



Rethinking Hong Kong Hong Kong Studies Symposium Friday 8 December 2023

Abstracts

<https://cuhk.zoom.us/j/94821017986?pwd=Mo0ocVkvSWVhYXoyV2RhaotQRGFzUT09>

Meeting ID: 948 2101 7986
Passcode: 181227



1. Jennifer Anne Eagleton

The Imaginary Cities of Hong Kong: A Disguised Narrative of Metaphors

Abstract: Cities and nation-states, are “conceptual” entities can also be metaphorical, since they are frequently “imagined” (for example, see the websites of any nation’s tourism authority). Benedict Anderson defined a nation as “an imagined political community [that is] imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (Anderson, 1991). An imagined community is different from an actual community because it is not (and cannot be) based on face-to-face interaction between its members. Instead, members hold in their minds a mental image of their affinity. As Anderson puts it, a nation “is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each live the image of their communion” (Ibid).

In Italo Calvino’s fictional work, *Imaginary Cities* (1974), the reader is given a series of vignettes describing cities of all kinds. We eventually discover that these fragmentary images are in fact one specific city: the Venice of Marco Polo as told to Kublai Khan. These fragments could perhaps be seen as either the multi-faceted aspects of a single city or the imaginary conception of that city’s citizens. Applying this to Hong Kong, I will “rethink” the city as consisting of a number invisible cities by taking a number of Calvino’s cities as comparison pieces and using them to analyze the metaphysical and emotional dimensions of Hong Kong. These “imagined cities” being a kind of “disguised narrative of metaphors” (Sanghani-Patel 2020) in a place that practices a “culture and politics of disappearance” (Abbas 1997), but not total disappearance since memories remain. Using a combination of metaphor analysis (Cameron & Deignan 2006; Cameron & Maslen 2010) and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough & Wodak 1997), this presentation will also be illustrated with images of the “invisible cities” of Hong Kong.



Bio: Jennifer Eagleton, a Hong Kong resident since October 1997, is a close observer of Hong Kong society and politics. In 2012 she completed a PhD on how Hong Kong talks about democracy using metaphor. Jennifer has written for HKFP, *Voice & Verse*, *Cha*, *Mekong Review*, and *Education about Asia*. Her first book, *Discursive Change in Hong Kong: Socio-political Dynamics, Metaphor, and One Country, Two Systems* was published by Lexington Books in 2022. She is currently completing another manuscript on Hong Kong political discourse for Palgrave MacMillan. Jennifer works in various roles at the University of Hong Kong, Metropolitan University and Baptist University.



2. Becky Luk and Ching Kan

Un-natural Nature: The rural trajectory in the negotiated landscape of the 1980s

Abstract: A quarter century after the 1997 British-Chinese handover of Hong Kong, rural transformation has arguably become the major spatial production process in this post-colonial city. Issues and controversies encircling this rural landscape are, however, becoming more debated and more un-settled in recent years. On the top of the list, development proposals and unchecked rural expansion have threatened the legally protected country parks and aroused considerable public attention. Beyond those protected zones, as agricultural activities declined and industries relocated away from Hong Kong, rural environments were being continuously exploited into brownfield sites or redeveloped into massive housing estates. In 2017, the government put forward a new countryside conservation policy, although the efforts to revitalize rural villages were not always welcomed by existing villagers. These on-going struggles reminded us how the colonial discourse on this rural landscape—one that depicted the colonizer’s transformation of the pre-colonial ‘barren rock’ to the remarkable country parks of today—have failed to grasp and engage with the actual socio-spatial processes in action. This research aimed to re-visit and re-construct an alternative rural history of Hong Kong that could inform and inspire the contemporary discussion. The rural landscape of Pokfulam, one of the many natural environments that was drastically transformed during colonial Hong Kong, was taken as the site for a detailed case study:

—to reveal how shifting colonial strategies on the colony, one that was constantly being adjusted to cope with regional geo-political situations, set the ground for bottom-up negotiations to proliferate into specific territorial processes, and producing unique forms and patterns on the rural landscape;

—to highlight how the pre-handover socio-political context leading to the 1980s - the end of the cold war, the Maclehorse era, and the British-Sino negotiations - materialized and radically altered the trajectory of rural communities and rooted the development tendencies of today's rural landscape in post-colonial Hong Kong;

—to re-examine how such a re-constructed trajectory of rural transformation and its turn since the 1980s inform the understanding on the colonial urbanism of Hong Kong—the concept of local, the structure of local communities, the connection with the natural environment, etc.



Bios:

Becky Luk is an architect and independent urban researcher in Hong Kong. Her work aims to reveal, examine and engage with the local urban systems and processes that make Hong Kong unique and specific, and to make a proper study on them before they disappear.

Ching Kan is an architect who draws and writes. The majority of her work is based on her observations on the urban issues in Hong Kong, transformed and re-presented by means of illustration and storytelling. Working as an independent research collective, their work focusing on the urbanism in Hong Kong were widely published. Most recent projects included 'Un-natural Nature' - a research series on rural transformation that was presented at the Society of Hong Kong Studies Annual Conference 2023, and was accepted by KU Leuven's SEAUS Conference 2023; 'Parallel Worlds' —a mapping project on gentrifying processes, which was presented at EPFL's DEEP CITY Latsis Symposium 2021; 'TO-BE Urbanism'—an article on urban activism that was featured on the journal MONU issue 34 Protest Urbanism in 2021; 'PIPI'—the storytelling series that were numerous awarded and exhibited; and 'Stone City'—a community map of Shek Mun in collaboration with Kai Fong Tour in 2022. The duo were also the grant recipients of the Hong Kong Institute of Architects CPD Research Fund 2022-23.



3. **Ann Gillian Chu**

Rethinking Hong Kong Theological Education: An Argument for Decolonising Hong Kong's Theology

Abstract: Hong Kong public opinion has been moving towards a narrative that diminishes the public value of the humanities within its society and in the broader context of Mainland China. From the influences of existential and neo-Confucian thinkers who migrated from mainland China in the 1950s leading to the heightening status of humanities, to the current scientism stemming from national policy incentivising big data and technological advancements, which has led to a diminishing value of humanities, Hong Kong's understanding of the public value of the humanities has changed significantly. This, in turn, has affected theological education in Hong Kong, which often uses Western Enlightenment paradigms, theories, and materials. What does it mean to value local theological knowledge in Hong Kong? How will the global trend of decolonising curricula affect the pedagogy of Hong Kong theologians and academics? The changing intellectual context demonstrates how Hong Kong's understanding of theology is heavily influenced by others, be it Britain, Germany or China. But what if Hong Kongers begins to ground their understanding of contextual theology in themselves? What if the practices of Hong Kong's laity is important to local theologians' theorisation of Hong Kong theology?

This paper argues that decolonising Hong Kong Christians' understanding of theology is urgent and necessary, especially in the post-Handover era of Hong Kong. This will enable the development of a Hong Kong theology based on the lived theology of the laity, reflecting theological lessons learned from post-

Handover Hong Kong socio-politics. First, I argue for the public value of the humanities in Hong Kong and the need to decolonise university education. Second, in a culture where theological education is largely seen as vocational training for ministers, I explore why Hong Kong lay Christians wish to study theology, and suggest the necessity of decolonising theological education by lifting up local, lay knowledge. This is also in line with the increasing localism and emerging local identity in Hong Kong's wider context. I examine narratives by Hong Kong's laity in church magazines and social media comments to assess whether pragmatism and Eurocentrism in theological education is a problem. For example, the pragmatic way of handling theological study in churches is prevalent, so Sunday schools tend to teach whatever their pastors happen to know, rather than a systematic curriculum of what congregants need to know to solidify their faith. As for Eurocentrism, theological professors are often educated in Europe, and their theology is largely shaped by British or German understandings of what church communities are or should be. I suggest that experiential learning, such as lived theology, can contribute to decolonising theological education. Finally, I argue for decolonising theological education, as well as for rethinking theological education for the laity in a comprehensive, liberal arts style, intended to stimulate the laity's ability to think critically about their faith. It is crucial to work out one's theology in community with others, as it is in communities where the emotional and affective dimensions of religion are accounted for and theologies are cross-checked with lived experience.



Bio: Ann Gillian Chu is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Religion and Philosophy at Hong Kong Baptist University in Hong Kong, and a Visiting Fellow at the Centre of Religion and Public Life in the School of Philosophy, Religion, and History of Science at the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom. She received her Doctor of Philosophy from the University of St Andrews in the United Kingdom. Dr Chu currently serves as the Early Career and Postgraduate Researcher Liaison Officer with the British Sociological Association – Sociology of Religion Study Group. She recently published an article in *Practical Theology*, titled “Stanley Hauerwas and ‘Chan Tai-man’: an Analysis of Hong Kong Laypeople’s Lived Theology and Hong Kong Theologians’ Engagement with Stanley Hauerwas’s Political Theology from a Practical Theology Perspective.” You can find out more about Dr Chu’s research at <http://gillianchu.com>, or follow her on Twitter [@agillianchu](https://twitter.com/agillianchu) or Facebook/Instagram [@gillianchuphd](https://www.instagram.com/gillianchuphd).



4. Christian Nathen Ng Experiencing the Recent Changing Socio-Political Context in the Religious Sector: A Study of Pentecostalism in Hong Kong

Abstract: This study aims at researching the developmental trajectories of Pentecostalism, one of the fastest-growing world religious movements, in Hong Kong since the 1990s. Pentecostalism is a Christian movement with a distinctive emphasis on both the ecstatic religious experiences of the Holy Spirit and practices of spiritual gifts, such as glossolalia, healing, prophecy, and exorcism. One distinctiveness of Pentecostalism lies in its ability to adapt to various local contexts. Since its arrival in Hong Kong in the late 1900s, it has reached over 300,000 adherents and consisted of over 100 churches there nowadays.

Observably, this rapidly growing religious movement in Hong Kong has received insufficient attention. The socio-political trajectories of the movement have remained ambiguous in academia. The research question selected is: how have the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches responded to the transiting socio-political context of Hong Kong since the 1990s? The author places this study within the theoretical framework of both Hong Kong Christianity, proposed by Ying Fuk Tsang and others (Hong Kong Christian Studies), and global Pentecostalism, developed by Allan H. Anderson and others (Global Pentecostal Studies).

This study is divided into three main sections. First, it explains the proposed theoretical framework and offers a critical overview of studies on Hong Kong Pentecostalism. The overview aims to provide

(non-)academics with a precise mapping of the relevant Pentecostal scholarship and help identify the research gap. Second, this study provides a brief history of Pentecostalism reaching Hong Kong from the 1960s to the 1990s and summarizes some general contextual characteristics and critical milestones of the subject through archival and document analyses, including newspapers, church publications, organizational reports, and governmental publications.

Third, this study addresses the research question regarding the dynamic interactions between Pentecostalism and the socio-political context of Hong Kong in two directions. On the one hand, it focuses specifically on how Pentecostal and Charismatic churches have reacted to social needs, including education and poverty, through multiple case studies, mainly based on the primary data from the author's two-year fieldwork and collected church documents. It further discusses Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori's sociological theory of Progressive Pentecostalism and some scholars' discourses from various fields, especially Hong Kong (Social and Cultural) Studies, based on the findings. On the other hand, it explores and depicts the reactions and inactions of Hong Kong Pentecostalism facing the handover of Hong Kong and recent socio-political movements consistently through the case studies. It then uses discourses by scholars from different disciplines, such as Tobias Brandner, Amos Yong, and others, for theoretical discussion.

This study does not posit itself as a theological or biblical study. Rather, the author regards this study as part of Pentecostal Studies with particular historical and socio-political lenses. Similar to the case of Hong Kong Studies, Pentecostal Studies is a growing academic field that invites dialogues from different disciplines. This study envisages contributing to both Pentecostal Studies and Hong Kong Studies by introducing the former to the latter and bringing the latter into the theoretical discussion with the former.



Bio: Christian Nathen Ng is a Ph.D. Candidate in Religious Studies from the Department of Cultural and Religious Studies at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. Ng has been researching Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in Hong Kong through different disciplinary lenses, including spatial studies, ritual studies, festive studies, organizational studies, and so forth. His research interests include Hong Kong Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity, Hong Kong church history, local congregational studies, and the sociology of Pentecostalism. His recent article entitled “In Search of Pentecostal Trajectories and Realities: A Study of Hong Kong Assemblies of God Churches,” published in the *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, focuses on the historical and social studies of the Hong Kong classical Pentecostal churches.



5. Carlo Tuason Out-Sounding Hong Kong

Abstract: This paper explores the theoretical, cultural, and social construction of Victoria Harbour in Hong Kong through sensorial and perceptual technologies and cultural products, which I argue ultimately function within a system of constant acceleration. This system of acceleration—logistical, technological, economic, etc—indicative of globalization and modernity, which manifest uniquely in Hong Kong, is the motivating force that contextualizes this paper. I highlight Virilio's conception of logistical modernity, as articulated by Benjamin Bratton, while locating Victoria Harbour, and its countless functions and roles, as a site of logistical noise and, thus, speed.

Every night at 8:00 PM, for a brief 10-minutes, the skyline along both sides of Victoria Harbour is transformed through a seemingly spectacular and visually stimulating laser light show entitled *Symphony of Lights*. Through analyzing *Symphony of Lights*, alongside other creative works by Hong Kong and diasporic artists, I aim to articulate how sound, time, and visibility within and around the harbour are managed as infrastructures of the state, as well as how artists ruminate upon and negotiate these systems of power. Moreover, I frame *Symphony of Lights* as an act of sonic warfare, participating in the logistical performance of the state perpetuating itself through this touristic performance, for both local and non-local audiences.

I articulate a theorization of logistical noise, that foregrounds the logistical and economic activity inherent in Victoria Harbour. Building upon Virilio's logistical modernity and deviating from Bijsterveld's work on mechanical noise, I show how logistical noise presents in Victoria Harbour and how it undergirds larger systems of power. Logistical noise is thus the various mechanical, technological, economic, and environmental sounds and sonic residues that layer and reverberate with and against each other that expose and embody the machinations of logistical modernity and the interconnected systems of globalization, logistics, trade, and mobility.



Bio: Carlo Tuason (he/him) is a musician, curator, and PhD student in American Studies and Ethnicity at the University of Southern California. His research, writing, and curatorial practices explore visual complexes of power, speed/time, creative resistance, visibility, public space, and performance as they manifest in contemporary art and visual/sonic cultures within Asia and its diaspora. His writing has appeared and is forthcoming in X-TRA, Amerasia Journal, DIACritics, and The Experiment Station- The Phillips Collection. He has previously assisted on exhibitions and projects at the USC Pacific Asia Museum, Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center, and Chinese American Museum-Los Angeles. Carlo holds an MA in Curatorial Practice and the Public Sphere from the University of Southern California, a BA in International Affairs from the University of Cincinnati, and a BM in Music Performance from the College-Conservatory of Music. He releases music and performs under the stage name "Chay Guan."



6. Gabriel F. Y. Tsang

Superficial retrieval of the past: Ann Hui's *Love After Love*

Abstract: As the most significant adapter of Eileen Chang, Ann Hui relevantly directed three films *Love in a Fallen City* (1984), *Eighteen Springs* (1997), *Love After Love* (2020) and one drama *The Golden Cangue* (2009). Across over three decades, Ann Hui apparently bears imbricated "anxiety of influence," which is not as Harold Bloom classically defined as a compulsion of resisting and avoiding other writers / competitors' influences, but is an ambiguous ambivalence of literally reformatting and creatively reinterpreting Eileen Chang's original texts. The challenge is that the mainstream audience and critics, usually fans of Chang, dominantly adopted "normative and source-oriented approaches," which Linda Hutcheon borrowed from Theo Hermans to confirm the impossibility of absolute trans-mediation, to evaluate the achievement of Hui's adaptations. Problematically, the simplistic judgement as such made upon the closeness of the transformed texts to the source texts not only implicitly impacts on the director's intention, but also largely shadowed her independent voice and creativity. Therefore, this presentation will neglect Eileen Chang's sublime aura, chiefly focusing on the represented chronotopes of *Love After Love*. It intends to reveal how Ann Hui visually, vocally, and textually recovered the fictional worlds set in the 1940s, and why she deleted, added, and revised contents upon the original story. The core argument is set on the adaptation's minimization of potential references to local political events and attention to coordinating between various sectors towards a level that the director could confidently regard as "at least decent" in spite of wide criticism, instead of embedding a national / urban allegory. An unspeakable context that resulted in the asymmetry of visual-audio and narrative levels is presumably an urge of Hollywoodization-Mainlandization. As the Chinese government and film practitioners were copying the globally effective model of the Hollywood film industry, which both determines consumers' preference and consolidates the imperial spread of the American culture, Hong Kong directors who hoped to enter the Chinese market seems to necessarily follow the mainstream formulation.

Works cited

Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973.
Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Adaptation*. New York: Routledge, 2006.



Bio: Gabriel F. Y. Tsang, currently Assistant Professor at Hong Kong Baptist University, completed his PhD and MA degrees in Comparative Literature at King's College London and the University of Hong Kong respectively. He formerly served the British Postgraduate Network for Chinese Studies as President, stayed as a visiting scholar at Stanford University and the National University of Singapore, and worked as Associate Researcher at Sun Yat-sen University. His research outcomes were presented at the academic conferences held by the University of Oxford, the University of Cambridge, Peking University, National Taiwan University, the University of Copenhagen, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, etc., and had been widely published in peer-reviewed academic journals, including *Journal of Narrative Theory*, *Sungkyun Journal of East Asian Studies*, *Asian Studies*, *International Journal of China Studies*, and *The Language and Semiotic Studies*.



7. Shui Kau CHIU

A functionalist revisiting Project Yi Jin

Abstract: In the late 1990s, the budgets of the Hong Kong government suffered a lot due to the impact of the 1997 Asian financial crisis. While expenditures of the government remained huge, revenues of the government reduced dramatically. The government realized that the previous practice of traditional public administration was no longer suitable for Hong Kong. The Hong Kong government has administered new public management in the public sector to address the difficulties. Under the dogma of efficiency, effectiveness and economy, the government reexamined its expenditures in various areas. One of the affected sectors was higher education. Higher education encountered financial strain after the government adjusted its funding for education. Meanwhile, many young people were unemployed or failed to pursue further studies. The government has thus launched Project Yi Jin, which is currently known as Diploma Yi Jin, since 2000, authorized qualified higher education providers offering an unconventional and self-financed study path for young people to cater for their educational needs. Even though Project Yi Jin has been implemented for over two decades, studies focused on the project were dated, inadequate, and infrequently supported with a particular theoretical perspective. Therefore, a study to revisit the project under the aforementioned context was proposed to narrow the academic gaps. As functionalism concerns the operation of society as a whole, it was employed as a theoretical framework for this conceptual article. This article utilized the ideas of the institution and social fact from the functionalist perspective and argued that the project had facilitated the consolidation of society. On the one hand, the project has assisted higher education as an institution to survive and exercise its function by alleviating the financial stress attributed to the new public management in the public sector. On the other hand, the project has also promoted stabilizing society by relieving potential social discontent in a territory under economic depression. By offering young people hope for their futures, the project has further enhanced society, especially the young people, to respect social facts such as law and order. This article will become one of the significant references for higher education and education policymakers. Higher education is advised to constantly review how to satisfy different educational needs of learners, strike a balance between limited resources, and nurture graduates with the necessary skills and knowledge to empower sustainable development of society. Education policymakers are reminded to consult and cooperate with various stakeholders in the sector and formulate education policies that can devotedly adapt to dynamic environments.

Keywords: Project Yi Jin; traditional public administration, new public management; functionalism; Hong Kong.



Bio: Shui Kau Chiu is devoted to his teaching career and has taught various modules at the tertiary level in Hong Kong. One of his recently referred publications, “Well-being of Educators: A Functionalist Perspective” (*Education Journal*, 2023), shared his thoughts on well-being with educators. He has also served as a manuscript reviewer for different peer-reviewed journals such as *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, *Chinese Journal of Communication*, *Cogent Business & Management*, *Cogent Social Sciences*, *International Journal of Communication*, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *Journal of Information Technology and Politics*, *Journal of Risk Analysis*, and *Qualitative Health Research*. His research interests include science, technology and society, education, communication, risk perception, cultural theory of risk, and history.



8. Lu Danqi

How to build a community on stage: Rearranging Hong Kong into mainstream narrative through CCTV Spring Festival Gala Cantopop performances since 2020

Abstract: The CCTV Spring Festival Gala is widely regarded as a key platform for celebrating family reunions and national unity. A prevalent facet of Hong Kong culture, Cantopop, is oftentimes rearranged into mainstream narratives on the Gala stage in order to display the vibrancy of Hong Kong and also emphasize political solidarity. Over a hundred Hong Kong celebrities have performed on the Spring Festival Gala stage across nearly four decades, ever since Hong Kong resident Zhang Mingmin's inaugural performance in 1984.

Cultural scholar Bai Huiyuan (2023) has identified two defining moments in Hong Kong's history: "My Chinese Heart," performed at the 1984 Spring Festival Gala, and "1997 A.D." performed at the 1997 Gala. Both performances were elaborately rehearsed, capturing historic moments while reinforcing the central value of "community" in terms of politics, culture, and emotion.

Surprisingly, the vocal performances selected to represent Hong Kong at the 2020 Gala garnered little scholarly attention. Given that the Gala has, for the first time, set up a venue in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and displayed the thriving cityscape of the Greater Bay Area, it implies the interplay between the regional and national levels. Furthermore, based on quantitative research, two of the most commonly featured Hong Kong celebrities on the Gala stage, namely Jackie Chan and Nicholas Chan, delivered noteworthy performances of the songs "The Great Wall of China Will Never Fall Down" and "New Year's Disco" in Cantonese. These performances hold significant cultural value. This paper will therefore concentrate on the Cantopops that were performed during these historically important Galas and present two primary arguments.

On the one hand, these main melody Cantopops aimed to establish a sense of community by displaying magnificent Chinese natural landscapes (1984), exploring the nation's harsh colonial past (1997), and presenting panoramic shots of the Greater Bay Area landscapes (2020). On the other hand, the rationale behind constructing "mainland-Hong Kong solidarity" via musical performances has moved from the sentimental to the financial aspect. It now focuses on building a prosperous community in the Greater Bay Area instead of evoking a yearning for the motherland. These nuances indicate the coherence and changing nature of the PRC government's plans for Hong Kong and its strategies for constructing national solidarity narratives during different time periods. This perspective presents a unique viewpoint on Jaques Attali's (1977) cultural theory regarding the correlation between modern music and the socio-political environment.

From a cultural diffusion standpoint, "The Great Wall of China Will Never Fall Down" and "New Year's Disco," both link to the "northward expansion" of Hong Kong culture. Specifically, the former is associated with the popularity of Hong Kong TV series *The Legendary Fok* (1983) in mainland China, while the latter is a reinterpretation of the song "Wild Wolf Disco" written by Gem Dong in 2019, highlighting the significant influence of Cantopop music in the northeast of China. These two tunes have been selected, rehearsed, and frequently presented during CCTV's large celebratory events. By incorporating songs illustrating Hong Kong's influence on mainland China into mainstream discourse, the PRC government is cocurrently reshaping Hong Kong's identity through heightened nationalism.



Bio: Lu Danqi, Ph.D. student at School of Chinese, The University of Hong Kong with Presidential Scholarship. She graduated from Peking University (MPhil in Literature) and Zhejiang University (BA in Literature). Her research interests focus on contemporary Chinese literary and visual cultural studies, Hong Kong cinema and culture, gender and sexuality. She has presented her paper at several academic conferences including the International Conference on Comparative Literature (ICLA Congress 2022), PKU International Doctoral Student Forum of Art Studies (2023), and published academic papers and

novels in journals including *Appreciation of Famous Works* and *Children Literature*. Working as the principle investigator and first author, she has contributed one chapter named “Family-Nation Narrative: Representations of the Family Unit in China Central Television (CCTV) Spring Festival Gala’s Comedy Sketches, 1983-2022” to the forthcoming book *The Asian Family in Literature and Film: Changing Perceptions in a New Age, Volume 1: The East* (Palgrave MacMillan).



9. Longlong Ge Metamorphic Snake, Metamorphic City: The Invisible Hong Kong in Lilian Lee’s Green Snake

Abstract: When literary critics focus on the works of Lilian Lee (also known as Lee Pik Wah; Li Bihua) and the transforming and integrating city Hong Kong since the 1980s, the nostalgia in *Rouge* (胭脂扣 1984) and the political metaphor for the return of Hong Kong in *Farewell My Concubine* (1993) adapted by Chen Kaige often stand on the centre, while the ideology of *Green Snake* (1986) is likely to be downplayed by the academics who read this mythological novella more through the lens of affection entanglement between men and women, demons and human beings. Lilian Lee’s *Green Snake* is a novella of supernatural allure and cultural richness. In contrast to the glorification of White Snake/Bai Suzhen’s (白蛇/白素贞) Mother Earth image and her faithful love to Xu Xian (许仙) in Feng Menglong’s (冯梦龙) story, Lee’s *Green Snake* retells the mutual seduction between Green Snake, White Snake, Xu Xian, and Fahai (法海) from the perspective of Green Snake/Xiao Qing, a supporting character of the original story, demonstrating the demise of the boundaries between humanity and bestiality, emphasising natural desire of love and sex for women, and reflecting on the tragedy of destiny that women cannot escape from.

However, both the cultural background when Lee was writing and *Green Snake*’s critique of the Cultural Revolution at the end of the story bury clues for readers to review this work in terms of the transformation of Hong Kong, rather than treating this story as a romantic myth, as the city itself was confronting transformation imposed by a new regime and new policies. Lee’s narrative conjures a mesmerizing world where mythical creatures and the urban landscape coalesce, inviting readers to contemplate the symbiotic relationship between folklore and contemporary society. In this condition, this study will delve into the intricate tapestry of the narrative, exploring how Lee projects the development of Hong Kong in the 1980s on an extraordinary figure, that is, an assemblage of snake and woman. By analysing the nuanced connections between the allegorical significance of the green snake’s transformations and the symbolic and metaphorical expressions of Hong Kong, this study will investigate how the enchanting narrative of *Green Snake* serves as a lens through which to unveil the invisible layers of Hong Kong’s complex sociocultural history, ultimately revealing the city as a living entity in a constant state of metamorphosis.



Bio: Longlong Ge is a PhD candidate from the Department of Cultural, Media, and Visual Studies at the University of Nottingham. She received a Bachelor’s degree in Teaching Chinese to Foreign Language Speakers from Huazhong University of Science and Technology, Wuhan, in 2020 and a Master’s degree in Languages, Literatures and Cultures from Durham University, Durham, in 2021. She serves on the editorial boards of *English Language, Literature and Culture* as a peer reviewer, and has participated in Wuhan Huaguang Institute of Information Science as a young scholar since 2019. Her research field is located in the cross of gender, cultural, and transcultural studies in Britain and China. Her Ph.D. project is taking up the works of Angela Carter and Lilian Lee (Li Bihua), two female authors active in Britain and Hong Kong, China around the 1980s. Ge is particularly interested in how their gender politics and ideology of resisting normativity through the philosophical lens of “metamorphosis” are presented and how the transcultural elements shape the metamorphoses in their works.



10. Sonny Shiu-Hing Lo

Understanding the New Dynamics of Beijing-Hong Kong Relations

Abstract: The past two decades of the studies on Hong Kong politics was dominated by the paradigms of democratization, state-society interactions, and the hybrid regime. However, the imposition of the national security law by the central authorities in Beijing onto the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) in late June 2020 and the revamp of Hong Kong's political system in March 2021 have not only questioned the validity of these paradigms, but also raised the importance of our deeper understanding of the new dynamics of Beijing-Hong Kong relations. The democratization paradigm has proved to be inadequate; the emphasis on the role of civil society has been turned around to highlight the power of the central and local states; and the hybrid regime paradigm has turned into a dominantly softly authoritarian regime. If the previous paradigms in studying Hong Kong politics have shown inadequacies, the new dynamics of Beijing-Hong Kong relations have to be understood in the broader context of China's central-local politics. Specifically, the central state had to intervene politically in the affairs of its localities whose national security was at stake, whose civil society was out of control, whose political reform was regarded as opening the door to foreign intervention, and whose pluralistic politics were seen as a threat to the leadership of the mainland's ruling party.

The HKSAR's political development from July 1, 1997 to May 2020 was characterized by a trend of adversarial struggles, ideological confrontations, and the launch of socio-political movement to push for a faster pace and larger scope of Western-style democratization. However, this type of pluralistic politics was in direct conflict with the elite political culture of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Beijing's elite political culture remains paternalistically authoritarian, seeing Hong Kong's contentious and pluralistic politics as politically unacceptable and vulnerable to foreign intrusion and "subversion." Compounding the failure of Hong Kong's democracy movement was the failure of its fragmented leaders to give "face" to the central authorities, who saw political turbulence, confrontations and violence as utterly unacceptable.

As such, the imposition of the national security law in June 2020 and the resultant revamp of electoral reforms in March 2021 have called for a deeper understanding of the new dynamics of Beijing-HKSAR relations. These new dynamics have since then been driven by the central concerns about national security, the centre's perception of Hong Kong as a local region focusing on economic development, the central preoccupation of remaking Hong Kong people's local identity into national Chinese identity, and the ruling party's national plan of integrating the HKSAR deeper into the Greater Bay Area while reshaping the capitalistic city as an economic platform for China to expand its Belt and Road initiative. These new dynamics of central-local relations are now increasingly prominent in the new politics of Beijing-Hong Kong interactions.



Bio: Sonny Shiu-Hing Lo is Professor at the HKU SPACE Community College. He is the author of many books on Hong Kong and Macau, including *The Politics of District Elections and Administration in Hong Kong* (2023), *The Politics of Education Reform in China's Hong Kong* (2021), *The Politics of Peaceful and Violent Protests in Hong Kong* (2020), *China's New United Front Work in Hong Kong* (2019), *Macau in the Second World War, 1937-1945* (2022), *Casino Capitalism, Society and Politics in China's Macau* (2020), *The Politics of Policing in Greater China* (2016), *The Politics of Controlling Organized Crime in Greater China* (2013), *The Politics of Cross-Border Crime in Greater China* (2010), *Political Change in Macao* (2009), *Governing Hong Kong* (2007), *The Politics of Democratization in Hong Kong* (1997), and *Political Development in Macau* (1995). He previously worked at the University of East Asia (Macau), Murdoch University, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, University of Hong Kong, University of Waterloo, and the Hong Kong Institute of Education.

