NATION FORMATION AND IDENTITY FORMULATION PROCESSES IN

HONG KONG: LITERARY, CINEMATIC, PLASTIC AND SPATIAL

TEXTS AMIDST THE UNEASY CONFLUENCE OF

HISTORY, CULTURE, AND IMPERIALISM

By

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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

      The members of the committee appointed to examine the dissertation of LAI SAI ACÓN-CHAN find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

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Chair

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Abstract

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Chair: Victor Villanueva

Hong Kong is a special case in postcolonial studies. Its *telos* has been defined by

unique colonization, decolonization, and recolonization processes. The conformation of a

(post)colonial hybrid identity in its last decades as a British Dependent Territory and first

years as a Special Administrative region of China was possible not only because of a

traumatic awareness of its origins and its final destiny, but also because of dissenting

voices that aimed at narrating local stories rather than national histories. In this light, this

dissertation examines the uneasy confluence of history, culture, and imperialism in Hong

Kong. That is, it analyzes literary, cinematic, plastic, and spatial texts that revolve

around a set of complex questions and issues that arise because of Hong Kong's unique

history: Is it possible to talk about a third identity amidst the British and the mainland

Chinese identities that, to some, have shaped Hong Kong? How differentiable from

former and present colonizer's identities is the Hongkongese identity? What does the

emergence of a distinctive identity reflect about the innermost desires of Hongkongers in

regards to nationhood? Does a Hongkongese nation or quasi-nation exist? If so, what does it mean to be a quasi-nation under the one country, two systems formula? Even so, what does it mean to be a quasi-nation in the era of socialism with Chinese characteristics? This study tries to answer all those concerns as it analyzes a variety of cultural manifestations produced in the last three decades and so by and about Hongkongers and their particular history. Some cultural producers in this dissertation are P.K. Leung, Wong Kar Wai, Xi Xi, the Hui brothers, Kith Tsang, Warren Leung, Dung Kai-cheung, Rey Chow, Timothy Mo, and Oscar Ho.

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to

all those who . . .
struggle for universal suffrage,
believe in democracy,
advocate for one person, one vote
in Hong Kong and
wherever the rule of law
is entirely without

All the Cantonese revolutionaries and daydreamers,
All the Ryans and Lulus and Chow Mo-Wans,
All the Centaurs of the East
Who have lived and will live in
The city at the end of time,
The floating city,
1997 and 2046

PREFACE: BLAME IT ON MEMORY,

NEW HISTORIES OF HONG KONG AND ITS PEOPLE

"Do memories have an expiration date?" asks one of Wong Kar Wai's characters in his 1995 film *Chungking Express* after having gulped down 30 cans of newly expired pineapple as if to preserve the memories of his last sweetheart, May, one month after the breakup. My personal answer to that question is that memories have no expiration date because I have to wonder why I, the overseas-born offspring of a couple of Chinese immigrants born in the West themselves but raised in the East, have memories of a Hong Kong and a Canton that I had never seen before July 2002?   It is hard to determine the boundaries that shape one's memories.   Where did my parents' and grandmothers' memories end and mine start? Through years and years of their talk-story I must have somehow absorbed recollections of places and people never seen.

When I decided to travel to Hong Kong for the first time, my mother said "so, you're going back." "Going back where?" I thought "this is where I have been all my life, in Costa Rica." But you see, Chinese people do not merely go to or visit or travel to China like tourists do; they go back. I reluctantly accepted that I was "going back" to China, but my mother was right, I *did* go back: being in Hong Kong was like returning home. Since the moment I sat at the departure gate for the Continental flight from Newark to Chep Lap Kok, I felt transported to a pre-verbal world in which my internal rhythms put me closer and closer to the mother(land). I was lost in boredom, barely hearing the usual airport warnings, when I blithely noticed.   A feminine voice was announcing, *in Cantonese*, that the gate had been changed. Understanding a language that I often associate with the leisurely times of my early childhood eased that passage from a symbolic to a rather semiotic word. My first morning in Hong Kong was an absolute delight: comforting sounds, smells, tastes, sights, feelings. The employees of the Warney Hotel calling me Chan *siu che* when in the West I go by *señorita* Acón or Miss Acon-Chan. Radio and television programs in Cantonese. People around speaking a dialect that speakers of Mandarin

unfairly find provincial and unrefined. Dim sum restaurants, noodle parlors, Hong Kong style bakeries, street food stalls, bubble tea parlors. Green tea ice cream, snowy moon cakes, scallion pancakes, Cantonese cuisine. And finally, the view and the marine aromas of the fragrant harbor. I was entranced.

My infatuation with Southern China, and especially Hong Kong, comes from the collective remembrances of my parents, grandmothers, and relatives who visited us throughout my childhood. My infatuation, in turn, took me through an eerie walk down a very unusual memory lane. A week before my departure for Asia, I casually watched my first Wong Kar Wai movie, *In the Mood for Love*. One thing that characterizes the filmography of Wong is his obsession for the effects of highly-unsettling experiences on the way one spins the threads that conform the fragile make up of memories. This movie in particular is part of a trilogy, along with *Days of Being Wild* and *2046*, about the Hong Kong of the 1960s, the tumultuous decade when my parents drastically cut all links with territorial China. They never lost their traditions, quite the contrary, they taught us all about being Chinese; however, they never went back to China. Every time I watch the movies a succession of images are triggered: recollections from pictures of my mother and her sisters wearing exquisitely-tailored Chinese style, yet modern, dresses with the high-rise buildings of the Hong Kong of the sixties in the background, of my uncle in his military regalia sitting with other heads of department of the Hong Kong Police Department probably in the late seventies or early eighties, of my cousins' brides in red ceremonial Chinese robes posing for studio portraits that were to become the fad of fashionable modern Chinese couples in the 1990s, and of postmodern buildings like the Bank of Hong Kong, the Lippo Towers, the Hong Kong Shanghai Banking Corporation, and the Hong Kong Convention Center Extension, all set in the Beijing's "one country, two systems" formula that

was to govern Hong Kong for the next forty-five years. This dissertation actually owes a lot to nostalgia, nostalgia of who I could have been had my parents stayed in Hong Kong, and nostalgia for all those things, peoples, and experiences that have served as points of intersection (in a Wong Kar Wai manner) between me and the so-called motherland.

Having worked the theme of Asian American literature in my master thesis, this time I had decided to go a bit further and work with Anglo Asian literatures. In the process, I discovered Timothy Mo's *An Insular Possession*, and before I knew it I found myself researching other literary pieces dealing with Hong Kong's particular socio-political status. But I came across some limitations or rather fortuitous situations that in the end made me opt for cultural studies rather than purely literary studies. First, the body of literature in English was not large enough to make some generalizations about nation formation and identity formulation processes in Hong Kong. Second, I noticed a pattern of cultural production across several extra-literary genres and media. Third, along the way I realized that a study of that pattern could reveal more about those processes than the study of one single manifestation such as, say, literature. One last reason was the body of critical works about issues of (post)colonialism, nationalism, and identity, which usually favors other geo-political regions like the Indian sub-continent, Africa, and the Caribbean and more often than not ignores the case of Hong Kong.

Regarding literature in English, so far nobody has published an analysis of post-Sino British Joint Declaration literature dealing with the complex conglomerate of emotions triggered by the transfer of sovereignty. There are anthologies of literary works written by authors with varying degrees of allegiance to Hong Kong (*Hong Kong Writing in English: 1945 to the Present, Hong Kong Collage: Contemporary Stories and Writing, Hong Kong Stories: Old Themes New Voices,* and the 1997 *Renditions* Special Issue on Hong Kong literature), but apparently nobody

has attempted to group exclusively the writings about pre and post-Handover concerns of Hongkongers. Interestingly enough, other areas of cultural production, specifically more visual cultural productions such as the plastic arts, the cinema and architecture, have taken the lead in terms of (post)colonial analyses of Hong Kong. David Clarke's *Hong Kong Art: Culture and Decolonization* presents "the first comprehensive survey of contemporary art from Hong Kong presented within the changing social and political context of the territory's 1997 handover from British to Chinese sovereignty." Yingchi Chu's *Hong Kong Cinema: Coloniser, Motherland and Self* examines "the concept of 'national cinema' in the context of Hong Kong's status as a quasi-nation with strong links to both the 'motherland' (China) and the 'coloniser' (Britain), arguing that Hong Kong cinema is a national cinema only in an incomplete and ambiguous sense," the one produced by its in-between condition. Finally, Ackbar Abbas' *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* explores primarily the architecture of Hong Kong to illustrate the changing cultural spaces of the city as metaphors of the elusiveness of colonial space. But unlike Clarke and Chu, he goes beyond the study of one single cultural manifestation: he examines specific examples of the territory's cinema, photography, and literature as well. The privileging of visual arts over the art of literature begs the question: what has moved cultural critics to publish volumes about architectural, cinematic and plastic texts, but none about literary texts in a postcolonial context? I will attempt to address some of the issues that spring from this question.

Given this panorama, this dissertation will set out to explore and study some literary, plastic, cinematic, and architectural texts as (post)colonial and, therefore, fragmentary, historical narratives about Hong Kong's processes of nation and identity formation. I have chosen not to focus on one single medium because the (post)colonial status of Hong Kong should be analyzed

from different vantage points in order to show the various stories that have shaped Hong Kong in the last two decades and so. I am interested in examining the particular *telos* of Hong Kong as it has been uncovered and narrated by those engaging in critical cultural conversations in the territory, both popular and intellectual conversations. That is why there will be analyses of "low" culture and "high" culture, but mostly of the latter because while an emerging identity first manifested in elements of popular culture, it was in the consciously political nature of works crafted by intellectuals that the issues at hand were manifesting with the most intensity. It can be argued that this elitism compromises the popular and democratic nature of nation formation and identity formulation, but that is why I will also analyze popular manifestations such as polls, pop culture, and rallies. The literary narratives to be studied are Eurasian Timothy Mo's *An Insular Possession*, excerpts from Dung Kai-Cheung's *The Atlas: Archaelogy of an Imaginary City*, Xi Xi's "Marvels of a Floating City," and Leung Ping-Kwan's *City at the End of Time*. Plastic arts and spaces I am interested in extricating are installations and other alternative forms of plastic art as opposed to pieces that belong in state-funded art museums. Another thought-provoking set of cultural artifacts is Second-Wave director Wong Kar Wai's trilogy *Days of Being Wild, In the Mood for Love,* and *2046*. And last, but not least, I want to analyze some buildings that make political statements for or against the colonial/ neoimperial regimes in the territory.

The first chapter is intended to give a historical overview of the architectural, cinematic, plastic, and literary backgrounds that defined cultural production in the decades of the eighties and the nineties in Hong Kong. In the second chapter, my intention is to question the objectiveness of historical discourse. By analyzing Mo's *Insular* as a novel that reveals the work of production, that is, its metafictional nature, I would like to make a comment on the fictionality of historiographical discourse itself. This chapter, in turn, will be the gateway to analyze, in the

rest of the dissertation, contemporary cultural manifestations as local (his)stories of a Hong Kong in search of an identity. In chapter three urban planning is analyzed through architectural, literary, and plastic texts to explain how the city has been calibrated and counter-calibrated by colonizer and neocolonizer. Chapter four explores the traumatic effects of calibration and counter-calibration practices in the psyches of the city-dwellers. Wong' trilogy and Xi Xi's and Leung's literary works will be analyzed. Finally chapter five will tie up all the chapters as it analyzes the emergence of quasi-nationhood and of a third space of expression for Hongkongers through popular manifestations. The chapter traces back the point when they first began the search for an identity and discusses polls, forms of popular entertainment like Cantopop and a vernacular cinema, and political rallies.

CHAPTER 1: THE HISTORIES OF HONG KONG

"The history of Hong Kong was never a serious topic
for academic research, and there was no need for a colonial
government to take that seriously either. Around mid-1950s,
there were scholars in China publishing in China.
I think it was a carefully orchestrated political undertaking
to rewrite HK history, and to reclaim its history with its 'motherland.'"

Oscar Ho Hing-kay. Interview, November 25, 2007.

1.1 Introduction

Historiographies of Hong Kong abound—whether they are about government politics or about the peoples coexisting in Hong Kong, whether they are written from a British colonial perspective or from a Chinese nationalist perspective or from a Hongkongese local perspective, whether they are intended as myths of origin or as vindication manifestos. My particular "historiography" aspires to examine some pivotal cultural events that led to nation formation and identity formulation processes in Hong Kong. It is about a "quasi-colony" that became a "quasi nation" despite and because of the mainland's neocolonial pretensions during a very traumatic period for its inhabitants. Thus, this historiography spans the last twenty to thirty years of cultural production in former British Hong Kong. The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the reader to the various histories that have shaped Hong Kong's culture from classical accounts of Hong Kong by Anglophone writers to less "historical" accounts of Hong Kong architecture, cinema, plastic art, and literature.

1.2 Hong Kong: A Borrowed Place Within a Borrowed Time

> A borrowed place living on a borrowed time, Hong Kong is an
> impudent capitalist survival on China's communist *derrière*,
> an anachronistic mixture of colonialism and the Chinese way of life [. . .].
>
> In today's world, Hong Kong is an improbability—one
> had almost said an impossibility. But it works.
>
> Richard Hughes, *Hong Kong: Borrowed Place—Borrowed Time*

The historiographer Christopher Munn argues that the few original histories of nineteenth-century Hong Kong may be divided into three schools: the colonial school, the Beijing school—largely anti-colonial and Marxist nationalistic, and the Hong Kong school, that

goes beyond traditional settler or typical communist narratives and instead "addresses the dynamics of society and politics within Hong Kong, introduces questions of race, class and gender differences, and studies patterns of organization that do not fit easily into traditional colonial structures" (4-9). This particular study fits into the third school's tenets as it is framed within the transitional period (last decades as a British colony) in the history of postcolonial, post-Handover SAR-HK (Special Administrative Region, Hong Kong). In the foreword to *A Borrowed Place: The History of Hong Kong*, Frank Welsh begins the argument of his book in an apologetic tone as he pronounces it to be "one-sided and patchy" as "any history of an Anglo-Chinese enterprise is unhappily likely to be" (xi-xii). He goes on to argue that just as Chinese scholars who are limited to official documents from the Historical Archives in Beijing "may well not be alert to the nuances of nineteenth-century British politics and society" (xii), English writers who are not fluent in Chinese will find themselves restricted to translated material and, therefore, to an arbitrary selection of works, making their work "inescapably Anglocentric." Like Welsh, I must defend the choices I made when I let nostalgic memories guide this research about the uneasy confluence of imperialism, geography, history, and culture in Hong Kong. In this chapter, my readings of its history will be largely based on the patterns of cultural production in the colony from the time when it began to noticeably assert itself as an autonomous entity to July, 1 1997.

In *A Borrowed Place: The History of Hong Kong*, Frank Welsh claims that the unexpected birth of Hong Kong was at best what produced a temporary truce amidst the first Anglo-Chinese armed conflict and at worst the twisted answer to the British's demands for a free trade port anchored in China, but controlled by British political and economic interests. The sixth Qing Emperor's assertion that the foreigners who had encamped in Canton from the early

1800s were nothing more than "barbarians always look[ing] on trade as their chief occupation; and [. . .] wanting in any high purpose of striving for territorial acquisition" (qtd. in Welsh 1) may have racist resonations, but it proved to be partially true in the case of the events that led to the infamously called "Opium Wars" and to the cessions of Hong Kong and Kowloon.

The remoteness of the port of Canton (not to mention the remoteness of Hong Kong, a territory about 60 miles south), where trade with foreigners had been going on for centuries, and its own marginality in relation to the northern Manchu dynasty had contributed to the mindless cession of a tip of China to a foreign power. About Hong Kong, Welsh points out that, "On Chinese maps of the Ch'ing period (1644-1911) [it] was either omitted or unrecognizable; its first appearance is on a chart published in 1760, which shows only the west coast of the island" (13). Later, Captain George Hayter of the East India Company's *York* charted the island as two separate islands, but despite his mistake, he was the first to record the name the territory has nowadays: *An-chin-chao* or *He-ong-Kong'* (13-14). In 1842 Hong Kong was only one among hundreds of islands in the Pearl River Delta, did not stand out as the most prominent or the largest either in size or population or the most fecund, and on top was located in the southernmost tip of the Chinese empire (11). However, it was to become a sought-after haven where traders gave free rein to their greed and rejoiced in the marvels of the *laissez-faire* doctrine. "The rising costs of Indian administration, increasing competition, and a desire to find a market for British exports combined with a growing intolerance of extortion" moved the British Crown to send a negotiation team to Beijing in order to request a slackening of the restrictions on trade (32). But the proposals of the foreigners clashed with a Manchu definition of sovereignty largely based on xenophobia. Welsh believes that for the Chinese empire the most outrageous of their demands was perhaps "'a small unfortified island near Chusan for the

residence of English traders, storage of goods, and outfitting of ships'" (qtd. in Welsh 33).

Whether it was to be located in Chusan or somewhere else, the British had already devised some

sort of "insular possession" in the Pearl River estuary from which to make profit with the most

appalling of capitalistic transactions, drug traffic, while they conveniently expanded the scope of

their empire. The cession of Kowloon and the lease of the New Territories expanded the

colonial territory insofar as it was to be regarded a temporary place of sojourn, a borrowed place

within a borrowed time.

1.3 The Opening of a Third Space

In *Hong Kong Cinema: Coloniser, motherland and self*, Yingchi Chu argues that since

its inception as a British holding, Hong Kong kept strong ties to China, so that a unique

triangular relationship emerged, "an interdependency that suggests a quasi-national status rather

than that of a nation" (xii). It was ironically the early detachment of the colonizer and the

closeness to the motherland that later made possible the emergence of a third identity in the

midst of the transfer from British colonialism to Chinese neo-imperialism. According to Chu,

the colonizer implemented two codes of law in the dependency's initial stages. The colonized

were to be governed in conformity with the British laws, but they were not to be protected by

them. While Hong Kong prospered economically and attracted mainland triads and other

underworld societies, administratively it stagnated. To compensate for the inability of colonial

public institutions to cope with the high rates of crime and maintain political and social order,

alternative socio-political structures emerged to manage the native's affairs and ensure their

safety. While the European community's interests were safeguarded by the Chamber of

Commerce, the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank, the large *hongs*, the Jockey Club, and the

Sanitation Board, which served as Executive Council, Legislative Council, and Civil Service; the Chinese community was protected by the District Watch Committee, the Tung Wah Board of Directors, a Chinese Sanitation Board, a Chinese Chamber of Commerce, Heung Yee Kuk (a rural assembly), and Po Leung Kuk (a charity organization helping orphans), all of which had the same functions as the above-mentioned. Thus, the ties to the motherland were never cut off, allowing the Chinese population to preserve their own cultural traditions and beliefs. Ironically, the apartheid practices of the British, while discriminating, set Hongkongers apart from other colonized subjects whose traditions and languages were obliterated by the colonizer. Freedom of movement from motherland to British colony allowed Hongkongers to keep their culture alive, build an early sense of Chinese nationalism, and protest against British rule, and it also opened a gateway for dissidents and revolutionaries to plot against dynastic power and for wealthy families, first, and then refugees, to flee to the colony. Chu points out that "mainland national political culture was transplanted to and intensified in the colony" (5). Thus, Hongkongers experienced firsthand the anti-Manchu Taiping movement of the 1850s, Sun-Yat Sen's attempts to overthrow the Qing Dynasty in the late nineteenth century, the May Fourth Movement, the Canton-Hong Kong General Strike, the anti-Japanese war manifestations, the struggles between the Kuomintang and the Communists for power, among other political manifestations (4).

When the borders between the mainland and Hong Kong were closed in 1950, there were about 2.36 million people in the colony (24). The close connection that had previously existed between motherland and colony was suddenly interrupted, causing another type of nation formation process to slowly materialize. The British colonial government and the Chinese Communist government's conjoint decision to discontinue their freedom of movement practices

caused a diaspora to emerge. Although Chu argues that "(t)he term 'diaspora' is not commonly used to describe the mainland Chinese in Hong Kong, perhaps because the colony cannot be perceived as 'foreign' territory to China [. . .] the mainland Chinese refugees and migrants in Hong Kong shared cultural characteristics of other diasporic communities" (24). For one thing, post-1949 Hongkongers were suddenly forced to assimilate the fact that they had not been part of the mainland for over a century despite the continuous ties. The closing of the borders enabled a geographical displacement of peoples that was later to be manifested in Hongkongers' cultural dislocation and in their need to formulate an identity. Thereby, the second half of the twentieth century proved to be crucial for nation formation and identity formulation processes in Hong Kong.

While the 1950s generation had strong feelings towards what they considered the motherland, Chu contends that their offspring grew up in a Hong Kong detached from the mainland and, as a result, had no strong nationalistic feelings toward China. This was a generation that "enjoyed better living standards, and achieved higher literacy levels, both in Chinese and English, compared to their parents. Culturally, they were exposed to a variety of products, including films from Europe, Hollywood and national films. By growing up in the era of television, they developed cultural identities resembling the culture of their local communities rather than that of China" (39-40). This was the generation that was making important cultural breakthroughs in the Hong Kong of the 1970s. In fact, so much had changed since the 1950s: the colonial government actively participated in local affairs that assisted the Chinese population; Hong Kong had evolved into one of the economic miracles of Asia and had most of the trappings of a first-world, capitalist nation; and a clearly defined identity, that of the *heonggong yen* (the Hongkonger) had come into existence.

Whereas the economy boomed after the mid-1950s, the colonial government was still lagging in terms of housing assistance, education and health, and working conditions as pointed out by Hopkins (271-314), Podmore (42), and England (220-2). In 1967, taking advantage of the growing restlessness among the Chinese population, left-wing organizations contrived a protest campaign against the government that lasted for about a year and a half and resulted in bloodshed and substantial monetary loss. While it failed at liberating Hong Kong from British imperialism, it ironically broadened the gap between mainland and insular possession, first, because of the Hongkonger´s repudiation of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and, second, because rather than withdrawing from its colony, Britain was forced to reexamine its relationship with the local Chinese community. A series of political reforms made possible a more fair representation of local interests in the colonial administration and facilitated two-way channels of communication like Radio and Television Hong Kong (RTHK) and the City District Officer Scheme. Programs of social outreach were also launched to improve the living standards of the Chinese population. The colonial government worked hard on narrowing the social welfare and educational gap that had existed since the 1950s: by the late 1970s, 43% of the population had access to the government's public housing programs (Hutcheon, *Hong Kong: Yesterday and Today* 5); there were about 50 hospitals (among government, government-assisted, and private) serving the population (Choa 123-54); one out of three children were attending secondary school (Hinton 145-62); and two new universities had been founded: Chinese University and Polytechnic. Not content with social and political reforms, Chu argues that the Hong Kong colonial government promoted identification with the city through cultural activities and community programs, both of which produced a sense of pride and of belonging to this territory that had become home and contributed to set Hongkongers even more apart from their

mainland siblings. That newfound sense of identity was to be manifested in particular cultural forms produced in the territory.

1.4 Architectural, Cinematic, Plastic and Literary Histories of Hong Kong

1.4.1 Borrowed Places: Urban Development and Planning in Hong Kong[1]

> Architecture, whether urban or rural, Chinese or Western, is the most honest record of a place, capturing and reflecting the aspirations, values and needs of a people. It is symbolic of both the place and of the moment.
>
> David Lung, "The Heritage of Hong Kong: Architecture"

> Political power takes many forms. In addition to the power evinced by a charismatic leader, an indomitable military presence, an entrenched bureaucracy, or an imposing network of laws and statuses, many political regimes make especially powerful symbolic use of the physical environment. Throughout history and across the globe, architecture and urban design have been manipulated in the service of politics.
>
> Lawrence J. Vale, *Architecture, Power and National Identity*

In "The Growth of the City: A Historical Review," Edward George Pryor and Shiu-hung Pau argue that "From the very outset, the development of Hong Kong as a trading centre in southern China has been characterized by an unremitting search for further land suitable for urban development, a pressure imposed by its ever-expanding population and vigorous economy" (98). With an original area of only 72 square kilometers and a varied topography, Hong Kong proved to be a labor of love. Only by October 1841, nine months after the British occupation, there were about 15,000 people in the island, most of which were Chinese; and by June 1842, according to Captain Arthur Cunyngeheme, a two mile long town stood where brushwood had reigned before (98). Over the years, upheaval and unrest in the mainland brought waves of people to Hong Kong, not only overcrowding the island and endangering public health, but also putting strains in an inexperienced colonial administration also reluctant to deal with the affairs of the "native" population. While more slum-like living quarters were being built to

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[1]   All the information in this section comes from Pryor and Shiu, and Lung.

accommodate thousands of migrants ironically looking for better living conditions, the purposeful erection of landmark buildings and apartheid practices of the colonial government contributed to enforce forms of architectural dominance.

According to Pryor and Pau, "Between 1841 and 1900, some exceptionally fine public as well as private buildings were constructed on Hong Kong Island" (100). Some of them were attempts to not only support the British state apparatus but also display the outreach of Western capitalism in China. Hong Kong was, first and foremost, a territory born because of and for the production, exchange, and circulation of wealth. Yet the presence of armed forces, church, and much later of school could not be ignored. The military presence of the British colonizer was made evident with the construction of the Headquarter House (later renamed Flaggstaff House) of the Commander British Forces, Major George D'Aguilar. The church, another pillar of the British monarchy, made its presence felt at the inauguration of the Anglican St John's Cathedral in 1849. Thus, says David Lung,

> By 1870, the two-mile long stretch of waterfront along the harbour from Victoria
> (Central) to East Point (Causeway Bay) was already extensively developed with
> handsome and prestigious buildings [. . .]. There was the P&O Building, the
> Exchange Building (later to be used as Supreme Court), St. John's Cathedral,
> Government House, Murray House, Murray Barracks with batteries and weekly
> parades, the Roman Catholic Chapel, Harbour Master's House, Wardley House (a
> bank), Lapraik's Clock Tower [. . .]. (40)

A sample of the finest Western architecture was the Hong Kong Hotel (1874), "synonymous with the best accommodation and service in the far East" and strategically built in current Hong Kong's Central District between Queen's Road, Des Voeux Road and Peddler Street (roads that

coincidentally bore the name of colonial rulers and administrators and that traversed what nowadays is the executive heart of the island). The first City Hall (1869) was born as a civic (as well as an economic) enterprise of a group of *taipans*, among which stands out Jardine Matheson & Co (who contributed with HK$50,000). More than an administrative building, it was a space exclusively for the British population to consort and form community ties. It had a library, a museum, an assembly hall, a ballroom, a supper room, a theater, and some meeting rooms. The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, built in 1886, was "the largest commercial development to have been built in Hong Kong" (qtd. in Pryor 100) and undoubtedly boasted the purchasing power of a foreign elite. What the three buildings had in common was their ideological purpose. The architectural style, largely exported from Victorian England, was imposed rather than developed from the unique geography and culture of the territory. Large amounts of money were invested in these venues, demonstrating, on one hand, the desire of the colonizers to perpetuate their elitist and imperialist values and, on the other hand, their detachment from local affairs.

As an entrepôt, Hong Kong was not initially meant to showcase magnificent colonial buildings as British India was. Just as Lord Palmerston underestimated Hong Kong when he called it a "barren rock," early urban planners dismissed the island's potential to become a metropolitan city. They only saw a provincial Hong Kong as an "inconsequential appurtenance of the global imperial domains" (Lung 41), but that was to change as the city skyline began to take its current shape. While the first decades of colonial Hong Kong witnessed the birth of a city in the Western sense of the word and the rise of structures meant to display, not the artistic vision of a people, but only the purchasing power of a few; dramatic urban and architectural changes occurred from the last quarter of the nineteenth century to the first quarter of the

twentieth century. Land reclamation projects along the original Praya (currently Central) led to

the construction of the Supreme Court, the second Hong Kong Club and five commercial

buildings financed by Paul Chater, the Armenian owner of Hong Kong Land Investment Agency

Co. Mostly named after British royalty or representing the interests of the colonial elite, the

Prince's, St. George's, Queen's, Alexandra and York buildings had a similar architectural style:

they were built of brick and granite and had arcades, verandahs, and Victorian façades.

The different cultural groups that populated Hong Kong contributed with and funded their

particular architectural vision and that, in turn, bestowed the city a uniquely cosmopolitan touch.

Parsees, Christians, Jewish and Muslims not only coexisted peacefully but also built temples,

synagogues, and mosques that showcased their faith, culture, and even wealth in some cases.

The birth of the Republic of China in 1912 brought about an air of revolution that materialized

into the first institution of higher education in the territory: University of Hong Kong. It was

created thanks to, on one hand, the social work of Governor Lugard's wife, Flora. On the other

hand, its erection was possible due to the generous donations of two local non-White

businessmen, one of them a Parsee opium trader and the other one a Chinese businessman.

The age of high-rise, high-tech buildings starts in 1935, when the new HSBC

Headquarters were built. Its Art Deco Style with Egyptian, Chinese, and Japanese motifs is a

testament to the multiculturalism of the city as well as the jumble of architectural styles that has

characterized Hong Kong since its inception. This is also the point that marks the departure from

colonial, mostly Greek and Victorian-inspired, classicism and the preference for more

contemporary styles that signify the rise of a new world vision and of new contenders for visual

as well as political and economic power in the city. While some architects favored Art Deco

style, others rooted for European Modernism. Yet, the flowering of an authentically Asian style

took place in the 1930s. "Chinese Renaissance" was "an extension of an emerging movement in the mainland, among a group of architects recently returned from their architectural studies in the West, anxious for self-identity and a national style" (47). Their trademark style combined "reinforced concrete buildings" with traditional Chinese motifs, and some examples of this style can be found in Hong Kong: St. Mary's Church in Causeway Bay (1937), the Methodist Church in Wanchai (1935) and Holy Trinity in Tokwawan (1938).

After this creative and economic surge that altered the skyline of Hong Kong, urban planning aimed at providing housing for postwar mainlander immigrants and local victims of the great fire of 1953. The colonial government devised plans to create new towns and erect massive housing units to lodge a population that had abruptly grown from a few hundred of thousands to about two million people. This style of public housing is known as English Brutalism. Needless to say, functionality prevailed over aestheticism as impersonal buildings mushroomed, densely populating previously undeveloped spaces on both sides of the harbor. The surplus generated by the growing industries from the postwar period to the early seventies became apparent in a skyline featuring true skyscrapers. Once again, it was time to show off the economic power that Hong Kong had acquired in the years since the Second World War. This time, however, the territory's purchasing power was accompanied by generations of true Hongkongers who had been born there and raised with Western, avant-garde ideas. Some of them had been educated in the West and had brought with them a desire to transform their homeland.

Multi-storied structures and modernization projects replaced the last remnants of colonial architecture and changed the map of Hong Kong again and again. Jardine House was the tallest building in Asia when it was completed in 1973 and a most expensive venture developed on

reclaimed land with a political and economic purpose: that of restoring the faith of the public in

Hong Kong as a corporate destination in the last years of British rule.   Especially after the

political disturbances of 1966 and 1967. On the other hand, buildings dating back to the turn of

the century were being replaced by more modern structures. The Mass Transit Railway project

doomed the Hongkong General Post Office to destruction in 1976. A new Hong Kong club

building was erected in 1983 where the old Victorian style club once stood. Whether to develop

or redevelop, famed architects from the most prestigious architectural firms in Hong Kong and

abroad took innovation to the extremes, playing with modern designs and new materials and

defying formal and conceptual conventions. The Alexandra building, the Landmark, Exchange

Square, the Hong Kong Club, the Lippo Centre, HongkongBank (HSBC), and the Bank of China

Tower belong to this era of a dying colonial city trying to insert itself in contemporary economic

and cultural conversations while betting on its modernism and cosmopolitanism. These were,

nevertheless, mostly the projects of Western architects.

Local art and culture found a vessel from which to reach the increasingly sophisticated

Hongkonger in Shanghai-born Tao Ho's Hong Kong Arts Centre (1978) and in local Simon

Kwan's Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (1986), both symbolically built on reclaimed

land. Another Kwan design was the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology campus

(1992), the college equivalent of financial centers like the Lippo Centre, the HSBC Headquarters,

or the Bank of China Tower, not only because of its striking architectural design but also because

of the high construction costs that earned it "the nickname of The Rolls Royce Campus" (53).

Lingnan College campus represents an attempt to honor its mainland origins as it "recreate[s] the

Chinese character, with buildings throughout capped in pitched roofs similar to the old campus

buildings in Canton" (53). Corporate images of wealth and power by local architects include

Pacific Place (1988-1991), one of the largest shopping malls in the heart of Victoria, the

Convention and Exhibition Centre in Wanchai (1990) and its Extension (symbolically

inaugurated on June 30th 1997), Central Plaza, one of the tallest skyscrapers (1992), the Centre

(1998), and Citibank Plaza (1992). All of them stand out as visual metaphors of everything that

Hong Kong had become in its last two decades as a British Dependent Territory struggling to

become a quasi-nation if not in the political sphere, at least in the cultural and economic spheres.

Other landmarks that have made it to the history of twentieth-century Hong Kong architecture

are the Upper Peak Tram Station (1996), the airport rail Kowloon Station (1998), and Chek Lap

Kok International Airport (1998).

1.4.2 Hong Kong Cinema: A Nascent Industry[2]

> As Hong Kong has not had all the attributes of a nation, it is not surprising that the cinema does not fit comfortably into the theoretical category of national cinema. And yet, Hong Kong cinema exhibits certain characteristics of a national cinema, which functions as part of a web of economic and cultural institutions within a recognizable and bounded society.
>
> Yingchi Chu, *Hong Kong Cinema*

Stephen Teo traces the origins of a Chinese cinema that has transcended the barriers of a

regional film industry to become a transnational one. In 1909, the earliest two-reeler comedies

were produced in the territory (Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema*, 3), yet Shanghai was to take the lead in

film-making, production, and distribution and as the Chinese version of the dream factory,

Hollywood, in the 1930s. However, the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1942) and the civil wars

between the Kuomintang and the Communists that ended up in the latter's rise of power in 1949,

strategically moved substantial parts of the industry from the convoluted mainland to a relatively

more neutral space, Hong Kong. The presence of big studios like Grandview, Universal, Nanyue

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[2]   All the information in this section comes from Teo's *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimensions*

and Tianyi and renowned film-makers like Chiu Shu-sun and Kwan Man-ching in the Hong

Kong of the 1930s boosted the nascent film industry and made the colony emerge as "the base

for Cantonese movies with a sizeable overseas market in Southeast Asia and America" (6).

While the number of Cantonese films was increasing, their quality and artistry was decreasing to

the point that the "clean-up movements" of 1935, 1938 and 1949 were instigated to improve the

quality of Cantonese-speaking films, upgrade what was considered a regional industry, clean up

the territory's reputation as frivolous, alien, and anti-patriotic, and ultimately emerge as a leading

industry.

During the period when China dramatically cut off its links with Hong Kong, the

territory's film industry began to take its current shape. A second wave of Shanghainese film-

makers fled to Hong Kong from 1946 to 1949, bringing more talent and investments. Most of

their films were Mandarin film productions with "grand production values and glamorous

casting" or "Shanghai movies made in Hong Kong" (12). Because China imposed a closed-door

policy, these film-makers started to cater to South-East Asian, Taiwanese, and overseas Chinese

audiences, all of which constitute its current traditional markets. Most important of all, Hong

Kong cinema capitalized on the different ideologies, filmic languages, and themes used by left-

wing and right-wing studios as well as on the materialistic modernization boosted by studios that

aspired to Hollywood-style cosmopolitanism. Thus, anti-feudalism, nationalistic pride, exile,

pain, reverence for the past, and Western, glamorous lifestyles were among the most popular

themes rendered in the cinema of the 50s, a growing industry. The Cantonese cinema of this

decade chose realism as a vehicle not only to express Cantonese values, but also to shatter the

conception that only Mandarin productions in the territory could qualify as A films. Soon

Cantonese films heavily influenced by the leftist strand of the Shanghai film industry began to

gain public recognition. While not hardcore representations of the Communist ideology, these films rendered social themes and issues with genuinely didactic purposes. Thus, they did not push audiences away precisely because ideological conditioning was not the sole intent of these films. Although, as Teo explains, "[b]y 1972, Cantonese production was virtually at a stand-still [. . .] [t]he realist strain of Cantonese cinema continued indomitably, often with modifications—or concessions—to the demands of other genres" (47) like family melodrama, *wenyi pian* (epic romance tragedies), martial arts, opera, and *fenyue* (a new generic mixture of soft-core pornography and light farce).

This move away from the traditional Cantonese melodramas of the 1950s and 1960s and into genres never seen before allowed Hong Kong New Wave Cinema to gradually emerge at this time. In fact, the decade of the 1970s was a breakthrough period for Hong Kong: it was a period of "economic boom and increasing sense of confidence among the Hong Kong Chinese" (137). It was the coming of age of the Hongkongers who grew up in the past two decades as demonstrated by the innovations brought about in the filmic scene. Teo argues that "the kung fu genre's treatment of form, content and character accelerated the break with the kind of realism codified by the Cantonese family melodramas popular throughout the 50s and 60s" (137). This experimentation and themes of "social relevance" paved the way for a new cinema. By crossing the fixed boundaries between genres, experimenting with cinematographic techniques, and developing controversial themes with more universal appeal, innovators like Lung Kong, Tang Shuxuan, and Michael Hui reinvented Cantonese-speaking cinema. Lung conflated different genres while tackling sensational themes never treated before like prostitution, drug abuse, and social hysteria. Tang was the first to deal with a highly political and politicized theme—the traumatic effects of the territory's return to China—in highly experimental art films. Hui's films

not only marked the cinematic revival of the Cantonese dialect, but also revamped Cantonese cinema itself. Unlike former Cantonese films, he addressed both Cantonese-speaking and Mandarin-speaking audiences with universal themes and characters, rather than with local clichés and problematics. A new identity was emerging in the territory, that of the Hongkongese individual, whose concerns and aesthetic radically differed from the ones of their mainland relative and whose sympathies lied in the place that they had learned to recognize as home.

It is this concern with personal as well as cinematic identity that produced the bulk of new wave cinema from 1979 to 1982. In keeping with the genre experimentation initiated by Lung, Tang, and Hui, many new wave filmmakers chose to debut with crime thrillers, precisely because of the genre's adaptability, and to cater to the tastes of a more demanding public and a changing world. The audiences of the 1980s were more cynical, on one hand, and more sophisticated, on the other hand, than the audiences of the 1950s and 1960s. Many of them had grown up amid the political disturbances of the 1960s, events that began to shape a distinctively Hongkongese political identity; many of them had even been exposed to Western cultures and ideologies. As 1997 approached, more and more directors started to develop themes that explored the conflicting feelings of Hongkongers in the wake of the return to China. Mostly trained in television, New Wave filmmakers gave Hong Kong cinema a distinctive identity by experimenting with form, content, technique, production, design, and scriptwriting.

1.4.3 Revolutionary Art: From Canton to Hong Kong[3]

> Cantonese eccentric painters are perhaps more numerous
> than northern ones, just as Cantonese revolutionaries are also
> characteristic (the great Taiping Rebellion had its origin in Kwantung,
> and Sun Yat-sen was a Cantonese, partly educated in Hong Kong).
>
> Nigel Cameron, "Art in Hong Kong Today"

As early British colonizers did not intend to transform Hong Kong into a place of cultural pretension, the history of what we could call Hongkongese contemporary art does not start until the early twentieth century with the arrival of people who strongly promoted the arts in the territory. The founding of the Hong Kong Art Club (1925), the Guangdong Association for the Study of Chinese Painting, Hong Kong Branch (1926), the Lai Ching Art Institute (1928), the Hong Kong Fine Arts Institute (1930) and other organizations, the first special art inset in a newspaper in Chinese (1925), the first "native" art exhibitions in Hong Kong, and the first courses in fine arts in local colleges followed suit. By mid-century the Hong Kong Academy of Arts was founded. And soon after that, art made its way into secondary education, when the Education Department decided to include painting in the examination syllabus for junior and senior students in 1954. The following year, and in order not to lag behind these local forays into the arts, the British Council had no choice but to organize the first Hong Kong Arts Festival. The publication of art magazines (*Outlook*, 1952, *Artquarterly*, 1973, *Arts Monthly*, 1976, and *Artists*, 1978), the opening of galleries (Hong Kong Cultural Works, Oriental, and Chung Lo, 1954, Chatham and City Museum and Art Gallery HK, 1962, and The Art Gallery, CUHK, 1971, among others) and museums (Fung Ping Shan Library of University of HK renamed Fung Ping Shan Museum and City Museum and Art Gallery restructured into HK Museum of Art and HK Museum of History in 1975), and the founding of Departments of Fine Arts of Kingsway College

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[3]   All the information in this section comes from Hinterthür , Clarke and Ho, and "Chronology of Hong Kong Art Development."

(1958), Ching Kuo College (1961), Chinese University of HK (1963), Tsing Hua College (1969), and University of HK (1978) followed suit.

But in order to study Hong Kong art in the nineties, it is first necessary to understand this historical trajectory of the territory's art life. As David Clarke and Oscar Ho argue, the trajectory of Hong Kong's art is diametrically opposed to that of the mainland due to cultural, economic, and political factors that set Southern China apart from the rest of the country and Hong Kong from British colonizer and mainland neo-colonizer. The first influence in Hong Kong art comes from the Lingnan School (1930s), a term used to refer to the Three Masters of the Lingnan School, Eclectic School, or New National Painting, Gao Jianfu, Gao Qifeng, and Chen Shuren, and their students. This school revived the art of flower and bird painting (one of the three main categories in Chinese painting). Their greatest contribution was "the introduction of social consciousness and criticism into art" (Hinterthür 38). It could be said that because of its distance from the seat of imperial power, Guangdong province was considered backward, peripheral, and rural. As a result, Cantonese people developed a double vision that still nowadays constitutes an integral part of their essence. This, in turn, made them revolutionaries and nonconformists. The Taiping revolution started in Guangdong, the Anglo-Chinese Wars were fought in the South China seas, Sun Yat-sen was from that area. As a "reformist" group, the Lingnan school played with both traditional Chinese and nontraditional Chinese elements in their works to make incisive comments on the political affairs of the country and to rebel against the visual regimes of traditional art. With their anti-dynastic background, they painted scenes that represented resistance to the invaders, the birth of a new order, and the celebration of difference. Hinterthür argues that the Lingnan School was "crucial to the development of Hong Kong painting" with their "bold technical and stylistic innovations, their iconoclastic combination of Oriental and

Western elements, and the socio-political dimension of their art" (48). The Communist takeover brought a flood of Chinese artists who, along with local Hongkongese artists returning from abroad, injected the artistic scene of Hong Kong with new directions. Both groups contribute to create a new type of Chinese art, a precursor of Hong Kong art in the nineties. Some advocated the modernization of Chinese art within the traditional canon, while others leaned towards an artistic fusion of East and West. According to Hinterthür, these post-war artists "heralded the development of modern art as we know it, in Hong Kong" because they were "instrumental in changing the attitudes and directions art would take in the future" (80).

The next generations of artists proved to be more experimental and took more artistic licenses than their predecessors. It was in the year 1956 when Modern Literature and Art Association was founded by writers and poets. Four years later they organized an event to popularize the visual arts in Hong Kong. In the next two decades, a great variety of artistic groups—the Circle group (1964), the Shui-Mo painters (1968), the One Art Group (1970), Visual art Society (1974), Front Group, Hong Kong Sculptors Association (1982), Graphic Society and INGROUP (1974), among others—had emerged and exhibited diverse interests and skills. They worked different media, more often than not, mixing disparate materials, genres, and media. To Hinterthür, the trademark of the sixties is "clash" and the trademark of the seventies is "consolidation," but the eighties are an "open forum" for even more creativity (171). A "more experimental tendency" and "an emphasis on socio-political and environmental problems" was expected from the nineties on (171). And that is exactly the direction that art in Hong Kong has taken since Hinterthür's *Modern Art in Hong Kong* was published in 1985.

1.4.4 The Literary Scene: What is Hong Kong Literature?[4]

> "There is a force of exultation, a celebration of luck, when a writer
> finds himself a witness to the early morning of a culture that is defining itself,
> branch by branch, leaf by leaf, in that self-defining dawn [. . .]. The personal
> vocabulary, the individual melody whose metre is one's biography,
> joins in that sound, with any luck, and the body moves like a walking,
> a waking island . . . This is the benediction that is celebrated, a fresh language
> and a fresh people, and this is the frightening duty owed."

Derek Walcott, Nobel Prize Lecture, 1992.

The craggy piece of land that Lord Palmerston once scorned and that China mindlessly ceded after its defeat during the first Anglo-Chinese War, metamorphosed into one of the economic and cultural hubs of Asia. Yet, forsaken by the motherland and never fully occupied by the British, Hong Kong stood as an orphaned child nobody wanted to claim and as an abducted girl waiting to be possessed by the conqueror. As a result, one hundred and sixty six years after the cession of Hong Kong and ten years after its handover to China, it still suffers an identity crisis produced by the colonial legacy. In the literary world, a bulk of what is done in the field of postcolonial studies revolves around the literatures of former Commonwealth members (several African countries, India, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, some Caribbean countries, some South Pacific Island countries, and Sri Lanka), U.S. literatures, and even Latin American literatures, but has completely ignored the case of Hong Kong . The former status of Hong Kong, not as a colony like English-speaking countries such as India, Australia, Trinidad and Tobago, and South Africa, but as a British Dependent Territory and its current status as a Special Administrative Region of China complicates this panorama even further. As William Tay argues in "Colonialism, the Cold War Era, and Marginal Space: The Existential Condition of Five Decades of Hong Kong Literature," "Although ruled by the British for a century and a half, Hong Kong differs from Africa, India and the Caribbean in that it does not have a tradition

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[4]   All the information in this section comes from Xu and Ingham, Lau, and Tay.

of literary writing in English" (Tay 31). Indeed, Tay's article itself belongs to a critical survey not of, say, Commonwealth literature or Hong Kong literature, but of Chinese literature. Furthermore, in *Hong Kong's Colonial Legacy*, veteran journalist C.K. Lau takes an extreme position in affirming that "there is absolutely no English-language Hong Kong literature" (111).

Literati are less radical. In the foreword to *City Voices: Hong Kong Writing in English, 1945 to the Present*, well-known academician and poet Louise Ho voices the feelings of isolation of those who write in English in Hong Kong: "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" (qtd. in Xu xiii).   It might be true that Hong Kong literature is not composed of a strong body of works written in English, but the tradition certainly exists. It is that scantiness that should precisely push the meager community of HK writers in English to, in Mike Ingham's words, make use of the collaborative efforts of local publishers, academics, expatriate writers, emerging voices, and the Hong Kong Writers' Circle, and promote this new wave of English writing (Xu 1). To his co-editor, Xu Xi, "city voices in English have existed and continue to do so" (17).

Some theories have been offered to extricate the origins of this weak literary tradition of Hong Kong writing in English.   Ingham argues that "In a community that is approximately 98 percent Cantonese speaking and one that is, in theory at least, post-colonial in consciousness, it is clear that for the population at large and for the burgeoning Chinese-language literary scene, local English writing must be seen at best as an irrelevance, at worst an irritating excrescence generated by the colonial era" (Xu 1). Lau believes that the colonial failure to transform Hong Kong into a truly bilingual society is to blame for. The city has undeniably become a global city, yet English has only been but the language of administration, commerce and law (*Hong Kong's*

Colonial Legacy 101). In countries with several ethnic groups and languages or dialects such as India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka or Singapore, English did become a lingua franca that allowed colonizers to communicate with the colonized, but not in a society where the majority of the Chinese population has always been of Cantonese extraction. Another problem that did not pave the way for English to become ingrained in the island was its unusual status as a "borrowed place" within a "borrowed time." England was never able to take over the whole China. Throughout centuries, trade in limited Chinese ports and then exclusively in Canton was the closest thing for the British Empire to colonizing that country. As a result of the Anglo-Chinese Wars, Hong Kong, then Kowloon, and finally the New Territories were added to the British Empire. Throughout the years, a flood of immigrants were coming from and going to the mainland, so that there was not a sizeable stationary population. Then, the 1960s marked the beginning of Hongkongese massive immigration to the West (my parents and other relatives included among those) mainly because of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and the threat of Communism. The temporary status of Hong Kong as a British Dependent Territory must have also encouraged its citizens to resist linguistic domination. As Lau contends, they belong to a special breed who at times will side with the motherland when confronted with the foreign invader, but other times will claim their own individuality on the grounds of dialect, degree of Westernization, and historical experiences. These are special conditions that partly explain the scant literature written in English in Hong Kong.

What is Hong Kong literature though? Is it a body of writings by and about Hongkongese authors writing in Chinese? Or is it a body of writings by expatriates living in Hong Kong or former Hong Kong residents living in other countries? Should literary works always be written in Chinese or in the language of the colonizer or even in other languages? Should they always be

about Hong Kong, its history and stories, and its people or about other less local themes? Tay

does not answer all of the above questions, but at least sheds some light on the origins of a truly

local Hongkongese literature:

> The existence of literature in Hong Kong has always depended on newspaper
> literary supplements, magazines, and publishing houses. Seen in the context of
> the ideological battle of the Cold War years, these forums for literature can be
> subsumed under three categories: those with foreign economic (and political)
> backgrounds, those produced by in-house writers' groups and enjoying relative
> independence, and those aimed strictly at profit. (34)

What Tay calls the "premodern" era of Hong Kong, the 1950s and 1960s, was a very active

period for the literature written in Chinese. The leading leftist newspapers *Wenhuibao*,

Dagonbao, and *Xinwanbao* had long been publishing weekly supplements on literature and the

arts (obviously with a political agenda). The main right-wing newspaper *Xianggang shibao*

(*Hong Kong times*) had its own literary supplement, the "Qianshuiwan," (Repulse Bay), speaking

on behalf of modernism in the territory. However, many contributors to these sections were

mainland writers as well as writers from Taiwan. Even (pro-Taiwan) commercial newspapers

like *Xingdao ribao* (*Sing Tao daily*) and *Huqiao ribao* (*Overseas Chinese daily*) had supplements

that periodically featured literary pieces. In the 1970s, the decade that some critics like Tay

identify as the beginning of the modern era in Hong Kong (33), a new generation of local writers

began to emerge. Thus, the writings of emerging figures such as Xi Xi and Ye Si (a.k.a. P.K.

Leung) were serialized.

Regarding literary magazines, the competition between left and right triggered by the

Cold War was represented by two diametrically opposed magazines of the 1950s: *Renren*

wenxue (*Everyone's literature*) and *Wenyi xinchao* (*New waves in literature and art*). In the next decades, the works by leading Taiwanese writers, leftist writings, translated pieces, and critical articles took prominence in Chinese language magazines in Hong Kong. Whether in commercial or literary, comprehensive or specific, rightist or leftist magazines or journals, contributors had plenty of options to publish their works, and the literary scene in Hong Kong was definitely growing.

These historiographies show an intriguing pattern in regards to nation formation and identity formulation processes. All of them point to the transformations brought about by China's closed border policy. But not only that: all of them describe the decade of the seventies as the time when noticeable changes were being effected in the fields of architecture, film, art, and literature. My intention in drawing these relations between different aspects of Hong Kong's cultural history is to unfold, in subsequent chapters, this pattern of cultural production in synchronization with the emergence of the Hongkongese identity and quasi-nation at the imminence of the transfer of sovereignty. In chapter two, my main aim is to discuss the fictionality of historiographical discourse in order to mock obsolete official discourses and liberate the potential of local stories to carve out a unique space for Hongkongers. With that said, the next three chapters are devoted to narrate and extricate local stories of cultural production to show the effects of colonization and recolonization on Hongkongers.

CHAPTER 2: AN INSULAR POSSESSION,
 THE FICTIONALIZATION OF HISTORY

"History, too, is a montage of images,
Of paper, collectibles, plastic, fibres,
Laser discs, buttons. […]
Write with a different color for each voice;
OK, but how trivial can you get?
Could a whole history be concocted like this?"

P.K. Leung, "Images of Hong Kong"

2.1 History or Story?

The notion of history as a teleological *grand récit* is rooted in the fact that, rather than an objective collection of a series of past events that are ultimately accepted as factual, history is the careful selection and ensuing interpretation of past occurrences. This is a view that critics from different disciplines share. Hans Kellner proposes a "crooked reading" of history aimed at making obvious the links among rhetoric, reality, and representation. He contends that it is the cultural form we choose to represent reality that gives the illusion that reality is continuous and that, therefore, history is linear. Critics like Stephen Bann, Roland Barthes, Dominick LaCapra, Paul Ricoeur, and Hayden White among others agree that by purposefully unfocusing—that is, reading a cultural text distortedly—the constructed, rhetorical, nature of our knowledge of the past is put into the foreground and the purposes of our retrospective creations are brought out into the open (Kellner 7). To illustrate the rhetorical nature of history, Kellner argues that the manner in which historians begin or end a historiography reflects the question of purposeful choices and the ways these choices affect the histories they narrate and reveal how they (re)process historical understanding. Another rhetorical strategy that historians seem to employ is figurative language,

> regulative metaphors of history, which generate explanations rather than adorn them: the organic figures of growth, life-cycles, roots, seeds, and so on; the figures of time with their rises and falls, weather catastrophes, seasons, twilights; the figures of movement (flow of events, crossroads, wheels); the technical figures of construction, gears, chains; theatrical figures of stage, actors, contest. Most of all, of course, the figure of History as pedagogue, ever 'teaching' 'lessons.' (8)

Besides metaphors of history, there is also the question of historical emplotment, the idea that, according to Ricoeur, plot regulates and steers our readings and interpretations of history. Thus, what Kellner ultimately suggests is that historiographies can be read in the same way as fiction stories.

History is a whimsical genre that never recounts events from a simple objective perspective. Like fiction writers, historians are confronted with a series of choices to chronicle their material. From the focus of a particular historical document to the language and diction to the point of view employed by the chronicler, it all comes down to the purposeful analysis, evaluation, and selection of materials to narrate one possible version of the events at stake. David Cowart asserts that a deconstruction of Aristotle, Hegel, Croce, Collingwood—that is, a deconstruction of texts on the philosophy of history—would disclose the uneasy question of whether to interpret history as science or as art (14). According to Hayden White, "continental European thinkers—from Valery and Heidegger to Sartre, Levi-Strauss, and Michel Foucault— have cast serious doubts on the value of a specifically 'historical' consciousness, stressed the fictive character of historical reconstructions, and challenged history's claims to a place among the sciences (1-2).

Indeed, this debate is a recent one since in antiquity it was widely accepted that history had a constructed nature. In the introduction to Alessandro Manzoni's *On the Historical Novel*, Sandra Bermann highlighted the link between history and rhetoric that had existed since Cicero described the former as a "particularly demanding opus oratorium," thus, recognizing the rhetorical as well as the fictional implications of historical writing (Manzoni 16). When history was subsumed by rhetoric, it was modified so that instead of merely accumulating descriptive detail, it tended toward mimicking the same unifying principles of rhetoric: "More than ever

before, history sorted and construed its documents, generalized from them, even manipulated them in order to please and persuade" (17). She goes on to explain that during the Renaissance, history largely documented "God's greater plan" according to Petrarch, Coluccio, Salutati, and Poggio Bracciolini. Even Manzoni shared this belief but with a twist. He did not believe that history was "guided every step of the way by God, but committed as well to the psychology of human choice" (19).

To Robert Young, the history of the Western world is made up of white mythologies. By opening his critique of Western historiography with an account of the Algerian French Jewish academician, Hélène Cixous, Young emphasizes the teleological nature of the writing of history in the West: "I saw that the great, noble, 'advanced' countries established themselves by expelling what was 'strange'; excluding it but not dismissing it; enslaving it. A commonplace gesture of History: there have to be *two* races—the masters and the slaves" (qtd. in Young, *White Mythologies* 1). Young argues that what Cixous criticizes in this passage is Hegelian dialectic and by implication Marxism and their participation in producing and circulating forms of knowledge complicit with forms of oppression. History, says Young, is for Cixous "another forgotten *story* of oppression" [my emphasis]: "Already I know all about the 'reality' that supports History's progress: everything throughout the centuries depends on the distinction between the Selfsame, the ownself . . . and that which limits it: so now what menaces my-own-good . . . is the 'other'" (qtd. in Young 2). But rather than blaming Hegel for making that dialectic possible, she blames the "Hegelian machinery" for facilitating the operations of a pre-existing system of inclusion/exclusion, namely, Western History.

From Cicero to poststructuralist and postcolonial critics like Cixous and Young, the view on history has been that is has functioned as a narrative meant to persuade the average,

unquestioning individual of humanity's progression towards an expected *telos*, be it God's greater plan or the ideological designs of a group in power. That is why I find Michel Foucault's distinction between "effective" history and traditional history useful to read and analyze a historical fiction like *An Insular Possession*. While the former "becomes 'effective' to the degree that it introduces discontinuity in our very being," the latter aims at "dissolving the singular event into an ideal continuity—as a teleological movement or as a natural process" (Foucault, "Nietszche, Genealogy, History" 88). Effective history dispels the myth of necessary continuity to an event that rather than being "a decision, a treaty, a reign, or a battle, [is] the reversal of a relationship of forces, the usurpation of power, the appropriation of a vocabulary turned against those who had once used it, a feeble domination that poisons itself as it grows lax, the entry of a 'masked' other" (88). To recapitulate, to Bermann, Cixous, Young, and Foucault, rather than the objective collection of a series of past events, history is the careful selection and ensuing interpretation of past events that are conventionally accepted as factual.

As an Oxford educated History major, writer Timothy Mo addresses history theories and reflections like those of Kellner, Ricoeur, White, Bermann, Cixous, Foucault, and others and proposes yet another twist to Kellner's theory: the possibility of representing fiction as an objective genre like history. A proposal of this nature certainly begs the question, what is the historical novel: is it exclusively the type of fiction that made Sir Walter Scott the forefather of all historical novels or is it a hybrid genre shaped by cultural, historical and geographical considerations? As the novel is the only one of the three major literary genres born after the emergence of the written word, its conventions are not as distinctly defined as those of drama and poetry, genres shaped by the use of mnemonic devices and spectatorial conventions. The novel's capacity to mimic the socio-ideological languages of literary and nonliterary genres

poses problems of classification and produces disagreements as to whether particular types such as the epistolary, the confessional, and the picaresque novels, among others, are subtypes or only mutations of the genre. The historical novel is not exempt from this controversy, especially two centuries after Sir Walter Scott allegedly created the genre in the Western world.

According to George Lukács, the historical novel emerges as the indirect result of the French Revolution, the revolutionary wars, and the rise and fall of Napoleon because for the first time, history became a mass experience when major parts of Europe changed into a war arena (23-24). The mass armies and civilians involved in those events started "to comprehend their own existence as something historically conditioned, for them to see in history something which deeply affect[ed] their daily lives and immediately concern[ed] them" (24). As these "real mass movements" gave people a sense of historicity, especially during a century when processes of nation and identity formation were heavily shaping up Europe, national histories were being forged as teleological narratives: "The appeal to national independence and national character is necessarily connected with a re-awakening of national history, with memories of the past, of past greatness, of moments of national dishonor, whether this results in a progressive or reactionary ideology" (25). This was the socio-historical panorama that made possible the materialization of the first modern historical novel, Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley*, in 1814, and later on, of a long chain of imitators and innovators of the historical fiction. When Manzoni was writing *On the Historical Novel*, between 1828 and 1850, the genre was becoming widely accepted, to a great extent, because of the Industrial Revolution and the rise of the European nation-state, and that is why the historical novel became the perfect vehicle to carry revolutionary and nationalist-imperialist (in European standards) messages.

In the next century, historical fiction was evolving to the point that its outgrowth, the new

historical novel, also known as postmodern historiographic metafiction, became less interested in

understanding history as the ultimate truth and more interested in rewriting it from the multiple

perspectives of nonmainstream peoples. Linda Hutcheon asserts that historiographic metafiction:

> refutes the natural or common-sense methods of distinguishing between historical
>
> fact and fiction. It refutes the view that only history has a truth claim, both by
>
> questioning the ground of that claim in historiography and by asserting that both
>
> history and fiction are discourses, human constructs, signifying systems, and both
>
> derive their main claim to truth from that identity. [It] also refuses the relegation
>
> of the extratextual past to the domain of historiography in the name of the
>
> autonomy of art. (93)

Following Hutcheon's thread of discursivity, in *Latin America's New Historical Novel* Seymour

Menton describes the genre as an ambiguous combination of reality and history, a conscious

distortion of historical facts, with recognizable historical figures as protagonists, and the use of

metafiction, intertextuality, and the carnivalesque (23-24). Both Hutcheon and Menton agree

that, first, there has to be a conscious effort to blur the line between fiction and fact and, second,

that structural choices largely define the debunking in this kind of fiction.

In between Scott's *Waverley* and the historiographic metafiction, other critics have

proposed theories not just to define, but also to analyze the historical novel. The typologies of

Harry E. Shaw in *The Forms of Historical Fiction: Sir Walter Scott and His Successors* (1983)

and David Cowart in *History and the Contemporary Novel* (1989), are the most comprehensive

ones that critique and understand historical fictions about contemporary Hong Kong. Shaw

argues that "works of standard historical fiction" have made use of history in three ways that

may coexist in the same work: 1) history as pastoral (history provides "an ideological screen

onto which the preoccupations of the present are projected for clarification and solution, or for disguised expression"), 2) history as a source of dramatic energy that vivifies a fictional story and can produce melodramatic effects but also cathartic effects, and 3) history as subject (52). On the other hand, Cowart argues that a discussion of historical fiction can be organized under four rubrics: 1) the way it was—fictions where the authors aspire to historical verisimilitude, 2) the way it will be—fictions where authors reverse history to contemplate the future, 3) the turning point—fictions where authors aim at locating the specific moment when the present became what it is, and 4) the distant mirror—fictions where the present is projected into the past (8-9). An overview of Lukács and Hutcheon, on one hand, and Shaw and Cowart, on the other hand, only shows the lack of consensus regarding definitions and functions of the historical novel. Returning to my initial question: is the historical novel exclusively the type of fiction that made Scott the forefather of all historical novels or is there room for a new historical novel?, it is plausible to claim that as an outgrowth of the socio-political context of the nineteenth century, Scott's type of historical fiction served as a vessel of grand narratives then, but in modern times, ludicrous historical fictions are written to deauthorize the phallocentric pens that have crafted historiography as the white male mythologies of the West. In other words, the new historical novel is chameleonic and brazen. Mo's *Insular* perfectly exemplifies that.

2.2 *An Insular Possession*: novel or historiography?

Anglo-Chinese Timothy Mo's *ouvre* reflects the same unconventionality, even eccentricity, which characterizes the author. The Eurasian son of a Cantonese lawyer and a British mother, he was born in Hong Kong but educated in England from the age of eight. In an interview entitled "Mo Can Do," Murray Waldren reveals intriguing facts about the personality,

beliefs, and professional ethic of Mo. For one thing, Mo seems to have a grudge against the literary canon: "Gabriel García Márquez? 'a pompous, grandiloquent old fart.' Graham Green? 'A middle-brow entertainer.' Kingsley Amis? 'I am a twenty-five times better novelist'" (qtd. in Waldren 241). To these diatribes, Mo adds "The English literary establishment is pretty insufferable. I think their books are small-scale and unambitious, mean and inward-looking. The general educated reading public wants the Amis/Iris Murdoch strain, and I detest that. I used to think people like Kazuo Ishiguro, Salman Rushdie and Julian Barnes had stirred that pot up a bit, either with their exoticness or sheer brilliance, but it hasn't done anything to change podgy British taste" (241-42).   His self-righteous remarks could be considered arrogance, but are actually part of a survival strategy that he must have developed, first, as a local student receiving a "Chinese classical education at the Convent of the Precious Blood" where the "ferocious Cantonese nuns" expected inquisitive pupils to keep their lips sealed (qtd. In Vlitos 307) and, second, as a foreign child being snickered at and beaten up in the racist schools of England for having the right answers. After being repressed, ignored, or discriminated, he turned to boxing, and quite a fighter he became as evinced by what some have called petulance, others excess, and by his constant attempts to reinvent his writing and his unwillingness to pander to publishing giants like Random House, Viking, and others.

As author of other works that deal with individuals in the margins of society— *The Redundancy of Courage* (1991), *Brownout on Breadfruit Boulevard* (1995), *and Renegade or Halo[2]* (1999)—Mo has strived to depict a wide range of experiences, from colonial resistance to political and corporate corruption to cultural dislocation. Mo had written about a male foreigner married into the household of a traditionally Chinese family in Hong Kong (*The Monkey King,* 1978) and a Chinese family living in England (*Sour Sweet,* 1982) before he wrote *An Insular*

Possession (1986) a historical novel about merchants making a living in Canton, Macao, and Hong Kong in the 1830s and 1840s. Mo employs several strategies to convince his readers that, rather than a fictional account of Hongkongese history, they are reading a true historical account of the events that led to the first Anglo-Chinese War. In order to accomplish a crooked reading of, not history but fiction, he employs form, content, and particular tropes in purposeful ways.

2.2.1 Formal Conventions

The first strategy that Mo employs is ludicrously playing with formal conventions to give the illusion that rather than a fictional account his is a historiography. He intentionally reconstructs the typical settler/chronicler narrative through the language:

> The river succours and impedes native and foreigner alike; it limits and it enables, it isolates and it joins. It is the highway of commerce and it is a danger and a nuisance. Children fall off fragile naïve craft; drunken sailors topple from the decks of the Company's chequered ships. Along with the rest of the city's effluvia the river sweeps the victims out to sea. Thus, for centuries it has fulfilled the functions of road and, as rivers will, cloaca. Its appearance changes, if not its uses. (Mo 5)

The opening lines of the novel set the mood as Mo not only mimics an archaic use of the English language—as if to set the novel in a century infamous for imperial and capitalistic practices, but also makes his narrator the chronicler, geographer, and colonizer of his personal version of the events that led to a permanent settlement in Hong Kong. In personifying the river, Mo also alludes to the eponymous river in what is considered the paradigmatic novel on imperialism—*Heart of Darkness*, and in the process he unleashes the potential of effective histories to turn

master narratives upside down. Thus, his novel is not told from the point of view of imperialists exploiting the natural or human resources of the region or from the vindicated voices of the exploited and oppressed natives, but from the relatively neutral position of a third group—in this case, American expatriates like Walter Eastman and Gideon Chase.

Another element that adds authenticity to Mo's account is his use of framing or incorporated genres. "Such genres," says Mikhail Bakhtin, "introduce into the novel their own languages [which] are primarily significant for making available points of view that are generative in a material sense, since they exist outside literary conventionality and thus have the capacity to broaden the horizon of language available to literature" (323). By incorporating the discourses of periodical publications which may have actually not existed and of letters which may only be a figment of Mo's imagination, he playfully makes his readers question, not the authenticity, but the fictionality of the characters and events. First, when he interpolates excerpts from two newspapers, *The Canton Monitor* or *The Lin Tin Bulletin and River Bee*, and letters written by some of the major characters, he employs a smaller typeface as if to set apart fictional discourse from journalistic and testimonial discourses. Second, he attaches two appendices that add even more to this jocular "overlap" of factual sources and fabrication. In the first one, he "reproduces" entries from *A Gazetteer of Place Names and Biographies Relative to the Early China Coast*, a sort of "Who's who?" in the Canton, Macao and Hong Kong of the 1830s and 1840s. The appendix includes the brief biographies of historical figures like Lord Napier, Sir Henry Pottinger, and Captain Charles Elliot, but the bios of fictional characters like Alice Barclay Remington, Harry O'Rourke, and Gideon Chase coexist hand in hand, adding more to the poor reader's confusion. The narrator tells us that while Alice and Gideon left a written legacy behind them—letters and a journal the former and varied publications the latter, nothing

but two daguerreotypes of the original works was left from O'Rourke's paintings, which perished in two fires. The second appendix is constituted by excerpts from Professor Gideon Chase's autobiography entitled *The Morning of My Days*. If a perspicacious reader was not fooled by either the interpolations of periodicals or epistles or the entries from the *Gazetteer*, then the allusion to Gideon Nye, an American businessman who actually worked in the American *hong* in Canton in the 1830s and to his lecture "The Morning of My Life in China," could finally persuade him that Gideon Chase may not be as fictitious.

One last consideration in my attempt to prove how Mo's *Insular* critiques form as a prerequisite for genre is Chase's article "On the Literary Modes of the Chinese," published in the third issue of the second volume of the *Lin Tin*. In comparing the Chinese prose romance to the nineteenth-century Western novel (American, British, French, Spanish, German), Mo cleverly employs the language of the explorer/colonizer to describe the latter, which "unfolds itself along a path which to all practical intents and purposes is *linear*, of 180 degrees as the navigator might say, or a reciprocal course. It may ramble, but essentially it proceeds along a course of cause and effects, each contributing to the movement of the whole" (Mo 359). In contrast, the native novel "moves in a path which is altogether *circular*. It is made up of separate episodes [. . .] joined by the loosest of threads. It chooses to emphasize incident, character, and language. It usually contains long passages or extracts of poetry, fable, song, and essays, lists of goods, recipes, formulas for patent medicines, and even spells" (359). Although produced within a Western literary tradition like the English one, *Insular* stands out as a hybrid form of historical fiction, a mix of both the Western gaze and Eastern sensibilities. The novel certainly tries to challenge historiographical discourse by imitating and even mocking it and, therefore, following a linear progression of cause and effect, but that linear progression is at times broken by the insertion of

other literary and nonliterary discourses within the narrative. Besides, the conscious act of going back to the past, expressed by the intentional recreation of archaic language, contributes to break the chronological line of events, as Mo writes about the 1830s and 1840s in the 1980s (a crucial decade for Hong Kong) and as present and future (1980s and 1990s) are sometimes projected onto the past, as pastoral. Referring to the Western novel and the Chinese prose romance, Chase concludes: "The former is a mighty river pushing to the sea, swollen by tributaries, diverging into deltas, but ultimately meeting its end in the Ocean. The other is a still lake" (359). The former is a traditional history; the other is made up of effective histories.

2.2.2 Content

Regarding content, in making a couple of Americans the protagonists of his novel Mo opens up a space for a third nationality or identity to shape up and, in the process, he enhances a reading of fiction as a historiographical text, not of the past *but* of the present. That is, he makes a novel purportedly about the history of the cession of Hong Kong to Britain, not only one more cultural artifact produced after the Sino British Joint Declaration in 1984 and about the particular nation formation and identity formulation processes triggered by the return to China, but also a chronicle of those processes. That is why it can be said that the characters and the events in the novel perform an intrafictional function within the novel and a metafictional function outside the novel. Walter Eastman constantly complains about the biased views of *The Canton Monitor*, so it is no surprise that when the circumstances push Eastman and Chase to run their own periodical, they offer a voice that counteracts the bigoted comments of their competitor. That is, they represent another space of signification and give voice to a segment of the population that has remained in the margins. Rather than a fabrication of events that favors the British and justifies

their unlawful trade, *The Lin Tin Bulletin and River Bee* offers fresh stories about the various peoples who populate the Pearl River delta and criticizes the greed of Western profit-makers. True to their professional integrity, Eastman and, especially Chase, report not only events in the area from the opposite perspective, but also the various effective histories of both Chinese and foreigners instead of a single history that aims at showing progression towards a teleological end. In their second issue, they publish one such effective history: "Both Kwangtung and Kwangsi provinces [. . .] were until recent times—speaking in a historical, rather than an individual's span—almost wholly inhabited by aborigine tribes" later invaded by the northern Chinese (285). The historical accounts of a single Han people who had inhabited the "Kingdom of the Middle"—China—for centuries, is wholly a fabrication that the periodical points out. In the end, Eastman and Chase, in their role as "objective" reporters, and Mo, in his authorial position, appropriate the role of historiographers whose loyalties lie with neither foreigners nor locals, but with and against both.

Gideon Chase, in particular, embodies that third space of signification as he is willing to learn from and about the local people and customs. First he is not as contemptuous of all things foreign as a rather racist Eastman. Then, Chase learns Chinese calligraphy, an art that is both verbal and visual as opposed to Eastman's merely visual hobbies: painting and daguerreotypy. Chase learns calligraphy as art form, but also as a gateway to the language and as a means to understand the host culture. Thereby, he becomes a mediator between the East and the West, first as a reporter of local stories about Southern China and concrete practices considered barbaric by Westerners and, later, as a translator between Captain Elliot and the Chinese emissaries and as a compassionate defender of the victims of the Anglo-Chinese war, regardless of their nationality. During the war, he could be seen both carrying wounded British soldiers

and saving local women from being raped by Indian Sepoys, collaborating for the British and helping locals to escape. As a correspondent of the *Lin Tin* and an eyewitness of some of the battles between China and Britain, Chase reports what he observes on board of British war crafts and on Chinese territory as well, often contradicting the *Monitor*'s biased news stories and revealing the economic and political interests of the merchants. He stands as a linguistic phenomenon to both his fellow expatriates and the Chinese. Chase's acquisition of the Chinese language is beyond Eastman and O'Rourke's comprehension, and to the Chinese he addresses in their dialect, he is a marvel at times, a freak at other times.

Another example of how Mo uses content to arouse a crooked reading of fiction can be found in the celebration of America's independence by a select group of expatriates in Macao. It gives Eastman an excuse to rant and rave against the British colonizer in the *Lin Tin*'s fifteenth issue, dated July 18th 1838:

> Whenever Americans gathered together on this day they had a right to be gay, yet there was a serious aspect to their assembly for they celebrated their delivery from despotism. This had not been an iniquitous so much as a galling tyranny, but then the gnat's bite was more irritating than that of the dog, which was not repeated ad infinitum. [. . .] He concluded with a wish to the effect that the present difficulties in the China trade might be soon and peacefully resolved and without recourse to bangs and fusees, louder, uglier, and more injurious than the handsome spectacle they had just witnessed, but that it would not be *their* government which would be first to shed innocent blood. (332-33)

As a former British network of colonial settlements and given the imminent armed conflict between Britain and China, the United States stood as the ideal of freedom and democracy and as

a little giant that had fought the Motherland and defeated it. Perhaps it was a slanted allusion to the cession of Hong Kong to Britain and a veiled message on Hong Kong's particular situation when Mo published *Insular* in 1987? The inclusion of two Americans as the protagonists establishes some similarities between the American and Chinese histories: both groups were disdained by the British and considered inferior; both territories were relatively unexplored by the white European man, and the American nationality stands out as a third nationality in the conflict between England and China, just as Hong Kong would develop its own quasi-national identity despite its links to colonizer and motherland. In the celebration of the American independence there are allusions to a desired decolonization in pre-Handover Hong Kong. By projecting the preoccupations of the present onto the past, that is, by employing the present as a distant mirror, Mo makes use of history as pastoral. The history of the first Anglo-Chinese war, infamously known as the first Opium War, and of the subsequent settlement in the island of Hong Kong, provides "an ideological screen onto which the preoccupations of the present are projected for clarification and solution, or for disguised expression" (Shaw 52). The traumatic events foreshadowed by the Sino British negotiations were projected onto Mo's novel to criticize the exclusion of the territory from decisions about its fate. The way it was collides with the way it is in 1980s Hong Kong causing past and present to overlap and, therefore, enabling a critique of present events through a satirical work about the historical past of the territory. Eastman and Chase represented cultural producers like Mo himself, who through their cultural artifacts mocked official discourses and unveiled the potential of other spaces of signification to make and narrate stories of the local people.

2.2.3 Tropes

A third way in which Mo achieves a crooked reading of fiction is through the use of tropes. He establishes comparisons between (1) painting and fiction writing and (2) journalism and fiction writing. Regarding the first metaphor, painting as penmanship, Mo contrasts the painters of the novel and their artistry to, sometimes, himself and his mastery of the art of writing, and other times to the ideal writer's. The painter Harry O'Rourke is depicted as a temperamental old rogue: "Boaster, grand prevaricator, story-teller, wit and conversationalist of mighty reputation" (Mo 11) who believes himself to be a genius. Mo seems to pour a little, if not a lot, of his own personality in this fictional character who like him excels in recreating stories stroke by stroke. While Mo's pen is O'Rourke's brush, the former's blank page is the latter's canvas. But perhaps the most important similarity between writer and painter is their colonial status: Mo's as a Hong-Kong-born immigrant and O'Rourke's as an Irish subject. They are both in the margins of the Empire and that is probably the reason why they have eccentric personalities that repel many around them (and the reason Mo puts O'Rourke, along with former imperial subjects, Eastman and Chase, in a central role in the novel).

One of O'Rourke's works in the novel is an incomplete painting to be called "On Meridian's Verandah, Macao": "In the background will figure in order from left to right: one of Horsburgh's charts of the Malacca Straits, a globe, a telescope, hookah, fez (yes a fez), a dog called MacQuitty, a fowling-piece, a plate of sugared almonds, a raised-stand dish of Turkish delight, a pomelo, and three decanters which contain respectively port, sherry, and Madeira" (64). Mo employs ekphrasis as a rhetorical device to tell the history of colonization in the East. Thus, he makes O'Rourke allude to activities linked to master-subaltern relations like exploration, hunting, and commerce. Through his painting, he invokes James Horsburgh, a Scottish

hydrographer who worked for the East India Company during the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century. As a chartered joint-stock company, it had legitimated trade in the East Indies, a business that was deplorably linked to imperial practices. Navigational instruments like the charts and the telescope indirectly refer to the first expeditions of Western colonizers in Asia. The dog and the fowling-piece or shotgun represent the use of force to subjugate the natives. While guns can be used for sportsmanship, they can also be used for military or defensive purposes. In other words, Mo seems to depict the history of colonization as the result of the tedium of the white man and of the belligerence of the West. That is why the natives must necessarily be orientalized by means of the fez and the hookah, elements that represent the East as exotic and mysterious playthings to be conquered. Still nature elements such as the almonds, the dish of Turkish delight, the pomelo, and decanters complete the picture. As foodstuffs native to the East, the first three are a representation of the riches and knowledge extracted for the profit of the colonizer, whereas the decanters of sherry, port and Madeira refer to Portuguese commercial interests in the East, most specifically to their presence in Macao. Not by accident is the painting entitled "On Meridian's Verandah, Macao": Macao being the gathering place of the expatriate community in Southern China in the 1830s and Meridian being one of those unscrupulous profit-makers. Through the compositional elements of his painting, O'Rourke not only narrates a story, but also becomes a pictorial historiographer of nineteenth-century Asian colonization.

Walter Eastman is another pictorial historiographer. Trained by O'Rourke, he becomes interested in painting and another related visual art popular in the nineteenth century, the daguerreotype. Sublimely inspired by the Macanese landscape, he plays with colors and other compositional tools that allow him to make a painting, similarly to the way that a writer tells a

story:

> The water he sees as primrose where it is in the sun and chocolate under shade
> [. . .], then the clouds, the horizon, where all three seem to meet, he fuses in a play
> of light and shadow. The hawks, as inverted black Ws or figure 3s, squiggled
> with a single movement of the brush, are the clasps that hold the planes of sky and
> sea together. He thins the sky with a film of water, darkens a patch of cloud.
> Stands back and feels excited. (119)

Just as Eastman carefully chooses the thematic elements of his landscape painting, he makes sure to organize them on the canvas, develop the whole concept throughout the space, and add transitions to smooth the passage from one image to the next. But like historians, he also has to make choices. On looking at this painting, Alice Remington objects to his knack for painting creatively but unobjectively.

> 'But, Mr. Eastman, there is no tree here.'
>
> 'No tree?'
>
> 'Yes, the branch which runs along the top of your picture, it does not exist.'
>
> Eastman stares at her.
>
> 'Is there something wrong, Mr. Eastman? Pray do not look so.'
>
> Eastman pulls himself together. 'I beg your pardon Miss Remington. Most
> humbly I do. No, it is but a device, not exactly a convention, perhaps an accepted
> fiction, by which I may draw your eye in, make the scene complete and . . .
> somehow more outstanding.' (120)

Like history, Eastman's painting crafts a story, rather than narrates facts objectively. To him what matters is the effect on the interpreter of the text. Through Eastman's theory about the

acceptability of inventive devices like the made-up branch, Mo makes a point on the fictionality of history and the socially-constructed convention of a supposedly objective genre that is, in fact, not always objective but only verisimilitudinous. Telling a crooked version of the facts, contends a ludicrous Mo, makes them more thought-provoking and eye-opening since that act engages the reader in a more active interpretation. Thus the ambiguity in the novel: is it fiction or fact? And thus the question in the subsequent chapters of this dissertation: history or story? official or unofficial? central or marginal? communism or democracy? HK-SAR or independent nation?

A couple of chapters later, Mo teases his readers once more by making Eastman apparently contradict himself. While in the landscape painting he claims that fiction is what makes a scene complete, in cold-heartedly drawing a *coolie* bitten by a poisonous snake he claims that he does not tell stories.

> 'The spectators, Walter, where are they?'
>
> 'I omit them.'
>
> 'Why?'
>
> 'Because I choose to do so.'
>
> 'But they are part of the story, perhaps the largest part.'
>
> 'I do not tell a story.'
>
> 'But every picture should tell one.'
>
> 'Is that a fact?' (162)

However, not narrating stories in a painting does not necessarily mean that the artistic work has to be devoid of fictional elements. Like a historiographer, Eastman makes his own choices. He focuses on the suffering and disfigurement of the man, but erases all traces of the spectators half-

horrified and half-fascinated by the slow but convulsive death of the coolie. In omitting the spectators from his painting, he creates a fictional scene from which the eye of the passersby has been obliterated. Whether out of whim or after careful deliberation, he makes a choice. And having a choice is, in the case of his paintings, a way to tell (his)story and fictionalize the scenes represented on the canvas. Eastman is first and foremost passionate for painting and that is why it is most appropriate that his second occupation while in China is that of a journalist. He already has the vision of an artist, of a crafter.

The use of perspective and angles of vision, a technique usually associated with painting, is the most fitting device to intensify crooked readings of fiction. When teaching Alice how to paint, Eastman explains the laws of perspective from a Western point of view. He believes that the perspective or lack of it in native paintings makes them appear "flat and unnatural" (112). Coming from Eastman it might sound like bigotry (and it does), but Mo implies that the most revealing perspective is always a foreign one, meaning a defamiliarized perspective. That is, entering the work of art without preconceived beliefs. Not in vain does Mo put these words in the mouth of Eastman: "One's point of view is, after all, a matter of perspective. I don't talk of painting, mark you" (183). Putting things in a different perspective is precisely the *Lin Tin Bulletin and River Bee*'s purpose. Later on, when Eastman, Chase, and O'Rourke conceive the bulletin, perspective takes on a political meaning understood only through a mathematical metaphor: "Instances of modern triangles might be depicted thus:

ENGLAND

INDIA   CHINA

Which is a specimen of political geometry where the *angles* and *inclinations* on all sides are not equal, some being rather more *acute* than others" (291-92). Historiographical accounts have

portrayed the triangular relationship between England, India and China in ways that have favored the former. From the point of view of the colonizer, England or rather "Angland," the colonized are inferior peoples whose differences give the conquerors the right to tip the balance of power in their favor. So the widest angle corresponds to England while the acutest angles, while not equal, correspond to the subalterns: India's angle slightly wider than China's because of its earlier links with the empire. The result is a political triangle with unequal *sides* and *angles*. During the British invasion of Canton, the British send their Indian troops, the *sepoys*, at the vanguard to avoid casualties. The *sepoys*, however, take advantage of their privileges and indulge themselves in "[r]ape, robbery, arson and murder" (575) as Chase observes and reports in the *Lin Tin*. Shielded by their official status as messengers of the British Empire, the *sepoy* soldiers savagely desolate villages and take plunder. The *Lin Tin* satirically invokes the original act that led to the first Anglo-Chinese War to criticize this political bias: "It seems that when Commissioner Lin seized the 20,000 chests of opium, he violated the rights of property of the owners—but when it came to Chinese goods—why, it's only looting" (591).

Another comparison that Mo draws to enhance a crooked readings is that between journalistic discourse and fictional discourse. Outraged by the biased reporting of *The Canton Monitor*, the English expatriate community's official organ of mass communication, Eastman and Chase create a new periodical, *The Lin Tin Bulletin and River Bee*. Although Chase argues that written media is "merely an organ of opinion, not a creator of it" (134), the truth is that the written word, especially when framed by the journalistic genre can, more often than not, take sides, distort realities, and manipulate opinions as evinced by the *Monitor* and, ultimately, offer a different side of reality, like the *Lin Tin* does. The first issue of the latter, dated January 3, 1838, certainly makes a point on the ideological functions of journalistic discourse. Two epigraphs

summarize the editors' ideological position and, in turn, Mo's agenda:

> Oh printing! What troubles hast thou brought mankind? That lead when molded
>
> into bullets is not so mortal as when founded into letters.—Marvell
>
> [. . .]. A man has a voice because he is a man, and not because he is the possessor
>
> of money.—Cobbett (273)

The power to utter and spread one's beliefs only takes full force in the journalistic medium. And both Eastman and Chase intend to use that power to counter the one-sided and, more often than not, deprecative reports of the *Monitor*, even when in the process they make choices and become fictionalized as well. They claim to be the defenders of the concerns of the public and denounce "those organs for the dissemination of information and views" as "*instruments*" that serve the merchant class's self-interests, "promote partisan views," and view facts and events by means of a "specious and distorting eyeglass of interest" (274). Because Eastman and Chase abhor the filthy opium traffic validated by the merchants and the press, they believe it is their duty to tell the other, often overlooked, version of the facts. While Eastman censures the immoral nature of the business, Chase narrates stories that explain the idiosyncratic ways of the Chinese. In doing so, they offer a different version of reality for the reader to consider. As Eastman proclaimed, one's point of view is a matter of perspective, of positioning. And their eccentric position as Americans and as defenders of the interests of the public give them the power to send ideological bullets flying through their periodical.

They cleverly frame the inauguration of their periodical in the context of Queen Victoria's accession to the English throne, announcing a new stage in the annals of British history. And thus they announce the age of a new informative organ: "News also reached our little communities of Canton and Macao but a few weeks since of a new era in England. How

fortuitous that its inception should so closely coincide with that of our organ. Let both be new brooms, sweeping aside the dust of the old and instituting a new, freer, and better order of things" (275). The new periodical is meant to offer a third space to express views, one not exclusively influenced by British or Chinese ideologies. That is why the *Lin Tin* publishes news stories about both East and West. In the process, however, they must fabricate stories to attract an initially elusive readership. As "compositor, printer, editor, composer of leading articles, chief correspondent and solicitor of advertising," Eastman performs some of the tasks of a fiction writer. He fabricates and markets his stories in a cohesive, plausible vehicle. The layout of the bulletin is important because it mimics the layout of its competitor. Knowing that in their newcomer position they are at a disadvantage, Eastman decides to use a layout the readership is familiar with in order not to alienate them and because of technology constraints (their press did not allow innovations). In their second issue, dated January 17, Eastman piques the interest of a supercilious readership by making up the warmest welcome to their periodical: "We expected nothing from our prospective audience but immediate indifference [. . .]. How warming and heartening, then, to be received with such a degree of interest and show of support" (281). But not only does Eastman fabricate information about the reception and circulation of the Bulletin, he also publishes some fake letters by fictitious correspondents like Stella, Pursuer, and Soloriens, and readers like Senex and Hibernius to add variety, attract the readership's interest, and make his slants at the merchants and their vehicle of expression, the *Monitor*—later renamed *The Hong Kong Guardian and Gazetteer*—more believable.

Along with these rhetorical devices, Eastman introduces the relatively new technique of the daguerreotype to his news reporting. True to his theories about the fictionality of painting and despite Chase's strong opposition, he manipulates the corpse of a dead British crew member

to capture a moment that never existed. In order to impress his readers with images of the battles between the British and the Chinese fleets, he once again makes choices. His intention is to create a story and sell it to the public. In the twelfth issue of the fourth volume of the *Lin Tin*, he introduces his reflections on the theory of the daguerreotype or heliogravure: "The language of man is at once and at the same time an expression and instrument of his needs and, for those who follow him, relic and evidence of that experience. Words may be fashioned, invented, changed to an end. And the worthiness or otherwise of that end, is to be discerned in . . . the lexicon of that manifestation" (590). In other words, Eastman (and Mo as well) deliberately makes use of different types of language—written and visual—as instruments to express other possible realities, but in the process, produces a fabrication of facts. While he does not offer a misinterpretation or a falsification of major historical facts, as the *Monitor* regularly does, he does narrate a story from a particular angle, his own. About the daguerreotype he contends that it is both an art and a science. Even though it pretends to be the real thing, it is just a reproduction: "Not two individual operators will ever take the same scene or portrait in quite the same fashion. [. . .]. the minutest deviation in angle [. . .], framing [. . .], and moment selected to make the exposure [. . .]—all or severally each contribute to the final result" (591). And in that difference lie the science and the objectivity of the technique. Like a fiction writer, the operator of a camera makes choices that include point of view, plot, and setting. Those choices, nevertheless, produce images that are only "segments of the world," "parts, not wholes; shards, no the mirror; abruptness, not continuity (592)."

It is only fitting that the novel should have, not a grand ending in the fashion of a nineteenth-century master narrative, but an open-ended closure. Towards the end of the novel, a disillusioned Chase and a pragmatic Eastman agree that their days in the news business are

numbered   The advent of a new era is marked by the renaming of the *Canton Monitor,* the

persisting corruption, the demoting of a fair man like Captain Elliott as the Plenipotentiary of

Hong Kong, and the designation of Sir Henry Pottinger as the first Governor of the territory.

While Chase, in his callowness, believes that his ideals have no room in such a depraved place as

the new entrepôt and that, therefore, he (and Elliott) ended up in defeat, a more seasoned

Eastman assures him that there are no ends, but just the present to enjoy and live. Astonished by

the latter's decision to abruptly stop the circulation of their periodical, the former asks: "'Do you,

Walter, mean seriously to say that, without rhyme or obvious reason, explanation, apology, or

warning, you shall cease to publish the Lin Tin Bulletin and River Bee?'" (649). To which

Eastman replies that "the world is not like that—it *is* untidy, there are no reasons, the final sum

never balances. There is no blank end, only . . . the succession of moments leading on to

something else. The line is drawn through the ledger quite rudely" (650). In other words, there

are no ends, only continuation; no past, only a continuous present. Death or the end of a brilliant

career, he goes on to explain, is just arbitrary; as arbitrary could be the end of a fiction work or

the discontinuation of a periodical publication. That the end of the *Lin Tin* era should come

exactly at the point when the novel ends physically is certainly illustrative of Mo's notion of

historiographical discourse. The historiographer makes choices at all times: the form, particular

tropes to convey content, the beginning, even the end. Mo himself chose to be a fiction

historiographer in *Insular*, and as such, he chose to use external form, subject matter, and the

tropes of painting and journalism as creative modes to expose the fictionality of a nonliterary

genre like history.

As discussed earlier, even though *An Insular Possession* is not strictly a Hong Kong

cultural artifact, it was produced by an overseas Chinese author in a period of intense nation

formation and identity formulation. Form, content, and tropes were purposefully crafted to associate fictional characters and happenings to people and historical events. In narrating the stories of a singular group of expatriates in the Southern China of the 1830s and 1840s, Timothy Mo cleverly wrote about present-day key events in Hong Kong. But interestingly enough, he was not the only one as the period from 1984 to 1997 proved to be significantly traumatic to Hongkongers with a heightened sensitivity to the arts. They began to develop notions of quasi-nation-ness and identity in cultural works that also documented the history of the territory in the last years of British colonialism. Mo's *Insular* obliquely documents the concerns of Hong Kong in that traumatic era and exposes the sham of historiographical discourse. As a graduate in history, Mo was certainly familiar with the theories of Kellner, White, Ricouer, Foucault, Manzoni, Lukács, Cowart, and the others. His mastery of the rhetorical devices employed by historiographers, therefore, should not be surprising. The purpose of this chapter on the fictionality of history is twofold: first, to deconstruct traditional notions of history as seen through the lens of Mo, both a fiction writer and a student of history; second, to prepare the reader for the varied effective histories told by literature writers, filmmakers, plastic artists, urban planners and architects to be unfold in the ensuing chapters.

CHAPTER 3: CALIBRATION AND COUNTER-CALIBRATION PRACTICES

IN THE CITY

"But then, we don't want to see everyone telling exactly
the same story. And so, amidst this clamour of voices,
we should perhaps listen carefully: who is telling the story?
What sort of story is it? For whom?"

P.K. Leung, "The Story of Hong Kong"

This section's main concern will be exteriorizing the links among representations of Hong Kong, urban planning, and the circulation of (neo)imperial forms of power/dominance to reveal master narratives taken as History and narratives that counter them. Architectural, literary, and plastic texts will be analyzed in the light of Terry Smith's notions of calibration, AlSayyad's representation of the city and dominance, and Michel's Foucault's heterotopic spaces. In "Urbanism and the Dominance Equation: Reflections on Colonialism and National Identity," Nezar AlSayyad claims that nineteenth-century colonialism signified the rise of modern capitalism to the detriment of occupied territories and societies and the emergence of organized political and economic dominance, a dominance "perpetuated in administrative policies, in literary discourse, and in architecture and urban form" (1). AlSayyad further contends that a colonial past is a prerequisite to understand urban form in, not colonial cities, but as Anthony King phrased it, cities "in a colonized society or territory," and that "built form" is a social construct produced by hegemonic processes that define societies (4). Departing from these two premises, it is possible to assert that Hong Kong has been planned as a space where two colonizing ideologies have strived to exclude the local peoples from power exchanges, therefore, aiming at obstructing unique identity formulation and nation formation processes. However, Hongkongers have found ways to express their unique concerns and have engaged in battles against the imperial discourses of colonizer and neocolonizer.

3.1 Visual Rhetorics of Empire

The common practice of conquerors, colonizers, and other settlers has been to take over indigenous forms of socio-ideological organization as well as the more material seats of power. While examining the case of Australia, in "Visual Regimes of Colonization: Aboriginal Seeing

and European Vision in Australia" Terri Smith theorizes that visual regimes of colonization

practiced in settler colonies consist of calibration, obliteration and symbolization. He goes on to

explain that map-plotting, topographic measurements, and surveillance of peoples are practices

of calibration which "are more than acts of noticing and naming, of fixing position and

describing characteristics" since they are really the instruments of an imperial gaze that aims at

"initiat[ing] processes of continuous refinement, of exacting control, of maintaining order" (483).

To this definition we could add urban planning and its links to forms of dominance in the

colonial era. Regarding practices of obliteration, Smith contends that they include "erasing the

habitus, the imagery, the viewpoints and, eventually, the physical existence of indigenous

peoples" and could range from manslaughter to othering the native (483-84); while to AlSayyad,

obliteration is manifested in the suppression of culture, religion and wealth as embodied in the

demolition of religious and political buildings of colonized peoples (6-7). Finally, Smith defines

symbolization as "[t]ransforming the world of experience by treating selected parts of it, or

certain relationships in it, as representative of an abstract idea (such as beauty) or of an

ideological tendency (such as the rule of Bourgeois law)" (484). To AlSayyad, architecture and

urbanism play a fundamental role in the construction of symbols and the interests they serve:

"The colonial city becomes not only the theater for displaying power and dominance, but also the

school where instruction is 'given' to the populace in order to perpetuate relationships of power

and dominance" (16), which in turn, are tightly linked to identity formulation and nation

formation.

3.2 Calibrating the Colony

On January 26 1841, the British occupied the, according to British historiographers, scarcely inhabited island of Hong Kong. The Union Jack was raised on a site named Possession Point. Its original dwellers, fishermen and villagers, lived in rustic constructions and humble boats, mainly in the southern part of the island in modern-day Stanley. They were later joined by the foreign merchants and expatriate community who had been pushed out of Canton and Macau. The latter settled in the northern deep-water harbors. Eager to rebuild their businesses, the merchants soon erected warehouses to joyously continue the commercial exchanges that had deeply troubled the xenophobic Chinese Emperors. This, in turn, produced such a real estate craze that only four months later, there were about seven thousand people in the island: "on May 15 1841, the island's population was said to have been 4,350, with another two thousand fishermen living on their boats, eight hundred –presumably immigrant merchants in the bazaar, and three hundred labourers from Kowloon" (Welsh 131). This rather accelerated development of the island is what defined it from the beginning as a commercial entrepôt rather than as a military depot. And this is precisely what defined Hong Kong as a rather anomalous case since its inception. Although the territory was certainly calibrated according to the British imperial gaze, obliteration and symbolization practices took a different turn. While the British did rename places in Hong Kong, they did not strive towards erasing the identities of the original inhabitants of the island or replacing their world of experience with a Western one. There simply was not a big enough population to have formed a common identity before the arrival of the British. Also, because Hong Kong was formed as a capitalist venture rather than as a military undertaking, the Chinese who populated the island went there in search of jobs, did not necessarily seek permanent residence, and most important of all, did not pose a threat to the colonizer. Finally, the

separate legal codes allowed a peaceful coexistence of Western and non-Western peoples and gave the so-called native population relative autonomy.

Just as there was no need to obliterate a non-existing national identity or symbolic constructions (as most were humble shacks), back in 1841 there wasn't an indigenous people who would have proudly brandished a flag, sung a national anthem, or fought to preserve values, language and customs, but rather immigrants eager to, on one hand, fight against Chinese dynastic power and, on the other hand, become part of the capitalistic machinery. Regardless of the reasons that originally attracted these people to Hong Kong, a uniquely Hongkongese identity did begin to take shape in the second half of the twentieth century because of radical changes in the triangular relationship between Hong Kong, motherland, and colonizer. Nation formation and identity formulation processes were exacerbated by the 1980s Sino-British negotiations for the transfer of power to take place on June 30, 1997, at midnight. It is during the late seventies and early eighties when, aware of the economic and political potential of the territory, China and England began to impose subtle practices of symbolization meant to transform the landscape and participate in ideological exchanges to shift the balance of power in their favor. In *Architecture, Power and National Identity*, Lawrence Vale asserts that a bulk of what was being written in the late eighties and early nineties about architecture and urban design emphasized "that all buildings are products of social and cultural conditions" (3). He further adds that "symbolic state buildings need to be understood in terms of political and cultural contexts that helped to bring them into being" (3). But in a uniquely postcolonial city like Hong Kong, initially a worthless piece of land which due to Western colonization ironically became the modern-day equivalent of a city-state, the most prominent buildings that can be analyzed as outgrowths of the unique socio-political panorama of the last 30 years are buildings epitomizing all that Hong Kong has

become in the era of late capitalism: a world-class financial hub. That is why in the case of a unique postcolonial territory such as Hong Kong, architectural venues and planning financed with British capital or sponsored by the People's Republic of China have been intended to give the city a pseudo-nationalist identity, first as a British Dependent Territory and currently as a Special Administrative Region of China.

3.3 Calibrating and Counter-Calibrating the City

Because they are fundamental components of Hong Kong's skyline, architectural texts like the Bank of China Tower, the Extension to the Convention and Exhibition Centre, and the Hong Kong Shanghai Banking Corporation participate in dialogues that support and resist visual regimes of representation. In doing so, they can generate powerful memories of events and "places that do not exist [. . .] which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites[. . .] are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (Foucault, "Of Other Spaces" 231). These Michel Foucault called "placeless places" or heterotopias. According to him, they have a twofold function in relation to all the space that remains: they can create either "a space of illusion that exposes every real space [. . .] as still more illusory" or "a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed and jumbled" (235). So while the former are heterotopias of illusion, the latter are heterotopias of compensation. The Bank of China Tower, the Hong Kong Shanghai Banking Corporation, and the Convention and Exhibition Centre Extension are both heterotopias of illusion and heterotopias of compensation in the sense that they conjure up chimeras and orchestrate space with ideological intentions.

3.3.1 The HSBC

Founded by Scot Thomas Sutherland in 1865, the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank's primary mission was to finance trade in the Far East. The HSBC is fraught with colonial connotations not only because it was the first financial institution in the island, but also because of its iconic pair of lions safeguarding the gates and symbolizing the authority of the British crown in the dependency. The first building that housed the headquarters of the old "Honkers and Shankers" was, along with the elegant Hong Kong Hotel and the splendorous City Hall, among the first landmarks of the colony, and they were strategically located on the original Praya, the promenade by the waterfront. Edward George Pryor and Shiu-hung Pau point out that while the finest materials were used and the quality of the workmanship was the highest in the buildings of Central district, the colonial government neglected housing and urban planning in the rest of the island.

At first, the bank leased Wardley House, but in 1886 the first HSBC headquarters were built in a place with, in accordance to local beliefs, good *fung shui*. Even nowadays, the bank's location has nothing to envy other landmarks in the city; it is located on #1 Queen's Road Central, the very first road that the British had built in the island, and currently one of the main arteries of the city. The building boasted a neo-baroque style with large columns, high ceilings, verandahs, balconies, large windows, overhangs and a sumptuous dome (Pryor 100). With its rather classical design, this building symbolized, along with other grandiose buildings of the era, one of the forms of power that to this day have defined Hong Kong: purchasing power. That was what formed the basis for the kind of apartheid practiced in the colony. While Central District was studded with architectural gems that stood out, not just because of their aesthetic qualities, but mainly because of the wealth they showcased, west of Central, in Sai Pun Ying,

tenements houses posed sanitary hazards to their inhabitants because of careless planning, deficient plumbing, and inadequate sewage and ventilation systems (101). When juxtaposed to these spaces that exposed the real living conditions of the majority of the inhabitants in the island, the first building of the Hongkong Shanghai Bank stands as a heterotopia. It was the other side of the coin: the wealth of a few, a symbol that conferred status. And as such it was a placeless place that imposed a visual regime of colonization because it was concerned with processes of continuous refinement. Upon arriving to Hong Kong, newcomers would enter via Central and were welcomed by Western-looking constructions. They would seek temporary housing at the Hong Kong Hotel, entertainment at the City Hall, religious comfort at St John's Cathedral, and financial security at the HSBC, all under the illusion that they were still in the Western hemisphere. At the bank, foreign customers would be greeted by employees looking alike and exhibiting familiar manners and speaking a familiar language. They would exit to the street and find other Western-looking buildings and a network of expatriates like themselves living at a home away from home thanks to the joint work of early urban planners and the forms of power circulating then. Confined to their slum-like tenements, fishing villages, and boathouses, the "native" population was completely left out of this picture.

The second building was completed in the period between the World Wars, in 1935. Its Art Deco design departed radically from the Greek classical design of the first building. The message that this newer and more innovative construction carried was that neither the Crash of the market in 1929 nor the World Wars slackened the imperial grip on the colony or even weakened the Empire's political and economic power. The spirit of the Roaring Twenties echoed in the elegant, functional, and ultra modern lines of the new building, which paid homage to the modernist era. Western financiers strived to insert Hong Kong in the economic and

cultural conversations of the day. Thus, the second HSBC was the highest and "the most technically advanced" building with its air conditioning, invisible panel heating-system, and high-speed electric lifts (qtd in Pryor 105). Some of the construction techniques were so advanced that they had never been used elsewhere in the world or even within the British Empire. This was Hong Kong's way of claiming that it had entered the Machine Age. The use of some materials such as glass, steel, iron, granite and others was meant to attest to the bank's position at the forefront and to the stability of the institution in almost seventy years of existence. Although still neglected by the colonial government, especially in regards to housing, education, and social outreach, Hong Kong was slowly becoming more cosmopolitan because once again, money spoke loud and clear. If for the first generations of patrons, familiarity was the bait, modernity was the lure in the 1930s. In this sense, the Art Deco HSBC building has heterotopic connotations. With its twelve stories, state of the art technology, and physical appearance and decorations exported from the West, it dazzled not only the usual Western customers but also the Chinese nouveaux riches. With the birth of the Chinese Republic in 1912 and the increasing foreign influence, many Chinese began to depart from tradition. Some welcomed Western fashions and customs; others adopted cultural and political ideas from the West. The HSBC represented this new vision and illusion of modernity.

Fifty years after its last re-creation and, coincidentally after its neighboring banking fellow institutions, the Bank of China and the Standard Chartered Bank, had commissioned new headquarters, a third HSBC Headquarters was inaugurated. The new headquarters were built from 1979 to 1986 with a design by the renowned British architect Norman Foster in an interesting move, not only to insert Hong Kong in current postmodern discourses, but also to reassert the presence of the former empire long after the handover to China. The style of the

building is defined as "high-tech modern" which in the vocabulary of Foster Associates means "uncompromising exploration of technological innovations and forms" although "the firm's work also shows a dedication to architectural detailing and craftsmanship" (Matthews). In *Hong Kong Art: Culture and Decolonization*, David Clarke calls this "arguably the most significant example of modern architecture in the city and certainly intended as such" (105) since as opposed to other buildings, it is concerned with addressing passers-by with its self-reflexive and disorienting structure: "dramatic exoskeleton trusses, interior atrium, and escalator entry through glazed atrium floor." In an attempt to connect such a futuristic vision of Hong Kong with the colonial past, the original bronze gatekeepers and a 1906 life-size statue of the first manager, Sir Thomas Jackson, accompanied by six monarchs over successive years, are kept close to the building to symbolize historical and corporate continuity. Clarke points out that during the handover period, the motto of the bank was "Your future is our future" (107) as if to reassure customers of their commitment to Hong Kong beyond the transfer of sovereignty.

Nowadays, anti-hegemonic, political groups use the atrium to voice unconformity against the establishment. The seemingly neutral grounds of the post-Handover HSBC have become an ideological battlefield. By projecting a period that caused lots of anxiety to the Hongkonger (Sino-British negotiations for the transfer) into those grounds is that a third space is opened for alternative groups to do politics in a territory currently under the grip of Chinese neoimperialism. A few days before the tenth anniversary of the Handover, while I was trekking around the city avidly collecting footage for my documentary, I happened to pass by the atrium. A group of Chinese extremists were rallying their followers. Curious passers-by (like me) momentarily stopped to witness their lively protests. Both the police forces and the media were roaming around waiting for action. After a while, I resumed my pace to reach the Peak Tram Station,

when I understood the importance of that political gathering. The Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, Hu Jintao, had traveled to Hong Kong in order to preside in the commemoration of the tenth anniversary and was visiting the vicinity. Some places between the HSBC and the BCT, the rival banks, were blocked by Hong Kong police officers and one could sense mixed feelings in the air. How ironic, I thought, that what was supposed to be a neutral space between two spaces charged with ideological connotations had been taken over by the mainland, if only momentarily. But that was to be expected on the arrival of the Chairman on such a political date for a people who have slowly acquired political awareness and notions of identity and nationhood.

3.3.2 The BCT and the ECEC

The Bank of China was originally one of four state-owned banks of the mainland. Founded the year of the establishment of the Republic of China (1912), it is the oldest Chinese bank. So it bears a symbolism charged with nationalistic connotations. Even though it originally served as the Chinese central bank, the Central Bank of China was created in 1928, thus, pushing the BOC aside, until it gradually became a commercial banking institution. It began to operate in Hong Kong in 1917, but it was not until 1994 that it started to issue bank notes in the territory, one would say, just in time for the takeover. The building that housed the headquarters of the BOC before I.M. Pei's Bank of China Tower was built in 1950 and still stands today. Curiously, it was not demolished like the outgrown HSBC of 1935; quite the contrary it currently houses the Sin Hua Bank and a Shanghai-style China Club, two venues with mainland significations. In keeping with the patriotic winds of the 1960s, the building was used for Maoist propaganda during the Cultural Revolution (Clarke *Hong Kong Art* 136). Passers-by would be encouraged to

rebel against the British during the social revolts of 1967. Contrary to the HSBC which is located in Central District, the BCT is located at 1 Garden Road, in the district of Wan Chai, as if to set itself apart from all that remains of British colonialism. First, it is not located on one of the first roads built by the British back in the 1840s, second, although only a few blocks away from the HSBC, it stands in a district with a Chinese rather than an English name. In addition, a new building on a new location was erected as if to foreshadow Hong Kong's fresh start on July 1st, 1997. That is, to project an illusion of a desired and auspicious return to the motherland.

Made of glass, aluminum and granite, the BCT is "a kind of architectural ode to verticality and visuality" with its "arrangement of four prisms that form the solid lower sections [. . .] becoming more ethereal, in successive arrangements of three, two and finally a single prism that forms its topmost stories" as it rises and twists (Abbas 84). It constitutes one of the earliest attempts of the Central Government of the People's Republic of China to carve nationalistic meanings into public space as Hong Kong prepared for the transfer of sovereignty. The design was disclosed in 1984, a significant year when considering that the Sino-British Joint Declaration that outlined the terms of the handover was signed then, inescapably setting the countdown to June 30th 1997 at midnight. It was designed by the world-class architect and recipient of the Pritzker Price, I. M. Pei, to make a major political and architectural statement. By assigning the task to an accomplished expatriate such as Pei, the PRC appealed to a Chinese sense of pride with more nationalistic than merely ethnic connotations and to the Hongkonger's trust that the new rule would not be characterized by the atrocities and reckless miscalculations that made thousands emigrate all over the globe during the second half of the twentieth century. Rather, its citizens could expect the one country, two systems formula to allow gradual economic and ideological openings after the reunification. With such a hyper-modern building and such a

major investment, the state finances seemed to be taking a whole new direction. China was about to insert itself into major economic dialogues of the post-Cold War era. The BCT further built up trust and created public memories as it housed the new headquarters of a bank originally associated with the Chinese central bank, and was purposefully built across from another building that was also meant to make both a political and an architectural statement—the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank, established by the British colonial regime, definitely in an attempt to obliterate the colonial past.

However, the structure's postmodern minimalism does not immediately help the passers-by to identify this as a building with mainland nationalistic connotations. Thus, its segmented vertical design had to intentionally recall a traditional Chinese symbol: bamboo and its auspicious meanings both for the customers of the bank and for the citizens, especially, after the reunification with the motherland. It had to hang on to the fundamental significations of bamboo and, therefore, to the symbolization of the building. Almost from the moment that the design was disclosed, the BCT's detractors criticized the inauspiciousness of a building that resembles a Chinese chopping knife. To counteract both public criticism and the possible negative effects of its shape, some additions were made. A Chinese style garden with a pond and a couple of lions guarding the entrance supposedly deflect the bad *fung shui* of the building and add another layer of signifiers to a space designed to produce identifications of the local with the national.

While the BCT was one of the first attempts by the Central People's Government (CPG) to develop strong national associations, the Extension to the Convention and Exhibition Centre (ECEC) was meant to symbolize the one country, two systems formula. While Hongkongers did not protest the signing of the Sino British Joint Declaration back in 1984, five years later, pro-democracy demonstrators repudiated the June 4th 1989 Massacre in Tiananmen Square as the

date of the handover drew closer and old fears about the communist government resurfaced. In response, claims Clarke, the CPG felt the need of replacing tragic memories with more buildings and sculptures that projected a Chinese national ideology (138). Thus, the ECEC was born to reinscribe a new chapter in the history of Hong Kong: that of the motherland's long-awaited reunification with the long-lost offspring. Because the handover ceremony had to take place in Hong Kong rather than in China, they decided that instead of selecting a place with colonial connotations, they would not only build a new structure but also reclaim land to create a new space or a heterotopia where mainland nationalistic connotations could be inscribed anew and the literal reclamation of Hong Kong could take place. It was the mother country's symbolic act of reclaiming, but also of reabsorbing a late-capitalist political and economic system into a still socialist economy opening up to international markets.

Just as the BCT intentionally represented tradition in the form of bamboo, the Extension had symbolic and ideological meanings too. The architects designed an "aluminum-clad roof [that] has been described as portraying a seabird taking off over water, and since the Extension just outs into the harbor the implied movement is (significantly) northwards, as well as upwards" (qtd. in Clarke 139). Along with the creation of this "placeless place," a number of presents to celebrate the handover were sent from thirty one provinces and regions, but only one was placed for public display in the Extension. *Forever Blooming Bauhinia* was chosen because it produced associations to Hong Kong's flora. Since the bauhinia is a native species, it was designated as the official symbol of the post-1997 HKSAR and that is why it is represented in the flag as well. The CPG somehow sensed that using a symbol more closely related to the history of China and, thus, to attempts to overtly nativize the relatively autonomous entity that pre-1997 Hong Kong had become, could pose a problem of acceptance. They did, however, make sure to make a

subtle connection to China. The sculpture sits on top of a pedestal alluding to one of the main symbols of imperial repression, the Great Wall of China and with a caption that reads: "the rendering of the Great Wall on the pedestal symbolizes the greatness of our motherland" (Chow and Teather 10). An interesting story to counteract PRC attempts to fictionalize the history of Hong Kong is found in Oscar Ho, who argues that rather than with a prosperous future, some Hongkongers associated the new structure with doom and the destruction of the city ("Make Believe"). An old folk story tells about a rock resembling a turtle that slowly moves upward, towards the peak. People believed that when the turtle rock reached the top of Victoria Peak, Hong Kong would sink into the ocean. Interestingly enough, the Extension *does* look like a turtle.

The Bank of China Tower and the Extension to the Convention and Exhibition Centre are the kind of buildings that because of their denotations and connotations can be seen in more than one way. In this sense, they are heterotopias, placeless places that nevertheless conjure up significations associated to the PRC's attempts to impose a visual regime. That is, the BCT is not just a business establishment, just as the ECEC is not an innocent addition to a pre-existing structure, but they are pervasive reminders of the upcoming events in the Hong Kong of the nineties: the beginning of the return of the forfeited child to the motherland. They also stand as spaces of illusion that expose the illusory nature of a British Dependent Territory about to become a Special Administrative Region of China, of a colony about to be decolonized by the British and recolonized by the Chinese, and of a physical space that recalcitrantly blended both Western and Eastern cultures, ideologies, and political and economic systems. At the same time, they were intended as two instances of perfect, meticulous and well-arranged space and, therefore, as visual spaces highly-charged with PRC ideological meanings and, thereby, easier to

implant in the mind. While one has directly competed against the HSBC since its establishment in 1917, the other one is an attempt to start over on a reclaimed space within a reclaimed time, literally and figuratively.

3.4   *The Atlas: Archeology of an Imaginary City*

Part fiction, part theory*, The Atlas: Archeology of an Imaginary City* is a unique literary work of which only a handful of the original fifty-one short pieces are translated into English. Four are the parts of Dung Kai-Cheung's *Atlas*: Theory, City, Streets and Signs, but stories from only two of them are the ones that Dung himself translates for publication.   As a breed between literary and extra literary genres, this work challenges the calibration, obliteration, and symbolization practices that are embedded in historical texts whether they are actual textbooks or urban spaces. The work is Dung's attempts at mapping the geography and urban growth of Hong Kong, not with cartographic symbols or skyscrapers, but with words. In doing so, he ends up plotting the map of Hong Kong's particular idiosyncrasy and innermost desires. He charts what Ackbar Abbas calls a space of disappearance or in Foucauldian terminology, a placeless place, a heterotopia. The heterotopias that Dung conjures up in *The Atlas* have a different function than the heterotopias evoked by the HSBC, the BCT and the ECEC; they act as counter-sites where the visual regimes of British colonization and of Chinese recolonization are contested and inverted by alternative practices of mapping and measurement, which in turn, express the ambiguous identity of the Hongkonger. The temporal setting for the *Atlas* is a twenty-first century when Hong Kong is no longer and "the narrators can only gather, from the maps and atlases of the city drawn at different periods in the past, what the city was like and what changes

it went through during Hong Kong's 156 years as a British colony, from 1841 to 1997" (Cheung, *Hong Kong Collage* 40).

In his fictional pieces featuring streets and city landmarks, Dung employs an interesting strategy to criticize both the British colonization and the neoimperial pretensions of mainland China simultaneously, sometimes projecting the present into the past as pastoral, other times projecting the future into the past to contemplate the way it will or could be. The first stories conspicuously deal with what is usually defined as colonization in the case of Hong Kong, that is, the British acts of calibration, obliteration, and symbolization. But as the stories narrate more contemporary events like the dreaded Handover, Dung shifts his focus from the colonial past to the neoimperial future to subtly but incisively comment on the proverbial return of the lost child to the motherland. The first of the translated pieces, "Possession Street," begins with an account of the occupation of Hong Kong Island on January 25th 1841. The original act of naming the street after the takeover is mocked when the narrator changes the original date and provides two stories that apparently became ingrained in the collective imaginary and accepted as alternative stories. The first one suggests that for the Cantonese-speaking locals the street was known as *Sui Han Hau*, the mouth where the water walks, because that was the point where a watercourse entered the sea. To the locals, Possession Street has never made sense, first, because English never amounted to more than the language of administration, law, and commerce in Hong Kong and, second, because even since 1841, most of the population spoke Cantonese and read Chinese characters. Since street names are posted in the signs both in Chinese and in English, there is no need for local people to know English to find their way in the city. Dung further makes fun of the colonizer's ways of calibrating Hong Kong when he so matter of fact claims that "[i]n fact, not too many locals knew that the street was related to the invasion of the island" (41). An act of

territorial possession is usually important only in the annals of the (neo)colonizer's history, Dung seems to be saying.

The other story explains the presumed bad *fung shui* of Possession Point, which the Chinese named Sai Pun Ying or West Camping Site because that was the site chosen by the British to station their troops. However, it becomes another story that mocks the visual regimes of the colonizer. For the Chinese, fortune-telling is not just about predicting the future but a science that ensures auspiciousness. That is why the narrator believes that in mindlessly naming the road by the original landing place, Possession Street, the British attracted all sorts of spirits that possessed the place, and curses befell upon the troops. Apparently poor sanitation and the terribly hot and humid weather caused some casualties among the troops and, therefore, they ended up moving to the east, to modern-day Central District. Long after the barracks were moved and Hong Kong became a bustling place, "the open ground next to Possession Street became the gathering place of entertainers, practitioners of herbal medicine and fortune-tellers [. . .]. Among the fortune-tellers was one [. . .] who professed that the fung shui of Possession Point was unfavourable to the British. On their part, the British also kept away from this potentially dangerous district of suspicious Chinese characters" (41). Dung's real intention in narrating this second story about Possession Street is to criticize the apartheid practices of the colonial government, and not to explain what made the troops move to what is coincidentally the administrative heart of Hong Kong at present.

Before land reclamation projects extended the northern shore of Hong Kong island, Sai Pun Ying was located on craggy terrain. Let us not forget that several had disdained Hong Kong on the grounds of its convoluted topography. Central was probably a little more flat than Western at that time and, thus, had been chosen to become the seat of political and economic

power. Sai Pun Ying, on the other hand, became a slum that contained most of the Chinese population under almost inhuman conditions. Architecture historians like Pryor and Pau argue that poor sanitation, among other equally serious hazards, characterized the living tenements built by the colonial government. In my last visit to Hong Kong, while I was looking for an elusive monument or plaque commemorating the importance of Possession Point, I came across a few streets populated by little herbal medicine shops offering the services of Chinese traditional healers and selling all sorts of remedies and incantations. With my western frame of mind, I led myself to believe that the Hong Kong Chinese would commemorate such an infamous event; instead, they built a Chinese-style garden (probably to counteract the bad *fung shui* of the original event). Defeated by what I wanted to serve as the opening scene of my documentary, I slowly began to walk towards Central. As I began to move away from the little shops, the skyscrapers of Central filled my vision. There was a certain feeling as Chairman Hu's presence loomed over the city, as if moving from the past to the present or even to the future, that is, as if moving from one act of colonization to the commemoration of another act of colonization to the end of the one country, two systems formula.

In "Scandal Point" and 'Aldrich Street" Dung mocks military attempts to calibrate, obliterate, and symbolize an unfairly disdained island that ironically became a world-class financial hub. "Strictly speaking," says the narrator, "the word 'scandal' implies a measure of public offense, but in its Chinese translation, *han wa*, it became 'gossip' limiting its meaning to 'true or false talk which brings harm, shame, or disrespect to others'" (43). That is why upon attending mass at the cathedral, the foreigners would return to their exclusive neighborhood in the Mid-levels via Scandal Point, where they would start gossiping. In fact, he says, "Some teleological map-readers insist that the relationship between Scandal Point and the military

cantonment around it was not fortuitous. The purpose of the military garrison was clearly to

defend the scandals, and at the same time to imprison and contain them within the invincible

walls of guns and cannons, preventing them from leaking out, and also preserving their

multiplication" (44). Dung makes fun of the military paraphernalia and unnecessary military

posts in what Lord Palmerton once called a "barren island with hardly a house on it" (qtd. in

Welsh 108). Without many natural and human resources to exploit, or indigenous peoples to

obliterate, the British troops were certainly superfluous in such a small island. The old Murray

Barracks eventually gave way to the Hong Kong Park. The only colonial structure that remains

in the vicinity is St. John's Cathedral, nowadays surrounded by either tourist-oriented places like

the park itself, Pacific Place, the Museum of Tea Ware, and the Peak Tram Station, or

corporations like the BCT, the Citybank Tower and the Lippo Centre. Another story is Major

Aldrich's. A man of stern discipline, he had been sent to the island after the signing of the

Treaty of Nanking in 1842, and had devised a grandiose plan which "included a large military

cantonment laid out in beautiful symmetry, as well as a foolproof defense scheme. [. . .] Aldrich

fondly imagined that this invincible giant would become the center and the symbol of Hong

Kong Island in the future" (Dung 44). But Governor Pottinger, the tenth colonial governor,

opposes the plan, and needless to say, Hong Kong is populated with not one but several

architectural giants that have placed the city on the global map and have forced its entry into the

great cultural, political, and economic conversations of the modern era.

        Besides from subverting the official history and the territory's calibration by the British

with counter-historical memories, Dung plays with the English names of some places and, in the

process, subverts the meaning they once had in the language of the colonizer. Aldrich Street is

one example. After Pottinger had dismissed Major Aldrich's grandiose plan, somehow he

becomes a syncretic figure venerated in a temple to *Oi Dit Dzui Kung* (Lord or Grandpa Aldrich),

Oi Dit Dzui being the Cantonese transliteration of his name. The figure of Aldrich is

appropriated in the act of translating his name, and the history of Aldrich's orderly and very-

structured ways and his stern self-discipline turn into the collective memories of a Chinese

military god who guards homes and temples from evil spirits. In the process of countering a

public but imposed history with an equally public but shared memory, he becomes as symbolic

as that fortress he imagined and appears in times of crisis, but in 1997, the year of the handover,

he disappears along with Aldrich Bay, *Oi Dit Dzui* Temple, and Aldrich Village. Dung

obliterates the imperialist regime of the British by embedding Major Aldrich and his failed plan

into Hongkongese folklore. So Aldrich becomes a symbol of Hong Kong's unique hybridity,

ultimately threatened by the territory's reabsorption by the new colonizer, the People's Republic

of China.

Another example of this kind of subversion is Sycamore Street. The narrator starts by

asserting that several streets named after trees "had English names as originals and were then

translated into Chinese, so Sycamore Street should not have been an exception" (49). But then

s/he explains that it was because "unlike all the others just mentioned (Pine, Oak, Beech, Elm,

Ivy, Cherry, Maple, Willow, Poplar, Cedar), it was based on phonetic rather than semantic

translation" (49). The problem with the Chinese translation of Sycamore—*mo fa guo*—is that it

means "fruit without flower," a very unpropitious name. So Sycamore ended up being

transliterated as a much more auspicious name—*Si Go Mo Gai*, the street of poetry, song, and

dance. Another version of the story tells that before the arrival of the British, there was a place

called Si Go Mo with cultured pursuits of poetry, singing and dancing. It eventually gave way to

licentious laughter and bawdy song as it degenerated into a den of libertines and whores in the

twentieth century (the infamous Walled City of Kowloon), and this was the reason the British transliterated the Chinese name to the English "Sycamore." Although it is impossible to know what story is the true one, Dung concludes the tale with an element that dissipates any ambiguity: the colonial government planted some bauhinia in the street, the bauhinia being represented in a sculpture that the Central People's Government gave the city for the handover and from that day on, a symbol that has involuntary connections with the PRC. Just as the fruit without flowers—*mo fa guo*, the bauhinia lacks something: it is a beautiful flower with no fruit. Perhaps a warning of the bleak future under the one country, two systems formula? Whatever the answer is, what is important is that the narrator points out that no matter what plant or symbol the British or Chinese outsiders employ to name that street, and in a metaphorical way, impose a history on the territory, they will always find popular resistance. In twisting the British and Chinese attempts to calibrate the city, Dung's imaginary city resists the obliteration and symbolization practices of colonizers and neocolonizers in an interesting move that also challenges traditional history and produces a heterotopia that counters other heterotopias.

In providing different versions to explain how another component of urban space—streets and districts—was named, Dung counterattacks two official Histories with private, individualized (his)stories from different narrators and sources. The annals of the colonial past (1841-1997) and the annals of the neoimperial future (1997-2047) are deauthorized by the anonymous, yet collectively constructed counter-memories that inscribe a heterotopic space for yet another history made up of the varied stories of Hong Kong. The city portrayed in the *Atlas* constitutes a space of illusion that exposes real spaces like the HSBC, the BCT and the ECEC as still more illusory and opposes official attempts to mythologize the eclectic histories that make up Hong Kong.

3.5   Traditional History Versus Effective Histories

Michel Foucault makes a distinction between effective history and traditional history. One instance of traditional history is the distribution of physical space in the Hong Kong Museum of History. The permanent exhibition, named *The Hong Kong Story*, is made up of eight galleries chronologically ordered in such a linear and continuous way that spectators are not encouraged to skip one to go to the next. The type of history that the museum advertises as that ideal continuity also pays lip service to the Central Government of the People's Republic of China.

A recount of the special exhibitions held there from 1990 to 1999 reveals that during the year before, the year of, and the year after Hong Kong's return to China, there were subtle allusions to Hong Kong's imbrication to a larger Chinese civilization and history, whereas during the rest of that decade there was at least one annual exhibition about one aspect of the local history: costume, education, history past and present, the economy, traditional trades and crafts, and photographs. The 1996 special exhibition, *The Maritime Silk Route: 2000 Years of Trade on the South China Sea*, strategically placed the craggy piece of land that once not even the motherland wanted within a wider historical and geographical context than the British colonial era. One of the 1997 exhibitions, *History through Maps: An Exhibition of Old Maps of China*, inserted the map of Hong Kong within the larger map of China in an attempt to erase the fact that it was precisely Western colonization along with local nation formation and identity formulation processes that had put Hong Kong in the political, economic, and cultural maps of the world. Finally, one of the 1998 special exhibitions, *Lin Zexu and the Opium War*, was a direct allusion to the Anglo-Chinese Wars and an attempt to gain the sympathies of local Hongkongers through

the connection between an opprobrious trade brought by the British and the dishonorable kowtowing of China to Britain.

The Story of Hong Kong has served to promote a single, nationalistic vantage point that clashes with the multiple viewpoints of diasporic subjects such as Hongkongers. Their strategic position between East and West, Britain and China, late capitalism and socialism with Chinese characteristics, endowed them with "ways of seeing wild" (in allusion to Robert Payne's article about the unconventional filmography of Hongkongese director Wong Kar Wai). That is, with the kaleidoscopic vision of Dung Kai-Cheung's centaur of the east to mention only one specimen that encapsulates the plight of post-1997 Hongkongers. Dung's piece is only one of many cultural artifacts produced in the last two or three decades that deal with the hybridity of the Hongkonger. Ping Kwan Leung, a local college professor, novelist, film critic, literary critic, and cultural critic at the forefront of the debates on Hongkongese postmodernity and postcolonialism writes:

The story of Hong Kong has been told by many people. Some tell the story of a fishing port, others tell the story of a Chinese sailing boat, some tell the story of buildings rising high into the sky, others tell the story of the dazzling lights at night. Yet others tell the story of the fog at Lei Yue Mun, or the bars at Lan Kwai Fong. The story seems to get simpler; the story seems to get more complicated. It leads to other stories, breaks off and begins again, begins and falters. The story of Hong Kong is getting longer, messier; the story of Hong Kong is getting shorter, flatter. Everyone is telling it—the story of Hong Kong. Everyone is telling a different story. (3)

Indeed, everybody is telling a different story that traces what Hong Kong has become: from government-run museums to private, non-profit cultural centers to commercial galleries and less

traditional exhibition spaces. But does anyone have the correct version of the facts?

3.6 The Para/Sites of the Museum Culture

Changes in the political panorama of Hong Kong in the 1980s and 1990s had profound transformative effects in the cultural scene. David Clarke and Oscar Ho believe that as a result of, first, the 1984 Sino British Joint Declaration and, second, the 4 June 1989 repression of the Beijing pro-democracy movement, an "increased sense of selfhood [. . .] developed in Hong Kong during the pre-handover period" (10). This led to growing demands for autonomy and the first wholly-elected legislature in 1995. Fortuitously, the period from 1995 to 1997 was prolific for Hongkongese artists who set out to depict the unique historical conditions of that time frame in works that also expressed Hong Kong's trauma: that of being a borrowed place within a borrowed time, that is, that of being an imagined place still working towards a defined nationality and identity.

That is how plastic art constitutes yet another space that renders heterotopias of a third space of meaning which counteract British colonial and Chinese neoimperial significations. Free artistic experimentation found a space in Hong Kong in the late 1980s when "a new generation of artists came to the fore in Hong Kong, and in contrast to their [Modernist] predecessors they chose to employ techniques and stylistic languages more directly related to those of Western art" (Clarke, *Hong Kong Art* 70). Unlike the Hong Kong Modernists, that generation had acceded to educational opportunities in Europe or North America. However, rather than imitating Western art, these artists appropriated "Western idioms" but rejected Western narratives of art development; at the same time, they subverted the larger historical discourse of Chinese civilization by turning to local meanings and audiences. Because they did not pander to classic high art, they found themselves lacking the support of traditional museums and galleries. The

establishment of the Hong Kong Arts Development Council in 1995 gave a space of production

to these artists and marked the rise in popularity of the installation. As Clarke argues:

"installation enables Hong Kong artists to connect to a history which is local rather than framed

as national, since it opens up the possibility of appropriating objects from markedly popular and

material culture as part of the artwork" (72).

According to two of its original creators, Lisa Cheung and Kith Tsang, Para/Site was

born in 1996 as an alternative temporary installation space for artists concerned about "tak[ing]

art outside of the conventional arts scene and put[ing] it into the community" (Millichap 32).

These artists were eager to break down the four walls of traditional exhibition spaces with

nontraditional works, media, and techniques. They were, at the same time, critiquing highbrow

art in museums, galleries, and art centers. To Ho, however, this trend was neither new as it had

emerged in the mid 1980s nor a mere act of rebellion against the canon: it was a "direct response

to the problem of lack of space" (Bennett 36). In such a cluttered, but cosmopolitan and (then)

colonial city such as Hong Kong, space has constituted a problem that could be summarized in

three phrases: demographic explosion, the skyrocketing prices of real state, and a lease with an

expiration date. This mix is what made installations in the mid-nineties so popular as vehicles to

make political statements in and about a rather apathetic colonial territory. Installations are

always site specific, but in the case of installations in the Hong Kong of the 1990s, the term "site

specificity" was applied to refer to both the ephemeral nature of the art works and to their subject

matter: the very site on which they were produced, a soon-to-be former Western colonial

territory about to become another quasi-colony in the vast imperial map of China. In this way,

installations became the quintessential borrowed space within a borrowed time in a consumerist

postmodern society like the Hongkongese one.

One way in which local artists infuse local meanings and the discontinuities of effective histories into their artwork is through the use of verbal puns or games, and the local dialect rather than the official language of the PRC or the language of administration, law, and commerce during colonial times. Cantonese is spoken by more than 90% of the population of Hong Kong and shares the same written characters as Mandarin, so works like Warren Leung's *Victory over Victoria* and *Vis(i)ta,* and Kith Tsang's *Guong Guen* that favor the spoken as opposed to the written word, a dialect over an official language, the linguistic image over the purely visual image, and Chinese over English, challenge the primacy of both Britain and China over Hong Kong's cultural agency.

"Victory over Victoria" is a large-scale aerial photograph from the installation *Victoria Tunnel*, held during January and February 1998 at Para/Site. About it, Clarke says that, Presumably of British military origin, it shows the Central area of Hong Kong island, officially known as the city of Victoria. This surveillance image, which shows what looks like military vessels in the harbor, was taken in November 1945 (according to data visible along its bottom edge), and thus belongs to the period just after the British regained control of the colony from the Japanese at the end of Second World War. (87)

In looking back to a past when Japanese colonization was an impending threat to the British colonization of Hong Kong while looking to the future under a new colonial power, China, Leung transforms the title into a polysemic signifier. Whose victory is he referring to? The colonial powers' or the colonized desiring subject's? What or who is the Victoria of the title? The historical Victoria Island under Queen Victoria, who was the empress at the time when Hong Kong became a colony? Or the provincial Victoria island under King George VI, ruler of England during World War II? Or the cosmopolitan Victoria island of the post-handover under

Queen Elizabeth II? Is the term over to be taken literally (as the picture shows an aerial view) or

is it a metaphor of the Hongkonger's capacity to rise above the (neo)colonizer? In

reappropriating the picture and playing with its verbal meanings, Leung defies practices of

calibration that in this specific case are aimed at scrutinizing and controlling the city from the

vantage point of the (neo)colonial power.

Vis(i)ta is a conceptual assemblage consisting of three sealed wooden pinhole cameras

installed one above the other in an iron frame, each containing an invisible exposure taken at one

of the three established tourist sites in Hong Kong. The title is a direct reference to the gaze, the

eye being enclosed within the parentheses (i), and an allusion to sight and perspective in what

remains of the rest of the word. This has the effect of momentarily dislocating the gaze of

spectators who are expecting a conventional piece of work. Little do they know that instead of

approaching the piece with the external vision of the colonizer or of the imperialist, they need to

perceive it with the eye of the local and, thus, put themselves in the shoes of a Hongkonger.

Each of the sections has an inscription of the Romanized name of one of the three parts that

make up the map of Hong Kong, which rather than clarify might confuse those who do not

belong to the local scene and thereby do not speak Cantonese. To an English speaking tourist or

a Mandarin speaking mainlander "san gai," "gau long," and "heung gong" do not make any

sense since for the former "san gai" is the New Territories, "gau long" is Kowloon, and "heung

gong" is Hong Kong, while the latter will rather pronounce them "xin jie," "jiou long," and

"xiang gang." It is interesting to point out that even ten years after the handover, when most

Hongkongers feel proud of their Chinese ancestry and identify themselves as Chinese

Hongkongers, Cantonese is still the most used language/dialect in Hong Kong and will still be

for at least forty more years, despite the flocks of wealthy mainlanders who regularly visit or
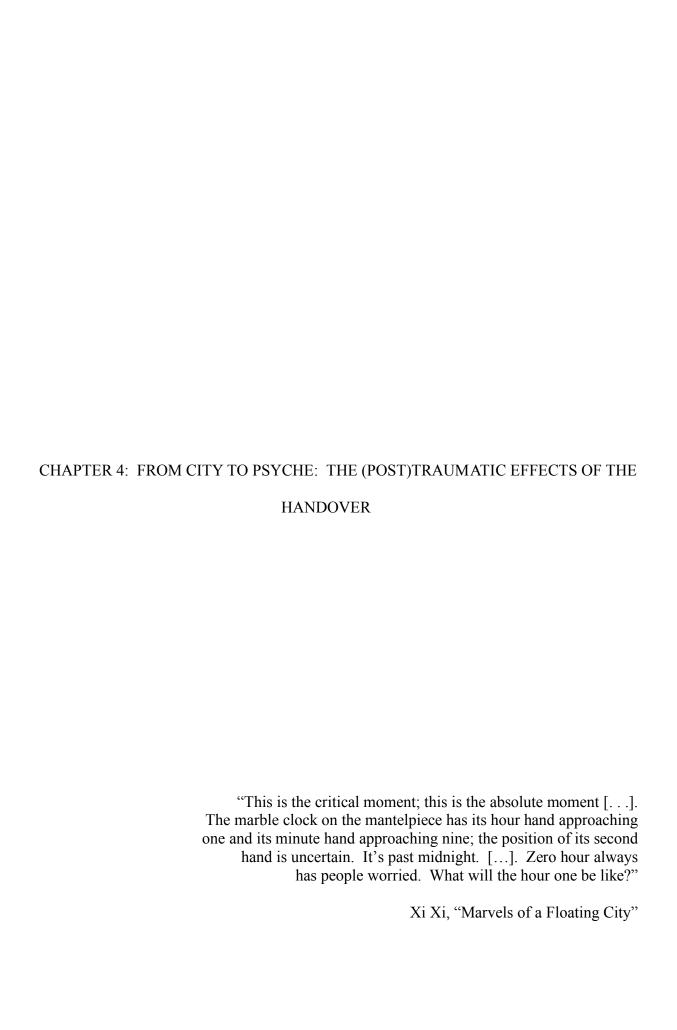
move to the city and despite the government's efforts to displace Cantonese as the language of instruction.

Because Cantonese is a tonal language, many words pun: the abysmal difference between paying respect to the patriarch of the family and insulting him by calling him an "old thing" is marked by tonal difference. This kind of word play has been exploited by local artists to force the entry of the spoken language into the silent realm of the visual and to construct intervisual images that incorporate both the verbal and the visual. Tsang's *Guong Guen* is a mixed-media sculptural assemblage exhibited in the Para/site show art SUPERmarket from February to March 1998 and illustrates a Cantonese slang phrase. By selecting a variety of slang that can only be understood by Cantonese speakers, he hinders speakers of the official language from comprehending the phrase *guong guen*, but he also favors the low over the high—slang over normative language. In the same way, in romanizing the phrase, he attracts Westerners but then thwarts their understanding. Either way, he laughs at the imperial and Western discourses that are addressed in the piece of work. And precisely that is what *guong guen* means—a swindler, ruffian, or hoodlum, someone who acts dishonestly. There is little in the piece created by Tsang that could hint at its meaning: a glass bottle with a stick hanging from the cork. In romanizing the phrase, Tsang freed the original word from tonal constraints. Because Cantonese is a dialect that depends on tones to mark semantic difference, Tsang breaks with the fixity of the sign and like a trickster plays with the viewers' capacity to interpret the piece. While the first component of the word remains a constant, *gong* (tone 1 in Cantonese), the second component, *guen*, changes each time, giving at least four different meanings: light tube, lamp, bachelor, and swindler.

Coming from a household of Cantonese immigrants, my first guess was that Tsang was indeed swindling his audience, but I had no scientific way of proving it. So I resorted to an experiment involving an undergraduate student from Hong Kong and a colleague from Singapore who speaks Cantonese as a second language. I never told any of them what I thought, but only revealed that the phrase was slang and showed them the work of art. My student's first guess was light bulb (the elongated fluorescent kind). At first he had a hard time because he could not understand such an abstract concept as shown in the art work and had never been conscious about Romanized Cantonese. But after a weekend thinking it over, he came up with the words hoodlum and ruffian. Being more exposed to the reading and interpretation of cultural texts, my colleague had more theories about the meaning of guong guen, but his readings were influenced by his first language, Mandarin. In the end, he decided to poll some people back home and the only one who had the same answer that I, and probably Tsang, had in mind was a Cantonese-speaking lady from Hong Kong who settled the dispute. Guong guen is slang for swindle, cheat, scam, deceive. But in Tsang's work it means to outwit anyone not familiar with the local dialect. As an artist-run space, Para/Site Art Space serves, like Dung's *Atlas*, to map the effective histories of a "borrowed place" within a "borrowed time." The way these temporary installations make use of space in such a crowded place as Hong Kong and against the linear narratives of museums and galleries that favor the permanence of colonial or ancient Chinese artifacts, enhances the exteriorization of the half seen and the uncanny, those discontinuities in the very being of a troubled subject for whom decolonization meant recolonization rather than autonomy. That is why the works of Tsang and Leung are important in the postcolonial projects of the city: "The textbook narrative of national history may be perfectly able to subsume high cultural artefacts to its purpose, but objects from everyday life that are beneath its disdain may become

tools for a fragile alternative history—a history based on memory and personal lived experience"

(Clarke 72).

The1997 Handover triggered all kinds of interesting cultural responses to (neo)colonial

calibration. The socio-political climate of the Hong Kong of the last twenty five years (from the

time of the Sino-British negotiations to outline the transfer of sovereignty to the present) has

favored the emergence of a heterotopic space. Here, local artists have subverted those colonial

regimes and inscribed, in the cracks of the official, traditional history of both empires, varied

effective histories that speak volumes about the underlying desires of the Hongkongese quasi-

nation. The playful mode of Dung Kai-Cheung, Kith Tsang, and Warren Leung, the blurred line

between high and low, official and marginal, normative and alternative, the questioning of the

grand narratives of Britain and China as portrayed in the HSBC, the BCT and the ECEC, and the

triple linguistic competences of the Hongkongese, are all contextualized within the search for the

Hongkongese identity.

CHAPTER 4: FROM CITY TO PSYCHE: THE (POST)TRAUMATIC EFFECTS OF THE

HANDOVER

"This is the critical moment; this is the absolute moment [. . .].
The marble clock on the mantelpiece has its hour hand approaching
one and its minute hand approaching nine; the position of its second
hand is uncertain. It's past midnight. […]. Zero hour always
has people worried. What will the hour one be like?"

Xi Xi, "Marvels of a Floating City"

Product of the shaping forces of the motherland and the imperial colonizer, Hong Kong's identity is necessarily traumatic, and so are its cultural artifacts, especially those produced after the negotiations for the handover began in 1982. My particular interest in analyzing this issue in this chapter is through director Wong Kar Wai's Hong Kong-in-the-60s trilogy, *Days of Being Wild* (1991), *In the Mood for Love* (2000), and *2046* (2004), poet P.K. Leung's "City at the End of Time," and fiction writer Xi Xi's "Marvels of a Floating City." These are works that depict the traumas of the city through the fears and anxieties of its inhabitants during very sensitive times in the history of Hong Kong.

4.1 Wong Kar Wai 's Nostalgia for the Hong Kong of the Sixties

Like his Hong Kong New Wave ancestors, Wong—who belongs to the Second New Wave—displaces the anxieties surrounding the countdown to Chinese control in a subtle way, thus, setting the trilogy not in the nineties but in the sixties. Precisely, in portraying the decisive period when a relatively autonomous and modern Hong Kong began to break out of the colonial mentality and an identity was taking shape, Wong hints at the presence of a troubled, contemporary 1997 Hong Kong in the interstices of its absence. That is, Wong purposely chooses a decade highly charged with political unrest, fear, and massive emigration to escape the threat of mainland Communism, but also with the potential to rapidly become an economic model in the East. But once again, Wong's strategy is a subtle one, so that visual features of the Hongkongese landscape—like landmark buildings or street names—are physically obliterated but hover psychically in recurring motifs that serve as metonymies of the dislocated selves of Hongkongers in constant transition from East to West and vice versa.

Critic and film historian Stephen Teo says that in Wong Kar-Wai's cinema, "Hong Kong and the cinema are conjoined as one" (*Wong Kar Wai* 1). That is, the city's restless energy feeds his films, making them as fragmentary and chaotic as the Hongkongese identity itself. Widely recognized as a cult director, Wong has been influenced by his New Wave mentors, in particular Patrick Tam, but he is also known for not using preexisting screenplays as in the true spirit of what Francois Truffaut disdainfully called the stuffy "tradition of quality" (Stam 84), but creating movies that interpret his external influences in artistic and innovative ways. Among the literary influences on Wong's filmography are Julio Cortázar, Harumi Murakami, Jin Yong, Liu Yichang, Raymond Chandler, Gabriel García Márquez, Osamu Dazai, and in particular Manuel Puig and his 1969 novel *Boquitas pintadas,* translated into English as *Heartbreak Tango* (Teo 4). His other main influence is his nostalgia for the past. Born in Shanghai in the 1950s, Wong moved to Hong Kong when his family relocated due to the People's Republic of China's Communist regime. Teo argues that in Wong's sixties trilogy, he recreates the Hong Kong of his childhood. But not only that, he constructs narratives of Hong Kong that act as effective histories.

Days of Being Wild, the story of six characters in search of happiness, was originally conceived as a diptych but because of box office failures, Wong had to wait to materialize his dream. The main character Yuddy is the prototypical rebel without a cause; in fact the movie's (Ah Fei Zhengzhuan) English title is *Rebel Without a Cause*. Yuddy's unhappy relationship with his foster mother and his eternal search for his biological mother cause him to jump from one dysfunctional relationship to another. His unhappiness, in turn, causes a chain of unrequited love relations as Yuddy's inability to love Lai-Chen or Lulu is transformed into Lulu's unwillingness to love Yuddy's friend and Lai-Chen's inability to love the cop/sailor who witnesses Yuddy's

death. Although not intended as *Days'* sequel, upon its release, *In the Mood for Love* became automatically associated to it because of the theme of unrequited love and the similar setting, soundtrack, and characters. In the last three minutes of *Days*, an unnamed dandy performed by Tony Leung Chiu-Wai goes through an elaborate grooming ritual, then grabs his money, lights a cigarette, and leaves his room, all without saying one single word. Yet, it is through his body language that we spectators associate this character with the deceased Yuddy, so that had *Days* succeeded, Leung would have had the main role in the sequel. As Wong Kar Wai is one of those *auteurs* with token actors and recurring characters, he summoned Leung to give life to Chow Mo-Wan and Maggie Cheung to perform as an alter ego of Lai-Chen in *Mood*, a story where Wong refines and perfects the "missed moment" resulting from and in unrequited love. In *Mood*, a more mature story, its characters are also leading lives with more responsibilities and grown-up interpersonal relations. Mo-Wan and Lai-Chen begin a relation after finding out that their respective spouses are having an affair, but the pressure is too much and they finally go separate ways. Finally, *2046* was originally intended as a diptych, but it ended up being *Mood*'s companion piece and the informal third part of the trilogy. The movie picks up where *Days* starts and where *Mood* ends, that is, it actually goes back to the beginning of the trilogy while it serves as a sequel to *Mood*. Whereas the Chow Mo-Wan of *Mood* is a shy romantic hero, the Chow Mo-Wan of *2046* is the cynical, dislocated womanizer of *Days*. Like Yuddy, he jumps from one sexual relation to another without finding the One he lost, Lai-Chen. In the process, he affects and is affected by four different women: the Mandarin speaking namesake of his lost love, Su Li-Zhen, his landlord's daughter, Wong Jing-Wen, Lulu (from *Days of Being Wild*), and another dance hall girl, Bailing.

Although at first Wong did not intend these three movies as a trilogy, they became

powerfully united because of the recurrent use of certain motifs that, it is true, are found in varying degrees in his other movies *As Time Goes By* (1988), *Ashes of Time* (1994), *Chunking Express* (1994), *Fallen Angels* (1995), and *Happy Together* (1997). For one thing, Wong seems to be obsessed with the effects of highly-unsettling experiences on the way one spins the threads that conform the fragile make up of memories. His notion of the "missed moment," that instant when two entities intersect but for some reason are not in the same tune recurs obsessively in his *ouvre*, but it is in *Days of Being Wild*, *In the Mood for Love*, and *2046* that it is reproduced in ways that interlock the three movies in a compact trilogy. The missed moment, then, becomes the point of departure to understand Wong's metaphor of unrequited love as the displacement and dislocation of pre- and post-Handover Hongkongers. It also explains the uneasy fusion between East and West and issues of decolonization and recolonization that resulted from intersections ingrained in the particular historical situation of Hong Kong.

4.2 Traumatic Mappings of the Hong Kong of the 60s/90s/year 2046

Trauma has different yet complementary functions and characteristics according to different theorists. To Dominick LaCapra, "Trauma indicates a shattering break or cesura in experience which has belated effects" (*Writing History, Writing Trauma* 186), one of which is writing trauma or as he calls it traumatic or post-traumatic writing (in its most specific sense), or (post) traumatic signifying practice (in its most general sense). Writing trauma consists of "processes of acting out, working over, and to some extent working through in analyzing and 'giving voice' to the past—processes of coming to terms with traumatic 'experiences,' limit events, and their symptomatic effects that achieve articulation in different combinations and hybridized forms" (186).

In theorizing "post-traumatic culture," Kirby Farrell recognizes the interchangeability of the traumatic and the post-traumatic. To him, the term explains trauma as an interpretive process, not a literal one, and as such it embodies a cultural trope as neither everyone in the same culture is bound to be affected by traumatic events nor are they to be affected in the same ways. One of the characteristics of the post-traumatic is acting as "a space in which patterns of supremely important, often dangerous symbols and emotions may reinforce one another, gaining momentum, confirmation, and force when particular social conditions and historical pressures intersect" (12). Farrell contends that when a group undergoes a traumatic experience, the survivors will cope by producing alternate cultural forms to safeguard them from the annihilation of meaning and identity. Among the uses of trauma are for therapeutic purpose, as a policy of terror, to strengthen group bonding, as a justification to inflict trauma on others, as a mode of coping, as a cry of protest, to induce memories or produce false memories.

According to Anne Kaplan "traumatic events may affect the discourse of an entire nation's public narratives" (66) causing instances of national forgetting or displacement, only that perpetrators and victimizers forget and displace traumas differently. For example, the work of public intellectuals and scholars can become publicized only to the extent that the entire nation is ready to hear from the victims. To this respect, Farrell coincides with Kaplan. He points out that according to Judith Lewis Herman, the study of psychological trauma may periodically be anathematized, repressed and forgotten (14). Interestingly, "the conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud is the central dialectic of psychological trauma" (qtd. in Farrell 15). To Farrell, "Post-traumatic culture registers the dissonance, the shock-of-meeting-long-denied realities that threaten our individual and collective self-esteem" (15)

Traditionally, the terms trauma, diaspora, and displacement have been linked to postwar scholarship on Jewish history. But as Hatja Garloff contends, most recently, in trying to distinguish between imposed and self-imposed types of exile, attention has been brought to what these terms mean in the context of the postcolonial world: "The term that once described Jewish Greek and Armenian dispersion now shares meaning with a larger semantic domain that includes works like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest-worker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community" (qtd. in Garloff 3). The diasporic does not connote a geographic space but an enunciative position and a mode of articulation. To Stuart Hall, it is the gap between "here" and "there" and the refusal to cover this gap through nostalgia and idealization of the lost home that makes diasporic discourse capable of producing new spaces from which to speak" (3). Garloff goes on to argue that a fundamental issue in the dialogue between Jewish cultural scholars and postcolonial scholars is the search for an alternative to the homogenizing discourse that characterizes the modern nation-state.

The reflections posed by La Capra, Farrell, Kaplan, Herman, Harloff, and Hall on trauma as a signifying practice or culture will be particularly helpful to explain how Wong Kar Wai's maps both city and individual in his Hong Kong in the Sixties trilogy. For one thing, what Wong does is to write or signify trauma in his films. In acting out, working over and giving voice to the past, he enables his characters to cope and come to terms with their own limit events or traumatic experiences. Besides from troubled Hongkongers of the sixties and by extension of the nineties, Wong's films are populated with characters in constant movement both physically and psychically. Some immigrated voluntarily; others are displaced by the circumstances. Then, his is a trope for his contemporary fellow citizen's anxieties, a personal interpretation of the events that triggered those emotions and, therefore, a particular historiography of Hong Kong. As a

survivor of those traumas or as someone trying to preserve a unique identity in a transitional period between two imperialistic regimes, Wong himself had to produce *Days*, *Mood*, and *2046* as alternate forms coexisting with British colonial and PRC's official versions of pre- and post-Handover events. He ultimately depicts trauma as metaphor for the therapeutic purposes of viewers, to strengthen the bonding of a people—Hongkongers—who are not particularly strong when it comes to political activism, to cope with fear under the two countries, one system formula, induce memories of forgotten past traumas, and prevent their repression. In the same way, he employs trauma to convey his cinematic techniques to an audience not used to effective readings of history, postmodern tropes like ambiguity, uncertainty, fragmentation, or even explorations of the mind that started as mappings of urban space. It is his simultaneously being "here" and "there" that enables him to produce a new space, more like a Foucauldian placeless place, to speak about the collective feelings of displacement and fear of a people whose fate is decided by others.

4.3 Urban Heterotopic Spaces; Heterotopic Spaces of the Mind

Along with cinema, architecture is the most developed cultural form in Hong Kong, according to Ackbar Abbas. There is effectively a symbiotic relation between architecture and cinema as both are highly visual mediums and as "architecture from the point of view of the city can be associated only with film, 'the visual art that developed alongside the modern city'" (Abbas 147). New Wave filmmakers were praised for incorporating urban settings and exploring historical and social changes (Rodriguez 65). And even Second Wave director Wong Kar Wai has mapped the city both architecturally and toponymically in some of his movies (*As Tears Go By, Chungking Express, Fallen Angels*), but it is the intentional avoidance of any kind of

mapping whatsoever what distinguishes his Hong Kong-in-the-Sixties trilogy as it serves to carve a third space outside of colonial or nationalistic discourses. Although like Dung Kai-Cheung, Wong counterattacks visual, urban colonization, rather than contesting toponymical mapping through verbal tropes, he chooses to create imagery that subverts practices of mapping in general. All the spatial references that identify the setting with Hong Kong are obliterated: no temples or high-rise buildings or street names or district names or landmarks, but only dark alleys, dilapidated buildings, and seedy joints. Images of the city inevitably hover in the minds of spectators but are totally absent in the movie; instead, he employs time markers to play with the notion of Hong Kong as a borrowed place within a borrowed time while revealing the intense psychic traumas of the city-dwellers.

In one of the first scenes of *Days of Being Wild*, Yuddy flirts with Lai-Chen in the concession stand where she works, with the clock on the wall as the only witness. He says "You will see me tonight in your dreams" and leaves. Almost immediately music from circa 1960 sounds in the background and a scene of the Filipino jungle is shown. After flirting with her for three days on a row, he makes his most powerful move: he stares at his watch for one minute, asks her what date it is, and tells her that "one minute before 3 pm on April the 6th 1960 we will be friends." Gradually they become friends of one minute, then two, and then of an hour. In only five minutes of footage, Wong has blurred the clear-cut boundary that separates past from present. That is, he juxtaposes the context of the Hongkonger's anxiety in the face of the 1997 handover (clock ticking and insistence on the exact date and time) to a less anxious immediate past (April 6th 1960) to a more idyllic remote past in the Philippines (Yuddy's happy days had his biological mother not given him up). He also interlocks visual images (the run-down stand and the dark alleys, the bright tree tops of the jungle) with sound images (the music from the

fifties and sixties, the clock ticking furiously) that shift between past and present. In fact, most of the action takes place either in the dark alleys of an anonymous impoverished district or in second-class night clubs, old apartment buildings, or small restaurants that do not bear conspicuous time or place markers. The music, however, irrupts in each scene immediately recalling nostalgic memories and creating an atmosphere that summons the past, but also support the actors' roles as some of the themes identify specific traits or particular moments in the action. One tune in particular—*Perfidia*—becomes Yuddy's theme, and it sounds during three pivotal moments: to signal the domino effect of Yuddy's unhappiness, to mark the exact moment when the proverbial legless bird (Yuddy) lands to die because he is tired of looking for the One, and when the dandy (performed by Tony Leung) is introduced in the last scenes of the movie.

The motif of the clock appears each time that a potential relationship is thwarted by the parties' inability, unwillingness, or fear. So, the characters only cross paths momentarily but soon after continue in different directions, causing an anxiety in each. The clock, thus, symbolizes the expected end of a liaison that has not even begun. Yuddy's adoptive mother will never reveal who his real mother is, making theirs a love-hate relationship. He will marry neither Lai-Chen nor Lulu because as the legless bird who would not stop flying until he died, he is in an oedipal search for the One. Lulu yells "Don't love me" to Yuddy's friend, while the cop waits for Lai-Chen's call until tired of biding his time he becomes a sailor. While in the Philippines, he crosses Yuddy's path, but the reckless Yuddy dies, shot by some troublemakers before they could build up a significant friendship. As the only pre-handover movie in the trilogy, *Days* powerfully expresses the anxieties of six characters intersected by others in an attempt to provide a trope for the contemporary Hongkonger's feelings of loss and cultural displacement caused by their in-between condition. That is, by their being caught between a

colonial past and a grim neoimperial future, by their release from one late capitalist power and their reabsorption by a communist-turning-into-capitalist economy, in short, by their being what the local writer Dung Kai-Cheung calls the "Centaur of the East."

Wong Kar Wai's second movie appears nearly ten years after *Days*, so that the arbitrary path-crossings of Yuddy, his friend, the mother, Lai-Chen, Lulu, and the cop become more psychological and enhanced intersections. In *Mood*, his more mature rendition of the missed moment reveals a more disturbing anxiety that haunts the post-1997 Hongkonger: the post-traumatic effects of the return to China.   If the first five minutes of *Days* set the tone of the whole movie, the 127 minutes that *Mood* lasts mesmerize the spectator with its artistic workings and reworkings of the missed moment. In reducing the number of main characters to only two, Wong concentrates the impact of the potential intersection of two entities (Chow Mo-Wan and So Lai-Chen; metaphors for China and Hong Kong, East and West, communism and capitalism?). The action is set in the Hong Kong of 1962 in an old apartment building where Mo-Wan and Lai-Chen are looking for a room to rent. A conversation is spoken in Cantonese (the official dialect of Hong Kong) and in Shanghainese (both the landlady's and the new lady tenant's regional affiliation) to signify the traumatic union of Hong Kong and the mainland. As Lai-Chen leaves the apartment to get her belongings, Mo-Wan fruitlessly knocks on Ms. Suen's door. Felicitously, he finds a room next door, at the Koos. So they fatefully become neighbors, and Ms. Suen remarks "What a coincidence, you both moving the same day."   Over the next weeks, they cross paths in either his landlord's flat or in her landlady's. So, new acquaintances are made as the Koos, the Chans (Lai Chen's married surname), the Chows and Ms. Suen take their meals together. But Mr. Chan and Mrs. Chow begin a secret affair that ironically drives Mo-Wan and Lai-Chen closer: first, they find out that both like martial art stories, then they casually

meet in the dark alleys or in the noodle stand where they get their dinner from time to time, finally they cannot help noticing that they have an object that each other's rivals own too. Thus, they become close in an attempt to find out what drew their respective spouses away from them. In the process they project onto the other the mixed feelings they still have for their spouses with dire consequences.

Unfortunately, they play games that make them drift apart—fetishizing one another, becoming emotionally (but never physically) attached and feeling guilty, longing for the lost spouse, enacting future break-ups. Although the real reasons for their separation are not clear, Wong makes sure of one thing: that the spectators understand that there are myriad reasons why Mo-Wan and Lai-Chen could not sustain their relationship. The inability, unwillingness, and fear of the more juvenile and irresponsible characters of *Days* takes on unsuspected psychological dimensions that Wong depicts in those psychotic games and in schizophrenic images— voiceovers, slow motion scenes, partial shots of clocks and bodies, juxtaposing shots of each character alone—and both intertextual and intervisual images—quotations from literary works, Lai-Chen's *cheongsams*, tunes and lyrics that express the anxieties shown in the facial and body language of both, and real footage about de Gaulle's visit to Cambodia in 1966.

The issue of time that Wong initiated in *Days* is retaken in *Mood*, but this time also adopting a new form: the varied *cheongsams* that Lai-Chen wears throughout the movie and a new musical theme. The use of clocks is less pervasive in *Mood* as they are rendered only partially and with less frequency and significance than in *Days*. Only once does the clock signal a pivotal event in the reconstruction of Mo-Wan and Lai-Chen's never-fulfilled love affair, when they realize the unfaithfulness of Mr. Chan and of Mrs. Chow, but refrain from being equally deceitful. Until that moment, the narrative has flown relatively smoothly and linearly, but

afterwards the narrative becomes fragmentary as if paralleling the dislocation of the characters. More meaningfully than the clocks, Lai-Chen`s *cheongsams* function as ways to signal the passage of time in the four years that the movie spans and to connect the decade of the sixties to the last decades of the twentieth century, when Hong Kong became one of the Asian hubs of fashion design and apparel retail. She wears about a dozen colorful dresses—each more beautiful and fashionable than the previous one—that contrast significantly against the dim, anonymous backgrounds**.** The main love theme that accompanies the lovers, Shigeru Umegayashi's score, is actually borrowed from another film, *Yumeji*, but Wong appropriates it beautifully. According to Joanna Lee's interactive essay in a special edition of the movie, "This alluring waltz, with an entrancing string ensemble arrangement, is symbolic of the tentative, romantically intriguing steps of the male and female dancers. The dance rhythm also embodies the paradox of passion and socially conformist duties of the sexes." To mark the passage of time in the movie it blasts over and over each time that a missed moment occurs, and it resounds incessantly in the footsteps of the couple as they drift through the alleys, stairs and hallways recreating an incorporeal waltz that can only persist in the cracks of their desiring selves.

While *Days* depicts the affective response in pre-handover Hong Kong, *Mood* is mainly about the recent post-traumatic effects of the handover, and *2046* is about a new type of anxiety, the one surrounding the end of the one country, two systems formula that was to characterize the transition period from 1997 to 2047. 2046 is a polysemic signifier in the last of Wong Kar Wai's Hong Kong-in-the-sixties trilogy. In *Mood*, it is only the hotel room where Mo-Wan and Lai-Chen could have consummated their love; in *2046* it is the emotionally charged room in Hong Kong where Lulu dies longing for Yuddy, where Jing-Wen speaks Japanese after her forced break-up with her Japanese boyfriend, where Bailing begins a sad sexual affair with Mo-

Wan, and the room Mo-Wan himself initially wanted; it is also the number of the room where Mo-Wan and the Cambodian Su Li-Zhen live while in Singapore, the setting of the sci-fi story that Mo-Wan writes in collaboration with Jing-Wen, and the fictional place where people go "to recover lost memories." After his failed affair with Lai-Chen, Mo-Wan grows terribly cynical and suppresses all kinds of emotions and memories. The secret that he whispered to a tree in Angkor Wat in the last scenes of *Mood* is finally disclosed in *2046*: "Once I was in love. After a while she wasn't there. She went to 2046 to wait for me, but I couldn't find her. I never found out if she loved me. All memories are traces of fear." "No one comes back from 2046," says Mo-Wan's Japanese alter ego in the story, "no one except one person because some get away easily but others take much longer." Mo-Wan becomes the first to come back from 2046 since he cannot bear the memories of the one he loved, and once being the one with the broken heart, he subsequently becomes the heartbreaker who merely uses people as time-fillers and then discards them.

By the time Wong shoots his third movie, the conspicuousness of the ticking clocks gives way to another technique that he had employed in *Days*. As the year 2047 becomes the most terrifying second part of the countdown to China, Wong's obsession for time markers takes the form of dates not merely setting the action, but meant to document key events in 1966 and 1967 and map the psyches of individuals who dwell in memories, all while looking towards July 1st 2047. Wong interpolates news footage of the 1966 and 1967 riots as a preamble to the dissection of his characters' troubled hearts. Then, he shows two scenes that take place in a particularly sensitive day of the year for many: December 24th. On the Christmas Eve of 1966, Mo-Wan runs into a Lulu who is still mourning Yuddy and who cannot remember Mo-Wan. Rather than pouring out her grief, she acrimoniously dismisses him. A typically Wong Kar Wai intersection,

this meeting later propels Lulu to remember her present misery and to bewail while helplessly lying on her bed. The next Christmas Eve, Mo-Wan asks her new neighbor Bailing for dinner. On their way back, while walking on the dimly-lit streets of Hong Kong, their conversation highlights his unwillingness to start a serious relationship. It has been a few months since they have been flirting and Bailing wants more. She asks him why waste time if you find the right person. To which he replies that a man like him has nothing much except time and that all he needs is company. She wonders if to him people function only to fill time. He cynically replies that they can borrow his time too. After that exchange, their flirting degenerates into meaningless sex for him, but for her it becomes unfulfilled love. A date in between those two Christmas Eves—May 22 1967—serves to draw a parallel between microcosmic dislocations at the level of the human heart and macrocosmic upheavals, when the social disturbances in Hong Kong were reaching a climax: a curfew was imposed, homemade bombs circulated, and the economy stopped dead. Whereas Lulu's is an example of the Hongkonger's "delayed emotions," Mo-Wan's is an example of Hong Kong's "borrowed time," both interlocked to give meaning to the uncertain future starting on July 1st 2047.

The simple path-crossings of Yuddy and his contemporaries have become the complicated interpersonal relations of Mo-Wan and Lai-Chen, and later of the fruitless relations of Mo-Wan and his women, relationships branded by the diasporic nature of the Hongkonger. *Mood*'s Mo-Wan and Lai-Chen cannot have a stable relationship, not only because of their past relationships with their respective spouses but also because the Hongkonger never learned to see Hong Kong as home. S/He has always been a subject in transition, always migrating either from the mainland or to the varied overseas Cantonese communities around the world. That is why Mo-Wan accepts a job in Singapore soon after they miss their moment. In the same way, that is

why when four years after their first intersection, when they separately go back to their old flats they find out that the Koos and Ms. Suen are moving or have moved overseas due to the impending threat of communist China. As in the 1960s, the clock is incessantly ticking and will not stop until 2046, the last of the fifty years that Deng Xiaoping gave Hong Kong to wholly integrate into the political and economic system of the motherland. Even when Hongkongers stay in the place they temporarily consider home, they cannot help feel dislocated as they are torn between their colonial past and their neoimperial future. That is why like the Mo-Wan of *2046*, they try to suppress those painful memories of idyllic times. If the trauma of Wong's 1991 movie is characterized by the fear and anxieties that came along with decolonization, the trauma of his 2000 movie is characterized by a total lack of hope regarding the future and an anxiety caused by the recolonization of Hong Kong by China, especially in the face of the latter's neo-imperial claims in the "rebel provinces." The trauma depicted in the 2004 movie is even more pessimistic as it is characterized by the cynicism, absence of emotions, and moral and social corruption of the future. These are the effective histories of the Hongkongers seen with the kaleidoscopic lens of Wong Kar Wai.

4.4 Hong Kong's Traumatic Post and Neo Coloniality

Among all the postcolonial outposts, Hong Kong has a singular position. Unlike most former colonies, its *telos* was not the expected freedom, but a new kind of colonization imposed by its motherland. In "Between Colonizers: Hong Kong's Postcolonial Self-Writing in the 1990s," Rey Chow argues that the case of Hong Kong has been omitted in most debates on postcolonialism, partly because it does not fit in the typical First World/Third World, Master/subaltern, East/West colonial models in Asia. She explains, however, that "there is the

imperialism practiced by East Asian cultures themselves: the territorial and economic aggression of Japan before and after the Second World War, and the imperialist policies practiced in Mongolia, Taiwan, and Tibet by China" (152**).** Chow poignantly asks "How do we talk about a postcoloniality that is a forced return to a 'mother country,' itself as imperialistic as the previous colonizer" (153) and "what happens when colonialism is not a past but a future, when colonialism has not yet left all its tracks but is looming in the time we normally associate with hope, change, freedom?" ("Things, Common/Places, Passages of the Port City" 186). These questions are further complicated by Hong Kong's former status as a British Dependent Territory rather than as a colony, by its fundamental function as a trading post, and by the fact that the end of colonial rule was handled by Britain and China in ways that caused panic among the population but that also forced the Hongkongese intelligentsia to repossess political agency through cultural agency in heterotopic spaces.

The 1987 Film Censorship Bill, "a law that restricted '[motion] pictures which damage relationships with other countries" (Payne 2) complicated cinematic representations of national or quasi national identity. This because filmmakers believed there was an unspoken reference to China, especially since the Sino-British Joint Declaration was still fresh in everybody's mind. While resenting having China and Britain decide their future, Hongkongers did not protest the signing of the agreement then. It was not until the massacre in Tiananmen Square that there were large pro-democracy demonstrations in Hong Kong as the fatalistic date of the handover drew closer and old fears about the communist mainland government resurfaced. As a filmmaker emerging in the late 1980s, Wong Kar Wai was positioned in a particularly sensitive era regarding the Hongkonger's anxieties surrounding 1997. Like many of the intellectuals producing cultural artifacts during this time, he found subtle ways to not only subvert censorship

but also to give an outlet to his contemporaries' apprehension, instability, and dislocation. He used his characters in *Days*, *Mood* and *2046* as tropes that expressed those feelings, intertextual references to other colonizers or colonial outposts in Asia, and polysemic dates and numbers to construct Hong Kong as a borrowed place within a borrowed time and Hongkongers as machines with delayed reactions.

Yuddy's troubled relationship with his mothers seems to parallel Hong Kong's equally distressing relationship with the motherland and the colonizer. Abandoned at birth by his biological mother, apparently a wealthy woman from the Philippines, Yuddy identifies himself with the legless bird who can fly and sleep in the wind when tired and lands only once in his life to die. Like Yuddy, Hong Kong lacks a foundational part due to the abrupt way in which its links to China were cut in 1841, first occupied and then ceded to Britain during the Anglo-Chinese Wars. Yuddy's relationship to his adoptive mother, a former harlot/dance hall girl, is as emotionally lacking. For years he stays close to her in the hope that one day she would reveal who his real mother is, but the woman refuses to tell him, more out of selfishness, than out of love. When she decides to emigrate to the United States with a wealthy man, Yuddy confronts her:

> Yuddy: You made me stay with you all these years. Now you want to go. I won't let you!
>
> Mother: I've taken care of you for so long. I'm not deserting you. I've made arrangements. The house will stay with you. I'll send you money.
>
> Yuddy: I want nothing. I just want you to stay. You wouldn't set me free, now I won't let you go.

> Mother: All these years you've been standing against me. Can't you be nice?
>
> Yuddy: If you wanted me to, you should have told me the truth. I only wanted to know who my parents were.
>
> Mother: You're only afraid your mother is inferior, no counterpart to me! You want to fly? Now fly, fly high and far! Don't ever let me discover that you've been fooling yourself all this time.

"What is unique of Hong Kong [and of Yuddy], however, is precisely an in-betweenness and an awareness of impure origins" (Chow, "Between Colonizers" 157). As Luo Dayou[5] claims in one of his songs, like a bastard and an orphan, both the city and the Hongkonger "grew up in the state of being abandoned, struggling for a compromised survival in the gap between East and West" (qtd. in Chow 158). Hong Kong's dislocation owes much to its impossibility of reclaiming a native culture based on Chinese folklore because at the time of its cession, it was a largely uninhabited craggy island, a poor fishing village that later became the refuge of mainland émigrés, expatriates from all over the British Empire, and Chinese laborers from the mainland. Nativism is, nevertheless, the PRC's excuse to recolonize Hong Kong. Kuan-Hsing Chen argues in "The Decolonization Effect" that "'nativism' operates on every level of social formation. The official posts have to be first nativised; then it is followed by the changes of national flag and dress, the language, the curriculum, the textbooks, food, etc" (86-87). Of these changes, the ones that should worry Hongkongers the most are the imposition of Mandarin over the local dialect spoken by the majority of the population, and the new national flag that ripples next to the local flag, or rather the nationalistic displays of China in its attempts to appeal to Hongkongers as the lost motherland.

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[5]   A Taiwanese doctor-turned-singer now based in Hong Kong.

In discussing the particular postcolonial legacy of Hong Kong, Chow has made a distinction between nativism and postmodern hybridity. One of the contradictions about Hong Kong's postmodern hybridity is that, on one hand, it is as cosmopolitan as the center of imperial power that created it; on the other hand, "poverty, dependency, and subalternity persist well beyond the achievement of national independence" ("Between Colonizers" 157). Indeed, by purposely suppressing any architectural or toponymic signs from his movies, Wong Kar Wai directs his spectators' gaze to the effects of European colonization: the dim alleys and streets, the run-down buildings, and cheap joints. Chu Yingchi points that "Although the Hong Kong economy developed rapidly after the mid-1950s, the social welfare system in relation to housing, education, health and working conditions remained inadequate" (43-44). This in turn set in motion protests against the colonial government in 1967. In order to capture that sense of dislocation that comes along with colonization, Wong sets part of the action in the trilogy in other Asian colonies.

While in *Days* the Philippines stands for that other, in *Mood* and in *2046*, Singapore and Cambodia stand for the colonial alter ego of Hong Kong. The Philippines is portrayed as a leisurely place in the tropics that allures people with its tunes of Latin American inspiration, but it is also the run-down place where the legless bird, Yuddy, stops his flight to die. Cheap joints and dimly-lit alleys and recesses recur to characterize Singapore. In *Mood*, Lai-Chen fruitlessly waits for Mo-Wan in a second-rate hotel room (room 2046 once again), and in *2046*, Mo-Wan nostalgically relives his first romance with the other Lai-Chen, the single-glove-clad Su Li-Zhen from Phnom Penh, among dark streets, dirty stairways, and decrepit buildings. At the end of *Mood*, a distressed Mo-Wan chooses the decayed magnificence of Angkor Wat as the recipient of his grievances because in old times when people did not want to disclose their secrets they

would climb a mountain and look for a tree hole to pour their secrets. Cambodia is, not only the place of origin of the mandarin-speaking Li-Zhen, but also a former colony of France. Thus the possible criticism to the warm reception to de Gaulle in 1966 through what seems like real news footage from back then. The results are lethargy, unconformity with the system, cynicism in the worst of cases, and fear to commit. Even though direct references to either China or Britain are not made, there are, in the shadow of Japan, traces of the advantageous and harmful effects of both past and future types of colonization. In *Mood*, Lai-Chen's husband constantly brings Japanese goods from his business trips to Japan: rice cookers, fashionable handbags, and expensive ties that give status to and create dependency on the dwellers of the flat building. It is because Mo-Wan's wife carries a Japanese bag identical to Lai Chen's that both Mo-Wan and Lai-Chen find out that they are both being double crossed. In *2046*, external influence is even more pervasive. The sci-fi story that Mo-Wan writes is about himself as a Japanese man on a fast speed train heading to 2046. The setting illustrates Japan's leading position regarding technological innovations. And Japanese becomes one of the three main languages spoken in the movie along with Cantonese and Mandarin. While in *Mood* most of the characters were Hongkongese, in 2046 there are three main characters who speak the official language of the PRC, two who speak Japanese, and two who speak Cantonese.

Wong also plays with dates to express the anxieties surrounding the countdown. The date that epitomizes all the traumas endured by Hongkongers is, in the last movie, Christmas. The Japanese character of Mo-Wan's story says, "Paragraph 201 in the Passenger's Guide warns that area 1224-1225 is specially cold. The train heating won't be enough. Passengers are advised to hug each other." December 24th proves to be a microcosmic parallel of the riots and disturbances of 1966 and 1967 and, later on, of December 19th 1984 (Signing of the Sino-British

Joint Declaration), June 4th 1989, July 1st 1997, and June 30th 2047. It is in Christmas when Mo-Wan lives emotive moments with Lulu (1966), Bailing (1967), and Jing-Wen (1968), and in the Christmas of 1969 he fruitlessly looks for the Cambodian Li-Zhen. This public concern for time made Wong depict the Hong Kong of the future as a heterotopia, a liminal space resulting from borrowed time (the 99-year lease on Kowloon Peninsula and the New Territories). Living in a borrowed place, in turn, has made Hongkongers like Wong himself similar to the robot attendants on the train to 2046: unable to show their real feelings. Sadly, the more time extends into the future, the more emotion is delayed. As Mo-Wan reflects when he realizes that he once had a happy ending in his grasp, but let it slip away: "Love is a matter of timing. It's no good meeting the right person too early or too late. If I'd lived in another place or time, my story might have had a very different ending." But he did not, and as a metonymy of Hong Kong, Mo-Wan becomes entangled in a self-destructive life idling, gambling, and having one-night stands until he understands, at the end of the trilogy, that "There is one thing I'll never lend to anyone" and leaves. The very last quotation on the screen reads: "He didn't turn his back. It was as if he had boarded a train headed for a drowsy future through the unfathomable night." And perhaps as unfathomable is the bleak future that awaits Hong Kong in 2047.

Like a heterotopia, Wong Kar Wai's Hong-Kong-in-the-sixties trilogy juxtaposes incompatible textualities producing polysemic spaces that encapsulate the anxieties of his 1990s contemporaries regarding the political changes brought about by the handover. In avoiding place markers, he challenges the official history of Hong Kong and provides an alternative version based on personal stories. But these personal stories stand for the (his)story of a collectivity in search for an identity and, hence, for the dislocation of both characters and real people. About Wong's films in general, Jean-Marc Lalanne believes that they resemble a map "dreamed too big

to hold together in one piece and of which there remains only bits and pieces" (9), in allusion to Jorge Luis Borges' short story about a map that was so minutely drawn that it covered the Empire it was to denote. *Days of Being Wild*, *In the Mood for Love*, and *2046* are parts of a map of Hong Kong that Wong plotted himself with bits and pieces of the discontinuous history but also of the psyches of dislocated peoples in an equally disjointed territory. Paying homage to one of his main influences, Manuel Puig, Wong devised an informal set of movies that can well be termed "heartbreak tangos," where the glamour of the film industry of the past coexists with the present anxieties of characters searching for love and happiness amidst decolonization and recolonization. Like Yuddy, Mo-Wan and Lai-Chen, when will Hong Kong finally have the One?

4.5 A Floating City[6]

Xi Xi belongs to a generation of writers influenced by the Latin American Boom writers (Julio Cortázar, Gabriel García Márquez, Carlos Fuentes, Mario Vargas Llosa), not only because of subject matter but also because of the use of innovative techniques. Like the works of her contemporary, P.K. Leung, her works were initially serialized in local newspapers in the early 1970s. Xi Xi started her "Fertile Town" series the year when Margaret Thatcher traveled to China to begin the negotiations for the transfer of sovereignty and published her last story the year before the Handover.

Although not strictly part of the series, "Marvels of a Floating City" shares some major themes with the Fertile Town stories and expresses her concerns about the future of Hong Kong after 1997. Yet, "Marvels" is a much more experimental work. First, the storyline is nonlinear, and some might even argue that there is no plot whatsoever as it is composed of thirteen

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[6]   Background information was taken from Eva Hung's introduction to *Marvels of a Floating City and Other Stories.*

vignettes that are linked by tone and certain recurring motifs. Her narrative style is metonymical; she never states directly what distresses her contemporaries, but rather makes odd associations between the floating city and some paintings by the Belgian artist René Magritte, that in the end tell a coherent story about Hong Kong—some might even say Xi Xi's version of the history of the territory and its people. The characters are nameless entities. In fact, they are the pre-Handover Hongkongers collectively grouped because of their fears and anxieties in the face of July 1st 1997. The narrator merely refers to them as "people in the floating city," "the people here," "people,' "everyone in the city," or "they."

Regarding themes, "Marvels" projects the anxieties and underlying desires of pre-Handover Hongkongers. In keeping with her impersonal and metonymic ways of narrating, she avoids time markers and relies on oral tradition to explain the origin of the nameless floating city. It was "many, many years ago" that the "grandparents of our grandparents" witnessed the sudden appearance of the floating city "in full public gaze, hanging like a hydrogen balloon" (Xi Xi 3). But then "Many, many years passed [. . .] [and] [t]he events of the past which they had related became obscure legends" (3). By avoiding specific references to dates and calling the official annals "obscure legends," Xi Xi dehistorizes the official History of the colony. Hong Kong's identity as a floating mass of land only makes sense when linked to two unmentionable dates: first, January 26, 1841, and then, July 1st 1997. The first act of colonization erases the island's former identity as a Chinese territory, as the British take possession and start irreversible processes of calibration and symbolization. These processes being relived at the imminence of the Handover cause traumatic experiences that Xi Xi represents metaphorically and metonymically. The grandparents' grandparents recall "the event with dread: layers of clouds collided overhead, and the sky was filled with lightning and the roar of thunder. On the sea, a

myriad pirate ships hoisted their skull and crossbones; the sound of cannon fire went on unremittingly. Suddenly, the floating city dropped down from the clouds above and hung in mid air" (3). This event is recalled time and again when the date that contemporary Hongkongers most dreaded approached. To Xi Xi this is "the critical moment," "the absolute moment," "the particular moment;" "a time of glad tidings for the whole city. But from the look of the room we can see it is not festival time" (17). The Handover was indeed a time of glad tidings, but not for everyone in the city. Some chose to immigrate; others produced cultural artifacts—films, literature, art— that expressed their concerns about the transfer of the city from the hands of the democratic, capitalist Britain to the repressive, communist hands of the People's Republic of China. Other references to the Handover are the clock indicating the time. It is past midnight, the "Zero hour [that] always has people worried" (17) As the clock is almost ticking the first hour of the day (and of post-Handover Hong Kong) the narrator anxiously asks "What will the hour one be like?" "Is the floating city's Prince Charming waiting somewhere around the stroke of midnight?" But Cinderella's carriage is turned into a pumpkin again, its steeds have become the mice they used to be, and her dreamlike gown is an old raggedy dress again.

There is nothing normal about this city that floats: either its beginning or its characteristics or its people. Even though it is not firmly rooted to the crust of the earth, under normal circumstances the city is always still; it only moves slightly when it is breezy. The clouds above might fluctuate or the sea below might turbulently agitate, but the floating city will but subtly stir. The inhabitants of the floating city are a special breed also. Xi Xi narrates that when the typhoon season starts, people dream the very same dreams because the city, which would normally stay still, will start rocking and swaying at the force of the winds and storms. Thus, the citizens dream that they too are floating—"everybody is just like a small floating city"

(7).   They also wish they had wings to leave this city for a solid place, one that does not unnaturally hang in the air. They "feel that to live in a city that is floating in the air is a scary thing," but "Where does one go if one leaves a floating city? That's a tough question. Where can one find a solid city where one can lie forever in peace?" (21). Because of their inability to fly, the people of the floating city dream, after typhoon season, of objects that fly or move away from their place of origin: "box kites," "drifting snowflakes," "graceful butterflies," "thistle down," "the city sprouting wings" (23) Their underlying desire of flying away from the city has taken the form of a phenomenon, "a strange plant which our biological world has never witnessed before—the bird grass" (23). That is, grass shaped like birds, that feels like feathers, and that rustles when the breeze comes.

Another phenomenon that only seems to occur in the floating city (as if it weren't strange enough) is the fact that mirrors only reflect the back view of objects and people. Whether mirrors are locally made or brought from abroad, they cannot duplicate the image placed in front of them, and no matter "how many mirrors you use and whatever the angles you place them at, the mirrors only reflect the rear side of reality" (19). This limitation does not mean that whatever is reflected on the mirrors is not to be taken as real. Quite the contrary, says the narrator, like the wicked queen's mirror this is "an honest mirror; it never lies" (19). So, just as one cannot see what lies in front of a mirror, one cannot see or predict the future. But one is allowed to look back to the past and learn from past experiences: "History is a mirror, and that is one positive aspect of the mirrors in the floating city" (19). Xi Xi seems to argue that 1841 is the reflection of 1997. While what happened at Possession Point in the morning of January 26th was an act of colonization; what took place on June 30th 1997 at midnight, rather than an act of liberation from the British Empire, was an act of recolonization by a new power.

As a result of these particular occurrences, the people of the floating city and the city itself are unique. Like the bird grass, the city-dwellers are difficult to classify, neither bird nor grass, neither animal nor plant, neither East nor West. They are also child prodigies who have surpassed their two mothers. Once a barren rock with barely a house on it, Hong Kong became a metropolis with all the trappings of modern nations, except for democracy. For some time, it grew at a faster pace than mainland China and became a world-class city comparable to London, New York, Tokyo, or Paris. Yet it is the Cinderella of the East, first an orphan adopted by the British Empire and graciously brought up until it became the pearl of the orient and, then, reclaimed back by a motherland that in the mind of many is rather like a stepmother, her gown turned into rags at the twelfth stroke of the clock on June 30th, 1997. Like the floating city, its inhabitants are part of a "marionette performance staged by the god of destiny holding numerous invisible strings in his hands" (11). At the same time, the people of the floating city have developed a common identity that sets them apart from colonizer, motherland and even from other former colonized territories. Dreaming the same dream is "a collective [and traumatic] manifestation of the Third-Side-of-the-Straits Complex" (7). That is, it is a manifestation of a third identity existing in the interstices between the Chinese ethnic identity and the British identity stamped in passports that, however, do not grant the right of abode to their holders.

4.6 A City at the End of Time

Like Xi Xi's floating city, the Hong Kong portrayed by Leung Ping-Kwan, also known as P.K.Leung or Ye Si, is an entity with a mind of its own. Both the floating city and the city at the end of time are personifications of a borrowed place that operates within a borrowed time. Leung's, however, is less metonymic and more realistic since the focus is placed, primarily, on

the physical rather than the psychic components of the urbanscape. That is, the poems in *City at the End of Time* (1982) are examples of topographical writing, a term coined by Chen Dawei to refer to the geographical realities of Hong Kong (Taylor 52). As writings about the topography of Hong Kong, Leung's poems deal with cityscapes and streetscapes that build up a certain mood of nostalgia and even apprehension. His reliance on noun phrases more than on verbal phrases also contribute to depict Hong Kong differently than Xi Xi. The narration is enhanced by the clusters of concrete images that make up cohesive stories about specific places in the city. Special emphasis will be paid to the poems in the first section of the book because they depict the city.

The first poem paints a rather bleak picture of a Hong Kong reaching the last stages of British colonialism. It is a wintry day "At the North Point Car Ferry" where the "chill was through to the bone" (Leung 1). The heavy industrialization and the dullness of the day set the mood of the speaker, "[b]ussing all day along dusty streets /[. . .]/one hardly saw the earth at all, just concrete" (2,6). And that, in turn, predisposes the reader to feel dejected. As the mediator between the city and his audience, the speaker leads us through this jumble of "black smoke," "broken glass," "rusty drums," and "burned rubber" that is Hong Kong at the end of its colonial time. The city has reached such a degree of modernization that rather than progress there is retrogression. That is why there is nothing in the natural landscape that can make the speaker cheer up and enjoy the city. A ride on the ferry from the less inhabited outlying islands is certainly an enjoyable experience as one can revel in contemplating the mountains and the waters that sandwich the urbanscape. But in this poem, natural marvels like the trees, the bay, clouds, or waves become dull elements in a postcard of an apocalyptic, troubled, heavily-developed Hong Kong. In the title, there are nostalgic connotations as North Point became a permanent

settlement for two mainland waves of immigrants. First it was known as Little Shanghai and then Little Fujian. It is in these reminiscent scenes that unspoken feelings of a less afflicted Hong Kong dwell, haunting pre-1997 Hongkongers.

In the next poem, "The Clogs," Leung brings out more nostalgic feelings about a soon-to-be-gone era. After wearing a pair of old clogs, the speaker finds himself magically transported to the past, "clacking back into the years" (2). Those "old clogs in Ladder Street" (1) purposefully invoke memories of a more traditional Hong Kong since the Man Mo Temple and the Tung Wah Hospital were two of the gathering places of old-time Hongkongers. "Why can't one make appointments with bygone voices?/`Tomorrow at ten; wear the clogs; I'll hear you then'" (19-20) asks a speaker who has been daydreaming a happier, more innocent time: a time before "modern buildings shot up, and storm clouds rolled" (14) and like children, Hongkongers lived without many preoccupations.

"Fabric Alley" is another nostalgia poem, but it differs from "Clogs" in that Leung compares politics to tailoring. Since Hong Kong has been a mecca for tourists or even locals looking for well-tailored and relatively inexpensive outfits, the poem looks back to a glorious past when the city became a top textile manufacturer. Fabric Alley or Cloth Alley was a famous passageway between Queen's Road Central and Des Voeux Road Central also known as Wing On Street. But the fabric market was moved to Western Market when a more modern landmark, The Center, was developed. "We follow fashions, deliberately, in and in" (1) says an increasingly critical speaker as if to mean that change is an inevitable, but not always welcomed, part of life. Popular markets turn into corporate skyscrapers; traditions give way to modernity; old colonial regimes turn into a predictable one country-two systems formula that only cloaks the reunification of two incompatible ideological and economic systems: "How endless and many

are the disguises/ concealed by revealing" (9-10). The transparency of the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China is but apparent seems to be saying our speaker. With little bribes like the Forever Blooming Bauhinia and most recently a pair of pandas on the tenth anniversary, the CPG has been selling a nationalistic rhetoric to Hongkongers since 1997: the return of Hongkongers to the motherland is the return to their long lost roots. The poem concludes with the speaker's main preoccupation: "All these stock images, the layers/ of colors superimposed to make old patterns,/ their many lyrics gone sour, also their erotic suggestions:/ can we really see ourselves remade in any of these [old patterns]?/ Yet these are all we see in front of us./How to go about tailoring something new,/ to make it so it wears the body well?" (32-38). What is at stake is whether to remake a people who have slowly concocted a unique identity, whether to return to an ethnic chimera that is no longer.

"I need a new angle/ for strictly visual matters" (1-2) declares our speaker in "Images of Hong Kong," perhaps in an attempt to break with the hackneyed images and fusty nationalistic discourses that he recurringly criticizes in other poems. He worries about policies and regulations to redo the city, the architecture, the traditions and fashions of Hongkongers and, ultimately, the underlying desires to reshape the minds of its dwellers: "The Star Ferry clock-tower,/ sunsets in Aberdeen: too familiar. Only now somebody plans to redo something" (16-18). Although the speaker refers to the rebuilding of the old Star Ferry Pier into a much modern complex up to par with the changing cityscapes of the 1980s, he also has second intentions. Leung publishes his poems in 1982, when the negotiations for the handover were in their initial stage. So there might be an allusion to Hong Kong's exclusion from the negotiation rounds between Beijing and London. Overnight change probably seemed like a game to those politicians sitting on their self-righteousness and looking down on the soon-to-be-decolonized

and then recolonized: "One has only to push buttons to change pictures/ to get it on so many trends one can't even think,/ so much trivia and so many places and stories/ one can't switch identities fast enough. When can we--? (19-22). The speaker's inquisitive and inquisitorial style is only appropriate to question and criticize actions that only cause Hongkongers to "always [be] at the edge of things and between places" (41), to always ask "[w]hen can we just sit down and talk?" (25), "[r]each out and touch—what?" (28), "tonight's moon—/ does it come at the beginning or the end of time?" (32-33), "[c]ould a whole history have been concocted like this?" (44), "each of us finds himself looking around for—what?" (48). So many questions, but barely an answer.

The speaker employs the recurring image of a pond to draw parallels between British colonization and mainland neoimperialism in "An Old Colonial Building," "The Leaf on the Edge," and "Distinguished Leaves". The first poem clearly alludes to the colonial heritage left behind by England. The speaker mentions a colonial edifice "the imperial/ image of it persisting right down, sometimes,/ to the bitter soil in the foundation" (4-6). Then he describes the typical architectural style of nineteenth century: "the noble height of a rotunda, the wide, hollow corridors" (7), "stairs down to ordinary streets" (9), "familiar alcoves sometimes brimming/ with blooms sometimes barren" (10-11), the round window in the cupola" (13) until his vision finally reaches its destination: a circular pond. That is when readers realize that he has seen all those images through the muddy waters of the pond. That is all left from British colonization: "duckweed drifting,/ day and night caught in the surface, no longer textbook/ clean, but murky, the naïve goldfish searching/ mindlessly around in it, shaking the pliant lotus stems/ and the roots feeling for earth, swirling orange and white,/gills opening and leeching" (13-18). In other words, "fragmentary, unrepresentative worlds" (25). In the second poem, the speaker draws another

image of a pond, this time to criticize the oppressive practices of those entrenched at the center of power. Hong Kong is "the leaf at the pond's/ edge" (1-2), while imperial power is represented by the "beauties at the center [. . .] leaf battlements and all,/ reprising the regimens (sic) like an old regime" (3-4). In the third poem, the speaker and his companion walk around a pond and suddenly stop to chat. In what seems to be a slanted allusion to China during the negotiations for the transfer of power, the speaker censures his addressee: "You favored London on a grey evening; you recalled/ strong red tea, a cold hearth, and an atmosphere/ of talk of shadowy old bookshops and the precious musty presence of antique tomes" (7-10). The pond stands out as a signifier of local meanings, of a people who will "rather not bend/ neither of us in love with flags or fireworks" ("Old" 23-24) or "make an imperial scene, or shout/ anthems to the down-pours" ("Leaf" 7-8). Although the pond has traditionally been associated to Chinese signifiers, in introducing censure and criticism of the (neo)colonizer, the speaker appropriates and redefines the symbolism.

Finally, in Leung's city at the end of time, there are echoes of Wong Kar Wai's unsettling architecture of the mind. The building blocks of the former's poems are the "[s]urplus images of the city [. . .] discarded with the garbage" ("In Ap-liu Street" 12). That is, overloads of images that like emotions are accumulated until they must necessarily be discarded to move on. Most of those images only point at the internal traumas of Hongkongers waiting for the clock to beat the twelfth stroke of the fateful date. Like Wong, Leung strips his work off of a fundamental component to express mental disturbances. While for Wong, that component is the city, for Leung it is the human one. In describing places and streets, he invokes the emotions of the people who have lived in the city and strolled down those roads. He summons up the nostalgia, the fears, the apprehension of a people who sense the end of the city as they used to know it.

Whether it is for the well-being of the majority, they do not know. All they see ahead of them is "the empty, perfect distance nothing can fill/ and nothing crosses" ("Streetlamp and Tin Leaf" 5-6). All they see is a dark fifty-year period graciously bestowed by the CPG for the total reabsorption of Hong Kong into the mainland.

Xi Xi's floating city and Leung Ping-Kwan's city at the end of time were conceived as heterotopic spaces that encapsulate all the pre- and post-Handover plights of the Hongkonger looking for an identity. Like Wong Kar Wai's trilogy, these two literary works were produced during a sensitive period of time and, therefore, voice Wong, Leung, and Xi Xi's "processes of acting out, working over, and to some extent working through in analyzing and 'giving voice' to the past—processes of coming to terms with traumatic 'experiences,' limit events, and their symptomatic effects that achieve articulation in different combinations and hybridized forms" (LaCapra 186). Theirs are the local stories that deauthorize the official annals of British and Chinese history and express the identity concerns of a quasi-nation.

CHAPTER 5: OF QUASI-NATIONS AND THIRD NATIONALITIES

"The interesting thing about HK identity is that it is a fabricated and non-essentialist kind of cultural identity (i.e. not based on skin colour, 'race,' or nationalist ideology, etc), and that it is not defined against Chinese identity (but neither is it simply a sub-set of it, it works against certain nationalistic definitions of Chineseness as promoted in the Mainland). It is an identity that always seems in need of affirmation and never simply seems self-evident in the way that ethnic or national identities regularly do."

David Clarke. Interview. Nov 7, 2007.

5.1 Of Nationalisms and Quasi-Nationalisms

Questions of nationalism and identity in post Sino-British-Joint-Declaration Hong Kong are not thoroughly elucidated without an analysis of the emergence of a native popular culture in the decades of the sixties and seventies. While in chapters two through four, an analysis of some of the most significant high cultural productions in the last decade and a half of British rule reveals that the imminence of the handover had indeed triggered processes of nation formation and identity formulation, because of the elitist nature of literary, architectural, plastic and filmic texts, the opinions, emotions, and concerns that they convey cannot account for the general impressions of an entire people. One thing a study of pre-handover, high culture production might reveal about the collective unconscious of a people; a completely different thing "low" culture and more "objective" and immediate texts and experiences might reveal about Hongkongers. That is why in this chapter, I turn to sociological studies, journalistic reports, and studies about popular forms of entertainment that shed light on nation formation and identity formulation processes in Hong Kong since the 1960s. I conclude this chapter and this dissertation with an analysis of the first decade of Hong Kong as a Special Administrative Region of China.

Since nationalism and nation-formation are largely defined by Western, high theories, trying to apply related concepts and theories to non-Western, (post)(neo)colonial territories such as Hong Kong would prove highly inadequate; hence, the need to cathacretize them in order to render more local meanings aimed at explaining unique identity formulation and "quasi-nation" formation processes in the fragrant harbor and, hence, the need to talk about, not nationalisms but, quasi-nationalisms. In his pioneering *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson claims that nationalism was created right before the nineteenth century as a "cultural artefact" that has

been used ideologically. In defining the nation, he concurs with Ernst Gellner's belief that nationalism "*invents* nations where they do not exist" (qtd. in Anderson 15). To Anderson the nation is not a real group of individuals but a creation, "an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign," characterized by the way they are imagined and not necessarily by their degree of genuineness (15).

The application of Anderson's definition of nationhood to the case of Hong Kong is ambiguous: on one hand, it arrogantly takes for granted particular processes of nation-formation in non-Western localities; on the other hand, it seems to befit the territory's particular confluence of historical circumstances and cultural traits. Anderson believes that the nation has finite boundaries beyond which lie other nations and that it is sovereign because it was born in the era of the Enlightenment and Revolutions. A community like the Hongkongese one, imagined by emigrés and expatriates and, therefore, made possible by migratory practices along its hundred and sixty seven years of existence, does not have finite boundaries, but is rather boundless as it includes all those immigrants and displaced peoples and reaches to the greater community of overseas Chinese of Cantonese origin and other nationalities who have migrated all over the globe in search of economic and political stability. Then, it is not a sovereign state as it is understood in the West: first, it is a post-Enlightenment holding and, second, it does not have political autonomy but it does have an economic power rivaled by only a handful of Asian politically sovereign states, including the motherland, and that, in turn, is what enabled a cultural autonomy expressed through uniquely Hongkongese elements of popular culture. However, it is not in Hong Kong's status as one of the four economic miracles or tigers, but in the cultural production of the last thirty years and in the relationship between colonizer and colonized, that its nationhood or rather its "quasi-nationhood" is to be found.

Anthony Smith claims in *The Antiquity of Nations* that notions of nationhood and national identity are but a modern political fabrication, "liable to mythical interpretations and political manipulation" (33). He uncovers the illusory nature of founding myths of a nation when he argues that as "myth exaggerates, dramatizes, and reinterprets facts," it "turns the latter into a narrative recounted in dramatic form, and this is part of its wide appeal" (34). In his classification of motifs and features that endow community members a sense of identity, eight are the myths that build common ties:

1.   a myth of origins in time; i.e. when the community was 'born';

2.   a myth of origins in space; i.e. where the community was 'born';

3.   a myth of ancestry; i.e. who bore us, and how we descend from him/her

4.   a myth of migration; whither we wandered;

5.   a myth of liberation; i.e. how we were freed;

6.   a myth of the golden age; i.e. how we became great and heroic;

7.   a myth of decline; i.e. how we decayed and were conquered/exiled; and

8.   a myth of rebirth; i.e. how we shall be restored to our former glory. *(The*

Ethnic Origin of Nations 192)

Because Hong Kong has been caught in a triangular relationship, it has been defined mainly through the mythologies of two nations, but only at the imminence of the handover did it distinctively create its own mythology. While myths of origins in time and space define British colonial notions of history, nationhood, and identity; myths of ancestry and liberation define those of the People's Republic of China. As the British mythology has been discussed earlier, let us turn to the PRC's mythology.

Mass media discourses in pre-Handover China and Hong Kong (in Chinese) played an

important role in supporting mostly, but not exclusively, PRC-based myths of nationhood and identity. Some also played a fundamental role in giving rise to a local mythology. In employing varied rhetorical strategies to explain how and why Hong Kong returned to China, pro-PRC discourses created mythologies packed with nationalistic feelings. One strategy was to exploit the alleged close connection that had existed between the mainland and Hong Kong before the first Anglo-Chinese War. While Hong Kong media alluded to the mother-offspring metaphor to argue this so-called connection and to rant against the deviant nature of British imperialism; Chinese media chose to obliterate the 155 years of British colonization by claiming that Hong Kong had never ceased to be part of China, at least territorially, because it was attached to Guangdong province. Another strategy was attributing the transfer to a specific agent, rather than considering the handover as the end of the 99-year lease on the New Territories and, by extension, the consequent relinquishment of Kowloon and Victoria Island. Both Chinese and Hongkongese media gave credit to the reforms of late socialist China, more specifically, to Deng Xiao-ping's economic reforms and open-door policy, thus ignoring the thirty years of closed-door policy that separated Hong Kong from the mainland and the social welfare reforms (though aroused by the 1967 riots) by the colonial government that heavily contributed to Hong Kong's economic take-off and put into motion nation (or rather quasi-nation) formation and identity formulation processes. In a 2006 speech about Hong Kong' s changes since the return to China, Szeto Wah, chairman of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China, argues that Deng's real intention in opposing the British pretensions in post-1997 Hong Kong responded more to a practical rather than a nationalist or patriotic call. He claims that "Deng was shrewd. He knew that if the economy didn't develop and if the livelihood of the people didn't improve, it would ultimately cause the downfall of the Communist Party."

Still another strategy of the media was the use of metaphors to explain the new role of post-Hong Kong. Shi-xu, Kienpointner, and Servaes argue that in Hong Kong media there was a tendency to portray the new Special Administrative Region as "the capitalist world's pioneer," "mainland China's guide," and "China's most important meeting point with the world" (131). Chinese media, on the other hand, portrayed Hong Kong as "China's window, bridge and conduit to the world economy" (132), that is, not as the main destination, but only as a lateral passage, a gateway with lesser importance. Lee Cher-Leng claims that metaphors were used by the Chinese government, the Hong Kong government, and the Hong Kong press with different intentions. "Embrace of the fatherland," "coming home to the big family," and "the mother-child reunion" were the most popular metaphors to make an indirect reference to the transfer of sovereignty as a simple family reunion where Hong Kong had a minor rank. The master metaphor was employed to allude to Hong Kong's identity after 1997 and to empower themselves. Finally, the bridge, window, floodgate, channel and door metaphors were employed as a reference to Hong Kong's subaltern role with regard to China. Xu Jiatun, former director of Xinhua News Agency, allegedly China's "de facto" embassy in Hong Kong, and a political dissident who fled to the U.S. eleven months after the Tiananmen Square Massacre, said once in an interview that "in order to further expand the economy, China needs to fully *utilize* Hong Kong. China has to attract foreign capital. Hong Kong's investment in China is very substantial. Hong Kong is also a very important *entrepôt* for China's trade with the outside world" [my emphasis](Chugani 136).

What these strategies suggest is that both the media and the government endeavored to create specific imagery in order to fabricate myths of what each believed Hong Kong to be. Whereas official media and government discourses depict Hong Kong as ranked on an inferior position

and not as an entity, but as an appendage of the mainland, from local media and government discourses an underlying desire for sovereignty is inferred (and thus the metaphors of the pioneer, the guide, and the important meeting point), even if those discourses are equally ideological and hegemonic. The deliberate paternalism of the PRC was but a stratagem to exert control over a territory that was progressing towards autonomy. In claiming Hong Kong as a member of the greater Chinese family since immemorial times, the PRC not only effaced the British history of colonization in the territory, but also their own relinquishment of the territory. But in the process they created a myth of ancestry and a myth of liberation based on the PRC's nationalistic discourse that showcases Deng as a visionary whose "socialism with Chinese characteristics" ultimately released Hong Kong from the shackles of British colonialism. Not necessarily an event that happened due to natural progression, the return of Hong Kong was foreshadowed by the end of the 99-year lease on the New Territories. Deng certainly opposed British aspirations to an extension on the lease as stipulated in earlier treaties or, at least, the implementation of a British administration after the transfer of sovereignty. But the Sino British Joint Declaration only ratified what had been established back in 1898. Wah argues that the implementation of the "one country, two systems" formula was meant to maintain Hong Kong's capitalist system so that it could "support China's economic development and to keep the Hong Kong economy stable." Denying the British an extension on the lease was a political move that Deng knew would insert China into the economic conversations of the late capitalist era rather than an expostulation of the reasons why Hong Kong should not remain a Western holding anymore.

In regards to Hong Kong nation formation processes, a myth of decline along with the Chinese myth of liberation explains the unnatural and humiliating experience of colonization and their subsequent release from foreign control, while a myth of rebirth not only points at the pride

they felt when Hong Kong was decolonized, but it also hints at their subconscious desire to be their own and true masters rather than just a window or a bridge between China and the West. Several myths of decline contribute to produce a local mythology of nationhood and identity: Wong Kar Wai's *2046*, Dung Kai Cheung's *The Atlas* and Xi Xi's "Marvels of a Floating City," P.K. Leung's "City at the End of Time," and a folk story about the turtle rock. These narratives challenge the historiographical accounts of the British and of the People's Republic of China. They juxtapose gossip with history, probability with fact, plurality with "Truth," ambiguity with "Reality," five unofficial versions of Hong Kong's history with the official nationalist chronicle. Whereas the British version is a myth of origins in time and space—January 25/6 1841, Possession Point, Hong Kong Island, and the PRC's version mixes myths of ancestry, liberation, and rebirth; Wong's, Dung's, Xi Xi's, Leung's, and the anonymous tale are myths of decline because they are all apocalyptic fictions about the grim future of a city in-between regimes, like Hong Kong. The first one narrates the cynicism and anxieties of Hongkongers in the last year of the one country, two systems formula, the second one chronicles the findings of some anthropologists who "discover" Hong Kong when it is no longer the metropolis it was in 1997, the third one is about a city so traumatized by some unexplained event that it has detached itself from the ground and floats on the sea, the fourth one is about a city reaching the end of its time as a colonial outpost, and the last one is about a turtle-like rock that on reaching the Peak will cause the destruction of the city. The pessimistic and, at times, playful tone of the narrators and speakers sharply opposes the overly cheerful yet dogmatic tone of the PRC's historiography, which appeals to a common Chinese ethnicity and employs a hackneyed propaganda that depicts Hong Kong as the long-lost child being freed from the British colonizer and being restored to a chimerical former greatness back with the motherland. In contrast, *2046*, *Atlas*, "Floating City,"

"End of Time," and the folk tale create uniquely Hongkongese myths of foundation and, therefore, drive unique identity formulation processes. Another uniquely Hongkongese myth that drives such processes is the "Lo Ting" story that counters official historiographies about Hong Kong. Oscar Ho Hing-kay, former curator of the Hong Kong arts Centre and local artist engaged with the theme of cultural identity in the territory writes in "Inventing History," that the assumption that Hong Kong is an extension of the grand mainland Chinese culture is widely accepted (51). However, in the course of his research on local mythology he found out about a mythical creature called "LoTing," a half fish, half human ancestor of the Tanka people (the contemporary boat-dwelling people) who were massacred by the South Song emperor on account of their successful salt-making industry. As curator of the exhibition *Museum 97: History, Community, Individual*, he proposed that artists "fabricate the history of Hong Kong before the British moved in" (51) to challenge the British myth of foundation. And to mock the mainland myth of continuity, Ho's team claimed in their story that their forbears "were from the sea, instead of from the land as a denial of the cultural linkage with China" (51). The exhibition was intended as "a metaphor for the distinctiveness of Hong Kong culture" (51), a distinctiveness that helped to create myths of quasi-nationhood amidst two particular processes of colonization.

Data from several polls about identity issues in Hong Kong also reveals a lot about the mythologies of the nation that Hongkongers live by, in particular, myths of (re)birth . Lau Siu-Kai argues in "Hongkongese or Chinese: The Problem of Identity on the Eve of Resumption of Chinese Sovereignty over Hong Kong" that the Hongkongese identity is defined by two geopolitical units: Hong Kong and China. That is, although they primarily side with the local identity because most were born and raised in the territory, Hongkongers also feel a strong affiliation with the Chinese identity mostly on the grounds of common ethnicity and values. The

aim of his study was to solve the following inquiries with data from two Chinese ethnic groups in Hong Kong—those who identified as Hongkongese and those who identified as Chinese:

(1) Was there a crisis identity among the Hong Kong Chinese in the run-up to 1997? (2) What were the attitudinal and behavioral correlates of the two identities? (3) How would the identity problem affect mainland-Hong Kong relationship after 1997? How would it affect implementation of the "one country, two systems policy"? (4) How would the identity problem affect Hong Kong's society and politics after 1997? Would the differentiation between Hongkongese and Chinese constitute a cleavage with political undertones? (5) Would there be a blurring or merging of the two identities in the future as to make them politically meaningless? (Lau 2).

I will reinterpret Lau's data to delve into the idiosyncrasy, belief system, and desires of the Hongkongese quasi-nation, whether there is such a thing, in order to extricate and understand their myths of nationhood.

The first point to consider is the apparent detachment of Hongkongers from the political affairs that affect the fate of the territory. Being acclimated to Western capitalism, respect for civil rights, and a growing awareness of democracy, and having experienced apartheid practices and neglect of the colonial government, on one hand, and the fear of communist takeover, on the other hand, one would certainly expect more civil participation in the political life of Hong Kong. A significant declaration about the Hongkongese is that "what was startlingly absent in the Hong Kong identity was strong affective attachment to the Hong Kong society" (Lau 8). The history of the territory could account for this feature of the Hongkongese society. In establishing a British holding in Southern China, the British did not enslave the population or strive to change

their language, beliefs, and urbanscape as they did in other parts of the Empire. Quite the contrary, in establishing the colony as an entrepôt, the foreign merchants attracted the cheap labor of thousands of Cantonese people who back home faced famine and social and political unrest. And thus began a two-way flow of migrants between Hong Kong and the mainland and, in recent years, between Hong Kong and the rest of the world, in particular, Australia, Canada, and the United States. Hongkongers cannot attach themselves to a fixed lifestyle because their way of life transcends man-made boundaries. They have always been in transition from one geopolitical location to another, from one mental frame to another. And they have always been aware that they live in a borrowed place on borrowed time: they lived, first, the transfer of sovereignty in 1997, and now they are living the "stable but illusive uncertainty" of the one country, two systems formula. This uncertainty is what has defined the political apathy of the Hongkonger who in the late sixties participated in demonstrations against the colonial government and who is paradoxically capable of participating at massive demonstrations against the PRC's violation of human rights each June 4th or rallies every July 1st to demand that universal suffrage and the right to elect their own representatives be enacted as stated in the Basic Law.

Another element that defines the Hongkongese identity is the collective values that place individual interests beneath communal interests. A feature that other Chinese ethnic groups share (mainland Chinese, Taiwanese, overseas Chinese), communal values define Hongkongers' main identity dilemma. On one hand, Hongkongers pledge allegiance to China on account of their ethnicity, values, and national pride. Lau contends that a great majority believe in the common interests of the people, mutual collaboration, and respect for the big Chinese family insofar as those interests are defined by the group' ethnicity and insofar the Chinese identity is

extolled but not to the expense of the local Hongkongese one. Thus, when it comes to choosing between local and global interests, the gap between Hong Kong-born Chinese and Chinese who moved to Hong Kong is wider. In the first group, not much support was given to statements like "China's interest comes first; Hong Kong's interest comes second," "China's national anthem should be sung in local schools," and "Hong Kong should make every possible sacrifice to help China in need" (14). In the second group, there was a statistical difference of 12% at worst and 19% at best in the same statements. So, even when the country's interests seem to be at the heart of Hongkongers, regionalism takes precedence when local interests are at stake.

There was also a significant statistical difference in regards to each group's political outlooks, meaning that ideological identification also define the Hongkongese identity. Those who identified themselves as Hongkongers tended to mistrust the Central People's Government more than their Chinese counterparts and the statistic difference ranged from 10% to 30% in the years of 1988 through 1995. Probably because of the imminence of the handover and because Hongkongers had adjusted to the Hongkongese way of life, they were less confident in post-handover life. Only three years before the transfer, only about 40% of Hongkongese were optimistic about the future, about 60% were not confident about the legal system after 1997, and only about one third were confident in the Basic Law (and the promise for short-term democracy and self-rule that it held). As a result, a year later, only about 20% of Hongkongese believed that China would keep its promise of letting local people rule the territory.

As Lau claims, "[a]s a concept, 'identity' is nebulous and multi-dimensional" (1); that is why despite the common values and ethnicity that Hongkongers share with their Chinese fellow countrymen, when it comes to local political affiliation, their values and beliefs will take a different turn, sometimes even deviate significantly. In 1995, about 60% of Hongkongers said

they would pledge support to political leaders disapproved by the CPG, in the other words, pro-democracy leaders. Back in 1988, in post Sino-British negotiations Hong Kong, more than half of Hongkongers were in favor of political independence. Both their mistrust of the Chinese government and their anxieties about the economic and political uncertainty after 1997 made those who identified as Hongkongese in the poll to diverge significantly from those who identified as Chinese. This even translated in about 55% of the Hongkongese polled in 1994 to support the permanence of Hong Kong as a British holding after 1997. Although these percentages only constitute a representative sample, they are very telling of the myths of nationhood that the Hongkongese live by. What Lau's study shows is a series of intriguing contradictions and an indiscernible plurality in the identity of the inhabitants of Hong Kong. These contradictions or pluralities, in turn, point to identity formulation and nation formation processes that were concocting during the last fifteen years or so of colonial rule spurred, in turn, by other processes that had started in the sixties and seventies.

Hongkongers, like the former colonizer and the motherland, live by their own myths of nationhood. In different times, each had created narratives to explain what they were and the relationship they had with each other. While in British myths of nationhood what matters is when the invasion and subsequent cession of Hong Kong occurred, what wars were fought, which empire was subjugated, and what other political decisions and events led to the formation of the first and only British holding in China, what matters in Chinese myths of nationhood is the Communist Party's role in "liberating" a people who would have rather stayed as a British territory, repossessing a territory that not even the Qing Emperors considered strategic back in 1841, and deriding British imperialism. In the Hongkongese myth of nationhood, there is an underlying desire for autonomy. So what matters in their version is how they became a

distinctive Chinese ethnic group—namely Hong Kong people or Hongkongese—with a quasi-nation of their own, and why they became whither.

5.2 The Emergence of an Indigenous Popular Culture

Still another feature of the distinctive identity of Hongkongers is manifested in what McIntyre, Cheng, and Zhang think is the product of affluence in the Hong Kong of the 1970s and 1980s: popular forms of expression that encapsulated indigenous values and ways of life (225). They specifically refer to an entertainment culture that gave rise to Cantopop, popular cinema, and television and commercial radio. These spaces of self-expression opened up by the territory's purchasing power evolved into the political and cultural spaces for critique discussed in the other chapters. McIntyre et al. believe that Cantopop is an English word allegedly coined by Hans Ebert, a writer for the American pop music magazine *Billboard*, and it stands for Cantonese popular music (226). In Cantonese it translates as *yuth yuh* (Cantonese) *lauh hahng* (popular) *kuk* (music), but actually, the term used by the local people is *lauh hahng kuk*. It emerges during a crucial time for identity formulation processes in Hong Kong, when the city was becoming economically prosperous and when the population was increasingly being conformed by second or third generation Hong Kong people. When China closed its borders and the influx of immigrants to and from the territory stopped, all that linked them with their mainland counterparts was their common values and ethnicity. Matthew Turner argues that in failing to identity with the new communist regime in the mainland, the Hong Kong Chinese were only left with "an identity of lifestyle, a shared recognition of similar self-images, real or desired, of existential choice, from food to education, that had to be made now that Hong Kong people could no longer be guided either by Chinese tradition, or Chinese modernity" (qtd. in McIntyre

223).   On the other hand, the colonial government's *laissez-faire* policies and their encouragement of economic affluence but not of political awareness led to the conformation of an initially materialistic and indulgent identity that only purchasing power could fashion in a metropolis.   In fact, Choi claims that "the indigenous entertainment culture of Hong Kong developed solely in response to market demands and in the absence of any protectionist government policy" (qtd. in McIntyre 224).   As Hong Kong's textile manufacturing industry grew to become a global leader in the 1980s and Hong Kong served as an entrepôt between post-Mao China and international markets, it became a regional financial hub as well.   That, in turn, translated into a booming entertainment industry produced with local capital, by and for locals.   As the younger generations became busier with their careers and were more affluent and because a bulk of the population had been born in Hong Kong, they not only began to demand forms of popular culture they could identify with, but they also had a need to express themselves through more familiar means.   This and the growing cosmopolitanism shaped the entertainment scene of the late 1970s and afterwards.

Lee and Luk concur that the local youth culture that emerged as a result of the closed door policy grew up between two cultures, the Western one and the Eastern one (McIntyre 225). This dual set of cultural conventions framed the birth of Cantopop as the offspring of Cantonese lyrics and Western instrumentation and rhythmic patterns.   The popularity of rock'n roll in the 1960s had inspired some local artists to form their own groups.   Erni claims that it was songwriter, lyricist and performer Sam Hui, leader of the band "Lotus," who "catapulted the new Cantonese pop music to the status of being a cultural medium for the expression of a new 'Hong Kongness'" (qtd. in McIntyre 228).   Before the emergence of Cantopop, Hongkongers had been entertained by two main genres that originated in the mainland, Mandopop and Cantonese opera.

While the former was popular mostly among the older generations because it was inspired by old Western ballads and was interpreted in the official language rather than in the vernacular Cantonese, the latter, although interpreted in the vernacular, had a more provincial feel and catered to more mature audiences, like Mandopop. When Hui broke out into the musical scene with this new form of expression, he exploited elements of Hongkongese popular culture that had never been used in a song. He and his brother, Michael Hui, used street language and the everyday life experiences of the commoner to compose songs about and for Hongkongers. Other groups followed suit, new stars were born, and soon, a Hongkongese mass entertainment industry that interconnected song, television, film, and radio arose.

By the mid-1970s and with the propagation of TV sets in Hong Kong, the television industry begins to take shape. TV series fed on the popularity of the new music genre by featuring Cantonese theme songs. Cantopop bands were presented in entertainment shows, and even one had a weekly TV show of their own. Then, what began as all-male bands singing the new popular songs turned into a single-star phenomenon featuring names like Sam Hui himself, Alan Tam, Anita Mui, Leslie Cheung, George Lam, Sally Yip, and Kenny Bee in the seventies and eighties, and Jacky Cheung, Andy Lau, Aaron Kwok, Leon Lai, Faye Wong, and others less famous in the nineties and in the new century. As some of these artists became well-known faces, they crossed-over to other genres like film and television. Soon they were not only singing the theme song of a film or soap opera, but also performing as the protagonists in local films or TV shows as well as advertising products for the Hongkongese market. One example of a cornerstone crossover is found in the Hui brothers, in particular in Michael Hui. While Sam sang the theme songs of Michael's films, Michael helped Sam to compose the lyrics. After performing in a sitcom, working as a variety show host, and co-writing the Cantopop lyrics

interpreted by Sam, Michael debuted in the film *The Warlords*. Stephen Teo argues that his

"spectacular progress thereafter had important ramifications for the development of Hong Kong

cinema for the mid-70s onwards. [H]e was viewed as the first truly 'local' star from his

generation to make it in the 70s, typifying the rise of a generation which had grown in Hong

Kong in the 1950s and 1960s. Hui was also instrumental in reviving the use of Cantonese [. . .]

at a point when Cantonese movies were thought to be moribund" (Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema* 140).

Like Sam's songs, Michael's films dealt with themes akin to Hongkongers. His films made a

point on problems resulting from Hong Kong's new socio-economic status: the exploitation of

cheap labor, the never-ending housing problem in such a cramped city, the working class trying

to make it in an increasingly competitive society, drug abuse, prostitution, and police corruption.

Just as his brother had helped to relegate forms of musical entertainment from the mainland,

Michael Hui displaced the, until then, dominant Mandarin speaking film industry and the

countrified Cantonese films based on folklore, kung fu, or opera, and gave the locals a new form

of expression and identity. Teo considers this period the transitional phase between a second-

class film industry and the New Wave *Auteur* phase in Hong Kong film.

In fact, Michael Hui has a film, *Jumping Ash*, which critics have considered "pre-wave"

work because of experimentation resulting in conceptual and stylistic differences that set it apart

from the martial art films that had reigned until then. It was, according to Teo, the first local film

"to feature a 'new look' based on free-style editing, realistic location photography and a faster

than usual pace" (145). *Jumping Ash* paved the way for the younger directors who became

known as the Hong Kong New Wave: Ann Hui, Alex Cheung, Tsui Hark, Yim Ho, Patrick Tam,

Peter Yung, John Woo, and Tsui Hark. In 1979, the year that film critics signal as the beginning

of the new waves period in Hong Kong cinema, they began to express their concerns about

personal and cinematic identity in creations of their own. They not only actively employed the vernacular language, Cantonese, but also discovered a new filmic language that translated into stylistic breakthrough and issues of social significance. Teo contends that far from commercial, their films soon found a market to cater to: the same younger audiences that conferred Cantopop its status as the main form of musical expression in the territory. Because these audiences were more educated and consequently more discerning, professional standards were raised and a variety of techniques and special effects developed. That, in turn, also raised the quality of local radio and television because these many of these directors and their crews also worked for Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) and HK-TVB.

One of the most internationally acclaimed Hong Kong directors, Wong Kar Wai, was Patrick Tam's assistant before he became one of the most well-known Second Wave directors who emerged in the late eighties and early nineties. He stands out from his generation in that he addressed the problem of identity in pre- Hong Kong in some of his films. He developed techniques like the missed moment and the delayed emotion in response to the plight of pre-1997 Hongkongese. With Wong, the Second Wave becomes identified with more experimental narrative techniques that transcend the boundaries of the screen as they borrow techniques from other genres like literature and plastic art. Actually, the trajectory of the work done in other genres/areas of cultural expression corresponds with the trajectory of nation formation and formulation processes in Hong Kong. The sixties and seventies are the decades when an emerging identity is coming out of its shell. That is why it was but timidly manifesting in elements of popular culture like the use of the vernacular and the portrayal of common Hongkongers in typical situations in the territory. Whether in the songs of Cantopop stars or in the innovative films of New Wave directors, Hong Kong was acquiring an identity separate from

the colonial government's and the mainland's.

It was also the time when literature began to carve out a public space in newspapers. In being serialized in such a massive medium, young writers like Xi Xi and P.K. Leung began to express their identity and reached a readership that would not have probably read local literature otherwise. As the city became an international finance and manufacturing hub and the skyline was reshaping Hong Kong as a metropolis, bolder expressions of cultural identity were coming out such as the Hong Kong Shanghai Banking Corporation Headquarters and the Bank of China Tower. Although imposed, these expressions of the city's identity gave Hong Kong a postmodern feel in accord with its new economic status. Hong Kong was no longer a cultural desert nor an appendage of the mainland. It was slowly rising as a financial hub and a cultural oasis, and its inhabitants were acquiring political awareness, especially because of their exclusion from the negotiations over the fate of the city and because of the Tiananmen massacre. As the city was running out of time, those expressions were taken to the extreme. And hence the obsession of some artists to map the city physically and psychically. From this period come works influenced by Latin American Boom writers, New Wave filmic renditions of the city, installation art and, especially, art works that emphasize word play in Cantonese.

One of the leading English language newspapers, the *South China Morning Post*, published in June 2007 a poll conducted by the University of Hong Kong the year before. About 39% of the interviewees (3,993 young students) believed themselves to be Hongkongese Chinese with the first being the main component of their identity and about 29% considered themselves Hongkongers in contrast to about 10% who identified themselves as Chinese and about 22% for whom the Chinese element was more important than the Hongkongese part of their identity. What is significant about these numbers is that despite the return of the territory to China and the

mandatory implementation of Putonghua as the language of instruction at school, the majority (about 78%) still align themselves with the Hongkongese identity even if theirs is a split identity.

5.3 Revis(it)ing Hong Kong Ten Years Later

The panorama looked grim since the start of Hong Kong as a SAR: the Asian financial market was undergoing a crisis as the former colony was being handed over to the mainland. Then in 1999, article 24 of the Basic Law (Hong Kong's mini-constitution) prompted a fierce debate on two issues: whether mainlanders had the right of abode in Hong Kong and whether the National People's Congress should interpret the Basic Law in cases that do not concern national defense, diplomatic relations and the relationship between the Central Authorities and the HK-SAR. A great controversy arose because the NCP overturned the Court of Final Appeals decision and ruled in favor of the children of mainland parents who have the right of abode and gave them, in turn, the right to live, work, and vote without restrictions in Hong Kong. It was estimated then that by 2009 about a million and a half mainlanders would have immigrated to Hong Kong, putting strains on the socio-economic situation of the territory. Three years later, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome struck, killing about three hundred people and stopping the poultry industry dead. Finally, the terrorist attacks of September 11 had slowed down the flow of tourists and had their share in bringing the local economy to a standstill.

To make things worse, in September 2002, the local government proposed a security law that threatened Hongkongers' freedom of speech and made old fears about China's oppressive regime resurface. The proposal was backed by Article 23 of the Basic Law, an article that allows the enactment of

laws on its own to prohibit any act of treason, secession, sedition, subversion

against the Central People's Government, or theft of state secrets, to prohibit

foreign political organizations or bodies from conducting political activities in the

Region, and to prohibit political organizations or bodies of the Region from

establishing ties with foreign political organizations or bodies.

On July 1st 2003, a people who have traditionally been rather apathetic took to the streets in really impressive numbers. Not tens of thousands, but hundreds of thousands expressed their discontent with the course of events in post- Hong Kong. For the first time, about half a million marched on the annual demonstration. The central government responded to the avalanche of critical affairs by shelving the proposal indefinitely and by implementing, on June 29th, a CEPA (Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement), a sort of free trade agreement between Special Administrative Region and mainland. The same year, the central government put into effect the Individual Visitor Scheme that allowed mainlanders to cross the border that had been closed fifty four years before. Because Hong Kong is a favorite Asian destination of tourists looking for a world-class experience shopping for genuine Chinese gold and jewelry, high-tech devices and electronics, and the finest apparel goods, flocks of affluent mainlanders have, since then, crossed the border on a daily basis to have a taste of Western consumerism. This policy boosted the tourism sector and, therefore, the local economy. Recent opinion polls show "a consistent strengthening in people's feel-good sentiments towards Beijing and the nation's progress in areas including human rights and the rule of law" (Yeung, "What's in a Decade?"). To top that, influential pro-democracy figures such as former Chief Secretary and current member of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong (LegCo), Anson Chan Fang Ong-san, believe that the one country, two systems formula has been implemented successfully.

These policies and opinions, plus the fact that life does not seem to have changed for the

worse under a socialist government's rule, have given Hongkongers the illusion that rather than going backward, Hong Kong has progressed, claims Chris Yeung in his July 1st 2007, newspaper report "What's in a decade?" Even Chairman Hu Jintao, in his speech at the inauguration of Executive chief Donald Tsang's second period, expressed his overly optimistic view that Hong Kong was not only enjoying a high degree of autonomy as stated by the Basic Law, but also had displayed great vitality as a "great international economy city." However, Yeung argues, "the reality [. . .] is far more complex." Roughly a month before the tenth anniversary, during a Basic Law symposium, state leader Wu Bannguo had claimed that the high degree of autonomy depended on how much power the central government decided to give the local government. In his July 1st speech, Hu himself had warned Hongkongers that "'One country, two systems' is a complete concept." In other words, that the emphasis of the formula is on one country, that is, one single political entity with two coexisting economic systems, but again, under one political and ideological system and, therefore, that Hong Kong is allowed to maintain its democratic, capitalistic lifestyle only if it agrees to put aside pretensions to complete autonomy and self-rule that antagonize national unity and security.

Hu's veiled threat reverberated as democratic political leaders were preparing for the pro-democracy rally to take place hours later. Ever since the Basic Law was implemented, different camps have interpreted some articles differently. The most controversial article seems to be article 45, an article particularly addressed in last year's annual demonstration:

Article 45   The Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall be selected by election or through consultations held locally and be appointed by the Central People's Government.

The method for selecting the Chief Executive shall be specified in the light of the

actual situation in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and in accordance with the principle of gradual and orderly progress. The ultimate aim is the selection of the Chief Executive by universal suffrage upon nomination by a broadly representative nominating committee in accordance with democratic procedures.

The article is so vaguely phrased that it is open to interpretation. While in the pro-Beijing camp they claim that "orderly and gradual progress" could mean up to 49 years after the transfer of sovereignty to implement universal suffrage or even no suffrage and self-rule at all, pro-democracy advocators think that it means as little as ten years starting from the 2007 Chief Executive election.

While the main concern of the organizers of the rally was universal suffrage, there were other equally pressing concerns as well: air quality, low wages, a wider gap between the high class and the working class, unemployment, heritage conservation, competition against the mainland's increasingly capitalistic machinery, and others. But these, Hong Kong legislator Margaret Ng believes, cannot be addressed without "a system [that] can ensure transparency and accountability and respect for the rule of law." She further adds that although some of the socio-economic phenomena are the result of globalization and can, therefore, be found elsewhere, the local government is to blame largely because of their failure to anticipate or react. As major decisions cannot be made without the approval of the Central People's Government, there are times when the local government has not shown leadership, integrity, or enough celerity precisely because of their limited autonomy for political decision-making. Anson Chan also believes that there is an urgent need for a democratic system that "can deliver strong, effective governance, transparent and accountable governance" (Yeung). At a symposium in Taiwan's

Soochow University, the Vice Chairman of the Mainland Affairs Council, You Ying-lung, said that "Chinese totalitarian rule is not fitted for [. . .] Hong Kong's 'open, free society,' that China has 'always tampered' with Hong Kong affairs, and that the HK-SAR government has automatically restrained itself while trying to fathom Beijing's mind" (Kuo).   Even pro-Beijing politician Tsang Yok-sing, former chairman of a party that merged with a pro-government party, believes that without universal suffrage, there will not be full integration of Hong Kong people into the Chinese nation: "Up to now, what is the most important factor that hinders the return of the hearts of people towards the nation? The answer is: there's no universal suffrage" (Yeung).

What lies at the heart of the problem, though, is a matter of mutual distrust. Hongkongers have no confidence on Beijing's underhanded ways, just as much as the Central People's Government doubts Hong Kong's sincere return to the motherland. Despite the official propaganda that advertises an increasing integration of motherland and HK-SAR, the CPG still has its reservations. Hongkongese' primary identification with the local rather than with the national is one major consideration or rather one major excuse to not grant them universal suffrage yet. Hongkongers, on the other hand, think that the interventionist policies of the central government have led to faulty governance and mock the alleged high degree of autonomy given to Hong Kong. In another article, journalist Chris Yeung reports that an anonymous source, a prominent pro-Beijing figure, "concurred that the central government had waded deeper into Hong Kong's internal affairs" ("Smooth Sailing") since the 2003 demonstration. According to him, the CPG's liaison office has time and again intervened in sensitive events such as elections. Starting with the hand-picking of post-handover's two chief executives, Tung Chee-hwah and Donald Tsang Yam-kuen, and most recently with the blessing of "independent" candidate to LegCo, Regina Ip Lau Suk-yee (former Secretary of Security under Tung's second

term and widely known for her pro-Beijing allegiance), the central government has systematically appointed or "recommended" officers loyal to them in key government positions.

Another issue that has sparked Hongkongers' distrust of the CPG is their censorship practices and violation of human rights record, especially because Hong Kong has been a relatively free society that respects civil rights and the rule of law. Three isolated incidents featuring censorship and selective persecution have some sectors worried about freedom of speech and individual guarantees in post- Hong Kong[7]. In 2005, a journalist with the Singapore-based *Straits Times*, Ching Cheong, was imprisoned for alleged espionage against the PRC. His followers claim that he was falsely accused of selling state secrets to the Republic of China in Taiwan and that his trial in the mainland was biased. Outcries were heard as the Hong Kong Journalists Association, Reporters Without Borders, the International Federation of Journalists, and the Committee to Protect Journalists protested Ching Cheong's detention in vain. He was sentenced to a five-year term, but was released in February 2008. Espionage is such a serious crime that one cannot help wonder, first, why he was given such a ridiculously short sentence and, second, why if he was found guilty he was released before his term ended. In November 2007, Szeto Wah was prosecuted along with seven more people for allegedly using unlicensed radio equipment at a Citizen's Radio forum that had taken place in May. He had been the guest speaker and the topic of the program that day was the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre. His supporters believe that his is a case of selective persecution as prominent political figures including a deputy, an executive councilor, and a legislator have appeared in that program and have not been prosecuted. The trial was postponed until March 2008 and the radio station is currently litigating the unconstitutionality of the Telecommunications Ordinance in regards to

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[7] All the information on this topic comes from the following articles posted on Wikipedia: Politics in Hong Kong, Ching Cheong, Citizen Radio incident, Edison Chen photo scandal, Internet censorship in the mainland, each of which is based on stories from local newspapers both in English and in Chinese.

broadcasting licenses.

The third one is a case of Internet censorship unfolding at the present moment. It involves unscrupulous people distributing some private pictures illegally, strict enforcement actions by the Hong Kong Police, and freedom of speech on the Internet in post-1997 Hong Kong as a matter of national security (in accordance with article 23 of the Basic Law). The protests appeared because of a scandal involving some local actors who appear nude or in compromising sexual situations online. Apparently, someone got hold of actor and singer Edison Chen's digital pictures and posted them. The advocators of freedom of speech in this controversial case argue that the police first claimed that it was not a crime to own that kind of material in domestic computers. Assistant Commissioner of Police, Vincent Wong, had said that "people who had only transferred the obscene picture files to friends had not violated the law." After those pictures were massively shared through e-mail, Tang King Shing, the Commissioner himself, took back their position and said that anyone in possession of that material could be prosecuted for breach of the law. Local activist and current member of LegCo, Leung Kwok-hung, a.k.a. Long Hair, protested against the police for "sowing confusion and creating an atmosphere of 'white terror' among netizens. Leung urged Commissioner Tang to clarify whether merely keeping the pictures violated the law." Censorship in this case could set a problematic precedent in a Special Administrative Region of China. The PRC has laws and administrative regulations that have given rise to about sixty internet regulations and some censorship systems implemented by the state. These laws and regulations do not apply to the HK and Macau SARS, at least not yet. What is questionable is that their instruments of censorship allow the elimination of anti-PRC critical comments or portals within minutes. They also block media sources from the West regularly. What would happen if the central government

decided to end with some individual liberties enjoyed by Hongkongese, in particular, those that deal with freedom of speech, freedom of the press and of publication, freedom of procession, of demonstration, of association, and others, and even though they are supposedly protected by Articles 27-38 of the Basic Law? Because, who has a final say in how the law is interpreted? The NPCSC or Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, of course. In this regard, Hong Kong has no autonomy whatsoever.

The main question now is, what would happen if the CPG decides not to appoint the candidate chosen by Hong Kong people through universal suffrage? That Beijing ever thought of using force to take the territory away from Britain is not improbable, especially during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, or when London first began negotiations with Beijing over the fate of Hong Kong in 1997, or after the Tiananmen Square incident. So, repressive acts against pro-democracy advocates in the present would not be too farfetched. At present though, the nationalistic/neoimperial rhetoric of the PRC relies on subtle propaganda and a paternalism that belies the CPG's veiled threats. For the tenth anniversary of the reunification, the government went all out with 90 million Hong Kong dollars (about 15 US $ millions) allocated for a year-long celebration. Only 16 million alone were spent on a "fireworks extravaganza featuring a pioneering display of the Chinese characters for 'Chinese' and "10'" (Wu). The theme song for the anniversary, to be played during the firework show, had to be, as expected, a Cantopop song performed by a constellation of local stars to cater to the Hongkongese identity. Although "Just Because You Are Here" is sung by local talent, features typical local scenes, and is about Hongkongers, it also has an underlying message of support of the motherland. There are references to the dragon's heart, the ancient walls, and a traditional Chinese measurement, a thousand years, probably to presage a successful millenarian relation between China and Hong

Kong under the one country, two systems formula. While in 1997, Hongkongers were presented with a golden bauhinia sculpture representing the local flower, ten years later they were presented with Le Le and Ying Ying, a pair of China's most cherished national symbol, pandas. They made their first appearance to the public on July 1st, of course. Needless to say, the public went crazy about the new addition to Hong Kong's local theme park, Ocean Park. This exacerbated celebration of the local in the context of the national caused a more immediate and sentimental identification with the motherland.

On the other hand, chairman Hu's visit on such an auspicious date had a different impact on how Hongkongese receive nationalistic discourses from the mainland. In the typical fashion of Communist Party leaders, Hu was almost inaccessible as those around him were under intense security scrutiny. And yet, the communist leader stayed at the five-star Grand Hyatt. He had a carefully orchestrated agenda that included the inauguration speech at the Convention and Exhibition Centre, where a decade earlier his predecessor Jiang Zemin had presided in the reunification ceremony, the inspection of the People's Liberation Army garrisoned at Stonecutters Island, HK, and some official events organized by the local government. His agenda excluded foreign governments, pro-democracy protesters, and the Falun Gong, a religious group persecuted by the CPG. His busy agenda had a politicized tone as one can judge by the language he employed, his garb, and the overall message of his speeches. Without regard for the local culture, he spoke in the official Putonghua and expected those around him to speak and understand Mandarin at all times. Apparently communist leaders have never heard the proverb "When in Rome do as the Romans." For the review of his troops he put on an olive green uniform to "make a political fashion statement" (Sheridan) and perhaps even warn spectators of the military power of the CPG. His speeches not only advocated for the unity of

HK-SAR and motherland and urged a stronger sense of identity among Hong Kong youth, but also had an admonishing tone, especially in the context of pro-democracy protests in the territory.

While my first trip to Hong Kong and the mainland was a trip down nostalgia lane, my second trip was a figurative journey to the underworld. The first time I was elated and eagerly identified with the surroundings, but the second time around, I felt so detached from everything. I constantly felt defeated by the pollution and the humid weather and annoyed by the dirty streets, the newfound capitalism in the mainland, and the political hypocrisy of the PRC and of the people who claim with blind zeal their adherence to communism and yet live by the same principles of Western capitalism. Besides, some issues about Hong Kong saddened me deeply: the problem of underpaid and overworked Filipina domestic helpers, the "mainlandization" of Hong Kong, the gradual marginalization of Hong Kong as an international port and cosmopolitan financial hub, the kowtowing of Hong Kong to the "motherland," the gradual loss of an identity that these people forged in times of intense anxiety. The second time in Hong Kong, I stayed at my cousin John's flat in the fashionable Discovery Bay, where about one half of the inhabitants are foreigners. His 5 year-old son's first language is English because his nanny Lulu is from the Philippines and because he attends an international school where the language of instruction is English. His Cantonese is poor, almost risible. My concerns are: what will be Ryan's second language, Cantonese or Putonghua? Will he grow up to be a Hongkonger or a Chinese? Will he ever know the importance of what his people did to create a quasi-nation in the midst of two empires? Will he ever, like Dung Kai-Cheung's narrator, fix his eyes on a Hong Kong that is no longer? What will happen when the one country, two systems formula is no longer necessary? Will Hong Kong lose ground and be cast aside? While it is an international entrepôt, it will

serve its needs. In this race against time, what will arrive first, universal suffrage or complete reabsorption into the political and economic systems of the mainland? The panorama is really alarming.

There still remain four more decades into Deng's one country, two systems formula. Some analysts predict that China will become a world economic power in the next twenty or thirty years. What will happen as China becomes more capitalist? Will it become more ideologically open and democratic as well? Will Hong Kong's unique identity be reabsorbed by the greater Chinese identity? Will the neoimperial rhetoric of the PRC triumph over the will of Hongkongers to preserve their quasi-nationhood? I hope not. I want to believe that people like Anson Chan and Long Hair and Martin Lee and Szeto Wah will do anything in their power to bring universal suffrage to Hong Kong, and I want to believe that some day, Deng's "Capitalism with Chinese characteristics" will evolve into a political system that will bring about only positive breakthroughs for my people, both in the mainland and in the SAR. But if politics is not enough, then, there is a legacy left by the historiographies I examine in this dissertation and my own historiography. I trust that it will suffice.

How does one talk about processes of nation formation and identity formulation in a territory with such a history as Hong Kong? From a scattered group of fishing villages to an international entrepôt to an appendage of the world's next economic power, Hong Kong has donned several identities throughout the ages. While textual analysis does show a conscious concern from cultural producers to unveil patterns of (quasi)nationhood and identity, the common Hongkonger does not want to publicly acknowledge their awareness of those issues. After several informal conversations or interviews with Hongkongers I am related to or have met

casually or in the classroom, my impression is that they are, in the true fashion of Chinese people, cautious with strangers. They do not vent political matters or open up as easily as, say, many Westerners or overseas Chinese I know. The common Hongkonger seems content with their life in post-1997 Hong Kong, enjoys living in such a free society, and has created a common identity not always expressed politically; however, the common Hongkonger is also proud of their Chinese origins and pledges allegiance to, not the People's Republic of China, but this mythologized version of China. This paradox is what made me turn this project into a personal historiography that traces private histories as well as traumas, desires, and fears of a people I identify with ethnically and politically. Hong Kong's identity as a city struggling to counter-calibrate itself was keenly expressed by cultural producers like Timothy Mo, Dung Kai-Cheung, Kith Tsang, Warren Leung, Wong Kar Wai, Leung Ping-Kwan, Xi Xi, David Clarke, Oscar Ho, and the Hui brothers among many others that this dissertation could not examine. It analyzed particular cultural contexts and artifacts that have shaped Hong Kong as a quasi-nation in the midst of its political, but not economic, transfer from Britain to China. It also evaluated the role of alternative narratives or histories in unique processes of nation formation and identity formulation that oppose past and present rhetorics of empire. It examined the raising awareness of Hongkongese intellectuals regarding the uneasy confluence of imperialism, geography, history, and culture in the territory, and finally it showed the relationship between power/knowledge, urban planning and the lived experiences of Hongkongers as represented by plastic, architectural, cinematic, and literary texts.

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