Cold War Hong Kong: An Archipelagic Reading of Sinophone Literature During the Seventies

by

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MPhil, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2016

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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in the
Department of English
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Fall 2023

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Abstract

This dissertation critiques Cold War representations of Hong Kong as an apolitical and hyper capitalist site by turning to Sinophone literary fiction written during what I call the "long seventies" (1970-89). Within the Cold War discourse dominated by the Chinese and Western nation-states, Hong Kong tends to be understood as a neutral zone in which the UK, the US, and China furthered their own economic and political interests, unchallenged by Hong Kong people who benefitted from this neutrality. However, the literature written during this period tells a different story, one in which linguistic, ethnic, and regional differences were bridged as everyday peoples of Hong Kong forged decolonial relationships that undermined Cold War imperialisms. Through practices of close reading and archival research, I situate two modern classics, Ye Si's novella *Paper Cuts* and Xi Xi's short story cycle *My City*, in relation to a group of understudied short stories by established authors, such as Yang Mingxian, Yan Chungou, Peng Cao, and Lv Qi Shi, who write within and outside Hong Kong. I reread this literary corpus with an emphasis on themes of unexpected identification, accidental friendship, and ephemeral alliances that challenge the Cold War construction of national and legal identities. I show that Hong Kong literature provides a key space to re-evaluate Cold War neutrality as an inter-imperial mechanism that caused the city to be imagined as culturally and politically featureless in exchange for ideological and juridical impartiality.

I draw on archipelago as both metaphor and materiality to re-conceptualize Hong Kong—a Cantonese coastal city, island-peninsula, and transoceanic nodal point—as part of a larger network of mainlands and islands that connects peoples, cultures, languages, and territories. Unlike an area studies approach, an archipelagic reading of Hong Kong's Sinophone stories proposes an ethics of situating Hong Kong in close proximity to the Chinese mainland without resorting to a nationalist narrative. Furthermore, the stories this dissertation studies represent the city's archipelagic linkages with Southeast Asia, Europe, and beyond to challenge divisions marked by Cold War borders.

Keywords: Hong Kong literature; Cold War studies; Sinophone; postcolonial studies; archipelagic

To my parents and my grandfather

Acknowledgements

As a project about the history of modernity, this dissertation was and will continue to be transformed by the devastating moments of our time: Hong Kong's 2014 Umbrella Movement and 2019 Anti-Extradition Bill Protests, Covid-19, and the new Cold War. However, the communities that I am surrounded with have taught me to keep creating hope in times of destruction and grief.

My belated thanks go to my MPhil supervisors Grant Hamilton and David Huddart in the English Department at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, who first introduced me to postcolonial studies. Against all odds, they set me on a path of studying Chinese literature and culture so that I had a chance to answer my questions about contemporary China.

In Vancouver, I am grateful to all four members on my committee, who work from three departments across two universities. I thank them for having guided my doctoral research rigorously and patiently since the very beginning. As supervisor and mentor, Christine Kim worked most closely with me even after she moved departments. Christine and Sophie McCall first met with me, as a PhD applicant, on a sunny winter day in February 2016. They welcomed me with generosity beyond my expectation. I thank them for teaching me not only about the scholarship of Asian diaspora and Indigenous literature but also about how to live, care, and build relationships as a feminist. I thank Helen Hok-Sze Leung for teaching me queer studies and the alternative ways of conceptualizing Hong Kong in a comparative and transpacific lens. I thank Christopher Lee for showing me how to understand globalization via East Asian Marxism and how to read Chinese language literature together with Anglophone Asian American literature.

The English Department at Simon Fraser University has supported me financially and intellectually. I thank my graduate chairs Michelle Levy, Clint Burham, and Matthew Hussey, each of whom has offered generous funding opportunities to me, an international student during much of the doctoral study. I especially appreciate Ann & William Messenger Graduate Fellowship and Aphra Behn Graduate Scholarship in English. David Chariandy, Carolyn Lesjak, and Jon Smith, in various ways, prepared me to become a well-trained and resilient scholar in the pre-dissertation stage. Michael

Everton and Peter Cramer taught me how to conduct effective pedagogy in undergraduate classrooms.

This project will not be possible without the support of the InterLibrary Loan (ILL) at SFU library. Since 2017, librarians at ILL have helped me access more than three hundred publications (both in English and in Chinese) across the world. My gratitude extends to the Hong Kong Literature Collection at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hung On-To Memorial Library (Hong Kong Collection) at the University of Hong Kong, as well as the digital archives of “Hong Kong Literature Database”, “The 70’s Biweekly and People’s Theatre”, and “Historical Laws of Hong Kong Online”.

I am indebted to various kinds of peer support. At the beginning of the pandemic, I was fortunate to befriend Jin Xianan and Wang Dan, with whom and other friends I discussed early-stage writing progress and struggles online biweekly. I greatly benefited from exchanging drafts and having conversations with Wei Yuan, Xie Jieyi, Taylor Morphett, Mackenzie Ground, Primrose, Hu Linying, Liu Mengyuan, Jiang Fan, and Lv Shupu. Yuan continues to make Vancouver a liveable and fun place; Jieyi was the first to plant the seed in me that I could become a good scholar; Taylor and her family (Bill and Lyra Green, and Joanne and Bill Morphett) were by my side during some of the toughest times of the PhD journey. Ayaka Yoshimizu generously shared with me her personal and professional network. Song Lin, Rao Yichen, and Kandice Sharen offered invaluable advice as they themselves emerged as early-career scholars. Jin Lu provided me a mental and intellectual sanctuary during a moment of crisis in 2015; our friendship has since then always been a place of comfort and care. I thank my childhood friend Liu Han who has always believed in me. I am also grateful to my therapist Veronica Li who taught me so much about myself.

The sport of bouldering is at once the shelter and the inspiration for my academic mind. Nothing but bouldering shares so many parallels with the extreme challenge and enjoyment of writing. The sport helped me learn about my body and my emotion in profound ways, and in return I brought these lessons into the process of writing. I thank Amber, Billy, Cheryl, Cleo, Devon, Eric, Jasia, Kevin, Niv, Sho, Trevor, and many more fellow climbers whom I met at the Hive (Surrey) and in Squamish for making all this possible.

Finally, I would like to say thank you to my Chinese and Canadian families. To my parents in China: Baba, Mama, thank you for always believing in me even though we could not speak about the content of my work. To Laoye in a different world: I learned to appreciate your gentleness and humour through writing this dissertation—thank you for whispering Cantonese-accented words to me during my childhood. My Italian Canadian father Dom, you embraced me as your kin right away. I will never forget your warm and firm hands. My Canadian mother Mary, you have shown me the strength, resilience, and wisdom of keeping things going in the darkest times. Ryan, I am so glad to have become your sister—I wish nothing but your safety and happiness. Aunt Anna, Jeff, and all the Trichilo family, thank you for your generosity, understanding, and love. Finally, my gratitude goes to Josh Trichilo, my partner in every sense of the word. With your love, intelligence, and humor, pieces of me are flying back to help build a new self.

Table of Contents

Declaration of Committee ... ii
Abstract ... iii
Dedication ... iv
Acknowledgements ... v
Table of Contents ... viii
List of Figures ... x
Glossary ... xi
Preface ... xii

Introduction. Cold War Mapping and Archipelagic Reading ... 1
Mapping Hong Kong onto the Cold War ... 4
Hong Kong Exceptionalism ... 4
Neutrality as Cold War Violence ... 7
An Archipelagic Reading of Cold War Hong Kong ... 11
Hong Kong Seventies ... 19
De-Cold War Space in a Model Colony ... 19
The Debate of "Local Consciousness" ... 22
Literary Writing and Publishing in a Commercialized Society ... 25
Languaging Hong Kong: Sinophone Literature as Medium of Cultural Translation ... 29
Lingual Triangulation ... 30
Two Chinese Languages: Mandarin and Cantonese ... 34
Languages in Translation: Chinese and English ... 39
Chapter Overview ... 43

Chapter 1. Hong Kong Short Story as De-Cold War Genre: Writing Trauma after the Cultural Revolution ... 46
1.1. Writing Trauma in Hong Kong ... 51
1.1.1. Reclaiming the Language of Revolution ... 52
1.1.2. Reinventing the Post-Traumatic Self ... 56
1.2. Collective Healing: Solidarity in Contested Perspectives ... 60
1.2.1. Shared Truth by Disparate Chinese Subjects ... 62
1.2.2. Towards a Shared Temporality ... 66
1.2.3. The Road to a Transnational Revolution ... 70

Chapter 2. Rereading Ye Si's *Paper Cuts*: A Hong Kong Modern Classic as Diasporic Articulation ... 77
2.1. *Huangxiang*: Illusions or Imaginaries ... 79
2.1.1. A Cold War Reading ... 79
2.1.2. Two Imaginaries: Relating the Self with the Other ... 83
2.2. Diasporic Articulation from a Peninsula ... 85
2.2.1. Post-Realism and Hong Kong Realities ... 85
2.2.2. Diasporic Articulation, a Peninsula Perspective ... 90
2.3. Transformative Narrator, a Hong Kong Subject ... 93

2.3.1. Qiao's Story: Communicating the Impossible 95
2.3.2. Yao's Story: Towards a Communal Future 99
2.4. Assortment of Tongues: Reclaiming the Hong Kong Accent..............................103

Chapter 3. Coastal Identity in Hong Kong: *My City* and Other Stories of Migration 108
3.1. Two Tales of Cold War Migrants in Hong Kong 108
3.1.1. Border Crossers 109
3.1.2. Coastal Travellers 111
3.2. Literary Representation of Coastal Experience 115
3.2.1. A City on the Sea, Transoceanic Imagination in *My City* 116
3.2.2. "On Board," a Coastal Narrative of Accidental Encounter......................123
3.2.3. Cross-Ethnic Identification in "Tigerland/Bitterland" 130
3.3. De-Cold War Representations of Islands and Mainlands 138

Coda. Race and the Cold War: Hong Kong Writings from Paris 145

References...152

Appendix. Romanization of Chinese Expressions 176
Chinese Names of Hong Kong Writers 177
Chinese Terms and Phrases 178
Chinese Names of Newspaper, Literary Journals, and Publishers in the Seventies.....180
Chinese Names of Characters in Fiction 182
Chinese Ethnic Groups 183
Chinese Place Names..183

List of Figures

Figure 1. A map showing the archipelagic formation of Hong Kong. 13
Figure 2. Book cover of the 1982 edition of *Paper Cuts*. 82
Figure 3. Book cover of the 2015 edition of *Paper Cuts*. 93
Figure 4. Xi Xi's illustration of the South American continent. 121
Figure 5. A map showing the voyage taken by the characters in "On Board." 124
Figure 6. Still from Ann Hui's *Boy from Vietnam*. 140
Figure 7. Left, Luis Chan's Flying Fish (1979). Courtesy of Hanart TZ Gallery. Right, details of Luis Chan's Seascape (1978) on the book cover. Courtesy of Hanart TZ Gallery. 142

Glossary

This glossary consists of the romanization of a list of key Chinese terms and the Chinese names of Hong Kong literary writers that I study in this dissertation. For consistency, when referencing the original language I use the traditional Chinese characters, in which the majority of the studied literary texts were published. Following the Chicago citation style, I use the Hanyu Pinyin romanization system. Exceptions to Pinyin occur when the personal names spelt in the Wade-Giles system (according to their Cantonese pronunciation) are more familiar to the English readers. Other Chinese terms, place-names, names of fictional characters, and other proper nouns are listed in the Appendix.

hunza de yuwen	混雜的語文
Lv Qi Shi	綠騎士
Peng Cao	蓬草
pingshui xiangfeng	萍水相逢
Song Mu/Choi Chun-Hing	松木/蔡振興
Xi Xi	西西
Xianggang	香港
Xin Qi Shi	辛其氏
Yan Chungou	顏純鈎
Yang Mingxian	楊明顯
Ye Si/Leung Ping-Kwan	也斯/梁秉鈞

Preface

I was born in Northeast China (historically known as Manchuria) and I spent my most formative years in the South China city of Shenzhen (literally meaning deep waterway), a special economic zone bordering Hong Kong (literally meaning the fragrant harbour). Between 2013 and 2015, my time of graduate school at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, I frequently crossed the Shenzhen-Hong Kong border. It could be once in a few months, or a couple of times within a day. Initially an unfamiliar land, Hong Kong became my third home once I started studying and living in the city. Having migrated from Northeast China to South China, growing to be fond of a previously unknown space and learning to be part of a new culture was not as daunting as when I left my first home and traveled to Shenzhen by train for three days and two nights. However, despite that Hong Kong was geographically so much closer to Shenzhen than Northeast China, I realized that Hong Kong's unique political system and its history of being a previous British colony made it a lot more difficult for me to explain my new sense of belonging. Most of my acquaintances at the time implied that I admired Hong Kong's colonial legacy and I despised the fellow Chinese mainlanders. Others mocked me by pointing out that I did not even have a legal Hong Kong identity. However, my acquired intimacy towards Hong Kong was not a result of my dis-identification against mainland China. Rather, it was in Hong Kong that I felt I had never been so close to understanding China and its modern history.

How were rifts produced among different Chinese communities and how could they be overcome in the face of the entangled histories of imperial wars, Western colonization, and the Chinese state violence? This has been the intellectual and personal question driving behind this dissertation.

Introduction.

Cold War Mapping and Archipelagic Reading

Hong Kong has no literature—or so I was led to believe. During my first two years of researching the history and culture of the city in the late twentieth century, I encountered the widely-circulated belief that Hong Kong is a cultural desert. This absurd narrative seemed particularly convincing given dominant constructions of so-called high literary writing.[1] With my upbringing in mainland China and my training in postcolonial studies, I eventually realized that my expectations to find certain kinds of literary production (either the archetypical postcolonial fiction of Anglophone literature or the standard modern Chinese literary writing) resulted in the disavowal of Hong Kong's rich literary production. In other words, by examining Hong Kong literature in a Procrustean style, I ended up "*not* seeing what *is* there," a predominantly shared negative attitude to Hong Kong culture as Ackbar Abbas puts it (6). Only when I started reading Sinophone stories—that is, stories written in the Chinese language but expressing an alternative cultural-political relationship to the nation-state of China—as a venue to understand everyday experience from the perspective of the common Hong Kong Chinese did it become clear that my inability to see Hong Kong literature was an often-unconsidered product of the ongoing Cold War legacy. By examining how Hong Kong Sinophone writers experiment with short fiction, this dissertation aims to make visible the city's resistant aesthetic. Such an aesthetic disrupts the Cold War discourse dominated by the Chinese and Western nation-states, one in which Hong Kong is represented as an apolitical and hyper capitalist site. Writing this project has become my personal journey of decolonizing the self. Each draft helps me see more clearly how the rediscovery of my cultural identity and my sense of belonging requires a more thorough critique of what I

[1] The idea that Hong Kong is a cultural desert was first circulated by mainland-raised intellectuals such as Wang Tao (1828–1897) and Lu Xun (1881–1936) after their arrival in and visits to Hong Kong in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Throughout the late twentieth century, canonic Hong Kong-based literary writers were still troubled by the concept of the "cultural desert"; see Liu Yichang (1995, 1) and Ye Si (1996, 21; first presented in a 1993 conference). Even today, Hong Kong novelist and scholar Dorothy Tse Hiu-hung (*The Inspired Island: Xi Xi, My City*, 2015) speaks about the difficulty of having literary writing produced in Hong Kong to be acknowledged by its residents.

am calling Cold War historicism, a way of seeing the Cold War as the new modern beginning of all peoples and cultures in Hong Kong, China, and Asia.

Since the 1990s and the 2000s, Cold War studies has been transitioning away from the exclusive focus on the First World (US-led NATO countries) and the Second World (former Soviet-Union territories in Europe) and turning towards the studies of the Third World (regions with colonial histories in Asia, Africa, and Latin America).[2] For scholars of Cold War Asia, this shift has created a space to reflect on the aftermath and continuation of the "hot" wars in the area. There are two primary subjects of study within the field of Cold War Asia: the socio-political transformations in the postwar nation-states of China, Japan, and South Korea,[3] and the Asian diaspora in the US as a result of the Korean War and the Vietnam War.[4] To a much lesser extent, attention is paid to territories beyond the major Cold War sites.[5] In all cases, the influences of and negotiations with the United States and the Soviet Union are considered central to the understanding of Asia's regional wars, national revolutions, independence movements, and anti-colonial resistance. Put differently, Cold War studies has offered ways to examine how the two superpowers have shaped and continue to shape Asia's postwar history, present, and future.

Within this Cold War framework, Hong Kong is a hard fit. Although the British colony of Hong Kong is generally imagined as a defensive line against communist China, there is little research that is dedicated to Hong Kong's complex Cold War

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[2] Earlier Cold War scholarship on the Third World primarily focuses on the intricate international relations; see Hale and Kienle (1996), Ali (1999), Aldrich *et al.* (2000), and Westad (2005). The 2020s witnesses a turn towards transnational literary studies in the Third World; see Hammond (2020), Kalliney (2022), Yoon (2023).

[3] Odd Arne Westad (1993), Jian Chen (2001), and Chung-in Moon *et al.* (2001) are the foundational works in international relations, with respective foci on China and South Korea. Lisa Yoneyama (2016) examines (post-)Cold War Japan with approaches of cultural anthropology.

[4] Working within Asian American studies, Jodi Kim (2010), Josephine Park (2016), and Simeon Man (2018) critique the US's imperial project in Asia and Asian America. Other scholars of the Vietnam War such as Yến Lê Espiritu (2014) and Viet Thanh Nguyen (2016) establish the field of critical refugee studies.

[5] Chen Kuan-hsing (2006; translated into English in 2010) and Michael Szonyi (2008) respectively examine two islands—Taiwan and Quemoy—that border communist China and the "free" world. More recently, scholars further extend the geographical scope to tell alternative Cold War stories; see Y-Dang Troeung (2021) on Cambodia (officially not at war with the US), and Jini Kim Waston (2021) on the US-allied countries of the Philippines, Singapore, and Indonesia, alongside with South Korea.

experience. This is partly because the US and the Soviet Union had limited presences in the city. Hong Kong did not undergo American military invasions as were the cases in Korea (1950–1955) and Vietnam (1955–1975); and as the last colony of the British Empire in Asia, Hong Kong was blocked from any significant influence of the Soviet Union. Instead, the Cold War for the common Hong Kong person was mostly experienced as a battle between Mao Zedong's Chinese Communist Party and Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Party of China (Kuomintang or KMT).[6] But even so, Hong Kong did not suffer ideological violence in the same way as Maoist social movements in China (1950–1976)[7] or Taiwan's anti-communism Martial Law period (1949–1987). Furthermore, with a colonial government that neither overtly supported nor defied communism (a point I will unpack in this chapter soon), Hong Kong was in between the First World and the Third World; this ambivalent political position disqualified Hong Kong from participating in the Third World's non-aligned movement.[8] Because Hong Kong's experience did not conform to any of these familiar historical patterns, it becomes difficult to analyze how to understand Hong Kong in relation to the Cold War. For these reasons, even though Asian and Asian American scholars have expanded Cold War studies of Asia into a diverse field with critiques of colonialism, imperialism, militarism, and nationalism, critical research on Hong Kong remains wanting. This dissertation addresses this gap by mapping Hong Kong onto a Cold War framework in order to expose a much more covert style of dividing peoples and cultures, wherein major powers and ideologies compete and collaborate with one another to establish the postwar global order that we live in today.

[6] Incidents such as the pro-KMT riot on October 10, 1956 and the pro-CCP riot in May 1967 reminded the everyday people of the ideological battle in Hong Kong.

[7] This time frame roughly covers the Land Reform Movement (1948–1953), Three-anti and Five-anti Campaigns (1951–1952), the Great Leap Forward (1957–1961), and the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976).

[8] For the history of the Non-aligned Movement, Third Worldism, and the 1955 Bundung Conference, see the special issues "Bandung/Third Worldism" (2005) and "Bandung/Third World 60 Years" (2016) in *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*.

Mapping Hong Kong onto the Cold War

Hong Kong Exceptionalism

Among the handful of current studies of Cold War Hong Kong, most tend to take a liberal stance (and therefore implicitly pro-US perspective) and read the city as a site of exception, as if it was a space immune to the superpowers of the US and the Soviet Union as well as the regional powers of CCP, KMT, and British colonialism. The first and now widely cited book-length project to reflect this approach is Chi-kwan Mark's *Hong Kong and the Cold War: Anglo-American Relations 1949–1957* (2004). Taking issue with earlier Western scholarship that either dismisses or exaggerates the Cold War tensions in Hong Kong, Mark argues that Hong Kong's position as "an outpost for intelligence gathering, propaganda, and even covert action by the Americans, the Chinese Communists, and the Nationalists" (5) was in fact "indirect, discreet, and non-confrontational in nature" (6). His argument is a valuable attempt to examine Hong Kong beyond the Western-centric Cold War imaginary, which is based on ideological conflicts. However, Mark's scholarship becomes problematic when he takes the lack of conflict in Hong Kong as an inherent social feature rather than a social construct. Mark infers that Hong Kong, unlike other British colonies, has a high tolerance for colonial rule. When describing Hong Kong in the 1950s, Mark states that

> The Hong Kong Chinese were generally *tolerant* of British rule, whilst the British colonizers did not exploit Hong Kong in a way that aroused strong anti-foreign feeling. Occasionally, there were violent protests against the British administration in Hong Kong, but not serious racial and political conflicts as had occurred in other British colonies. In short, Hong Kong remained a *harmonious* society despite the many problems and challenges the bulk of the Chinese faced in the post-war period. The coexistence of the two races was indicative of the *cosmopolitan* nature of Hong Kong, a meeting point between East and West. (18, my emphasis)

This passage points to Cold War Hong Kong as an anomaly in the British Empire during a time when global anti-colonial movements were taking place across Africa, Latin America, and Asia (e.g. Indonesia in 1945, the Philippines 1946, India 1947, Burma 1948, Malaya 1957). According to Mark, instead of rising up against the British, Hong Kong Chinese rebuilt their lives in the postwar years. As I will show soon, this rather peaceful and seemingly "natural" urban development in Hong Kong was a deliberate construct based on a secretive diplomatic agreement between Beijing and London after

World War Two. Mark, however, avoids analyzing this inter-imperial phenomenon and concludes hastily that Hong Kong is inherently a free cosmopolis, tolerable of racial tensions between the British and the Chinese. Ignoring the grassroots resistance history in the immediate years of postwar Hong Kong,[9] Mark implies that the British colonial rule was benign and that the Hong Kong people did not express any form of anticolonial resistance.

Differing from Mark's analysis which situates Hong Kong in the context of the British-American empire, another group of established scholars map Cold War Hong Kong more closely onto the historicity of China, an ever-expanding regional power. For instance, Wang Gengwu, the earliest leading figure in the studies of overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, focuses on another unusual feature of Hong Kong. In "Hong Kong's Twentieth Century: The Global Setting," an introduction to the essay collection *Hong Kong in the Cold War* (2016), Wang compares Cold War Hong Kong with other Chinese regions, including the mainland, Taiwan, and other overseas Chinese resettlements. He argues that Hong Kong "retained its unique position for Chinese both inside and outside China" because

> The city was not under Chinese rule. Its people were not, unlike the Chinese overseas everywhere else, subject to sovereign states or new nations emerging out of colonialism expecting loyalty. And they enjoyed the unusual advantage of living under a British view of global linkages that was deliberately liberal and undemanding. … As this exceptional position developed, Hong Kong became, *more by default than by any specific effort*, the heart of a Chinese global outlook that was only just below the surface of Cold War concerns. (7-8, my emphasis)

Like Mark Chi-kwan's remarks about Hong Kong's atypical, free-of-oppression role within the British Empire, Wang's analysis emphasizes that Hong Kong is an exceptional Chinese place. On the one hand, it kept a distance from the newly established China and was shielded from the global revolutionary influence of Mao Zedong. On the other hand, Hong Kong maintained a strong "sense of ethnic consciousness … [which] enabled a global persona that attracted attention among Chinese everywhere, including those on the mainland" (8). Wang interprets this specific phenomenon as an

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[9] For example, Edmond Tsang argues in *Hong Kong's Earliest Political Parties and Fighters for Democracy: The Reform Club of Hong Kong and Hong Kong Civic Association* (2019) that as early as the 1950s Hong Kong society witnessed a high level of political engagement, led by grassroots organizations.

incomparable privilege for the Hong Kong Chinese to access absolute freedom and autonomy in making political, economic, and cultural choices. However, despite his explicit mention that the British rule in Hong Kong was "deliberately liberal," Wang idealizes a free Cold War Hong Kong that came into being effortlessly, absent of governmental control and imperial design—a narrative derived from the (neo)liberal discourse of the "invisible hand" of the "free" market. For Wang Gengwu, Hong Kong is a Chinese city that was more free than the rest of the "free" world, a true Cold War model in Asia for the West.

By focusing on Hong Kong's position within the two camps of the Cold War (the West and China), Mark and Wang represent the discursive foundation of Hong Kong's past, present, and future. Such a foundation is perhaps best described as Hong Kong exceptionalism. That is, Cold War Hong Kong is a time-space that is simultaneously the pivot point and the outsider of postwar global order; it is imagined as an anachronic and de-politicized site. Built upon such an exceptionalist reading, most existing Cold War studies of Hong Kong use the narrative of lack of conflict to omit the specific Cold War violences imposed on Hong Kong society and its people. For example, the prolific historian Priscilla Roberts opens and ends her "Cold War Hong Kong: The Foundations" prologue to *Hong Kong in the Cold War*, with the following two quotes:

> For Hong Kong, the Cold War was a distinct and crucial period in its own evolution and in its relations with China and the rest of the world. Without the global clash of ideologies, the city might well have failed to win and keep the key nodal position it attained in those years. (15)

> Hong Kong exemplified the saying that the true mark of high intelligence is the ability to hold two conflicting beliefs at the same time. … in Cold War Hong Kong, two or more opposed and seemingly incompatible realities could simultaneously be true and often were. (23)

As a co-editor of the collection, Roberts sets an unambivalent tone that celebrates the Cold War for bringing Hong Kong economic-political benefits and commends the major powers in Hong Kong for their diplomatic manoeuvrings. Like Mark and Wang, Robert's exceptionalist reading reflects a certain interpretive violence imposed on Hong Kong. By casting the Cold War as the starting point of the Hong Kong that we know of today, these scholars erase Hong Kong's centuries-long trans-regional relationships with South China, Southeast Asia, and the Asia Pacific. They also de-historicize Hong Kong people as apathetic subjects with few or no contesting tendencies and even as beneficiaries of

Western colonization, thereby isolating Hong Kong's experience from both the global Euro-American colonization and the Chinese struggle towards modernity. As a result, Hong Kong is imagined as a hyper-capitalist and apolitical space.[10]

Neutrality as Cold War Violence

This dissertation reads the lack of conflict in Hong Kong as another form of Cold War violence. Rather than understanding Hong Kong via exceptionalism, I argue that the city's Cold War experience exposed an inter-imperial logic through which the global postwar order was established, and new hierarchies and new asymmetries were solidified. I work from a basic point that the singular situation of Hong Kong was the product of deliberate planning from both sides of the Cold War (in this case, China and the West). I am particularly indebted to Laura Madokoro's *Elusive Refuge: Chinese Migrants in the Cold War* (2016), which examines the violence experienced by Chinese migrants across Asia Pacific not as the result of the aggression of individual nations, but in terms of an entangled imperial web constituted by China, the British Empire, the US, and other white settler societies. Unlike the scholarship that I reviewed previously, Madokoro analyzes the behaviours of the major powers to offer a historical understanding of how the everyday Chinese communities in Hong Kong, mainland China, and Southeast Asia were impacted by the Cold War. By doing so, Madokoro advances the methodology of Cold War studies from a superpower- and region-based approach to an inter-imperial and transnational one. Examined in this new paradigm, the so-called neutral Cold War Hong Kong was a deliberate result of the negotiations among multiple colonial, national, and local powers, rather than a natural border area that happened to serve the interests of every major power.

To transform Hong Kong into such a collaborative space, these opposing Cold War forces had to be at peace with one another within the city, at least on a diplomatic level. As Madokoro points out, the British colonial authorities in Hong Kong

[10] Today, this imagination is complicated by Hong Kong's recent political dissent movements against China's iron-fisted rule. However, I want to point out that despite the diverse activist agenda happening on the ground, the West largely interprets Hong Kong's political resistance as solely anti-communist, rather than an anti-imperial or anti-capitalist. This Western interpretation is undoubtedly a continuation of Cold War mentality.

> maintained a neutral stance in the standoff between East and West. Neutrality was considered a question of survival. To choose sides would be to risk the animosity of the communist regime in Beijing and the economic survival of the colony. This commitment to neutrality had important implications for the movement of people from the PRC as the colonial government refused to participate in the propaganda exercises around Cold War refugees. In fact, local authorities regularly sought to deter movement into the colony given Hong Kong's overcrowded conditions and fragile infrastructure. (5)

Here, Madokoro shows that Hong Kong might seem neutral but it was not a "free" place, especially not for the Chinese border crossers. While Britain, the US, and China could reach a diplomatic truce and used Hong Kong as a cornerstone to consolidate each of their positions in the new global order, their political inconsistencies were manifested in the chaotic and convoluted migration policies targeted at the mainland Chinese. For peoples who have lived in the greater Cantonese border area connecting Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland, the sudden imposition of border control caused much confusion and pain. In other words, the lack of conflict among major powers was only possible at the expense of violating people's physical and cultural relationships to their living space. It is in this sense that the Cold War neutrality (the diplomatic peacefulness) in Hong Kong was another form of violence imposed on peoples who took, or could have taken, Hong Kong as home.

Moreover, diplomatic neutrality camouflaged imperial presences of the US and China in Hong Kong, making it more challenging to pinpoint and resist the imperial violence. As the dominant Cold War superpower in Asia, the US had a surprisingly muted appearance in Hong Kong. Unlike Japan, the Philippines, and Taiwan, Hong Kong was not an official part of America's first island chain (a line of militarized islands)[11] against China's communist influence in the Asia Pacific.[12] However, British Hong Kong was the US's indispensable ally outside of the military realm. In addition to continuing its

[11] The first island chain refers to a transregional, offshore archipelago that encompasses the entire eastern seaboard of China. It "centers primarily on the Japanese home islands, the Ryukyus, Taiwan, and the Philippines," in which the US established military bases in various forms (Yoshihara 2012, 294).

[12] In "Post/colonial geography, post/Cold War complication: Okinawa, Taiwan, and Hong Kong as Liminal Island Chain," Chih-ming Wang mentions that "geographically, Hong Kong has never been conceived as part of the first island chain" (2021, 9).

lucrative trading business with the British colony,[13] Washington arranged Rest and Recreation activities in Hong Kong beginning in the Korean War and continuing throughout the Vietnam War.[14] At the same time, instead of performing the hypocritical role of an anti-colonial liberator who saves the peoples from the previous oppressors (such as encouraging anti-Japanese militarism sentiment in Taiwan and anti-Dutch movements in Indonesia), "the post-war US administrations generally regarded Hong Kong as an exception in the process of [anti-European] decolonization" (Mark 2004, 32). In maintaining British power in Hong Kong, Washington could keep monitoring China in a quiet but secured way.

Contrary to the dominant Cold War imaginary, Beijing shared the American and British agenda for Hong Kong. Very much against today's understanding that China has always had absolute authoritarian control over Hong Kong, Beijing had intentionally performed a much more distant and restrained role since the establishment of PRC in 1949. In return for this restraint, China received the first Western diplomatic recognition from the United Kingdom in January 1950.[15] Historical studies (including both the pro-Beijing[16] and pro-West[17] camps) and memoirs (covering perspectives of colonial nostalgic,[18] Maoist,[19] and non-Maoist leftist narratives[20]) have confirmed the longtime hypothesis that Beijing negotiated a secret agreement with London regarding Hong Kong's sovereignty. Based on archival materials recently made accessible, these writings reveal that China's diplomatic policy for Hong Kong was "planning for long-term gains, and making full use of it (*changqi dasuan, chongfen liyong*)." In other words,

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[13] Peter E. Hamilton, *Made in Hong Kong: Transpacific Networks and a New History of Globalization* (2021).

[14] Peter E. Hamilton, "'A Haven for Tortured Souls': Hong Kong in the Vietnam War" (2014); Chi-kwan Mark, "Vietnam War Tourists: US Naval visits to Hong Kong and British-American-Chinese relations, 1965–1968" (2010).

[15] A partial diplomatic relationship between China and the UK was established in 1950. On March 13, 1972, Beijing accorded full recognition of the UK government, permitting the exchange of ambassadors. See Yu Ruxin's *Hong Kong, 1967* (2012), 304.

[16] Yu Ruxin, *Hong Kong 1967* (2012).

[17] Priscilla Roberts and Odd Arne Westad, *China, Hong Kong, and the Long 1970s* (2017).

[18] See Ching Cheong's *The Complete Story of Hong Kong 67 Riot* (2018) and Lo Yan Wai Connie's documentary *Vanished Archives* (2016).

[19] See the 67 Synergy Group organized by Shi Zhongying.

[20] See Cheung Gary Ka-wai, *Hong Kong's Watershed: The 1967 Riots* (2009); Luo Hailei, *My Father Luo Fu* (2011).

Beijing intended to take full advantage of Hong Kong as a British colony, an international trading port, and a Cold War listening post for the new China. As a result, China actively advised against any anti-British social movements in Hong Kong. This policy was thoroughly implemented throughout the Cold War years, even for heated issues such as the 1967 anti-colonial riots, the Vietnamese refugee crises, and the Sino-British negotiations of sovereignty transfer.

For the declining British Empire, it was in their best interest to keep Hong Kong neutral and to further the economic and political benefits of China and the US, as the latter two became the dominant forces in the postwar Asia Pacific. To actively forge such neutrality, the colonial government transitioned Hong Kong away from a "barren island"[21] and developed it into *a model colony in a postcolonial world*. A letter to London from MacLehose in 1974 exposes this imperial design:

> I think we should do everything we can to make Hong Kong a model city, of international standing, with high standards of education, technology and culture, as well as industrial, commercial and financial facilities, from which China can gain great benefit, but which China might be reluctant to try to absorb while she still has some need of the material benefits it offers and while her own conditions remain so different. … [This] would to some extent safeguard … the British and other foreign interests in the colony. (4–5)[22]

It is clear that modernizing Hong Kong serves two imperial purposes for the British Empire: 1) to benefit from peaceful relations with both China and the US, and 2) to use the colony as an opportunity to refashion its global image from brutal oppressor to builder of the postwar world. Today, the colonial nostalgia—a sentiment that associates colonialism with free market, urban development, and cosmopolitan identity—felt by

[21] Contrary to the popular imagination today, the British Empire had not considered Hong Kong an important colony until the 1970s. Echoing Queen Victoria at the very beginning of the colonial seizure in 1841, Lord Palmerston, the foreign secretary at the time, expressed his explicit disappointment in having Hong Kong— "a barren island with hardly a House upon it," in his words—as an imperial trading port (qtd. in Wasserstrom 2020, 25-26). Even one hundred years later, after the British took over Hong Kong after the Japanese Occupation (1941-1945), the then Governor Alexander Grantham (governing between 1947 and 1957) belittled Hong Kong merely as "a small village" and entrepôt (qtd. in Louis 1997, 1060); it, therefore, was not worthy of much political and constitutional reform according to Governor Grantham (Louis 1997, 1065; 1069).

[22] Letter from MacLehose to London, 27 May. 1974, NA, FCO 40/ 547.

many public members of the Hong Kong Chinese is a byproduct of the British construction of Hong Kong during the Cold War.[23]

These self-contradictory and entangled imperial intentions to maintain Hong Kong neutral, in fact, imposed violence for different peoples of Hong Kong, who arrived at this border area via various routes over centuries. As I have discussed above, the diplomatic neutrality in Hong Kong, on the one hand, presented the city as a peaceful and cosmopolitan haven, while on the other hand, restricted travellers, migrants, and refugees from accessing Hong Kong. That is to say, in the absence of war and military atrocity that were rampant in many regions of the Asia Pacific,[24] Hong Kong's neutral position during the Cold War nevertheless divided peoples and territories that had been connected, alienated individuals and communities from social relationships, and eventually violated the heterogeneous process of forming cultural identities.

An Archipelagic Reading of Cold War Hong Kong

zhou *(continent): land surrounded by water*

lu *(mainland): land above water*

dao *(island): mountains in water*[25]

In the previous section, I have charted that both the discourse and the history of the Cold War are key in constructing Hong Kong as an *isolated* island. The dominant discourse in the studies of Cold War Hong Kong interprets the inter-imperial mechanism of diplomatic neutrality with an underlying paradigm of liberal exceptionalism. To combat these discursive and historical violences, this dissertation draws on archipelago as both metaphor and materiality to re-conceptualize Hong Kong as part of a larger network of mainlands and islands that *connects* peoples, cultures, languages, and territories. I turn to the long-ignored Sinophone literature produced in Hong Kong to tell this new Cold War story. By Sinophone literature, I refer to the literary works published in the written

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[23] For the critique of colonial nostalgia and MacLehose's colonial governance, see Lui Tak-lok, *1970s Deja Vu* (2012, 141-86).

[24] John Price calls the Cold War atrocity the "remilitarization of the Pacific" (2011, 7).

[25] The definitions of the three Chinese characters (*zhou*, *lu*, and *dao*) that I gave in the epigraph are based on information from *Xinhua zidian* (New China dictionary) and *Hanzi ziyuan: dangdai xin shuowenjiezi* (Chinese Character etymology: contemporary new Shuowen Jiezi). See the Appendix for the Chinese characters.

Chinese language by Hong Kong authors (within and outside Hong Kong) who speak Cantonese, Mandarin, English, and other languages. As I will further unpack in the section "Languaging Hong Kong," since the term Chinese literature usually implies that China is an uncontested unified entity, I find Sinophone literature a useful notion to emphasize the heterogeneous, regional lived experiences articulated in the written language of Chinese. The Sinophone literary texts studied in this dissertation—Ye Si's novella *Paper Cuts*, Xi Xi's short story cycle *My City*, and a group of understudied short stories by Yang Mingxian, Yan Chungou, Song Mu, Xin Qi Shi, Lv Qi Shi, and Peng Cao—show that linguistic, ethnic, and regional differences were bridged as everyday Hong Kong people forged alternative relationships with one another to undermine Cold War imperialisms.

Before situating this dissertation within the scholarship of archipelagic studies, I want to first explain the geocultural and historical relevance of the notion of archipelago in the context of Hong Kong. The place that we now know as Hong Kong is comprised of two major islands (Hong Kong Island and Lantau Island), a peninsula (Kowloon and the New Territories) connecting to the Chinese mainland, and more than 260 outlying islets (see Figure 1).[26] In other words, although Hong Kong is often imagined as an area defined by clear borderlines, it is in fact an archipelago with jagged, moving boundaries. Here, I use the term archipelago to evoke an image of connectedness among the diverse geographical features that configure Hong Kong. Such an image presents a Hong Kong that is plural and expansive, contesting the Western colonial and Chinese national ways of dismissing Hong Kong as a small, secluded island. Moreover, I find that the concept of archipelago has the potential to resonate with the non-binary epistemology of land and water expressed in the Chinese language. In Western epistemology, the idea of continent refers to the continuous and expanding land, which is derived from its etymologic root in Latin; it is often considered as opposed to water, such as in the phrase terra firma, meaning solid ground and dry land. This binaristic perception of land and water makes the former a preferable object for human control. However, this is not the only way to conceptualize the relationship among human, land, and water. As the epigraph of this section shows, the logographic origins of the Chinese

[26] According to a 2022 government document entitled "Hong Kong Geographic Data" released by the Survey and Mapping Office, Lands Department of Hong Kong, "there are a total of 261 islands with area of 500 [square meters] or over." Although most of these islets are uninhabited, they also include inhabited ones such as Tung Ping Chau, Grass Island, and Lamma Island.

characters for continent, mainland, and island indicate that land can be perceived in an intimate, not opposing, relationship with water. To some extent, a mainland is a big island and an island is a small mainland, both of which are parts of an ever-changing archipelago of land and water. I am aware that this relativist claim can be stretched into a problematic universalization that overwrites the geocultural specificities of islands in comparison to, for example, inlands. Instead, by intentionally blurring the conceptual line between islands and mainlands, an archipelagic approach allows us to see Hong Kong as connected with the Chinese mainland without having it to become subordinate to the latter.

Figure 1. A map showing the archipelagic formation of Hong Kong.
The figure reveals selected details from “Hong Kong Geographic Data.”

Hong Kong, literally meaning the “fragrant harbour” in Chinese, is part of the larger body of land and water in the region centring what is now called the South China Sea. Since signing the third and final colonial treaty in 1898, the colonial territory of Hong Kong has spread about twenty miles north into the Chinese mainland, turning the peninsula south to the Shenzhen River into what is now known as the New Territories of

Hong Kong.[27] Throughout the Cold War and even till this day, the northern border areas of the New Territories—such as Sha Tau Kok (meaning the crest of the mountain and the cape of the sea)—are culturally more connected to southern China than the urban centre of Hong Kong Island.

Extending the scope of land and water beyond the greater region of China, Hong Kong was historically a nodal point in the wider framework of migration movements across the Pacific and the Atlantic, along the shorelines of Southeast Asia, and among the mainlands and islands of Asia, North America, and Oceania. Historian Henry Yu calls this migratory phenomenon the "Cantonese Pacific."[28] Focusing on the nineteenth and early twentieth century, Yu explains this remarkable migration pattern that

> Speaking various local dialects of Cantonese, and creating local and regional networks out of village and family patterns of migration, hundreds of thousands of trans-Pacific migrants in the 19th and early 20th century created a single regional migration system with nodes centered upon the ports of Hong Kong, San Francisco, Victoria, Vancouver, and Sydney, as well as other ports such as Honolulu, Seattle, Yokohama, and Manzanillo. […Through these ports] a vast geographic pattern of migrations extended all across North America, Australia, New Zealand, Latin America, and the Caribbean. (126–27)

Building upon the colonial infrastructure in Hong Kong, the Cantonese migrants created intricate village-oriented support networks before the system of nation-states took global control in the late twentieth century. To be noted that even though Hong Kong had been a British colony since the 1840s, the border areas between China (Qing Dynasty) and the British colonial territory remained unchecked and porous until the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, the violent embarkment of the Cold War in Asia.[29] The open space of Hong Kong, therefore, enables it to become not only a nodal point for the coastal Chinese communities but also a hub for merchants, travellers, and diasporas of other ethnic and religious groups throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Apart from the British and American expatriates, Japanese, Portuguese, Jewish, and South

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[27] There are three colonial treaties that give shape to the modern Hong Kong: the 1842 Treaty of Nanking for the colonial seizure of Hong Kong Island, the 1860 Convention of Peking for Kowloon Peninsula, and the 1898 Second Convention of Peking for the New Territories.

[28] See Henry Yu's "The Cantonese Pacific in the Making of Nations" (2018, 126).

[29] For Hong Kong's border history, see Ruan Zhi, *Inquiries about Entry: A History of the Hong Kong Frontier Closed Area* (2014).

Asians all had strong influence on Hong Kong's economic and social history.[30] The land and water of Hong Kong bring forth an archipelago of cultures and diverse ways of coastal lives.

With Hong Kong's geocultural and historical specificities in mind, I now turn to archipelagic studies to show that how the field provides a new angle of critiquing various forms of colonialism and imperialism. As an emerging field under the broadly defined postcolonial studies, archipelagic studies has gained growing academic attention since the 2010s. Scholars (Stratford et al. 2011; Pugh 2013; Stephens and Miguel 2020; Roberts 2021) often situate the field in two schools of thought: one represented by the Caribbean writers Derek Walcott (1992) and Édouard Glissant (1997), and the other represented by the Pacific Islander thinkers Epeli Hauʻofa (1995) and Craig Santos Perez (2015). As disciplines across humanities and social sciences expand the regional and historical scope of archipelagic studies, a principal argument remain the anchor of the field. That is, islands are connected, not divided, by ocean. This is most prominently seen in the seminal essay "Our Sea of Islands" by Hauʻofa. Challenging the contemporary European way of conceptualizing the Pacific island countries as "too small, too poor, too isolated to develop any meaningful degree of autonomy" (89–90), Hauʻofa returns to traditional Oceanic knowledge and imagination, according to which each island is a linking point that brings together the sea, the sky, as well as other islands. Thus, the Pacific is a "sea of islands" rather than "islands in a far sea" (91). Although other Indigenous scholars such as Ingersoll (2016) have rightfully pointed out that we should not romanticize the hardship of ocean life, the conflicts among oceanic communities, and the diversity of islander identities, Hauʻofa's theorization nevertheless provides an alternative starting point to think through material and social challenges produced in various forms of colonialism. In the following, I will look at three cases to show how the archipelagic studies can help re-evaluate Hong Kong's experience as a transoceanic archipelagic site, and how in doing so the field can broaden ways of examining Cold War histories and their ongoing aftermath.

My first case considers a recent study of the Vietnamese resettlement by Asian Americanist scholar Evyn Le Espiritu Gandhi. In *Archipelago of Resettlement*, Espiritu

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[30] See Patricia Lim's *Forgotten Souls: A Social History of the Hong Kong Cemetery* (2011); Ding Xinbao and Lo Shuk Ying's *Not of My Kind: Foreign Communities in Pre-War Hong Kong* (2014).

Gandhi interrogates a vexed situation faced by Vietnamese refugees who built their new homes on Indigenous lands of Guam and Israel-Palestine. Parallel to but different from that of Hong Kong, it is a situation marked by multiple dispossessions and contested claims of belonging, one that is produced by the US military aggression in Asia during the Cold War and the ongoing settler colonial violence across the Pacific and North America. For Espiritu Gandhi, "the practice of tracing an archipelago of Vietnamese refugee resettlement" is a project that illuminates "an archipelago of US empire and a corresponding archipelago of trans-Indigenous resistance" (11). Putting Indigenous and settler colonial studies in conversation with critical refugee studies, *Archipelago of Resettlement* calls for an ethical relationship among displaced peoples by thinking with non-Western epistemologies of land and water. Particularly, the book dwells on Vietnamese expressions centring on the word *nước* (simultaneously meaning water, country, and homeland). Like *nước*, as she further interprets the overlapping non-binary relationship between land and water, "an archipelago is made up of both land and water. A duality without division; a contrast without contradiction" (10). In doing so, Espiritu Gandhi provides substantial ways of re-imagining forms of identity, belonging, and relationship that radically go beyond the paradigm offered by Western epistemology and the English language. Although Hong Kong cannot be charted directly onto the same archipelagic framework, the method presented in this book inspires me to think more thoroughly with the various Chinese expressions (oral and written) to imagine Hong Kong beyond colonial, national, and separatist terms.

Analyzing Sinophone literature from Taiwan and Malay, Nicolai Volland's "Fluid Horizons" (2022) provides a second case of inspiration to study Hong Kong with an archipelagic approach. Volland makes an insightful observation about the relationship between landscape and knowledge production:

> In its own civilizational imaginary and much of its literature, China has been construed in continental terms, as a land-based entity—an empire situated on terra firma … bounded by deserts, mountains, jungles, and oceans—places inhabited (if at all) by semibarbaric or barbaric peoples. This civilizational self-understanding … has … engendered a belief in ancient and reliable categories of thought and knowledge. The growth of critical interest in Chinese literatures from beyond and outside the Chinese mainland, as well as the rise of Sinophone studies, have exposed the artificiality and partiality of these notions and revealed them to be less stable than they may appear. (338)

Volland speaks about a well-known, hegemonic phenomenon in the Chinese culture. The political and cultural centers in ancient China were built in the plain area surrounding the Yellow River. This included today's provinces of Henan, Shandong, Shanxi, and Hebei. Peoples and cultures from the non-plain area, as Volland points out, were and continue to be considered inferior. For example, the coastal regions of southern China, including that of the Cantonese, were historically called as "southern barbarians" (*nanman*). Volland, as with many scholars in Sinophone studies, emphasize that we need to look at literatures written "beyond and outside the Chinese mainland" to contest Chineseness as a centralized cultural symbol (338). Thus, by turning to what Volland calls "the archipelagic region of the western Pacific" to examine Taiwanese Indigenous writer Syaman Rapongan (member of the Tao people in Lanyu Island) and Chinese Malaysian author Ng Kim Chew (341), Volland argues that their fictional stories "challenge land-based systems and categories of thought" by representing fluid cultural identities (342). Volland's article is valuable to this dissertation because of its geoliterary focus in Sinophone literature. At the same time, the article seems to reinforce a binary between land and sea, and, by extension, re-essentialize the problematic boundary of proper China. This risks to foreclose opportunities of reading resistant potential from literatures produced in other landscapes, such as deserts, mountains, and jungles (as Volland lists alongside with oceans), as well as many more that might exist in a larger mainland. That is to say, in order to thoroughly critique Sinocentrism, we also need to consider more radical ways to build alternative relationships with the landmasses and waterwaves, and attend to people who live in different geocultural formations within the mainland. As someone who was born and migrated within the Chinese mainland, I think it is crucial for an archipelagic approach to emphasize a reading of land and water as *integral* to each other. It is in this sense that an archipelagic reading of Sinophone literature from Hong Kong has the potential to not only build solidarity with literatures written *within* mainland China but also illuminate the resistant potentials in the latter.

Lastly, I turn to Wang Chih-Ming's 2021 article entitled "Post/Colonial Geography, Post/Cold War Complication: Okinawa, Taiwan, and Hong Kong as Liminal Island Chain." Writing in the conjunction of cultural studies and human geography, Wang proposes to read the islands in East Asia as a "crucial aspect of border thinking" that challenges "major power dynamics" among China, Japan, and the US (2). Particularly, Wang examines a transnational Chinese diasporic activism (taking place in Hong Kong,

Taiwan, and the US in the early 1970s) against the state contestations (the US, China, and Japan) over the Diaoyu(tai)/Senkaku islands. As part of his argument, Wang reads Hong Kong Chinese as fellow rebels of the coastal peoples of the Amis (one of many indigenous communities residing in Taiwan before the mainland Chinese settlers) and the Okinawan (part of the Ryukyuan islanders, distinct from the ruling Yamato people in Japan). Since both of the latter two have a long history of fighting against multiple hegemonic powers, this new reading allows Hong Kong to occupy a new subject position—no longer an extension of the Chinese continent, a trophy of the British colonialism, or a listening post for the American imperium—but a resistant island-subject connected to a larger web of sea and land.

Importantly, the three cases above reveal an emerging field of archipelagic studies that does not necessarily center an American or anti-American narrative when critiquing the Cold War. To a large extent, this is because the fundamental concerns of this field originate from experiences of small places (such as the Caribbean and Pacific islands), compared to the adjacent field of transpacific studies which primarily draws on experiences of how the major nation-states (such as China, Japan, and South Korea) interact with the US. Since the US did not have a strong presence in Cold War Hong Kong (see the previous section "Cold War Mapping"), archipelagic studies opens up additional space to critically study Hong Kong experience alongside analytics provided in the more established field of transpacific studies. As Hong Kong-based scholar Tan Jia proposes in the roundtable entitled "The Minor Transpacific," a practice of "transpacific inter-referencing" among small places needs to be undertaken so that the hegemonic place of the US is provincialized (22). To be clear, I do not intend to deny the material and cultural influences of the US imperialism and other major powers within Hong Kong during the Cold War.[31] Rather, my point is that scholars of Hong Kong should not prioritize disclosing American involvement and overt anti-American materials (as I was myself in the long process of thinking through this project) to justify the ways we approach the specificities of Hong Kong history and culture.

An archipelagic reading, therefore, emphasizes that the geocultural location of Hong Kong—equally proximate to land and water—produces a particular culture, in

[31] One of such examples is seen in Peter E. Hamilton's "'A Haven for Tortured Souls': Hong Kong in the Vietnam War" (2014).

which the energy of resistance flows in the coastal city, like the way water shapes rocks, sometimes silently and deeply, other times abrasively and spectacularly, but always in a changing rhythmic manner.

Hong Kong Seventies

De-Cold War Space in a Model Colony

In Hong Kong, due to the politics of neutrality that I have outlined, an "anti-Cold War" narrative has not reached a common meaning that is shared among the public (like in mainland China)[32] or within an influential scholarly group (like in Taiwan[33] and North America[34]). And it is precisely in the absence of a reified anti-Cold War proposition that arises an opportunity to redefine what I call a de-Cold War aesthetic might look like. By de-Cold War aesthetic, I mean a resistance style of carving out a space, however small or temporary, in which neither British-American imperialism nor Chinese nationalism is the totalizing force. This dissertation focuses on a period I call the long seventies (1970–1989, hereafter the seventies) because it is a heightened time when the British-American power and the Chinese state were competing and collaborating with one another on a more or less equal footing. On the one hand, there were no conventional anti-colonial struggles or national independence movements in Hong Kong; on the other hand, the lack of an absolute discursive domination opened up a de-Cold War space for social-cultural experiments. For Hong Kong's Sinophone literary writing during the seventies,[35] in the absence of Cold War censorship or support, the stories represent the

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[32] In mainland China, the discourse of "anti-Cold War thinking (*fan lengzhan siwei*)" means to denounce the US-led Western world that stigmatizes PRC and interferes with China's governing policy in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Xinjiang, and Tibet.

[33] For non-pro-US intellectuals in Taiwan, the concept of de-Cold War refers to the redress of the collective psychological terror caused by the KMT-versus-CCP battle, which was reframed and amplified by the Cold War. In *Asia as Method*, Kuan Hsing Chen further develops the notion of de-Cold War and defines it as movements that "[confront] the legacies and continuing tensions of the cold war" (2010, x).

[34] In North American cultural studies, the critique of the Cold War centers on the US-led policy of othering cultural, racial, ethnic, and sexual differences as the alien, the traitor, and ultimately the Cold War enemy.

[35] In contrast, the Anglophone writing in and about Hong Kong during the same period, such as Robert Elegant's *Dynasty* (1977), was largely supported by the US. Notably, the US also supported Sinophone writing in the first decade of the Cold War; some famous and controversial examples include Eileen Chang's two bilingual novels *Naked Earth* (1954) and *The Rice Sprout Song* (1955). For critical analyses of Eileen Chang's Cold War writing, see Christopher Lee's

city's resistant connections with other mainlands and islands in South China, Southeast Asia, Europe, and the Pacific.

Sociologist Lui Tai-lok points out in his 2012 book *1970s Deja Vu* that the seventies is a temporal anchor to understand how the common Hong Kong people imagine their relationship to the city in the past, present, and future through what he calls a sense of detachment (*shuligan*). Instead of reproducing colonial nostalgia when remembering this period, Lui calls for more attention to a resistant potential in the midst of British colonial rule and the Cold War. He argues that one of the most distinct Cold War experience in colonial Hong Kong is "a sense of detachment" (49). Not to be understood as the lack of sense of belonging or apathy (*lengmo*)—a stereotypical way of describing Hong Kong people's relationship with the space—the sense of detachment is

> a state of psychological distance from what is at hand. It describes an attitude of not easily accepting, being persuaded, or supporting any ideas. An attitude that always thinks about an alternative way-out in every situation. … This sense of detachment gives Hong Kong people a certain cultural space and vitality. They do not fully embrace or submit to British rule and culture, and they see China in a different light. (*1970s Deja Vu* 50)

To me, Lui's concept of "detachment" is one of the most insightful interpretations about Hong Kong's collective response to the Cold War politics of neutrality. The sense of detachment not only suggests suspicion towards propaganda and promises made by the Cold War powers, but it also compels the common people to create political and cultural meaning in their everyday lives.

Building on Lui's scholarship and my earlier discussion of neutrality, I argue that the years between 1970 and 1989 were a particularly rich period for international and cross-cultural identifications. These two were dates respectively marked by a series of student-led social movements in Hong Kong and Beijing's military crackdown of the Tiananmen protest. From the perspective of the common people, the former event signaled an alternative beginning in Hong Kong's modern history by marking an internationalist resistance. The movements led by students and youth diverged from the Maoist leftist (*zuopai*) revolutionary tradition as they were inspired by the transnational anti-imperial momentum. Notably, organized by grassroots student-activists who worked

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"The Strange Smell of Truth: Ethnicity, Translation, and Realism in the Cold War Writings of Eileen Chang" (2012, 23–47); and Peter Kalliney's "A Failure of Diplomacy: Placing Eileen Chang in Global Literary History" in *The Aesthetic Cold War* (2022, 117–48).

independently from the CCP-supported platforms,[36] these transnational de-Cold War movements in Hong Kong were not the same as the better-known Third World's Non-aligned Movement against the US and the Soviet Union, in which Maoist China was a major player. While China was generally celebrated by fellow Third World countries for its contribution to the non-aligned movement, some Hong Kong grassroots activists were more suspicious of China's claims and agenda as a nation-state. In his reflection piece published in 1973 in the bilingual magazine 70s Biweekly,[37] student-activist leader Ng Chung-yin (1946–1994) reviews the youth movements since the late 1960s. Unlike the Maoist leftists who prioritized the reunion with communist China, Ng was primarily concerned about Hong Kong's "development of internationalism (*guoji zhuyi*)"—namely, the potential for Hong Kong people to establish political identification and relationality with elsewhere, an alternative to a chauvinist Chinese identity. This is seen not only in Ng's investment in the solidarity campaigns for Biafra and South Africa, and the anti-war protests for Vietnam and Bangladesh; it is also seen in events that could be easily taken over by nationalist sentiment, such as the Chinese Language Campaign (1970–1974) and the Protect Diaoyutai Protest (1971–1972).[38] Although the internationalist voices were not predominant in public discourses, their persistent presence throughout the seventies revealed a diversity of political and cultural imaginations, in which (neo)colonialism took various forms across the world and China was an open signifier for cultural identification.

The fledging tradition of internationalism, however, was forcefully paused after the military crackdown of the Tiananmen protest on June Fourth, 1989. In the edited essay volume *Yeshi Xianggang ren* (Also a Hong Konger), multiple contributors observed that 1989 rewrote the complex process of identity formation into binary oppositions of Chinese national (*zhongguoren*) and Hong Konger (*xianggangren*).[39] In the decade after 1989, the emerging aspiration of developing a non-essentialist, non-

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[36] The CCP-supported platforms in Hong Kong included newspapers of *Wen Wei Po* and *Ta Kung Pao* and the Hong Kong and Macao Working Committee of the Communist Party of China (*zhonggong gang'ao gongzuo weiyuanhui*).

[37] In this reflection piece, entitled "General Review of Hong Kong Youth and Student Movements," Ng Chung-yin uses the pen name Mao Youlan.

[38] "General Review of Hong Kong Youth and Student Movements," no page number.

[39] Liang Yiwen, *Also a Hong Konger: Reflections from New Migrants* (15; 40; 46; 149–50; 168).

chauvinist identity was replaced by an overwhelming fear, and an ensuing desire of dis-identifying, against China.

Moving away from colonial negligence (1840s–1960s) but not yet experiencing the overwhelming state violence (1989), the Hong Kong seventies (1970–1989) was caught in a competition between British-American imperial and Chinese national historicities. This rather short and relatively peaceful period, however, was also precious because it allowed Hong Kong's literary and political circles to re-imagine cultural differences by disrupting the binary oppositions of Cold War logic—capitalism and communism, self and other, West and the rest, free and oppressed, here and there. Unfortunately, the retrospective studies of the seventies, although they notice the de-Cold War potentials of this time, often fall back into the neoliberal paradigm of Hong Kong exceptionalism to explain the historical specificities.

The Debate of "Local Consciousness"

In post-1997 literary studies of Hong Kong (written in Chinese, English, and other languages),[40] the seventies is predominantly framed by the discourse of Hong Kong local consciousness (*bentu/bendi yishi*). Published in 2003, Zhao Xifang's *Novelizing Hong Kong* is the first book-length project that reads various literary genres (i.e. native-soil, urban, modern, postmodern, romance, and martial arts fictions) produced in the 1970s under the framework of "local identity and experience." In the chapter entitled "The Identities of Hong Kong,"[41] Zhao states that

> After the industrialization and urbanization in the 1960s and 1970s, Hong Kong gradually became an advanced capitalist society and established its own modern and urban subjectivity. … The generation that grew up in the 1970s, unlike their parents, did not care much about mainland China. Instead, they developed a delicate sense of Hong Kong consciousness (*xianggang yishi*). (136-37)

[40] Earlier literary scholarship in Chinese often focuses on Hong Kong's literary history in the early twentieth century. In the 1990s, literary criticisms that discuss literary works of the 1970s—such as Chan Ping-leung's edited volume *Analysis of Hong Kong Literature* (1991), Wang Jiancong's *The History of Hong Kong Literature* (1995), and Huang Jichi, Zheng Shusen and Lu Weiluan's edited volume *In Search of Hong Kong Literature* (1997)—do not use the concept of the "local."

[41] The chapter title is translated by the author Zhao Xifang, shown in the English version of the table of contents: IV.

Writing in a romanticizing tone, Zhao suggests that the formation of local identity was a result of a *separation* from mainland China, economically, politically, and culturally. This view, with its varying echoes, later becomes the foundation of reading Hong Kong literature written in the 1970s. For example, when speaking of the seventies, Huang Wanhua uses the term "Hong Kong's literary 'subjectivity' (*xianggang wenxue zhutixing*)" interchangeably with "local consciousness" and argues that such a local identity is possible partly because of the city's "*liberation* from the political ideologies of the Chinese Communist Party and the Kuomintang, as well as from the British colonial culture" (2017, 58; my emphasis).

Similarly, literary criticism collections dedicated to single authors—such as Xi Xi (1937–2022),[42] Ye Si (1949–2013),[43] and Lilian Lee (Li Pi-hua or Lee Pik-wah, 1959–)[44]—all contain a considerable number of entries that interpret the literary works as a representation of local consciousness. This is most evidently seen in the scholarship of Xi Xi's 1975 novel *My City*. For instance, Hong Kong novelist and critic Pan Guoling (Lawrence Pun) states that

> *My City* … is *completely free from* the perspectives of the colonizer, the immigrant (*wailai zhe*), the transient (*guoke*), and the hostile, and it opens up a new vision that is apolitical (*fei zhengzhihua*) and insidery (*junei ren*). In short, it is a story full of Hong Kong consciousness (*xianggang yishi*) told in the words of its own people. Thus, *My City* marks a pioneering spirit that *breaks with* the old ideology and embraces the new ideology born out of the social climate of the 1970s. (69, my emphasis)

Like with Zhao and Huang, Pan understands Hong Kong consciousness through concepts of independence, autonomy, and various ways of articulating "neutrality." Zhao, Huang, and Pan (each taking a different literary framework, respectively postcolonial theories, studies of overseas Chinese literature, and postmodernism) all read Hong Kong literature produced during the seventies as a representation of cultural exceptionalism. Hong Kong, under this interpretive paradigm, is once again isolated into a space with clear geopolitical and ideological boundaries.

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[42] *Research on Xi Xi (Volume I to IV)* (2018).

[43] *A Collection of Reviews of Ye Si's Works: Fiction Section* (2011).

[44] *Literary Hong Kong and Lilian Lee* (2000).

But not all scholars agree with this approach of claiming local identity. Like Chan Chi-tak, Ackbar Abbas, and Shen Shuang, I contest this paradigm of understanding Hong Kong through isolation and exceptionalism. For example, Chan Chi-tak argues in *Jieti Wocheng* (Deconstructing My City) that the "sense of local culture (*bentu wenhua yishi)*" that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, was "based on the cultural influence of the generation of mainland intellectuals in the 1950s" (5). Unlike the dominant discourse that I outlined above, Chan states that "Feeling local is not the same as being separated from the other" (6). While Chan maps Hong Kong in China-centered terms, literary scholarship in English situates Hong Kong more transnationally. In his seminal work *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance*, Ackbar Abbas uses the trope of translation to think about transnationalism. As he succinctly puts it, "the local is *already a translation* …, so that the question of local cannot be separated from the question of cultural translation itself" (1997, 12; emphasis in the original text). For Abbas, the metaphorical and dynamic process of translation takes place not only among national cultures of the British and the Chinese, but also the "refugees, migrants, and transients, all of whom could claim local status" (12). Another literary scholar Shen Shuang also explicitly proposes a "dissociation of the local from the 1997 Hong Kong identity discourse" because "the identity of a place is constructed by social relations both within and beyond the local context" (2012, 570). Shen advocates locating Hong Kong "not just in the global-local nexus, as contemporary theories of globalization present it, but also in a longer history of continuous translocal and transnational flows" (576). Foregrounding relationality, rather than exceptionalism, Abbas's and Shen's scholarship resonates with the archipelagic approach of understanding Hong Kong identity beyond geopolitical, ideological, and cultural borders.

Literary critics' ongoing debate regarding Hong Kong's local consciousness confirms that the seventies hold special significance in conceptualizing the city's cultural genealogy. Here, I would like to return to Lui's caution of retrospective constructions and answer his call to re-investigate history. "Rereading the 1970s," in Lui's words, is to "find out what the city was like before it became the reified version of 'Hong Kong seventies'" (2012, 7–8). To me, instead of taking for granted that the 1970s is a clear start to the literary representation of a local consciousness (as the dominant literary criticism suggests), I look into Hong Kong's writing and publishing environment for literary writers at the time to explore the de-Cold War potentials.

Literary Writing and Publishing in a Commercialized Society

With an intentional void of overt Cold War tensions, consumerist culture in the seventies became the norm that reinforced the model colony's "neutral" position. With the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) in communist China and the anti-communist Martial Law period (otherwise known as the White Terror, 1949–1987) in Taiwan, Hong Kong was the only Chinese-dominant place that allowed for "free speech."[45] Under such conditions, the publishing environment for literary writing in Hong Kong was highly commercialized and chaotic but, at the same time, decentralized and inclusive. Such a unique cultural space of Hong Kong seventies, then, enabled some of the most experimental and radical writings not only in modern Chinese language literature but also in postcolonial literature.

Here, I should clarify that in this dissertation I use the term "literary writing" to refer to fictional texts that are different from the popular styles of fictions, such as Ni Kuang's sci-fi adventure story and Yi Shu's romance. These popular fictions gained wide Sinophone readership and they provided valuable angles to understand Hong Kong culture during the long seventies. Avoiding using concepts such as "high literature" in Anglophone literary studies or "serious literature (*yansu wenxue*)" and "pure literature (*chun wenxue*)" in Chinese literary studies, I recognize that the boundary among different literary genres is not a stable one. As Wai Chee Dimock argues, literary texts often participate in "an alluvial process, sedimentary as well as migratory" (2007, 1380). At the same time, in comparison to the majority of the works written by Ni Kuang and Yi Shu, the literary texts studied in this dissertation bear significant differences in compositional styles and thematic foci. While the former body of literature focuses on representing everyday struggles and aspirations of the majority of the Hong Kong Chinese (primarily of the so-called working class), the latter stories offer readers a literary space to imagine lives and fantasies of a much wealthier world—a narrative symptom of a society transitioning to neoliberal capitalism. For example, constituted of more than 140 novels, Ni Kuang's *Wisely Series* often feature an adventure of seeking treasures (diamonds, jade, gold, ruby, etc.); similarly, among her 250 novels, most of Yi Shu's stories depict a journey of a young woman with a privileged educational background (either from private schools in Hong Kong or from elite universities in the

[45] Chan Kit-yee, *Hong Kong Fiction and Personal Memory* (2010, 38).

UK) striving to establish herself in a higher social class. Acknowledging that there are different mode of critical reading to examine the subversive potential in works by Ni Kuang and Yi Shu, this dissertation dedicates to explore how the first type of literature represents encountering negotiating differences.

With this definition of literary writing, I now examine the publishing environment of such texts. Unlike postwar China and Taiwan, Hong Kong seventies could not inherit any institutionalized publishing platforms dedicated to literary writing; this demands a less consolidated way to develop a literary community. In China, the state-sanctioned *Renmin wenxue* (People's literature, 1949–) and *Shouhuo* (Harvest: literary bimonthly, 1957–) had been two stable literary sites;[46] and an academy-based equivalent in Taiwan was *Xiandai wenxue* (Modern literature, 1960–1973; 1977–1983) founded by a student society at National Taiwan University.[47] Literary journals in Hong Kong, in contrast, were often short lived due to poor economic condition. Journals such as *Xiaoshuo yuebao* (Fiction monthly, 1953), *Haowangjiao* (Cape of good hope, 1963), and *Qingchun zhoubao* (The youth weekly, 1968) lasted less than a year. Many writers thus chose to publish in the side columns of commercial news papers and the supplements of entertainment magazines, alongside information about horse racing, lottery, stock market, celebrity gossip, and bourgeois lifestyles. Commercial venues such as Hong Kong Express, Hong Kong Times, and Sing Tao Evening Post were the hub for a generation of literary works, including those that later became modern Hong Kong classics. However, as Xiao Si (penname of Lu Weiluan) observes, the majority of these well-crafted pieces were scattered and thrown away with the newspaper and magazines. This makes it challenging to create a sense of literary public, both for the writers and the readers. If a literary journal planned to publish an anthology, or if a prolific writer wished to turn their work into a book, they usually would have to resort to two Taiwan-based institutes—Hong Fan Bookstore and Vista Publishing (Yuan Jing)—because there was no literary publisher in Hong Kong until the establishment of Su Yeh (meaning green

[46] Both magazines paused during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) and resumed afterwards.

[47] *Modern Literature* was founded by Pai Hsien-yung, Leo Lee-Ou Fan, and other undergraduates from the Foreign Literature Department, who were students of Tsi-an Hsia.

sleeves) in the early 1980s.[48] In an increasingly commercialized society, Hong Kong writers faced a "situation of fending for oneself by luck" (Zheng 2007, 213).

In the meantime, precisely because of commercialization, Hong Kong writers were more willing to move across different ideological spaces (e.g. anti-communism, neoliberal-capitalism, anti-capitalism, and internationalism) while experimenting with an alternative cultural politics (of writing and of living together) that was not bound by rigid political loyalties. As an active participant in this process, Ye Si reminds us that he and his peers often maneuvered *within* the commercial restrictions to carve out spaces for literary writing in the seventies. In a reflection piece on creative writing in commercial newspaper columns, Ye Si recalls that one had to "strategically publish works that propose alternative political implications in commercial magazines and experimental works via smaller press" (1996, 55). This was because literary journals run by established intellectuals tended to have ideological preferences. Importantly, such a flexible strategy did not contradict Ye Si's open and frequent critique of Hong Kong's commercialization. Neither was it to be conflated with an endorsement of the neoliberal "free" market. Ye Si's response, unusual sounding to many Maoist *and* Western Marxist ears, echoes Ackbar Abbas' argument about the cinematic innovations prompted by commercialism in Hong Kong. Although Hong Kong film and literature (especially the literary short fiction that I study in this dissertation) are two distinct cultural realms, with different targeted audience/readership and production process, I find that Abbas' insight about the "slippery nature of Hong Kong's cultural space" resonates with the ways in which literary writers established an agnostic relationship to the marketplace (20). To mobilize Abbas, by publishing in commercial venues, Hong Kong literary writers in the seventies had been "[exploring] the cultural possibilities of what looks like a negative situation" (20) and "finding alternatives *within* [not *to*] the system" (21, my emphasis). More precisely, the negative situation of lacking material and cultural infrastructure for literary writing in fact compelled Hong Kong writers to build and imagine a community based on scavenging, (dis)assembling, and re-assembling—a process distinct from the formation of a national identity.

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[48] For a focused study of *Su Yeh*, see Wang Jiaqi's *Forty Years of Su Yeh: Reflections and Research* (2021).

This alternative approach to community building was further seen in the establishment of peer-supported literary periodicals (*tongren zazhi*) that relied on fundraising among groups of writer friends, a publishing practice first implemented in Taiwan.[49] These peer-supported publications ran as much as a non-profitable career as "a way of living, a means of resistance," as Ye Si puts it (1996, 170). Such resistance, for him and his fellow writers, was not only to address the disappointment in the publishing industry but also to use written words to reclaim common people's everyday experience beyond Cold War ideologies (169–70). Most participants worked as voluntary part-time editors for the periodicals while holding full-time salaried positions elsewhere. In Hong Kong, the first peer-supported literary journal—*Siji* (Four seasons, November 1972; May 1975)—was released by Ye Si, Ng Hui-bin (Wu Xubin), and other fellow writers (170). This journal was born out of the belief that literary representation should go beyond simply reflecting social problems (as Maoist literary theories would claim); instead, a healthy literary environment should encourage experimentation in theme and style to explore realities and to imagine futures (170–71). This vision attracted many emerging writers and the first issue successfully realized these ambitions. Unfortunately, due to the lack of sustainable economic and editorial support, *Four Seasons* also had a short-lived fate; it took the editors another three years to release its second and final issue. *Four Seasons*, nevertheless, initiated a new mode of literary periodicals in Hong Kong. It encouraged writing of speculative fiction, translated a series of works by Gabriel García Márquez and Jorge Luis Borges (a decade before Márquez won the Nobel Prize in 1982), and introduced less mainstream literary works from mainland China, Europe, and the Americas. The cross-cultural focus in *Four Seasons* consciously situated Hong Kong in close relation to transnational de-Cold War movements without announcing an assertive belonging within it—a subject position differing from that of the nation-state, whose solidarity claim is always rooted in sovereignty (as in the case of Third Worldism).

Taking the momentum from *Four Seasons*, Ye Si, Xi Xi, Zhong Lingling, and others launched another literary journal—*Damuzhi* (The big thumb)—in October 1975. This time, the founders merged the accessible approaches drawn from the commercial publishing practice and the continuing dedication to literary works. Ye Si recalled that

[49] Taiwan's history of *tongren* literary periodicals can be traced back in the 1920s during Japanese colonial rule (1895–1945). For more details, see Wang Chih-ming's *Re-Articulations: Trajectories of Foreign Literature Studies in Taiwan* (2021).

peer writers took turns to transform their tight apartments into editorial headquarters; a group of friends going for a late night snack downstairs after typesetting in home-offices was "like celebrating a holiday each time" (1996, 179). Staying active until 1987, *The Big Thumb* assembled and produced a generation of writers, who then were dispersed to create a vibrant literary zine culture, including *Xiangyata Wai* (Beyond the ivory tower, 1975–1978), *Wenxue yu Meishu* (Literature and fine arts, 1976–1977), *Wenmei Yuekan* (Literary monthly, 1977–1978), *Bafang* (Eight corners, 1979–1990), *Su Yeh Wenxue* (Su Yeh literary journal, 1980–2000), and *Xianggang Wenxue* (Hong Kong literature, 1985–), among numerous other proceedings.[50] This publishing history also reveals an often ignored aspect of Hong Kong during the seventies. Though short and ephemeral, it is a history of the formation of an intimate, transformative, and decentralized community who in return represented Hong Kong identity in their literary works by thinking with the perpetual reconfiguration of social spaces and accidental encounters with the other. It is in this sense that the publishing practice produced a de-Cold War space.

Languaging Hong Kong: Sinophone Literature as Medium of Cultural Translation

Until the 1990s, literary works of the colonized in British Hong Kong were primarily written in the Chinese language by Cantonese-speaking authors.[51] Comparing to South Asia and Southeast Asia, the decentred role of the English language is a rather surprising literary phenomenon, unique to Hong Kong's coloniality. In this section, I explore new approaches beyond postcolonial studies of Anglophone literature by foregrounding the role of Cantonese in relation to Mandarin Chinese and English. Because Hong Kong was exempted from adopting either the national language (Mandarin Chinese) or the colonial language (English) in a forceful way due to the city's neutral diplomatic position during the Cold War, the southern dialect of Cantonese was

[50] For a comprehensive overview of the zine culture in the 1970s, see Wu Xuanren, *Hong Kong Youth Publications in the 1970s: A Retrospective Collection* (1999). For analysis of specific literary journals, see Chan Tsz-him's doctoral dissertation, "The Explorations of Identity and Literature in Hong Kong's Youth Journals during the 'Fiery Years'" (2016).

[51] There was a small number of poets who wrote in English under the influence of the Oxford poet Edmund Blunden (1896–1974); see *City Voices: Hong Kong writing in English: Prose & Poetry from 1945 to the Present* (2003, 1–26). Additionally, UK-based Timothy Mo (1950–) and Lee Ding Fai (?–1989) were other two non-expat exceptions who wrote fictions about Hong Kong in English during this period.

preserved and it remained the primary oral and written form for Hong Kong people. To be noted, although speakers of Mandarin Chinese and Cantonese communicate via a homogenous writing system, the sounds and vocabularies between the two languages are as distinct as French and Spanish. Given the complex linguistic situation in this British colony, I want to point out that for Hong Kong authors writing during the seventies, the choice of writing in the Chinese language was neither "natural" (because it was the "mother tongue" for most people) nor "unprecedented" (because of the British colonial presence for over a century). Rather, writing in Chinese was a deliberate and continuous attempt to articulate Hong Kong's cultural identity that is simultaneously informed by English, Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese, and many more languages.

As I explain more thoroughly in the following three sub-sections—"Lingual Triangulation," "Two Chinese Languages," and "Languages in Translation"—in order to convey the complex interrelationship between the languages in Hong Kong, I use and intervene into the concept of Sinophone to analyze Hong Kong literature. To reiterate my definition of Sinophone literature in this dissertation, the term refers to Chinese-language stories written by Hong Kong authors (including those who write within and beyond Hong Kong, and who speak various dialects) that express an alternative cultural-political relationship to the nation-state of China. I argue that Sinophone writing in Cold War Hong Kong is an articulation of *cultural translation* between different worlds. Considering Hong Kong literature as translational texts also reconceptualizes Sinophone studies away from its dominant emphasis on margin and minority, and to open up space for future discussions of other dialect writings that challenge national and imperial formation.

Lingual Triangulation

Although the presences of Japanese, Portuguese, and multiple Chinese dialects such as those spoken by Teochew, Hakka, and Shanghainese are all strong in Hong Kong, for the purpose of theoretical clarity I will focus on the triangulating relationship among the three major languages of English, Mandarin Chinese, and Cantonese. English is the language of colonial law and the ruling class; Mandarin governs the written grammar; and Cantonese is spoken most often. That is to say, all three languages have a dominant but limited position at any given moment in the everyday life of Hong Kong

residents (Chinese and non-Chinese included) during the seventies.[52] This makes it necessary to always consider the three languages in relation to each other. In the following analysis, I offer three ways of understanding the lingual triangulation in Hong Kong to establish an idea that the lingual triangulation in Hong Kong is not a stable one but a translational one.

Drawing on experiential knowledge, Rey Chow offers one way of understanding the triangulating lingual relationship in *Not Like a Native Speaker: On Languaging as a Postcolonial Experience*. Recalling her time in primary and secondary schools in the 1960s and the 1970s, Chow writes that:

> While Hong Kong was still a British colony, it was entirely acceptable not to know Chinese. Indeed, not knowing Chinese was hardly a social stigma, as such nonknowledge rather conferred something enviable on those who for one reason or another did not have to know the indigenous tongue: an elevated social status. Even so, within the so-called indigenous scheme of things, Cantonese, most Hong Kong residents' native language, was and continues to be treated as an inferior or inauthentic version of Chinese. (12–13)

In Chow's Hong Kong experience, English ranks the highest, followed by Mandarin Chinese, and the spoken language of Cantonese at the bottom. The "enviable" group with "elevated social status" that Chow refers to is mainly constituted of the British colonial officials and expatriates, as well as bilingual Chinese compradors and their descendants. Generally speaking, they were the people who set and benefited from the laws and rules covering all aspects of the social life. Most authoritative documents (including legislation, court proceedings, legal papers, government reports, corporate regulations, and factory protocols) were only available and valid in English; and even in cases when some of these documents (such as public policies, district bylaws, bureaucratic forms, and government service hotlines) provided bilingual versions, they always favoured the English speakers in big or small ways (Walker 1971). Although the colonial government in Hong Kong never actively forbade the native tongue or eagerly

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[52] This historical lingual situation has changed since the 2010s, a decade after the sovereignty transfer in 1997. As an indirect product of the launch of Moral and National Education (MNE) in primary and secondary schools in 2012, Cantonese is threatened to be replaced by Mandarin Chinese in Hong Kong. For the 2014 debate regarding the status of Cantonese in relation to Mandarin, see Siu-pong Cheng and Sze-wing Tang's "Languagehood of Cantonese: A Renewed Front in an Old Debate" (2014).

promoted English as the means to adopt Britishness, as was the case in India,[53] they effectively created a desire in Hong Kong Chinese to estrange themselves from their everyday oral language. Cantonese was considered an "inferior or inauthentic" dialect, as Chow puts it (2014, 12–13), in comparison to the one spoken in northern China, later designated as Putonghua (spoken Mandarin).

However, outside of the elite circles (British officials and Chinese compradors), most Hong Kong Chinese who came from a migrant and/or so-called working class background, would never be able to achieve the "nonknowledge" of Chinese that Chow describes (2014, 12). Written Chinese had been the primary communicative language in everyday life throughout the British colonial rule, even though it did not have an official status until the mid-1970s. To address such an unequal power dynamic between Chinese and English, a group of student-activists led a series of campaigns, pressing the colonial government to legalize Chinese as an official language, also known as the Chinese Language Movement (1970–1974).[54] After a few years of collecting signatures on petitions, demonstrating peacefully, and facilitating public discussions, the movement was widely supported by the mass population and successfully resulted to the enactment of the Official Languages Ordinance in February 1974.[55] The Ordinance acknowledges that the English and Chinese languages "possess equal status…and enjoy equality of use for the purposes" of "communication between the Government or any public officers and members of the public." For the activists and the proponents of the movement, this was a partial but substantial step towards reclaiming their relationship to the Chinese language, especially its written form.[56]

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[53] In *Masks of Conquest*, Gauri Viswanathan argues that the colonial government in British India was eager to transform the colonized into a civilized British subject—a subject that conforms to the colonial "shaping of character or the development of the aesthetic sense or the disciplines of ethical thinking"—by inventing a comprehensive educational system that teaches the British literature as a new discipline, separate from history and philosophy (3).

[54] Though not central to my argument here, it is important to note that the movement became controversial among Chinese intellectuals in Hong Kong because it mobilized various discourses (including that of national pride, democratization, and political intervention) in order to appeal to the general public. For the historical materials of the Chinese Language Movement, see *The 70's Biweekly* (issue 15–18; 20; 21; 29) spanning from November 1970 to July 1973.

[55] For the detailed historical accounts of the Chinese Language Movement, see issues 15–18 of *The 70's Biweekly*.

[56] There were opposing voices from the colonial government, the Chinese elites, and Maoist intellectual-activists. Particularly, some Maoist advocates criticized that the movement symbolized a surrender to the colonial juridical system and therefore undermined the more important anti-

Lastly, I provide alternative arguments from linguists to further complicate the lingual triangulation; that is, Cantonese obtains certain power over English and Mandarin despite the latter two's official or literary superiority. Apart from being the "*de facto* official spoken language" for most Hong Kong people (including non-Cantonese mainlanders and Southeast Asian migrants), Cantonese also has a long history as a written language (Bauer 2018, 107). It has historically been the primary language for the vibrant folk culture in the greater Canton region (including present-day Guangdong and Hong Kong) since the late Ming dynasty (1368–1644).[57] Folk oral and written expressions in wooden-fish songbooks (songs dated in the 1600s and books in the 1700s), love ballad poetry (in the 1700s), and Cantonese opera libretti (in the early 1900s) continued to develop into modern forms of colloquial language, cinematic dialogues, radio plays, Canto-Pop lyrics, printed media, and literature in Hong Kong during the long seventies.[58] More importantly, linguists have observed that the development of Cantonese language-based practices has a rebellious tendency against the dominant culture. Robert Bauer remarks that written Cantonese in Hong Kong often transcribes standard Chinese expressions and English lexicon in "non-standard ways with … Cantonese … characters" (2018, 104). Donald Snow further notes in *Cantonese as Written Language* that unlike cases in many other cultures undergoing modernity, the growth of written Cantonese is not supported by the state, or driven by nationalist movements (7). In other words, as a mediating language between Mandarin Chinese and English, Cantonese potentially provides a subversive force that disrupts projects of modern nation-building and colonialism. Taken together with Rey Chow's personal experience, the history of Chinese Language Movement, and the linguistic argument, the double role of Cantonese—the inferior and the subversive—destabilizes the lingual triangulation in Cold War Hong Kong.

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colonial agenda which was the return to China. *The 70's Biweekly*, one of the major organizing site for the Chinese Language Campaign, also included some opposing voices, such as "The Destiny of the Chinese Language Campaign" (1971). For more critiquing voices from the pro-Beijing leftwing group, see newspaper *Wen Wei Po* and the monthly magazine *The Seventies*.

[57] Foundational linguistic studies on Cantonese include Robert Bauer's doctoral dissertation "Cantonese Sociolinguistic Patterns: Correlating Social Characteristics of Speakers with Phonological Variables in Hong Kong Cantonese" (1982) and Donald Snow's *Cantonese as Written Language: The Growth of a Written Chinese Vernacular* (2004).

[58] For close analyses of the oral and written practices in the Cantonese culture, see Rey Chow's chapter on radio play entitled "The Sounds and Scripts of a Hong Kong Childhood" in *Not Like a Native Speaker* (103–122); and Marjorie K. M. Chan, "Vernacular Written Cantonese in the Twentieth Century: The Role of Cantonese Opera in Its Growth and Spread" (2022).

Two Chinese Languages: Mandarin and Cantonese

To a large extent, the increasing tension between Mandarin (the national language) and Cantonese (the dialectical language) since the early twentieth century has produced a particular kind of language-based identity in Hong Kong. For non-Chinese speakers and readers, it might be useful to compare the relation of these two Chinese languages with languages of Latin origin. Like French and Spanish, Mandarin and Cantonese derive from a common source but their pronunciation and lexicon differ greatly. Historically, peoples speaking different languages in the greater China region communicated through reading the written Classical Chinese, like Latin across the Roman Empire. This is similar to diglossia, a common European linguistic phenomenon in which “different languages are used within a speech community for different social purposes” (Snow, 11). However, unlike Latin languages, whose alphabetic written forms reflect the phonetic rules, Chinese characters follow a logographic writing system that gives no instruction on pronunciation. For example, a Cantonese speaker reading a Classical Chinese text is different from a French speaker reading Latin because “there is no sign in a Chinese character to show that [one pronunciation] is preferred over [the other]” (Cheng and Tang, 393). This diglossic situation is further complicated by China’s language movement in 1915 that succeeded in replacing the Classical Chinese with the written vernacular language (see the discussion of New Culture Movement in Chapter 1). While the Classical Chinese is not intended to imitate the way of daily speech, the vernacular language movement attempted to form a more mimetic relationship between spoken and written words so that literature can be more available to the common people outside of the literati elite circle. The irony, however, is that only the dialects in central China became the recognized vernacular, the national language of Mandarin as we know of today.[59] In the modern context of reading and writing vernacular Chinese, when Cantonese speakers read a Mandarin text, it is not simply a matter of using the Cantonese dialect to pronounce the text, as they do with classical poetry; rather, there is a process of “translating certain standard Chinese words into Cantonese semantic and

[59] During the New Culture and May Fourth Movements in the early twentieth century, there were debates regarding the tension between dialect literature and national literature; see Marston Anderson (1990). Additionally, Richard VanNess Simmons’ collection *Studies in colloquial Chinese and its history* (2022) examines how the various spoken Chinese dialetcial langauges are written into texts beyond that of the Mandarin.

functional equivalents" (Bauer 2018, 106).[60] My tracing of this complex linguistic relationship shows that Cantonese and Mandarin are as distinct as they are connected to each other in everyday Hong Kong culture.

Taking a theoretical angle, Chow argues that Hong Kong subjects' relationship with the Chinese language is not as smooth and uncontested as it might seem. In the introductory chapter entitled "Skin Tone—About Language, Postcoloniality, and Racialization" in *Not Like a Native Speaker*, Rey Chow calls for more academic attention to "the crucial link between racial objectification and the work of language" (2). Centring Fanon's anguished remembrance of "the Negro and language" in *Black Skin, White Masks* (2), Chow complicates two dominant philosophies of understanding the relationship between language and subjectivity in the Anglophone scholarship. First, although language has the potential to establish reciprocal inter-subject relationships by becoming the other, as Walter Benjamin and other post-Enlightenment language philosophers have theorized, Chow contends that possibility cannot be actualized without questioning the belief that language represents a "mental interiority," essential to human subjects (3–4). Second, unlike what Louis Althusser's notion of interpellation suggests, the subject's agency takes a much more complicated form than merely using (or not using) language to respond to a social situation, especially if it is a racializing one (Chow 2014, 4–5). By reading Fanon in juxtaposition with Benjamin and Althusser, Chow questions the idea that language is an "an inalienable interiority" to the self; instead, language, just like skin color, is "impermanent, detachable, and (ex)changeable" (14–15). It is in this sense that Chow proposes to see language as "a form of prosthetics, something that can and must be undone and remade" (15) and languaging as a meaning-making process that "transform[s] and repurpose[s]" the established system of speaking, reading, and writing (38). Such a conceptual shift allows the colonized subject to renew their relationship with both the native tongue and the colonizer's languages, and therefore provides a decolonial possibility of subject-formation. Hence, efforts of the Hong Kong subjects to reclaim and reconnect with the Chinese language should be

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[60] Bauer gives an example to show this translating process with the sentence meaning "They are policemen." In standard Chinese, the sentence pronounced as "*tāmén shì jing chá*" could be translated into the equivalent Cantonese as "*keoi5 dei6 hai6 caai1 jan4*." Bauer concludes that "the standard Chinese pronoun, copula verb, and noun correspond to completely different Cantonese words that are written with standard and non-standard Chinese characters" (2018, 106).

understood not as an endorsement of the "monolingualization for purposes of nationalism" (46) but an embracement of "linguistic multiplicities" (60). As the body chapters of this dissertation will show, Sinophone literature in Hong Kong strives to represent the Cantonese vocabulary, sound, syntax, idioms, oral traditions of songs and storytelling; occasionally, it also captures "a polyphony of lingual variations" brought by the migrants from diverse regions in mainland China (109).

To me, Chow's argument about languaging as a process is a productive point of intervention into Shih Shu-mei's concept of Sinophone. Shih proposes to replace "Chinese language" with the term "Sinophone" because the latter disrupts the homogenizing connotation behind the word "Chinese" which assumes, in dominant scholarship and discourse, the "chain of equivalence … among language, culture, ethnicity, and nationality." After a few updates of the term since it was first introduced in 2004,[61] Shih explains in her 2011 *PMLA* article "The Concept of Sinophone" that Sinophone studies

> encompasses Sinitic-language communities and their expressions (cultural, political, social, etc.) on the margins of nations and nationalness in the internal colonies and other minority communities in China as well as outside it, with the exception of settler colonies where the Sinophone is the dominant vis-a-vis their indigenous populations (716).

Taking issues with China as a centralized nation-state and the standardized Chinese language as a hegemonic cultural force, Shih puts special emphasis on the marginal(ized) and minor(itized) position of the cultural works. Geopolitically, Sinophone studies examines overseas and diasporic Chinese communities residing outside of the People's Republic of China. Ethnically, the field is dedicated to the cultures of non-Han ethnic minorities within the PRC, who "have positioned themselves on the margins of Chineseness for a long time, as long as their communities have been incorporated into China" (2011, 710). As the PRC becomes a regional and international dominant power, Shih's critique of China-centrism and Han-centrism provides a much needed framework to re-evaluate China's imperial force in history and in the present. However, film scholars such as Sheldon Lu (2007), Audrey Yue (2012), Yiman Wang (2014), Howard Chiang and Alvin Wong (2020), have challenged the general exclusion of the PRC in Sinophone

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[61] The term "Sinophone" was first introduced by Shih in "Global Literature and the Technologies of Recognition" (2004), then updated in *Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations across the Pacific* (2007).

studies and endeavoured to widen the scope of coalition among diverse social and cultural communities within the PRC. For instance, by examining the work of a Beijing-based gay filmmaker Cui Zi'en, Yue proposes a queer Sinophone cinema that includes "not only queer Chinese cinemas outside of China, but also queer Chinese films in China" (2012, 105). Similarly, examining a series of the transnational and cross-regional co-produced films involving actors and scriptwriters from mainland China, Wang argues that the power of minoritarian voice in Sinophone cinema "may very well derive from its stranger position inside the matrix of the mainstream" (28).

Built upon the existing scholarly debate, I read the multilingual representation in Hong Kong Sinophone literature not in terms of center/periphery (China and its margins) and majority/minority (Han and non-Han). Instead, informed by experiences of a coastal borderland where the intensity of migration has become the overarching feature of the society, the Sinophone texts in Hong Kong challenge not only Han-centrism and Mandarin-centrism but also the very construction of Han ethnicity and Mandarin language as hegemony. Since Shih points out that another name for the Chinese language (*Zhongwen*) is *Hanyu*, meaning the language of Han, Sinophone studies usually assumes that there is a smooth continuum between Mandarin Chinese and the Han ethnicity. However, this relationship is neither natural nor stable. Born into a Han family (defined by my legal identity documents) in Northeast China and migrating to South China, I grew up baffled by the mysterious and slippery meaning of Han as an ethnic concept. On my paternal side, there were talks during family gatherings that my father's birth place, Faku County in Liaoning Province, was the place of origin for the Manchu; while at the same time our neighbours in the city of Shenyang would frequently tell me that my father looked ethnically Korean (known as *joseon-jok* in English and *Chaoxianzu* in Chinese). On my maternal side, it was only after moving to South China that I realized that my grandfather's "bird-like" accent was because of his Cantonese heritage, a topic that was either brushed over or laughed at by my Shandong dialect-speaking grandmother. How could these discernible differences among my family members all be explained by the ethnic category of Han? The reflection on my childhood confusion leads me to the argument that the idea of Han Chinese is a misleading concept in itself. Although broadly used as a category to describe the major ethnic group in China, the identity of Han Chinese, as we understand it now after the establishment of the PRC, should be more accurately interpreted as a nationalist construct to homogenize

and assimilate the diversity of peoples who speak different languages, practice various cultural customs, live in disparate environments, bear heterogeneous histories, and constantly expand their web of kinship through marriages.

To self-identify or to be identified as a Han does not reveal an ethnic, cultural, lingual, or moral reality. Although Cantonese and Hokkien are both officially categorized as Han, their languages are distinctive from the central Chinese dialects (which later become the basis of Mandarin) and their coastal life styles clearly differentiate from those of Han people from central inland China, where the geographical makeup is the plain. The same can be said about the mountain peoples in northeast and southwest China and the plateau nomads in north China. Even within the same natural and linguistic habitat, the concept of Han Chinese still fails to address the regional disparity. For example, Emily Honig's *Creating Chinese Ethnicity: Subei People in Shanghai, 1850–1980* offers a historical study of how the people in Subei, where the regional culture used to be considered as "a symbol of sophistication," became a distinct group discriminated against by the neighbouring Shanghai city dwellers (2). While I do not fully agree that the framework of ethnicity explains the becoming of Subei people, I think Honig's work is important precisely because it exposes the myth of ethnic identity as a natural, innate, and stable concept. Without diving into the history of and debate about modern China's ethnic policy,[62] what I want to point out here is that Han Chinese, like the fifty-five ethnic minorities categorized and recognized by the government of PRC, is also a product of the nation-building project. To understand Han Chinese as an uncontested ethnic identity category that represents hegemonic power and centrality may not help us to investigate the complexity of a given region, where the Han people is a perhaps dominant but always transformed/transforming group in the establishment of the local culture.

Since the Chinese language in Hong Kong come from such diverse socio-historical backgrounds and take up so many oral and written forms, Sinophone writing in Hong Kong not only disrupts the Sino-centric continuum between Hong Kong and China, but also deconstructs the hegemonic formation of Mandarin and Han. In Chow's words, languaging, or one's relationship to language, is "a visceral and emotional as well as

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[62] For analysis on this topic, see Louisa Schein's "Making *Minzu*: The State, the Category, and the Work"; and Thomas Mullaney's *Coming to Terms with the Nation: Ethnic Classification in Modern China*.

intellectual limit experience" (14). That is to say, languaging is a constant interactive process of negotiating multiple boundaries—between the inner thought and outward articulation, between the individual and the collective, between the self and the other. It is, therefore, more helpful to conceptualize Sinophone literature as a transformative *written* form to represent the multi-lingual, multi-tonal, and multi-accented realities in Hong Kong.

Languages in Translation: Chinese and English

I should now extend the statement of languaging to the relationship between Chinese and English. Although this dissertation chooses not to study Hong Kong's Anglophone literature, I would like to examine the nuanced and sometimes less visible role that English has played in constructing Hong Kong's multilingual literary scene, which is predominantly mediated and translated via the Chinese language. To begin with a well known and less subtle dimension, English literature in Hong Kong during the 1970s was predominately written by the British and American expatriates. These expat novels were produced and circulated under the wider imagination of (post) Cold War Orientalism, to borrow Christina Klein's words.[63] Till this day, they continue to make their fame among global Anglophone readers. For example, after five editions in the 1970s, John Gordon Davis' *The Years of the Hungry Tiger* (1974) was reprinted again in 2015. Christopher New's *The Chinese Box* (1975) was republished in 2002 and 2014. Similarly, Robert S. Elegant's *Dynasty: A Novel* (1977) has eighteen editions, with the latest reprint in 2017. Other popular texts such as John le Carré's espionage fiction *The Honourable Schoolboy* (1977) and Richard Mason's *The World of Suzie Wong* (1957) are frequently referenced in journalist writings and university classrooms when discussing Hong Kong. While such novels, as Rajeev S. Patke and Philip Holden succinctly put it, do not form a "coherent [literary] tradition" and often set the city as "an exotic backdrop," they have had a significant and ongoing impact on the Western imagination of today's Hong Kong (2010, 97).

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[63] See Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945–1961*. For Klein, Cold War Orientalism differs from the kind of Orientalism that functions through an ideological divide between East and West. Instead, Cold War Orientalist cultural texts represent "a wide-ranging discourse of racial tolerance and inclusion that served as the official ideology undergirding post-war expansion" (2003, 11).

In contrast, the desires and struggles for the colonized in Hong Kong to write creatively in English were much more complex. As mentioned earlier, due to Hong Kong's unique position in the British-American Cold War mapping, there was no substantial body of Anglophone texts in Hong Kong as in other ex-colonies such as Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines in Southeast Asia. Louise Ho, one of the earliest and now most celebrated non-expat English-writing poet in Hong Kong has spoken about the limited existence of English literary writing on multiple occasions.[64] Most prominently, when reflecting on the out-of-placeness of being among other Commonwealth postcolonial writers in a 1999 event, she writes in the foreword to *City Voices: Hong Kong Writing in English 1945 to the Present* (2003) that

> Those of us writing in the English language in Hong Kong would know the feeling of isolation, perhaps of functioning in a void. There is no English-language literary community from which to draw some kind of affinity or against which to react. There is insufficient writing in English here for a critical mass to have formed. The literary traditions that do exist in Hong Kong are, obviously, those of the Chinese language. For us, it is a case of *chacun pour soi*, in that we each carry a culturally different baggage from the start; and presumably, we each work according to some implied tradition and critical standard of one's own adherence. (xiii)

The literary circumstance that Ho describes as *chacun pour soi*, a French idiom meaning every man for himself, simultaneously gestures at a lack of literary space and the possibilities of establishing new literary traditions for Hong Kong writers of English. Against the dominant assumption, Ho's use of English, although a definite product of British colonialism, does not amount to an easy surrender to colonial subjugation. Quite the contrary, her poems show that the English language used by a person of Chinese descent can be deployed to "function less as a form of poetic authority" but to express "the cultural, political, and personal tensions" shared among many Hong Kong subjects, regardless of their mother tongue (Abbas 1997, 125–26). What I want to point out with Louise Ho's reflection is that the English language does not sit in opposition to the Chinese language when considering literary writing in Hong Kong. While speaking English signals a cultural-political superiority, those Hong Kong writers who struggle to find a path of writing in English are not too dissimilar to those choosing to write in

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[64] Louise Ho published her first poetry collection entitled *Sheung-Shui Pastoral and Other Poems* in 1977. The collection is republished in *Incense Tree: Collected Poems of Louise Ho* in 2009. A section in Ackbar Abbas's *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* is dedicated to analyzing Louise Ho's poetry (1997, 123–28).

Chinese. Put simply, literatures written in English and Chinese languages cannot be understood in a binary relationship of the colonizer and the colonized, or that of the two Cold War sides; instead, as I will show with the ensuing two cases, the interaction of the two languages condition, enable, and inspire literary writers of both languages.

Xu Xi (1954–; not to be mistaken with another famous writer Xi Xi) is a Hong Kong-born Indonesian Chinese writer of English. As a co-editor of the anthology *City Voices* and prolific Anglophone writer since the 1990s, Xu explains the journey of finding her literary voice in English against the complicated lingual background due to her family's migratory routes. She writes that

> Growing up in Hong Kong, my contemporaries chattered, as did I, in Cantonese, Cantolish, Eng-ese, and English. … My parents' native tongues were Javanese, and in my father's case, Mandarin as well. English was their second or third language, Cantonese their least fluent, acquired purely for survival in their borrowed land, Hong Kong, in which they separately arrived after the war. They met and married in the city which is where I was born and raised. Despite half a century's residence, neither one of my parents ever sounded like a Hong Konger in either of the city's 'native' tongues. My private language at home was English, but really, like that of my parents, ESL (English as a second language). The public one was often Cantonese, but more accurately, CSL. (19)

Unlike a hierarchical triangulation of English, Mandarin, and Cantonese which we have discussed earlier in this section, the position of each language is reordered in Xu's experience. For her, it is difficult to pinpoint a "pure" mother tongue, and among these acquired languages, English is private and more intimate while Cantonese is public and more distant. Self identifying as Indonesian Chinese and committing to writing stories of the Chinese community within and beyond Hong Kong, Xu does not adopt the expatriate perspective nor that of the stereotypical Chinese bilingual elites. At the same time, as a second-generation migrant child with ties to Indonesia, Xu does feel a sense of alienation from the Cantonese language in ways that are different from the inferiority complex that is observed in many working class Hong Kong Chinese. Like with Louise Ho and many other Hong Kong writers in English, Xu's short fictions and stage plays produced in the 1990s are literary responses to the continuity and disjunction among multiple native tongues and acquired languages for different peoples of Hong Kong. Her unique relationship with languages echoes Chow's concept of languaging, "a framework of thinking about language as involuntary memory, self-estrangement, and lived experience" (Chow 2014, 11).

The creative force embedded in the mongrelization of languages becomes even more clear when Leung Ping-kwan (pen name Ye Si), a prolific writer primarily writes in Chinese, reflects on how English has been a secret source of inspiration for his Chinese writing. With his experimental writing heavily criticized by the high school Chinese teacher who graduated from the prestigious Peking University, Leung found a surprising freedom in the English class. He recalls in an essay entitled "Writing between Chinese and English" that

> Though I was not good with English grammar, I found … the pleasure in actually using language to reflect upon my daily experiences. Few of my readers know the secret that some of the first pages of my first book of essays were actually translated from early practices in English writing! (2005, 199)

In this rare English-written piece where Leung discusses his relationship with both languages, he reveals how their entanglement does not necessarily manifest in the form of a simple presentation of two languages side by side or a literal translation. More often, the entanglement happens on an epistemological level, impacting the structure of feeling in Raymond Williams' terms, before the words appear on the page.

Leung goes on to unpack his bilingual process of writing a poem of English entitled "Leaf of Passage," a poem inspired by his experience at the Vancouver International Airport, and it is dedicated to the new migrant fathers shuttling between Vancouver and Hong Kong. After presenting the poem and introducing the compositional background, Leung's reflection on the bilingual and cross-cultural process ends with the following.

> I started to write the poem in English first, but shifted halfway to Chinese and finished it, then I "translated" it back to English. English first, then Chinese, then English. But the two languages must have tangled deeper in my mind. When I wrote in Chinese, the English lines started to emerge among the characters. When I wrote in English, I must have secretly brought some of the Chinese sentiments over to the passage. Only when I really worked on the poem in English did I discover the unconscious echoes to Li Po's lines "Sailing through wails of monkeys from both banks, a light boat has passed thousands of mountains" in my first line; and Li Ching Chao's "How can such a leaf of a boat move that many woes?"
>
> But then when I read through it again, I discovered that the original Chinese already carried with it images and sentiments that were not Chinese. The images from Chinese classical literature such as "snow goose flying south" found themselves in the strange company of Haida mythical figures and

> sages who were supposed to cross the river on blades of weed were stopped by custom officers examining their suspicious passports. As the poem developed, it grew into the present form, which is a negotiation between a couplet and an eight-line Chinese regulated verse with parallel couplets. (2005, 204–05)

Moving between the English language, Chinese classic poetry, and Indigenous mythologies, this powerful passage articulates how the residue of a "foreign" language and/or culture already informs the creative mind when writing in the "native" language. Similarly, there is no real way to differentiate the "source" and "target" languages when writing is always a translational practice.

The retrospective reflections from Ho, Xu, and Leung on the impact of English make up the missing pieces in our discussion of Hong Kong's Sinophone literature during the seventies. In this section, I showed that the triangulating relationship among Cantonese, Mandarin, and English is the multilingual background to read the literary materials chosen in this dissertation. Though primarily written in the Chinese language, the Sinophone text I study should be read, not as a monolingual one, but a translation of flows of multiple languages that saturate Hong Kong's everyday experience. I also hope to have revealed that Hong Kong literature's endeavour to negotiate multiple languages is a reference point, not an exceptional case, for many other dialects (Chinese and beyond) to challenge nationalistic and imperial formations.

Chapter Overview

The body chapters of this dissertation take an archipelagic approach to read how Sinophone Hong Kong literature complicates dominant ways of telling a Cold War story. An archipelagic reading of Hong Kong stories is a geoliterary practice of analyzing "how thought was related to place," in the words of Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000, xiii). Chapter 1 argues, through an analysis of a selection of five short stories written in Hong Kong, that the history of the Cultural Revolution is part of the ongoing Cold War violence which shapes the lives of not only mainland Chinese but also Chinese subjects in Hong Kong and overseas communities. I show that these stories that I examine challenge the genre of wound literature, a memory project of the postsocialist Chinese state that reproduces the binary of communism and capitalism as China transitioned into a neoliberal stage within the Cold War period. In contrast, works by migrant writers from the mainland—Yang Mingxian's "Yao dama" (Auntie Yao, 1979) and Yan Chungou's "Wei shiqu de"

(For those that have gone…, 1984)—open more discussion about trauma and state violence. Such stories invited more imaginations from those Hong Kong authors who had no firsthand experience of the Cultural Revolution. Examples are seen in Xin Qi Shi's "Zhenxiang" (Truth, 1982), Song Mu's "Cong Kangle Dasha tiaoxia lai de ren" (The Man Who Jumps off Connaught Centre, 1984), and Ye Si's "Geming Dadao lupang de yayi" (The Dentists on the Avenida de la Revolución, 1985), all three of which will be examined in this chapter. An archipelagic reading of these five short stories about trauma in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution proposes an ethics of connecting the Chinese subjects in Hong Kong and the mainland without absorbing the former into a hegemonic Chinese nationalist narrative. These stories are also powerful cases to dispel a stereotype that due to the colonial history of Hong Kong, its Sinophone literature must only write about topics and experiences that are utterly different from the mainland ones. Instead, this chapter shows that Sinophone literature in Hong Kong translates, challenges, and enriches the concerns of modern Chinese history.

Further complicating Hong Kong's archipelagic relationship with the Chinese mainland, Chapter 2 rereads Ye Si's post-realist novella *Paper Cuts* (1977). While dominant readings of this text are rooted in the Cold War narrative of neutrality and interpret the Itnovella as advocating for Hong Kong to remain unaffected by Chinese or Western cultural influences, I show that the novella's alternating yet imbricating representation of Chinese folk epistemology and Western modern thought provides an articulation of a diasporic aesthetic which resists the Cold War style of neutrality. A diasporic aesthetic understands a cultural accent (co-produced by multiple sources), not as an unfortunate deviation from the orthodox standards, but as a productive point to create a new, differing culture. By analyzing the novella's deliberate critique of the neutrality of a narrator (narratively transparent and culturally "unbiased"), I show the text's ambition to further urge its readers to interrogate cultural neutrality and reclaim a diasporic culture in Hong Kong. To do so, the novella defamiliarizes hegemonic languages (Mandarin Chinese and English) and foregrounds the Cantonese dialect. I interpret what Ye Si calls an "assortment of tongues" as an archipelago of languages, peoples, and cultural practices in Hong Kong. In this way, *Paper Cuts* also presents a model for urban Sinophone literature, one that takes the written form of regional oral culture (in this case, the Cantonese language and Cantonese opera) to critique the role of hegemonic languages in modernity.

Chapter 3 adds an additional layer to the understanding of Hong Kong's archipelagic relationship by analyzing three literary texts that compel us to reconceptualize the image of a Cold War migrant—Xi Xi's *My City* (1975), "Hudi" (Tigerland/Bitterland, 1987), and Ye Si's "Chuanshang" (On board, 1979). Challenging the division of people in Hong Kong into the categories of permanent residents and (il)legal migrants from communist China and Vietnam, these stories show that the people travelling through and residing in Hong Kong are fellow strangers who participate in coastal movements that have connected South China, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific for centuries. In this chapter, an archipelagic approach entails a reading that connects seemingly disparate experiences (of mainland Chinese migrants and Vietnamese refugees) in Hong Kong. I think with a common Chinese phrase "*pingshui xiangfeng*" (accidental encounter) to theorize how coastal stories in Hong Kong's Sinophone literature develop archipelagic ways of understanding intimacy in social relationships. As I show through the three literary texts in this chapter, when situated in the geocultural context of an archipelago, the idea of social intimacy needs to be understood not in terms of direct relationship of giving and receiving between two individuals or individualized groups, but in terms of a more mobile community constituted of strangers who might have only accidentally met each other once but would continue to pass on the survival skills, material support, and mental care from one to another as a way to reciprocate and to weave the larger web of social kinship.

The coda turns to Paris-based authors Peng Cao and Lv Qi Shi to map Sinophone Hong Kong onto the field of Asian diasporic literature. This chapter expands the scope of the dissertation by considering how experiences of racialization and cross-racial solidarity in European contact zones, another archipelagic site, transform the ways of telling a resistant story about Cold War Hong Kong.

Chapter 1.

Hong Kong Short Story as De-Cold War Genre: Writing Trauma after the Cultural Revolution

Literary fictional authors in Hong Kong during the long seventies, like writers of the early twentieth century China and those of other cultures writing during transitional times, predominantly worked with the genre of the short story. As postcolonial scholars have argued, the brevity of the short story is not a structural deficiency;[65] rather, it gives the genre the "potential capacity for dissidence," both in terms of form and content, against a panoramic national narrative that is often provided by the novel (Awadalla and March-Russell 2013, 4). In the context of modern China (starting from the New Culture Movement in 1915 and the May Fourth Movement in 1919), the short story was a reflective means to think through the many problems regarding China's path towards modernity.[66] As Marston Anderson (1985) argues in "The Morality of Form," the narrator's conscious relationship with the protagonist, the author, and the reader is key for the short story to participate in China's transformation from feudalism to a modern nation-state. Thus, it should not be a surprise that prolific Hong Kong writers across generations throughout the Cold War period published their major works in the book format of a single-authored short story collection.[67] Outstanding stories from other writers were anthologized by their fellow author-editors.[68] Rather than promoting a standard storytelling voice, the peer-support anthologizing practice encouraged thematic and formal diversity, enabling what Ye Si (1987) calls a "family of fictions," a communal space to read and (re)produce literature. Today, literary scholars continue to revisit both

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[65] From Walter Benjamin's "The Storyteller" (1936) to Frank O'Connor's *The Lonely Voice* (1962), Western literary scholarship predominantly sees the short story as either a modern degradation of oral tradition, a compromised form to novels of realism, or a literary genre only for the oppressed groups.

[66] Theodore Huters, *Reading the Modern Chinese Short Story*.

[67] This includes established writers such as Liu Yichang (1918–2018) and Shu Hong-sing (Shu Xiangcheng, 1921–1999) and the emerging writers like Xi Xi (1937–2022), Ye Si (1949–2013), Lilian Lee (1958–), and Peng Cao (1964–).

[68] Important anthologies include Ye Si's *Selected Short Stories from the Big Thumb Magazine* (1978), Ye Si and William Tay (also known as Zheng Shusen and Zheng Zhen)'s *Selected Short Stories of Young Hong Kong Writers* (1979), Ye Weina and Choi Chun-hing's *Literary Anthologies by Hong Kong Young Writers Association* (1983), and Ye Si *et al.*'s *Family of Fictions* (1987).

the canonic and the understudied short stories to understand the multifaceted nature of Hong Kong literature in the late twentieth century.[69] In comparison to novels of realism,[70] the genre of the short story (together with its formal variations such as the short story cycle and the novella) allowed writers to experiment with the narrative voice in order to represent contested perspectives in Hong Kong as the city was undergoing, on the one hand, unprecedented colonial-capitalist modernization, and on the other hand, was witnessing global momentum in anti-imperial, de-Cold War movements.

Particularly, Hong Kong's multifaceted storytelling voice was complicated by the arrival of mainland fictional writers who migrated to the city in 1976 after Mao's death and the subsequent end of the Cultural Revolution. Experiencing the Cultural Revolution firsthand, these authors started writing their stories in Hong Kong but in ways that intervened into the stylistic and political limits of writing trauma, limits that simultaneously motivated and confined their fellow writers remaining in the mainland. Such limits are best represented in the literary genre known as "wound literature" or "literature of the scarred" (*shanghen wenxue*). As the first literary movement after a decade-long censorship on daily and artistic expressions during the Cultural Revolution, wound literature was the main venue through which the mainland Chinese could express their grievance against the traumatic history. Primarily published between 1977 and 1985,[71] wound literature refers to realist fictional stories that rebuke the Cultural Revolution for its psychological damage on the Chinese people, especially the intellectuals and well-educated individuals. Two short stories are believed to be the founding pieces of wound

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[69] Influential retrospective anthologies include the multi-volume periodization series (1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1984–1985, 1986–1989, etc.) under the title of "Xianggang duanpian xiaoshuo xuan (selection of Hong Kong short story)" and Liu Yichang's two-volume *Centennial Collection of Hong Kong Short Story* (2006).

[70] Generally speaking, there were two kinds of novels of realism published during this period in Hong Kong. Li Huiying's *Qianfang* (Frontier, 1972) and Xia Yi's *Xianggang liang zimei* (Two sisters in Hong Kong, 1976) are archetypical socialist realist novels that feature anti-Japanese hero(in)es. The second kind of realist novel include Dong Rui's *Chuyang qianhou* (Before and after going overseas, 1977), Bai Luo's *Xinlai Xianggang de ren: piaobozhe* (Newcomers to Hong Kong: the drifters, 1986) and *Ruo Yun de ai* (Ruo Yun's Romance, 1987). They are bildungsroman of Hong Kong's migrant population; as descendants of Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, both Dong Rui and Bai Luo strictly follow the May Fourth realist literary tradition established by Mao Dun (1896–1981) and Lao She (1899–1966).

[71] This specific periodization is to differentiate from the following literary phenomena in the late 1980s and 1990s, such as search-for-roots literature (*xungen wenxue*), culture literature (*wenhua xiaoshuo*), and avant-garde literature (*xianfeng wenxue*). For an analysis of Chinese literary history in the post-Mao era, see Liu Zaifu (1994, 12–24).

literature—“Banzhuren” (The headteacher, 1977) written by literary author Liu Xinwu and published on the state-sanctioned literary journal of *People’s Literature* in Beijing, and “Shanghen” (Wound, 1978) written by a Fudan University student Lu Xinhua and published on the mainstream newspaper *Wenhui Bao* in Shanghai. While the latter story gives the genre its name, the former provides a narrative archetype for an ensuing large body of literature.[72] “The Headteacher” features a middle school teacher Zhang Junshi who reforms his classroom by questioning Cultural Revolution terminologies and re-introducing Chinese and Western literary classics that are previously censored. The story concludes with Zhang’s hyper-optimistic monologue, in which the miserable past will be overcome by the bright future under the new leadership of the post-Mao communist party. Since then, most stories of wound literature adopt a similar narrative arc with predictable characters: the intellectual or the well-educated (a student scholar, a historian, a doctor, an artist, a school principal, etc.) are the conscientious new liberators of the nation; the poor and the less-educated are brainwashed, ignorant, or sometimes evil; and finally the Party high officials (that is, powerful individuals rather than the violent power of the state) are the only ones to be held accountable for the national trauma. Although most wound literature still follows a formulaic script (symptomatic remnants of the Cultural Revolution),[73] it nevertheless is a powerful attempt “to rediscover human value and to protest against psychological enslavement in the name of revolution” (Liu 1994, 12-13). Thus, wound literature, despite its problematic tendencies as I will further unpack soon, becomes a key genre for literary critics to understand how the Chinese society continues to make meaning of the traumatic history happened during communist revolution, a product of China’s attempt to construct a non-Western and non-capitalist modernity.

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[72] For a selected list of writers of wound literature, see Liu Zaifu (1994, 13).

[73] To be sure, there are exceptions within wound literature, but they are either met with severe censorship or overlooked by the general public. An example of the first kind is Bai Hua’s literary theatre script *Kulian* (Miserable in love, 1979) which later made into the movie entitled *Sun and Man* in 1980. The controversy revolves around a line expressed by the protagonist’s daughter; namely, “You love this country, miserably in love with it, but does this country love you?” Till this day, the film has been released to the public. An example of the second kind is Wang Anyi’s short story “Benci lieche zhongdian” (The terminal station of this train, 1981). The protagonist in Wang’s story is first introduced as an archetypical student scholar; however, instead of celebrating the bright new future, the melancholic protagonist sharply points out that the violence and trauma of the Cultural Revolution continues to impact the Chinese youth and many forthcoming generations.

At the same time, critics have pointed out that the new ideological symptoms, ones that differ from the Maoist communist ones, represented in wound literature require thorough investigation. Concurrent with the emergence of wound literature is the launch of the Open Door Policy in 1978. Post-Mao China soon entered a postsocialist and effectively neoliberal-capitalist stage, in which import and export trades were resumed and state assets were privatized.[74] The historicist linear narrative of wound literature is a "socially symbolic act," to borrow Fredric Jameson's concept, that reflects this abrupt political shift. In *Illuminations from the Past: Trauma, Memory, and History in Modern China*, Ban Wang argues that wound literature was

> enmeshed in a rigid set of terms…: tradition versus modernization, past versus present, political errors versus enlightenment, east versus west, stagnation versus progress. These terms reflect a strong desire to shake off the nightmare of recent history, particularly the trauma of the Cultural Revolution, and co-envisage the possibility of a more meaningful, hopeful future. (143)

Put differently, as a national "memory work of trauma," wound literature functions as a means to overcome a dark chapter in the process of nation building, not to challenge the violence of the modern nation-state (Ban Wang, 13). More importantly, the "meaningful, hopeful future," though led by the same communist party, is a future that stays away from chaos and violence caused by revolution. After the failure of the Cultural Revolution, the Third World no longer faithfully believed that Maoist and other communist revolutions were liberating forces to achieve national development and global decolonization. In other words, officially communist regime or not, many Third World countries started to turn towards neoliberal-capitalism in the seventies and eighties, the last two decades of the Cold War. It is in this sense that the new meta-narrative of progress in wound literature represented an epistemological turn towards neoliberalism within the Cold War history.

In her seminal book *Lishi yu xushu* (History and narrative), Meng Yue further analyzes the narrative of wound literature by pointing out that although it provides detailed description of the traumatic experience it essentially avoids to represent the social cause of such trauma. She poignantly argues that wound literature has offered profuse and realistic portrayal of "the crazy, cruel, shocking, and absurd events during

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[74] See Wang Hui, "Contemporary Chinese Thought and the Question of Modernity" (1998).

the decade of the Cultural Revolution, about all kinds of wrongfully accused cases, about the distortion and mutation of the soul," but

> the sum of them is not enough to name or explain this catastrophe. … Rarely do the stories of wound literature lead to any kind of sobering insight into the nature and causes of this unprecedented tragic event. What are the more important things that wound literature has not written or failed to write about? That is, what kind of collective and national tragedy is the Cultural Revolution? What forces directed this tragedy, and why the people allowed it to happen? (31)

What Meng identifies here is indeed a traumatic symptom of wound literature itself: the inability to articulate the psychic experience of and by a suffering collective. Although Meng's scholarship is often interpreted as an unambiguous criticism against wound literature (such as Ban Wang), I read her observation as providing an opportunity to reconsider the potential of writing trauma. To me, her questions direct our attention away from the moral accusation of the Cultural Revolution in literary representation, and, instead, they gesture towards a literary voice that rethinks the alternative trajectories that revolution *could have* taken in modern China. Notably, however, studying a wide range of literature produced in the mainland, Meng's responses to her own questions are also rather circuitous.[75] Perhaps she is conditioned to do so without a reference to a body of literature that pushes beyond the narrative and ideological limits that she so accurately pinpoints. Understood in this way, the scholarly dissatisfaction with wound literature is not so much a disdain for but a disappointment in a literary genre that has not reached its potential of representing trauma and healing in ways that the traumatized can re-evaluate the anti-imperial agenda and restart imagining how to make an alternative modernity possible again.

In hope of searching beyond the conventional limits in wound literature, this chapter turns to stories about the Cultural Revolution that were written in Hong Kong. I show that works by migrant writers from the mainland—Yang Mingxian's "Yao dama" (Auntie Yao, 1979) and Yan Chungou's "Wei shiqu de" (For those that have gone…, 1984)—open, instead of foreclosing, more discussion about trauma and state violence. Such stories invited more imaginations from those Hong Kong authors who had no firsthand experience of the Cultural Revolution. Examples are seen in Xin Qi Shi's

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[75] For example, resorting to a reductive use of psychoanalytical terms, Meng concludes that the Cultural Revolution reveals the "death drive of particular Chinese characteristics" (34).

"Zhenxiang" (Truth, 1982), Song Mu's "Cong Kangle Dasha tiaoxia lai de ren" (The Man Who Jumps off Connaught Centre, 1984), and Ye Si's "Geming Dadao lupang de yayi" (The Dentists on the Avenida de la Revolución, 1985), all three of which will be examined in this chapter. While wound literature attempts to put behind the Cultural Revolution as a dark chapter while China transitioned into a neoliberal stage within the Cold War period, short stories written in Hong Kong show that the traumatic history of the Cultural Revolution is part of the ongoing Cold War violence. An archipelagic reading of these five short stories about trauma in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution proposes an ethics of connecting the Chinese subjects in Hong Kong and the mainland without absorbing the former into a hegemonic Chinese nationalist narrative. These stories are also powerful cases to dispel a stereotype that due to the colonial history of Hong Kong, its Sinophone literature must only write about topics and experiences that are utterly different from the mainland ones. Instead, this chapter shows that Sinophone literature in Hong Kong translates, challenges, and enriches the concerns of modern Chinese history.

1.1. Writing Trauma in Hong Kong

For many mainland readers, wound literature is re-traumatizing because the subjectivity of the everyday people remains a forbidden topic. The Chinese subjects are treated as inhuman twice: the first time during the Cultural Revolution and the second time in wound literature. Beyond mainland China, wound literature is much less circulated. The international public imagines the Cultural Revolution primarily through Anglophone literature published in the 1990s and 2000s, written by Chinese writers who attended creative writing programs in the US. Particularly, Yan Geling's "Xiu Xiu, The Sent-down Girl" (1996)—adapted into a film in 1998, Ha Jin's *The Crazed* (2003), and Li Yiyun's *A Thousand Years of Good Prayers* (2006) gain much attention through international film festivals and the US book awards. Similar to wound literature, these texts often represent their characters as forever damaged individuals with no future in China and thus reinforce the Cold War imaginary of inhumane communism and humanistic free world.

Keeping a distance with China and the US, mainland migrant writers such as Yang Mingxian and Yan Chungou develop a writing politics that explicitly critiques the state violence as the cause the collective trauma while not recreating the Cold War

binaries. Although sharing theme and content with wound literature, these stories experiment with different narrative styles when representing the trauma of the Cultural Revolution. In many ways, Yang and Yan inherit and develop a May Fourth literary tradition, one in which that the formal experiment of the short story probes "questions of the transitivity of literature and its insertion in the social order" (Anderson 1985, 53). For example, Marston Anderson's "The Morality of Form" argues that many short stories by Lu Xun (1881–1936, known as the most important fictional writer, poet, essayist, and thinker in modern Chinese vernacular literature) deploy the strategy of the "mediating narrator" (39). That is, mediating between the fictional world (characters in the story) and the lived world (author and reader of the story), Lu Xun's narrator both critiques the incompetence of the intellectual (within and beyond the story) and simultaneously gestures that his readers may forge a different future in their lived reality by reflecting upon the fictional representation of such incompetence. Much like Lu Xun's "mediating narrator" who constantly reminds their reader that neither of them is outside of the moral ambivalence presented in the central layer of narrative, stories by Yang and Yan invite Hong Kong readers to reconsider the past and future of revolutions across Chinese communities undergoing modernization.

1.1.1. Reclaiming the Language of Revolution

Four years after migrating to Hong Kong, the Manchurian-born and Beijing-raised author Yang Mingxian published "Auntie Yao" (1979) which became the first impactful story that inserts life-segments of the Cultural Revolution into Cold War Hong Kong. A co-recipient of the first Chinese Literature Award for Fiction organized by Hong Kong Urban Council, the story of "Auntie Yao" was later included in Yang's short story collection under the same title, published by Linking Publishing in Taiwan, 1981. Yang's other two short stories won Taiwanese literary awards respectively in 1980 and 1981;[76] her second short story collection *Crystal Ice* was published in 1988. Since Yang's stories primarily represent the lives in the courtyard houses (*siheyuan*) in Beijing during the Cultural Revolution, literary criticism interprets them with a binaristic evaluation of communism and capitalism. For example, Feng Weicai categorizes "Auntie Yao" under the label of wound literature in his edited anthology *Selection of Hong Kong Short Story:*

[76] See "Author's Information" in *Selection of Hong Kong Short Stories: The 1970s* (1998, 255).

The 1970s (5). Similarly, Taiwanese writer Lin Haiyin contextualizes Yang's fictions under the dichotomy between the materially backward mainland China and the economically advanced Taiwan (Lin 1981, i–x). Acknowledging the powerful critique of state violence in Yang's stories, this section, however, offers a different reading. Reversing tropes in wound literature, "Auntie Yao" refuses to be read as an ideological script. Instead, its comical retelling of a familiar story offers a critical perspective on the Cultural Revolution beyond a Cold War lens. Specifically, by foregrounding ordinary people's everyday experiences through the creative use of colloquial language, northern dialect, and regional proverbs, "Auntie Yao" reclaims the revolutionary potential of language from dominant political discourses.

Set in Beijing, "Auntie Yao" represents the protagonist—a middle-aged, peasant-born siheyuan-resident—as a rebel against, not a victim of, the Cultural Revolution. Intervening into conventional wound literature that graphically depicts poverty, physical violence, and psychological suffering, Yang's story focuses on Auntie Yao's everyday resistance against the corruption of the Revolutionary Committee members, the hypocrisy behind the movements of class struggles, and the bureaucracy of the endless gatherings. Auntie Yao ridicules the didactic and violent language of the Cultural Revolution by making spontaneous twists when asked to chant the revolutionary slogans. One example is seen in an assembly of *wendou* [struggle with words], a regular event in which one selected individual becomes the onstage target of verbal criticism and personal insult from the assembled group. Resisting to participate in the *wendou* assembly targeted an individual named Third Sister Cao, Auntie Yao makes small chat with her fellow group members to critique not the targeted individual but the leader of the *wendou* assembly. When the assembly leader coerces the group to repeat the formulaic slogan "Down with Third Sister Cao," Auntie Yao, instead, changes it to "Down with Third Sister Liu" (238). The switch of surname of the targeted person brings uncontrollable laughter to the assembled group.

Third Sister Liu is a fictional character made nation-wide famous through a 1961 socialist musical film produced five years before the start of the Cultural Revolution.[77] In the film, Third Sister Liu is a poor and brave young woman of the Zhuang ethnic minority

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[77] For an analysis of the cultural role of this character and the film in socialist China. See Eddy U's "*Third Sister Liu* and the Making of the Intellectual in Socialist China."

(otherwise known as Bouxcuengh) who resides in the mountain areas of southwestern China. However, after the launch of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, the film about Third Sister Liu could no longer be screened since only eight of the revolutionary operas or model operas (*yangban xi*) were permitted for public performance and circulation. In the narrative time of Yang's story, the once widely-admired cinematic figure of Third Sister Liu has come to represent, in a rather random way, a previous chapter within Mao's China. Hence, the fading image of revolutionary Third Sister Liu sharply contrasts with the extant image of so-called counter-revolutionary Third Sister Cao. Applying the revolutionary imperative language of "down with" to the fondly remembered figure of Third Sister Liu accidentally disrupts the order of power constructed by the communist state. In other words, "Down with Third Sister Liu" is comical because it breaks the cultural and political taboo by exposing the inherent contradictions behind the state agenda of revolution.

Auntie Yao's joke on a horrific event temporarily creates an alternative communal space for the people to release their dissent against the arbitrary violence happening throughout the Cultural Revolution. A fellow assembly member snickers and responds to Auntie Yao:

> You old lady didn't put your heart or ears in the meeting at all. … How on earth does Third Sister Liu disturb you from a different generation and a different dynasty? It's like having Bao Er Dun to wrestle with Li Kui—two people from two worlds! … Well, be careful of becoming the first one who commits a counter-revolutionary crime simply by getting the slogan wrong! (238)

Seemingly bickering with Auntie Yao, the group member in fact builds on Auntie Yao's joke to further deconstruct the censorship on expressions explicitly using the given revolutionary language. By pointing out that the once iconic socialist model of Third Sister Liu from a few years ago now has turned into an anachronic figure, the group member reveals a communal knowledge that the serious-sounding propaganda cannot be taken seriously. The foreign-sounding name "Bao Er Dun" is likely a mispronunciation of Pavel Korchagin, the protagonist of a Soviet Union socialist realist novel *How the Steel Was Tempered* which was originally published in Russian in the 1930s and widely circulated in China in the 1940s and 1950s. In contrast, Li Kui, a legendary character from the classic Qing novel *Water Margin* (*shui hu zhuan*), was considered as one of the counter-revolutionary Four Olds (*si jiu*). Having Bao Er Dun and Li Kui to fight each other

is a literal translation of the state ideology of treating socialist culture and classic Chinese culture as confrontational. However, when the two cultural icons are juxtaposed in this way, the ideological struggle only becomes laughable, suggesting that the Cultural Revolution is a failing project. If a representative of the Old Culture such as Li Kui remains an important imaginative reference point to praise a half-recognized character in a Soviet Union socialist realist novel, then the cultural struggle orchestrated by the communist state fails to achieve their revolutionary goal.

Furthermore, rather than using insinuation to express dissatisfaction with the Cultural Revolution, Auntie Yao employs a straightforward and ruthless way of speaking against authorities. Often in a form of dialogue, the story contrasts the colloquial expressions with the state rhetoric to question the meaning of revolution. For instance, the below quote demonstrates the lines between Auntie Yao and two boys whose parents serve on the Revolutionary Committee. Auntie Yao reprimands the boys for bullying her grandson, and the two boys in turn attempts to discipline Auntie Yao for her call for justice.

> You fucking little bastards, too comfortable to do anything good? … if you dare to touch Hong Hong [the grandson] again, I will gouge off your eyes as balls to kick, twist off your head as a night pot to pee in!
>
> … Chairman Mao teaches us not to beat and not to curse. You embarrass yourself, old woman. … Don't forget Three Rules of Discipline [*san da jilü*] and Eight Points for Attention [*ba xiang zhuyi*]. Don't forget to criticize individualism and to condemn revisionism [*dou si pi xiu*]. Old Lady Yao, you should kneel before Chairman Mao's portrait to apologize. Dou—Si—Pi—Xiu!
>
> … Listen, why don't you go home and ask your mom to *dou si pi xiu*? Go ask your mom if occupying someone else's house counts as individualism! Ask her if intentionally not paying back the money you owe counts as bourgeois style! Go get a clear answer before lecturing me. … Also, trim your tongue and speak clearly—who would understand your scentless farts? I'm telling you brats, don't ever think about bullying Hong Hong again. It's called "hanging curtains on a wall—no way [*qiang shang gua lianzi—meimen*]"! (245–46)

Here, I quote the dialogue extensively to contrast the state revolutionary language with a range of oral expressions that are commonly used in the Beijing dialect—slangs, proverbs, and truncated witticism [*xiehouyu*]. The literary representation of the rich and often vulgar colloquialism dispels the trope of wound literature in which the Chinese

people respond to the traumatic Cultural Revolution by either speaking empty words to protect themselves or falling into various states of aphasia. Integral to this point, the rest of the story represents that Auntie Yao is a storyteller and knowledge collector of the local expressions and practices before the communist regime (232–34; 249–54). Rather, as Yang demonstrates, if the trauma inflicted by the Cultural Revolution is the erasure of language and culture, then a revolutionizing way of writing trauma is to make the affluent orality present again in the story of the Cultural Revolution.

1.1.2. Reinventing the Post-Traumatic Self

As we see in the example of "The Headteacher" (discussed in the introductory section of this chapter), wound literature often relies on the mode of autobiographical confession, a narrative that assumes a higher authority as its reader. Even for stories of wound literature that are written in the third person narration, the protagonist and the writer rarely have any mediating narrative space; namely, inside and outside the story, the two subjects share the same persona of a disillusioned intellectual. Such a style of writing leaves little room for the traumatic self to be reinvented and healed. While Yang Mingxian addresses this problem by intentionally featuring the non-intellectual characters, another author Yan Chungou (also known as Ngan Shun-kau) reinvents the subject of the intellectual in his literary writing. Participating in the early stage of the Cultural Revolution as a local leader of the Red Guard (*hongweibing*), Yan Chungou migrated to Hong Kong from Fujian Province in 1978, two years after the end of the Cultural Revolution.[78] Starting his career in Hong Kong as a proofreader in the commercial news paper *Ching Po Daily*, Yan served as the chief editor of Cosmos Books and retired in Canada. At first glance, Yan's personal journey fits too well into a Cold War narrative: a previously loyal communist follower starting a successful new life in the free Hong Kong. However, Yan's writing suggests otherwise. Since settling in Hong Kong, Yan has been writing reflexively about the Cultural Revolution in forms of fiction and non-fiction.[79] Often taking a lyrical tone to feature tragic topics, Yan's short

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[78] For more biographical information of Yan Chungou, see his prose collections *A Book of Self Delight* (1996) and *An Embarrassing Feast* (2000), as well as Yuan Siu-cheong (Yuan Zhaochang)'s journalist article published in *Initium Media* entitled "Writer Yan Chungou: Forty Years in Hong Kong, I peeled off the Scales of the Cultural Revolution One by One."

[79] Yan's early short stories won two Hong Kong literary awards respectively in 1981 and 1983. *Hong Lv Deng* (The traffic light), his first short story collection, was published by SCMP Book Publishing in 1984 and his second collection *Condemnation* was published by Cosmos Books in

stories center the psychology of the traumatic subject rather than reproducing graphic violence or a formulaic plot in wound literature.

The short story "For those that have gone…" (1984) was initially published in Yan's first collection *Hong Lv Deng* (The traffic light) then anthologized in *Xiaoshuo Jiazu* (Family of fictions), a collection of eleven literary stories. Each story in Family of Fictions was selected by a director from the Radio and Television Hong Kong (RTHK) and adapted into a standalone television episode in the series under the same name as the literary anthology. Set in Hong Kong and narrated from the perspective of a dejected middle-aged man who gave up his writing career due to the Cultural Revolution, "Gone" tells the story of a reunion, after a gap of twenty years, between the unnamed protagonist (whose wife and child cannot cross the mainland-Hong Kong border to join him) and his previous lover Yuan Yuan who returns from overseas as a successful essayist. The story ends with the couple separated again after a romantic yet ethically ambiguous night. However, in this heartbreaking story, Yan's intentional mismatch between the protagonist who used to be a writer and the active author (a strategy of creating the mediating narrative space) signals a light of hope: what could not be done by the intellectual figure in the story is achieved by another self in a different temporality. In a less obvious way, Yuan Yuan, through whose position the reader interacts with the protagonist, is also a traumatized character. Representing those Chinese subjects who did not experience the Cultural Revolution first hand but nonetheless lost decades of their lives, Yuan Yuan's seven-day visit to Hong Kong from overseas is her endeavour to heal. In this way, the story shows that the Cultural Revolution is not merely a traumatic history only concerning the mainland Chinese; rather, it is a symptom of a larger social wound caused by the Chinese struggle towards modernity and a defensive response to Euro-American standards of "progress" economically, politically, and socio-culturally.

Representing the characters' emotional reunion in Hong Kong, the story shows that the Cultural Revolution is a shared trauma among the Chinese subjects both in the mainland and overseas. While they likely spent their previous love life in Southeast Asia, the couple broke up when the protagonist went back to mainland China (under the Party's call for overseas youth) to serve the newly established country in the 1950s, while Yuan Yuan left for North America in a rage. However, during the Cultural

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1992. The most recent work *Bloody Times in Blossom Days* (2019) is a historical novel based on his experience during the Cultural Revolution.

Revolution, overseas ties became "evidence" for treason. Like many other intellectuals with overseas backgrounds, the protagonist was an easy target. During their first meal after the reunion, the protagonist tries his best to answer Yuan Yuan's questions about his life in detail. Instead of providing graphic descriptions, the third-person narrative uses free indirect speech to portray the protagonist's psychological relationship with his traumatic experiences: "every question feels like an old scar, to answer them is to torn off the scar with flesh attached to it, it's so bloody, but she can't see it" (189). It is not until here that the readers learn that the protagonist's calm and restricting voice throughout the story has been a form of self-protection to reduce the pain of reliving the twenty years of despair. At the same time, it is as painful for Yuan Yuan to ask these questions as for the protagonist to answer. These questions need to be asked because they are the result of her "bitter meditation during those sleepless nights over the past twenty years" (188). As a Chinese residing overseas, Yuan Yuan must have heard of the atrocities happening during the Cultural Revolution from tidbits of information, but she would have no personal access to get in touch with the protagonist since no forms of international communication were allowed in China. Divorced and raising three children as a single mother, she confesses that the protagonist has never left her mind. In her own words, "you have been distracting me for half of my life" (190).

To address this shared trauma of communist violence in the "free" world of Hong Kong, however, is surprisingly challenging. The capitalist compartmentalization of time in everyday life continues to prevent people with different traumatic histories to come together for healing. At the beginning of the story, when Yuan Yuan just lands in Hong Kong, she reveals serious concern about potentially not being able to spend much time with the protagonist since her tourist schedule for daytime "is so full that no one can take a breath" while he has to "work night shifts" (187). Even with the protagonist prearranging a seven-day leave, the couple eventually only spend two evenings together after twenty years apart. Yuan Yuan's busy schedule of seeing family, friends, and colleagues contrasts with the protagonist's solitary time waiting in his apartment. The temporal disjuncture created between the two Chinese subjects (and their respective communities) cannot be automatically bridged by simply being in the same space.

On the night before Yuan Yuan returns to North America, the couple spent have their first sexual encounter together after twenty years. With their aging bodies

comforting each other, it signals that the two paralleling traumas can only start healing through a chance for intimacy:

> They lay down in each other's arms. She pulled his head over and kissed him on the wrinkles on his forehead, murmuring "For all the pain you've suffered over the years…" And she kissed his slightly balding hairline, saying "For all your talent…" Then she kissed him on his dry lips, saying passionately "For those that have gone…"
>
> His nose was sore and tears came out in a flood. Burning tears, rolling down the corners of his eyes, flowing over his ears and seeping onto the pillow. He felt his body had been so old, filled with ailments, left no achievement in the twenty years of youth. He had never shed a tear despite all the suffering and exhaustion, but now he could finally let out a cry with her line "for those that have gone…"! (195)

Yuan Yuan's touch and care, and her willingness to expose her own vulnerability are the very things that people are deprived of during the Cultural Revolution. The protagonist's tears are a sign of him believing, again, that such intimacy is possible in a post-traumatic life. Importantly, the story does not erase the fact that the protagonist is in a marriage and the irony that he is forced to separate from his wife and child. When he comes back to his apartment after this romantic night, he realizes that "a strand of Yuan Yuan's grey hair happened to be resting on the photo frame of his wife and child, and an unusual bitterness tumbled in his heart, as if the bitterness from the past were rushing from all directions and crashing with the bitterness of today" (196). Instead of depicting the protagonist's romantic feelings towards Yuan Yuan as a moral failure, the story suggests that no individual is outside of the social trauma of the Cultural Revolution. Moreover, the story suggests that only a gesture, no matter how imperfect, towards a social intimacy can start the process of collective healing.

Though taking a different literary style than Yang Mingxian, Yan Chungou's lyrical writing also represents the trauma of the Cultural Revolution in ways that resist a reductive Cold War imagination of the mainland Chinese and Hong Kong Chinese. Together with other migrant writers such as Jin Zhao (1931–)[80] and Lin Yemu (1938–)[81]

[80] Jin Zhao, penname of Liang Yuwen, returned to Hong Kong in 1976. He publishes two short story collections—*The Taste of Mango* (1980) and *Real and Fake Fang Ling* (1982)—among other fictional and non-fictional writings.

[81] Lin's short story "The Doctor's Visit" (1980) is selected in *A Selection of Hong Kong Short Stories: 1970s*. His short story collection *Scenery from Left and Right* is published in 2013.

who feature the Cultural Revolution in their fictions during the long seventies, Yang and Yan put forward a new politics of writing trauma that is different from wound literature.

1.2. Collective Healing: Solidarity in Contested Perspectives

Authors who are Hong Kong-born and raised also respond to how the trauma of the Cultural Revolution has affected the psychology of the Hong Kong subject. Not bound by the tropes of wound literature, their stories take the communist history as an anchor to comprehend the growing socio-political differences between mainland China and Hong Kong. In this section, I will examine Xin Qi Shi's multi-genre novella "Truth" (1982), Song Mu's "The Man Who Jumps off Connaught Centre" (1984), told through the perspective of four narrators, and Ye Si's braided story "The Dentists on the Avenida de la Revolución" (1985). As seen in many other short stories on diverse topics produced during the same period—such as Liu Yichang's "Duidao" (Intersection, 1975), Xi Xi's "Jiazu rizhi" (A family diary, 1981), and Ye Weina's "Mege de hunshi" (My brother's wedding, 1981)—a key literary strategy deployed by Hong Kong authors during this time is the layered narrative. This section shows that the multi-narrative structure of Hong Kong short story creates literary space for readers to explore potential solidarity among contested perspectives in Cold War Hong Kong.

Literary scholars in the New Left school often read multiple or braided narratives as a symbolic act and formal strategy to represent the rapidly changing reality in capitalist European societies. In *The Political Unconscious*, Fredric Jameson rereads Joseph Conrad's *Jim Lord*; he argues that the text's narrative shifts between "high" literature (naturalism, existentialist account) and mass culture (romance, adventure story, gothic, and the like) is not a stylistic failure, but a performative representation of the "boiling emergence and disappearance of so many transitory centers" in late nineteenth-century capitalist England (224). In contrast to the individualized and independent point of view developed in Henry James' bourgeois novels, Jameson argues, Conrad's multi-narrative structure symbolically represents the relationality between the "perspective of language" (not just the perspective of a middle-class character) and the "materiality of language" in capitalism (224). That is to say, the narrative voice within the literary text is inseparable from the social condition in which the text is produced. For Jameson, Conrad's multi-narrative novels, unlike Henry James'

singular narratives, “have the function of symbolically resolving the contradiction in the subtext” of the capitalist society in its accumulative stage (44).

Jameson’s theorization of European novels offers insight into the reciprocal relationship between pretext and subtext, between narrative perspective and socio-political materiality in transitional historical moments. In the meantime, Hong Kong literature and the city’s transitions of the seventies require a different interpretative framework. First, capitalism and bourgeois lifestyle were the manifestation, rather than the cause, of the many social contradictions in Hong Kong’s Cold War years. Consumerist culture was the middle ground for the increasing presences of British colonialism and the communist Chinese state (see Introduction). Second, the technique of multiple narratives deployed in the short story is fundamentally different from the one used in the longer form of a novel. Not having the space to elaborate insignificant details, as the aesthetic principle of the Bloomsbury writers according to Jameson (223), Hong Kong short stories must make succinct use of the multiple narratives to parallel the brief everyday moments in which the competing ideologies and modes of production coincide. Here, I would like to return to postcolonial theorization of the transgressive power of brevity in the short story. As what Awadalla and March-Russell build on Nadine Gordimer’s argument, short story is “not a fragment of something larger but complete in itself: striven with its own fault-lines” (2013, 5). Similarly, Philip Holden, turning to the transitional period between the Malaya independence (1957) and Singapore’s ultimate separation from Malaysia (1965), argues that “The short story, in contrast [to belated novels such as Lloyd Fernando’s *Scorpion Orchid* (1976)], enacts what Bhabha calls the performative: it insinuates itself into the fabric of history at decolonization’s moment, its ‘repetitious, recursive’ pages dwelling on the ‘scraps, patches and rags of daily life’ in an ‘uncertain, passing contemporaneity’” (2010, 455).[82] Together, postcolonial scholars reinterpret the fragmentation of the short story not in terms of lack but as a formal condition that enables the genre to be responsive to volatile social changes, experimental in its artistic expressions, paratextual in its transgressing textual, authorial, and worldly boundaries, and finally translational between realism and folktale, as well as among colonial, national and foreign languages.

[82] Holden’s quotations of Bhabha are seen in “DissemiNation” (1990, 297, 306).

The three short stories I analyze below, instead of mirroring or resolving the social problems, deploy the form of multi-narratives in a deconstructive way; they turn Hong Kong's Cold War contradictions into opportunities of creating alternative, de-Cold War space within the volatile structure of power.

1.2.1. Shared Truth by Disparate Chinese Subjects

Xin Qi Shi (1950–), penname of Kan Mo-han, was born and educated in Hong Kong.[83] Widely published in multiple literary magazines in Hong Kong and Taiwan, Xin Qi Shi is best known for her short fiction collection *Qing se de yueya* (The blue crescent moon, 1986) and her novel *Honggezi jiupu* (The Red Chequers Pub, 1994). As the first piece in *Moon*, "Truth" was originally published in *Su Yeh Literature* in 1982 and adapted into a standalone television episode in the RTHK series *Family of Fictions* in 1987*.* The adapted twenty-minute episode, directed by Sheila Cheung (Zhang Shaoxin) and scripted by playwright Cheung Chi-sing, represents a popular reading of the story; it emphasizes the suspense and crime element of the plot, in which one of the twin sisters Cheng Yu (*rain*) and Cheng Yun (*cloud*) murders their common lover. Alongside the dominant interpretation, I read the melodramatic love triangle as a way to articulate that the two sisters with opposing personalities are two types of Chinese subjects entangled in a shared Cold War historicity.

Narrated entirely by the elder sister Yu, the story is constituted of two parts. The first part opens with an inner monologue of Yu at the scene of murder; the rest of Part One recalls the sisters' childhood and their teenage experiences during the Cultural Revolution in a Cantonese town in mainland China. Despite their identical physical features, the twin sisters are treated with arbitrary favouritism by their father and thus grow up approaching the world with opposing philosophies. The younger sister Yun is represented as insecure, self-centred, and bitter, while the elder sister Yu (the narrator) is represented as loving, generous, and understanding. Part Two follows a similar structure: it resumes Yu's first-person narration in the present time of the story by representing the direct dialogue between Yu and the Hong Kong police officer; it then recalls the sisters' new lives in Hong Kong after they flee mainland China in different

[83] See the entry on Xin Qi Shi in the CUHK Library Archival Collections. https://archives.lib.cuhk.edu.hk/agents/people/459

stages of the Cultural Revolution (Yu in 1970 and Yun in 1981). Unlike back in their hometown where the distinct personalities of Yu and Yun are so obvious to their father and the villagers, the two sisters are often mistaken by their neighbours, coworkers, Yu's fiancé, and the police and enforcers in the new social environment of Hong Kong. The novella eventually reveals that Yun kills Yu's fiancé out of jealousy. "Truth" ends with the innocent Yu impersonating Yun to take the charge of manslaughter and to serve a fifteen-year sentence in the Hong Kong prison so that Yun does not have to face repatriation to China. Yun, in contrast, leaves Hong Kong for the US, using Yu's legal identity.

The suspense of the story builds not so much on the disclosure of the crime act, but on the navigation of the arbitrary social justice systems in both mainland China and Hong Kong, as represented through the tension between the twin sisters. During the Cultural Revolution, Yun is an active Red Guard who publicly criticized Yu and their father as counter-revolutionaries in order to validate her personal value in the village, an element that has long been absent from her family life. However, likely turned into a counter-revolutionary herself in the later stage of the Cultural Revolution, Yun once again falls out of the Party's favour and becomes an outcast in the communist society. Yun's misfortune continues when she escapes to Hong Kong in 1981, three years after the end of the Cultural Revolution and one year after the launch of Hong Kong's strict repatriation policy for mainland migrants. Yu's narration explains the random challenges accompanied with this timing:

> As Hong Kong now implemented immediate repatriation, my younger sister [Yun] came at the wrong time. I let her keep my Hong Kong ID card, and I carry my new driver's license. The photo on the identification document would fool the most watchful enforcer. (38)

The immediate repatriation immigration policy ("ji bu ji jie" in Chinese), as mentioned in the block quote above, was implemented in October 1980 and it was well known for its cruelty among the Hong Kong Chinese. It discontinued a decade of relatively permissive border practice. Particularly, both the loosely guarded borders from 1968 to 1974, and the Touch Base Policy between November 1974 and October 1980 allowed for the

massive exodus of the Cultural Revolution escapees to land in Hong Kong.[84] In other words, while migrants from mainland China used to have a chance to start a new live in Hong Kong if they survived the border crossing process, all mainlanders arriving in Hong Kong after October 1980 were considered illegal migrants and they, if found, would be sent back to the Chinese authorities. For the twin sisters, although Yun (in 1981) travels through the same mountains and rivers as Yu (in 1970), the former no longer has legal means to obtain an identity in Hong Kong. The legitimacy of Yu and the illegitimacy of Yun echoes the theme throughout the novella—two supposedly equal subjects, two sisters who "shared the same womb together," (9) are driven further apart while both of them simply want to live a life that actualizes their self worth. Thus, the switch of legal identities between Yun and Yu critiques that artificial division is a common form of governmentality in both mainland China and Hong Kong. Regardless of their intentions, sharing the same Hong Kong ID card is the twin sisters' first collaboration to resist the continuous social injustices. It is in this way that they become integral to each other as social subjects. As Yu remarks at the beginning of the story, "each time Yun injures me, she stabs herself more deeply" (2).

Although the novella only has one narrator, its play with a few narrative styles including memoir, oral testimony, and letter, makes Yu, the only narrator, take on a complicated position. The juxtaposition of the narrator's many roles compels the reader to reconsider the (political and literary) contexts within which the truth is told. For example, as the teller of her own memory, Yu is an unreliable narrator. The opening of the story, when Yu presents her inner monologue at the crime scene, shows that the narrator has a secret plan which is not ready to be shared with the reader. It writes:

> In just ten minutes, I got rid of my lifelong hesitation and timidity, and showed my immense courage in this matter, restoring myself from a state of extreme anger and grief. Dreams, future, and all other worldly desires no longer bothered me. I was very calm and sensible to do everything I had to do. I must present this event to the world with a flawless appearance, and most importantly, I must make the law enforcement believe what I say. Almost feeling like a holy and solemn martyr, I waited for the change of fate. I collapsed in the darkness. When the horns of the police car and the ambulance came approached from far away, I sniggered. (2)

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[84] According to the Touch Base Policy, "illegal immigrants from China would be granted residence if they succeeded in reaching the urban areas or repatriated if they failed to do so" ("abstract" in Tong's MPhil thesis entitled "Touching Base: Immigration Control in 1970s Hong Kong").

In this passage, the narrator endeavours to represent her uncontrollable mood swings in a controlled tone. Presented as a rational decision, she reveals that she is determined to tell a version of truth that deviates from what she believes has happened. At this point of the story, it is intentionally unclear if Yu, the narrator, speaks from a perspective a victim or a perpetrator. Since this passage of unreliable narration is immediately followed by new sections in which Yu recalls her family life in mainland China and her experience of the Cultural Revolution, the reader wonders how the narrator's telling of her memory is mediated by her current state of mind. Such a readerly doubt disrupts the Cold War mode of perceiving any stories told by a Cultural Revolution survivor as a kind of confession without any individualized motivation.

As I have shown, the complex narrative throughout the novella deliberately destabilizes a moral reading that interprets the twin sisters as enemies; however, the end of the story seems to circle back to a binary representation of Yu and Yun (virtuous and evil, saviour and saved, victim and perpetrator). I read the story's narrative inconsistency as a symptomatic representation of Hong Kong's Cold War struggle, a struggle of creating a space for different Chinese subjects to rebuild a sense of commonality. In the final section of Part Two, the incarcerated Yu receives a letter sent from Yun. The letter reads:

> Yu: As you have expected, I am now in the US. I'm sorry about your imprisonment but I will never forgive you. … Your forbearance to me is just a charity from the excessive love you have received. … I know that the gulf between you and me is caused by life's injustice … , but it's too late to do anything about it now! Nothing will change between us in this life time! … Our battle will last forever, you cannot escape it, I will haunt you like a demon, I do not forgive myself, but neither will I forgive you! (52–54)

Notably, this letter is the only time when Yun's inner voice is represented in this story. However, Yu does not offer any direct response upon finishing reading the letter, foreclosing an opportunity of intimate dialogue between the twin sisters. Instead, the story ends with a final line that describes Yu carelessly dropping the letter onto the ground while describing the dim lighting in the cell and her plan for surviving prison life. The abrupt closure implies the narrator's contradictory feeling towards her sister's letter: Yu desires to communicate with Yun, but is conditioned to not do so.

Yu's dilemma is shared by the literary text. On the one hand, the text expresses a strong desire to reconnect disparate subjects whose lived experiences and worldviews

are driven apart further from each other due to communist state violence. On the other hand, as the common space between Hong Kong and mainland China continued to be segregated via border control, and as Chinese subjects in Hong Kong continued to be hierarchized via immigration policies in the wake of the Cultural Revolution, the text faces geopolitical and socio-cultural challenges when imagining a reconciliation between the twin sisters about their respective trauma. Nonetheless, "Truth" is a valuable attempt for Hong Kong authors to bridge the divergent processes of subject formation in Hong Kong and mainland China during the Cold War.

1.2.2. Towards a Shared Temporality

Sharing the same challenges faced by "Truth," Song Mu's "The Man Who Jumped off the Connaught Centre" (1984) offers an alternative approach by bringing together four first-person narrations. Born in Hong Kong in 1953, Song Mu (penname of Choi Chun-hing) is a literary writer and secondary school teacher.[85] "Connaught Centre" was first published in the famous literary column entitled "City Hall" in the commercial newspaper *Sing Tao Evening Post* then anthologized in Feng Weicai's *Selection of Hong Kong Short Stories: 1984–1985*. As a rare case for Hong Kong literature, this story has two versions of English translation, respectively appearing in *Hong Kong Collage: Contemporary Stories and Writing* (1998) and *In Search of a Flat: An Anthology of Hong Kong Urban Short Stories* (2013).[86] Brief literary commentaries, often in a sentence or two, praise the story's representation of the multifaceted growing tensions between Hong Kong and mainland China in the former's everyday urban setting.[87] Expanding on these observations, I argue that Song Mu's story does more than listing the multiple stances regarding the prevailing Hong Kong-mainland competitions during the Cold War; instead, by using four imbricated narratives, the story creates a common time-space for readers to re-evaluate these contested perspectives as a series of relational narratives

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[85] Song Mu has published a short fiction collection *Night Cycling* (1995) and a prose collection *Beer Cans and Peanut Shells* (2020). Additionally, Song Mu is involved in multiple edited projects of Hong Kong literature, such as *Literary Anthologies by Hong Kong Young Writers Association* (1983).

[86] This dissertation uses the translation by Fan Xing, anthologized in *In Search of a Flat*, because it better captures the tone and rhythm of the original text.

[87] See Ye Si's "Urban Culture and Hong Kong Literature" (1989, 19).

that critique the communist state brutality of the Cultural Revolution together with Hong Kong's capitalist violence.

The threading plot of "The Man Who Jumped off the Connaught Centre" is a deceptively simple one: in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution, a young man from mainland China committed suicide by jumping off the fifty-two-storey Connaught Centre, one of the highest buildings in Asia at the time. Completed in 1973 and now known as Jardine House, Connaught Centre is a landmark in Hong Kong's Central District, the financial and touristic hub in Hong Kong Island. Song Mu's story refers to Connaught Centre in its Chinese phonetic translation—Kang Le Dasha—which literally means the Building of Health and Happiness. As the translators' notes explain, in the seventies and eighties Connaught Centre was on the one hand considered by the general public as "a symbol of modernity … and … how prosperous Hong Kong would become" (Cheung 1998, 55); while on the other hand it represented "a cruel urban reality for new immigrants" (Kelen, Wong, and Song 2013, 5). Referencing the layered semantic and social meanings of Connaught Centre, the story's title explicitly juxtaposes the concepts of violence and modernity in the shared contexts of Hong Kong and mainland China.

The narrative structure of the story deepens its thematic concern. There are four narrations told from four discrete Hong Kong perspectives. They are an elderly intellectual, a young manual labourer, a middle-class mother and opera singer, and a film scriptwriter. Each narrator respectively encounters the young man who visits Connaught Centre and seems in despair. Judging from the young man's hair and dressing style, the Hong Kong narrators immediately recognize him as a newcomer from mainland China. At first glance, these narrations seem unrelated since the four narrators are clearly unknown to each other and the young man only appears as a fleeting, secondary subject in their conversation or inner monologue. However, the text connects the four narratives in two ways. First, there is no obvious marker other than an additional line break in between different narrations. Readers can only detect the change of perspective through the representation of the characters' idiosyncratic oral expressions. For example, the second narrator, the resentful and overworked labourer who cleans the facade of Connaught Centre, speaks in Cantonese slurs and vulgar expressions. This drastically differs from the speaking style of the intellectual-narrator or that of the opera singer-narrator, whose speech is saturated with Western vocabularies and references. The additional line break encourages the reader to take a deep breath, not a forceful

pause, while navigating the four perspectives. In this way, the text suggests that the differences *among* Hong Kong residents are no less distinct than the differences *between* Hong Kong Chinese and mainland Chinese.

Second, the text constructs a continuous flow of time through the four narrations. That is to say, each narration is not merely a relativistic perception of the same event; instead, each represents a time stamp, indispensable to the completion of the story. Particularly, the first narrator catches a momentary glimpse of the young man who wonders in front of Connaught Centre, with a face “so blank”—a normalized expression of indifference that soon melts into the crowd of the “white-collars of Central” who are on their way home (116/98).[88] Triangulating the Hong Kong narrator, the Cultural Revolution survivor, and the mainlander newcomer against the backdrop of Connaught Centre, the first narration is key; it marks the temporal beginning of the story and situates the forthcoming characters within the intergenerational trauma across Hong Kong and mainland China. The following three narratives represent more hostile responses to the mainlander migrants, but they also reveal that the shuddering xenophobia, ignorance, and apathy against mainlanders manifest the accumulative agony caused by capitalist development. The second narrator, standing in the cleaning cradle far above, sees the young man enters Connaught Centre. Initially mistaking the latter as a white inspector sent by the company, the labourer-narrator keeps referring to the young man as *daluzai*—a “mainlander” with “bumpkin head and bumpkin face”—and “A Chan” (*a-can*)—a derogatory term for mainlanders (118/100). By depicting the labourer’s inner monologue, the story reveals that his antagonism against mainlanders is an expression of his general resentment towards the enlarging inequalities in the free-market society. Coming from a poor family, the labourer-narrator has no choice but to keep his underpaid and precarious job, for which “tons and tons of mainlanders are queuing up” (117/99). The third narrator is completely oblivious to the young man who is falling from Connaught Centre because she is preoccupied with how her middle-class privilege is challenged by the competitive mainlanders who only speak in “mandarin” (*waisheng hua*) and “[countryside] mainland dialects” (*xiangxia hua*) (120/101). At the same time, her husband’s career depends on the trading business with mainland China. Finally, the fourth narrator is rushed into the crowd of onlookers after the young man has fallen.

[88] The first page number refers to the English translation in *In Search of a Flat* and the second page number refers to the original Chinese text.

Instead of feeling for the suicide, the scriptwriter-narrator desensitizes himself and makes utilitarian use of the tragedy for ideas to produce a commercial film, exoticizing the young man as a previous “Red Guard leader” who becomes a “[Big Circle Gang member]”[89] (*daquanzai*) in Hong Kong (122/103). It is in this final narration that all characters are brought together into a group portrait; each of their seemingly irrelevant personal suffering is reframed by the larger social pain—a result of dismantling a collective Chinese community that could have worked together to build a path towards modernity.

However, despite the tragic ending, the story is not a reactionary reproduction of injustices. Rather, it strives to construct potential solidarity among the contested perspectives in Cold War Hong Kong. This is done by foregrounding the subjectivity of the Cultural Revolution survivor (the first narrator’s intellectual friend). Similar to the protagonist in Yan Chungou’s “Gone,” the elderly intellectual has grown up in Hong Kong, received a doctoral degree from overseas, returned to serve the new China with his expertise, and endured much suffering in the past decades. In the narrational time of the story, the friend has left China and is about to fly to the US through Hong Kong the next day. The narrator accompanies his friend to sightsee around the Central District before another farewell. Heartbroken for his friend, the narrator laments to the latter that “Come, go, come, go…why did you leave [Hong Kong] in the first place?” (115/98) Instead of concurring the implication that his youth is wasted by communist China, the story represents the friend’s surprising response and the narrator’s changing opinion. It writes:

> “We had to, as Chinese!” He had lost the radiance in his eyes, but the determination stayed fixed on his face.
>
> I understood implicitly. I knew that he had been through the Anti-Rightists Movement, the Cultural Revolution, been put in the Cowshed, one rib broken, full set of teeth knocked out. … He seemed to harbour no regrets about anything, and in many ways I silently agreed with what he’d done. Whenever I thought of him, I couldn’t help but feel that I was always doing unimportant things, away from the eye of the storm. In a way, I felt ashamed of my peaceful life. He took a deep breath and said:
>
> “I want to get out of here so I can think, think about what has gone wrong in these past thirty years.” (115–16/98)

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[89] Fan Xing translates this phrase into “Daai Hyun Jai (gangster)” (122).

Clearly, the passage does not disguise the violence happened in communist China but neither does it repeat the teleological narrative of wound literature. Rather than having the friend—a Cultural Revolution survivor—feel remorseful, dejected, and nihilistic, it is the narrator—a communism dodger—who retrospectively yearns for more intellectual and political involvement with China's struggle of modernization in the postwar years. Their exchange thus disrupts the Cold War imaginary of Hong Kong and mainland China as two antagonist entities. These two characters reappear at the end of the final narration. This time, their conversation about the fallen young man is depicted through the eyes of a third person, the fourth narrator whose perspective represents a more dominant view of Hong Kong's Cold War generation. The two elderlies' genuine grief for the young man, a stranger to both of them, strikes the fourth narrator as an unintelligible feeling. But for the reader, it is precisely the exposure of the new emotion that illuminates the hidden, convergent paths of the past and leads towards the possibility of building a shared future between Hong Kong and China.

1.2.3. The Road to a Transnational Revolution

So far in this chapter, I have discussed how Hong Kong-based authors deploy various de-Cold War politics when representing trauma and imagining ways of collective healing in the wake of the Cultural Revolution. My fifth and final analysis extends the critique of the Cold War paradigm in a transnational lens by turning to Ye Si's "The Dentists on the Avenida de la Revolución" (1985), a braided narrative featuring a diverse group of Chinese graduate students in the US-Mexico border area. Ye Si, one of the most well-known Hong Kong writers (see Chapter 2), wrote this story a year after he completed his doctoral degree in comparative literature at University of California, San Diego. First published in a literary magazine in 1985, the story was collected in multiple anthologies (including *Islands and Mainlands*) and translated into English and French.[90] Reflecting upon his time as an international PhD student, Ye Si wrote that "Encountering other cultures can be a way to explore one's own cultural identity. … My time in the US also gave me a chance to travel slowly among different places and explore different art forms. … The experience was memorable because it created space for me to appreciate

[90] The English translation is included in *Islands and Continents: Short Stories by Leung Ping-kwan* (2007, 21–38). The French translation is seen in *Îles et continents: et autres nouvelles* (2001).

the admirable qualities of people and things" (qtd. in Ai 1992, 18). The process of composing, publishing, and translating "Avenida de la Revolución" tells its own transnational story. Many have observed that this text represents how intercultural exchanges shape Hong Kong identity (Wen 2003, 41) and how Chineseness is produced in constant negotiations (Ai 1992, 18; Minford 2007, xi). On top of the existing literary criticism, I argue that "Avenida de la Revolución" proposes transnational ways of becoming a revolutionary subject in the global south.

The story begins with the first layer of the interlacing narrative, in which two men cross the US-Mexico border to rescue a woman in Tijuana. The two men are the unnamed narrator (a Hong Kong international student at a university in San Diego, California), and his fellow student Carlos (a US citizen and previous Maoist with Mexican heritage). The woman, Weiwei, is a Master's student from mainland China majoring in oceanography. Walking along Avenida de la Revolución, a tourist centre in Tijuana primarily catering to the Americans, the narrator claims in a solemn tone that he and Carlos are tasked with "important business" (22/171).[91] The opening paragraph ends with the following line: "We had come to recover a Chinese girl who was somewhere in Mexico, destitute and lost" (22/171). However, this is not the full story. Immediately in the second paragraph,[92] the narrator discloses the exaggeration and self-importance behind this rescue narrative. It writes:

> No, it wasn't as serious as it sounded. "It's no big deal," Carlos had said to me on the phone. "I'll go with you on Monday morning." So we went to the University International Student Centre early in the morning to pick up an I-20 form from the secretary and drove to the border in Carlos's car. (22/171)

The deliberate contrast of tone in explaining Weiwei's situation invites the reader to consciously check a series of geopolitical binaries—mainland China versus Hong Kong, Mexico versus the US, gendered victim versus saviour, danger versus safety. Cliche-ridden as they are, readers realize that these binaries have been driving our imagination, rather comfortably, of Weiwei's situation as we read the story's opening paragraph. In

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[91] The first page number refers to the English translation in *Islands and Continents* and the second page number refers to the original Chinese text.

[92] Note that in the English translation, the opening paragraph is broken into two paragraphs. What I refer to as the second paragraph in the original text would be the third paragraph in the English version.

the cited passage from the second paragraph, we learn that Weiwei is not missing or in desperate crisis; she is stranded in Tijuana due to the lack of an additional travel document for Chinese citizens demanded by the US border officers. The US is not the saviour but the global police, and Weiwei needs not be liberated but to break free from the unequal border restrictions.

As demonstrated in the story's opening, "Avenida Revolución" interlaces two parallel narratives: one portraying flashback anecdotes about Weiwei and the other characterizing the representation of Tijuana. Both narratives often appear in the same paragraph (in the Chinese original text) as the narrator proceeds his journey of looking for Weiwei on the bustling street of the Avenida de la Revolución. In both narratives, the text challenges Western conceptions of the Third World.

In the case of Weiwei, she resists becoming a victim or a fanatic of communism under the Cold War gaze. For instance, when the fellow students from Hong Kong and Taiwan ask Weiwei about the Cultural Revolution, "the stories she [tells are] never the kind of thing other people expected to hear" (28/175). She would calmly acknowledge the existence of violent incidents but she would not emphasize the details. At first, her sophisticated response is misunderstood by the narrator as merely being "worldly-wise," a common strategy to protect oneself under communist censorship (29/175). But gradually, the narrator realizes that Weiwei is cautious that her words would be appropriated as ingredients of made-up stories about China. Not only contesting the anti-communist perspective, by sharing experiences in her own way, Weiwei also raises questions about the stereotypically fervent protagonists in the socialist revolutionary novels circulated in mainland China and among Hong Kong's small circle of left-wing intellectuals. The narrator notes that "She would only have been an unimportant character in those stories, probably appearing for one or two lines only, if at all" (29/175); instead, she is one of the many Chinese people who are "unconvinced by the relentless tides of [demagogic words]" (30/175). Just like the anti-communist discourse, the global image that socialist literature constructs about communism is equally misleading in envisioning the subjectivity of the everyday people in the Third World.

The Hong Kong narrator's telling of the anecdotes about Weiwei disrupts the Cold War imaginary in which the Chinese people are the outsiders to a global

community where Hong Kong and Taiwan are included. At one occasion, the narrator describes her in the following way:

> She didn't blindly worship western things, she just had a natural desire to explore other people's culture, a simple curiosity. … As she ate [her lunch] she used to browse through the Unicorn Bookstore's programme of art films. … We often saw her in the serial section of the library, reading the fiction pages of the latest edition of *People's Literature* or *Beijing Literature and Art*. Sometimes she would borrow old magazines and bring them back to our hall to tell us stories from them. … She didn't like the so-called "[wound] literature" which had become so popular in the past few years, but she did like most of more recent fiction. When we asked her why, she tried to explain: "It seems to reflect the problems in our daily life better." (30–31/176)

Weiwei's interest in Western art films and her discontent with wound literature cannot be simply understood as her wanting to be recognized by the West. She reads widely to explore new articulations that can help her think through the complexity of the modern, everyday life. In this sense, Weiwei is not dissimilar to the narrator. As he puts it earlier, "the distance between us [Chinese subjects from Hong Kong and the mainland] was actually not so great as we'd imagined it to be" (23/179). Importantly, these everyday interactions with Weiwei also become the foundation for the narrator to understand that there are ways to bridge the widening gap between Hong Kong Chinese and mainland Chinese because the differences are produced by socio-material conditions (growing up in capitalist and communist societies) rather than inherent ideological beliefs (capitalism and communism) (35/179).

Furthering the critique of the Cold War binaries, the story's second narrative, the representation of Tijuana, provides the textual and geographical framing in which the discussion about Weiwei and China is situated. After all, the recalling of Weiwei's anecdotes happens as the narrator presently navigates through the border area of Tijuana. Geopolitically and ideologically in between the West and the Third World, Tijuana (like Hong Kong) is a paradoxical space. On the one hand, it reminds and reinforces the inequalities of the US-Mexico border. Borrowing the words from one of his Hong Kong friends, the narrator points out that "It's so unfair! We can waltz into Mexico with no documents at all. But when we cross back into America, we get the third degree!" (26/173) In Tijuana, Mexican culture is also compromised to attract the US tourists. On the Avenida de la Revolución, for example, there are posters of eroticized Indigenous peoples, who "may have been meant to be Aztec heroes, but … looked more

like Apaches in a Western" (22/170); Mexican handicrafts on sale are "made to look like Mickey Mouse or some Extra-terrestrial" (36/179).

On the other hand, Tijuana cannot be reduced to a subordinate or parasitic Mexican city that only exists for the US. It is a real place where common Mexican people go about their lives. Alongside the commercialized touristy spots on the Avenida de la Revolución, there are also "a perfectly normal scene from daily life" (34/178). The narrator passes by "a hawker selling *camarones* and a variety of other delicacies on the roadside" including a "coconut stall" and "a stall selling tortillas" (33/178). In order to ask for news about Weiwei, he also stops by a dentist clinic where

> One white-robed dentist, a small, thin, middle-aged man with an ordinary face, came out to chat with his patients. They were like passengers bumping into each other on a bus. (33/177–78)

The everyday profile of the Tijuanians counteracts the Americanized image of the Mexican people. In many senses, the dentist on the Avenida de la Revolución and Weiwei are foils to each other; both chapters compel the reader to re-imagine places and subjects from the Third World beyond the Cold War construction.

The paradoxical condition of Tijuana is specific but not exceptional. In fact, many cities in Asia share the same situation with Tijuana. Commenting on the "confused riot of colours along the Avenida de la Revolución" (33/177), the narrator exclaims that "We could have been on a street in China" (34/178). Given the linguistic and ethnic differences between Mexico and China, the narrator's conclusion seems an unexpected identification at first. However, when contrasting to the white US, the urban landscape and folk practices in Mexico and China share more similarities than differences. As the narrator mentions earlier, Tijuana mirrors many Chinese border cities, such as Shenzhen, Macau, and Hong Kong. The text writes:

> "This place always reminds me of Shenzhen," Carlos said gently, referring to the new Chinese city that has sprung up across the border from Hong Kong. In a way it's true. The two places are similar—but at the same time quite different. A friend of mine once said Tijuana reminded her of Macau. That's true too. Especially when compared to San Diego, Tijuana is maybe more like something out of the Asia we are so familiar with. When I first came here and saw the potholes in the roads, the broken railings, the snack hawkers packing the street, I really felt like I was back home. On Californian TV we are always presented with Tijuana as a place with not enough water or a devalued peso, a world utterly different from California. To American

> tourists, it's a paradise for bargain hunters, an exotic destination, alive with Mariachi music and Margaritas. What can we say to their tales of adventures in bars and discos: we just feel differently. We come to Mexico less in search of exotic adventure. On the contrary, in Mexico we feel strangely close to the country, we even feel close to the poverty and dirt. (26–27/173–74)

The passage outlines the multiple conceptions about Tijuana—from perspectives of Carlos the Mexican American intellectual, the white US public and news media, and the Chinese international students from Hong Kong and the mainland. In doing so, the text situates this border city in relation to the global south. Carlos—a preserver of local Mexican art, a believer in communist revolution, and a hydraulic engineer working in China in the 1950s—does not like Tijuana. For him, Tijuana represents how "lovely things" such as revolutionary future and folk cultures "can be corrupted, by politics, or by commercialization" (28/174). In contrast, for the narrator and his fellow Chinese international students, it is precisely the "impurity" of Tijuana that reminds them of the struggle of modernization faced by the Chinese communities (both in Hong Kong and the mainland).

In this way, Carlos, the Tijuanian dentist, Weiwei and the narrator produce a collective image of the revolutionary subjects in the global south. Each of them, though coming from different socio-cultural backgrounds, tries their best to create their own versions of revolution in response to state-communism, Euro-American imperialism, and the Cold War. At the end of the story, Carlos and the Hong Kong narrator find Weiwei sitting on a bench outside of a dental clinic in a local market. From afar, Weiwei's silhouette seems pensive under the warm morning sunlight. The story concludes with an uncertain yet hopeful image which simultaneously refers to Weiwei and decolonial futures: "Perhaps she hadn't slept well the night before, or perhaps she was a bit tired after a long walk along the street. Or perhaps she just wanted to sit there and think, before standing up and continuing on her way again" (38/180).

In an article that analyzes the solidarity enabled by accidental encounters between Asian American activists and North Korean refugees, Chih-ming Wang encourages readers to ponder on "an ethics of co-presence where Asian Americans and Asians may share a common identity and even history, but are directed to different destinies" (2019, 248). Mobilizing Wang's examination on a post-Cold War situation, I suggest that an archipelagic reading of the five short stories about the Cultural

Revolution proposes “an ethics of co-presence” for Hong Kong Chinese and mainland Chinese to address a shared trauma during the Cold War. Here, an archipelagic approach allows me to read these stories as both allies of and intervention into the dominant genre of wound literature in mainland China. For Hong Kong’s Sinophone literature, such ethics of co-presence is done not by creating a rigid, indoctrinating, or allegorical identification process, but by forming a healing textual space where the author, the characters, and the reader build unexpected relationships among each other, a narrative feature enabled by the literary genre of the short story.

This chapter has provided the foundational discussions for the rest of the dissertation. Thematically, Hong Kong stories produced during the Cold War offers an alternative model in imagining possible decolonial relationships through unexpected identification (Hong Kong Chinese and mainland Chinese, China and Mexico). Stylistically, the formal features of the short fiction unpacked in this chapter will help us better understand the literary tradition in which a novella (Chapter Two), a short story cycle (Chapter Three), and other short stories (Chapter Four and Coda) are written.

Chapter 2.

Rereading Ye Si's *Paper Cuts*: A Hong Kong Modern Classic as Diasporic Articulation

> *It was an old play and an obsolete artistic form, but because you'd put feeling into it, it somehow moved me.*
>
> —Paper Cuts

This chapter rereads *Paper Cuts* (Jianzhi) as a post-realist text that represents Hong Kong's struggle of creating a diasporic culture from multiple sources during the Cold War. Since its initial publication in 1977, *Paper Cuts* has been one of the most discussed texts in the field of Hong Kong literature. The novella's author Ye Si (penname of Leung Ping-kwan or Liang Bingjun, 1949–2013) is a prolific poet, novelist, essayist, scholar, and an important cultural figure not only within but beyond the Cantonese world.[93] His collections of poetry and fictions are translated into English, Portuguese, Japanese, French, German, and Korean.[94] *Paper Cuts* is one of Ye Si's first novellas. Originally serialized in the newspaper *Express* (Kuaibao) in 1977,[95] the text has five Chinese-language paperback editions (1982; 1988; 2003; 2012; 2014) across Hong Kong and mainland China,[96] and in 2015 it was translated into English. Often listed

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[93] Starting his writing career in the 1960s and punctuating it with a PhD in comparative literature obtained from the University of California San Diego (1978–1984), Ye Si has published more than forty single-authored books, not to mention the numerous amount of column writings that were not compiled into a book format or the other dozens of collective projects that he partook as an editor, translator, and anthologizer. For a more comprehensive list of Ye Si's life work, see Appendix I and II in Wong Ka-ki's *Ye Si's Hong Kong Story* (2021, 333–406).

[94] Some of the English translation of Ye Si's works include poetry collections *City at the End of Time* (1992; 2002), *Travelling with a Bitter Melon* (2002), and *Lotus Leaves* (2020) as well as short story collections *Islands and Continents* (2007) and *Dragons* (2020).

[95] Notably, there are differences between the serialized version and the paperback. Ye Si rewrote some chapters and introduced new elements to the paperback version.

[96] The five Chinese-language editions are respectively published by Su Yeh in 1982, Greenfield Bookstore in 1988, Hong Kong Oxford University Press in 2003 and 2012, and Zhejiang University Press in 2014. This dissertation uses the 2014 edition.

together with Liu Yichang's *Intersection* (1972) and Xi Xi's *My City* (1975), *Paper Cuts* is categorized as part of Hong Kong's literary canon.[97]

The novella represents the city's multilayered realities as products of a Cold War paradox. That is, cultural influences from mainland China and the West compete peacefully yet fiercely in Hong Kong. Peaceful because British Hong Kong diplomatically cannot take a pro- or anti-communist side. Fierce because Hong Kong's neutral politics of the Cold War instigates cultural rivalry regarding everyday desires, preferences, and vocabularies. As a result, the Cold War simultaneously stimulates and restricts the presences of British-American imperialism and Chinese cultural nationalism in Hong Kong. For the common Hong Kong Chinese people, this is a confusing phenomenon because Chinese and Western cultures are at once considered as integral and threatening to Hong Kong's supposedly neutral position as a Cold War border; it is also a violent phenomenon because to stay culturally neutral is to stay culturally featureless.

Paper Cuts has twelve short chapters, evenly and alternately distributed between the stories of two young women—Yao and Qiao—each of whom struggles to understand her evolving sense of belonging. In the storyline featuring Yao, we see that although British colonialism has a restricted presence due to Hong Kong's Cold War position, Hong Kong people are nevertheless conditioned to perceive Chinese folk culture (i.e. the art of paper cutting and Cantonese opera) as either a shameful reminder or a fetishized object. The former conceptualization encourages the colonized to dissociate from racialized cultural practices and hence to emulate the supposedly "neutral" Western subject; the latter creates an anti-colonial role of a cultural nationalist who, in defense, rejects all Western cultural influences. Yao's tragic mental breakdown is a result of her lone fight against such a binary opposition, which is quietly instigated by the Cold War. However, it is possible to turn tragedy into hope. The narrator shows the readers that we need to transform solitary battles into communal resistance. In the other storyline of Qiao, we see the Cold War aporia manifested in a different form. On the one hand, Qiao's cultural proximity and racial resemblance to whiteness (i.e. her Westernized

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[97] This viewpoint is widely shared in the post-2000s literary scholarship produced both in Hong Kong and the mainland. Representative works include Zhao Xifang's "Chapter Three: Hong Kong Awareness" in *Novelizing Hong Kong* (2003, 127–155); Chan Chi-tak's "Chapter Two: 1970s–2000s: The Presentation and Disintegration of My City" in *Deconstructing My City: Hong Kong Literature 1950–2005* (137–234).

upbringing and ambiguous ethnicity) make her an ideal modern subject, conferring upon her certain privileges in British Hong Kong. But on the other hand, Qiao's position distances her from becoming a part of the Chinese community that she also identifies with. Initially caught in the dominant paradox of perceiving Qiao, the narrator eventually realizes that Qiao's effort of claiming both Western and Chinese cultural heritages speaks volumes to Hong Kong's struggle at large.

Situating *Paper Cuts* in the fields of Sinophone literature and global postcolonial literature, I argue that the novella provides an articulation of a diasporic aesthetic which resists the Cold War style of neutrality. As I will further unpack in this chapter, a diasporic aesthetic understands a cultural accent (co-produced by multiple sources), not as unfortunate deviation from the orthodox standards, but as a productive point to create a new, differing culture. By analyzing the novella's deliberate critique of the neutrality of a narrator (narratively transparent and culturally "unbiased"), I show the text's ambition to further urge its readers to interrogate cultural neutrality and reclaim a diasporic culture in Hong Kong. To do so, the novella defamiliarizes hegemonic languages (Mandarin Chinese and English) and foregrounds the Cantonese dialect. I interpret what Ye Si calls an "assortment of tongues" as an archipelago of languages, peoples, and cultural practices in Hong Kong. In this way, *Paper Cuts* also presents a model for urban Sinophone literature, one that takes the written form of regional oral culture (in this case, the Cantonese language and Cantonese opera) to critique the role of hegemonic languages in modernity.

2.1. *Huangxiang*: Illusions or Imaginaries

2.1.1. A Cold War Reading

In spite of its diverse cultural currents, *Paper Cuts* is predominantly interpreted as a text that advocates for Hong Kong's *unaffectedness* by the cultural impacts from both mainland China and the West. Such a dominant reading is a symptom of the Cold War narrative that imagines Hong Kong as an impartial and disinterested space. In the years after the novella's paperback release in 1982, Hong Kong critics have taken an allegorical approach to understanding the protagonists Yao and Qiao as anti-heroines, someone readers should *dis*identify with. For instance, Terence Chang Cheuk-cheung comments that "Yao represents a traditional Chinese woman, while Qiao represents a

more modern and Westernized one. … Both Yao and Qiao are in an abnormal mental state" (Chang and Ye Si 1983). Writing in 1985, Chan Ping-leung puts it more bluntly that both protagonists "have developed mental issues" (2011, 196). According to this logic, Yao and Qiao respectively represent a cultural problem that needs to be fixed: Yao symbolizes the desire to fully embody the traditional Chinese culture and she becomes mentally ill once she gets too obsessed with that goal; Qiao symbolizes a product of the modern Westernized culture, and her mental instability as well as her communicative incompetence is a result of her mixed cultural upbringing.

Consequently, many critics believe that the novella delivers a straightforward solution, stating that both the Chinese and the Western cultural worlds are merely illusions (*huanxiang*) rather than realities (*xianshi*) for Hong Kong society. Such critics assume that by disidentifying with Yao and Qiao, the readers help resolve Hong Kong's cultural troubles and re-establish Hong Kong culture as one that is independent of external cultural influences. Take Chan Po-chun's 1985 essay as an example. Chan asserts that "the Chinese 'traditions' that the character Yao clings to are unreal; they are illusions uprooted from their native cultural environment and have no relevance to the specific time and space [of Hong Kong] in which Yao currently lives. … Without paper cutting and Cantonese opera, Yao cannot find her identity in reality" (225). Over the next few decades, the argument that external cultural influences are unrealistic illusions continue to run strong through a variety of literary criticism. Later literary analysis often interprets the characters and the imageries in *Paper Cuts* as stable symbols through which definitive solutions to the problem of cultural belonging can be found.[98] For example, in a 1992 article the mainland scholar Ai Xiaoming writes that Hong Kong reality can only be truthfully revealed if we "debunk the two illusions (Chinese and Western), rectify the characters' psychological misidentification, and finally embrace the paradoxical nature of the modern life" (18). The irony here is although both Chan and Ai emphasize the complexities of Hong Kong's modern condition, they disavow the roles that Chinese and Western cultures have played in contributing to such intricate reality. By equating the tragic experiences of the main characters with the peril of cultural

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[98] This opinion is stated again in Wong Shuk-han's introduction to the 2014 edition of *Paper Cuts*. Wong cites Lo Kwai-cheung (1991) to suggest that "Qiao and Yao are two pre-given concepts in society, representing two different cultures" (15).

illusions and by advocating for readers to disidentify with the protagonists, these critics intend to idealize Hong Kong culture as unaffected, neutral, and pure.

Most recently, we see a variation of this canonic criticism in Wong Ka-ki's book *Ye Si de Xianggang gushi* (Ye Si's Hong Kong story, 2021). Comparing *Paper Cuts* with Ye Si's later short fiction collection entitled *Houzhimin shiwu yu aiqing* (*Postcolonial affairs of food and the heart*, 2003; 2009; 2013), Wong provides a critique of the 1977 novella. She writes that:

> *Paper Cuts* represents the imagination of Hong Kong occupying the in-between space as the mirroring characters of Qiao and Yao respectively represent Western and Chinese cultures; … it narrates a story of Hong Kong *blindly admiring* Chinese or Western culture. Such a plot design may not leave much space to express the subjectivity of Hong Kong because the in-between imagination mainly revolves around the relationship with the external other, but not conducive to a deeper grasp of the interior complexity of Hong Kong. In contrast, *Postcolonial Affairs of Food and the Heart* represents a hybrid and cosmopolitan imagination, which is more conducive to the representation of Hong Kong subjectivity. The hybrid cultural view … breaks through the previous in-between imagination, and this time the subject of Hong Kong has a complete voice. (93–94, my emphasis)

Wong confirms that today the impulse to disidentify with the protagonists continues to drive dominant interpretations of the text. More importantly, her analysis opens up but immediately forecloses the possibility of reading *Paper Cuts* through an anti-imperial and de-Cold War lens. In the above block quote, which is part of Wong's chapter tracing Ye Si's postcolonial thought, she makes it clear that *Paper Cuts* is not as progressive as the author's post-Handover writing such as *Postcolonial Affairs* in terms of representing Hong Kong's self-image. Differing from the critics writing in the 1980s and 1990s, Wong makes a significant move for us to appreciate Hong Kong culture not as parochially isolated but as "hybrid and cosmopolitan." However, this new line of argument fails to explain the rather arbitrary distinction between the danger of external cultural influences (as she argues about *Paper Cuts*) and the promise of cosmopolitan hybridity (as in *Postcolonial Affairs*). Such a hierarchical comparison not only denotes a historicist view implying that Hong Kong's self-writing "matures" over time, but also disregards Hong Kong's cultural response to the particular imperial formation of the Cold War. As do many scholars writing in the wake of the 1997 British-Sino sovereignty transfer, Wong's argument exposes a wider tendency to not consider the state violence manifested in the

Handover as continuation of the Cold War construction of territorial division in the post-Cold War era.

In fact, reading Yao and Qiao as anti-heroines who represent two external and oppositional worlds (the Chinese and the Western) implies the Cold War mentality of division. This is seen even in some of the most careful and insightful criticism. Lo Kwai-cheung, for instance, argues that the novella constructs two worlds that are "isolated from and incommunicable with each other" (Chen 2011, 263).[99] It is common to assume that Chinese and Western cultures ought not to mingle since their interaction tends to lead to mutual destructions. This assumption is perhaps best captured in the book cover of the first paperback edition in 1982 (see Figure 1): a hand holding a pair of scissors, an essential tool for the Chinese folk art of paper cutting, violently advances to cut through the modern-style silhouette of a presumably Western figure.

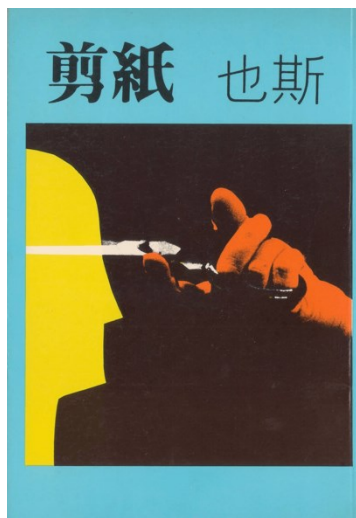

Figure 2. Book cover of the 1982 edition of *Paper Cuts*.

The problem here is that it regards the conflict between two cultural "illusions" as an inevitable destiny for Cold War Hong Kong but overlooks that the novella strategically reframes the conflicting differences as a starting point to re-establish a potential common ground for the future. In fact, the novelist has given hints to challenge this allegorical reading on more than one occasion. In the same interview with Terrance Chang, Ye Si tactfully responds that: "A Hong Kong person may contain qualities from both Qiao and

[99] Originally published in 1991, Lo's article "Popular Cultural Concepts in Several Hong Kong Novels" is selected in Chen Suyi's *A Collection of Reviews of Ye Si's Works: Fiction Section*.

Yao, just that the distribution ratio might vary for different people." The same applies to the two dimensions of Hong Kong reality: the novella represents that Hong Kong society is constituted of varying and entangled perspectives, each *dependent* on others. In other words, *Paper Cuts* shows that cross-cultural communication is challenging in Hong Kong not so much because the two worlds are incompatible with each other, but precisely because people refuse to acknowledge how different sides of realities are already intertwined in daily language, popular culture, communal relationships, and ways of perceiving the self in relation to others.

2.1.2. Two Imaginaries: Relating the Self with the Other

The word "illusion (*huanxiang*)," consistently used and invoked by critics across different literary reviews to interpret *Paper Cuts*, is drawn from Ye Si's non-fictional essay entitled "Liangzhong huangxiang" (which I translate as "Two imaginaries," 1976). Important to note is that the terms "illusion" (meaning fake and unreal) and "imaginary" (meaning creative and fictionally truthful) are two meanings of the same Chinese phrase *huanxiang*, and I suggest that most critics over-emphasize the first meaning of the phrase while ignoring the second. Reviewing the Cold War-induced cultural challenges faced by Hong Kong youth, this section shows that Hong Kong society needs to challenge the Cold War style of imagining other cultures, but not to disqualify the imaginative relationality with the other.

Written in 1976, one year before the serialization of *Paper Cuts*, "Two Imaginaries" outlines the ways in which the postwar Hong Kong generation struggles to position themselves in relation to the Chinese and Western cultures. The essay starts by responding to a review that warns Hong Kong audience about the bourgeois ideology represented in a 1969 American comedy *Alice's Restaurant* directed by Arther Penn. Engaging with the film and the review, Ye Si questions any simplistic attempts to strictly transpose Hong Kong onto either the Western postmodern culture ("a donkey covered with flowers carrying hippies into the church"—an iconic scene in *Restaurant*) or the northern Chinese culture ("donkeys working hard in mills against blasting winter wind

and drifting snowflakes"—a counter image provided by the reviewer of Penn's film).[100] "Two Imaginaries" famously states that

> Both cultural images, frankly, are nothing more than *huanxiang* [imaginaries and/or illusions]. Hong Kong is equally far from both *huanxiang*, and even though one seems more Chinese, it is obviously not more real. Hong Kong youth today are really living between these two kinds of *huanxiang*, and often mistake one of them as reality. (3)

While often interpreted as a double denial of the Chinese and Western influences in Hong Kong, what Ye Si takes issues with is a particular cultural phenomenon informed by the Cold War dynamic. The belated yet well-received screening of Penn's film in Hong Kong clearly insinuates the US's global ambition to maximize its influence on non-communist regions through popular cultural productions. In defense against the US's expansion of liberal ideology, the film reviewer is eager to assimilate urban Hong Kong into the agrarian Chinese landscape. Thus, the term *huangxiang* does not dismiss unfamiliar experiences as fake and unreal, but emphasizes Ye Si's critique of the Cold War binary framework which forces the Hong Kong youth to choose between one of the cultural ideals while neither, on its own, represents Hong Kong's material, historical, and socio-cultural specificities.

Extending the discussion of the film to wider concerns about everyday culture, Ye Si continues to analyze how Hong Kong's new generation growing up during the Cold War faced the challenge of "no established ways of life to follow" ("Two Imaginaries" 3). The essay writes that

> In terms of literature and art, the tradition in Hong Kong is rather fragile. The inheritance process from either the Chinese (i.e. the May Fourth modernization movement and the classical) or the Western is not entirely smooth, requiring individuals' efforts to break down the barriers. On the personal and family level, the daily rituals are fragmented. While not fully adopting the traditional Chinese manners or Western etiquette, Hong Kong society has not established its own ritual yet. … Put simply, the Hong Kong youth does not know how to remain whole in a society that breaks down repeatedly, or how to be a righteous person in this tilted society. There was no precedent before him/her. The youth is confronted with many emerging issues and has to find the answers themselves. (3–4)

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[100] This binary attitude is exemplified in Hong Kong's reception of an American comedy *Alice's Restaurant* directed by Arthur Penn in 1969. See "Two Imaginaries" (3–4).

Perhaps writing in understandable frustration due to the consistent struggle of creating a diasporic culture, Ye Si paints a bleak picture of Hong Kong society in this passage. While he is right to point out that the Cold War, in seemingly peaceful ways, continued to "break down" Hong Kong after the city experienced a century of colonization and imperial wars (1840s–1940s), this passage also undermines the emerging efforts of Hong Kong's Cold War generation (including his own attempts) to establish diasporic, new cultural rituals. As contemporary readers, it is important to recognize, but not to overstress, these despairing moments of a hopeful thinker while focusing on his teachings about how to create Hong Kong's cultural path in the face of the Cold War violence.

The rest of "Two Imaginaries" proposes that it is as crucial to thoroughly engage with the Chinese and Western experiences as it is to carefully explore local specificities. Ye Si calls for "a practice of renewing the life of an [adopted] cultural tradition" (7). This call makes two points clear. First, no culture exists in isolation. Referencing cultural traditions from elsewhere and imagining oneself in relation to others are integral parts of the culture-making process. Second, culture is only alive through the continuous and transformative negotiation between the classic legacy and the changing materialities. Thus, "Two Imaginaries" disrupts a set of Cold War-induced binary oppositions that critics too often deploy in their allegorical reading of *Paper Cuts*: Western versus Chinese, self versus the other, modern versus traditional, local versus extrinsic, illusions versus realities. In the next section, I analyze Ye Si's other non-fictional essays alongside "Two Imaginaries" to construct an alternative framework of reading *Paper Cuts*.

2.2. Diasporic Articulation from a Peninsula

2.2.1. Post-Realism and Hong Kong Realities

Understanding *huanxiang* as imaginative reality in "Two Imaginaries" helps us appreciate Ye Si's choice of unconventional realist writing in *Paper Cuts*. I argue that by borrowing from postwar Latin American literary techniques, the novella transgresses the ideological limits that are attached to the styles of literary realism prevailing in Hong Kong (i.e. socialist realism, Western mimesis, and May Fourth native-soil literature). In

doing so, *Paper Cuts* resists national and imperial ways of claiming Hong Kong culture as Cold War property.

In an interview with literary scholar Chan Chi-tak in 2003, Ye Si shares his compositional process of *Paper Cuts*, recalling that: “When putting ideas together for *Paper Cuts*, I wanted to write about a world full of imaginaries [*huanxiang*] on the one hand, and a real world on the other hand, though ‘real’ not in the same sense of conventional literary realism. … The opening of the novella [that is, the introductory chapters respectively to Qiao’s and Yao’s stories] was the hardest to write. Sometimes it felt too realist and sometimes too imaginative, and it took me nine times before I got it right” (Chen 2011, 13). What is shown in this reflection is Ye Si’s continuous concern with the limits of realism and his painstaking efforts in searching for a new language, a new literary voice with which to write a Hong Kong story. In “Two Imaginaries,” Ye Si critiques three types of realism: socialist realism, Western mimesis, and May Fourth native-soil literature (*xiangtu wenxue*). He writes that: “Many literary theories that advocate realism … only validate writings that represent a certain side of reality (such as the subject matter of factories). They only consider linear narrative as realistic and truthful; realism should mimic Western naturalism [*ziran zhuyi*]. Or they think of realist works only in terms of particular authors during the May Fourth Movement.”[101] The stake lies, of course, not inherently in the form of realism itself but how realism is used as a discursive tool to homogenize Hong Kong’s various languages, trans-regional histories, ethnic backgrounds, and artistic expressions via the major cultural forces during the Cold War.

Providing a set of well-established vocabularies, symbols, and narrative structures, each realist style imposes their own Cold War agenda on Hong Kong. The Western mimetic literary tradition, for instance, is part and parcel of the larger British-American imperial project which rewrites local cultures with the Enlightenment ideologies marked by rationality, scientification, and linear progressiveness.[102] In the case of native-soil literature, a genre born out of the desire to express patriotic loyalty to the motherland when confronted with war and foreign invasion during the early twentieth-century China,

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[101] “Two Imaginaries” (9).

[102] Marston Anderson, “Introduction: Writing about Others” in *The Limits of Realism: Chinese Fiction in the Revolutionary Period* (1990, 1–26).

it became a nostalgic means for many Kuomintang intellectuals and sympathizers to write about their mainland homelands while dismissing Cold War Hong Kong as a temporal time-space that bears no cultural value.[103] And finally, socialist realism in Hong Kong was a direct extension of mainland China's literary trend since it was crystallized in the late 1930s.[104] After Mao's government took power in 1949, the "socialist grammar of emotion," in Lee Haiyan's terms, was unprecedentedly governed through "a new universal category [of] class" (286). In this larger context, socialist realist literature can be understood as a guidebook of people's feelings in ways that were not too dissimilar to how *Mao's Quotations* (also known as *The Little Red Book*) regulated individuals' thoughts and behaviours.[105] All three styles of realism, when uncritically adopted in Hong Kong, forcefully prescribe to the city a deterministic Cold War identity: the colonized modern city, the barren island/the cultural desert, or the patriotic follower of socialism. But as *Paper Cuts* shows, Hong Kong reality cannot be reduced to any of these labels. If Ye Si were to choose to write the novella in one of the conventional realist genre, the story would be considered as too obscure to be modern (according to Western mimesis), too urban to be nostalgic (native-soil literature), and of course too bourgeois to be revolutionary (socialist realism).

What I am calling the post-realist writing style resists such a Cold War agenda for Hong Kong. Minor literary practices are actively introduced to Hong Kong literature. In the early 1970s, Ye Si was involved in several such projects including rewriting ancient Chinese mythologies into modern Hong Kong short stories,[106] advocating for non

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[103] *Renren wenxue* (Everyman's literature) is one of the most distinctive literary platform for such nostalgic writing. For instance, Huang Sipin's "Xundao" (Martyrdom, 1952) is set in Jiangxi Province, and his "Guye qitan" (The Night of the Old City, 1952) is set in Peking.

[104] The notion of "socialist realism" was introduced to China from the Soviet Union in 1933 by the Chinese Marxist critic Zhou Yang (1907–1989). While it was one of many other approaches to conceptualize literary realism in the mid–1930s, after Japan's official launch of war in 1937, "socialist realism" became the dominant literary trend since it answers the wartime call to mobilize the masses through arts. For a critical historical analysis, see Marston Anderson's "Chapter Two. A Literature of Blood and Tears: May Fourth Theories of Literary Realism" in *The Limits of Realism* (27–75). For other perspectives on this subject, see also Wang Ban, "Socialist Realism."

[105] For theorization of the socialist structure of feeling, see Haiyan Lee, *Revolution of the Heart: A Genealogy of Love in China, 1900–1950* (286–97).

[106] Two representative short stories of such a style are "See Mun and the Dragon" (1975) and "*Yubei*" (Jade Cup, 1976). Both are included in the collection named after the second short story. In the collection's afterword "Yingyinji yu shenhua" (The copy machine and Chinese mythologies, 1979), Ye Si invites his fellow writers and readers to draw inspirations from the "rich imaginations in ancient Chinese mythologies" (263) since realism was not sufficient to speak to Hong Kong's

mainstream Chinese art alongside the May Fourth movement,[107] as well as co-translating the Beat Generation, the French *Nouveau Roman*, and the postwar Latin American magic realist short stories into Chinese.[108] Continuing the path set by Hong Kong's preceding intercultural efforts—such as the magazine *Wenyi Xinchao* (New Wave of Literature and Art, 1956–1959), Liu Yichang's short stories ("Sinei" [Inside the temple] and "She" [Snake]), and Quanan (Kun Nan)'s fiction *Di de men* (Down through the limbus)—these literary and cultural translation projects, fundamentally, enrich ways of representing Hong Kong's Cold War realities. Among these minor literary practices, Latin American magic realism has the strongest and longest influence on Ye Si's own fictional writing. As I will soon show in the close reading sections, *Paper Cuts* borrows literary techniques from magic realism to make local meaning of the everyday reality beyond a Cold War interpretation.

Here, I want to clarify that I use the term post-realism to differentiate from Latin American magic realism or anti-realism. Although highly inspired by magic realism, Ye Si is cautious of turning Latin American writing into the new universal standard, or understanding Hong Kong literature strictly in magic realist terms.[109] Instead, he poses specific questions involving how the magic realist form illuminates the meandering decolonial struggles experienced in Latin America,[110] how Hong Kong literature—also caught in the bind between multiple Cold War forces—can reference the pathway taken by Latin American writers,[111] and how local authors writing in Chinese can incorporate foreign literary styles to rediscover Hong Kong's own history and reality.[112] Similarly, Ye Si honours the "transformative and innovative" spirit in the realist writings during the May

late coloniality nor the "shared problematics [of modernity] across Chinese-language literatures" (262).

107 Ye Si (1995, 53).

108 For the translation projects, see *Selected French Short Stories* (1970), *Selected American Underground Literature* (1971), and *Selected Contemporary Latin American Fiction* (1972). For Ye Si's reflections on literary and cultural translation are seen across various of his essay collections, see *Hong Kong Cultural Space and Literature*, *Books and Cities*, and *Ten Essays on Hong Kong Culture*.

109 See "Introduction" to *Selected Contemporary Latin American Fiction* (1972).

110 See "Introduction" to *Selected Contemporary Latin American Fiction* (1972). This volume includes ten short stories from Argentina, Brazil, Columbia, Mexico, Uruguay, Guatemala, and Chile.

111 *Hong Kong Cultural Space and Literature* (1996, 171).

112 *Hong Kong Cultural Space and Literature* (1996, 99–115).

Fourth Movement.[113] Hong Kong culture neither faithfully copied nor entirely subverted the May Fourth styles but critically adopted it into the Hong Kong context. At one occasion, Ye Si elaborates that

> I want to establish a model in which the discussion of Hong Kong culture and literature is seen together with Western and Chinese culture. … Hong Kong is not a subversive base but a marginal city that selectively inherits the Chinese May Fourth cultural tradition. (Chen 2011, 17)

To prove this point, Ye Si cites a wide range of editorial and creative works by Ronald P. Mar (Ma Lang), Liu Yichang, Cheung Man-yee (Zhang Manyi), Lam Nin-tung (Lin Tongnian), and Ng Hui-bin (Wu Xubin).[114] As repeatedly shown in his multiple essays, what interests Ye Si most is how an intercultural translating process enables an evolving self-reflexivity about the relationship between literary style, a sense of place, and cultural identity in Hong Kong.

In other words, Hong Kong's protean Cold War position between China and the West demands that its people adopt the role of a Derridean *bricoleur*, who uses "the instruments he finds at his disposition around him, those which are already there, which had not been especially conceived with an eye to the operation for which they are to be used and to which one tries by trial and error to adapt them, not hesitating to change them whenever it appears necessary, or to try several of them at once, even if their form and their origin are heterogenous—and so forth" (Derrida 2005, 360). For Ye Si, a *bricoleur* writer and artist does not rush for an easy answer by mimicking made-ready cultural models (be it Chinese, British-American, or Latin American), but carefully investigates extrinsic cultural experiences, expressions, and concepts within their particular contexts before adopting them to address specific local concerns. Thus, blending the Chinese and foreign literary traditions to represent Hong Kong's Cold War realities, Hong Kong literature engages with, what Wai Chee Dimock calls as regenreing, "an alluvial process, sedimentary as well as migratory"[115] (1380)—a process that risks "impurity, anomaly, or monstrosity,"[116] and one that can "destabilize and transform

[113] "Two Imaginaries" (7).

[114] Ye Si (1995, 53).

[115] Dimock's "Introduction: Genres as Fields of Knowledge": 1380.

[116] Dimock cites Derrida's "The Law of Genre" (224–225): 1377.

established knowledge."[117] It is in this sense that *Paper Cuts* can be put in an unusual dialogue with diasporic studies.

2.2.2. Diasporic Articulation, a Peninsula Perspective

By diasporic articulation, I intend to describe a process that *transforms*, not compiling or rejecting, well-established traditions into new cultural practices. The diaspora, though a familiar framework for scholars who study the Asian experiences in North America and other settler colonial societies, is an under-developed concept in Hong Kong. Particularly, Hong Kong's geo-cultural proximity with China—a peninsula and archipelagic site that is attached to the Chinese mainlands and waters—makes it both challenging and possible to imagine Hong Kong as a diasporic space, which brings together "incompatible" cultures under the Cold War imaginary.

The existing scholarship offers two main approaches when understanding Hong Kong via the concept of diaspora. Here, I understand diaspora as a cultural and historical phenomenon in which one (including a migrant or a member of a migratory community) inherits their cultural heritage from multiple sources. In the context of Hong Kong, the first approach to study diaspora focuses on the minoritized subjects and their navigation of cultural differences. A representative work is Audrey Yue's *Ann Hui's Song of the Exile*, a study of a 1990 film by the Hong Kong auteur Ann Hui. The film features a mother and a daughter—Aiko, a Japanese woman married to a Chinese Kuomintang soldier during the Sino-Japan war, and Hueyin, a mixed-race graduate returnee from the UK—who reconcile with each other as they travel across multiple homelands. In making her inspiring argument that diasporic intimacies destabilize nationalistic ideas of motherland, Yue considers the diasporic subjects in Hong Kong as minorities who take atypical migratory journeys and share (at least an element of) an uncommon cultural heritage that differ from the majority of local Chinese Hong Kong people. Like diaspora studies in North America, this approach understands the experience of a diasporic subject in Hong Kong as productive yet still deviant to the dominant culture.

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[117] Betsy Huang, *Contesting Genres in Contemporary Asian American Fiction*: 5. In her introduction to the book, Huang mobilizes Dimock's concept of regenreing to analyze Asian American genre fictions.

The second approach to diaspora in the studies of Hong Kong is located within the larger field of critical Chinese diaspora scholarship, which "articulates a non-essentialist identity and considers the possibilities of routes rather than roots" (Yue 2010, 16). With its critical influence, this approach, however, is primarily interested in (or conditioned by the Anglophone scholarly to be interested in) thinking through Chineseness in an overseas (here meaning outside of Hong Kong and the mainland) context. Take Rey Chow's *Writing Diaspora*, now a frequently cited classic on Hong Kong studies, as an example. Chow's essay collection discusses Hong Kong's post-Handover predicament in the US together with Chinese diasporic experience in North America. By framing Hong Kong in this way encourages a wider conversation with other threads of critical race scholarship such as Ien Ang's *On Not Speaking Chinese*, which critiques how Australia's multicultural governance imposes violence on Chinese Australians, as well as Aihwa Ong's *Flexible Citizenship* and *Ungrounded Empires*, which explores transnational economic activities across Chinese communities using analytics beyond the nation-states. Both Ang and Ong are concerned with Chineseness in Southeast Asia and the Asia Pacific. At the same time, the limitation of this approach is also apparent. It gives the impression (irrelevant to the author's intention) that the diasporic experience of Hong Kong Chinese is only validated when they leave Hong Kong for another place.

Taking the two approaches together, I want to point out that the analysis of diaspora needs to speak to a more broadly shared experience in everyday Hong Kong. As demonstrated in Ye Si's "Two Imaginaries," the peculiarity faced by Cold War Hong Kong is that *most* of its population lives *within* a society where the distinction between home and host cultures is ubiquitous but often innocuous. For example, cultural images based on northern Chinese experience are well-known in Hong Kong but they simply do not describe the coastal city's climate and landscape. This felt but disavowed difference is primarily shaped by Hong Kong's double position as a remote island and an attached peninsula. Despite the hardening of sovereign borders between Hong Kong and mainland China during the Cold War (a topic that I will further discuss in Chapter Three), the former's overland contact with the latter makes it challenging to conceptualize this British colony as fully overseas (because it is not separated enough by water) and different (too close to home). At the same time, re-situating Hong Kong as a diasporic

peninsula allows us to understand the specific struggles and promises of Hong Kong culture.

In an uncanny sense of similarity, perhaps connected through the experience of colonial domination and unexpected encounters unique to islands, Stuart Hall's theorization of the Caribbean cinema speaks most closely to the case of Hong Kong. Referencing Caribbean cultural heritages from Africa, Europe, and the Americas, Hall's seminal 1989 essay "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" invites us to "think of black Caribbean identities as 'framed' by two axes or vectors, simultaneously operative: the vector of similarity and continuity; and the vector of difference and rupture" (226). For Black Caribbean subjects who navigate these two vectors, Hall suggests their diaspora experience is defined "not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite, difference" (235). Likewise, the Hong Kong Chinese—another group of diverse subjects born out of complex colonial histories—also takes on diaspora identities that are, in Hall's words, "constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (235). Fittingly enough, the book cover of the English translation of *Paper Cuts* (2015) effectively captures this point. In contrast to the 1982 cover which I analyzed earlier, the 2015 version shows a renewed understanding of the novella's representation of diasporic cultural practices. As demonstrated in Figure 2, a parrot perches on a branch of a peony bush facing bamboo leaves. The parrot, an important companion of Qiao in the story, is represented in a photographic realist style while the peony and bamboo leaves, two classic symbols of Chinese traditional art, are in the form of papercuts. Consistent with the novella's equal attention to both content and form, the 2015 cover signals that the story is about finding transformative ways to bring together cultural practices that are seemingly incompatible.

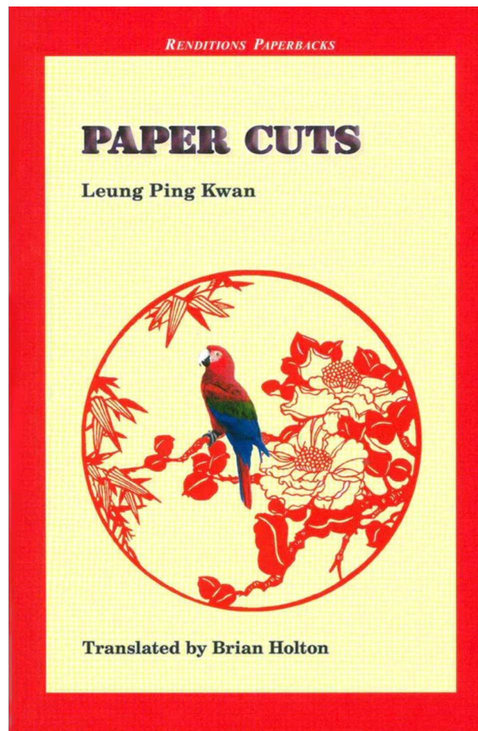

Figure 3. Book cover of the 2015 edition of *Paper Cuts*.

2.3. Transformative Narrator, a Hong Kong Subject

The rest of this chapter will show that *Paper Cuts* carefully crafts the character development of the narrator in order to guide readers not to simply disidentify (or identify) with Yao or Qiao but to feel involved in the protagonists' stubborn but sincere efforts of searching for a diasporic identity. Witnessing the struggles of Yao and Qiao, the narrator increasingly challenges his role as an objective observer (a conventional literary role in the West) and a neutral bystander (a stereotypical Hong Kong subject position constructed by the Cold War). The representation of the narrator's slow inner transformation through interacting with Yao and Qiao is the novella's ultimate call for social change.

In modern Western literature, the narrator often functions as a transparent glass window, through which the readers can access the inner worlds of the characters but at same time keep a safe distance from the moral conflicts or ethical dilemmas represented in the story. In contrast, readers of *Paper Cuts* are invited to resist adopting this neutral and unaffected position. This can be read as the novella's intervention into the colonial modernity's project of producing an autonomous and independent self. In *Toward a*

Global Idea of Race, Denise Ferreira da Silva traces European philosophical thoughts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to show that the Enlightenment and scientification projects established the rational and self-determined individual as desirable and superior, a kind of subject that Silva calls "the transparent I" (99). According to this binaristic logic, the further one is away from the transparent subject position and closer to the affectable, the more inferior one becomes. However, as Silva points out, the central irony in European modern philosophies is that "they fail to acknowledge that the transparent I is also an effect of the arsenal of raciality," a response to the encounters of different bodily traits and social configurations on a global level (168–69). Participating in the global encounters, many local cultural expressions and practices actively expose and reflect on such an irony. *Paper Cuts*'s depiction of an affectable and vulnerable subject position for the narrator contributes to the larger global anti-imperial and de-Cold War imagination.

In many senses, *Paper Cuts* inherits the transgressive use of narrator from modern Chinese literature. The May Fourth Movement (1919) has established a tradition of taking the narrator as a mediator to engage with the readers and to induce social changes. Lu Xun's short stories (see Chapter One), as many scholars have concurred, "usually focus on interaction between narrator and protagonist, or between two juxtaposed figures or events—his fiction can be seen as a kind of 'story-theatre.' … Such fiction can be likened to the old Peking opera, in which the sets are more symbolic than naturalistic and the stage director, like the fictional narrator, moves back and forth through time and space to propel the dramatic action and engage the audience's attention" (Lee 1985, 11).[118] In other words, it was a key concern and a conscious decision for Lu Xun and many May Fourth literary writers to draw on older Chinese artistic forms to enhance interactions with readers because after all, as Marston Anderson argues in *The Limits of Realism*, literature was an artistic means for social transformation—to alter feudal China's social and cultural orders into a modern one (1990, 73–75).

While inevitably influenced by the May Fourth literary tradition, *Paper Cuts*' use of the narrator shows some profound differences. Perhaps inspired by but dissimilar to

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[118] Here Leo Ou-fan Lee cites William Lyell and Zhu Tong to make the analogy between Peking Opera and Lu Xun's stories.

Lu Xun's mediating narrator whose role tends to cynically make the readers aware of their own hypocrisy and ignorance only at the end of the story,[119] the narrator in *Paper Cuts* has been honest, from the beginning, about his developing emotions—concern, confusion, anger, and compassion—towards the protagonists, Yao and Qiao, as the story unfolds. In my reading, the readers are brought along throughout the journey to experience, not so much a shocking revelation after a severe social problem is exposed, but the *process* of thinking through social relationships via the narrator's perspective. Thus, Yao and Qiao are no longer anti-heroines but points of identification.

2.3.1. Qiao's Story: Communicating the Impossible

The novella opens with Qiao's story and continues her plotline in every other chapter (Chapter Three, Five, Seven, Nine, and Eleven). Qiao, an ethnically ambiguous illustrator, and the unnamed narrator, an art editor, are colleagues working for a Chinese-language magazine owned and managed by a non-Chinese speaking Westerner. The story begins with Qiao asking the narrator a favour to decipher anonymous letters only containing cut-out love poems written in Chinese literary styles (traditional classics, May Fourth New Poetry, and modernism). With her Westernized upbringing, Qiao is confused about both the content of these paper cut-outs as well as the very gesture of sending them. As Qiao continues to receive these cut-out poems, the narrator finds out that they are sent by Huang, another colleague of theirs, who has a crush on Qiao. Experiencing no affection from Qiao and suffering from a broken heart, Huang badly injures Qiao's foreign boyfriend mistaking the latter as a sexual perpetrator. At the end of Qiao's story, the narrator realizes that the violent incident could have been prevented if he had acted more like a cultural translator between Qiao and Huang, rather than a cynical onlooker.

At the beginning of the novella, the narrator embodies and disrupts a dominant viewpoint that understands Qiao as an outsider of the Chinese cultural worlds. When

[119] See Marston Anderson (1985, 39–40). Referencing two short story collections *The Outcry* and *Hesitation*, Anderson argues that roughly half the stories employ a mediating narrator, which is defined by Anderson as "one how, though generally playing a minimal role in the narrated event, receives and transmits the story to the reader" (39).

invited to Qiao's apartment for the first time, the narrator describes the space in the following way:

> Qiao went across the room and raised the white blinds to reveal a red wall. Not a window, but a wall. No, I was wrong, it was a window, the all-pervading red color coming from the cigarette advertisement painted on the wall of the building across the way. Up close to the window, we could watch the people on the street below, and the silent stream of passing traffic. (12/3, slight modification in the translation)[120]

At first glance, Qiao's apartment is confusing, eccentric, and, in the narrator's own words a couple of pages later, he feels "like a stranger in a strange land" (14/4). In addition to the ambiguous window/wall, the apartment is filled with foreign and surreal objects: a scrapbook constituted of images from Western modernist magazines, a cupboard turning out to be a foldaway single bed, a spiral staircase that leads nowhere but a solid ceiling, and a trick glass in which the liquid only runs around within. Even the casual chat between Qiao and the narrator is littered with misunderstandings. In this sense, Qiao's Western-flavoured apartment seems to represent an abnormal space in the eyes of a common Hong Kong Chinese. However, the strangeness presented in Qiao's room is already a familiar and indispensable feature to Hong Kong reality. In the block quote above, the narrator is right about what he sees both times: the building wall across the street permeates into the room through the window, and the room window reframes the building wall. After all, the cityscape has always been part of the apartment view, and one's apartment is another city spectacle seen from a different perspective. The two realities—inside and outside, Western and Chinese—are as fabricated as they are real.

The climax of such intertwined realities is when Qiao presents the anonymous paper cut-out for the narrator to decipher. Listening to the popular 1977 English song "Love is a Rose" by the Canadian singer Neil Young and surrounded by all kinds of "oddly-shaped red things" (17/8), the narrator finds an excerpt from an ancient Chinese love poem on the paper cut-out:

> Grey, grey were the rushes,
>
> White dew like boar-frost;

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[120] The first page number refers to the English translation and the second page number refers to the original Chinese text of the 2014 version.

She that I loved so

Was somewhere by the water:

Upstream I followed her,

The way was hard and long;

Downstream I followed her,

And found her in the water.[121] (16/7)

The excerpt expresses the determined and delicate affection from someone in love who will surmount any obstacles to pursue their loved one. The excerpt is the first stanza from an ancient poem entitled "Rush Leaves (*Jianjia*)" (300 B.C.E.) collected in *Classic of Poetry*, known as *Shi Jing* in Chinese. Historically, Confucianism has always considered *Classic of Poetry* as one of the key authoritative textbooks for intellectuals. By the late 1970s, "Rush Leaves" became one of the most well-known classic poems among the Chinese speaking communities thanks to the 1975 Taiwanese romance movie *The Unforgettable Character*, the lyrics of whose theme song "By the Water" were a modern rendering of "Rush Leaves."[122] Qiao, in order to comprehend the classic poetic imagery and the modern lyrical feelings, turns to the narrator for assistance.

Here, the depiction of the narrator's reaction stands out. Initially, the text portrays him as disinterested in either Qiao's desire to understand the poem or the letter sender's expressive intention. As he says to himself in a dismissive tone, it is just another cliché

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[121] This quoted version is translated by Brian Holton specifically for *Paper Cuts*, on page 16. The version below is done by Arthur Waley, as part of the complete translation of *The Book of Songs: The Ancient Chinese Classic of Poetry*. Note that in the Chinese original, the speaker in the poem has no assigned gender.

Thick grow the rush leaves;

Their white dew turns to frost.

He whom I love

Must be somewhere along this stream.

I went up the river to look for him,

But the way was difficult and long.

I went down the stream to look for him,

And there in mid-water

Sure enough, it's he!

[122] The film *The Unforgettable Character*, starring Brigitte Lin, was adapted from a 1975 novel under the same title, written by Taiwan's most popular romance novelist Chiung Yao.

instance where “some lovesick guy” clips out an “out-of-context quote to his dream woman,” except that this time it is “just absurd” because Chinese “classical poetry [is] well beyond” Qiao’s Westernized taste (17/8). Instead of elucidating the cultural contexts or the semantic meaning of the poem despite Qiao’s explicit and persistent inquiries, the narrator justifies his non-action, once again, stating to himself that “In this kind of atmosphere [in Qiao’s apartment], explaining why some unknown person had quoted from the ancient *Classic of Poetry* seemed a pretty difficult task” (17/8). Meanwhile, the text represents that the narrator’s firm refusal to explain is undermined by a self-doubting tone. He narrates at one point that “I didn’t know if she was listening or not” (17/8) and at another occasion that “I had the vague feeling that she wasn’t much bothered” (17/9). Such unreliable narration insinuates that the narrator is unsure about the very epistemological foundation of his own acts—the denial of Qiao’s ability and genuineness of understanding the Chinese culture, and the denial that the Chinese culture is worth exploring in the first place.

The competing feelings (yearning and avoiding) for the Chinese culture are precisely the products under the Cold War paradox in Hong Kong. In this context, the desire of *struggling to love* expressed in “Rush Leaves” speaks to a broader social concern. The gesture of sending “Rush Leaves” (together with the other Chinese poem excerpts that Qiao is about to receive throughout the novella) in a re-contextualized form—a paper cut-out—conveys a collective desire of struggling to communicate the seemingly impossible in a fragmented, diasporic, and creative way.

Understanding the paper cut-outs as an invitation for cultural exchange, I suggest that Huang’s attack against Qiao’s date Roger signals not an inevitable failure of attempting to bridge inter-personal and intercultural differences in Hong Kong. Rather, it is a final prompt for the narrator to take responsibility of changing the *status quo*; the narrator realizes that he too takes part in this tragedy. In the concluding chapter of Qiao’s storyline (Chapter Eleven), upon learning about the incident, the narrator rushes to the hospital to visit his friends and colleagues. With Huang lying unconscious in the ward, the monologue voice of the narrator presents an emotional reflection. As much as a personal meditation, the passage engages the readers by using the first pronoun plural. It writes that:

> We'd all felt there was the greatest sorrow in this, something that even transcended questions of whether any one individual was purely in the right or purely in the wrong. The relationship between one person and another had been entangled with the feelings of the rest of us. We onlookers had been dragged in, we might have found fault with some of the extremes of Huang's behaviour, which had led to this irreparable tragedy, but when this terrible thing happened, could we have remained on the outside? I had only been a messenger at first, but because I had inside information, I became responsible for some of it too. Now I blamed myself as well. … I'd been busy, work wasn't going well, I was in a bad mood, I had many different reasons, but if I had known that once the thing was done it would be irreparable, would I perhaps have put in a bit more effort? (145–46/144, slight modification of the translation)

The "greatest sorrow" not only refers to physical and mental damage suffered by each individual in this incident (i.e. Huang's hospitalization, Roger's fatal injury, Qiao's emotional shock). It also refers to the collective failure of bridging the "deep gulf," as the narrator describes it in the novella's Chapter Nine, among those who were born and raised in Hong Kong yet "came from very different backgrounds … and had different ways of expressing their feelings" (114/111). For the narrator, what he realizes in the end is that the task of bridging cultural differences is not only a matter between Huang and Qiao but he too bears responsibility since he is entrusted with the role of a cultural translator rather than just a neutral "onlooker." Qiao's storyline ends with the narrator's awakening: despite of an increasing mistrust against language and meaning across various social domains (e.g. workplace, popular media, daily conversations), it is more important to assist people to actualize their yearning to bridge communication differences, rather than to disguise or even aggravate misunderstandings with cynicism.

2.3.2. Yao's Story: Towards a Communal Future

In another plot line (Chapter Two, Four, …, Twelve), the narrator is a long-term friend to Yao and her family. Recently, Yao's family signals that they need help from the narrator to understand Yao's increasingly worrisome behaviours. She quits her job as a school teacher, spends all her time practicing the folk art of paper cutting, starts to show signs of mental illness, and eventually attacks her family with the paper cutting knife. After much hesitation, the narrator reaches out to Hua (a paper cutting artist and professional Cantonese opera singer migrating from mainland China) and invites him to visit Yao together. Unlike the dominant interpretation that understands Yao's failing mental health as an individual failure, I suggest that the process of caring for Yao gives

the narrator a chance to realize the importance of social intimacy in establishing a collective cultural identity.

As an attempt to understand Yao's mental deterioration, the narrator reflects on previous moments in which Yao inspires the narrator to imagine a sense of cultural belonging through her dedication to the art of paper cutting. Drawing from his memory a few years prior, the narrator reveals that Yao has treated the papercuts not as collectable commodities, "an instant conjuring trick," but as a cultural practice that "required continuous and steady work" (47/42). Instead of chasing the cultural fever for the Chinese folk art that surfaced in Hong Kong during the mid–1970s,[123] Yao has modelled herself after Hua to practice the art of paper cutting—sharpening the knife, composing the pictorial story, carving the paper, and finally pasting the delicate papercuts onto a white backing paper.

Importantly, in the middle of revisiting his memory, the narrator changes his voice from a second-person epistolary narration (addressing Yao, as most of Yao's story is told) to a self-immersive narrative voice that can be best described as a combined effect under stream of consciousness and magic realism. Let us understand stream of consciousness as multidirectional transitions between the narrator's subjective and supposedly objective perspectives, and magic realism as an imaginative representation of everyday reality. This shift in narrative voice indicates that the narrator not only admires Yao's and Hua's dedication to the art of paper cutting, he also sees himself recreated in the world of papercuts. For six pages, as the narrator details the graphic stories represented in the papercuts he steps into the imaginative domain and sails across a diversity of Chinese folk worlds: ethnic minorities' dancing and singing parties, classical four-season sceneries, Han folktale spectacles, agricultural ceremonies, and urban vaudeville fairs. In one of the most magic realistic moments, the narrator sees himself and his friends as the papercuts figures who parade at a carnival. He reports his imagined reality:

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[123] The cultural fever for the Chinese folk art in Hong Kong refers to a brief fascination (roughly between 1971 and 1975) over cultural practices of paper cutting, clay sculptures, paper kites, woodcut New Year paintings, acrobatics, stamps, and other folk art. It represented the desire to culturally, rather than politically, identify with China. However, Ye Si critiques that this phenomenon in Hong Kong "only borrowed the theme, not really attuned to the spirit of folk art" ("Two Imaginaries," 8).

> And oh, our friends were there too! Huilan, dressed as a bride in phoenix tiara and brocade cheongsam, was getting married to Gao, who wore a long scholar's gown; the music was dazzling, the candles shone bright—I had never seen them dressed up like this. … Xu had poles, spinning five or six plates with one hand, Bai was warily walking the high wire on tiptoes. And as for myself, I don't know how, but I was walking on stilts now, mounting the clouds and riding the mists, it seemed. (50/45)

In this imaginative passage describing the festive atmosphere at the carnival, we see that the narrator yearns for a reality where he is able to inherit and practice Chinese folk customs which, as he admits earlier, he "had never seen" or had "known nothing about" (46/41). In contrast to a nostalgic tone when discussing northern cultures and war histories in mainland China, the imaginative worlds in the papercuts provide an alternative way for the narrator and the generation who grew up in Cold War Hong Kong to build a diasporic relationship with China—connecting with but differing from it as a modern country with long traditions. Thus, energized by Yao's dedication and creativity, the narrator finds the art of paper cutting a productive artistic form that strengthens communal bonds and transforms his cultural identity.

Moreover, Yao enables the narrator to reconnect with Cantonese opera, an old but transformative art that can articulate shared feelings of a modern Hong Kong collective. Having a vague memory of Cantonese opera from his childhood and growing up in its absence, the narrator is initially cynical about the emotions expressed in the classic repertoire. An example is seen in the novella's Chapter Four, the second chapter within Yao's story. When discussing a popular opera entitled *The Purple Hairpin* (1957; 1977) with Yao and her sister, the narrator "started an argument just for the sake of it" (56/50). He recalled saying to Yao that "I didn't like the sentimentality or the rancour in them, nor did I much like the men and women in operas, so stuck-up and unapproachable. … apart from those extremes of emotion and extreme lives, there should be room for a broader range of feelings, and apart from those extremes of self-lacerating morality, there should be some kind of ordinary morality we could apply in the modern world" (56/50). While the narrator, representing the dominant voice of Hong Kong's Cold War generation, is right to observe the emotional differences in Cantonese opera, he establishes a binary opposition between the traditional and the modern, and takes the latter as a universal standard.

Aware of the problems of such a binary, the novella provides a performative response and an alternative third literary space. Rather than verbally arguing with the narrator, Yao and her sister start “gently singing” (56/50) a famous dialogue in *The Purple Hairpin* and later inviting the narrator to “sing along” (58/51). Despite his earlier criticism of Cantonese opera, the narrator cannot help being captivated by Yao’s impactful singing voice and her ability to switch between the feminine and masculine roles in the opera. After three pages of a detailed representation of how each line is performed, the narrator comes to a new conclusion about Cantonese opera:

> After that verse, we all burst out laughing. You two were laughing at me, naturally, a total and utter layman. But, layman though I may have been, from that moment I began to feel something new. Of course, it was an old play and an obsolete artistic form, but because you’d put feeling into it, it somehow moved me. Because of the two of you, at this point I felt a naturalness and an optimism about life, a sweet and solemn feeling: in that maybe outmoded text, I had seen beautiful things. So I asked you to sing some more. (58–59/52)

Here, Yao and her sister help the narrator rebuild connections with his cultural heritage, not through an argumentative debate or a dogmatic lecture on the cultural value of Cantonese opera. Instead, it is the social intimacy—the joy of being with others and of exposing one’s own feelings to join an interactive sentiment—enabled by an art form that changes the narrator’s binaristic view. This memory motivates the narrator to change his approach of caring for Yao. Learning from his unsuccessful reasoning with Yao during her mental breakdowns, the narrator eventually realizes that to facilitate Yao’s healing, what needs to be done is not any kind of lecturing (no matter how well-intended it is), but to recreate an environment for social intimacy to be possible again.

In the final chapters of Yao’s story, the narrator decides to reach out to Hua, who now is an actor-performer in the film versions of Cantonese opera. Listening to the on-site singing of *The Reincarnation of the Red Plum* (1959), another popular opera in Hong Kong, the narrator appreciates its characters’ intense emotions. Perhaps relating to Yao’s suffering in his mind, the narrator expresses that

> I couldn’t see any actors, but I was drawn little by little into the sound, and I seemed to be watching a woman express her feelings with a gentle grace and charm; I added my own memories and fancies to that, and could sense her confused state of mind, I recognized those people suffering in silence and I wanted, if I could, to help them to do something. I listened, rapt, as the lyrics came to life, as though there was a face breathing beside me,

> and I could feel the voice, now accelerando, convey a mood of confusion… (106/102)

This time, the "wide surge of uncontainable emotion" in the opera resonates with the narrator's own "ebbing, flowing, uncertain state of mind" as he is preoccupied by Yao's well-being (106/102). According to the narrator's changed perspective, the affective intensity articulated in the opera is no longer outside but part of the ordinary feelings in modern Hong Kong.

With his renewed understanding of a collective cultural identity, the narrator invites Hua to visit Yao at the end of the novella. Not fantasizing Hua to be an elixir for Yao's suffering, the narrator nevertheless allies with Hua as "another helpless [ordinary man], a concerned friend" (150/150). Bringing together the isolated individuals is the narrator's small step forward in rebuilding a more hopeful community.

2.4. Assortment of Tongues: Reclaiming the Hong Kong Accent

So far in this chapter, I have argued that *Paper Cuts* dispels the stereotypical representation of the narrator as an objective and unchanging role. Instead, by depicting the transformation of the narrator, through whose perspective readers participate in the story, the novella compels its readers to challenge their normalized attitude—cynicism and nihilism—an attitude that is violently produced by Hong Kong's supposed neutral position in the Cold War. As a concluding note, I want to turn to the novella's reform on language to resist the Cold War aesthetic of neutrality. Rather than staying culturally neutral and featureless, *Paper Cuts* reclaims the Hong Kong accent. In the "Postscript" to the first paperback edition of *Paper Cuts* in 1982, Ye Si writes:

> Turning to language, it reminds me of when Günter Grass came to Hong Kong,[124] and everyone at the conference was talking about the Cantonese we speak here and our English-medium education, afraid that these would influence Hong Kong writers' expressive powers in Chinese; I had a Hong Kong education as I was growing up, and I am naturally led to be heedful of this, but at that time I took another view, which is, if you wish to write about modern-day Hong Kong, it's simply not enough to use the language of outmoded text-books, you need to develop and practise a language that

[124] My annotation: Günter Grass, the German writer and recipient of the 1999 Nobel Prize in Literature, visited Hong Kong in the fall of 1979 after his month-long lecture tour in mainland China.

> includes the assortment of tongues we see before us. The language in my mind isn't a language that merely follows syntactic structures, nor is it an ornamental tongue to be embellished with beautiful diction. … [L]anguage is much more important than that, because it is almost always through language that we understand the world, and through language that we create ourselves. Complex language, in its response to the ways of looking at incidents just mentioned …[reveals] a complex way of seeing. (2014, 158)

The phrase "assortment of tongues" in this passage is at the core of not only *Paper Cuts* but also Ye Si's contemplation on Hong Kong literature throughout his writing career. Here, Brian Holton's tactful translation of the Chinese original expression *hunza de yuwen*, literally meaning "mixed words and texts," well captures several layers behind this poetic articulation. First, it indicates the intricate co-presence of different oral (*yu*) and written (*wen*) expressions in Hong Kong. Particular to Ye Si and his fellow writers' concern is how to develop a kind of literature that can stay truthful to the multilingual, multi-tonal, and diasporic lifeworld of Hong Kong. Second, as argued in the Introduction chapter of this dissertation, to represent such an assortment of tongues is to deliberately resist the hegemonic languages of English and the written standard Chinese in Hong Kong. By taking the Cantonese dialect as the medium to challenge and negotiate with the dominant powers, Hong Kong literature represents the city's reality where seemingly incompatible elements *struggle* to establish new relationships with each other. In many ways, to represent the assortment of tongues is to represent an archipelago of languages, peoples, and cultural practices within Hong Kong.

In *Paper Cuts*, one distinct example of such an imbricating assortment of tongues is seen in a succinct moment in the novella's chapter five, when Qiao and the narrator are sitting in a taxi chatting away and listening to the radio:

> There was a love song playing, a Cantopop tune, and not a Western pop song: *Requested by David for Mary Richard for Elizabeth Henry for Sabina Tony for Lucy…*(63/56)

In the English translation listed here, the first line is the narrator's voice, describing that a Cantopop love song is playing in the radio. The second italicized line is the radio broadcaster's voice, announcing the audience's request for whom the song is played.

The two lines defamiliarize both the English and the Chinese languages in the Hong Kong context. Same as in the translation above, when representing the radio

broadcaster's voice the original text bears no punctuation, signalling the fast speaking pace. What is not captured in the translation is that Ye Si does not spell these eight common Western names in Roman letters, despite that it is a rather customary bilingual practice in Hong Kong's literary and cultural texts, such as Quanan (Kun Nan)'s 1961 novel *Down through the Limbus* and the student-activist magazine *The 70's Biweekly*.[125] Instead, these foreign names (though likely referring to Chinese individuals) in the above quote are deliberately transliterated into Chinese characters. Without any space between the Chinese characters, these English sounding names clump together as an unintelligible code at first glance.

In an equally unexpected way, the text challenges the reading habits built for the "proper" Chinese writing standard (i.e. Mandarin). In the literary representation of the broadcaster's announcement, there are no recognizable linguistic markers—such as verbs that help to identify subject or object positions, or prepositions that help to understand the sentence structure—that are familiar to a Mandarin reader. Rather, any attempt to speed read will further perplex the reader. It is in this way that *Paper Cuts* "breaks up the continuum that is all too conveniently posited between a language (in this context, Chinese), its official or standard representation in a particular form of speech (in this case, Mandarin/Putonghua), and the unwieldy, evolving, and heterogenous event of cultural identification (in this context, the contentious something called 'Chineseness')."[126] Perhaps the only anchor to decipher this code is the repetition of a frequent oral Cantonese expression—a verb-preposition phrase *dimbei* (meaning "requested for," here translated as "for")—which is inserted between the transliterated Western names. Indeed, it is only after the reader pronounces each character in the Cantonese dialect that the meaning of this text starts to appear. In doing so, this seemingly nonsensical line compels its readers to recenter the Cantonese dialect as they re-establish their cultural relationship with both the English language and Mandarin.

For readers who are not Cantonese speakers, such misalignment between spoken words and written languages is a particularly strange phenomenon. Of course,

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[125] *Gate of the Earth (di de men)* opens with the author's poem in English; phrases and sentences spelt in English are also no strangers in this text and others alike. Similarly, *The 70's Biweekly* together with other avant-garde magazines never hesitates to directly quote English language texts.

[126] See Rey Chow (2014, 84). In this piece, Chow analyzes Ye Si's post–1997 poems.

all cultures worldwide carry a complicated history in which slangs, idioms, and other colloquial expressions mediate through their respective hegemonic language. Anglophone postcolonial literature offers some of the best examples. Stories such as Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon*, and Shani Mootoo's "Out on the Main Street" feature an accented voice to represent the ongoing manifestation of colonial history and to resist the standardized English as a unitary *lingua franca.* These literary articulations are made possible primarily through making phonetic alterations in the English language.

However, in order to express similar cultural dissent in Hong Kong, the Chinese language literature faces additional challenges partly because the Cantonese dialect must defy more than one hegemonic language, and partly because this local tongue must also share the same logographic written system with Mandarin. Another Hong Kong author Xi Xi represents this conundrum in her short story cycle *My City* in the following way:

> In this city, when you mean the public vehicle, you say *ba-see* [the Cantonese transliteration of the English word "bus"];[127] when you mean fresh cream cake, you say fresh *ke-leem* [the transliteration of "cream"] cold biscuit. Since this is the case, in this city, the brain, the mouth, and the hand that writes are always quarrelling. The hand says: You want me to write ice-cream, then why do you keep saying snow-cake, snow-cake? The mouth says: I'm telling you these two people are a football judge and a borderline guard, how come you write them down as referee and linesman?
>
> The hand that writes, the brain, and the mouth have been quarrelling for more than a hundred years now, so they have decided to hold a no-holds-barred public debate. (119–20/156,[128] with important modifications in translation)[129]

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[127] Original note from the translator reads that "The whole paragraph refers to differences between the spoken language (Cantonese) and the written language (Mandarin) used in Hong Kong. One of the major differences is vocabulary as indicated here. A large number of Hong Kong Cantonese words are transliterated English words" (footnote 3, 119).

[128] The first page number refers to the English translation and the second page number refers to the original Chinese text of the 2010 version.

[129] *My City: A Hongkong Story*, translated by Eva Hung in 1993. In this passage, I made two modifications to Eva Hung's translation. First, instead of taking "bus" as the translation of "*gonggong qiche*," I choose the term "public vehicle" to better reflect how the Chinese language describes the modern object. Second, I added "the brain" as the third factor in the quarrels of expression in Hong Kong. This decision is made according to the more complete editions of the novel published by Suye (1996), Hongfan (1999), and Guangxi Normal University Press (2010).

Taking a different kind of strategy of defamiliarization than *Paper Cuts*, Xi Xi's passage gives more explicit examples concerning the unique Hong Kong phenomenon that three languages run across each other to create different terminologies referring to the same everyday object. But like with Ye Si, Xi Xi's point here is less about establishing a stable alignment between the triangulation of English-Mandarin-Cantonese and that of the hand-brain-mouth. Rather, this passage suggests that as a result of the century-long navigation of the British colonial and the Chinese national narratives of claiming Hong Kong, the quarrel, or as Ye Si calls the "assortment of tongues," is both a central predicament and a potentially productive feature for Hong Kong literature to develop its own storytelling voice and to reclaim what I am calling the Hong Kong accent.

By re-constructing the relationship between reading and listening, texts and voices, Ye Si's *Paper Cuts* reminds us that even though English and Mandarin are the hegemonic languages in Hong Kong, they do not move smoothly across all social and cultural spheres. Tight through the Cantonese dialect, a mixed genealogy of sounds, voices, and words has always been the cornerstone of Hong Kong culture. *Paper Cuts* demonstrates this point right after the succinct quote that I have analyzed on page 104. Immediately following the radio host's announcement is the vocal voice of the Cantopop star Sam Hui, singing his 1974 piece entitled "Two Gamblers' Love Song (*shuangxing qingge*)":

> *Drunk, I hug my lonely pillow, can't help my heartbreak,*
>
> *Silent tears at midnight, an empty bed, alone with my regrets.*[130] (63/56)

While the lyrics are written in the spirit of classic Chinese poetry, the music blends Western vocal style, instrumental arrangement, and chord progression together with melodic and rhythmic remnants of Cantonese opera. Thus, once again, Ye Si compels us to imagine how a complex literary representation of the variety of tongues, as he envisions, can indeed produce new Hong Kong subjects who are always in the process of creating differing cultural practices.

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[130] According to the translator's note, this line is "Translated from Sam Hui, 'Shuangxing qingge' 雙星情歌, in [the film] *Guima shuangxing*" (footnote 1, 63). The film, known as *Games Gamblers Play* in English, was released in 1974 and it ranked first at the box office (Lv, 2012: 25).

Chapter 3.

Coastal Identity in Hong Kong: *My City* and Other Stories of Migration

> *There are continents in the story of the island, and islands in the story of the continent. There is an old continent in the new continent, and the new in the old! Islands and mainlands are relative and connected. Perhaps only those who live on the islands are sensitive to their differences with the mainland; but after traveling around the vast mainlands, I find that the small islands do not have to stay small if we let our imagination run wild.*
>
> *—Ye Si*[131]

3.1. Two Tales of Cold War Migrants in Hong Kong

Throughout the Cold War years, British Hong Kong witnessed multiple migration waves flowing from two communist regimes: China and Vietnam. Committing to diplomatic neutrality, a position that did not overtly defy either side of the Cold War (see the Introduction of this dissertation), the colonial government in Hong Kong treated the two groups of migrants with diametrically opposing policies. Those trekking from mainland China (including the ones who were retreating from the communist government, looking for better living conditions, uniting with family members, and moving for all other possible reasons), were repatriated as illegal migrants because the British needed to fulfil its promise of recognizing the legitimacy of the People's Republic of China. Meanwhile, those fleeing the Socialist Republic of Vietnam were first accepted then detained as refugees because the British colony needed to share the Western humanitarian responsibility for the US's defeat in the Vietnam War. Although Cold War Hong Kong's migration policy maintained diplomatic peace among the UK, the US, and China, it imposed much political and cultural violence on the peoples who used to be fellow travellers and dwellers in the coastal city of Hong Kong. As a result, peoples in Hong Kong were divided into permanent residents, refugees, and illegal migrants,

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[131] See the 2002 preface to *Islands and Mainlands*, a collection of short stories based on experiences in mainland China, Hong Kong, and the United States.

competing with one another for urban space, housing resources, job opportunities, and permission of cross-border movements.

3.1.1. Border Crossers

In the 1970s and 1980s, increasingly strict border measurements between Hong Kong and the mainland were implemented so that Beijing and London could both benefit from keeping Hong Kong as a free international trading port. After undergoing a few variations during the 1950s and 1960s,[132] in 1974 the colonial immigration law discontinued an oral agreement known as "Touch Base Policy" so that all mainlander travellers would be strictly repatriated if found.[133] And since bodily features cannot easily differentiate people from the two sides of the border in this case, the Immigration Control Office under Hong Kong Police Force relied heavily on various types of identification papers to hunt the unsanctioned migrants.[134] Notably, because the "open movement between Hong Kong and China" had had such a long history, in order to segregate the people who had been so deeply intermingled, identification documents must function as a monitoring tool not only for international travels but also daily activities within the colony (Madokoro 2016, 38). Apart from inspecting the border areas, Hong Kong police also patrolled the city streets to search and arrest anyone who was considered suspicious.[135] For these reasons, everyone was (and still is) legally advised to carry their Hong Kong ID card or other identification papers at all times to prove themselves not an "illegal immigrant." Even though these control methods did not and could not completely prevent unwanted migrants from mainland China, they nevertheless changed Hong Kong people's material and conceptual relationships to borders. Namely, the boundary lines and monuments, previously used to distinguish Hong Kong from China in a

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[132] Issued on April 1st 1949, the Immigrants Control Ordinance (Cap. 243) is the earliest legal source to trace the enhancement of border control in Hong Kong. For items that specify repatriation, see 9.3 and 11.2 in the Immigrants Control Regulations (Cap. 243). In the subsequent decades, additional immigration law includes Registration of Persons Ordinance (Cap. 177) which was first released in 1960, as well as Immigration Regulations (Cap. 115) in 1972. For the social impact of these legislation, see Laura Madokoro's *Elusive Refuge* (34–54).

[133] Tong (2021).

[134] The variety of identification papers govern both international travel and daily activities. Depending on the place of birth, international travel documents are divided into British (Hong Kong) Passport and the Certificates of Identity. For navigating everyday life, two of the most crucial identification documents include the Hong Kong ID Card and Closed Area Permit.

[135] See, for example, item 6 "Power of arrest" in Registration of Persons Ordinance (Cap. 177).

symbolic manner, were gradually turned into checkpoints guarded with wired bars and weapons,[136] and more importantly into "demarcations of legality and illegality" (Madokoro 2016, 39). As Laura Madokoro argues in *Elusive Refuge: Chinese Migrants in the Cold War*, these new legal devices to categorize identities "marked the beginning of a separation between the residents of Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland" in ways that the previous imperial and civil wars had not done (38).

Following the same logic of neutrality, British Hong Kong was obliged to support US's defeated but heroic image after the "Fall of Saigon" (May 1975) by functioning as a port of first asylum for the Vietnamese war migrants. From 1975 to 2000, the refugee policy in Hong Kong underwent three phases. In the first phase (1975–1981), Hong Kong received about 95,000 Vietnamese migrants,[137] who were settled in Hong Kong's military camps and factory buildings that were later known as "open camps" where freedom of movement and work outside were permitted until they were resettled in the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.[138] 2 July 1982 marked the beginning of the second phase (1982–1988), when Hong Kong government introduced a "humane deterrence" policy that indefinitely detained all new arrivals until resettlement overseas.[139] Concurrently, more and more open centers[140] were replaced by "closed centers," which were operated by the Correctional Services Department that also ran Hong Kong's many prisons.[141] Between 1988 and 2000, Hong Kong witnessed the long and notorious third phase,[142] in which all incoming Vietnamese nationals were placed in detention centers and treated as illegal immigrants unless they were classified, after a

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[136] A good example is seen in the transformation of Chung Ying Street (meaning Sino-British street) in the border area of Sha Tau Kok.

[137] Chan and Loveridge (1987); Chan Kwok-bun (1990; 2010); and Laura Madokoro (2016).

[138] Chan and Loveridge (1987); and Law (2014).

[139] Chan Kwok-bun (1990; 2010).

[140] The term "open asylum centers" describe facilities where the war migrants are free to leave the facility and find work outside of the facility.

[141] Chan Kwok-bun (1990; 2010).

[142] Note that Hong Kong only implemented these detainment practices on the Vietnamese migrants. For instance, migrants from mainland China were immediately repatriated if they could not resettle in the squatter huts. For other neighbouring ports of first asylum, extreme measures were undertaken as early as 1979. Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines completely stopped accepting Vietnamese migrants; boats were refused to board.

strict screening procedure, as “political refugees” defined by the 1951 UN Convention.[143] The screened in rate was consistently and suspiciously 15%; the rest were repatriated by force.[144] At a time (from the 1960s onwards) when Western countries started lifting their racist restrictions against Asian migrants and re-opened their “door of freedom,”[145] Hong Kong, the once open space, faced tightening border control. In other words, the image of the Hong Kong that we know of today, a space associated with clear geopolitical boundaries, is a product of the Cold War history. As the physical and mental well-being of the refugees deteriorated in each phase, and as the tax money expended on building and managing refugee camps continued to rise, a gulf between the Hong Kong Chinese residents and the Vietnamese war migrants was widened. Under such an increasingly polarizing situation, few remembered that many of the Vietnamese refugees had long connections with China as descendants of the overseas Chinese in Vietnam.

Despite the opposing migration terms respectively executed against the Chinese mainlanders and the Vietnamese nationals, these Cold War migration policies jointly instigated a new narrative about a clear division between self and the other, disrupting the ways in which peoples in Asian borderlands used to negotiate differences. According to the Cold War narrative, the place one is born into, the language(s) one speaks, and the relationships one inherits, all became legal and social points of identification that either grant or withdraw a person the opportunity to build the sense of belonging in Hong Kong.

3.1.2. Coastal Travellers

To rewrite the Cold War narrative that continues to divide peoples, cultures, and territories that have been connected for centuries, this chapter turns to critical refugee studies and transoceanic studies. I engage with critical refugee studies to analyze how the derogatory identity categories of “mainlanders” (indicating their illegality and immorality) and “Vietnamese refugees” (indicating their victimhood and non-belonging) were produced through historical contingencies of the Cold War, and I draw from

[143] Chan Kwok-bun (1990; 2010).

[144] *ibdi*.

[145] In the US, the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) was repealed in 1943 and interracial marriage was constitutionalized in 1967. In Canada, the Chinese Immigration Act (head tax since 1885, and exclusion since 1923) was repealed in 1947 and immigration restrictions were lifted in 1967.

transoceanic studies to show longer and wider connections among spaces and cultures that transgress national borders and imaginations. Bringing these two approaches together enables a vantage point for me to imagine a pre-Cold War epistemology, from which I can read how Hong Kong literature tell de-Cold War stories about identities and relationships. This chapter therefore argues that the Cold War crises and their aftermath faced by Hong Kong are not brought by the migrant population, but the Cold War gatekeeping of movements and the denial of a coastal subjectivity.

Scholars of critical refugee studies have argued against the predominant premise that refugees are outside of the norm, expelled from any national community and deprived of civil rights. Citing Trinh T. Minh-ha's warning against the tendency of turning refugee-ism as a reified label of victimhood (2010), Yến Lê Espiritu's *Body Counts: The Vietnam War and Militarized Refuge(es)* (2014) proposes to "empty" the power of "damage-centered" refugee narrative (3–4), and "conceptualizes 'refugee' as a critical idea but also as a social actor whose life, when traced, illuminates the interconnections of colonization, war, and global social change" (11). Moving from critical studies based on the Vietnamese diasporic experience within the US to the migration history within Asian regions during the Cold War, Laura Madokoro argues in *Elusive Refuge* (2016) that "The notion of a political refugee or, more specifically, an individual persecuted, or fearing persecution, because of their political beliefs was a product of Cold War confrontations between East and West. Western governments considered political refugees to be in need of assistance and protection, distinct from other migrants who moved for seemingly less coerced reasons" (3–4). Key to what Madokoro calls the "refugeeing process" is the West's monitoring of various migration practices and classifying the coastal peoples into legal and illegal migrants (7). The field is further enriched by Viet Thanh Nguyen's *Nothing Ever Dies* (2016), which maps the violence of the Vietnam War onto a global scale not only by comparing it with the continuous wars in the Middle East and Asia Pacific, but also by attending to the asymmetrical memories of the refugees from the ensued genocidal wars in Cambodia and Laos, as well as drafted soldiers from China, South Korea, the Philippines, and Guam. For Nguyen, the ethics of what he calls the "just memory" of war is enabled by not forgetting that "As people able to learn both love and hate, we expand our circle of the near and dear to include others, and formerly thin relations become thicker" (59). More recent scholarship echoes this memory ethics by addressing how the global Vietnam War has affected diverse peoples

across and beyond Southeast Asia: the Vietnam War in Asia Pacific and Asian America (Simeon Man 2018), the refugee epistemologies of Hmong people from Laos (Ma Vang 2020), and Cambodian refugee lifeworlds (Y-Dang Troeung 2022). Scholarship in critical refugee studies has conceptualized the ways in which refugees form new social relationships *during* and *after* their arrival in the resettled lands.

At the same time, current works in this field continue to revolve around how the US militarism displaced Asian Pacific communities, a framework that does not effectively capture the insidious kind of Cold War violence experienced in Hong Kong. The ineffectiveness results from two reasons. First, as I have argued in the Introduction, although Hong Kong played an integral role in the establishment of a US-led global order after the end of the Second World War, the city's neutral and peaceful position, which had benefited US Imperialism, the British Empire, and the Chinese nation-state, made Hong Kong too "cold" to be examined by existing analytics that are based on the US's hot wars and anti-US resistance in the Asia Pacific. Second, while the sudden and massive migration influxes from Asia to the West indeed demonstrated a series of unprecedented and traumatic events produced by the Cold War history, witnessing the consistent flows of movements between South China, Southeast Asia, and various lands across the Pacific had been part of the everyday coastal life in Hong Kong *prior to* the Cold War. Focusing on the continuum rather than the rupture in the centuries of migration practice, I intend not to dismiss the particular injustices confronted by migrants during the Cold War. Quite the contrary, it is precisely the violation of the coastal epistemology of movements that constituted the specific Cold War violence taking place in Hong Kong.

For these reasons, I bridge critical refugee studies with transoceanic studies, an emerging interdisciplinary field, to understand how the city's geo-cultural affinity to water has shaped the ways in which people form intimacy and relationship with their fellow strangers who are arriving at, departing from, travelling through, returning to, and residing in Hong Kong. Scholars have shown that coastal subjects across the world offer alternative ways of understanding spatiality and historicity alongside the modern Euro-American epistemologies. In his seminal essay "Our Sea of Islands" (1993), Tongan and Fijian anthropologist Epeli Hauʻofa argues that water both pushes and extends the boundary of land mass. Challenging the contemporary European way of conceptualizing the Pacific island countries as "too small, too poor, too isolated to develop any

meaningful degree of autonomy" (89–90), Hau'ofa returns to traditional Oceanic knowledge and imagination, according to which each island is a linking point that brings together the sea, the sky, as well as other islands. Thus, the Pacific is a "sea of islands" rather than "islands in a far sea" (91). Echoing Hau'ofa's epistemological shift and tracing the global maritime history in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, sociologist Renisa Mawani argues that the disproportionate prioritization of land over sea in the studies of empires has conditioned scholars to follow the logic of sovereign territories and the national boundaries even when critiquing it. To turn the analytical lens from land to sea, therefore, allows us to examine the competing discourses of movements, relationships, and histories without recentering the nation states. Mawani's theorization of a land-to-sea critical turn, hence, reminds us that the "inhabited or lived" experiences of the nautical sojourners, migrants, and commerce travellers have inspired *and* resisted the imperial desire of control and domination (2018, 29). As a parallel example, historian Amino Yoshihiko re-examines the early cultural activities centring the Sea of Japan to dispel the predominant nationalistic discourse that understands Japan as a mono-ethnic and land-based agricultural society. Reading Japan archipelagically, Yoshihiko argues that sea fishing, coastal trading, and river travelling had enabled cultural spheres that connect the present-day eastern Japan more closely to the Korean Peninsula and the Chinese mainland than western Japan.[146] Most recently, the ocean-based approaches of rethinking national, territorial, ethnic, and cultural borders are further multiplied by Asian Americanist Evyn Lê Espiritu Gandhi's concept of "*nước*—a land/water dialectic" in her study of the Vietnamese refugee settlers across Guam and Israel-Palestine (2022, 2). Recognizing that the dynamic relationship between human, water, and land can both reinforce *and* unsettle settler colonialism, Espiritu Gandhi reads North America and the Asia Pacific as relational archipelagoes that consistently push for more ethical and "pluralized forms of collective belonging" (5). Drawing on everyday vocabularies, poetic expressions, and mythical imaginations of water and land in Vietnamese, Chamorro, and other indigenous cultures, she states that "To *làm nước* then, to make water/land, is to forge decolonial futurities" (5).

Taking critical refugee studies and transoceanic studies together, while the historical periods and geographic concerns of these works do not necessarily overlap

[146] See Amino Yoshihiko, "The Maritime View of the Japanese Archipelago" in *Rethinking Japanese History* (2012, 31–64).

with the Hong Kong Seventies, I read the literary representation of migration stories beyond the dominant Cold War discourse. Instead of taking the nation-state as the default unit operating within an Euro-American-centric temporality (industrial modernization, the come and go of imperialisms, military invasions, capitalist globalization), and instead of seeing coastal travellers as sympathetic or unwanted border transgressors, this chapter adopts an archipelagic approach to connect seemingly disparate experiences (of mainland Chinese migrants and Vietnamese refugees) in Hong Kong. I think with a common Chinese phrase "*pingshui xiangfeng*" (accidental encounter) to theorize how coastal stories in Hong Kong's Sinophone literature develop archipelagic ways of understanding intimacy in social relationships. As I show through the three literary texts in this chapter, when situated in the geocultural context of archipelago, the idea of social intimacy needs to be understood not in terms of direct relationship of giving and receiving between two individuals or individualized groups, but in terms of a more mobile community constituted of strangers who might have only accidentally met each other once but would continue to pass on the survival skills, material support, and mental care from one to another as a way to reciprocate and to weave the larger web of social kinship.

3.2. Literary Representation of Coastal Experience

The rest of the chapter examines three literary texts written during the Cold War: the canonic short story cycle *My City* (1975), as well as two less studied short stories—Ye Si's "Chuanshang" (On board, 1975) and Xi Xi's "Hudi" (Tigerland/Bitterland, 1987). I will start with *My City*, rereading its climactic sections, not as a representation of an exceptionalist Hong Kong identity, but as an articulation of transoceanic imagination in a time when the Cold War has divided peoples and cultures. Then, I will move on to the other two texts which represent diverse lives on and by the sea of the Cantonese, Teochew, and other coastal peoples from the South China Sea and Vietnam. By contrasting the coastal epistemologies and the Cold War norms of division and categorization, I argue that these literary representations compel us to understand modern Hong Kong identity in relation to other coastal subjects across the Asia Pacific.

3.2.1. A City on the Sea, Transoceanic Imagination in *My City*

First serialized in *Hong Kong Express* from January to June 1975,[147] Xi Xi's *My City* has five paperback editions published across Hong Kong, Taiwan, and mainland China (1979; 1989; 1996; 1999; 2010).[148] In 1993, the text was translated into English.[149] *My City* takes eighteen short episodes to represent a vast range of urban issues concerning housing, public health, infrastructure, colonial bureaucracy, political demonstration, and refugee crises among other social aspects. The story does not follow a straightforward plot line that is marked by conflicts and solutions. Rather, the subject matter in each episode is independent yet related to one another that resembles a series of urban folktales more than a Chinese linked-chapter novel (*zhanghui xiaoshuo*).[150] In tones that are childlike and humorous, the text is primarily narrated from the perspectives of six youths—Fruits, Merry Mak, Swim, Braids, Liberty, and Silly—many of whom do not necessarily know each other and can best be described as fellow city-dwellers in Hong Kong.

Although the story's unconventional style was met with much doubt during its initial publications in the mid and late 1970s,[151] retrospective criticism unanimously

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[147] Like *Paper Cuts* and other literary writings produced during the same period, *My City* was first serialized in the literary supplement of the *Hong Kong Express* from January to June in 1975.

[148] They are respectively published by Su Yeh (1979), Yunchen Culture (1989), Su Yeh (1996), Hong Fan (1999), and Guangxi Normal University Press (2010). This dissertation uses the 2010 edition to reference the original Chinese text.

[149] As the first Hong Kong novel-length text that is translated in its entirety, this text has at least two English titles. The one I use in this dissertation, "My City: A Hongkong Story," is given by Eva Hung in her 1993 translation. Alternatively, literary scholar Shen Shuang translates the story's title into "I City" in her study of Hong Kong literature. The two versions of translation reflect the ambiguous meaning of the original Chinese title—*wo cheng*. For more interpretations of the title, see Ho Fuk Yan's introduction in the novel's 1989 edition.

[150] Ho Fuk-yan, a literary specialist on Xi Xi's writings argues that the structural design of *My City* can be understood in terms of the "moving point of view (*yidong shidian*)" and "scattered perspective (*sandian toushi*)" which are commonly used in the Chinese long scroll paintings. One prominent example of such painting is Zhang Zeduan's *Along the River During the Qingming Festival* in the eleventh century. For further analysis, see Ho's introduction to the 1988 Yunchen edition of *My City* entitled "One Reading of *My City*" (2010, 249–50).

[151] Drawing on her own struggles of appreciating the text during her initial readings, Hung gives a warning to "linguistic purists and 'literary policemen'" in her "Translator's Introduction"; this offers a glimpse into the kind of criticism that *My City* has received (Hung 1993, xiii). For Xi Xi's response to such criticism, see *On the Theme of Time: A Conversation* (1995, 204–207).

applauds the text for its representation of Hong Kong identity.[152] Most interpretations, with their diverse cultural-political implications, contend the story establishes a distinct local narrative that disrupts the British discourse of Hong Kong (a barren rock with no history or civilization) and simultaneously draws distinction from the mainland Chinese culture.[153] As a result, the Hong Kong represented in *My City* is often read as a singular, isolated, and exceptional place. Recognizing that the dominant reading of *My City* validates a unique local literary voice in Hong Kong, this section, however, intervenes into it by re-reading the story as a call for trans-local identification.

Key to such a dominant reading is the resort to Hong Kong's demographic shift in the 1970s, from a migrant-dominated population to a permanent resident-dominated population. Most evidently, in a 2004 article "*My City* and Hong Kong Seventies," literary writer and cultural critic Pan Guoling (also known as Pun Kwok-ling or Lawrence Pun) cites Hong Kong government's annual reports and sociological studies to prove this point.[154] According to the official statistics, it is not until 1971, more than two decades after the Japanese Occupation (1941–1945) and the Chinese Civil War (1927–1949), that the population born in Hong Kong exceeded that of the migrants. As with many other critics in humanities and social sciences, Pan understands this demographic shift as an indication of the birth of Hong Kong's local generation, who become the predominant force to build a modern Hong Kong that is no longer preoccupied with war and political turmoil. Pan writes that:

> The demographic shift has transformed Hong Kong from a "borrowed space" to a place where people can settle for life, from a demographic structure that is dominated by migratory population [*fudong renkou*] to one that features permanent population [*guding renkou*]. … Before the 1950s, Hong Kong had long been a "haven" for immigrants from the Mainland. In

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[152] The post–1997 appreciation of the text is seen in a wide range of narratives, including brief advocacies offered by international academic leading figures (Leo Ou-fan Lee, David Der-wei Wang) to those by local public intellectuals (Leung Man-tao and Pan Guoling), from studies by mainlander scholars (Zhao Xifang's *Novelizing Hong Kong*) to those by Hong Kong critics (Chan Chi-tak's *Deconstructing My City: Hong Kong Literature 1950–2005*), the government-funded public event I-City Festival 2005 (see *Journal of I-City*) to the independent documentary film *The Inspired Island: Xi Xi, My City* (2015).

[153] An exception is seen in Chan Kit-yee's "Sci-Fi Elements and Modernity in Xi Xi's *My City*" (2008). Chan reads that the expression "gods bless my city" is a double wish to both Hong Kong and mainland China; however, Chan does not elaborate on this reading to turn it into an argument.

[154] Pan's sources include Hong Kong annual reports in 1971, 1973, 1974, 1975, Matthew Turner and Irene Ngan's *Hong Kong Sixties: Designing Identity*, and Lv Dale's *Excuse me, the Bill!*

> the 1970s, the generation born in the 1950s and early 1960s grew up and became the primary group in Hong Kong, creating a new force in society. Because this post-war generation was locally born and raised [*tusheng tuzhang*] in Hong Kong, it is only natural and logical that they see Hong Kong as their home. In the novel *My City*, when Fruits is interviewed for work, he answers "——I was born here, in this city——No, I have never been anywhere else." These words unconsciously reveal the self-identification and sense of belonging to the city that sprouted in those days. (57)

Pan's passage rightfully dispels the spatial stereotype that confines Hong Kong merely as a place of chaos and non-belonging. However, the "post-war generation" that Pan refers to was also the generation who lived with the Cold War in Asia—the aftermath and continuation of the imperial and regional wars, the re-demarcation of territories, cultures, peoples, and identities. The discourse of demographic shift, establishing a dichotomy between the migrant and the locally born, is therefore a product of Cold War logic of division.

Rereading *My City*, I argue that the text in fact challenges such Cold War mentality in various everyday moments. Let us remember that the cited lines from the story in Pan's passage ("——I was born here, in this city——No, I have never been anywhere else") are not an un-contextualized universal assertion made about Hong Kong identity, but part of the interaction between the character of Fruits and his job interviewer in an interrogating environment. Reflecting on their dialogue, Fruits is not quite satisfied with his factual but inadequate answer because such economic and transactional exchanges about an individual's identity evade wider and longer social connections and inhibit opportunities of rebuilding such relationships. Indeed, during his interview, Fruits meditates in his inner-monologue in which he imagines a city beyond his own and wonders if he and the interviewer could have formed a non-interrogative and mutual relationship, and if they could have represented two peoples from different territories but sharing a common history.[155] For Fruits, his identity is rooted in but not exclusive to the place of birth, and his sense of belonging to Hong Kong is compatible with his potential identification with other neighbouring places and peoples. This de-Cold War reading also applies to the text's most widely known expression "gods bless my city

[155] See the full passage in Episode Four of *My City* (34–35/48–49).

(*tianyou wocheng*)," appearing in Episode Thirteen.[156] Though often read as a proclamation of an exclusive allegiance to Hong Kong in defense against the cultural-political influence from mainland China,[157] "gods bless my city" derives from the text's representation of the memory of the earlier war migrants, who had been crossing China-Hong Kong borders back and forth during the Japanese invasion in the 1930s and 1940s.[158] In other words, the text reminds us that the city is built by a collective of diverse peoples; and the blessings are to remember the city's traumatic past and to honor the war survivors for their efforts of raising their children who become Hong Kong's postwar generation. Apart from the two moments that I have analyzed, *My City* frequently makes defamiliarizing comments about legal identification documents and border control policies (see Episode Four and Twelve) to challenge the Cold War norm. My rereading shows that Xi Xi articulates an alternative narrative of Hong Kong identity that takes issue with the Cold War discourse which ostracizes travellers and war migrants from residents, settlers, and citizens.

I take this new understanding of *My City* to further examine the twin episodes of Fourteen and Fifteen, in which the text weaves together two experiences: the sea life of the Chinese sailors along the Pacific Ocean, and the refugee life of the migrants from communist China and Vietnam. Episode Fourteen features the character of Swim, a Hong Kong-born sailor-electrician who flies over the Pacific Ocean via Tokyo, Hawaii, and Massachusetts, joins the Chinese crew members in Houston, and voyages south along the Atlantic coast on a cargo ship named *Oriental*. When asked by the crew members for updates about Hong Kong, Swim accounts for the overwhelming migrant phenomena on three separate occasions in Episode Fourteen (136–38/179–80; 139–40/182; 141/185). In each occasion, the text juxtaposes the details of the refugees' journeys to Hong Kong with the ongoing everyday life fragments on the ship of *Oriental*,

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[156] With its punchy nature, this expression circulates beyond its literary readers and becomes a catchphrase for Hong Kong people, especially during the 2014 Umbrella Movement and the 2019 Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement.

[157] One example is seen in a popular 2019 protest song named "Sing Hallelujah." Composed in the style of the Christian hymn, the song takes the phrase "*tianyou wocheng*" as its Chinese title. It is important to notice that the usage of the expression "gods bless my city" is highly contested among individuals with different cultural and political believes.

[158] See Episode Thirteen of *My City* (128–32).

suggesting the resonance between the two experiences. For one occasion, the text writes:

> There have been many refugees, says Swim. … [Some] came via the sea. They came in small groups of three of four, or they came alone. Since they were afloat on the sea, no one could go and say to them: You must be hungry. They spent days and nights at sea. On their way home, some of their bodies were half eaten by sharks; others had started rotting. By the time they arrived at the beaches of this city, their faces were unrecognizable, their bodies no longer whole.
>
> When Swim comes out of the smoking room, he has finished the morning's work and he can now go back to his own room and rest. … Standing on deck, Swim can see the ocean. The ocean is all around him. The ocean that is close to the ship is ocean, the ocean that is far away is sometimes ocean, sometimes sky. (139–40/182)

The first half of the quote is narrated by Swim who recounts the atrocious experience of the refugees, while the second half switches back to a third-person indirect speech to portray Swim's life on the ship. Notably, despite the apparent shift in narrative time and voice, the text offers no transition between the two halves, encouraging the readers to make direct connection between these two kinds of experience of the sea that are otherwise dissociated with one another. Swim's solitary presence on the deck creates a paralleling image of the floating refugee traveler, both are surrounded by the all-encompassing water. Although the text never directly reveals the reactions from Swim or the crew members upon hearing the updates of the city, readers can imagine from the text's performative message that the refugee tragedies of forbidden familial and social reunion deeply resonate with the overseas sailors on the cargo ship, who would understand the physical and emotional struggles of water travelling more than anyone else.

More importantly, never once does the text specify the asylum seekers in Hong Kong with shorthand such as "defectors" and "boat people," or describe the migrants by their origin of departure such as "mainland China" and "Vietnam." For readers who are not familiar with Hong Kong history during the Cold War, this narrative strategy could be justifiably puzzling. Such was the case for me during the first few times of reading. However, with the knowledge of the historical context (see the previous section "Two Tales of Cold War Migrants"), I now see it as Xi Xi's careful effort of attending to the ethics of representation involving migration experiences in Hong Kong. It is an ethics

that acts upon the Cold War discourse which creates biopolitical and psychological divides between newly arrived war migrants and long-term settlers in Hong Kong. Put differently, while *My City* carefully attends to the specifics of migrant experiences from different periods (i.e. WWII and the Cold War), the text makes it clear that the socio-historical contingencies cannot pre-determine the individuals' identities.

Episode Fifteen further shows that the process of identity formation for Hong Kong subjects is inseparable from their own experience of transoceanic movements. It is most evidently represented through a moment of alternative identification for Swim. Narrating from Swim's viewpoint on the cargo ship, the text writes that:

> The ship sailed past Tampa, past Cuba, and skirted Panama. Swim saw that the sea there was dotted with yachts and fishing boats. And then the ship passed the West Indies and Trinidad, sailing along Brazil's long coastline, past [Salvador]. At this moment the ship is at Santos, replenishing its oil and drinking water supply. As Swim stands on deck, he can see a distant city floating in the black night. It is a city on the sea, decorated with numerous lights. Is it my city? Is it my city? Swim cries out loud. All of a sudden he is under the impression that he has returned to the city where he lived. (147–48/192)[159]

Figure 4. Xi Xi's illustration of the South American continent.
In the 2014 Chinese edition, this illustration accompanies the block quote above, showing Swim's sea journey to the Hong Kong reader (193).

[159] Eva Hung translates "Salvador," a coastal state in Brazil, into "El Salvador," a Central American country on the east shore of the North Pacific Ocean. The names of these two places share the same expression in Chinese, but only Salvador makes geographical sense according to the sailing journey Xi Xi describes in this passage.

This passage is charged with emotions in response to the loaded concepts of home and belonging. For Swim, the familiar cityscape and coastal surroundings in Santos remind him of Hong Kong. Clearly, the passage shows that even as someone who “likes life at sea” and chooses to “see all four corners of the world,” Swim is homesick after travelling for only a few months (133/175). However, seeing Hong Kong in the South American coastline reveals more than just a nostalgic sentiment. Through this “misidentification,” the passage provides an opportunity for readers to reconsider different ways of imagining home. That is, the sense of belonging is not bound by a fixed conceptualization of place. Of course, home is deeply rooted in a specific place, but the memory and meaning of that place travels, expands, and multiplies as one encounters differences.

Therefore, Swim’s heart-wrenching cry for “my city”—a coastal port—must be situated in relation to the depiction of different water traveling subjects across other port cities. In addition to the juxtaposition of the refugees and the sailors in Episode Fourteen, Episode Fifteen also portrays the navigation among linguistic and cultural differences within the Chinese crew. By this time of the story, Swim has extended his understanding of kin due to his friendship with other non-Cantonese Chinese crew members who come outside of Hong Kong. Carpenter, for example, “has jet black hair and jet black eyes, the same as Swim” but they do not share each other’s language; “[both] of them have to gesticulate” until Swim asks Carpenter to teach him to speak Mandarin (144/188). As Swim learns the language, Carpenter “also tells Swim many things about the ship” and shares pastime activities such as paper cutting with Swim (144/188). Put differently, Swim’s bonding with Carpenter is not based on the same place of origin, the supposed inherent Chineseness, or submission to the hegemonic culture; rather it is based on the continuous work of building a reciprocal relationship. Consistent with the idea of acquired kinship, Swim’s identification with the foreign coastal ports (i.e. Santos, Buenos Aires, and other Equatorial regions in South America) also disturbs the dominant interpretation of the notion of “my city” as Hong Kong people’s exclusive affection towards their home. For many Hong Kong writers, as Rey Chow puts it, the “foreign…is not necessarily only a matter of exotic destinations; it can also be the opportunity for a renewed discovery of and emphasis on one’s own history” (2014, 84). For these reasons, I suggest that *My City* makes a deliberate call to map Hong Kong onto the oceanic framework alongside other islands and coastal cities.

By representing the unexpected identification against the backdrop of the Cold War division, *My City* offers an alternative way of imagining the minor but persistent transoceanic relationships among Asian Pacific subjects. The concern for Cold War borders in *My City* is not a discrete case in Xi Xi's prolific writing career.[160] The fourth section of this chapter will return to her other story "Tigerland/Bitterland" (1987) which further historicizes Hong Kong's treatment of migrants. As a migrant writer herself, Xi Xi, who is considered as the most iconic literary figure in representing Hong Kong identity, proposes over and over to consider Hong Kong as a city within "a longer history of continuous translocal and transnational flows" (Shen, 576). The rest of the chapter will show that Xi Xi, together with other Hong Kong writers and artists, makes a powerful critique that border restrictions have become the new means of imperial violence in Asia during the Cold War.

3.2.2. "On Board," a Coastal Narrative of Accidental Encounter

Ye Si's "On Board" (1975) tells a story that historicizes the idea of Hong Kong identity by contrasting the Cold War everyday norms with the fading coastal experience. The short story was first published in Ye Si's short story collection *See Mun and the Dragon* (1979) and then anthologized again in *Islands and Mainlands* (1987; 2002) which also is translated into French.[161] As several French critics[162] and Ye Si himself note, the collection tells stories about how "islands and mainlands are relational and connected."[163]

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[160] For example, "Spring Prospect" (1977) tells a story of Old Lady Chan anticipating the visit of her younger sister in the mainland after a twenty-four-year separation due to war and the Cultural Revolution. The author's autobiographical novel *Migratory Birds* (1981) and its sequel *Weaving Nest* (2018) also spin around her family's footprints in Shanghai, Zhejiang, southern China, and Hong Kong. Moving beyond the borders of Hong Kong, "Cross of Gallantry" (1981) turns to the cruel irony faced by Deehan, a young Nepali border patrol officer in the UK, who receives a cross of honor rewarded by the British government due to his high record of arresting illegal migrants. This short story is narrated through Deehan's monologue and his conversations with Bhunah, a Mongolian boy. "Cross of Gallantry" intertwines Bhunah's innocent excitement about border enforcers' "braveness" (85) with Deehan's ethical struggle when he has to capture "children, women, elders" who remind him of his family in Nepal (87). Although "Cross" is set outside of Hong Kong, it clearly references the shared position across diasporic Asian subjects.

[161] *Îles et continents et autres nouvelles* (2001).

[162] *A Collection of Reviews of Ye Si's Works: Fiction Section* (2011, 200–203).

[163] See the preface to *Islands and Mainlands* (2002), a collection of short stories based on experiences in mainland China, Hong Kong, and the United States.

The story of "On Board" takes place on a voyage in the Mirs Bay (Dapeng Wan), a water border area between Hong Kong and China. Located in the northern corner of the South China Sea, the Mirs Bay connects the majority of the eastern side of Hong Kong's New Territories and the coastal area of the Chinese mainland. Coming back from Tung Ping Chau, an outlying island that is closer to the coastline of China than Hong Kong, and destined to dock at the Ma Liu Shui Ferry Pier in the New Territories, the boat carries passengers who have spent a getaway weekend in the island village of Tung Ping Chau, an increasingly popular activity among the emerging middle class in urban Hong Kong. The story unfolds as the junior boat owner interrogates a young woman on board, Xiaomi, to find out if she is a communist defector and illegal migrant from the mainland. During the back-and-forth questioning with Xiaomi and her family on board, the boat owner, however, inadvertently reveals his own migratory stories. Originally from the Teochew region, east to the Cantonese area, the boat owner's family have been fishermen for generations travelling along the coastline connecting Hong Kong and south China. By having the boat owner embodying the double role of a border inspector and a coastal subject, "On Board" deconstructs the Cold War violence of dividing territories that have been entangled with each other and resetting histories for Asian communities.

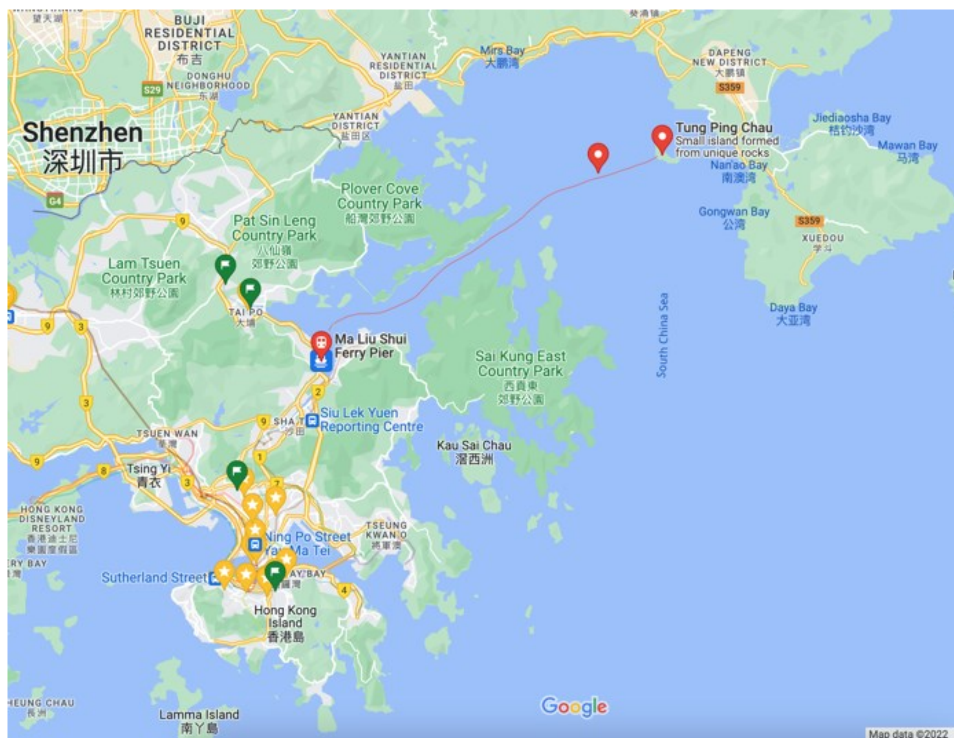

Figure 5. A map showing the voyage taken by the characters in "On Board."

After the boat departs, the junior boat owner singles out Xiaomi from the rest of the passengers and requests identification papers from her. Baffled by this arbitrary demand at first, Xiaomi soon learns that her short hairstyle and plain clothing choice make her seem less like a "Hong Konger (*xiangggangren*)" (17) and more like a "snake" (15) from Communist China. In the colloquial language along the coast of the South China Sea, "snake" is a jargon for an "illegal migrant crossing via water (*touduke*)" which literally means a "surreptitious water traveller" in Chinese. Not carrying any identification documents on her getaway vacation, Xiaomi is then conditioned to interact with the boat owner who performs a mock interrogation, sliding between the perspectives of an authoritative representative and a chatty stranger. Interestingly, the slippery interrogative process repeatedly undermines the normative imagination of identities through evoking a series of uncanny parallels. For example, to justify his suspicion of Xiaomi, the boat owner recalls a previous incident when a "snake" is found on board. He says to Xiaomi that:

> I'm sorry if I offend you by saying this, but last time a woman was dressed more beautifully and fashionably [than you]. She sat there with style, but I recognized her [as a snake] at once. … These days the snakes are dressed in identical ways as Hong Kong people. Those clothes were brought in [to the mainland] by the head of the snake. That woman also had short hair like yours, was also sunburnt and red, and wore long pants and shirts. And here's the biggest problem for you: you don't even have a watch or any ornaments. (16)

Clearly, the boat owner's reasoning is self-contradictory. On the one hand, he insists that between the Hong Kong people and mainlanders there are inherent and detectable differences. On the other hand, every aspect he lists in the exemplary incident regarding the "snake" woman (i.e. physical features, cultural demeanour, and material belongings) only proves that there are few distinctions between a Hong Kong middle-class tourist to the outlying island and a mainlander traveler coming to Hong Kong by sea. Moreover, since the opening of the story has established Xiaomi's Hong Kong perspective through free indirect speech, readers have built a trust in Xiaomi's character and her claim for Hong Kong identity. It is in this literary context that the initially baffling parallel between Xiaomi and the "snake" woman, two subjects marked solely by the oppositional direction of their travel, strikes the readers as an exposure to the normalized inequality of movements across the coastal people who used to share the same water. As the

previous section delineates, the movement is only policed when the hardening Cold War border policies divide the once shared space into the free and unfree worlds.

The story further explores the asymmetry of movements by representing the differing experiences of border and identity. Born in Hong Kong and never setting their feet outside of the birthplace, Xiaomi and her sister do not have to pay much attention to the ID cards. In sharp contrast, the boat owner always keeps all his identification papers with him on board, from Hong Kong ID card to vessel's license, chief mate certificate, and driver's license. However, the abundance of documents is still not adequate to secure his sense of belonging because of his multidirectional relationship with borders. When facing Xiaomi's question, "So you are born in Hong Kong?," the boat owner gives an unexpected response. The story writes:

> He hesitated and said, "No, but do you know how long we have been in Hong Kong?" When no one answered, he said aloud, "More than eighty years; my grandfather was already here then." He lightened his voice again: "But we went back to fish later. That's why our documents only say we stayed in Hong Kong for thirteen years. All these documents, we have kept neatly and tidily." (21)

In this conversation induced by the topic of birth place, the interrogative relationship between Xiaomi and the boat owner is reversed for the first time. By destabilizing the form of interrogation itself, the reversion reveals the vulnerability of the Cold War logic that border inspection safeguards. Particularly, the story questions what can be called Cold War historicism—ways of thinking of the Cold War as the new historical beginning for all peoples across Asia. According to the colonial law, one's birth place predetermines one's political rights. If born in the postwar Hong Kong, one automatically obtains Hong Kong permanent residency and British citizenship.[164] If not, even for the legalized migrants, one is juridically considered neither Chinese nor British citizen, only a permanent but effectively second-class resident.[165] Put differently, one's familial and

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[164] The British nationality laws changed a few times between 1948 and 1986. Proven to be born or naturalized in the colony, a Hong Kong person is first a "Citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies" (CUKC) according to British Nationality Act 1948 then a "British Dependent Territories Citizen" (BDTC) via the British Nationality Act 1981, and finally a "British National (Overseas)"(BN(O)) under the Hong Kong (British Nationality) Order of 1986 which is designed to be effective after 1997.

[165] Before the sovereignty transfer in 1997, nearly two million Hong Kong people, that is 33% of the entire population, fall into this category. See the proceeding of the Legislative Council meeting in February 1994.

social histories prior to the birth are rewritten as subordinate under the Cold War logic. However, as the above block quote shows, the account offered by the boat owner challenges this normative narrative. The discrepancy between "eighty [undocumented] years" and "thirteen [certified] years" in Hong Kong clearly demonstrates the contested ways of claiming one's belonging (21). By including his grandfather's fishing life and the family's multiple sites of temporary settlement when claiming his belonging to Hong Kong, the boat owner reveals a long history of coastal subjects who seasonally move along the coast back-and-forth over generations. To recall my previous review of critical ocean studies, the Hong Kong stories about the activities happening at sea and along the coastline represent its people as coastal subjects who participate in and shape the transoceanic histories.

Just like water currents that are "not singular or unidirectional" but constituted by "[s]urface currents, crosscurrents, undercurrents, and rip currents move in multiple directions, with changing velocities and intensities depending on season, temperature, and climate,"[166] so are coastal narratives. Understood in this way, Ye Si's interweaving of the seemingly unrelated accounts in "On Board" is a key narrative strategy deployed to explore the story's thematic concern. That is, unexpected encounters can result in new understandings of Hong Kong identities which are formed through the navigation and exchanges of diverse experiences. Apart from mock interrogation and anecdotal storytelling, which I have analyzed above, the story also provides accounts about merchandising, boat vocabularies, mythologies of the sea, as well as geographic and climatic knowledge of the local islands in Mirs Bay. In doing so, "On Board" represents a collective, although not always smooth, coastal identity in Hong Kong while showing that the group of people on the boat—an intimate yet open, risky yet rewarding space—inhabit diverse Chinese cultural backgrounds.

The boat, therefore, is an ephemeral time and space that brings strangers together on a journey, a place of chance encounter. In many ways, the narrative structure mirrors the boat voyage; the story begins as the boat departs offshore, peaks while at sea, and ends with the travellers disembarking and dispersing. Importantly, the conversation between Xiaomi and the boat owner, two strangers who would unlikely know each other in urban Hong Kong, is only made possible on board. For some Hong

[166] Mawani (2018, 20).

Kong artists and scholars, such an ephemerality is a productive and proactive way of thinking about Hong Kong identity. In *Keeping Rolling*, a 2020 documentary about her four-decades-long filmmaking life, Hong Kong auteur Ann Hui speaks about her understanding of what she phrases as "Hong Kong characteristics." Commenting on a scene in which a group of anti-Japanese Occupation rebels waiting for a boat at shore, Hui says that:

> Since the war, Hong Kong has become a place where many accidental encounters (*pingshui xiangfeng*) take place. It is quite common for people to help each other even though they never get to see one another afterwards. Maybe because we are all refugees, we form this kind of relationship. A kind of relationship in Hong Kong that has continued from a very early time to this day.[167]

By stating "we are all refugees," what Hui intends to describe is not a sociological truth but an overarching sentiment that affects every individuals in Hong Kong. Here, Hui offers an unorthodox interpretation of Hong Kong identity. The phrase "accidental encounters (*pingshui xiangfeng*)" is a Chinese idiom, meaning strangers forming temporary bonds by chance just like duckweeds floating next to one another on water. Originating from a farewell prose-essay in Tang dynasty, the phrase is followed by a clause that writes "we are all visitors from other lands."[168] While the original essay emphasizes a disappointment in unsettlement and non-belonging, the phrase "accidental encounters" evolves to express a more hopeful feeling towards the serendipity of gathering and dispersal. However, even though the usage of "accidental encounters" has been associated with more positive emotions, it primarily describes relationships that are only momentarily affecting in our lives. What, then, is radical about Hui's remark is that she explicitly contends the "accidental encounter" is a persistent event in Hong Kong, and hence the foundation for Hong Kong's migrant-based society.

Using this Chinese lyrical expression to draw on the fleeting but genuine relationship among strangers, Hui redirects us to think about the process of identification

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[167] Here, Ann Hui was speaking about the creative intentions behind her *Our Time Will Come* (2017), a war film about Hong Kong's resistance movement during the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong (December 1941–August 1945). Although the film's artistic value and political implication remain a controversial topic among critics, I find Hui's remark inspiring and relevant to my discussion of Hong Kong identity.

[168] See *Tengwang Ge Xu, Preface to a Farewell Feast Atop the Prince Teng's Pavillion*, by Wang Bo of Tang dynasty.

not based on the recognition of blood, language, or homeland, but a collective affect that is amplified through ephemerality. Notably, in the context of Sinophone Hong Kong, to practice such greater social intimacy via accidental encounters (*pingshui xiangfeng*) requires one to rework with the meaning and feeling attached to the classic Chinese lyricism. That is to say, literally and metaphorically, one needs to be willing to *modify* one's established identity and *exchange* part of it with the other. Adding to the conversation of ephemerality, Rey Chow argues that the new ground for alternative identification process also relies on the reconceptualization of our relationship to time and history. In her keynote speech entitled "On the Motif of the Chance Encounter in Hong Kong Literary Culture," Chow critiques the "fetish of mutual recognition" in traditional Chinese mournful lyricism and the neoliberal capitalist discourse of the present.[169] Chow takes issue with the common imagination that social alliance can only be possible for people who live in the same temporal world and therefore share an identical future. For example, popular classical tropes include that former lovers cannot recognize each other when there is a temporal discrepancy between the lived and the dead (e.g. Su Shi's "Dreaming of my Deceased Wife"), or that a couple subsumed to disparate political systems must struggle to recognize each other (e.g. *The Flower Princess*). In both tropes, a temporality of the more powerful (that of the living poet Su Shi in "Dreaming," and the new dynasty of Qing in *The Flower Princess*) rewrites or erases other futurist possibilities (an imaginative reunion between the poet and his deceased wife, and a legitimate marriage between the exiled Ming princess and her betrothed in the Qing Dynasty). In other words, Chow challenges the "fetish of mutual recognition" because such mode of recognition demands that all differences convert to a stable temporality of the powerful (be it patriarchal, normative heterosexual, or national), and hence inhibits shared yet pluralized futures. Taken together, Hui and Chow all point to the idea that futures can be shared but different, and that the sense of *non-belonging* in a migrant society can also lead to collective care for a place and its peoples. More precisely, it is possible to form a collective identity without an obsession about complete

[169] This is an unpublished presentation on the two-day conference *The Question of Locality: Hong Kong Literature and Culture*, taking place at Hong Kong University, May 30–31, 2019. In this talk, Chow traces the representation of (non)encounter in classic literature (e.g. Bai Juyi's "Song of the Pipa," Su Shi's "Dreaming of my Deceased Wife"), Naamyam and the Cantonese Opera (e.g. *Song of the Exile* and *The Flower Princess*), and contemporary popular film (e.g. Stanley Kwan's *Rouge*, Wong Kar-wai's *Chungking Express*, Ann Hui's *The Way We Are*) in Hong Kong.

control over the land one settles in, the water one travels on, and the historical relationship that one is born into.

Of course, “accidental encounters” do not always lead to heartwarming results. As “On Board” shows, they are filled with doubts and misunderstandings. But if one can stay with the troubling reactions to differences, like Xiaomi and the boat owner have done, there will be new discoveries about the self, others, and the social and natural worlds surrounding them. Concluding the reading of the story with the discussion of ephemerality, I intend not to reproduce the hegemonic discourses that dismiss Hong Kong as “borrowed place, borrowed time,” nor do I wish to romanticize temporariness as a utopian and universal foundation for subjectivity. Rather, as Ye Si’s story has shown, ephemerality is bound to the material and historical conditions of Hong Kong as a coastal port, an island/peninsula, and a Cold War border. Accidental encounters do not automatically produce cultural meanings or new relationships, unless we take a risk by negotiating differences and navigating imperial rules. In the next section, I turn to an understudied history of Cold War violence—the global Vietnam War and war migrants in Hong Kong. I further show the asymmetries of mobility on a global scale during the Cold War and the responses from Asian Pacific coastal subjects.

3.2.3. Cross-Ethnic Identification in “Tigerland/Bitterland”

Xi Xi’s short story “Tigerland/Bitterland” was written in February 1987, thirteen years since the first group of Vietnamese war migrants arrived in Hong Kong,[170] and five years since the open asylum centers were turned into closed detention camps guarded by prison wardens.[171] This was also a time when Western countries propagated the discourse of “compassionate fatigue”[172] and started to breach the 1979 Geneva agreement on the responsibility of refugee resettlement.”[173] Since 1980, fewer and fewer

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[170] In May 1975, 3743 Vietnamese people arrived in Hong Kong on board a Danish container ship of *Clara Maesk*. See Chan Kwok-bun (2010, 380).

[171] On 2 July 1982 a “humane deterrence” policy was implemented by the Hong Kong government whereby new arrivals are indefinitely detained, until resettlement overseas, in closed centres operated by the Correctional Services Department that routinely runs Hong Kong's many prisons. See Chan (2010).

[172] Madokoro traces Western countries’ increasing reluctance to receiving more war migrants from Indochina (2016, 195–97).

[173] In 1979 a U.N. Conference on Refugees and Displaced Persons in South-East Asia convened in Geneva. Sixty-five countries attended. According to this Geneva Conference, the eight Asian

war migrants from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos were resettled in the West as promised,[174] while the arrival of new refuge seekers continued to rise in the eight ports of first asylum in Asia, including Hong Kong.[175] As a result of the increasingly compacted space, reduced resources, and emotional stress, violence within the detention centers escalated into hunger strike, rape, suicide, group fight, and murder. At the same time, Hong Kong Chinese's attitude towards the refugee crisis took a negative turn due to the growing taxes on accommodation and food to support the war migrants from Southeast Asia;[176] more importantly, such "humanitarian" support stood in sharp contrast to the strict repatriation policy against mainland Chinese migrants, most of whom are immediate family of the Hong Kong residents.[177]

As a literary response, "Tigerland/Bitterland" takes five sections, each with a different narrative perspective, to depict the troubling experiences inside and outside the detention centers in Hong Kong. Contemporary critics, however, often interpret the story as a compassionate yet somewhat passive documentation of the inevitable tragedy of the Vietnamese war migrants. For example, Chan Chi-tak comments that "Starting with the barbed wire fence, 'Tigerland/Bitterland' writes about the reality of the detention center and the political murkiness" (2013, 119–20). Similarly, Matthew Cheng Ching-hang notes that "The author is obviously sympathetic to the boat people in the Tigerland Detention Center. … She observes and responds to the plight of the marginalized communities with great care" (41). While I agree that the story takes an empathetic tone, I cannot help noticing that the analyses by Chan and Cheng indicate a sense of

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nations and territories were designated as ports of first asylum. They were Thailand, Bataan, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Japan, Macao, and Hong Kong. For the legal history and the obligation of the first asylum, see Chan and Loveridge (1987); and Barcher (1991). For more critical analysis on the 1979 Geneva Conference, see Laura Madokoro (2016, 188). For Hong Kong's role before the Geneva Conference, see Chan Kwok-bun who argues that "As far back as 1975, Hong Kong was designated a country of first asylum (and of resettlement) through her political relationship with Britain" (1990, 96).

[174] Madokoro (2016, 196–97).

[175] In the case of Hong Kong, The resettlement number dropped from 37,468 people in 1979 to 2,875 people in 1988. During the same time, the arrival numbers to Hong Kong continued to increase. In 1988, there were 18,449 new asylum seekers arrived in Hong Kong, the second highest number since 1979, which saw 68,748 Vietnamese migrants.

[176] Chan Kwok-bun (2010, 383–84).

[177] See Tong (2021) and the Introduction chapter of this dissertation.

detachment, a safe position occupied by a Hong Kong Chinese observer and rescuer, precisely the kind of narrative that the story takes issue with.

In contrast to the existing literary analysis, I argue that the story compels us to rethink the relationship between Vietnamese war migrants and Hong Kong Chinese residents not as the rescued and the rescuer. By making an overarching analogy between the ethnically diverse migrants in Hong Kong and the genus-wise ambiguous Jaguar in the zoo, the story critiques the amplified global asymmetry of mobility and the constructed conflicts among Asian subjects, both phenomena induced by imperial reordering of powers. The story shows that Vietnamese and Chinese have been *coastal neighbours* who share a common history but were directed towards different paths—victims and survivors of communism. Foregrounding the alternative kinship between the two ethnic groups is then to imagine an alternative history beyond the Cold War.

The story's original Chinese title, "Fu Tei" (two characters respectively meaning "tiger" and "land"), is named after a refugee detention center known in English as the Bowring Camp (1985–1990s) located in Tuen Mun District, a western coast region of Hong Kong's New Territories.[178] The camp was built next to the Fu Tei Village, home to the Hakka Chinese who are a historically migratory people from north China and settled along the southern shoreline.[179] In Cantonese, the character of "tiger" shares the same pronunciation with the word "bitter" (*fu*²). During the Vietnamese refugee crisis in Hong Kong, local protestors juxtaposed the phrases "tigerland" with "bitterland" to call attention to the mistreatment of Vietnamese war migrants in detention centers.[180] Throughout the story, the author also explicitly evokes the homophonic phrases to give them political

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[178] Bowring Camp is named after Sir John Bowring, who was the fourth Governor of Hong Kong (1854–1859). Initially a military garrison built after the war, Bowring Camp was turned into a refugee center for the Vietnamese war migrants in 1985, alongside other refugee centers such as Kai Tak Camp in Kowloon Bay, Yan Hei Camp in Sham Shui Po, and later the Whitehead Center in Sha Tin. For a detailed military history, see "The Defence of Hong Kong During the Early Stages of the Cold War, 1945–1960" in *Eastern Fortress: A Military History of Hong Kong* (235–260).

[179] Aidi Shushu (2014) provides historical photographs and traces a brief history of Fu Tei Village. For a critical analysis of the Hakka people, see the edited volume *Guest People: Hakka Identity in China and Abroad* (2006).

[180] Aidi Shushu (2014) includes an undated photo in which local protestors explicitly juxtapose "tigerland" and "bitterland" on their banner.

meanings. With the layered meaning of the title, we can now start unpacking the story, which begins with a direct introduction to the Fu Tei (Tigerland) Camp:

> On the barbed wire fence, there hangs a wooden sign, black ink on a white background. It reads: Tigerland Detention Center. Only standing on one side of the fence allows one to see the words on the wooden sign. For people living on the other side of the fence, even if they see it, they wouldn't recognize the Chinese characters; however, their understanding of the detention center is far more profound than the people who can read. (141)

As the opening paragraph of the story's first section, this passage sets up two kinds of space divided by the fence of the detention centre. One is occupied by the Hong Kong Chinese residents, free of mobility restrictions (at least in most cases), whereas the other the confined refugees. This dividing sense of space is then easily extended to the broader imagination of Hong Kong and Vietnam in the early 1980s: the former marked by peace and prosperity, while the latter caught in war and poverty. However, the sense of utter separation between the two spaces is soon complicated by the detailing of the detainee lives, filled with struggles, of course, but also with aspirations. Following the opening passage, the story zooms into the inner side of the barbed wires, depicting outdoor activities in a sunny winter day: a sunbather, a woman washing clothes, a mother cutting her child's hair (141–42). These are people with limited resources but who nonetheless maximize joy in their everyday life. Among them is the protagonist in the first section, Ah-Yong. Born into continuous wars, surviving fifty days on the sea, and already having spent four years in the Tigerland Camp witnessing bloodshed, Ah-Yong is a sixteen-year-old boy who accidentally came to Hong Kong as a handyman on a boat from a fishing port in north Vietnam. From Ah-Yong's focal point, Hong Kong is more of a "unfamiliar city" (142) than a "heavenly haven" (145). His hometown, on the contrary, despite the harsh living conditions, is "a good place" where "people fish, farm, and do small business" (142). Unlike Sister Nguyen who is going to reunite with her relatives in the U.S. next week, or Uncle Nian whose eleven family members have been waiting together for resettlement in the center, or Little Zi who desired and managed to return to Vietnam, Ah-Yong's migratory path is less calculated and his hopes for future less clear. Offering the varying experiences within the detention center, the first narration reveals that the detainees' prospect is as varied as the atrocity they face. In doing so, the first section of the story breaks the imaginary wall of seeing the Vietnamese war migrants as utterly othered than the rest of the fellow Chinese migrants in the port city of Hong Kong.

In fact, the fifth and final section of the story further demonstrates that the migrant lives within and beyond the detention centers inform each other in dynamic and intimate ways. The final section is narrated by a precarious migrant labourer, who came from mainland China and had been working as a refugee center guard since 1979. In a style that combines a monologue (using first person narration) and an imagined dialogue (using second person narration), the guard ("I") performs a conversation with another Chinese co-worker Aunt Lian ("you"). Having the narrator address to an absent interlocutor, an imagined "you," the text effectively invites the Sinophone readers to take the position of Aunt Lian and to have an earnest dialogue about the Vietnamese migrants. The guard's narration contains complaints and prejudice, but its radicality lies in the fact that he always speaks as a fellow migratory subject. By inviting the readers to engage with the guard's monologue, the narrative shows that the life trajectory of the Hong Kong Chinese is always entangled with the intimate other. The story closes with a powerful line that resonates with the story's title: as long as borders serve as a dividing tool, "wherever we are, we stand in a small piece of bitter land" (159).

Taken together, the first and final narration of the story challenge the normative imagination of the Vietnamese war migrants and their relationship with Hong Kong Chinese. I suggest that the "profound" understanding of the Tigerland Camp, as proposed in the story's opening paragraph, points to a common condition, not merely an exclusive truth to a minority group, in the migrant society of Hong Kong. If the third-person narration of Ah-Yong's story gently prepares the reader to rethink boundaries of space and identity, then the final section takes a more explicit step by forcing the Sinophone readers in Hong Kong to exit the bird's eye view and embody a perspective from the ground, which is a contested space but nevertheless *shared* with the Vietnamese migrants. In many senses, the migratory and psychological journeys of Ah-Yong and the Vietnamese "boat people" are Cold War equivalents to that of the Hakka settlers in Fu Tei Village, the Teochew boat owner from "On Board," the overseas Hong Kong sailors in *My City*, or many other coastal Chinese fishing communities and merchants who travel back and forth between southern China and Southeast Asia.

In "Buried History and Transpacific Pedagogy: Teaching the Vietnamese Boat People's Hong Kong Passage," Y-Dang Troeung reminds us that tracing and reframing the "Sino-Vietnamese cultural connections in the context of empire" can be a radical moment in the process of cross-racial and cross-ethnic identification (244). Teaching a

Vietnamese American autobiographical text in Hong Kong, Troeung references a well-known Chinese myth (the legend of Mong Fu Shek) to analyze a Vietnamese folklore (the story of Hon Vong Phu) used in Andrew Lam's "The Stories They Carried." To further assist Hong Kong students to adopt a cross-cultural perspective, Troeung provides a brief history of the "boat people" prior to the Cold War. She writes that:

> For most Hong Kong citizens, the term "Boat People" refers to the Tanka people, known as "on-water people" or "Nam Hoi Yan" in China, who first settled in the Yau Ma Tei area of Hong Kong beginning in 1916. Traditionally living on junks in coastal parts of Guangdong, Guangxi, Fujian, Hainan, and Zhejiang provinces, a small number of Tanka people also live in Northern Vietnam, the reason the term "Boat Person" in Vietnamese originally referred to this ethnic group from China. (245)

In Troeung's Hong Kong classroom, the introduction to this historical perspective further demonstrates that "typical depictions of the Boat People as desperate, pitiable refugees ignore a rich two-thousand-year-old Vietnamese culture" (244). On top of this point, I would like to pivot the historical context towards this chapter's concern about coastal identities, by dwelling on the slippage existed in between the two understandings of the "boat people." In the aftermath of America's Vietnam War, the term "boat people" is synonymous with "Vietnamese refugees" in the Anglophone world. With Western press photographs featuring congested floating fishing yachts at sea, as well as memoir narratives from model refugees, the image of travelling by boat has been internationally associated with starvation, drowning, unimaginable atrocities, and, ultimately, inhumaneness. In the context of the Cold War, British-U.S. controlled Asian societies must dis-identify with the Vietnamese boat people, under the name of rescue or otherwise, in order to defend the frontier of the "free world." The boat people, therefore, is reinvented by the Cold War as an isolated mass who has no history or future. However, as Troeung has pointed out, the "boat people" has a different life in various Asian languages and cultures. In an anthropological research published prior to the global Vietnamese refugee crises, E.N. Anderson argues that the boat people of South China, also known as Tanka people in Cantonese, is a group coming from both land-based and water-oriented backgrounds and "moving to the sea in a process of economic and ecological adaptation" (248), a group of "true boat-based hunters, gathers and other workers of the sea" (255). In other words, Tanka culture is dynamic, diverse, and migratory—characteristics shared among coastal communities of South China and Vietnam. My point here is not to use the history of Tanka to argue about the ethnological

makeup of Chinese or Vietnamese. Rather, rereading the history of movements within a wider and longer coastal culture, I suggest that the peoples travelling by boat, with their linguistic differences and cultural similarities, have always been *neighbours* (if not relatives) on waters—a relationship that challenge the Cold War formation of national and ethnic identity.

Reframing the "boat people" as coastal neighbours allows a new reading of "Tigerland/Bitterland." I argue that the representation of the jaguar in the story's middle narration (section II to IV) calls for cross-ethnic identification, which could transform into solidarity in face of entangled imperial violence. Sandwiched in between the narrations of Ah-Yong and the guard, the story's representation of the jaguar in a zoo is easily read as a humanitarian and universal comment on the lack of freedom. This reading, however, pre-determines an allegorical relationship between the trapped animal and the detained Vietnamese war migrants, further distancing the Chinese-language readers away from the characters in the story by dehumanizing the latter.[181] Alongside the dominate reading, I suggest that the story depicts the displaced jaguar within an alternative framework that reimagines kinship via *unfamiliarity*. The second narration begins with a careful description of the foreign features of the jaguar (misnamed as the American Tiger) in comparison to the more familiar Asian Tiger. It writes:

> There are black spots all over your yellow body, smaller on your head and larger on your back. Since you barely resemble the traditional striped Asian Tiger, zoo-goers with some distance from the cage often shout at you: "A leopard!" It is not until they get closer to the cage and see the mushroom-like wooden sign propped up on the grass that they marvel, "Oh, it's an American Tiger!"
>
> American Tiger. But there are technically no "tigers" in the Americas. The rosettes on the leopard are all solid dots, but the rosettes on your back are hollow circles with black dots inside. In fact, as with most Asian tigers, the end of your tail is also striped. If you were to live in the forest, you can dangle this tail down the heart of the river to fish, which is something your clan often does. But you've never fished with your tail, you've never seen a river or a fish. (146–47)

[181] I should mention that Chan Chi-tak (2013) offers a more sophisticated reading of the relationship between the history of South China Tiger and Hong Kong identity by referencing Ye Lingfeng's *A Journal of the Native Things in Hong Kong* (1958). However, he separates this understanding entirely from the interpretation of the short story.

In an unexpected way, it aligns the jaguar with the physically more dissimilar Asian Tiger, rather than the more similar leopard. Dispelling the common focus on the physical likeness in their coats between the jaguar and the leopard, the narrator carefully lists their differences. In contrast, the narrator draws affinity between the jaguar, whose "ancestors were nomads along the Amazon Basin" in South America, and the physically dissimilar Asian Tiger (147). Although the two species in the second pair seem to share more differences than similarities (in terms of appearance and histories), the narrator speaks of them as subjects that could have become co-dwellers given a chance to explore the environment together. Given the socio-historical and narrative context of the story, such an alternative imagination of identification can be well extended to the co-relationship between the Vietnamese and the Chinese.

Through various narrative innovations, as analyzed above, "Tigerland/Bitterland" (1987) communicates a radical message during a time when hostility against the Vietnamese war migrants was rising among Hong Kong Chinese. That is, the story situates the two peoples as coastal subjects adjacent to each other in the framework of the global Vietnam War. With a few exceptions, such as Ann Hui's *Boy from Vietnam* (1978) which I will briefly discuss in the concluding section, the story of "Tigerland/Bitterland" differs from most cultural representations of the Vietnamese refugee crisis that are produced during the same period. For example, Tao Ran's short stories "People of the Sea" (1984) and "After the Landing" (1989) reinforce the stereotypes of war migrants as pitiable subjects who are in dire need of rescue. On the other side of the coin, Evans Chan's feature film *To Liv(e)* (1992) defends, albeit justifiably, Hong Kong Chinese as ethical rescuers who themselves face political crisis caused by British colonialism and Chinese authoritarianism. In contrast, "Tigerland/Bitterland" moves away from the rescue discourse all together. The story questions "refugee" as an identity category and calls for a re-imagination of coastal relationship beyond the Cold War narrative.

Read together with critical refugee studies regarding the global Vietnam War, "Tigerland/Bitterland" and other radical cultural texts contribute two points to the existing scholarship. First, the story exposes the challenges of decolonization by illuminating Hong Kong's liminal position in the Cold War history. Notably, despite being a favourite Rest and Recreation center during the Vietnam War and a controversial first asylum for

the Vietnamese refugees,[182] Hong Kong's position is rarely discussed in the above-mentioned critical lens. Because of the British colonial presence during this time, Hong Kong seems more "at peace" with the American military presence than other Asian regions where anti-colonial and anti-imperial movements had taken more explicit forms. However, as "Tigerland/Bitterland" has shown, Hong Kong's quietness reveals less about the city's political apathy than the difficulty of finding the suitable language to articulate the strange conflicts that were only introduced to the coastal port after the Cold War. This leads to my second point which is concerned about the coastal relationship prior to the concepts of refugees and illegal migrants. The "refugeeing process," to borrow Madokoro's term, shapes not only the subject-formation of the war migrants, but *all* coastal subjects who used to, or could potentially, live in cultures built on laborious, dangerous yet flexible and mutual movements. Although the five narratives in "Tigerland/Bitterland" do not explicitly evoke such a history, it nevertheless re-orients our imagination towards it and an alternative future that it would have brought forward.

3.3. De-Cold War Representations of Islands and Mainlands

From the quintessential local expressions emerged through transoceanic imagination in *My City* to the coastal narrative of accidental encounters in "On Board," to the cross-ethnic identification with people on water in "Tigerland/Bitterland," the Sinophone literary writings I have analyzed in this chapter reveal an archipelagic understanding of Hong Kong coastal identities. In contrast to Pan Guoling's interpretation that a "consistent" local culture was only made possible when the "permanent population" outnumbered the "migratory population" (57), as discussed in the introductory section of this chapter, these stories show that what is understood as local Hong Kong culture today results from a dynamic process of negotiating differences among the Cantonese, Teochew, Hakka, Tanka, peoples in the Chinese mainland, Southeast Asia, and many more coastal nomads and settlers. The diverse peoples are related not necessarily by blood or language and least of all by nationality, but through their shared dependence on the rich resources and opportunities offered by rivers, lakes, and oceans. Together, the various coastal experiences of the literary characters—varying from sightseeing to sailing, merchandising, and fishing, from escaping wars and

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[182] For historical studies of Hong Kong as a R&R center, see Peter E. Hamilton (2014); Chi-kwan Mark (2010).

persecutions to accidental crossings—challenge the Cold War borders by articulating archipelagic conceptualization of social intimacy in a broader sense. In other words, an archipelagic reading of the coastal stories helps us understand how Hong Kong people have been establishing a floating common collective without an obsession about blood kinship, language similarity, homogenous settlement experience, or mono-ethnic and national identity.

In other cultural realms, Hong Kong artists have also produced coastal representations that resist the Cold War norms of division and surveillance. Ann Hui's *Boy from Vietnam* (1978), a standalone episode in the RTHK television series *Below the Lion Rock* which is widely considered as the cultural cornerstone of the establishment of Hong Kong's local awareness, offers a good example.[183] Literally meaning "the guest (*laike*)" in its original Chinese title, *Boy from Vietnam* depicts the cultural-historical connection between Hong Kong and Vietnam by featuring three individuals with different migratory routes. The main protagonist Ah-Wen flees Vietnam by boat, leaving his remaining family in Saigon/Ho Chi Minh City. Against the stereotypical imagination in the West, Ah-Wen does not want to resettle in the U.S. because he resents American army for his sister's death back at home and for being forced to defend South Vietnam as a teenager-conscript. Through Ah-Wen's perspective, the episode introduces the second protagonist Chen Zhong, a Chinese war deserter of the Vietnam War and illegal immigrant in Hong Kong. Sent by Mao's government to fight for North Vietnam during the war, Chen Zhong now makes counterfeit paintings in Hong Kong. The friendship between him and Ah-Wen rewrites their forced enemy relation during the war. The third protagonist You Qingnian Johnny is Ah-Wen's elder cousin who has come to Hong Kong as a tourist prior to the "Fall of Saigon." Accidentally staying in Hong Kong and working as a sex worker for years, Cousin Johnny continues to orchestrate his Chinese Vietnamese heritages to navigate different social spaces, even when his cross-cultural identity is not recognized by the Cold War authorities, such as the colonial Immigration Officers. Died of sexual abuse by one of his male clients and leaving his resettlement dream unaccomplished, Cousin Johnny nevertheless passes his survival skills to Ah-Wen. On top of the plot lines that speak about acquired kinship and unexpected alliance, the episode further challenges the audience's Chinese-centred expectation by creating a

[183] John Wong (2017).

bilingual social environment in which multiple characters switch smoothly between speaking Cantonese and Vietnamese languages. Cousin Johnny, in particular, breaks down the binary of the native and the foreign. Here, I would like to dwell on the broader meaning behind the idea of “cousin,” a member in the extended family. Johnny’s affinity to both Cantonese and Vietnamese worlds makes him not only the biological cousin of Ah-Wen, but a coastal kin to the Hong Kong Chinese. During centuries of back-and-forth migration based on folk commerce, tribute system trading, and European colonial business, populations connecting south China and Southeast Asia emerge as early as in the sixteenth century.[184] Thus, what the colonial Immigration Officer calls perjury is in fact “situational” ethnic self-identification for many Chinese Vietnamese, also known as *Hoa* people who are “highly acculturated” with the local society or the “offspring of intermarriage” between the Chinese and the Vietnamese (Tan 2004, 60). Understanding kinship in this way, I suggest that the episode reveals a coastal “ethics of co-presence,” to borrow Chih-ming Wang’s analysis of Asian Americans and Asians, where the three individuals “may share a common identity and even history, but are directed to different destinies” (2019, 248).

Figure 6. Still from Ann Hui’s *Boy from Vietnam.*
In this scene, Cousin Johnny is teaching Ah-Wen to say “thank you” in Cantonese.

Another example of de-Cold War representations are seen in the ink and watercolor paintings of Luis Chan (Chen Fushan, 1905–1995). Born in Panama and

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[184] For issues relating to ethnic Chinese in Vietnam has a long socio-historical genealogy, see Yuk-wah Chan (2011); Gareth Porter (1980); and Odd Arne Westad and Sophie Quinn-Judge (2006).

moved to Hong Kong with his family in 1910, Luis Chan is a prolific and phenomenal Hong Kong artist and critic, whose later work produced in the 1970s "offers a radical departure from [a colonial mentality in his earlier work]" and demonstrates what I consider as a de-Cold War coastal awareness (Clarke 1997, 400). During this period, Chan develops an idiosyncratic idiom that combines British landscape models, Western modernism, and Chinese classic ink painting to represent the specificities of "island and sea topography of Hong Kong" (Clarke 1997, 403). David Clarke provides a succinct overview:

> Faces may appear in rocks (*Peach Garden*, 1977), or islands metamorphose into birds (*Duck and Rooster Island*, 1980). We may be taken underwater to visit a rich and strange world of tropical fish (a recurrent subject for Chan) but then encounter a crowd of human faces as if trapped behind bars along a fish's side (*Seahorse Meeting a Fish*, 1978). (403)

We see these characteristics manifest in the two paintings below. Clarke argues that Chan's innovative experiment with the Western and Chinese models is the process of "decoloniz[ing] his psyche" (406). Adding to Clarke's statement about artistic style, I suggest that Chan's depiction of landscape, sea creatures, and ocean lives shows a coastal imagination of mutual relationships among peoples from different cultures as well as between human and non-human. The human figures are racially ambiguous but demonstrate a diversity of style through clothing, facial expressions, and demeanours. Produced respectively in 1978 and 1979, *Seascape* and *Flying Fish* articulate the shifting shape and the coming together of differences in a time when the migrants from mainland China and Vietnam continued to arrive in Hong Kong. Moreover, the two paintings portray a spatial reordering in which enormous groupers appear on top of the human-figured mountains and seabed sand, while still being involved in human activities. Much like Epeli Hua'ofa's theorization of Oceania island culture, Hong Kong's coastal imagination of the port city also extends upwards to the sky and dives deep into the water. Hence, different from how the colonial government burns the mountains to turn shallow water harbours into land (statistics in 2018 shows that since the colonial seizure of Hong Kong in 1841, over 70 square kilometres of land have been created through reclamation, constituting 6% of the total area and 25% of its developed land),[185] how the nation-states exploit the sea for natural resources (such as the territorial dispute

[185] Glaser, Haberzettl, and Walsh (1991, 368–69); and Ng (2020).

of Diaoyutai islands among China, Taiwan, and Japan for the submarine oil mines),[186] and how the U.S. uses the Pacific Ocean as an "empty" space for military experiment,[187] Chan's coastal imagination illustrate that the ocean lives depend on the well-being and ecological variety of the sea.

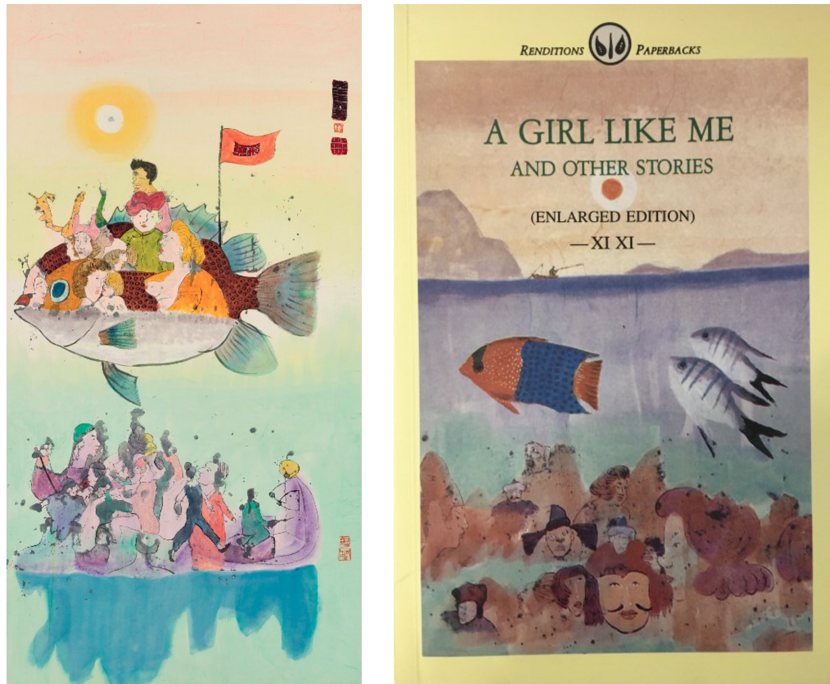

Figure 7. Left, Luis Chan's Flying Fish (1979). Courtesy of Hanart TZ Gallery. Right, details of Luis Chan's Seascape (1978) on the book cover. Courtesy of Hanart TZ Gallery.

Aware of the disciplinary differences of reading literature, television, and fine arts, I still take the risk to include Ann Hui's standalone episode and two modern paintings of Luis Chan in order to propose a broader understanding of the coastal culture of Hong Kong in a de-Cold War lens. As this chapter suggests, Hong Kong is not just a Cold War border and a frontier of the "free" world; the coastal city is also constituted of more than 260 outlying islands and connected with many other islands and mainlands via the Pacific Ocean.[188]

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[186] Wang Chih-Ming (2021).

[187] Shu, Heim, and Johnson (2019).

[188] According to the "Hong Kong Geographic Data," "excluding Hong Kong Island and Lantau Island, there are a total of 261 islands with area of 500 square metres or over."

Coastal identity, therefore, is a style of imagining the self via movements, ephemerality, and unsettlement, "anchored" in both cultural and material histories. The idea of coastal identity finds strong resonance with Ackbar Abbas's notion of "a culture of disappearance" (1997, 7). Abbas outlines three aspects of disappearance: "reverse hallucination" (as in the case of interpreting the changing Hong Kong with pre-determined criteria),[189] "replacement and substitution" (such as the sovereignty transfer of Hong Kong between Japanese military regime, British colonialism, and the Chinese national government in the twentieth century), and finally "techniques of disappearance that respond to … a space of disappearance" (8). While the first two aspects describe social problems in a space of disappearance, the last one indicates a proactive response to it. For Abbas, "it is a question of working with disappearance and taking it elsewhere, of using disappearance to deal with disappearance" (8). He argues that a "culture of disappearance" has radical and generative potential because

> disappearance is not only a threat—it is also an opportunity. [… a decolonial subject] must learn how to survive a culture of disappearance by adopting strategies of disappearance as its own, by giving disappearance itself a different inflection. (14–15)

As the rest of his book shows, the kind of Hong Kong subjectivity that Abbas envisions would need to derive from a longer cultural tradition that strives to inflect, transform, and represent the space marked by elusiveness, speed, and multifarious. However, today's interpretation of disappearance is largely associated with dystopia, loss, lack, "non-appearance" (7), and "effacement" (8)—images and metaphors that are not accurate or adequate to depict Hong Kong culture, as Abbas explicitly warns us. Narratives about Hong Kong such as "borrowed place, borrowed time,"[190] "a disappearing city,"[191] and "a dying city,"[192] are all popular ways to propagate either self-pitying nihilism or Western

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189 Inspired by Freud's "negative hallucination," Abbas defines "reverse hallucination" as "not seeing what is there" (25). Abbas uses the New Wave Cinema in Hong Kong as an example to explicate this point.

190 First used as the title of a 1968 non-fictional book by Richard Joseph Hughes, a British expat journalist in Hong Kong, the phrase is one of the most popular expression to describe Hong Kong's ephemerality.

191 See Jeffrey Wasserstrom's opening chapter "Disappearance" of *Vigil: Hong Kong on the Brink*. For Wasserstrom, disappearance also denotes political censorship, and illegal and unethical arrest conducted by the Beijing government in the recent decade.

192 In a chapter entitled "Posed Between Two Times" in Iam-chong Ip' *Hong Kong's New Identity Politics: Longing for the Local in the Shadow of China*, the author analyzes dying as a metaphor in Hong Kong: 98–116.

humanitarian sympathy. To me, such a neglect and misunderstanding of the creative potentials in the culture of disappearance partially results from the fact that the vocabularies that Abbas is conditioned to use fail to make a material connection with the landscape of Hong Kong. This is why I find it useful to understand the “culture of disappearance” in archipelagic terms.

Coda.

Race and the Cold War: Hong Kong Writings from Paris

Exploring de-Cold War relationships represented in Hong Kong literature, the previous chapters have critiqued how Cold War Hong Kong is often imagined as a lucky dodger of communism (Chapter 1), an exceptionally liberal space even within the "free" world (Chapter 2), and a Western-like saviour of the escapees from communist regimes (Chapter 3). These Sinophone stories that I have studied complicate the dominant Cold War discourse of Hong Kong by representing ideological, linguistic, and ethnic differences as well as the corresponding solidarities within a diverse but nonetheless Chinese-dominant community. What remains absent in my discussion is the analysis of the question of race in Cold War Hong Kong. For example, although the South Asian community has a strong presence in Hong Kong's everyday culture,[193] during the seventies there was little literary representation of their lives or their cross-racial interactions with Hong Kong Chinese.[194] Such willful ignorance needs to be interrogated because it still encourages a style of recognizing difference based on familiarity, facilitating the mechanism of assimilation. Put differently, it propagates an idea that ideological and linguistic variance among Chinese subjects is more acceptable only because it is more convertible than differences in skin color. Considering the question of race and racial difference, therefore, becomes integral to the telling of a de-Cold War story about Hong Kong.

The coda responds to this limitation by turning to two Paris-based Sinophone authors—Peng Cao (1946–) and Lv Qi Shi (1947–)—who write about Hong Kong and Paris as two archipelagic sites. Though mostly written in France, their literary works were published in Hong Kong and Taiwan, revealing to Sinophone readers the

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[193] The European imperial expansion brought to Hong Kong not only white expatriates but also many sailors, merchants, and soldiers of South Asian descent. See O'Connor, *Islam in Hong Kong: Muslims and Everyday Life in China's World City* (2012); Nguyet and Leung, *Understanding South Asian minorities in Hong Kong* (2014).

[194] In Timothy Mo's Anglophone novel *The Monkey King* (1978), Sikh guards and merchants are frequently mentioned as minor characters through the eyes of the mixed Chinese-Portugese protagonist.

importance of thinking through race in Hong Kong and Asia against the backdrop of the global Cold War. Born and raised in Hong Kong before moving to Paris in the early 1970s for post-secondary education, the two close friends Peng Cao (penname of Feng Shuyan) and Lv Qi Shi (penname of Chan Chung-Hing) are both influential female writers in Hong Kong literature. Peng Cao's "Shisanpo de huanghun" (Grandma Thirteen's twilight, 1975) and Lv Qi Shi's "Jiebian" (By the street, 1979) are one of the early attempts of representing Cantonese colloquial expressions in fictional literary writing. In addition to publishing more than ten single-authored books since 1979,[195] Peng Cao is regularly seen in literary magazines[196] and anthologies of Hong Kong short stories.[197] Similarly, Lv Qi Shi is an author of eight books (1979–2015), a frequent contributor to multiple literary journals, and a co-editor to a women's magazine *Beyond the Ivory Tower* (1975–1978). Together with their fellow writers who traveled between Hong Kong and Paris in the long seventies,[198] Peng Cao and Lv Qi Shi reveal a genealogy of Hong Kong literature in Europe during the Cold War. The fact that Paris, center of a previous European imperial power, became a hub for working class Hong Kong writers raises new questions about the reconfiguration of imperialism and global raciality in the Cold War.

Among their literary works of diverse topics, some of the most intriguing literary writings of Peng Cao and Lv Qi Shi represent Paris through the eyes of migrant students, illegal workers, diasporic artists, and travellers. In these literary representations, the Hong Kong Chinese protagonists and narrators live and work with migrant laborers from Southern Europe and African countries. In other words, Paris provided a space for the Hong Kong diasporas to renew their perceptions of racial, ethnic, and national differences—a space where the Chinese was one among many

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[195] They include five short story collections (1979; 1988; 1993; 2000; 2002), five prose collections (1980; 1986; 1987; 1990; 2014), one fiction (1997), two feature film scripts (1983; 1984) and two translations (1975; 1987).

[196] The literary magazines include *The Big Thumb*, *The Chinese Student Weekly*, and *Hong Kong Literature*.

[197] The Chinese language anthologies include *Selected Short Stories from the Big Thumb Magazine* (1978), *Family of Fictions* (1987), *Selection of Hong Kong Short Stories: 1970s* (1998). A number of her short stories are translated into English; see *Contemporary Women Writers: Hong Kong and Taiwan* (1990) and the translation magazine *Renditions.*

[198] See Shu Hong-sing (Shu Xiangcheng)'s novel *Two Shores of Paris* (1970); Cheung King-hung's poetry collection *Cold Tea on the Table* (1979); as well as Li Cuihua's multiple collections of short stories and prose, including *No Room No Home* (1997).

other minority groups. For example, Peng Cao's short story "Heiren Aujia" (Aoga the Black Man, 1973) tells two fleeting moments of cross-racial care between Aoga and an unnamed Asian woman in Paris, both of whose nationalities are intentionally kept ambiguous. Aoga is a probationary ticket checker and the Asian woman is likely an international student who works part-time as a baby-sitter for white French families. The two strangers encounter each other twice in the story. The first time is when the Asian woman kindly alerted Aoga about the puddle of water on the bench that he was about to sit on, and the second time was when Aoga let go of the same Asian woman (whom by then had forgotten about their initial encounter) knowing that she did not have a valid train ticket. Representing in detail the complex inner thoughts of Aoga during the two fleeting moments, the story critiques racial stereotypes: black men as sexual harassers and Asian women as timid individuals. Despite their visible racial differences, the two strangers are both *yixiangren*—"peoples from other lands"—struggling to make a living as racialized subjects while building social intimacy in the white-dominant society of Paris (71). Stylistically, as a Sinophone story told in third-person narration from the perspective of Aoga, the text also challenges the idea that a Chinese text or reader cannot inhabit a Black viewpoint. Instead of portraying Aoga as a sympathetic Other, the story represents his subjectivity by depicting Aoga's gentle love for his wife and children, his self-reflexive thoughts about racism against Black, Arabic, and Asian peoples in Paris, and his yearn for wider intimacy beyond racial and heterosexual norms. Hence, the Sinophone textual voice is established through the narrative voice of the black protagonist. In doing so, the story forms an alternative identification process, a cross-racial and anti-racist solidarity. In a similar narrative manner, Lv Qi Shi's "Simba" (1980), "Couscous" (1981), and "Dream of the Stone" (1994) tell stories of a migrant in France, from respective perspectives of an African young man, an Algerian boy, and a Cambodian woman in the Chinese language. Although these texts do not directly address the complexity of Hong Kong's multi-racial society (including the Chinese-centric racist attitudes towards other visibly different communities), when circulated in Hong Kong among Sinophone readers, they provide a rare opportunity for the Hong Kong Chinese to imagine what an alternative cross-racial relationship could look like.

In return, the experiences of encountering differences gained in Paris enabled a chance to imagine Hong Kong within the archipelago of racialized Cold War migrants. Many literary stories show that for non-white individuals in the "free" world, their distance

away from communism could not be translated into a pass for carefree life in the white Western world. This experience inspires Hong Kong writers in Paris to reimagine Hong Kong people's relationship with those of Japan (Peng Cao's "That House in Tokyo," 1985) and Cambodia (Lv Qi Shi's "Smile of the Stone," 1970) not as the supposed enemy or the othered stranger, but as kin. The conceptual rediscovery of the wider kinship, an intimate network that has already been there, provides new vintage points to critique the complicity between racism and the Cold War. Peng Cao's "My Home in Hong Kong" (1985) is a great example. Set in 1983, a year during the Sino-British Negotiation of Hong Kong's sovereignty, the story foregrounds the wish to *return* to Hong Kong from Paris, contrasting the dominant desire of leaving Hong Kong for Western countries, a desire induced by the fear for communism. The story is narrated from two imbricating third-person perspectives: He Shuxin (a young Chinese woman from Hong Kong who has been an international student and illegal worker in Paris for six years), and He Xinmin (Shuxin's elder brother who works as a school teacher in Hong Kong). In this way, the story represents two presences of Hong Kong and Paris, revealing how the Cold War simultaneously imposes new violence to peoples of Asia and Asian Europe.

Like other Asian migrants in Western countries, Shuxin finds racialization an everyday experience in Cold War Paris. The narrative begins with two incidents in which the French authorities—the post office staff and visa officers—refuse to acknowledge Shuxin's Hong Kong identity in the way that she claims it. In both cases, Hong Kong is catalogued as a subordinate city not to the PRC, but to a rather random Asian nation-state. For example, when Shuxin goes to the Immigration Office for a mistake on the information about her birth place. The story depicts the interaction in the following way:

> "Hong Kong? Where is Hong Kong?"
>
> … In her hand, Shuxin was holding the "Renewal of Residence Permit" that she had painstakingly applied for. On the permit, her place of birth was listed as "Hong Kong, Vietnam." Shuxin asked to have the error corrected.
>
> The two female visa officers looked at each other, confused. If Hong Kong is not in Vietnam, then where should it be? …
>
> Shuxin responded: Hong Kong is just Hong Kong! She showed them her British passport issued in Hong Kong, saying that "If it must belong to a country, count it as British. Hong Kong is still a British colony …"
>
> The older officer examined Shuxin's passport suspiciously, "But we can't say 'Hong Kong, the UK' …" Pausing to speak, and suddenly her eyes lit

> up "Ah, I know! Hong Kong is in Singapore?" Full of hope, waiting for Shuxin to nod in favor. (181–82)

For the French (and presumably white) visa officers, although Hong Kong, Vietnam, Singapore, and other Asian regions are interchangeable, the British colony of Hong Kong in Asia cannot be associated with the white Great Britain. The story's representation of incidents like this must be read in the junction of colonialism, racism, and the global Cold War. Given that the story is set in 1983 (the peak of the Sino-British Negotiation about Hong Kong's sovereignty after the colonial treaty expires in 1997) and therefore a heightened time of fear for communism, for the Europeans not recognizing Hong Kong as a British colony reveals a Cold War irony. That is, while the Cold War politics used the binary of communism and anti-communism to divide peoples within Asia, the diverse Asian subjects in Europe are generalized as one and the same.

Consequently, the six years spent in Paris compel Shuxin to reconceptualize Hong Kong no longer as a "cramped, noisy, dirty, and messy island," or a place "she thought she could justifiably resent," but her home that is filled with "indelible and warm memories" and "all kinds of incredible sounds and colors" (193). Shuxin's change of attitude evokes a diasporic sentiment of nostalgia; but more importantly, it offers new ways to re-associate Hong Kong/Asia not with sites of backwardness or points of departure. Among various fond memories, Shuxin recalls a childhood moment when she was startled to tears by the "thunderous" hawking voice in a boisterous dim sum teahouse (194). Revisiting this memory as an adult migrant in Paris, Shuxin now has a renewed interpretation. The story writes that:

> Everyone [in the teahouse] laughed. Their smiles dissolved the poisonous wrinkles of life—this is a teahouse with no posturing, a place for the toiling masses. … Survival is not an easy task. … But she still remembered the many kind, familiar smiles that appeared on one desperately tired face after another. This is how she learns about life, that living an ordinary, simple life also requires great courage and endurance. (194)

This passage represents that Shuxin reconnects with herself after self-alienated racialization, a healing moment anchored in the imagination of collectivity. It describes the struggle of life in Hong Kong, a collective struggle that brings hope in despair, a struggle that Shuxin wants to participate in again after leaving it behind. In other words, Shuxin's desire to return to the politically contentious Hong Kong is enabled through her

re-identification with the toiling, smiling masses and their "great courage and endurance."

As a foil, the story told from the perspective of Xinmin (Shuxin's elder brother in Hong Kong) further reveals how the postwar global border restrictions have generated an all-encompassing anxiety in Asia about capitalist development. Even though the white settler colonial nation-states had lifted their overtly racist policies for Asian migrants in the 1980s, the majority of the working-class Hong Kong Chinese, be they are permanent residents or citizens of the British colony, would not be able to migrate without making huge economic and personal sacrifices. As Xinmin's colleagues in the public school complain, "The British passport issued by Hong Kong might be enough to be a tourist in someone else's land. Immigration? Who would care about you?" (187) Take Canada for example, a Commonwealth country and previous British Dominion, "even if you have immediate family there, you have to wait for at least four or five years. And not only that, there are a lot of other requirements you have to fulfill…" (187). These remarks from the everyday Hong Kong people resonate with Shuxin's experience of a Hong Kong Chinese in Paris. Although a model colony for the British Empire to refashion the latter's global image in the postwar world (see Introduction), Hong Kong is not exempted from overt and latent forms of racialization, a lingering product of colonialism.

But more importantly, and this is why the Paris-written story "My Home in Hong Kong" extends the discussion of the literary texts that the dissertation has made so far, the story makes an explicit critique of the complicity between colonialism and capitalism—a complicity that camouflages the colonial presence and violence in Hong Kong. In comparison to the social panic during the Sino-British Negotiation brought by the fear for communism (including the anxiety about migrating away from Hong Kong, shortage of daily supply, financial turmoil in the stock market), what worries Xinmin more is replacing everyday relationship to the land and water with capitalist aggression under the name of progression. Walking along the paved seashore and watching the ongoing land reclamation project, Xinmin meditates that:

> This large, empty, dusty land is the result of two years of reclamation work, but it is still not over. Every day from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., cranes, mixers, pumping machines, and drilling machines continue to work non-stop, and I heard that an additional parking lot for private vehicles will be built. …The blue sea, the green hills and the white clouds…[I] watched [them] gradually disappear in front of [my] eyes… (198–99)

For Xinmin, what is threatening is not the uncertainty of a communism-infiltrated future but the present-day violation of Hong Kong people's relationship with the land and sea on which they build their lives and memories. It thus becomes clear that the building of the model colony in fact is a deliberate attempt to replace colonial history and violence of racialization with capitalist development.

By considering the question of race, the coda of this dissertation is a beginning to establish a framework to read Sinophone Hong Kong literature together with Anglophone Asian diasporic literature. It is also my attempt to map de-Cold War Hong Kong stories onto postcolonial and decolonial literature written in the Asian Pacific coastal cities, Caribbean islands, and other zones of imperial transitions.

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Appendix.

Romanization of Chinese Expressions

This appendix consists of the romanization of lists of Chinese terms, place-names, names of fictional characters, and other proper nouns that appear in this dissertation. For consistency, when referencing the original language I use the traditional Chinese characters, in which the majority of the studied literary texts were published. Following the Chicago citation style, I use the Hanyu Pinyin romanization system. Exceptions to Pinyin occur when the personal names spelt in the Wade-Giles system (according to their Cantonese pronunciation) are more familiar to the English readers. Occasionally, the Wade-Giles spelling is added in parenthesis after the Pinyin version. For the list of key Chinese terms and the Chinese names of Hong Kong literary writers, see Glossary.

Chinese Names of Hong Kong Writers

Bai Luo	白洛
Cheung King-hung	張景熊
Dong Rui	東瑞
Huang Sicheng	黃思騁
Jin Zhao	金兆
Li Cuihua	黎翠華
Li Huiying	李輝英
Li Pi-hua / Lilian Lee	李碧華
Lin Yemu	林也牧
Liu Yichang	劉以鬯
Ng Hui-bin (Wu Xubin)	吳煦斌
Quanan (Kun Nan)	崑南
Ronald P. Mar (Ma Lang)	馬朗
Shu Hong-sing (Shu Xiangcheng)	舒巷城
Tao Ran	陶然
Xia Yi	夏易
Xu Xi/ Xu Suxi	許素細
Ye Weina	葉娓娜
Zhong Lingling	鍾玲玲
Zhong Xiaoyang	鍾曉

Chinese Terms and Phrases

baxiang zhuyi	八項注意
bentu	本土
changqi dasuan, chongfen liyong	長期打算，充分利用
chun wenxue	純文學
daluzai	大陸仔
daquanzai	大圈仔
dou si pi xiu	鬥私批修
fei zhengzhihua	非政治化
fudong renkou	浮動人口
guding renkou	固定人口
guoji zhuyi	國際主義
guoke	過客
hongweibing	紅衛兵
huanxiang	幻象
ji bu ji jie	即捕即解
jiaxiang	假象
junei ren	局內人
lengmo	冷漠
muyuge	木魚歌
qiangshang gua lianzi—meimen	牆上掛簾子，沒門
sanda jilü	三大紀律
shanghen wenxue	傷痕文學
shuligan	疏離感
siheyuan	四合院
sijiu	四舊
tongren zazhi	同人雜誌
touduke	偷渡客

wailai zhe	外來者
waisheng hua	外省話
wendou	文鬥
wenhua shamo	文化沙漠
xianggang yishi	香港意識
xiangggang ren	香港人
xiangtu wenxue	鄉土文學
xiangxia hua	鄉下話
xianshi	現實
xiehouyu	歇後語
yangbanxi	樣板戲
yansu wenxue	嚴肅文學
ziran zhuyi	自然主義
zuopai	左派

Chinese Names of Newspaper, Literary Journals, and Publishers in the Seventies

The first column below contains the pinyin of the newspaper, literary journals, publishers, and literary awards in the seventies, which are followed by their English translation. The second column contains the corresponding original Chinese name. The third column contains the place of publication.

Bafang/ Eight corners	八方	Hong Kong
Beijing wenyi/ Beijing literature and art	北京文藝	Hong Kong
Daihuitang/ City Hall	大會堂	Hong Kong
Du Mu Zhi/ The big thumb	大拇指	Hong Kong
Haowangjiao/ Cape of good hope	好望角	Hong Kong
Hong Fan shudian/ Hong Fan Bookstore	洪範書店	Taipei
Jing bao/ Ching Po Daily	晶報	Hong Kong
Jinglian chuban/ Linking Publishing	經聯出版	Taipei
Kuaibao/ Hong Kong Express	快報	Hong Kong
Qing Wen shuwu/ Qing Wen book house	青文書屋	Hong Kong
Qingchun zhoubao/ The youth weekly	青春週報	Hong Kong
Renmin wenxue/ People's Literature	人民文學	Beijing
Renren wenxue/ Everyman's Literature	人人文學	Hong Kong
Shouhuo/ Harvest: Literary Bimonthly	收穫	Shanghai
Siji/ Four seasons	四季	Hong Kong
Su yeh chubanshe/ Su Yeh Publishing	素業出版社	Hong Kong
Su yeh wenxue/ Su Yeh literary journal	素業文學	Hong Kong
Wenhui bao/ Wenhui bao (Shanghai)	文匯報（上海）	Shanghai
Wenmei yuekan/ Literary monthly	文美月刊	Hong Kong
Wenxue yu meishu/ Literature and fine arts	文學與美術	Hong Kong
Wenyi xinchao/ New wave of literature and art	文藝新潮	Hong Kong
Xiandai wenxue/ Modern literature	現代文學	Taipei

Xianggang shibao/ Hong Kong Times	香港時報	Hong Kong
Xianggang wenxue/ Hong Kong Literature	香港文學	Hong Kong
Xiangyata wai/ Beyond the ivory tower	象牙塔外	Hong Kong
Xiaoshuo yuebao/ Fiction monthly	小說月報	Hong Kong
Xingdao Wanbao/ Sing Tao Evening Post	星島晚報	Hong Kong
Yuan Jing chuban/ Vista publishing	遠景出版	Taipei
Zhongguo xuesheng zhoubao/ The Chinese student weekly	中國學生週報	Hong Kong
Zhongwen wenxue chuangzuojiang xiaoshuozu / Chinese literature award for fiction	中文文學創作獎小說組	Hong Kong

Chinese Names of Characters in Fiction

Ah-Yong	阿勇
Aunt Lian	蓮姑
Auntie Yao	姚大媽
Bao Er Dun	寶爾敦
Carpenter	木匠
He Shuxin	何淑欣
He Xinmin	何新民
Qiao	喬
Swim	阿泳
Third Sister Cao	曹三姐
Third Sister Liu	劉三姐
Weiwei	微微
Xiaomi	小米
Yao	瑤
Yu	雨
Yuanyuan	媛媛
Yun	雲

Chinese Ethnic Groups

Hakka	客家
Han	漢族
Joseon-jok	朝鮮族
Manchurian	滿族
Tanka	蜑家
Teochew	潮州人
Zhuang	壯族

Chinese Place Names

Central	中環
Connaught Centre	康樂大廈
Faku	法庫
Ma Liu Shui	馬料水
Mirs Bay	大鵬灣
Sha Tau Kok	沙頭角
Shandong	山東
Shenzhen	深圳
Teochew	潮州
Tigerland	虎地
Tung Ping Chau	東平洲
West New Territories	西新界