong Polytechnic University Wrote a Poem Called 'Ugly Hong Kong';" *Dictionary of Politically Incorrect Hong Kong Cantonese*; WordPress, 5 Mar. 2012; Web; 16 Apr. 2012.

Imitation V

Untitled

By "Jau Si Naan Mong [憂思難忘]"

Corrupted China, place of harm and sins	*1*
As all expected. By learning its low	*2*
Morality, the core's decayed since	*3*
Its heart is dark and wicked like a crow.	*4*
I see no good, nor change, nor any good	*5*
Potentiality within. The men	*6*
Whom occupy the land are not the hope	*7*
Of futuristic views but loss again.	*8*
We land of incense, brightest star of East	*9*
Is yet to fill the stinky China with	*10*
The fine aroma of our masterpiece	*11*
Of clean and systematic social pith.	*12*
With many hard works we have done to teach	*13*
Them good, our system is now under siege.	*14*

Source: "A Mainland Chinese Student from Hong Kong Polytechnic University Wrote a Poem Called 'Ugly Hong Kong';" *Dictionary of Politically Incorrect Hong Kong Cantonese*; WordPress, 5 Mar. 2012; Web; 16 Apr. 2012.

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Note: Publications in Chinese are romanised, followed by the original Chinese titles and English translations, as instructed by the MLA system. Publications from Hong Kong are romanised under the Cantonese Pinyin system, the only romanisation system for Cantonese approved by the Hong Kong government, followed by the original titles in traditional Chinese characters. However, due to Hong Kong's colonial history, the official romanised names of the Hongkongers cited in this dissertation usually do not follow the Cantonese Pinyin system, but the rather inconsistent Hong Kong Government Cantonese Romanisation system. In these cases the official spellings are retained. Publications from mainland China are romanised in Mandarin under the Hanyu Pinyin system, followed by Chinese titles in simplified characters.

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