

國立臺灣師範大學英語學系
碩 士 論 文
Master's Thesis
Department of English
National Taiwan Normal University

空間、國族身份認同、性別：
閱讀 Elsie Sze 《回歸》

Space, National Identity, and Gender:
Reading Elsie Sze's *Hui Gui: A Chinese Story*

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中華民國一零五年七月

July 2016

摘要

本論文旨在運用後現代策略去解碼香港社會、政治和歷史的意義，從而分析 Elsie Sze 的小說《回歸》裡空間的含義與其對國族身份認同和性別關係之影響。第一章先定義「場所」(place)和「空間」(space)，進一步探討這兩者和身份型塑的連結；其後，本章分析如何把香港閱讀為巴比塔城市(a city of Tower of Babel)，再以作者和小說的簡介作結尾。第二章爬梳香港從英國殖民開始到回歸中國(1842-1997)的歷史，闡述英國殖民對香港的建構國族身份認同的深遠影響。第三章以整理昂利·列斐伏爾(Henri Lefebvre)的理論作開首，以其理論解讀《回歸》中空間如何對國族身份認同產生作用。第四章把重心移到《回歸》中空間與性別之關係。最終章著重於後九七時代香港人如何從國族身份認同的角度看待自己。

關鍵詞：Elsie Sze、《回歸》、香港、空間、國族身份認同、性別關係



Abstract

Applying a postmodern approach to decode meanings and significations in the societal, political, and historical contexts of Hong Kong, this thesis peruses Elsie Sze's novel, *Hui Gui: A Chinese Story* published in 2005, by concentrating on the multiple connotations and effects of space in Hong Kong especially on national identity and gender relations.

Chapter One defines “place” and “space,” and their relationships with identity formation, then explains how to read Hong Kong as a city of Tower of Babel in terms of spatiality, and ends with an overview of Elsie Sze and *Hui Gui*. Chapter Two explicates the history of Hong Kong from 1842 to 1997, i.e., from the year of the advent of British colonization to the year of the transfer of sovereignty from Britain to the People's Republic of China, and the profound impact of colonization on Hong Kong people's construction of national identity. Chapter Three reviews the major theoretical texts of this thesis, including Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* and *The Right to the City*, and incorporates with the textual analysis of *Hui Gui* in terms of the relationship between space and national identity. Chapter Four continues the discussion by elucidating the relationship between space and gender in this novel. The concluding chapter focuses on the post-1997 era and observes how Hong Kong people regard themselves in the 21st century.

Keywords: Elsie Sze, *Hui Gui: A Chinese Story*, Hong Kong, space, national identity, gender relations

Acknowledgement

First and foremost, my deepest appreciation goes to my advisor, Professor Joan Chiung-huei Chang. Without her guidance and meticulous proofreading, this thesis would not see the light of day. Even though we had some debates over my thesis, I learned how to choose my wordings carefully and organize my arguments logically and systematically. I have to thank my committee members, Professor Yauling Hsieh and Professor Hsiu-chuan Lee, at the oral defense for reading my thesis thoroughly beforehand and giving me so many insightful suggestions. Moreover, I am thankful to Professor Chia-chin Tsai and Professor Chiu-hua Su from Soochow University for giving me support and guidance, Professor Christine Kim from Simon Fraser University and Professor Chris Lee from UBC for showing interest in my research.

Secondly, I am indebted to all my good friends. Writing this thesis was not an easy task that sometimes depressed me and drained my energy and passion. Without my beloved friends, I could have never been able to carry on. Of all of my good friends, I owe my greatest gratitude to Jenny Huang who has been my companion, “comrade-in-arms,” listener, and advisor throughout this writing journey. Other friends whom I have to thank for their love and encouragement are Alice Shih, Wilson Lau, Charmin Cheng, Ingrid Liao, Lily Cheng, Angel Hsieh, Annie Shao, Gary Chen, Kristy Fan, Vivian Lee, Marshall Lin, and also Susan Su. Other two caring friends whom I owe my gratitude are Professor Ferdinand M. Lopez from University of Santo Tomas and Professor Oscar V. Campomanes from Ateneo de Manila University. Thank you for spending your precious time reading my thesis and offering me so much help. There are too many friends on this acknowledgement list, and I hereby show my heartfelt gratefulness to all of you.

Last but not least, I would like to dedicate this paragraph to my lovely family.

My whole family has always been very supportive in my studies and never rejected my decisions. I need to thank my father and brother for encouraging me to study in Taiwan and supporting my decision to stay here. For my mother, she had always treated me the best in the whole family even in the time when she was suffering from a severe illness. She is no longer able to stand by my side, but she always lives in my heart and memory.



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Chapter One: Tower of Babel

Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.” . . . The LORD said, “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them.” . . . So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel—because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world.

—*Genesis 11: 4-9*

Cities, unlike villages and small towns, are plastic by nature. We mould them in our images: they, in their turn, shape us by the resistance they offer when we try to impose a personal form on them.

—Jonathan Raban, *Soft City*

I. Introduction

Tower of Babel, a widely known story in the Book of Genesis, is the archetype

of the creation of different languages.¹ The construction of this tower is classically regarded as humans' rebellion against and their desire to position themselves an equal to God. In response to such a manner, God diversifies one uniform language into different tongues to punish humans' preposterous arrogance in a way of traditional hermeneutics. Humans, bestowed with one language and unwilling to be "scattered over the face of the whole earth" (*Gen.* 11: 4), have an intense desire for homogeneity. In "The Tower of Babel and the Origin of the World's Cultures," Theodore Hiebert concludes that traditional critics interpret this desire as "the value of identity and belonging" and reckon heterogeneity "an obstacle, a source of confusion and chaos, a catastrophe and a curse upon the human race, and, ultimately, a judgment of God" (58).

Tower of Babel in fact denotes less the "babeling" of languages than the creation of different significations. Hiebert subverts traditionalism and propounds a postmodernist reading by rebutting that "[t]he story's terminology, explicit claims, and repetitive structure all focus on the tension between singularity and multiplicity with the purpose of explaining the origin and variety of the world's cultures" (31). In *Genesis* 11: 6, God says that nothing will be impossible if people merely speak one language (and are granted with one culture); what God intends is to inflict challenges on humans and to render tasks arduous by means of confusing/diversifying one tongue into multi-languages. In this sense, most interpreters inscribe negative connotations on God's action and ignore the positive implications behind it. Instead of being read as reproach of mankind, the story of Babel should, as Hiebert argues, be re-interpreted as "the origin and variety of the world's cultures"—an aura of diversification and heterogeneity—which, he construes, corresponds to God's

¹ The spelling of "Babel" resembles the verb form "to confuse" in Hebrew (*bll*), signifying that the confusion of tongues originates from the Tower of Babel. See "Babel, Tower of" in Works Cited.

command: “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth” (*Gen. 9: 1*).

Ever since the late 20th century, the advent of postmodernism, which overthrew universality and the Absolute Truth, has ushered in an era of indeterminacy, heterogeneity, instability, and hybridity and valued difference and diversification. Diversification refers not only to the world’s languages and cultures but also to a postmodern interpretation of their meanings and significations. The capitalized Truth no longer exists; instead, by putting forth unprecedentedly new propositions or amending existing theories, it is superseded by multiple truths which are either replaceable or superimposable.

This thesis does not concern the babeling of languages; instead, with a postmodern approach to decode meanings and significations in the societal, political, and historical contexts of Hong Kong, this thesis peruses Elsie Sze’s novel, *Hui Gui: A Chinese Story* published in 2005, by concentrating on the multiple connotations and effects of space in Hong Kong especially on national identity and gender relations. Chapter One defines “place” and “space,” and their relationships with identity formation, then explains how to read Hong Kong as a city of Tower of Babel in terms of spatiality, and ends with an overview of Elsie Sze and *Hui Gui*. Chapter Two explicates the history of Hong Kong from 1842 to 1997, i.e., from the year of the advent of British colonization to the year of the transfer of sovereignty from Britain to the People's Republic of China, and the profound impact of colonization on Hong Kong people’s construction of national identity.² Chapter Three reviews the major theoretical texts of this thesis, including Henri Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* and *The Right to the City*, and incorporates with the textual analysis of *Hui Gui* in

² Not until the 1960s has the Hong Kongness emerged, people from China had referred themselves as Chinese; thus, I have used different terms to indicate the people living in Hong Kong: the natives referring to the Tankas, the Chinese immigrants, Hong Kongers appearing after 1960s, and generally Hong Kong people.

terms of the relationship between space and national identity. Chapter Four continues the discussion by elucidating the relationship between space and gender in this novel. The concluding chapter focuses on the post-1997 era and observes how Hong Kong people regard themselves in the 21st century.

II. Place, Space and Identity

At the outset, two similar but distinctive terms should be defined beforehand to steer clear of confusion. As defined by Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, a place is governed by “the law of the proper” according to which co-existing elements are situated in distinct location; thus, it is “an instantaneous configuration of positions” and “implies an indication of stability” (118). In contrast to fixity, a space is “composed of intersections of mobile elements” and “in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it” (118). The correlation of place and space is: a place filled with stable meanings and immobile order will be transformed into a space of multiple significations and mobility by the act of human practices and social relations. De Certeau’s forceful note, “In short, space is a practiced place” (118), summarizes their interrelationship. Place, I argue, is thus a stone-like location, while space involves humans’ sentiments and memories once they are engaged in the transformation process. Investigating place as a point of departure, this thesis probes into the transformed space “as a site of social encounter and social division, as a field of politics and power, as a symbolic and material landscape, as an embodied space, [and] as a realm of everyday experience” (Tonkiss 1).

In “Location, Place, Region, and Space,” Helen Couclelis offers an all-embracing definition of space and categorizes space into five major groups. She combines de Certeau’s definition of place and space into one and points out that the

latter “is probably the most fundamental” (215), defining space as “both expanse and confine, both what is between things and what contains them, both empty of matter and defined by the presence of matter; space is even a period or interval of time!” (215). The vastness of space would jeopardize criticism if one attempts to pin down and categorize space systematically in order to facilitate examination and understanding. But categorization is a necessary evil because a focal point is required for every critic to accomplish the analysis. Couclelis categorizes space into mathematical, physical, socioeconomic, behavioral and experiential, and exemplifies each kind with examples from daily life. Mathematical space refers to geometry that has, as Couclelis claims, long been considered “the formal science of space and spatial relations” (218). Mathematical space is mostly used to study spatial irregularity, such as the measurement of a spreading forest fire, a diffusing epidemic or urban areas. Physical space, defined as “place” in de Certeau’s account, is the one interacting with the physical world (Couclelis 220). Couclelis asserts that space could be conceptualized as “a container of objects,” such as “oranges are in a box and fish are in water,” and subsequently formalized as “a neutral background against which the positions of objects can be pinpointed and their motions described” (220). Physical space thus encompasses space/space and space/object dynamics, corresponding to the transformation of immobile place into mobilized space proposed by de Certeau. Socioeconomic space concerns “the interplay between [socioeconomic] relations and spatial structure” (224). For example, the factors to decide the location of a factory substantially would be the minimization of transportation and labor cost; or the distribution of residential areas is associated with citizens’ income levels. Next, what “people respond to environments largely as they perceive and understand them” is known as behavioral space (226). People, for instance, have a propensity to “avoid

a perfectly efficient route to work [if] that is perceived to be dangerous or stressful” (225). Lastly, experiential space is an all-embracing space which human beings actually experience, physically or contemplatively, before any logical and scientific analysis (Couclelis 229). All the above-categorized spaces, except the last one, facilitate the analysis of space in Hong Kong in this thesis.

As Hong Kong has developed into a highly urbanized metropolis under the British colonization, urban space is worthwhile to be investigated. Sophie Watson and Katherine Gibson, the editors of *Postmodern Cities and Spaces*, narrow down the study of space by focusing on urban areas and delineate how developed cities as postmodern spaces have problematized “discontinuity, disjuncture, and transformation” (1). In this collection, John Lechte conceptualizes a postmodern city as a space of indetermination in which meaning “goes in all directions” (106); Paul Patton discusses the shaping of one’s identity within a postmodern city as urbanism has an effect of confusing who is who, of giving opportunities for people to play many roles, and of losing themselves (5).

Patton’s discussion bridges the transformation of space with the shaping of identity. Engaging oneself in the spatial transforming process, especially through walking and observation in a city, is to place one’s identity at stake: taking up many roles may either inaugurate a brand new self or get lost by the overwhelming burden that eventuates in the confusion of the self and the others. Space and identity mutually transform each other in the sense that space necessitates human activities to transmute from static place to dynamic space, while humans’ sentiments and memories are invested in such process that gradually shapes their identities.

III. Hong Kong: A Tower of Babel

All the expositions of space mentioned above help to analyze Hong Kong's spatial pattern and its connotation to flesh out the skeleton of the geographical distribution and to discern the spatial mechanism. Hong Kong, as highly capitalized, is historicized into a hybrid city, in terms of languages used, people composed, and nationalities involved, a mountainous city where accommodates approximately 7.24 million dwellers.³ Hong Kong has always been one of the highest densely populated cities in the world; in other words, it is extremely hard for developers to find flatland for new construction unless through reclamation and removal of mountains. Penetrated with a strong aura of British colonization and capitalism, Hong Kong transforms herself from a fishing village to a world-leading financial center and cosmopolitan trade harbor, and has been elevated to be one of the Four Asian Tigers. With this evolution, every piece of flatland is preferably developed into a commercial/financial area for further capital accumulation, or into a residential community to accommodate the ever-increasing population.⁴ The speed of demolishing old and shabby buildings is unimaginably fast for building fancy and modern skyscrapers dedicated to commercial use.⁵ Sophie Watson and Katherine Gibson call postmodern space an urban space “of transformation and disjuncture” (1). Disjuncture happens in the spatial form in Hong Kong, such as mixed commercial-residential land use, most notably in Kowloon and Hong Kong Island, and in geographical distribution, such as the promiscuous construction of buildings

³ See Hong Kong. “Population.” 2014. *GovHK*. Web. 28 Nov. 2015.
<www.gov.hk/tc/about/abouthk/factsheets/docs/population.pdf>

⁴ The reclaimed land accommodates 70% of the commercial activity and 27% of the total population. For instance, a huge piece of land was reclaimed, and still in the process, in Lantau Island of constructing Disneyland by one of the largest transnational corporations in the world. The Victoria Harbor was narrowed as more spaces were needed for commercial development. West Kowloon and Shatin are two reclaimed residential areas.

⁵ Two of the most distinctive commercial high-rises are Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) Headquarters and the Bank of China Tower located in Central, Hong Kong.

everywhere in the city. Facing the prevalent trend of globalization, the highly capitalized Hong Kong is undergoing a nonstop process of commercialization and financialization that eventuates in shaping into a city with commercial and residential areas congested together. Tsung Yi Michelle Huang comments thus on the impact of globalization on Hong Kongers and on the yearning of the Hong Kong Dream:⁶

Living and walking in such a space, people in Hong Kong are spoon-fed the glorious global dream. . . . The urban space of Hong Kong embedded with such a narrative of global progress thus turns out to be a space of fantasy for its walkers to inscribe their own desires and dreams, a space glossed over by the grand rhetoric of globalization. (32)

The hybrid Hong Kong is replete with diversified spatial significations that result in indeterminacy and instability, making her a Tower of Babel. Indeterminacy and instability are often perceived in a negative sense as they easily arouse undesirable outcomes such as chaos and disorder; but the scope of these two terms could be much larger than what we usually perceive, as they could embrace plurality, diversity, and opportunity. In his “(Not) Belonging in Postmodern Space,” John Lechte remarks on the characteristics of a postmodern city as “a city of indetermination. It is a phenomenon of flows, of clouds of people and clouds of letters, of a multiplicity of writings and differences” (106). Hong Kong, a city of Tower of Babel, is fraught with meanings that flow and penetrate in all directions. Even though meanings are indeterminate and unstable, they are significant in explaining different occasions and phenomena. Spatial analysis is considered captivating only when space

⁶ The Hong Kong Dream, which is in fact not officially declared, heightens the influx of immigrants or/and the reflux of expatriates on the grounds of the instability and unpredictability after the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949. People were desperate to migrate to Hong Kong in the 1950-60s because they conceived that Hong Kong was a city glossed with the color of economic prosperity and social stability, and China was not a safe haven to root in. See Chi-Kwan Mark. “‘The Problem of People’: British Colonials, Cold War Powers, and the Chinese Refugees in Hong Kong, 1949-62.”

is “viewed as a *social production*: something constituted, reproduced, and changed by social relations, and in turn constraining the unfolding of such relations” (Couclelis 225; italics original). In “History: Geography: Modernity,” Edward Soja affirms that our “life-stories” (history) should be placed in the geographical context: “they [life stories] have milieux, immediate locales, provocative emplacements which affect thought and action” (139). The interaction between space (geography) and individuals (history) offers a useful clue to spatial conundrums, but not the only one.

Culture and geography are connected, for example, in the thesis entitled “Beyond Hybridization: The Spatial Histories of Mong Kok, Hong Kong.” Siu-hang Wesley Tang concentrates on the spatial histories and spatial analysis of Mong Kok district supplemented with other instances. Tang aims to “understand Hong Kong culture with a strong emphasis on its complicated urban spaces which constitute and interweave the everyday lives of most Hong Kong people” (16). What he means by “beyond hybridization” is that Mong Kok is not simply a hybridized district with modern commercial high-rises interweaving with short worn-out residential buildings; it is “culturally underestimated and ideological complex” (17), the same as Hong Kong culture. By analyzing the historical relationship between the present culture and space, and several specific spaces in Mong Kok, Tang offers an alternative elucidation of the relations between space and culture.

Another instance of such connection is provided by Wai Yin Chen. In “Urban Space and Cultural Identity of the Postcolonial Hong Kong in the Age of Globalization” (《後殖民香港在全球化下的城市空間與文化身份》), Chen illustrates the effects of capitalism and globalization on the governance of the city and the land-use planning before and after 1997. According to her observation, the city planning carried out by Britain had not resonated with social hatred and the concern

of mass media; yet, Hong Kong people have become increasingly aware of the dismal future and the disappointment to the governmental policy, urban planning in particular, in the postcolonial era; thus, they have aroused their Hong Kongness and dedicated themselves to resisting against the government in terms of space, which Chen calls “the cultural identity politics” (文化身份政治). The relationship between history and geography is shown to be closely knotted. Besides culture and cultural identity, the impact of space on national identity and gender relations is the focal point of the analysis of Elsie Sze’s *Hui Gui: A Chinese Story*.

IV. Elsie Sze and *Hui Gui: A Chinese Story*

Being a passionate traveler, Elsie Sze has written novels that transport readers to different times and spaces. Born and growing up in Hong Kong, Sze left her birthplace to further pursue her graduate studies in the U.S. and Canada after her graduation from University of Hong Kong at the age of 22 and has now settled down in San Mateo, California. After being an English teacher and a librarian for nine years, Sze has embarked on her writing career and published three novels until now: *Hui Gui: A Chinese Story* in 2005, *The Heart of the Buddha* in 2009, and lastly *Ghost Cave: A Novel of Sarawak* in 2014. Because Sze is a local Hong Konger and an avid traveler, the settings of these three novels are based on places that Sze’s grows up or travels.⁷ Sze selects Hong Kong and China to be the settings of *Hui Gui* mainly out of the reason that the former is her birthplace and root with which she has a strong attachment, while the latter is a place where her father and mother “had some wartime harrowing experiences similar to those of the characters” in *Hui Gui* when they were university students in China during Japanese occupation (“Elsie Sze’s Novel *Hui Gui*:

⁷ *The Heart of Buddha* and *Ghost Cave* bring readers to two other Asian places Bhutan and Sarawak, the largest Malaysian province on the island of Borneo.

A Chinese Story,” par. 1). Before and throughout her writing of *Hui Gui*, Sze has traveled to China a couple of times to explore and research “the historic period for the early part of the story with the help of books, films, the Internet and interviews” (Sze, par. 7).

Being a Hong Kong diasporic writer, Sze loves writing on homecoming or root searching, one of the motifs in her novels.⁸ The theme of *Hui Gui*, returning home in Chinese, is apparently revealed in the book title that carries twofold meanings: the handover of Hong Kong from Britain to China in 1997 and the journey home of the characters in the novel. *Hui Gui* is a family saga that transports readers from China to Hong Kong during the 1930s to 1997. Tak Sing, the patriarch and protagonist, was born to an affluent landlord family which later went bankrupt after the Japanese occupation and the inauguration of the People’s Republic of China in 1949—house being ruined by Japanese army and property being confiscated due to nationalization. Tak Sing immigrates to Hong Kong as a refugee and starts making a home in this city by acquiring a reputable job as a policeman and forming his own family with his wife Lily, their daughter Serena, and Lily’s maidservant Ah Lan. Towards the end, Serena takes Tak Sing’s bone ash back to China and says, “Papa is home, and Mummy is with him. This is their *hui gui*” (290). Serena’s attitude is affirmative because Tak Sing has once confessed to her that Hong Kong is considered as his second home, while China is the first (198). The narratives of this novel shift the focus from Tak Sing to Serena so as to underscore the passing down of the Chineseness from one generation to another and the root of the family. But does Serena conform to Tak Sing

⁸ *The Heart of Buddha* depicts two sisters, Marian and Ruthie, who undergo physical, between Canada and Bhutan, and spiritual journeys. The motivation of writing *Ghost Cave* is that the birthplace of Sze’s great parents and father is Sarawak in which Sze has an intense interest: “If you want to find out about your roots, you have to go back to the birthplace of your parents. My father was born here (Sarawak), and that’s the reason I want to write a book about Sarawak” (“Elsie Sze’s New Award-Winning Novel,” par. 4).

and regard China as her home? To her, journeying home is an ongoing process that reflects the non-stop internal conflict in terms of national identity.

Portraying Serena as a reflection of herself, Sze questions and problematizes the stability of home and national identity. According to the reviewer Shawn B, the definition of home is different for each of the character. “This yearning for home takes each on their own path and leads them on a journey of self-discovery” (par. 3). Home is categorized into three kinds: ancestral home, home of birth, home of attachment. B’s remark is so true that Serena defines home in her own term and takes a journey of self-discovery: a local born Hong Konger who treasures, but does not embrace, the ancestral home and later makes up her mind to leave for England. Sharing the same background with Serena, Sze is a local born Hong Konger who first migrated to Canada and then settled down in the U.S. Both Serena and Sze are determined to leave Hong Kong, the home of birth, and make a home of attachment in a different country, undergoing a struggle with their national identity, as a Hong Konger or a Chinese.

This novel is chosen out of the reason that the contradiction between its title and its content renders it significant in providing another angle of looking at the relationship between Hong Kong and China. The title, *Hui Gui: A Chinese Story*, seemingly suggests that it tells a story of recovering the Chinese heritage and of connecting with the Chinese root through the journey of returning home; yet, the story manifests the hopelessness of communism and delineates the characters’ fear and abomination of it, distancing Hong Kong from China. This contradictory relationship, just as the conflicting dimension of national identity, makes the story worthwhile for research.

Jonathan Raban has described accurately the dynamics between city and

humans in *Soft City*. Cities are like plastic that can be molded concordant with human imaginary; they, in return, shape humans in a form of resistance, such as confusing/diversifying our national identities and gender relations. More significantly, all types of spaces, the urban and the rural in particular, produce the same effect of mutual molding. This thesis, thus, aims to study the public and private spaces in both China and Hong Kong and probe into their impact on national confliction and gender relations. The next chapter maps out the history of Hong Kong for the sake of expounding on Hong Kong people's struggle with their national identity.





Chapter Two: Hong Kong as an Ivory Tower

The ivory tower of reason, rationality, and rigid structures colonizes the world of lived experience. And as a result, those who seek academic legitimacy for their narratives from the heart end up echoing the sanitized tone of the Master Narrative.

—Kirsten J. Broadfoot and Debashish Munshi, “Diverse Voices”

This teapot of jasmine tea prepared for you is perhaps too bitter. I am now going to tell you a story of Hong Kong legend which, I am afraid, is equally bitter—Hong Kong is a city of both grandeur and sorrow.

我給您沏的這一壺茉莉香片，也許是太苦了一點。我將要說給您聽的一段香港傳奇，恐怕也是一樣的苦——香港是一個華美的但悲哀的城。

—Eileen Chang, “Jasmine Tea”⁹

I. Britain: The Colonizer of the Ivory Tower in Hong Kong

Ivory tower, a term originated from the Bible and frequently used in the 20th century, has been infused with a sense of postcoloniality in the 21st century. This term first appears when Solomon is glorifying the stunning beauty of his beloved in *Song*

⁹ The English text and title are my own translation.

of *Songs* in the Bible, but has been applied as a pejorative since the 20th century to designate an environment of intellectual pursuit that is, according to *Oxford Dictionaries*, “a state of *privileged* seclusion or separation from the facts and practicalities of the real world” [emphasis added]. If this state of insulation is privileged, why does it carry a negative connotation in the modern contexts? The answer perhaps goes to impracticality, seeing that the insiders of the ivory tower, the intellectuals, cannot reify knowledge in reality since they confine themselves to their imaginary world. Living in the 21st century, Broadfoot and Munshi put forth a re-reading of the ivory tower in a postcolonial context: the dominance of colonial structures and ideologies (255). They apply the concept of colonialism to examine the meaning of the ivory tower and find how the colonizers, often coming from the West, construct the discursive space and structure to define values in accordance with their western ideology, while the colonized, i.e. the local people, are eager to be accepted by the colonizers. The governing framework designed by the colonizers was considered impractical inasmuch as they insist on following their ways of thinking and coercively implanting such ideologies on the colonized, without any acknowledgement of the colonized culture. Thus, the colonized are marginalized and often voiceless as they are, compulsorily or not, required to give up their individuality and to observe the game rules set by the colonizers, in the hope of joining the dominant culture; in other words, they have no choice but to accommodate themselves to the space “constructed by the dominant mainstream structures and ideologies” (255). “The ivory tower,” Munshi lays a simile, “functions like an exclusive club whose membership is tightly controlled by what might be called a ‘dominant frame’” (257). Striving to assimilate (join) into the mainstream (“the exclusive club”) in order not to be marginalized and excluded, the colonized therefore forsake their unique local culture by conforming to the ivory tower. This pessimistic

response, however, does not suffice Broadfoot and Munshi, so they conceptualize an active position, “a postcolonial awakening” or “a postcolonial self-reflexivity,” a response similar to the desire proposed by Simon During: a desire “of any decolonized community to have an identity and language of their own” (qtd. in Broadfoot and Munshi 256). The hope of “using their [the colonized] experiences and ways of knowing to talk back to, reframe, contextualize, and perhaps even reinterpret commonly used theories and concepts” (264) is what both authors expect of the academia, as scholars “potentially absorb, without reflection, a particular way of understanding the world” in a situation where they have only intake of Euro-American ideologies without any output of their cultural specialties (264).

The idea of the ivory tower can be extended to the examination about Hong Kong. History is conventionally considered objective and realistic, but Dominick LaCapra in *History and Criticism* reminds us that “[historical] documents are texts that supplement or rework ‘reality’ and not mere sources that divulge facts about ‘reality’” (11). By scrutinizing historical records that are sometimes fragmented, historians are merely capable of putting their subjective perspectives into play for generating secondary sources that still involve the component of imaginary (Wong et al. 143). History, Wang-chi Wong in *The Burden of History: A Hong Kong Perspective of the Mainland Discourse of Hong Kong History* claims, “is a discourse through which the historians tell us what has happened in the past” (6; my translation). British historian George Beer Endacott claims in *A History of Hong Kong* published in 1958 that “[t]he history of Hong Kong really begins with the coming of the British in 1841” (4). This bold claim is loaded with Britain’s superiority but has been significantly implanted into the mind of most Hong Kong people as, before the handover in 1997, they are only educated with Hong Kong’s colonial history of the

19th century and hereafter, without knowledge of the pre-colonial period.¹⁰ Wong asserts that most Hong Kong people have no sense of Hong Kong's history (7),¹¹ because local historians, who were less concerned with the local than with the Chinese history, did not write history about Hong Kong and Hong Kong people had not been able to access local historical discourse except via English writings till the 1980s.¹² Britain as the ivory tower took advantage of this occasion to manipulate the history and historical discourse in Hong Kong.

China had not taken heed of this place before the British troops sailed in. In 1841, when Britain requested for the cession of Hong Kong, the Chinese government was not really clear about the location of Hong Kong, and mistook it to be “adjacent to Stanley, Hung Hoeng Lou and Kwan Tai Lo” (「與赤柱、紅香爐、裙帶路各處互相毗連」)(馬金科 44).¹³ A Chinese thinker and fiction writer Wang Tao, who fled to Hong Kong for shelter in 1860s, wrote a series of essays explaining the current situation of Hong Kong, such as “Xianghai Jizong” (“My Sojourn in Hong Kong” translated into English and published in 1994) and “Xianggang Luelun” (“A Brief Introduction to Hong Kong”). Wang's motivation to write these essays was obvious: Hong Kong was “an abandoned land [by China]” (「棄土」) and “located in a remote corner where few recorders wrote about” (「香港僻在一隅，紀述者罕」)(qtd. in 王

¹⁰ This is the experience of most Hong Kongers, including the author of this thesis, because we are not taught about the history of Hong Kong in the history class in elementary and secondary schools. Therefore, Hong Kongers are often criticized of being unconscious of or indifferent to the local history. For more details, please see 王宏志等在 Works Cited.

¹¹ It seems contradictory to say that Hong Kongers have no sense about history even though most Hong Kongers are aware of the fact that Britain has indeed colonized Hong Kong. One suggested answer would be the uncertainty of the origin of Hong Kong history, as Wong asserts: “The length of Hong Kong history has been a contentious issue. A large number of Hong Kongers deem that Hong Kong has history only after British people arrived, whereas some Hong Kongers emphasize that its history should begin from the Neolithic period and is therefore very long” (「香港歷史的長短是一個很具爭議性的問題，不少人認為香港是在英國人到來後才有歷史的，但也有人強調香港早在新石器時代便有人居住，所以有非常悠長的歷史」，王宏志 7).

¹² Wong has mentioned that very few Chinese historical texts on Hong Kong history were published before 1980 (7), and only a few English books were published for documentation. See Eitel, Ernest John; Sayer, Geoffrey Robley; Hurlimann, Martin in Works Cited.

¹³ All translations are mine unless stated otherwise.

宏志 19-20). In contrast, Britain has had a record of naming the island Hong Kong since 1816 when William Pitt Amherst sailed to Beijing and was stopped by the sea of Hong Kong. He then saw a mountainous and magnificent island which he later named Hong Kong. “The date of this record is 10 July 1816, ‘Hong Kong’ already appeared in the writing of the British people since then” (王宏志等 159-60). Hence, Britain but not China is the one who brings the name of Hong Kong into being; it is thus logical to make such a claim that Hong Kong history “officially” commences in 1841.

In addition to Hong Kong’s name, Britain colonizes people’s mentality through propagandizing the positive impacts of colonization on this city. Britain tactically narrates the colonial history by highlighting its benefits and smothering up its atrocities brought to the people. A strong scent of colonialism/imperialism diffuses in most history of Hong Kong in English.¹⁴ Endacott, for instance, affirms that the colonizing action bestows a so-called “brand new” history on Hong Kong, and Frank Welsh terms Britain as “the ‘Mother Country’” of Hong Kong in order to emphasize the inseparable linkage between these two places (xii). These statements are no doubt peppered with an imperialistic ideology which is not uncommon in the English writings between late 19th century and early 20th century (王宏志 11). Before anti-colonial consciousness was mature, there would be no need for Britain to conceal its ambition of imperialistic expansion, so it could endeavor to promote the positivity of colonialism. But when anti-colonial sentiments among the Hong Kong people became full-fledged after the Second World War, partly inspired by the successive independence of many British colonies, Britain would only downplay or even subdue the dark side of Hong Kong’s history so as to attenuate the sprouting nationalism and patriotism. For instance, textbooks on Chinese Studies were meticulously scrutinized

¹⁴ The simplest way to distinguish colonialism from imperialism is that the former “can be thought to be a practice and [the latter] as the idea driving the practice” (S., par. 2). Both terms work hand in hand with each other. For more details, please see S., Prabhat in Works Cited.

and revised after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Here is the excerpt of an official report on Chinese Studies issued by Education Department in 1953:

Since the founding of the Republic, the Chinese politicians have striven hard to unite the nation by appealing to the people's patriotism, narrow nationalism and racialism. This explains why History textbooks published in China usually contain anti-foreign allusions, comments and propaganda, and are therefore not quite suitable for use in Hong Kong. . . . *Objectivity in treatment is, of course, to be strictly observed*, especially in connection with such topics as the Boxer Uprising and the so-called Opium War. [emphasis added] (31)

This one-sided narrative not only criticizes Chinese brainwashing education but also lessens the hostility of the people towards the British government by foregrounding the importance of objectivity in historical events.

II. British Carrot-and-Stick Policies

In most Sinocentric history of Hong Kong, Britain is a relentless dictator who inflicts pain, sufferings, and humiliation to Hong Kong people. History, as mentioned above, is a discourse supplemented with imaginary and therefore is subjective and biased; like the British discourse, the Chinese discourse is one-sided too. With the advent of 1997, many Chinese books and documentaries appeared after the 1980s, such as *Xianggang de Youyu (The Melancholy of Hong Kong)* edited by Wei-luan Lu (盧瑋鑾) and *Xianggang Cangsang (The Misery of Hong Kong)* issued by CCTV, the Chinese official propaganda which aims to eradicate the contributions of the British governance, demonize Britain while glorifying China, and alienate Hong Kong from Britain while drawing closer relationship with China. Obviously, these productions

attempt to register empathy and compassion for the people and to discredit Britain's colony as the British rule has made Hong Kong a messy and sinful city. For example, CCTV has thus commented: Hong Kong "is the largest center of opium smuggling in the world" (「全世界最大的鴉片走私中心」) and is regarded as "an unsinkable opium barge" (「不沉的鴉片躉船」) (中央電視台 42; 余繩武、劉存寬 48). Besides drug smuggling, China stigmatizes Hong Kong with other evils, such as prostitution, illegal gambling, poor living condition and corruption.¹⁵ Wong has summarized these Chinese discourses and categorized into three aspects to highlight the dismal side of Hong Kong: the absolute manipulative power of Britain, the implementation of racist policies against the Chinese immigrants, and the hardship of the people in Hong Kong (105-07).

Each governor assigned by Britain enjoyed a supreme power in Hong Kong. In 1843, Queen Victoria signed and promulgated Hong Kong Letters Patent and Hong Kong Royal Instructions that bestowed each governor with an unchallengeable authority to rule Hong Kong. Even though there were Executive Council, Legislative Council and Judiciary of Hong Kong, they merely performed a counseling function but had no power to hold back the governor. The speech of Alexander Grantham, the 22nd governor of Hong Kong from 1947 to 1957, is often quoted in all sorts of Chinese discourses to spotlight the absolute controlling power of Britain: "In a crown colony the Governor is next to the Almighty. Everyone stands up when he enters a room. He is deferred to on all occasions. It is always 'Yes, Sir,' 'Certainly, Your

¹⁵ For more negative descriptions of Hong Kong, please see 王宏志等 57-62 and 盧瑋鑾 in Works Cited. Both China and Britain criticize the miserable conditions in Hong Kong. For instance, Jan Morris delineates Hong Kong as "a port city so volatile as this: protection rackets, pornography, prostitution, illegal gambling, smuggling, violence of one sort or another." (43). She speaks in an ironical tone when discussing the issue of corruption: "Most notoriously, Hong Kong has specialized in criminal venality. When it comes to corruption the territory has always sailed as close to the wind as possible, and bribery . . . has always been a fact of life . . ." (45). Hong Kong, she adds, "seems to have been more prurient even than most such colonial settlements" (47).

Excellency . . .” (107).¹⁶

Chinese historians accuse Britain of implementing racist policies which discriminate and torture the Chinese immigrants. They point out that some policies have weakened the power of the Chinese and segregated them from the Europeans.¹⁷ Before the 1880s, no Chinese members served in any governmental institutions; in other words, the Chinese never got to have a say in any decision-making process. Curfew, harsh physical torture, and poll tax were imposed on them. The European District Reservation Ordinance and the Hill District Reservation Ordinance were issued in 1888 and in 1904 respectively in order to maintain the cleanness and security of the living area for the Europeans as the colonizers mostly considered the Chinese contaminated and unsafe—a Eurocentric way of thinking that was prevalent in that period. In addition, the following excerpt from *The Hong Kong Government Gazette* is perhaps the most discriminatory and humiliating notification that Britain has had ever issued: “Chinese Mechanics and labourers will not be allowed to use the Garden as a thoroughfare” and “No admission will be allowed to Chairs and Chair Coolies, or to Dogs unless led” (279). Gardens “having been established for the recreation of the inhabitants of Hongkong [sic]” were open for “respectable persons” but not low-class Chinese and dogs (279).

The hardship of people in Hong Kong derived from the supreme power of Britain and the implementation of racist policies thus becomes an issue for discussion. Chinese laborers were sold as indentured servants or in-debt workers to the West for

¹⁶ This speech is transliterated into Chinese in several books, please see 余繩武、劉存寬 and 劉蜀永 in Works Cited.

¹⁷ See Yu and Liu, and CCTV for a detailed explanation. Not only do the Chinese historians bring up the racist ordinances, but also Western scholars notice this issue of how Chinese were discriminated. For example, Peter Wesley-Smith quotes a prejudiced speech made by a legislative councilor in 1856: “Above all I object to the admission of Chinese as Attornies [sic] in our Courts of Law. They are a peculiar race of people, and in my opinion are generally crafty, corrupt, mendacious, and deficient in those qualifications which are needful in a trustworthy legal adviser . . .” (qtd. in Wesley-Smith 91).

profit-making, termed as *maai zyu zai* (literally meaning “selling piglets”) in Cantonese.¹⁸ Hong Kong was congested with Chinese immigrants as the population kept rising. Wang Tao (王韜) describes the crowded living environment in “A Brief Introduction to Hong Kong”: “Most houses where the Chinese dwell are as small as snail’s shell, as dense as beehive” (「華民所居者，率多小如蝸舍，密若蜂房」) (qtd. in 王宏志等 33). Once the two reservation ordinances were put into practice, the Chinese dwellers were expelled from those areas and packed the buildings outside the reservation zones, which resulted in poor living condition and unwholesomeness. If the Chinese account was infallible, the population in Hong Kong would never skyrocket from 12,361 in 1842 to approximately 4 million in 1971 (余繩武、劉存寬 299; Young 146), and Chinese refugees would never so desperate to migrate to Hong Kong, a phenomenon called *Da Tao Gang* (“fleeing to Hong Kong”), in and after the 50s. All the factual evidence proves that the Chinese historical discourse is unpersuasive and biased.

The stick policies were veritably manipulative and oppressive (the application of stick), but Britain excelled that by maneuvering to “reward followers, exclude rivals, neutralize the hostile, and disorganize the dangerous,” i.e., by offering Hong Kong people “a carrot” (Ngo 2). In his “Chinese Collaboration in the Making of British Hong Kong,” John M. Carroll traces back to the transactional co-operation between Chinese compradors/merchants and Britain, a relationship that “assisted both the British victory in the Opium War, which led to the cession of the island, and the early development of the infant colony [by providing them essential supplies]” (16-17). Those Chinese suppliers were often labeled as *Hanjian* (Han traitors) from

¹⁸ Indentured servants were those who signed and were bound by indentures that limited the freedom and rights of the servants. The second type, in-debt workers, was devoid of any contracts. Agents paid the ship tickets for them and later reclaimed the money back, adding 5-15% commission, from the workers whose obedience was a must to the creditors. This whole process is termed as Credit Ticket System. For more details, please see 劉蜀永 in Works Cited.

the Chinese nationalist perspective. Colonization and imperial expansion, Carroll writes, involved “a process of physical construction—from government, residential and commercial buildings to entire cities and towns. As in many other Southeast Asian colonies [including Hong Kong], this construction was carried out by Chinese workers and contractors” (18). In return, Britain rewarded them with exclusive entitlements such as “land grants and monopolies and enforcing separate business and residential districts for the Chinese” (Carroll 23), thereby stimulating the Chinese business and leading to the emergence of the Chinese bourgeoisie who later developed a close operation with Britain so as to stabilize their status and augment their revenue.

Britain’s acquisition of the island aroused the hostility and wrath from the natives in Hong Kong; therefore, Britain aimed at appeasing negative sentiments by proclaiming to govern the natives by the application of Chinese laws and customs. Charles Elliot announced a proclamation right after the occupation of Hong Kong in 1841: “the natives of the island of Hong Kong and all natives of China thereto resorting, shall be governed according to the laws and customs of China, every description of torture excepted” (Tsang 16).¹⁹ Even though Hong Kong (Hong Kong Island in precise) was ceded to Britain after the signing of Treaty of Nanking in 1842, the first to-be governor Henry Pottinger made an official announcement that assured the respect of Chinese habits and customs (Sayer 103). The reason for not coercively imposing juridical and customary changes on the natives was to alleviate the repulsion derived from the humiliation of losing sovereignty, to facilitate the governance, and to pave the way for enacting manipulative bills in the years to come.

¹⁹ This proclamation justifies the fallacy of Britain’s initial usage of torture on Chinese criminals in those Chinese discourses of Hong Kong’s history. Sir John F. Davis, the second governor of Hong Kong, confessed that the British law—penalty and imprisonment—did not have an intimidating effect, Britain thus finally decided to brutalize Chinese criminals by appealing to the Chinese law which is ferocious and inhuman.

The most illustrious “soft” policy Britain implemented on Hong Kong is laissez-faire or economic non-interventionism. On 1 February 1841, Elliot and James John Gordon Bremer jointly proclaimed that “[t]he inhabitants are hereby promised protection, in her majesty’s gracious name, against all enemies whatever; and they are further secured . . . in the enjoyment of their lawful private property and interests;” furthermore, “Chinese ships and merchants resorting to the port of Hongkong [sic] for purposes of trade are hereby exempted . . . from charge or duty of any kind to the British government” (Bridgman and Williams 64). By doing so *intentionally*, Hong Kong has developed into a free entrepôt “so as to give every encouragement to the commerce of all nations” (Tsang 17), a passage extracted from a document written by Foreign Secretary Lord Aberdeen to Governor Pottinger in 1843. The adoption of economic non-interventionism appealed to Chinese merchants who later transferred their business from Canton (now Guangzhou) to Hong Kong, boosting the economy and eventually crowning Hong Kong Pearl of the Orient. The prosperity of the society and affluence of the people in Hong Kong on surface were able to divert their attention from the dark to the bright side of colonization. Xu Jiatun (許家屯), a former Chinese Communist Party official, has conducted an analysis on the British governing model which aims to pacify the outrage of the people in Hong Kong: “Britain has implemented a sort of “benevolent” dictatorial governance in Hong Kong. In other words, it is a soft governance, with much freedom yet with no democracy. But insomuch as not being intimidated by the British rule, people had opportunities to vent their discontent and present their opinions which, to a certain extent, would be heard and accepted” (「英國在香港的統治，實施了一種所謂「仁慈」的獨裁統治，換言之，是懷柔性質的統治——有很大的自由度，沒有民主，但又可以讓人在不危及英國統治的程度下，有各種機會來宣洩他們的不滿或意見，而這些不滿和意見在一定程度上也得到了傾聽和改善。」) (183).

Seeing the coming of 1997, the last governor Christopher Francis Patten gave a political address in 1992 to advocate democracy, an element that had been absent in the whole colonial history. The first step to realizing democracy was made by Mark Aitchison Young in 1946, known as The Young Plan, but ended in failure.²⁰ But the second attempt made by Patten achieved a phenomenal success of pleasing Hong Kong people and led Hong Kong forward to democracy. Referring to the “one country, two systems” proposed by Deng Xiaoping in the 1980s and the subsequent promulgation of the Basic Law in 1990,²¹ Patten initiated a series of political reforms, one of which was an electoral system that enabled local permanent residents to vote for the members of Legislative Council. In addition, he delegated Hong Kongers for high-ranking posts such as Chief Secretary and Financial Secretary.²² Despite the anger from the government in China and pro-Beijing parties in Hong Kong, Patten upheld two notions: “Hong Kong People Governing Hong Kong” (港人治港) and “Handing Over the Power to the People” (還政於民). As a result, the advocacy of democracy highly impressed the people and made them further estranged from the socialist China.

In the end, China failed to break down the relationship between Hong Kong and Britain, but on the contrary draw them even closer to each other. Most Chinese discourses overemphasize the negativity of the British rule which in fact has brought economical prosperity to Hong Kong. These Chinese discourses failed to set Hong

²⁰ After the Second World War, a host of British colonies were eager for independence. Such circumstance would necessitate an appealing political reform in order for Britain to bribe Hong Kongers and to arouse their sense of belonging.

²¹ “One country, two systems” means that Hong Kong and Macao could remain as a capitalist society while the rest of China is governed under a socialist system. The Basic Law was co-drafted by China and Britain with reference to the “one country, two systems” and the Sino-British Joint Declaration signed in 1984, and went into effect on 1 July 1997. According to Chapter I Article 2, “The National People’s Congress authorizes the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to exercise a high degree of autonomy and enjoy executive, legislative and independent judicial power, including that of final adjudication, in accordance with the provisions of this Law” (2).

²² These two posts are the most senior officials in the Government Secretariat. The former is responsible for the administration of Hong Kong, while the latter takes the responsibility of all financial and economic matters.

Kong people apart from the British government; worse still, they aroused their distaste for the socialist China. Britain's carrot-and-stick policies have successfully won concession from Hong Kong people, and by turning Hong Kong into a capitalist society, they were eager to distinguish themselves from the Chinese in socialist China.

III. The Hong Kongness: The Emergence of Double Identity

In the pre-colonization era, China paid no attention to Hong Kong. Due to its distant geographical location and eccentric cultural practice, the Chinese hegemony used to discriminate against Hong Kong, and the people in Hong Kong were unwilling to identify with China. The Chinese used to believe in the notion that “China is the center of the world, and the other areas are as all barbaric” (「居天地之中者曰中國，居天地之偏者曰四夷」) (qtd. in 王宏志 110).²³ Geographically, Hong Kong is located at the far east of China and thereby viewed as an uncivilized area; Take the Tankas, one of the four biggest aborigines in Hong Kong for example.²⁴ They dwelled in boats and made a living on fishing, but were considered barbaric, or even dehumanized as animals; they were forbidden to receive education, to wear silk clothes, and to live ashore. Discriminated, exploited and brutalized by the mother country, the natives could hardly cultivate a sense of patriotism and nationalism toward China.

The arrival of British troops marked a turning point of Hong Kong history by bringing over the capitalist ideology which has been deep-seated in people in Hong Kong since the early 20th century. By virtue of the *laissez-faire* policy and economic non-interventionism, Hong Kong was transformed into an *entrepôt* and a financial

²³ Foreigners were treated as barbarians and categorized into four groups according to the direction by China: Eastern Barbarians (*Dongyi*), Southern Barbarians (*Nanman*), Western Barbarians (*Xirong*), and lastly Northern Barbarians (*Beidi*).

²⁴ The four biggest aborigines in Hong Kong are often known as the Tankas, the Hakkas, the Hokkien people, and the Weitou people. Only the Tankas, however, were locally born while the others were originally migrants from China.

center, which thereafter attracted loads of the Chinese in China to migrate to Hong Kong to pursue the Hong Kong Dream. Living in a greatly capitalized metropolis, the natives and the Chinese immigrants, who did not regard themselves as Hong Kongers yet, focus their goal on maximizing income and accumulating assets, sparing no time for political issues: “One of the effects of a very efficient colonial administration,” Ackbar Abbas comments, “is that it provides almost no outlet for political idealism (until perhaps quite recently); as a result, most of the energy is directed toward the economic sphere” (5). Hong Kong has thus become well-known for its pursuit of wealth and material enjoyment: “The beauty [of Hong Kong] is the beauty, like it or not, of the capitalist system. More than a usual share of this city’s energies goes towards the making of money, and nobody has ever pretended otherwise . . .” (Morris 33); Wang Tao criticizes the Chinese in Hong Kong are “people greedy for benefits and chasing after fame” (「錐刀之徒，逐利而至」) (qtd. in 王宏志 145). Britain has succeeded in instilling the natives and the Chinese immigrants with the capitalist ideology for the sake of not arousing any attention or efforts for politics; therefore, these people have increasingly identified with the British rule and distanced from the socialist China.

Britain carried out not only economic colonization but also cultural implantation on Hong Kong. Danlin Lu (陸丹林) assailed how the Chinese in Hong Kong were severely Westernized in the 30s: “[People in Hong Kong] think being Chinese is embarrassing; they resent that their skin color and face were not like those of the white people, which has brought them life-long misery” (「他們的心思，以為做了中國人是投錯胎的，頂丟臉的，只恨皮膚面孔不像白種人，使他(她)一生的倒霉」) (177-78); in addition, Yangci Tu (屠仰慈) criticizes that the Chinese in Hong Kong “lost the spirits and soul of China” (「缺失了中國的氣息，失去中國的靈魂」) (157). Both Chinese critics notice the rampant Westernization in Hong Kong culture.

After many trips to Hong Kong for thirty years in the mid and late 20th century, Jan Morris confirms that Hong Kong has been deeply Westernized in terms of architecture (31-33), hobby (37-41), language (56), table manner (56), title (57), English naming (57), and so forth. By assimilating themselves more to the British culture while retaining some Chinese customs, the Chinese immigrants gradually cultivate a hybrid cultural identity.

Accompanied with the economic colonization and cultural implantation, the Hong Kong consciousness, Hong Kongness in short, emerged when the 1967 Leftist riots happened. As the Cultural Revolution began in 1966, the leftists in Hong Kong went on demonstrations that later were worsened into riots. People in Hong Kong faced the dilemma of either supporting the British government (as a Hong Konger) or the Chinese leftists (as a Chinese). Most of them chose the former due to the threat of communism and reprimanded the pro-China protestants (Young 140). Compared with the Chinese in China, people in Hong Kong enjoyed life security and economic stability which whitewashed the negative impacts of colonization. According to Tai Lok Lui (呂大樂), colonialism was not a problem after the mid-1970s; what Hong Kongers were concerned about instead was whether or not the British government could be efficient in bringing economic growth and political stability (35-36). Being a Hong Konger literally denotes a double identity—being British in terms of economic and capitalist ideologies and structures, and being Chinese in terms of ethnicity. Metaphorically, Hong Kongers are taking a Sisyphean journey that never ends—an eternal state of in-betweenness. The following two examples illustrate this in-betweenness struggle and the impact of the British rule on gender relations in terms of space.

IV. Case Study: Kowloon Walled City and Ladies Market

Kowloon Walled City (hereafter the Walled City), demolished in 1993 and re-constructed into a park in 1995, was a self-governed Chinese exclave beyond the governance of the British rule. As Hong Kong Island became a British colony in 1842, the Qing government in China mobilized its army and cannons to the Walled City for defense. Once the Convention between the United Kingdom and China Respecting an Extension of Hong Kong Territory was signed in 1898, the whole Hong Kong was at the mercy of the British colonization, except the Walled City.²⁵ It then functioned as the military and administrative base of the Qing government.²⁶ Within the Walled City, the Qing officers and army constituted their own community and exercised their sovereign power. About the dynamics between space and power, Michel Foucault makes a succinct conclusive remark in an interview entitled “Space, Power and Knowledge”: “Space is fundamental in any form of communal life; space is fundamental in any exercise of power” (168). The British government, however, was unwilling to relinquish the sovereignty of the entire Hong Kong, consequently invading the Walled City in 1899 and expelling all the Qing officers, which left it in a vacuum state until the end of the Second World War.²⁷ The influx of refugees from the Mainland China after the inauguration of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 poured into the Walled City and made it the world’s most densely populated area with

²⁵ Under the terms of the convention, the New Territories, that is north of Boundary Street and south of Shenzhen River, and all the outer islands were leased to Britain for 99 years with no rental involved, and were colonized in Britain’s hands.

²⁶ The Qing government insisted to maintain the sovereignty of the Walled City on the grounds of the establishment of a foothold so as to enable Chinese army troops, merchants, and ships to enter the city justifiably, exerting military and economical influences on and gaining considerable benefits from Hong Kong (Sin et al. 12).

²⁷ During the Second World War, the Japanese troops occupied Hong Kong from December 1941 to August 1945, which is commonly known as Three Years and Eight Months. They destroyed the ramparts of the Walled City due to the expansion of Kai Tak Airport; thus, the Walled City was literally devoid of walls after WWII.

a population density of over 1 million per square kilometer.²⁸ Owing to the overpopulation and the lack of management,²⁹ the Walled City was transformed into a lawless, chaotic and unwholesome slum area, a hotbed of crime, prostitution, gambling, and drug. The following description of the Walled City by a travel writer Jan Morris could help us to imagine the Walled City at that time:

One after another, glass-fronted to the street, they are the surgeries of unqualified dentists. Their windows are full of pickled abscesses, illustrations of impacted wisdom teeth, grinning rows of dentures. . . . A maze of dark dank alleys pierces the mass from one side to the other. Virtually no daylight reaches them. Looped electric cables festoon their low ceilings, dripping alarmingly with moisture. It is like a bunker. Sometimes you seem to be all alone, every door locked around you (293, 295).

Guaranteed in the 1898 convention, the Walled City, though left empty and unmanaged before the Second World War, remained a Chinese territory and attracted Chinese refugees to sojourn for the sake of security regardless of the poor and repulsive milieu.³⁰

The preservation of the Chinese sovereignty over the Walled City thus engenders the complexity of Hong Kongers' construction of national identity. As shown above, Chinese refugees flushed into the Walled City, in hope of securing their safety in a Chinese exclave. Except the illegal immigrants from China, those who

²⁸ Manipulated by Britain, the Hong Kong government sent police to march into the Walled City to expel Chinese refugees and demolish numerous buildings, aiming to gain control over it. This event afterwards engendered a huge protest in Guangzhou, China. After several times of negotiation, all suppressions finally came to an end.

²⁹ The Walled City later became a no-man's-land (三不管地帶), meaning that it is a place that the Hong Kong government dared not manage, the British government did not want to manage, and the Chinese government could not manage (香港政府不敢管，英國政府不想管，中國政府不能管).

³⁰ The British government was so aggressive that it plotted to occupy the Walled City after its vacancy; in response, the Chinese government decried its action and strived to re-claim the sovereignty of the Walled City but ended in failure.

legally crossed the border and entered Hong Kong, known as the first generation, strived for a Hong Kong identity card. After the 1967 Leftist riots, most people in Hong Kong posed themselves as Hong Kongers. Living in the close-knit community in the Walled City, the Chinese refugees would consider themselves Chinese; however, they would have to shift their identity to a Hong Konger and assimilate into the society once they step out of the Walled City in order to assimilate into the society. The complexity of the construction of national identity demonstrates the fluidity and instability of identity in Hong Kong, a modern city that is fraught of various significations and connotations.

Different from the Walled City as a space free from colonial influence, Ladies' Market epitomizes what Abbas terms "colonial space." In "Building on Disappearance: Hong Kong Architecture and Colonial Space," Abbas specifically investigates Hong Kong architecture from the perspective of colonial history. "Colonial space," Abbas writes, "can be thought of as the projection of a colonial imaginary that maps out a symbolic order in whose grids the real appears and disappears for a colonial subject" (148). In other words, it is a space molded according to the colonial imaginary, and what is displayed/hidden is conditioned by the colonial subject. Abbas further manifests that cultural preservation in terms of architecture in Hong Kong is a strategic device "to exclude the dirt and pain [of colonialism]" and to erase local history for the sake of consolidating and stabilizing British governance and manipulation (149). Ladies' Market, located at Tung Choi Street between Argyle Street and Dundas Street, reveals Britain's intention to transform Hong Kong into a metropolis by means of capitalization and commodification. Tung Choi Street, literally meaning Water Spinach Street, used to be a farmland. Once the British rule embarked on capitalization, the farming terrain

was eliminated and replaced by commercial-residential buildings for being leased to street vending business. The appellation of Tung Choi Street remains the same; however, at least in local Hong Kongers' mind, it has already become a disordered alley for cheap clothes, accessories, appliances and daily necessities; the street's agricultural history is almost gone. Britain the colonizer did preserve the street name (local history), but at the same time has converted it into a capitalized market for capital accumulation (colonial imaginary).³¹ This maneuver, on the one hand, soothed the enmity of the colonized populace by incorporating foreign intrusive British administration (the commercialization of the street) with local inherent Chinese culture (keeping the original name); on the other hand, this kind of preservation echoed what Anthony D. King terms "the preservation syndrome":

[I]n the colonial context, this has a double irony. Not only does planning effort go into inculcating the colonized culture with similar values but the criteria of the colonial power are used to define and "preserve" "buildings of architectural and historic importance," while remnants of the indigenous culture are left to disappear. (56)

Britain values "the colonized culture" by preserving the original name but at the same time endeavors to erase the local history by developing it into a new scenic spot for commercial activity. Localness is obviously displayed, but with no contents of local history. Such phenomenon is congruous with Abbas's notion of "colonial space" and "space of disappearance."

Ladies' Market is also a domain of commodified space. Situated along the coastline and in a non-seismic zone accompanied with non-frozen deep harbor, Hong

³¹ Tung Choi Street is divided into two parts: Ladies Market and Goldfish Market. The latter traditionally was an area devoted to selling goldfish, but was later flushed in by pet shops selling different kinds of animals, from cats and dogs to beetles and reptiles. Agriculture has been fully wiped out and replaced by commercial activities.

Kong was at first spotted by Britain to have a high potentiality of developing into an entrepôt for global capital accumulation; commodity production continues non-stop during and after British colonization. As a result, “a fetishism of material wealth” featured by “a rampant and rapacious desire for material advancement” roots and sprouts in Hong Kongers’ ideology (Lau 69). This fetishism of commodity applies not only to products but also to space. For instance, the section of Ladies’ Market is demarcated as a pedestrian zone for consumerist activity for 8 hours per day on weekdays and 12 hours per day during weekends. It is regulated into different booths (in the middle of the road) or stores (along the road) that are leased to entrepreneurs who are eager to make profits. Space is, in short, commodified for capital accumulation under “total surveillance and control”, for the benefits of both the entrepreneurs and the government (Cuthbert 146). This was one of the ways for the British government to gain control over and monitor Hong Kong’s space, and how it inculcated the capitalistic ideology into Hong Kongers before 1997.³² Commodity fetishism and consumerism disperse into every corner. Suffice it to say that Hong Kongers’ are not so much infatuated with spiritual enlightenment as with material fulfillment, fervently desiring for money in all forms, be it portable cash or immovable property.

Apart from the colonization and commodification of space, the renaming of Tung Choi Street as Ladies’ Market emanates a smell of genderization. Once Tung Choi Street was developed into an alley for shopping, vendors targeted at female customers and mainly retailed women’s clothing and accessories; this explains why it was named as Ladies Market, a female place. This instance justifies how most people

³² As Hong Kong is tremendously capitalized and commodified, social open space is combined with commodified space which is under surveillance. Due to the coming of 1997, Britain plotted to offer benefits for private developers to purchase property if they were willing to provide open space; that is to say, more developers would own the space as private for the avoidance of socialization and Chinesization when the day of handover approached. See Cuthbert for further discussion.

consider shopping as a female activity. In *Why We Buy: The Science of Shopping*, Paco Underhill has remarked on how shopping is feminized: “Shopping is female. When men shop, they are engaging in what is inherently a female activity” (113; italic original). This somatic marker, what scientist Antonio Damasio calls, is inscribed and then internalized in people’s mind like “a kind of bookmark, or shortcut, in our brains” (Lindstrom 131). A man, if circumscribed by such circumstances, would be double feminized when he was engaged in shopping at Ladies Market.

Britain, diffusing Eurocentric ideology and constructing Western-based rigid structures, is sculpturing Hong Kong into, as Eileen Chang delineates, “a city of both grandeur and sorrow.” As a foreign sovereign and unaware of the Hong Kong local culture, Britain crowns herself a civilized country to rule Hong Kong and its people. She clings to the capitalist system and governs Hong Kong in recourse to this framework. Before 1997, the beauty of Hong Kong, according to Morris’s aesthetic sense, was derived from its capitalist system (33). This is so convincing that Hong Kong used to be, and still is, illustrious for its titles, such as Asia’s World City (亞洲國際都會), The Shopping Paradise (購物天堂), and City of Life (動感之都). Hong Kongers consciously welcomed the manipulation of the Eurocentric ideology and to fall into the economic and cultural structures constructed by Britain; in other words, Hong Kong is thus transformed into an ivory tower. What the people yearned for was to embrace the British culture by abandoning part, or all in the case of neutralization of becoming a British, of their Chineseness. Such abandonment leads to the sorrow that Hong Kongers were constantly conflicting with their national identity—moving in-between as they could never be fully accepted by Britain and were no longer a full Chinese—in the Sisyphean journey of whether identifying themselves as a Hong Konger or a Chinese that ultimately leads to the loss of self. The British rule not only

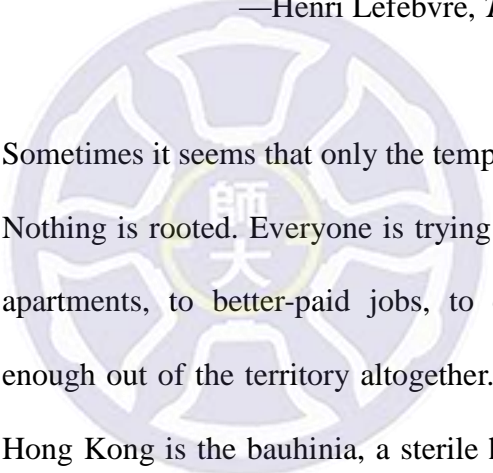
stirs up the conflict of national identity but also intensifies the gender relations in terms of space. The following two chapters will probe into these issues by analyzing Elsie Sze's *Hui Gui: A Chinese Story*.



Chapter Three: The Crystal Palace

Codes will be seen as part of a practical relationship, as part of an interaction between “subjects” and their space and surroundings. I shall attempt to trace the coming-into-being and disappearance of codings/decodings. My aim will be to highlight *contents*—i.e. the social (spatial) practices inherent to the forms under consideration.

—Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*



Sometimes it seems that only the temporary is permanent here. Nothing is rooted. Everyone is trying to move on—to bigger apartments, to better-paid jobs, to classier districts, often enough out of the territory altogether. The national flower of Hong Kong is the bauhinia, a sterile hybrid that produces no seed.

—Jan Morris, *Hong Kong*

I. The Crystal Palace: A Palace of Modernity and Capitalism

The Crystal Palace in London, featuring the cast-iron and sheet-glass architectural structure with the application of modern technology, is not only “an emblem for the final ambitions of modernity” (Sloterdijk 176), but also a symbol of capitalism. It was initially erected in Hyde Park to accommodate the first world’s

fair exhibition, known as the Great Exhibition, launched by Prince Albert in 1851. Over 15,000 exhibitors from the globe gathered and showcased the objects of technology introduced after the Industrial Revolution, half of which was from Britain and another half from worldwide contributors, including British colonies. This palace not only demonstrates the technological achievement around the world but also presents Britain as the host of many countries under her possession. The exhibition was successful as it lured millions of visitors and gained a tremendous sum of profits. On the one hand, it is a symbol of the dawn of modern technology and a blueprint upon which an array of edifices are modeled, such as the Garden Palace in Sydney and the Glass House of Lalbagh Botanical Garden in Bangalore. On the other hand, it is, as Audrey Jaffe argues, an epitome of capitalism (and its accompanying effect, consumerism) when displays and spectators are regarded each as consumer goods and potential customers (par. 5). Though the exhibits are not for sale, spectators experience window shopping of those everyday goods and necessities such as clothing and furniture, which are in favor of the taste of the bourgeoisie, are on the list of display. Furthermore, the palace is commercialized as it required an admission fee which would be used for maintenance and further establishment.³³ In *The Arcades Project*, Walter Benjamin considers the palace as a wonderland where “the world we knew from old fairy tales—of the princess in the glass coffin, of queens and elves dwelling in crystal houses—had come to life” (184). But what is secreted underneath the shiny glass of wonderland, including the hard labor of the proletariat in the production process and the incongruity between the proletariat and the glamorous palace, is “a less pleasant, sometimes bleak working world” (Sloterdijk 174).

³³ Incipiently installed in the Crystal Palace, public toilets required a penny for usage, which also suggests the commercialization of the palace.

The Crystal Palace can be analogous to or, more specifically, *is* Hong Kong. Developed into the Asia's World City with the help of advanced technology, Hong Kong has been famous for its successful, vigorous finance and commerce, economic prosperity, targeting at the bourgeois investors from the whole world, including Britain, with some of which used to be, or still are, under the British rule, such as Singapore, Bermuda, and British Virgin Islands. As Hong Kong is a highly capitalized and commercialized city, high-risers lining alongside the Victoria Harbor are a convenient image to bespeak its modernity and development. To speed up modernity and present itself as a land of opportunities, Hong Kong continually replaces old constructions with high-risers. For many Chinese immigrants, Hong Kong is a dreamland that evokes imagination and aspiration. However, once they reach Hong Kong, they will discover the bleakness beneath the sparkling appearance.

Temporariness and national confliction are two of the predominant drawbacks of the capitalized Hong Kong under the British rule. Overseas speculators, despite the willingness to invest in Hong Kong, do not spend much time lingering on this land, not to mention considering Hong Kong a place to root in. Likewise, the temporariness of residency can be applied to Hong Kong people in general. A Chinese author Xu Xu (徐訐) remarks, "People live in Hong Kong merely on a temporary basis, and the mobility is thus high; nobody treats it as a permanent place of abode . . ." (「住在香港的人，大家都是暫住性質，流動性很大，沒有人當他是永久居留地……」) (qtd. in 王宏志 22 n. 24; my translation). One of the contributing reasons for this impermanency is the numbness of senses: dwelling in such a capitalizing environment, the natives and the Chinese immigrants since 1842 were petrified by the "intrusion" of advanced technology at the outset but are numbed when time goes by; similarly, native-born Hong Kongers

are insensitive of the fast-changing surroundings. “The blasé attitude,” Georg Simmel explicates in “Metropolis and Mental Life,” “results first from the rapidly changing and closely compressed contrasting stimulations of the nerves.” (413-14). Even if Hong Kong people do recognize Hong Kong as a permanent place of abode, it is hard for them to cultivate a sense of belonging and to root in this land of temporariness. Without a sense of belonging, people can hardly nurture a culture of its own;³⁴ without unique culture, citizens are uncertain of their national identity. Because of the overwhelming capitalist atmosphere and the education following the British system, Hong Kongers after the 1967 Leftist riots did not have confidence in the upcoming rule of communist China, which led to The Hong Kong Mass Migration Wave. In this chapter, the interrelationship between space and national identity is put under scrutiny by incorporating Henri Lefebvre’s spatial theory with textual analysis of Elsie Sze’s *Hui Gui: A Chinese Story*.

II. Lefebvrian Analysis of Everydayness and Space

As a Marxist philosopher, Lefebvre is concerned about triviality and puts everydayness of the disadvantaged working class under the microscope. Capitalism and the accompanying effect of consumerism have invaded every worker’s everyday life, including working/leisure time and public/private sphere. They work for the sake of consumption; the more money they spend on purchase, the more work they have to do to earn back that sum of money. Workers are held in the palm of the bourgeois’ hand in terms of every aspect of their everyday life, which Lefebvre terms as “organized passivity” (“Everyday,” 10). To shift the role of

³⁴ This elucidates why Hong Kong is commonly regarded as the cultural desert, mostly by Hong Kong people. Their insensitivity and lack of a sense of belonging obstruct them from identifying with Hong Kong culture which seems void of uniqueness because it is the mixture of British and Chinese cultures, and from cultivating its own culture.

workers from passivity to activity, Lefebvre urges them to grasp the understanding of everyday life. In *Critique of Everyday Life Volume 1: Introduction*, Lefebvre underlines the importance of *presentness*: once a person “can begin the conquest of his own life, rediscovering or creating *greatness in everyday life*—and when he can begin knowing it and speaking it, then and only then will we be in a new era” (129). Instead of turning a blind eye to triviality and considering everydayness of the proletariat not epical, every worker ought to consciously discern the *greatness in everyday life*, an effective way to rebel against the “organized passivity.” In *Henri Lefebvre: A Critical Introduction*, Andy Merrifield addresses the underlying reason of Lefebvre’s urge: everyday life is precious due to its fragile nature that workers should live life to the fullest and be fully sensual in the hope of “commandeering our own very finite destiny” rather than being commandeered (2). In other words, the proletariat is not predestined to be overpowered by the bourgeoisie but is capable of handling its destiny through observing the greatness in everyday life.

But how are the observation of everydayness and the rebellion against the domination of capitalism likely to happen? Lefebvre would answer: through space. The thesis statement of *The Production of Space* is: “(Social) space is a (social) product” (26).³⁵ Space “is not some vacuum waiting to be filled by people” (Rogers 25), but something that is produced by humans. Every society thus “produces a space, its own space” as social space, involves and incorporates social actions of humans (Lefebvre *Production* 31, 33). Producing social space as a means of control, domination, and power “in the form of buildings, monuments, and works of art” (26, 33), humans are conversely produced as such that “all ‘subjects’

³⁵ Lefebvre draws a distinction between natural space and social space, which the former is specifically indicated, whereas the latter is simply superseded by the word space. The book title, therefore, suggests the production of social space. Likewise, this chapter will use space and social space interchangeably.

are situated in a space in which they must either recognize themselves or lose themselves, a space which they may both enjoy and modify” (35). Humans produce and are produced, acting as subjects and objects; that is to say, social space, by reference to Alice Gavin, potentializes social actions and is produced by them (47). Taking the active role of production, social space generates the (dis)order by encompassing the interrelationships with the things produced “in their coexistence and simultaneity” (73), and “infiltrates, even invades, the concept of production, becoming part—perhaps the essential parts—of its content” (85). Social space, therefore, contains “the *social relations of reproduction*”—the private family sphere—and “the *relations of production*”—the public working sphere in a hierarchical form (32).

Space is produced through the body as the agent. The use of the body, such as the use of members, sensory organs and gestures, is the prerequisite of the perceived and the lived space (40). The body constitutes and produces the space “in which messages, codes, the coded and the decoded . . . will subsequently emerge” (200). The interactions and relations, Lefebvre asserts, among bodies are indispensable for constituting the space (184). Conversely, space instructs body to the extent that it prescribes and forbids gestures (143). To sum up, the body “*is* space and *has* its space: it produces itself in space and it also produces that space” (170). In *Elements of Rhythmanalysis: An Introduction to the Understanding of Rhythms*, Lefebvre further expounds on the inherent rhythms of the body: “The body consists of a bundle of rhythms, different but in tune” (20). Instead of changing life, a person “would accomplish a tiny part of the *revolutionary* transformation of this world [the space]” by rehabilitating the sensible in consciousness and in thought through the rhythmanalysis of the inside and the outside of the body (26).

Lefebvre postulates a conceptual triad for the discussion of space. The triad refers to *spatial practice*, *representations of space*, and *representational space*. The first one is also called the perceived space that embodies the linkage “between daily reality (daily routine) and urban reality (the routes and networks . . .)” (*Production* 38). It subsumes the spatial competence and performance of every human that can be assessed empirically (38); it is “directly sensible or perceivable—open to measurement and description” (Rogers 29). The second space, known as the conceived space, is the conceptualized space that takes the form of plans, maps, or designs created by “scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers,” cast as the producers of space (*Production* 38, 43). This is the dominant space in which ideologies of the aforementioned ruling classes, including the institutions, disseminate (116); seized by ideologies, the conceived space functions repressively (Busquet 4). And hence, space is socially and politically produced (Elden 107). *Representational place* is the lived space of inhabitants and users, and of artists, writers and philosophers who describe rather than experience (*Production* 39, 43). On the one hand, this is the dominated and passively experienced space to which the ruled classes belong; on the other hand, this is “an active place—the lived space of struggle, liberation, and emancipation” (Rogers 38). The lived space as a site of struggle, as Marx Purcell argues for Lefebvre, can be thoroughly transformed into a political community that is free from the state and capitalism, if possible—a form of radical democratization (311). Heba M. Sharobeem draws a conclusive remark of the triad: they “refer to the physical space as we perceive or see it, to the mental space as we think of it, and to the actually lived social space . . .” (21). By decoding the codes imposed on space, we are able to construe “the transition from representational spaces to representations of space, showing up correspondences, analogies and a certain unity in spatial practice and in

the theory of space” (*Production* 163). In short, we can understand the perceived and the conceived space through the interpretation of the lived space.

III. Tak Sing’s Struggle with National Identity

Born and raised in a well-to-do landed gentry in pre-communist China, Tak Sing, the male protagonist in *Hui Gui*, acquires his Chinese national identity through his life in the rural village in Guangdong province, China. Tenant farmers living in this village practice agriculture in the paddy fields and are obligated to offer their cash crops to their landlords as a form of tribute: “In times of plenty, my father received as many as five thousand *dan* of rice a year from his tenants, plus other cash crops. But in lean years, he expected them to pay only whatever they could, no more and no less” (Sze 18). The village is *conceived* as a space in service for agricultural purpose and is “uncontaminated” by capitalism because it remains clean and void of industries or factories. The village as a *conceived* space disseminates the ideology of Chinese feudalism; that is to say, the economy is still structured by the reciprocal relationships of landlords and tenant farmers, and the possession of land can bring in both the service of the laborers and the accumulation of capital. The *lived* space of the villagers is dominated by such a feudal ideology. Growing up in a rural village in China, Tak Sing constructs his Chinese identity via the feudal system of governance.

Besides the physical environment, the Chinese culture and tradition manifested in his father’s land further buttress the Chinese identity of Tak Sing. The environment has instilled a strong sense of bonding and belongingness in Tak Sing as he receives the influence of religious belief, superstition, and the Chinese classics from his family. Tak Sing, born as the son of a landlord, confesses that he has been confined to his father’s land without transgression till the age of eight:

“My days until the age of eight were divided between my lessons and roaming the grounds of the big house and beyond, in the fields my father owned” (18). As his area of activity is restricted in a *conceived* patriarchal space that is repressive, Tak Sing acquires knowledge, such as religious belief and superstition, from his family. For instance, his mother always carries Buddhist beads in hand and visits the temple “on the first and the fifteenth day of every moon” to pray for blessings to the whole family (10); his mother’s feet are once-bound called “the three-inch golden lilies” since, as his grandmother has said, respectable family would only marry women with small feet (9). Apart from these religious and folklore beliefs, Tak Sing is forced to receive formal education from a hired tutor, Fu Tze, who teaches him *The Book of Three Characters* (三字經), *The Four Books*, and *The Five Classics* (四書五經) (18). Living in such a patriarchal space, Tak Sing shows homage and familial piety especially to his father: whenever his father urges him to do something, even to leave home for Hong Kong, he conforms. Despite his life being dominated, Tak Sing develops an inseparable connection with his family and a sense of morality from learning the Chinese classics. Even after Tak Sing migrates to Hong Kong, he still cares about his father, writes him letters and never abandons his sense of morality cultivated at his hometown. The education received, whether formally or not, strengthens Tak Sing’s sense of belonging to his family and China.

The rural atmosphere in the neighborhood evokes Tak Sing’s pleasure in senses and connects him closely with China. Right after the Second Sino-Japanese War breaks out in 1937, Tak Sing’s family flees to Tai Shek, a fictitious place, to sojourn; what he remembers from the flight are paddy fields, fish ponds, and farmhouses (28). When they stop to rest at night, the rural surroundings arouse the sensuous pleasure of Tak Sing and Ah Chu, his playmate and servant, which

manifests their attachment to the land: “Ah Chu and I thought it was wonderful, sleeping under a thousand stars, a night fragrance brushing through our nostrils, the cool air filling the pores of our skin, and the sound of crickets forming rhythmic music on our ears” (31). Both Tak Sing and Ah Chu are indulged in nature through the use of their senses—seeing, touching, smelling, and hearing. The interior of their bodies *harmoniously* interact with the exterior surroundings. Another occasion of interacting with the natural space takes place on the day of Tak Sing’s departure from Ka Hing to Hong Kong:

I was *unusually* aware of the limpid country air on my skin, a cool, luring caress touching my senses. I took deep breaths. Funny, *the air never smelled so sweet* as on the morning of my departure, that country smell of newly-turned sod moistened with dew drops in the night, before it hardened and cracked under the scorching sun. (90; emphasis added)

The sweetness of the air in the countryside has alerted Tak Sing in three aspects, as he was hardly aware of the natural scene of his dwelling village. Firstly, it confirms a harmonious relationship between the inside of his body and the outside nature. Secondly, it implies Tak Sing’s waving farewell to his hometown (Ka Hing), a place that has fostered him for more than two decades. Thirdly, it foreshadows that Tak Sing would enter a totally different world, the highly capitalized Hong Kong.

Even though Tak Sing is fond of the rurality in China, he later on considers Hong Kong his second home due to his childhood experiences which provide a concrete explanation why he embraces the capitalist ideology in a subtle way. Coming from a society that still carries the feature of feudalism, Tak Sing has been conscious of the class demarcation and of the possession of wealth in his father’s land. In fact, Tak Sing’s family has owned “five thousand *mou* [acres] of land . . .

for over a century” (17-18). His father has toiled on this land and built a big house adorned with luxuries such as rosewood furniture, whitewash walls, and the Qing Dynasty crystal chandelier (58). Lefebvre considers that if any construction of a natural space happens, the space is “modified in order to serve the needs and possibilities of a group,” which is called the appropriated space (*Production* 165). The land is *appropriated* by his father to accumulate capital, including the cash crops and the human laborers. His father leases his land to tenant farmers, and purchases *mui tsai* (female servants) from poor families to help with the housework. His father rationalizes his buying *mui tsai* by saying that it is a feasible way to help the poor. What Tak Sing thinks about this is: “Indeed, owning *mui tsai* seemed to be the correct thing to do” (Sze 8). Although later on he realizes that this sort of transaction *seems to be* morally flawed (8), he as a child, living in this *conceived* patriarchal space, is taught by his father that owning *mui tsai* as a form of capital is acceptable and profitable. At this point, Tak Sing is aware of the class demarcation—his father the upper class, the tenant farmers and the *mui tsai* the lower class; the former is affluent while the latter owns nothing in hand. When he grows older, he becomes uncertain about the legitimacy of his father’s purchase of human laborers but he is certainly aware of class differentiation and the importance of capital accumulation.

Tak Sing is eager to rid off class demarcation among people, which can be understood by his experience in the sedan chair. Wherever Tak Sing’s family goes, they travel by sedan chair rather than on foot. The sedan chair is a *conceived* space designed to diffuse the ideology of power and class differentiation, showing how Tak Sing’s family entertains their class superiority and discriminates the powerless lower class. While riding in the sedan chair with his mother to visit the temple, Tak Sing feels confined by this dominant space. Tak Sing endeavors to break out of the

confinement by attempting to leave the sedan chair but in vain: “How I wished I could jump out and join Ah Chu on the ground, but I knew my place was inside the sedan chair (Sze 15-16). Lefebvre points out that “the ultimate foundation of social space is *prohibition*” (*Production* 35). In this case, the sedan chair becomes a space that denies the admission of Ah Chu, a little boy from the lower working class and Tak Sing’s best friend, mainly because Tak Sing’s mother, whose presence symbolizes authority, does not let Tak Sing share the sedan chair with Ah Chu. But once his mother, an adult from the upper class, is not nearby, Tak Sing succeeds in eliminating the class differentiation between himself and Ah Chu by inviting Ah Chu to ride with him: “We soon felt a lot better [after urinating in the bushes] and laughed the rest of the way home, squeezed into seat of my sedan chair” (Sze 17). The absence of his mother endows Tak Sing with the power of transgression to subvert the ideology of the *conceived* sedan chair. In other words, the sedan chair is transformed by Tak Sing into a site of overcoming class discrimination; here he is able to temporarily free himself from the control of the ideology of class demarcation.

When Tak Sing’s family moves from their glamorous house to a humble wooden shelter during the war, there is still class differentiation in the family, which finally makes Tak Sing accept unfairness in reality. The dominating power extends beyond the land possessed by Tak Sing’s father: when they flee to Tai Shek for shelter, the wooden house where they are sojourning inherits the dominating ideology from the previous big compound where masters and servants do not share the same meal and carry out daily routine in segregated domains (37). Here, Tak Sing mostly conforms to the existing culture rather than fighting against it: “Since there was only one room on the ground floor of our house near Tai Shek, Ming Suk, Ming Sum [Ah Chu’s mother] and Ah Chu ate after us at the same table. *I had*

come to accept such unfairness as a way of life” (37; emphasis added). His active effort of subversion ends in failure and becomes a passive acceptance of unfairness in life, anticipating the forthcoming covert embrace of capitalism in Hong Kong where class stratification is evident.

Being aware of the class demarcation and the capital inherited from his ancestors, Tak Sing registers his distaste for and dread of the communism due to its persecution of landlords and its deprivation of freedom before and after the inauguration of the People’s Republic of China in 1949. Once the Second Sino-Japanese War comes to a truce in 1945, Tak Sing’s family returns to the ruined house in Ka Hing. When Tak Sing’s father uses “ill winds” to describe communism, what he criticizes is not the devastation of his house but the destruction caused by the Communist troops who “are abolishing land tenancy, confiscating the landlords’ land and redistributing it to the peasants” (58). Influenced by his father, Tak Sing as a teenager already finds communism disturbing when he overhears that landlords have been badly thrashed or killed (58). In 1949, when Tak Sing is studying at Zhongshan University in Guangzhou, big red banners are all over the main entrances and buildings, “inscribed with the characters *Long Live the People’s Republic of China!*” (68). The university students are in a state of euphoria, hoping that the new government “would rectify social evils and improve the condition of the peasants and workers” (69). Therefore, the whole university becomes a *conceived* space penetrated with the communist ideology that dominates the *perceived* and the *lived* space. Even though a university is perceived to be a place for education, it has now been transformed into a site of political promulgation where students participate in political activities to glorify communism (68). Likewise, Nan Hoy Square, a fictitious square in Guangzhou, becomes a place for “the ritual of a public execution” rather than a place for public assembly (69). Tak

Sing is stunned by the brutality of the executors and the senselessness of the communist supporters: “The execution is as disturbing now as it was when I witnessed it with a throng of onlookers at best curious and at worst bloodthirsty” (70). Instead of going back to Guangzhou, Tak Sing, persuaded by his father, is eager to leave communist China for Hong Kong, a dreamland of freedom and opportunities.

Approaching the border of China and getting ready to cross over, Tak Sing registers curiosity and later gratefulness towards the British-ruled Hong Kong. At Lo Wu, a border station between China and Hong Kong, Tak Sing confesses that this is the first time he comes across with the Union Jack, seeing “the British flag flying above the guard station marking the entrance to Hong Kong” (93). The border, a space of transition, marks a watershed in Tak Sing’s life: geographically, it is a farewell to communist rural China and a new beginning in the capitalist and modernized Hong Kong; and culturally he is leaving the Chinese past behind and looking forward to the future in Hong Kong, as he thus reminisces about the moment of crossing years later, “I would look back at the moment of my first crossing into Hong Kong and feel how lucky I was that the border was open when I stepped over” (93). This statement indicates how lucky he is to be able to spend the rest of his life in Hong Kong. The border plays a double role. For Chinese refugees who come after him, the border signifies a space of prohibition because it interdicts the uncontrollable influx of them; but for Tak Sing, the border is, as Lefebvre views, “the space of ‘yes,’ of the affirmation of life” (*Production* 201).

As soon as Tak Sing steps on the soil of Hong Kong, a sense of enchantment mixed with awe seizes him as he has never been in an urban city. In *The Right to the City*, Lefebvre remarks that an urban city undergoes a double process of industrialization and urbanization, and is constituted by the urban fabric which

buttresses urbanites' "way of life" in urban society (70, 72). He further defines the urban fabric in his subsequent book *The Urban Revolution* as both "the built world of cities" and "all manifestations of the dominance of the city over the country" (4). In short, the urban area swallows up the rural land use. Given that Tak Sing is overwhelmed with the urban fabric of modern technology—cars, tall buildings, gas street lamps—after reaching the city center, Kowloon, he feels thrilled and awed beyond words (Sze 94). Furthermore, displays in store windows fascinate him, such as "a big dried sail-shaped fin of a shark," "a huge coiled snake preserved in a glass jar," ivory-made miniature elephants, and "a yard-long tusk." (95). The experience of Tak Sing is similar to that of the tourists in the Crystal Palace to the extent that the displays, which are inaccessible to the workers, are made for the middle-to-upper class. Tak Sing, degraded from a rich landlord's son in China to a jobless poor man in Hong Kong, can merely afford window-shopping. From his viewpoint, those exotic merchandises, which he has never come across in China, carries "signs of happiness, of satisfaction, of power, of wealth, of science, of technology, etc." (Lefebvre, *Right* 95). The capitalistic luxury in Hong Kong strikes Tak Sing and arouses his awareness of the importance of capital.

Not only the space but also the gestures of Hong Kong people strike him. The city, Lefebvre writes, "*writes and assigns*, that is, it signifies, orders, stipulates . . . This [city] text has passed through ideologies, as it also 'reflects' them" (*Right* 102). As Lefebvre claims, the reflection of ideologies occurs not only in the city but also in human gestures: "Gestural systems embody ideology and bind it to practice" (*Production* 215). The capitalistic ideology in Hong Kong modifies and regulates human gestures. In order to sell one of the three gold bars given by his father to support himself, Tak Sing steps into a jewelry store, "displaying a glittering array of gold rings, bracelets and chains in its showcases"

(Sze 95). It is a *conceived* space diffusing the capitalist ideology and a *perceived* space that welcomes the rich to make transaction. At first, the shopkeeper dressed “in a brown Chinese jacket of silky brocade and matching pants” disdainfully looks at Tak Sing, who is in his *samfu* outfit (two-piece Chinese traditional outfit consisting of jacket and pants), “with the haughtiness of a minister of an ancient emperor’s court” (96). But at the moment when Tak Sing presents the gold bar, his attitude drastically changes: “As soon as he saw the yellow bar, his countenance changed from disdain to disbelief. He took the bar with both hands almost *reverently*. He *beckoned* to me to sit down at one of the inner counters away from the entrance to the store and the inquisitive eyes of passersby” (96; emphasis added). The jewelry store is therefore transformed from a space of prohibition to Tak Sing to a space of affirmation for him only when Tak Sing is identified as a capital possessor, and thereby is uplifted in social status. Hence, money and commodities, Lefebvre confirms, “bring with them not only a ‘culture’ but also a space”—a culture of consumerism and an abstract space (*Production* 265). In light of Lefebvre’s explanation, abstract space functions as a set of things/signs that erases distinctions and “endeavors to mould the spaces it dominates (i.e. peripheral spaces),” dominating spaces in Hong Kong (*Production* 49).

The abstract space produced by capitalism modifies Tak Sing’s thoughts and deeds. In Hong Kong, the abstract space erases spatial distinctions by erecting commercial and financial buildings (things) on which signs of power, wealth and ideologies are imposed. It thus corresponds to the *conceived* space inasmuch as it dominates or even crushes the *lived* and the *perceived* space. The images demonstrated by the abstract space have the power of brainwashing as we human beings “buy on the basis of images” (Lefebvre *Production* 76). Tak Sing is besieged by the abstract space that regulates his perception and gesture in the *lived*

space. When Tak Sing first arrives in Hong Kong, he works as a hawker that someone has introduced him to do as a means to earn a living. As Tak Sing stands at the waterfront waiting for the market to open, the smell of urbanity seizes him: “I could smell whiffs of salt sea air mixed with rotting garbage in the water lapping against the cemented shoreline. In these moments, I would have *an unspeakable sense of satisfaction . . .*” (Sze 114; emphasis added). This sense of satisfaction is unspeakable on the grounds that his *lived* space is unconsciously dominated by the abstract space of signs and images. Even though the smell of urbanity combines sea water (comfort) with rotting garbage (disgust), it arouses positive sentiments on Tak Sing as it means a hope for him to upgrade himself (gaining power) and make a better living (gaining wealth). Later on, he aspires to join the police force to serve the British-ruled Hong Kong government, “something meaningful for [himself] and for the city” (121); namely, something that is respectable and promising, with better money (124). While working for the government, he is eager to learn English, the colonizer’s language, so as to get promoted and to uplift his social status. With improvement in his economical situation, he also moves out of the squatter area where he initially stays in a rented room in North Point, a decent place with a flush toilet, tap water and shared cooking facilities that “only the upper echelon, the ‘men above men,’ could enjoy” (138). But this tiny room does not satisfy him; he soon moves again to one of the most expensive residential areas at Caine Road and Castle Steps after his marriage. His frequent relocation means a continual process of accumulating capital and privatizing property.

The confliction of national identity that Tak Sing experiences is subtle due to the similarity between pre-communist China and capitalist Hong Kong. In the aforementioned analysis, Tak Sing in his young age is already conscious of the class stratification and his possession of capital. Unlike Ah Chu who ultimately

joins the Communist troops to strive for a classless society and public ownership of capital (60-61), Tak Sing accepts the unequal distribution of power and wealth, and embraces the capitalist system in Hong Kong. Tak Sing is influenced by the capitalist ideology since his childhood. For him, capitalism means the capital accumulation and the private possession of property. In Hong Kong, Tak Sing admits, “Life was often unpredictable and unfair” (118), because there is always class differentiation. Tak Sing’s conforming to the capitalist system gradually leads to a subtle conflict of Tak Sing’s national identity. When Tak Sing is serving in the British-ruled Hong Kong government as a police officer, he wears British style uniform and speaks English. Tak Sing prefers the British governance of Hong Kong to the communist China. His acceptance of the capitalist ideology and his appreciation of the British rule therefore initiate his sense of belonging to Hong Kong, stimulate his sense of Hong Kongness, and make him feel home: “I’ve lived here for twenty-six years, and lately I feel a sense of belonging to Hong Kong that was never there before. I feel I’ve become a part of Hong Kong. I can now honestly call it my second home” (198). This claim already embodies Tak Sing’s wandering in between Britain and China because the term Hong Kong already suggests the combination of the British and Chinese politics and culture.

IV. Serena’s Struggle with National Identity

At her young and adolescent age, Serena, Tak Sing’s daughter, registers discomfort and fear of communist China when she is at home awaiting Tak Sing. During the Hong Kong 1967 Leftist riots instigated by the Cultural Revolution in China, she learns about the danger of being a policeman (Sze 169-70). The house she is living intensifies Serena’s horror of the communist rioters and worry about her father when she is informed of the horrific news happening on the street: “My

heart was pounding till it hurt” (170). One day after Tak Sing returns home from his duty, Serena hugs him and says, “The smell of his sweat at that moment was the sweetest smell on earth as I nudged my face into his back” (171). The sweat symbolizes the hardship of Tak Sing, a civil servant of the Hong Kong government, fighting against and winning over communist China. Serena understands that only British rule can guarantee peace and stability, while communism is always associated with brutality and trepidation in the society. When she grows older, she realizes that the Cultural Revolution is a horrifying nightmare that “the country being turned into a cultural wasteland as literary and artistic works were destroyed, and those accused of hiding such were punished” (169). Mao Zedong endeavors to brainwash every Chinese through his little red book of commandments and thoughts and to promulgate them “at the cost of destruction of lives and legacies,” and by “media reports disguised as news” (169, 171). According to Lefebvre’s proposition, the everyday life of the Chinese people, which is called the mediated everyday, “is **simultaneously** the prey of the media, used, misunderstood, simultaneously fashioned and ignored by these *means* that make the *apparatuses*” (*Elements* 50). Their everyday lives are at the mercy of the Mao’s government that emphasizes the promotion of Maoism through media but at the same time secretes the atrocities caused to China: Serena discovers that “people in Hong Kong had no real knowledge then of how people were living or dying in China during the Cultural Revolution” (171).

But Tak Sing’s talk-story establishes an incipient linkage between Serena and China when they are overlooking the border. At the age of fifteen, Serena is brought by Tak Sing to take a look at Lok Ma Chau, another border station between China and Hong Kong, from a hill with a panoramic view. Tak Sing recollects his memory of seeing the influx of refugees incurred by the Great Leap Forward in

early 60s and shares his story as a border policeman with Serena (153).³⁶ Tak Sing describes the Chinese refugees as “a stream of skeletons in rags,” devouring the food provided for them. For them, this border represents not only a space of legal prohibition that tolerates no leniency and negotiation, but also a space of hope that promises a better living if “they might get lucky” to cross the border (154). Tak Sing shares another story of letting a young man go on one occasion, who looks similar to himself as a boy from China (155); this decision is legally unacceptable but morally right to him. As he connects himself with the young boy who is suffering from hardship in China, it brings him into tears. Tak Sing’s story is moving to Serena. Standing near the border and listening to her father’s story, Serena shows sympathy to the Chinese although she still loathes communist China.

So when she is celebrating her sixteenth birthday, Serena is impatient and enraged at the uninvited visitor, Ming, Ah Chu’s son, to her party in her house. Situated at a high-class residential area with elegance and affluence, the house is, Serena perceives, a space dedicated to stylish bourgeoisie. When Ming arrives, he knocks on the door instead of using the doorbell. Serena’s friend Josie, who is from similar background with Serena, scornfully responds that the person should have rung the bell (182). Because the doorbell epitomizes modern technology with which the Chinese intruder is unfamiliar, Josie’s reaction reveals her discrimination against someone who lacks the knowledge of using modern devices. Ming, the party crasher from China, dressed with “a *samfu* that was too short for him, and tattered rubber shoes,” arrives at the wrong timing, so he leaves a bad impression on Serena at the first place (183). In addition to annoyance, she feels embarrassed

³⁶ The Great Leap Forward was an industrial campaign undertaken by Mao Zedong in late 50s to early 60s. This campaign mainly aims to catch up with or even surpass the steel production of the U.S. and Britain, eventuating in the overworking and the fatigue of peasants who are forced to relinquish farming. Thus, the country suffers from a widespread of famine and death that stimulates people to flush in Hong Kong for a better living.

in front of her friends as Ming's father is an acquaintance of her father. She is even angered at her parents' excitement: "I was exasperated that my parents could be so excited about the unexpected arrival of the stranger, who had crashed my birthday party and spoiled the whole evening" (183). This scenario could be analogous to Hong Kong people's complex sentiments towards the impending *hui gui*, the handing over of sovereignty of Hong Kong to China. On the one hand, Serena's family members, including Tak Sing, Lily's maid Ah Lan (both are Chinese immigrants) and Serena's mother Lily (a local born Hong Konger), are welcoming a new family member Chinese Ming from China (representing China) to come to their house (representing Hong Kong). On the other hand, for Serena, Ming's arrival is a deed of intrusion that discomforts her. But after listening to the conversation between Ming and Tak Sing, Serena realizes that Ming means a lot to his father, because this meeting is "the reclaiming of friendship gone awry [and] a reconnection to a buried past" (185).

Serena's attitude towards Ming changes after he pays a visit to her school. From Serena's perspective, a school is a place for education and accommodates only educated people. Standing among nicely dressed and well-behaved students, Ming, who is unkempt in appearance and unusual in expression, looks weird: "the thick crop of hair closely cut above his ears, with bangs covering part of his forehead, above his closely-knit eyebrows and high cheekbones, and the expression of amazement, and the unnecessary obliging look" (190). Because other students are verbally bullying Ming, he is sitting at the corner of the cafeteria like an outcast to have his meal alone. The school is a miniature of Hong Kong society where Hong Kongers refuse to welcome China. Yet, Serena's attitude towards Ming suddenly changes when seeing two girls poke fun at him: "Suddenly, I was not ashamed of Tak Ming anymore. I was mad at the way the girls were behaving,

disgusted at their meanness shown to someone as innocent as Tak Ming” (191). Sze does not provide an account for her change of attitude, but it is perhaps the result of her father’s talk-story at the border station and interaction with Ming at home that rouse her sympathy and connection to the Chinese: Ming, like Tak Sing, is a victim of communist China.

But Serena’s link to China is shaken by her rejection of Ming at the Lee Theater. Once Ming settles down in Hong Kong, he invites Serena to go for a Cantonese opera of the *Dream of the Red Chamber*. Serena admits that she never enjoys the Cantonese opera as the music “jar[s] to [her] ears” (215); Serena is not fond of Chinese culture as it gives her unpleasant experience. But later she finds it enjoyable because of its props and stage. Serena’s mindset is consistent with the architecture of the Lee Theater: with a dominant Western exterior and a hidden Chinese interior. Ming implicitly confesses his love to Serena after the performance, but what is in Serena’s mind is that their relationship is nothing “more than friendship and sisterly affection” (216). Within this space mixed with explicit Western and hidden Chinese elements, Serena convinces herself that she cannot love Ming: “I did not love Ming in the manner he would like me to. . . . I was not in love” (217). Her reservation suggests her feeble connection with the Chinese culture. A few years later, when Serena is informed that Ming is going to marry a Hong Kong girl named Kitty Chan, she feels upset with Ming’s marriage and is seized by a strange emptiness (220). Serena first rejects Ming’s love, but then the overwhelming sense of strange emptiness makes her realize that she has affection for him. The conflicting relationship between Serena and Ming reflects the same situation between her and China in the sense that she has loathed communist China since her childhood, but she sympathizes with the Chinese refugees running away from this land of authoritarian dictatorship and paradoxically connects herself with

it after listening to her father's talk-story of his past.

The conflicting relationship with China is intensified after Serena gets to know Richard, a British journalist, when she goes to the Victoria Park to attend a vigil to show condolences for victims of the June Fourth Incident.³⁷ At the front gate of the park, there is a “dark bronze statue of the stern-faced British Empress who gave the park its name” (232). The park as a monumental space, according to Lefebvre, “embodies and imposes a clearly intelligible message. . . . [M]onumental buildings mask the will to power and the arbitrariness of power beneath signs and surfaces which claim to express collective will and collective thought” (*Production* 143). The stern-faced British Empress symbolizes authority and law that govern every individual in Hong Kong. This monumental space represents the collective will of Hong Kong people on surface—the exaltation of the British governance—and could transcend death as “it seems eternal, because it seems to have escaped time” (*Production* 221). This monumental space is repressive in nature, Hong Kong people nevertheless hold a vigil here because they support freedom and democracy; they, including Serena, gather around to express their collective discontent to communism. When Serena first notices Richard, she deems that he is a “foreigner in solidarity with us” (Sze 233). She, as a Hong Konger, is on the same boat with him, a foreigner, fighting against communist China. While they are chatting, Richard leaves a good impression on Serena at the moment that she discovers his job as a reporter who divulges people's negative sentiments towards China. After they depart from the park, the image of Richard hovers in Serena's mind: “Richard Mills crept unobtrusively into my mind, the wavy brown hair, the keen dark eyes, and thin lips forming a tight smile” (235). The free flow of his

³⁷ This incident was a student-led public demonstration at Tiananmen Square, Beijing in 1989. Students appealed for political reformation and democracy, but were suppressed and killed by the Chinese central government.

image implies the establishment of the relationship between Serena and Richard. This first meeting at Victoria Park brings Serena and Richard close to each other, and, at the same time, draws Serena closer to Britain.

Serena's family moves to a new apartment after her mother's death. For welcoming Richard's visit, the new house is replete with mixed cultures, such as Ah Lan's preparation of sweet and sour pork/stir-fried beef steak, and the existence of both Chinese immigrants (Tak Sing and Ah Lan) and a Westerner (Richard). Richard pleases Serena when he sees the photo of her mother: "Richard stood in front of the photo and bowed, following the custom to show respects to the dead" (250). While having dinner, Richard impresses Tak Sing by complimenting Hong Kong people: "Well, they [Hong Kong people] are resourceful, hard-working, efficient in whatever they do, from the peddler to the bank manager. Hong Kong people can weather any trouble and come out on top. The place is beautiful, but it's the people that fascinate me most" (251). Ah Lan is also pleased when she is informed by Serena that Richard loves her cooking. Richard's speech seems to resonate with Margaret Thatcher's, when she compliments on the prosperity of Hong Kong during her term as Britain's Prime Minister; she says, "The Chinese People of Hong Kong are some of the most enterprising in the world. Their vigor has worked wonders within the fabric of a free economy . . ." (qtd. in Wong n.16). They both speak highly of Hong Kong people so as to please Hong Kong people and maintain good relationship with Hong Kong. This new house is a space where Serena leans forward to the British side while distancing herself from the Chinese side. Serena's new house therefore becomes a space of acknowledging her relationship with Richard and her affinity with British culture.

Serena's embrace of Britain is confirmed when she and Richard go to Lantau Island for a weekend vacation after Tak Sing's death. They stay in a villa, whose

window has a view of the giant Buddha, located at the foot of the Po Lin Hill. Lefebvre points out that nature “enters into exchange value and commodities, to be bought and sold” (*Right* 158). The construction of the villa exemplifies Lefebvre’s claim that nature is commodified for commercial purpose. Lefebvre holds a pessimistic view of the existence of nature and believes that it will soon be lost in sight in the capitalist society. But what Serena cares about is not nature but the intimacy with Richard. By making love with him in the villa, it symbolically represents her embrace of Britain and the capitalist system. For Serena, making love “in the shadow of the great Buddha” is bestowed with perpetual blessing (Sze 277). The scenario is paradoxical inasmuch as Serena builds connection with Richard (Britain) through the blessing from a Chinese deity. Buddha, representing the Chinese culture, will bless and remind Serena of her Chinese identity even if she clings to Britain.

Serena experiences a more explicit struggle of national identity than Tak Sing. Serena is brought up with a strong affinity to capitalism and a fierce distaste for communism. But after reading Tak Sing’s biography and listening to his talk-story, she is gradually aware of her identity as a Chinese. The reason why Tak Sing documents his life-story is: “I want you [Serena] to know about my past, because it is also your past—my roots are your roots” (148). His biography concerns not only the past, but also the present and the future: “I want you to know and remember the past, that you may understand the present, and build the future” (7). Whenever she reads his biography, Serena deems that every single word written by her father is injected with life and conveys meaning (6). Knowing much more about the Chinese story of her father, Serena reveals her feelings when the date of *hui gui*, returning sovereignty of Hong Kong from Britain to China, is imminent: “Perhaps I am being drawn into the exhilaration, apprehension, uncertainties, and *conflicting emotions*

building up here in Hong Kong, pride in its reunification with China and fear of the Communist regime . . .” (3; emphasis added). These conflicting emotions are derived from the Hong Konger’s sense of in-betweenness of Britain and China: on the one hand, Tak Sing’s Chinese story links Serena with China; on the other hand, she has a propensity to capitalism as her fear of communism lingers. On the date of *hui gui*, exulted by Tak Sing’s life-story, what she feels is “an inexplicable sense of pride” (287). The reunification of Hong Kong with China is spiritually the reunification of Tak Sing with China. Holding his biography in hand as a reminder, Serena is proud of her identity as a Chinese; but the conflict does not disappear; soon afterwards Serena makes a decision to migrate to Britain with Richard, indicating her trust in capitalism and distrust in communism.



Chapter Four: The Madwoman in the Attic

“Fearful and ghastly to me—oh, sir, I never saw a face like it! It was a discoloured face—it was a savage face. I wish I could forget the roll of the red eyes and the fearful blacked inflation of the lineaments.”

What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing; and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face.

—Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*

Man must be pleased; but him to please
Is woman's pleasure; down the gulf
Of his condoled necessities
She casts her best, she flings herself.

—Coventry Patmore, *The Angel in the House*

I. The Madwoman in the Attic/Public/Body

From the ancient time to the 21st century, women have been associated with domesticity. Despite the recent new image of men as caregivers and homemakers (househusbands), women are more often than not stereotyped to be domesticated. In

Gender and Space: Femininity, Sexualization and the Female Body, Seemanthini Niranjana confirms this point: “In any attempt to relate space with gender, what would be immediately apparent is the centrality of women to the formation and continuation of the domestic space” (108). In Britain, the association of women with domesticity was rampantly promulgated in the Victorian Age, especially after the publication of Coventry Patmore’s *The Angel in the House* (1854). Patmore’s poem served as an index of womanhood and propagated the ideals of wifedom and motherhood: an innocent, pure, and selfless woman who devotes herself as a submissive wife to her husband and as a caring mother to her children. Being submissive means being subordinate to her husband; being subordinate necessitates her acquiescence, passiveness, and simple-mindedness. A woman is thus sanctified into an angelic figure who possesses all these features. In other words, a woman, as Niranjana writes, “not only confront[ed] a set of normative injunctions and ideals [regulated by men], she [was] also constrained to shape herself in relation to them” (70). Besides being viewed as a moralistic propaganda, this poem is noteworthy as it points out the confinement of women to a house which shelters them from peril and contamination of the outside world. Compared to Britain, China has a much longer history of promoting women’s attachment and submissiveness to men and ideal womanhood through “Three Obediences and Four Virtues” (三從四德) in Confucianism.³⁸ In this case, the house is genderized in a paradoxical relationship as it defines men, who work outdoors, as the power holders and breadwinners, whereas women, who are the homemakers, as the powerless subordinates. Women, in both Britain and China, were traditionally expected to work indoors and to minimize

³⁸ Three obediences refer to how a woman is obligated to obey her father as a daughter (未嫁從父), her husband as a wife (既嫁從夫), and her sons as a widow (夫死從子). Four virtues are morality (婦德), proper speech (婦言), modest appearance (婦容), and diligent work (婦功) (Taylor and Choy 496).

unnecessary outdoor activities unless accompanied by their husbands so as to keep the households in order. In short, *the angel* ought to stay *in the house*.

Therefore, in Britain and China, women who were rebellious and outgoing were relegated to an inferior position by the social norms. Women who did not fit in the category of angels could be labeled as devilish monsters or immoral madwomen. In *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar point out that the dichotomous images of angel/sanctified women and monster/madwomen have appeared so often in literature written by men and, surprisingly, by women (17).³⁹ One of the most well-known examples of a madwoman would be Bertha Mason in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. According to Gilbert's and Gubar's analysis, the angelic figures in *Jane Eyre*, such as Miss Temple and Helen Burns, hide the monstrous side within their bodies that are rebellious and outrageous under the angelic exterior. In contrast, Bertha is portrayed as a voiceless animal-like madwoman with no hint of angelic quality; she, Gilbert and Gubar argue, is "Jane's truest and darkest double" whose appearances or manifestations are "associated with an experience (or repression) of anger on Jane's part" (360). Claire Rosenfeld concurs the juxtaposition of these two characters, "the one [Jane] representing the *socially acceptable* or conventional personality, the other [Bertha] externalizing the free, uninhabited, often criminal self" (314; emphasis added). Although Rosenfeld's characterization of Jane as a conventional woman is somewhat flawed in the sense that Jane actually has rebellious and shrewd personality, her analysis provides a good point: Jane disguises herself as an angel and presents herself in *a socially acceptable way* in order to rid off the labeling as "a madwoman." Being the master of the mansion Thornfield and

³⁹ Gilbert and Gubar have cited examples of Jane Austen, George Eliot, and Emily Dickinson, and so forth, to illustrate such binary opposition of images that exists in literature written by both men and women writers.

representing the social norms, Edward Fairfax Rochester has the power to allege Bertha's madness: "Bertha Mason is mad; and she came of a mad family;—idiots and maniacs through three generations!" (355). Women, be they angels or monsters, are expected to stay in a designated space—either the angel in the house, or the *madwoman in the attic*.

Grace Poole, the gatekeeper of Bertha's room, can be viewed as another example of a madwoman. We readers, like Rochester, are part of the social norms and equipped with the interpretative power to diagnose a person with madness during the process of reading as if we were playing the role of a doctor. Sharing some similar characteristics of Bertha, Grace can be seen as a madwoman who impresses her readers with her ghastliness: she laughs and murmurs with a loud voice that evokes a sense of creepiness and creates a gothic atmosphere: "When thus alone I not unfrequently [sic] heard Grace Poole's laugh: the same peal, the same low, slow ha! ha! [from Bertha] which, when first heard, had thrilled me: I heard, too, her eccentric murmurs: stranger than her laugh" (130). In addition to her eccentric articulation, she confines herself "in some low-ceiled, oaken chamber of the third story [of Thornfield] . . . as companionless as a prisoner in *his [Rochester's] dungeon*" (197; emphasis added). Like Bertha, she is trapped and companionless. Comparing Bertha and Grace, we find the former is a madwoman in the attic; the latter, the madwoman in the public. But what is different between them is that Grace presents herself in a *socially acceptable manner* when facing Rochester and the public. All female characters, Jane, Bertha and Grace in particular, live in Rochester-made Thornfield, implying their confinement to this mansion and their subordination to the patriarch. As Gilbert and Gubar interprets, Thornfield "is the house of Jane's life, its floors and walls the architecture of her experience" (347), and she "is to be crowned with thorns" as the mansion's name suggests (347). But what should be added in their

analysis is that not only Jane's, both Bertha's and Grace's lives are also defined and confined by this mansion which crowns them with thorns.

The type of madness in *Jane Eyre* chiefly pertains to pathological state, but there is a broader meaning of madness that helps with my reading of *Hui Gui* in terms of space and gender. In *Jane Eyre*, Bertha (the madwoman in the attic), Grace (the madwoman in the public), and Jane (the madwoman in the body) share a strand of common characteristics: they are mentally unstable (interchangeable silence and outrage), companionless and mysterious; they are confined to an alienated space and produce incomprehensible articulation. These women in Thornfield are treated as madwomen because they are reluctant to conform to the angelic figure sculptured by the social norms, namely the patriarchs in this case. In *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980*, Elaine Showalter defines madness as “deviance from socially accepted behavior” (29). The social norms play the role of judging whether a person is mad or not, and marginalizing and silencing anyone diagnosed with madness. The female characters in *Hui Gui*, except Lily, are not portrayed in the same way as in *Jane Eyre*, but still they can be, as I argue, regarded as madwomen in a broader sense. According to *Oxford Dictionaries*, madness not only means being mentally ill but also refers to having extremely foolish behavior or ideas, or being in a frenzied mental or physical state. This extended definition of madness helps to read the female characters in *Hui Gui*, including Lily (Tak Sing's wife), Mimi (Tak Sing's first encounter and friend) and Ah Lan (Lily's servant), as madwomen. In *Gender, Work, and Space*, Susan Hanson and Geraldine Pratt describe the reciprocal relationship between gender and space: “gendered identities . . . are fully embedded in . . . place and that different gender identities are shaped through

different places” (18).⁴⁰ This chapter examines the relations of gender and identities with a view of “space” in the novel, because the space “itself represents a space of female narrative activity and mobility which eventually is contained and enclosed in reassuring, conventional, patriarchal structures” (Gaylin 305).

II. Lily: A 20th-Century Wife and Mother

When Lily first meets Tak Sing in the classroom, she appears as an angelic figure that overpowers him. In Tak Sing’s impression, Lily is “more than beautiful than the images of the goddess *Kuan Yin*” and immediately enchants him (129). He is so mesmerized that he does not notice Lily’s addressing until she is looking at him “the way a teacher would look at a student, with inquiring eyes” (129). They play different roles in the classroom, which manifests the power relation between them: nicely dressed goddess-like Lily as a teacher overpowers humbly dressed ordinary Tak Sing as a student. The classroom, as a *conceived* space for education, besieges Tak Sing with inferiority complex by recalling his family background: “. . . I, a refugee from Guangdong, who had spent most of my life in the country, whose feet, as the crude saying went, had been steeped in cow’s manure” (130). But the class difference is not an obstacle precluding him from loving her. Instead, he looks back at her with his “penetrating gaze” which obfuscates her (130). His gaze has challenged the power relation premised on their classes, successfully making her dodge his eye contact (131). In order to retrieve her power, one day, Lily greets Tak Sing in a superior manner so as to turn down his love for her (131). On the one hand, the angelic figure of Lily asserts her being a sanctified and idealized lover difficult to approach. But on the other hand, it anticipates her tragic role in the domestic space, a life in bondage, after marrying Tak Sing.

⁴⁰ See Chapter 1 for the difference and correlation between place and space.

One night on the way to select a dining place with Tak Sing after class, Lily chooses roadside food stalls where the patrons are very different from her. She registers fascination with the roadside food stalls which are mostly “patronized by coolies and manual laborers” (132). Tak Sing immediately notices that she has never dined in such a place due to her social background. Lily is decently dressed with a “pink sweater set and fitted grey skirt” and eats elegantly (132); a patron in *samfu* (traditional Chinese outfit) sitting next to them, on the contrary, is “sitting with one bare foot on the bench . . . and loudly slurping soup from a bowl” (132). The huge contrast highlights that she looks “so foreign” among the patrons because, to Tak Sing, she is a sanctified goddess who should not mingle with the ordinary people (132).

Their interaction at the food stalls fortifies the sanctification of Lily and also connotes the hidden “madness” in her body. Thinking of dining with his idealized woman, Tak Sing is exhilarated on the grounds that he perceives himself “*monopolizing* an hour of her life, *commanding* her undivided attention while it lasted” (131-32; emphasis added). His perception of monopolization and commandment suggests his desire to surmount Lily and to view her as a potential angel in the house in the near future. During the dinner, Lily poses herself with a low profile; she confesses: “there’s a lot in life you can teach me, for you have experienced so much, while I have lived a sheltered life, like a frog looking up from the bottom of a well” (134). The sheltered life she has been living suggests that she is cultivated as an angelic figure by her family—a devoted daughter with filial piety to her parents. Therefore, she chooses to eat in roadside food stalls because this space could free her from the bondage of her family and releases the hidden, enthusiastic self who cares no formality, a feature that is conventionally labeled as “mad” and supposed to be cured or rectified. Lily enjoys sampan congee and stinky tofu, food that are never on the list of her family cuisine. This suggests Lily’s yearning for the

emancipation from her angelic appearance and the freeing of the hidden madwoman.

Lily introduces her name to Tak Sing after the dinner, which indirectly informs him about the angelic and mad aspects of herself, but unfortunately he only takes notice of the former. Her English name, Lily, symbolizes purity and flawlessness, and corresponds to her angelic image. Yet, her Chinese name, Poon Kit Lin (潘潔蓮), implies a totally different image: it can be an allusion to a Chinese historical female figure Poon Kam Lin (潘金蓮).⁴¹ Poon Kam Lin was a stunningly beautiful and remarkably intelligent noblewoman in Ming Dynasty but is stigmatized and demonized in *Water Margin* and *The Plum in the Golden Vase* written by two male authors.⁴² Since the day of the publication of these two works, Poon Kam Lin has become the archetype of a licentious and malevolent woman in Chinese culture. Poon Kam Lin has two contrasting images: one is an angel who is submissive and domesticated, and the other one is a madwoman who is passionate and kills her husband to fulfill her sexual desire. Both Poon Kam Lin and Lily share a Chinese character *lin* in their names, literally meaning lotus flower. Lily's name alludes to a Chinese classical poem "In Praise of the Lin Flower": "*From a distance, it gives out a sweet fragrance. Elegantly it stands alone, to be admired from afar, not touched up close*" (135). These two lines indicate the importance of distance while admiring the lotus. Its elegance and its solitude convey a sanctified sense of the lotus, and the forbiddance of touching it implies the alienation of the lotus from ordinary people whose hands would contaminate its purity. This interpretation is from the spectator's viewpoint, not from the lotus's, similar to how Tak Sing looks at Lily, without the consideration of her feelings. He recites the poem: "*I alone love the lin flower*

⁴¹ Poon Kit Lin and Poon Kam Lin are the Cantonese romanization. In Mandarin, the *pinyin* for the former is Pan Jie Lian and for the latter is Pan Jin Lian, which sound much more alike.

⁴² For a historical account of Poon, see Lo, Wen-Hsing in Works Cited. Both authors portray Poon as a shrewd, cunning, malevolent, and lascivious woman who commits adultery and plots to kill her lawful husband.

because it arises from the soil and yet is pure and untainted” (135). Lily is sanctified as an angel whose beauty and purity draw his attention, making him “hopelessly, irrevocably in love” after meeting her (135). But if we focus on the feelings of Lily, what can be argued is that she, just like the lotus, stands alone and is not willing to be touched, as she insists on preserving her passion, the hidden “mad” self, and remaining untainted.

So when their romance begins, Lily is torn between the mutually contradictory selves in her personality. Like the ballerina in the film *The Red Shoes*,⁴³ Lily is torn between her love to Tak Sing and her loyalty to her parents: “She was touched by a poor man’s love. And torn between two loyalties, like the ballerina in *The Red Shoes*” (287). Serena believes the forces tearing Lily apart are the two loyalties; but in addition to this inter-relational interpretation, the intra-forces between being a conforming angel and being a passionate madwoman are noticeable in Lily’s life. While watching the film at the theater, Tak Sing embraces tearful Lily who leans on him for comfort (137). This manner not only suggests that Lily surrenders herself to Tak Sing who is eager to play the role of a protective knight, but also foreshadows Lily’s suppression of the madwoman in her so as to play the role of the angel in the house. After marriage, Lily, the lotus flower, no longer stands alone but is touched by Tak Sing, a person from a lower class, gradually letting go her individuality and eventually taking her own life. Serena concludes her mother’s life by alluding to the symbolic connotation of the color in *Red Shoes*: “Red, the color of blood, the color of sacrifice and martyrdom, the color of love” (287).

The concept of the angel in the house is intensified when Lily brings Serena with her and pays a visit to Tak Sing’s father in China. Once she arrives at Tak Sing’s

⁴³ The film revolves around a ballerina named Vicky who is torn between her affection for Julian, her lover, and her career as a dancer. Failing to handle this dilemma, she commits suicide at the very ending.

house, she kowtows to her father-in-law and to the photo of Tak Sing's deceased mother, and offers two cups of tea, one to the former in person and another to the latter placed on the table, "as a sign of respect" in Chinese custom and ritual (158). During their stay, Lily and Serena pay respect to the tomb of Tak Sing's mother; the tombstone is crafted with an inscription by Tak Sing:

Greatness needs not come from heroic deeds

That rouse the heavens and rock the earth;

It can manifest itself in the silent love

Of a virtuous wife and a good mother. (159)

Lily is committed to keeping these words in mind (160), suggesting that she is going to be a devoted wife and mother, i.e., a competent angel in the house. In addition to the obligation of wifeness and motherhood that chains Lily in the house, a married woman in the traditional Chinese context is expected to have familial piety towards the parents of two families, the daughterhood. After marrying Tak Sing, Lily is able to pay respect to his parents but not to her own parents who have strongly objected to Lily's marriage and denied her; she becomes an unfilial daughter. Failing to fulfill the role of a daughter, Lily is more burdened with the responsibility of being "a virtuous wife and a good mother." The house of Tak Sing's father and the tombstone with Tak Sing's inscription, as a *conceived* space, are loaded with the Chinese traditional ideology that regulates Lily's manners and dominates her thoughts. More importantly, this ideology is the construct by men who infuse "the masculinist world view" (Hartsock 295). All the roles Lily has to play imposed by the Chinese tradition worsen her mental health and eventually incite her to take her own life after this trip to China.

The house where Lily is living is rendered a space of confinement and instability. In *Space, Place and Gender*, Doreen Massey refutes the notion of home as an imagined space providing "stability, oneness and security" (167). In Lily's case,

her home gives her no sense of security and stability but forces her to be the angel in the house, reminding her of the failure of daughterhood and the double burden of wifehood and motherhood. Being separated from her own parents and confined in her husband's house, Lily overdoses herself after her request of attending her mother's funeral is refused by her father (Sze 201). The cutting of the natural tie between her and her parents connotes that she is forced to become an unfilial daughter, and she is thus traumatized. Accompanied with this traumatic event, her life in bondage is perhaps another reason for her overdose. It is suggested that the madwoman part in Lily's body attempts to break free of the confinement and to exterminate the angel but in vain: As Serena depicts, "At times, Mummy would be herself, the loving and caring wife and mother. But as the years went by, the *normal* times were to become more infrequent, as she fought a gradual losing battle with the dark thoughts that rattled her mind, took away her rest, and stripped her defenseless against her own despair" (180; emphasis added). Serena has already internalized the masculinist notion of the angel in the house and, therefore, regards it normal and the madwoman within Lily's body as devilish and dark who drags away her energy and optimism. In other words, Serena's normalizing process substantiates that the masculinist ideology of womanhood diffuses in this house. For Lily, it turns into a confined and unstable space, full of anxiety and struggle.

The house marks the tragic ending of Lily—her suicidal death. What Lily needs, from Serena's perspective, is an ordinary life: "In short, she should neither be too happy nor too sad" (205). This conclusion suggests that Lily should be an emotionless and submissive person and remain faithful to the conventional role of being a wife and a mother. The house becomes a site that engenders Lily's black-and-white lifestyle and her motivation for committing suicide (205). In Serena's opinion, Lily is haunted by the "*senseless demon*" which deprives her joy and exhausts her spirit

(206); but for Lily, this senseless demon is in fact full of passion and energy and should be set free. This is the reason why she has a second overdose even though she seems to have been back to the “ordinary” life. Unlike married women in the Victorian Age who merely played the role as wife and mother, Lily takes up the job of a secondary school teacher and becomes a career woman. Although she is torn between her family life and career, the teaching job keeps Lily active in life. In “Imaginary Cities: Images of Postmodernity,” Paul Patton finds out that in urban city alternates “between the sense of endless possibility and the sense of loss, between exhilaration and despair” (119). This applies to Lily’s life experience as she takes up many roles—a teacher, a wife and a mother, which not only opens up many possibilities of her life but also makes her lost and confused, causing her overdose and suicide. Moreover, her life is always between passion and dullness, activeness and passiveness, colorfulness and monotony. But after resigning her job, she is determined to commit suicide, implying how she has forsaken the passionate and active madwoman in favor of the full-time angel confined in the house. This decision beckons her to the path of self-destruction.

III. Ah Lan: The Forgotten Other

Ah Lan, the faithful servant in Lily’s house, has played a crucial motherly role for both Lily and Serena and is thus confined to the house. As a Chinese immigrant just like Tak Sing, Ah Lan leaves Guangzhou for Hong Kong to find a servant job in a rich family for survival and the support of her own family: “*With free meals and lodging, I would be able to send most of my monthly wages home t:o [sic] help my folks*” (23). She takes care of baby Lily as a substitute mother who shoulders most of the maternal responsibilities and spends almost the whole day with Lily: “*From the time she was a month old, I took care of her. I bathed her, changed her, washed her*

clothes and diapers, rocked her to sleep. I got up in the night to give her a bottle” (23-24). For Ah Lan, she loves Lily “as her own daughter” (142); as for Lily, she is her *amah* (grandmother) who “is as dear to [her] as [her] mother” (134). So after Lily decides to marry Tak Sing and leaves her own parents, Ah Lan moves out with Lily and goes to work for them because Lily is all she cares for and she will serve Lily “till the end of her working days” (147). After Serena is born, Ah Lan, once again, plays the role of the substitute mother for Serena. The double maternal role played by Ah Lan illustrates how devoted she is to Lily and Serena, and how she is confined to the house. In other words, Ah Lan is domesticated and bonded to the house for her entire life.

Although Ah Lan is hired as a paid servant, the nature of her work has similarity with that of a *mui tsai* (female servant) which is long outdated in Hong Kong. Ah Lan follows Lily wherever she goes because Ah Lan cares about her the most. She is responsible not only for caring the baby but also for tending to the housework, such as cooking and cleaning. In addition, she makes it a routine to go to the market to purchase food for the family (166). She devotes herself unconditionally to “active service” and registers “her uncompromising loyalty” to them for her entire life (3). All these deeds can be analogous to that of a *mui tsai*: following her mistress to serve her needs, doing all the housework according to a routine, and showing permanent loyalty to the family which pays her for her service. Therefore, Ah Lan embodies the old mechanism of the employer-employee relationship, an out-of-date relation that does not fit in the present capitalistic system which is based on mutual agreement and contract basis between the employer and the employee.

Ah Lan serves Lily, Serena and Tak Sing as someone from the low social class, which epitomizes the “old-fashioned” Chinese tradition. Differentiating herself as a servant from the masters, Ah Lan refuses to dine with them until 1996, a year she has

worked for them for over fifty years (268). Her manners not only reveal her low position in the house but also, according to Serena's delineation, illustrate how she belongs to the group of outmoded and extinct elderly: ". . . [S]he belonged to that now-*defunct* school of *amahs* [sic] who kept the least desirable parts of the meat for themselves and ate leftovers from meal" (3; emphasis added). Her refusal of dining with her masters exemplifies that she still conforms to the long abolished master-slave relationship, and her eating of leftovers from meal suggests that she places herself in a defunct position which deserves no privileges.

Ah Lan's concepts confirm her traditional value judgment. Living in a westernized city, most Hong Kongers prefer seeing a doctor when they get sick, whereas Ah Lan "would walk a good mile and back to the herbalist down the hill for medicine" as she believes more in Chinese herbs than in Western medicine (3). Besides, she urges Serena to wed Richard because of her traditional Chinese way of thinking: she believes a mature woman in a marriageable age should get married as soon as possible and give birth to a grandchild as a respect to her parents: "Don't mind Ah Lan telling you, but you are not young, and your Papa probably wants to hold a grandchild soon" (256). And she feels uncomfortable with young couples living together without getting married (256). When having dinner together with Richard, an Englishman, the whole family conducts conversations using "various forms of English . . . except Ah Lan who would make comments in Cantonese" (266). All of these reconfirm that Ah Lan belongs to the old generation who are inculcated with Chinese traditional ideology.

In the end of the story, Ah Lan is left alone in a nursing home for the rest of her life due to her role of an "old-fashioned" servant who can be regarded as the madwoman in the attic. As soon as Serena makes the decision of migrating to Britain with Richard, she decides to send Ah Lan to a nursing home. Serena understands that

Ah Lan is not able to assimilate into the westernized Hong Kong, not to mention Britain. From a capitalistic viewpoint, Ah Lan's affinity to the long abolished master-slave relationship is rendered extremely foolish, or even mad. She is left behind because she belongs to the defunct and obsolete old generation. Like Bertha who is a Creole and considered the other in *Jane Eyre*, Ah Lan becomes the Other in Hong Kong and is destined to be confined in the house as she has no way to go. In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard proffers the function of a house which "constitutes a body of images that give mankind proofs or illusions of stability" (17). On the one hand, Ah Lan is willing to continue to live in the house as it is her comfort zone that offers security and stability; on the other hand, she chains up herself to the house and does not intend to leave "till the end of her working days" (147), which can be argued as a madwoman in the attic, being left alone and ignored like Bertha.

IV. Mimi: A Victimized Object

Mimi first appears as a dance hall girl, a prostitute indeed, at a dance hall where she meets and flirts with Tak Sing. Mimi puts on heavy makeup, with "a white powdered face, and large dark eyes" when working in the dance hall (106-07). Compared to Tak Sing who is young and inexperienced with women when he meets Mimi, Mimi is experienced in communicating and flirting with men. Besides, she uses her body as an instrument to overpower and even paralyze Tak Sing by touching and hugging him: "I [Tak Sing] felt her breath, and smelled her perfume, too strong, too intoxicating. . . . I felt like one forced to smoke opium and afterward unable to refuse it. She was so close her body touched me in places that sent electric shocks through me as we moved on the dance floor ever so slowly" (108). Tak Sing is addicted to and paralyzed by Mimi's flirtatious manner at that particular moment as if smoking the addictive and tempting opium. She at last kisses him on the lips, throwing him "into a

state of unspeakable pleasure and utter abandonment” (109). What Tak Sing abandons is his morality as he, a young decent man, comes across with a prostitute who can bring to him sexual pleasure. Being able to affect Tak Sing’s emotions, from “euphoria” into “shame and distress” (109), Mimi has sexually overpowered him.

Unfortunately, the dance hall is a gendered space where Mimi falls prey to sexualization and objectification. For Mimi, Hong Kong is “a great place to live, to enjoy life, to make lots money” (107). She, as a Chinese immigrant like Tak Sing, frenziedly aspires to accumulate wealth in this free land. Due to her low education level, she realizes that “it isn’t easy for a woman who cannot read and write to make a good living in Hong Kong” unless through human relations (117). Using her body as a means to establish connections, Mimi devotes herself to her job as a dance girl and prostitute: “Tak Sing, what I did with my clients was all part of my job. . . . But it certainly helped to know people with connections” (124). The dance hall where Mimi works at is designed as a *conceived* space that disseminates the patriarchal ideology of objectifying and sexualizing female body used in exchange for money. In *Space, the City and Social Theory*, Fran Tonkiss indicates the relationship between the body and the gendering of space: “The ways in which bodies take on and reproduce these social codes [produced by ideology] can make the gendering of certain spaces seem—if not exactly *natural*—then at least normal and certainly tenacious” (97). In the dance hall, also a “nes[t] for prostitution” (Sze 108), Mimi puts on heavy makeup, wears working costume, and flirts with male customers who consume her body. According to Arina Lungu, “commodification reaches even the innermost level of personal relationships,” including sexual pleasure (par. 9). The dance hall is a gendered space that commodifies her service, objectifies and sexualizes her female body.

In order to make money to fulfill her dream of being rich, Mimi quits her job and becomes a mistress of a tycoon, rendering her a madwoman. Years after parting

with Tak Sing, Mimi meets him in a café, looking “respectable, almost elegant” (144). In their conversation, Mimi metaphorically uses a pebble in the sea to speak for herself: “The pebble just goes with the rise and fall of the surge, but it remains the same, indestructible, for it was once part of a big rock. Eventually, it will wash ashore, after many waves, where, embedded in the sand, it will remain. I am such a pebble and I will survive” (145). The waves symbolize the hardship she is going through, including being a prostitute in the dance hall in the past and at present “wrapped up” by a tycoon (144); she is determined to chase her dream by means of her body and sexuality. After quitting her job as a dance hall girl, she surrenders herself to a married tycoon and claims: “. . . I am with someone now—he treats me well. . . . I am not in want anymore” (145). By saying that he treats her well, she means he can provide her with materialistic enjoyment but not spiritual fulfillment. Therefore, she looks respectable and elegant chiefly because of the financial support from the tycoon. As Tak Sing describes, she is confined to the house bought by the tycoon as if a bird “kept in a gilded cage, and then cast out and left in a ditch when her keeper’s interest waned” (144). Tak Sing’s description corresponds to Gilbert’s and Gubar’s analysis that “women in patriarchal societies have historically been reduced to *mere* properties, to characters and images imprisoned in male texts because generated solely . . . by male expectations and designs” (12); in the house, Mimi is shaped into a mere sexual object in pursuit of money, and this frenzy makes herself a madwoman.

In her later years, Mimi is repetitively dumped by several tycoons and ends up living alone in an unwholesome tiny cubicle. The next time Tak Sing meets up with Mimi after the reunion in the café is when she is diagnosed with tuberculosis, living in a building in a poor environment—street with “decaying garbage” and “rotten orange or blots of yellow spittle” (173). Living in the tiny cubicle that barely accommodates a single bed and allows some light in, Mimi realizes that using her

body in exchange for money is against her will and re-evaluates herself as “nothing but a whore” (175). Mimi is a caged bird which can be “cast out and left in a ditch” by any tycoon who gets bored of her. And she admits, she has been “with a few [tycoons], none lasting more than a couple of years” (176); she is just a plaything of men. Worse still, she is addicted to opium which deteriorates her health. The pebble metaphor she previously used is ironical in the sense that she is severely assaulted by the big waves (men’s objectification and sexualization) and, in fact, not invincible. Being a madwoman in the public who has frantically pursued money, she ends up with nothing left and dies of pneumonia.

Striving in British-colonized Hong Kong, the three female characters in *Hui Gui* represent different types of madwomen and unfortunately end up with a tragic life. Chris Patten, the last governor before Hong Kong’s reversion to China, metaphorically compares the new airport to be constructed after 1997 to a dowry, which implies that “Hong Kong is compared to a daughter to be married, with Britain her father, and China her husband” (Huang 150). Like the Thornfield built by Rochester in *Jane Eyre*, Hong Kong is a city that has been colonized and shaped by Britain, the metaphorical patriarch. The three female characters, Lily, Ah Lan and Mimi, encounter different scenarios in Hong Kong but all end up becoming a madwoman.

Chapter Five: The Undead Spirit

Heunggongyahn [Hong Kongers] may soon be dead; but from the ashes of that identity . . . a resurgent, independent *junggwokyahn* [Chinese] may emerge.

—Gordon Mathews, “Heunggongyahn”

The characters in *Hui Gui* constantly struggle with the conflicts in national identity and gender relations. Though born in China and in Hong Kong each, both Tak Sing and Serena undergo struggle with national identity, a reality Hong Kong people have to tackle with in their everyday life before 1997. Because of the British rule and the dissemination of the British ideology, eventually Lily, Ah Lan and Mimi are all rendered mad. Has the situation changed after the handover?

Gordon Mathews’ prognostication made in 1997 is accurate in the sense that Hong Kong people have increasingly identified themselves as Chinese, which is true at least from 1997 to 2008. From 1997 to 1998, Hong Kong was doubly swept by the Asian Financial Crisis and avian influenza resulting in economical recession and social trepidation. In 2003, the outbreak of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) caused hundreds of casualties. Nevertheless, Hong Kong people have been optimistic about the economic co-operation with prosperous China, and the number of those identifying themselves as Chinese has gradually escalated and reached the climax in 2008, the year when Beijing Olympics took place.⁴⁴ By reference to Victor

⁴⁴ The percentage of Hong Kong people identifying themselves as Chinese increased from 18.6% in 1997 to over 30% after 2001 and reached the highest point of 38.6% in 2008. For more graphic

Zheng and Shao-lun Huang, Hong Kong people had the greatest confidence in Hong Kong's future in 1997 (75). In their essay written in 2011, Sik Hung Ng and Julian C. L. Lai conclude: "Historically the national Chinese identity has been fluctuating and . . . clearly on the rise in recent years" (100). Yet, they have always been uncertain about whether or not China would conform to the Sino-British Joint Declaration signed in 1984 and keep the "one country, two systems" policy in practice proposed by Deng Xiaoping.⁴⁵

Unfortunately "[t]he creeping spread of state interventionism," as Stephen Wing-kai Chui puts it, in political, social, and economical aspects proves that the nightmare of breaking the promise is about to come true (2). In terms of political intervention, the Chief Executives in Hong Kong since 1997 have been "appointed" by Beijing, not by genuine election by Hong Kong citizens. And the advisory board and the statutory bodies in the post-1997 government mainly consist of pro-Beijing leaders, executives, and professionals. In "Eclectic Corporatism and State Interventions in Post-colonial Hong Kong," Ngok Ma notices that Hong Kong capitalists generally have an affinity to "political conservatism, loyalty to Beijing, and a pro-business mindset" and stresses their political influence both in China and Hong Kong: "With access to central or mainland institutions, these Hong Kong capitalists could wield more influence on Chinese officials, sometimes bypassing the Hong Kong government" (79-80, 74). In addition, Beijing intended to urge Hong Kong government to enact the National Security Ordinance, simply called Article 23,⁴⁶ in

data of Hong Kong people's national identity, see "People's Ethnic Identity." *HKU POP SITE*. HKU POP, n.d. Web. 9 Jun. 2016.

<<https://www.hkupop.hku.hk/english/popexpress/ethnic/index.html>>.

⁴⁵ See Chapter 2 for more details about the declaration and Deng's proposal.

⁴⁶ The Article 23 states: "The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall enact 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." See "Hong Kong

2003 so as to constrain people's freedom of assembly and consequently to facilitate the Chinese governance of Hong Kong. Resisting Beijing's intervention and upholding the autonomy of Hong Kong, Hong Kongers, mostly the young generation, held the Umbrella Movement in 2014 to demand universal suffrage in the election of 2017 Chief Executive. In "Hong Kong Identity on the Rise," Chiew Ping Yew and Kin-ming Kwong predict the effect of Beijing's interventionism on the rise of Hong Kong identity in the future: "If Beijing persists in its interventionist approach, it is foreseeable that the rise of the Hong Kong identity vis-à-vis the Chinese identity will continue unabated" (1110).

Besides intervening in governmental institutions, Beijing attempted to arouse Hong Kong people's patriotism and loyalty to China through education, which has annoyed Hong Kong citizens. As Yew and Kwong remark, "Civic education was reintroduced as an elective school subject. School syllabuses and curriculum guidelines were revised to emphasize students' Chinese identity; instruction in *putonghua* (Mandarin Chinese) was instituted, whereas English was downplayed as a medium of instruction" (1089-90). The institutionalization of *Putonghua* to slowly substitute Cantonese and English and the introduction of national education had agitated the majority in Hong Kong that they held a protest against this brain-washing educational proposal in 2012.

In view of the economic recession after the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997, Hong Kong government opened the door for Chinese tourists and businessmen, which speeds up Hong Kong's economical reliance on China. In 2001, Hong Kong government emphasized the need for economic co-operation with China in order to take advantage of the economic opportunities from the Mainland. In 2003, Beijing

Basic Law Article 23."

embarked on plans such as Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) and free tours to Hong Kong so that Chinese tourists could cross the Hong Kong border more easily for shopping and sightseeing (Chu 9). Since then, Hong Kong's tourism and business transaction have heavily relied on China. Hong Kong government, with the appointed Chief Executive and the majority of pro-Beijing and pro-business advisory committees, has subsidized many non-governmental organizations or owned majority shares of public corporations and private oligopolies. The private-public boundary has thus been blurred with the indirect state interventionism in economical aspect. As Ngok Ma terms it, Hong Kong has become a "business-dominated and corporatist" regime (88).

Hong Kong's heavy economical reliance on China has engendered disturbance in the society and discontent of Hong Kong people. The influx of Chinese tourists has led to extremely congested and overly clamorous environments all over Hong Kong. More significantly, a lot of Chinese tourists were in fact parallel traders (水貨客) who made good use of the multiple entry visa policy to import consumer goods, such as milk powder and diapers, from Hong Kong to China for sale. This mass consumption has been so severe that many districts have suffered from shortage of daily necessities, sparking off anti-parallel trading protests, such as the Restoration of Tuen Mun and of Yuen Long in 2015, and stimulating the advocacy of localism or even separatism from China such as Hong Kongers First and the Hong Kong Independence Movement. Another problem causing social revulsion is related to a special type of tourism—birth tourism. It means tourism boosted by Chinese women who come to Hong Kong to give birth of infants, who are called anchor babies (雙非嬰兒). Even though neither parent of the babies is Hong Kong permanent residents, the parent can get the right of abode in Hong Kong after the birth. Over 170,000 anchor babies were

born between 2001 to 2011. These Chinese expectant mothers have exhausted social resources, used up local expenses and exacerbated animosity towards the Chinese.

Owing to the state interventionism in many aspects, Hong Kong people are once again prone to identify themselves as Hong Kongers rather than Chinese after 2010 and implore for British re-colonialization of Hong Kong. Yew and Kwong make a hypothesis that “the ‘Mainlandization of Hong Kong’ . . . has led more people to gravitate toward the Hong Kong identity predicated on a distinctive set of values and norms” (1095). Their hypothesis is proven to be true in the sense that the number of people identifying as Chinese has plummeted and of whom identifying as Hong Kongers have skyrocketed since 2010.⁴⁷ In a more extreme case, some Hong Kongers even vote for the return of Britain to re-colonize Hong Kong.⁴⁸ Verna Yu, a freelance writer in Hong Kong, confesses that: “Perhaps, it [hanging on to a coin with the queen’s head] was just nostalgia. But more likely I was trying to hold on to something that linked me to the pre-handover way of life” (par. 6). It is evident that Hong Kong people have forgotten about the exploitation of the British rule and are looking forward to the British re-colonization in order to sustain freedom and democracy.

Resorting to British re-colonization should not be a wise remedy. Clinging to British (re)colonization would only make Britain a God-like figure who transforms Hong Kong into the Tower of Babel (different significations in political, societal, economical, and cultural contexts assigned by Britain), the Ivory Tower (British ideology spreading all over Hong Kong), and the Crystal Palace (highly capitalized Hong Kong). These three metaphorical hypotheses seem to be conflicting but in fact dialogical: the Ivory Tower is more like a closed circuit of ideology than the Crystal

⁴⁷ See note 47.

⁴⁸ The survey was conducted in 2013 by *South China Morning Post*, a newspaper in Hong Kong, and asked a question: “Would Hongkongers vote to return to a British overseas territory, given the option?”. Over 90% of the interviewees were affirmative to the question.

Palace that opens the door for investments and speculations and the Tower of Babel that is constituted with multiple cultures and spatial forms. But remarkably, Britain has the supreme power to select its guests and expel the unwelcome intruders; in a similar vein, God-like Britain is the one who designates the spatial forms and diversifies the cultures in Hong Kong, just as the Tower of Babel in the Bible. People living under these circumstances would be easily turned into madmen and madwomen in the attic (people blindly following British and capitalist ideologies).

Instead, to demonstrate Hong Kongers' distinctive features, the development of Hong Kong local culture should be a better method. On 1 February 2016, I interviewed a friend of mine in Hong Kong, Irene Sin, asking about her attitude towards Chinese immigrants. She made a good remark on why the Chinese immigrants in the past could assimilate themselves to Hong Kong society, but the current immigrants cannot: "In the past, they were willing to follow the rules [set by Britain]. But nowadays, they cling to their Chinese custom and refuse to follow those rules." In other words, the past Chinese immigrants were willing to be westernized. But what we need now is not just the assimilation to the Hong Kong society but the cultivation of a distinctive identity for the Hong Kongers: the Hong Kongness, pertinently defined by Mathews as being the people "who Hong Kong's people believe themselves to be," possessing "their senses of who they most deeply are in their lives and in their community" (Mathews 4). In "Like a Postcolonial Culture: Hong Kong Re-imagined," John Nguyet Erni notices that "writing about Hong Kong involves a triangular articulation of Chinese nationalism, British colonialism, and globalism" (391), but none of which is a distinctive feature of Hong Kong. Hong Kongers are always wandering between Britain and China and losing themselves in the labyrinth of complex national and cultural identities. Therefore, they should strive

for developing its own local culture in order to pursue its distinctive features and have a unified identity. In recent years, they have been more politically involved than before by showing concerns for Beijing's interventionism and taking part in political upheavals; but what is in urgent need is to be culturally conscious about the development of Hong Kong local culture. *Heunggongyahn* would never die but are waiting to be discovered. I would apply Yiu-Wai Chu's conclusion to end this thesis: "It is not possible to reclaim the past, but . . . to look back and reconsider the core values of Hong Kong and how they got lost (and found) in transition is a way to take back the future" (165).



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